

# Scottish style: the construction of Scottish identity amongst fashion and style influencers on Instagram.

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SCOTTISH STYLE: THE CONSTRUCTION OF SCOTTISH IDENTITY  
AMONGST FASHION AND STYLE INFLUENCERS  
ON INSTAGRAM

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## **Abstract**

Research into Scottish fashion is a developing field; existing studies have tended to focus on the production of iconic textiles such as tartan, tweed and cashmere. The aim of this thesis was to explore the construction of national identity and place amongst style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. It is argued that their experiences and output help build an understanding of modern Scotland in a new and unexplored context.

Scotland represents an interesting case as a stateless nation with a rich heritage and distinctive iconography. However, literature in the field of Scottish identity suggests that the Scottish mythology is so strong that it is difficult to establish a more contemporary vision of the nation and its people. The findings suggest that the Highland vision of Scotland as a tranquil place in which to escape city life is still strong but that material symbols such as tartan are not sufficient in conveying contemporary Scottish style.

The fashion industry in Scotland is growing and this is evidenced by the wealth of SMEs in the sector, predominantly in design, retail and events. However, London, in its close proximity to Scotland, is still regarded as the epicentre for UK fashion and media. Scottish style influencers play a key role in promoting fashion as well as conveying a contemporary vision of Scotland. Participant influencers were passionate in their promotion of Scotland as a destination and Scottish fashion brands.

Qualitative data from interviews with Scottish style influencers revealed that Scottish identity was important and influential in online and offline settings. Participants regarded Scottish identity as a positive attribute and something they could use to help them stand out in the increasingly crowded realm of style influencers on Instagram. A sense of belonging to Scotland was most strongly concerned with attachment to a place and this was influenced most powerfully by personal memories; Instagram enabled participants to record and relive these memories.

A novel photo interview approach generated imagery and ideas including: use of historic settings and landscapes as a backdrop for outfit posts; preference for autumn-winter styles; promotion of an outdoor lifestyle; production of a relatable and down-to-earth personality; and a relationship between place, mood and personal style.

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## Glossary of terms

Caption	The text that accompanies an image on Instagram
Fashion	Dress, style or appearance
Fashion blog	A regularly updated web page that is dedicated to the communication of fashion and style information, usually written from a personal viewpoint and where the focus is often on the individual writer
Feed	A dynamic social media interface comprising relevant and/ or up-to-date posts from other users whom an individual has actively chosen to follow on a particular medium
Followers	An audience built of those who actively choose to follow a social media user
Geotag	A location-based function that allows users to signal their physical location as part of a social media post
Icon	A representative symbol that has become so well recognised that it in itself connotes meaning without having to be explained
Iconography	A set of images and symbols that work together to connote a broader idea or image
Influencer	An individual who seeks to promote publicly an idea, product(s) and/ or lifestyle through social media
Instagram	A photo sharing application and popular social medium
Instagram biography	The 150 character written description that features on an Instagram user's profile
Instagram Stories	A 24-hour stream of temporary posts (image, video and/ or text based) that appear as part of an additional feed
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis: a highly qualitative philosophical approach to conducting research that has been adopted in the current thesis
Micro-influencer	An influencer with around 1,000-50,000 followers
National identity	A collective identity that is based on belonging to a physical place and characterised by shared language and culture
Place	Physical location
Post	A message released through social media, usually comprising an image and/ or text, and appearing on followers' news feeds
Scotland	A formerly independent small country that is part of Great Britain and the United Kingdom (population 5.4m)

*It requires great love of it deeply to read  
The configuration of a land,  
Gradually grow conscious of fine shadings,  
Of great meanings in slight symbols,  
Hear at last the great voice that speaks softly,  
See the swell and fall upon the flank  
Of a statue carved out in a whole country's marble,  
Be like Spring, like a hand in a window  
Moving New and Old things carefully to and fro,  
Moving a fraction of flower here,  
Placing an inch of air there,  
And without breaking anything.  
So I have gathered unto myself  
All the loose ends of Scotland,  
And by naming them and accepting them,  
Loving them and identifying myself with them,  
Attempt to express the whole.*

(*Scotland* by Hugh MacDiarmid, 1943)

I would like to dedicate this work to my mum, Rita, who has always been a huge inspiration to me! I can still remember attending her PhD graduation as a small child.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

*Fashion lends itself to being an optimal synthetic indicator of a nation's position, amidst memory, mystification, and imaginary (Segre Reinach, 2015, p. 271).*

As personal style commentary and social media usage has increased in popularity over the past decade, a number of studies have focused on fashion bloggers, in particular, as an example of a phenomenon where individuals can construct style and personal identity to engage followers (Allen, 2009; Chittenden, 2010; Palmgren, 2010; Pham, 2011; Rocamora, 2011a; Luvaas, 2013; Downing Peters, 2015; Findlay, 2015; Titton, 2015).

*Style in its very meaning refers to the way that we personally choose and combine clothing. It is not aligned to any one design school, particular trend or innovation in fashion (Young and Martin, 2017, p. 82).*

This thesis seeks to investigate the phenomenon of personal style as an expression of national identity by exploring the construction of Scottish identity amongst fashion and style influencers on Instagram as an example of social media.

### **1.1 The rise of the fashion influencer**

The power of fashion communication and its influence on a region is evident in the case of New York's ascendancy as a fashion capital, where the editors of publications such as *Vogue* helped New York reposition itself alongside Paris as a creator of world-class design (Rantisi, 2004). In more recent years, fashion writing has evolved to reflect changing readership perceptions (Konig, 2004) with an industry shift from exclusive to popular fashion (Rocamora, 2001). Fairchild (1989) argues that fashion criticism has, therefore, become diluted, encouraging the movement towards the adoption of new media, such as blogs, which have been credited as a major factor in the democratisation of fashion communication, previously regarded as the realm of the industry's elite (Allen 2009; Rocamora, 2011b; Findlay, 2015).

Online communities and fashion blogs are seen as key contributors to the fast-paced nature of the industry today “constructing... fashion as transient, passing, already gone” (Rocamora 2011a: p. 97). Rocamora (ibid: p. 95) describes fashion blogs as “texts in perpetual movement, always new, never-ending” due to their multimodal content of words, sound, image, video, and hyperlinks. A key feature of fashion blogs is the use of internal and external links and, in contrast to magazines, bloggers will often link to other bloggers in the field, sometimes even alluding to an offline relationship (ibid). This sense of relationship demonstrates that bloggers do not necessarily view other bloggers as competitors but rather part of their own community and hypothetically as a way to widen their network and audience and a validation of their own identity (Rocamora, 2011b).

Lebedeva (2013, np), in a study of photography in social networks, reinforces the message that “a picture tells a thousand words” and this is evident in the increasingly visual nature of fashion blogs (Sedeke and Arora, 2013) and the fashion industry’s affection for the photo-sharing application Instagram (Abidin, 2016; O’Brien, 2016). Kontu *et al* (2013, p. 72) found that “it is pictures [that] are enjoyed the most”, and these have the benefit of being shared and viewed quickly, with mobile phones allowing users to consume these immediately. The trend towards video blogging, or “vlogging” as it has become known, further reveals the preference for visual over written communication (George-Parkin, 2017). Some of the most popular fashion bloggers, such as Zoe Sugg, of *Zoella*, have abandoned their blog in order to focus entirely on vlogging; however, these influencers do still have an active presence on Instagram. Visual design in blogging is seen as increasingly important and bloggers are opting for “simple clear layout and highly personalised content” (Sedeke and Arora, 2013, p. 15).

While both individual and corporate blogs exist (Rocamora, 2011b, p. 410), the current research focuses on personal style influencers (ibid; Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2009) where the commentator is often pictured in their own home sharing items from their own wardrobe. Many successful fashion blogs in the UK could be classified as “personal”, focusing on the present, everyday life of the blogger (Rocamora, 2011b, p. 410). These are often written in the style of a diary, where the blogger will inject fashion and style advice into the story of their everyday life, referring to the past and alluding to a possible future (ibid). They usually talk directly to their audience, referring to themselves in the first person (Titton, 2015), followers as “you” and using the collective “we” to engage their audience. Communication typically ends by alluding to a future

event, encouraging follower loyalty, in line with Pham's (2011, p. 4) "horizontal communication", where the power sits evenly between blogger and follower, as mutually interdependent on each other. Rocamora (2011b) adopts an analogy from Snow White, where the blogger will portray an idealised identity through the computer screen (as a mirror) with followers who post positive comments reaffirming this identity.

The popularity of fashion blogs and their influence is explored quite extensively in the literature (e.g. Chittenden, 2010; Pham, 2011; Rocamora, 2011b; McQuarrie *et al*, 2013). Indeed the influence and impact of opinion leadership in the context of fashion and style has been debated for some time (Summers, 1970). Early fashion bloggers are credited with having democratised an industry that was previously reserved for the elite (Allen, 2009). It could even be argued that fashion bloggers have achieved a celebrity-like status through the accumulation of high numbers of followers with similar aesthetic tastes (McQuarrie *et al*, 2013). This extends beyond a purely online position, whereby fashion bloggers have consistently, and for some time now, appeared in the front row of high-profile events alongside editors, designers, critics and more traditional celebrities (Spedding, 2016); and where bloggers have infiltrated "the mainstream fashion media" (Rocamora, 2011a, p. 92). Indeed, where fashion bloggers were once admired for appearing real and relatable, many now appeal on a more aspirational level, leading what could be regarded as a celebrity lifestyle that includes free goods gifted from brands and travelling the world (Duffy and Hund, 2015b; Findlay, 2015). This commercial aspect has, of course, led to questions and doubts around the authenticity of the lifestyle they present (Marwick, 2015).

As social media has evolved, so has the definition of fashion bloggers, who are now more typically termed "influencers" (Abidin, 2016, p. 86). This is in recognition of the fact that they operate primarily through other social media platforms and that they have attracted such interest from brands that wish to use them to help market their products (*ibid*). Indeed, influencers appear to be particularly drawn towards more visual modes, such as Instagram and YouTube (George-Parkin, 2017). Fashion influencers reveal aspects of their "dressed identity" (Findlay, 2015, p. 171) through a series of posts, comprising of visual (photos and videos) and written communication in the form of captions, hashtags and, in the case of bloggers, longer posts. Their success is reliant on the portrayal of an identity that strikes the right balance between relatable and

aspirational and where this is communicated in a consistent and engaging manner to a digital audience (Song, 2016).

Fashion influencers, therefore, have allowed their audience access to fashion information in an instantaneous manner, providing a more personal and backstage glimpse into life behind-the-scenes than was previously accorded by fashion magazines (MacDowell and de Souza e Silva, 2018). The informal style of their communication has arguably made even the mere concept of fashion more inclusive. Through exposure to and engagement with the increasingly regular updates and posts that have come to be expected from a fashion influencer, the audience might gradually begin to believe they know the influencer personally and feel, to some extent, emotionally involved with that individual (ibid). This type of relationship has been termed para-social interaction and was originally recognised in the relationship between performers and spectators at sporting events or between television stars and their audience (Horton and Wohl, 1956). Para-social interaction was first recognised as a byproduct of mass media and television in particular, which suggests that visual messages are central in this type of attachment. The idea has since been applied to blogs and social media (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011; Stever and Lawson, 2013; Labrecque, 2014).

As the number of aspiring fashion influencers has grown steadily over recent years, it becomes progressively difficult for these individuals to establish and set themselves apart in such a crowded infosphere. A starting point for the current research was to wonder how fashion influencers, as they have become known, go about trying to differentiate or “brand” themselves (Duffy and Hund, 2015a, p. 3).

Duffy and Hund (ibid) explore the idea of “personal branding” amongst fashion bloggers as an example of creative entrepreneurship that is particularly observable amongst women. They highlight the importance of conducting research that considers, not only the texts that bloggers produce, but also the experiences behind these. Their study revealed three mechanisms that career-minded fashion bloggers used to help brand themselves: the portrayal of passion and enjoyment in their work through workplace-related imagery (e.g. desk space inspiration, attendance at events, and use of hashtags to signal this enjoyment); showing a desirable lifestyle that their followers might be inspired by and be envious of (e.g. exclusive experiences, travel opportunities and luxury products); and selectivity in the things that they choose to share whilst striving to appear as authentic versions of themselves.

The fashion industry has embraced Instagram in particular (Bobb, 2018) as a visual social media platform that is presently regarded as the logical starting point for any fashion influencer (O'Brien, 2016); some even argue that the platform will eclipse the blog completely (Klein, 2014; Blalock, 2016). Instagram has enabled a new wave of fashion influencers and this demonstrates that the medium is worthy of exploration as an illustration of a socially mediated phenomenon.

*Thanks to their unique aesthetics, and that je ne sais quoi quality that makes thousands of people click "follow," they represent a new kind of grassroots celebrity-making movement that is proving to have just as much value as traditional web publishing (Darwin, 2015, np).*

Both because, and in spite of, the influx of fashion influencers operating all over the world today, a career as a fashion influencer is regarded as a viable job prospect for fashion graduates and style-conscious individuals. Indeed, it is common for brands to pay an influencer who has amassed 5,000 followers between £200 and £400 for a single post on Instagram (Moloney, 2017). With increasing exposure to successful influencers and the appeal of the lifestyle they present, accompanied by easy access to social media, it is not difficult to see how this becomes an attractive prospect to those who have a keen interest in fashion. The fact that so many people operate on these channels anyway blurs the boundaries between personal and professional social media usage, making it possible to test the professional waters whilst at school, university, whilst raising children or in full-time employment.

Abidin (2016) explores fashion influencers, and specifically those who operate on Instagram, as "the latest iteration of fashion bloggers" (p. 86) and a form of "micro-celebrity" (p. 87). Maghfiroh and Hapsari (2015, p. 57) also investigate "celebrification" or the progression of ordinary people to celebrity status on Instagram and suggest that "real" celebrities use similar tactics to everyday people to harness and maintain their status through social media.

*Influencer commerce has experienced an exponential growth, resulting in new forms of digital practices among young women (Abidin, 2016, p. 86).*

Research into marketing through fashion influencers on blogs, vlogs and Instagram is increasing (ibid; Ghidotti, 2017). In this context, influence might translate to followers



actually purchasing products featured by a blogger or Instagrammer. However, influence might also be more subtle, where followers are influenced by the style choices, lifestyle and perceived behaviour of the commentator. Abidin (2016) found that influencers are most commonly aged between 15 and 35 years and their followers from 13 to 40: this supports the idea that followers are most interested in and influenced by lifestyle content with which they can relate on some level. Increasingly brands are turning their attention to fashion influencers to engage an audience, through paid sponsorship and advertorials.

There is ongoing debate in the fashion media over Instagram and whether the medium alone can be considered a kind-of blog (Dinardo, 2015) as well as the credibility of “Instagram only bloggers” (Darwin, 2015, np). Although, Instagram is regarded as important, many of the most successful fashion influencers still choose to use their blog as a platform (Song, 2016). This suggests that, although Instagram is an important tool through which influencers communicate most regularly, use of this platform alone might not be sufficient without provision of greater depth of content.

As part of the current study, preliminary interviews were carried out with fashion bloggers (Section 4.3) and these further revealed the significance of Instagram, where participant bloggers were found to be communicating more frequently and revealing more personal aspects of their identity through this medium. Although they operated on a range of social media, they regarded Instagram as particularly significant to their blog and the “shop window” through which readers would typically access this.

This thesis aims to further develop the field of fashion communication, adding to the body of knowledge that exists in fashion blogging and influence. However, the current research focuses on the broader definition of “influencer” rather than that of blogger (Abidin, 2016, p. 86), which might be more restrictive in the context of a small nation such as Scotland (McCrone, 2017). The participants in this research were sought on the basis that they used Instagram in a professional and public manner, meeting the criteria of a personal style influencer. They were all found to be communicating fashion content as a key part of their identity. Participants in the current study are referred to as “style influencers”, which captures the fashion element of their identity but allows for other facets, such as travel and lifestyle.

## 1.2 Instagram as an example of social media

Instagram is a photo-sharing social-media application that has experienced significant growth and success since its inception in 2010. Facebook purchased the app in 2012 for \$1bn and this was, at the time, regarded as a mark of Instagram's rapid success (BBC, 2012). For the first two years of its lifespan, the medium existed as an iPhone application and was later released in android form; the exclusivity might arguably have added to Instagram's initial allure. Although viewable on a desktop device, Instagram is still seen very much as a mobile application, designed for users to share personal photographs instantaneously (insta) and on-the-go (Van House, 2009, p. 1073; Song, 2016). By April, 2017, Instagram reported 400 million monthly active users and 700 million users overall (Alexei Kansara, 2017; Arthur, 2017). It has been described as the fastest-growing social-media platform in the world (Song, 2016).

Initial studies into the use of Instagram, like that of Hu *et al* (2014), cite the increasingly influential exchange of visual content, i.e. photo and video, as a factor in the popularity of the medium. Indeed, Instagram's success could be said to be emblematic of an increasingly "visual culture" (MacDowell and de Souza e Silva, 2018, p. 8), as an example of a medium that facilitates the sharing of personal photographs as part of a "collocated" digital feed (Van House, 2009, p. 1074). Perhaps due to its visual and immediate nature, major brands, media and commentators from the fashion industry quickly adopted Instagram.

*It democratizes fashion. There's a greater connection to the customer now.*

*Instagram enables brands to build a voice and speak more specifically to their audiences. Designers are not just thinking about the people at the shows...*

(Eva Chen Instagram's Head of Fashion Partnership, in Alter, 2016).

Instagram is often acclaimed for its story telling mechanisms, and it is believed that this is what attracts brands, who are able to use it to engage with an audience on a more personal level, telling their story and often emphasising their heritage as part of this (Martinus and Chaniago, 2017). Indeed, the fact that Instagram has a Head of Fashion Partnership suggests that the relationship between the fashion industry and Instagram is more than a fleeting affair. Not only do large numbers of posts on the medium relate to fashion but engagement levels on these posts tend to be much higher than that of other media, such as Facebook and Twitter (Rogers, 2017).

Since its launch, Instagram, as with other social media platforms, has gradually become more commercialised, for example with the first paid advert appearing in 2013, from fashion brand Michael Kors (Figure 1).



Figure 1: First Instagram advert (Taube, 2013, np)

In 2016, Instagram launched its *Business Tools* function, which includes access to insights and analytics to help promote a profile; interestingly this tool is also widely adopted by bloggers and influencers (Chacon, 2017). In summer 2016, Instagram launched a *Stories* feature, where individuals and brands alike can share images and video content for a limited 24-hour period, after which the post will disappear. This has enabled an additional layer of narrative discourse, expression of personality and behind-the-scenes information sharing; it also allows for personal style influencers to engage more candidly with followers by talking directly to the camera, giving a sense of their daily routine. Reportedly, around 300 million Instagram users view the *Stories* feature every day (Boachie, 2018).

*Instagram Stories is the current darling of the fashion world... Blink-and-you-miss-it as standard provides the exclusivity they appreciate, while not compromising on the beautiful feeds they are otherwise curating on their main accounts (Arthur, 2017, np).*

These developments demonstrate the extent to which social media are dynamic entities and, despite being user-orientated, it should be remembered that they are not user-

owned. The increased commercialisation of social media has been linked to the dwindling popularity of channels such as Facebook (Scott, 2013; Kan, 2018). Although Instagram is of particular relevance at the present time, it might not be in the future. For the purpose of the present study, Instagram itself is not the object of interest: it is studied purely as an exemplar of a currently highly popular medium for human communication with others and one that is particularly relevant to the fashion industry.

The study of fashion is still regarded as a relatively new discipline. However, it is one that has attracted significant attention in recent years. Bourdieu is acknowledged as an early thinker in the field of fashion (1993b). His social theories of material and symbolic production have been applied to studies of the fashion media (Rocamora, 2009) and, more specifically, fashion blogging (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b).

Bourdieu's description of a field as a social space (which may or may not be physically located) in which rules and norms are adopted and applied is considered relevant to Instagram as a context of study (1993a).

*A field, then, is a microcosm structured by the power relations between forces of conversation and forces of transformation, and the state of these power relations at a particular historic time determines the structure of the field at that time* (Rocamora, 2016, p. 234-235).

With this in mind, the realm of fashion as it appears on Instagram (inclusive of brands, designers, journalists, celebrities, bloggers, consumers, etc) could be categorised as a Bourdieusien sub-field of cultural production. Bourdieu's framework demonstrates the extent to which the study of individual fields is important in helping to uncover insights into social reality.

In his work, Bourdieu (1986) recognises the interplay between three forms of capital: economic capital is defined as financial position and material possessions; cultural capital is knowledge orientated and might be defined by experiences and educational achievement; social capital is network based, defined by the quality and/ or quantity of peers. If Instagram is to be considered a sub-field of cultural production, in Bourdieu's sense of the term, then all three forms of capital should be observable.

*Capital, which, in its objectified and embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46).*

Bourdieu's sense of symbolic capital is recognised as the result of economic, cultural and social capital (Lawler, 2011). This represents an individual's prestige within a field and is therefore relevant to Instagram, where position is highly visible through follower numbers and engagement level on posts.

The term "influencer", as it is understood today, derives from the commercialisation of social media (Abidin, 2016, p. 86): the business relationships that exist between brands and bloggers/ social media users. Opportunities are offered (payment, free products or services and invitations to events) in exchange for promotion in the form of blog and social media posts in the hope that this will persuade their audience (in the form of followers) to purchase from that brand. These business relationships appear to be becoming increasingly common in the fashion industry (ibid).

*Influencer marketing has gone from a creative tactic to a necessity in social media strategy... people will ignore ads but they won't ignore posts, mentions and blogs by influencers who they have willingly followed and routinely engage with (Ghidotti, 2017, p. 11).*

However, despite its commercial undertones, the word "influencer" has been adopted more widely simply to define people who use social media, and particularly Instagram, in a similar way to the fashion bloggers before them: sharing personal style, in its variety of forms, including the outfits they wear, the food they eat and the places they visit.

Fashion bloggers and influencers are heralded as having "extended the fashion map beyond traditional fashion capitals" (de Perthuis, 2015, p. 524; Rocamora, 2011a). Although physically situated in a geographic location, the digital and global nature of an influencer's audience allows them to appear placeless. However, while some choose to do this, there are also many who reveal and promote their place and national identity as part of their online identity.

Place is at the core of the Instagram app, where its *Geotag* feature enables users to add a location to their post. Once added, this acts as a clickable link where users can access a visual map and enjoy other images that have been posted from that same place, “turning Instagram into [their] own city guide” (Song, 2016, p. 32).

Instagram has attracted interest in the field of cultural studies where it is suggested that the medium has transformed “amateur photography” which has become “immersed in the texture of every-day life” and increasingly accessible to a wide audience (Utekhin, 2015, p. 185). Instagram is also recognised as a platform that facilitates identity construction, which will be discussed further in Section 2.1.

*While people always say “stop and smell the roses”, I say it’s more fun to stop, smell, snap and share the flowers that brightened up your day. Then know that your photo brightened someone else’s day too* (Song, 2016, p. 15).

One fashion blogger turned influencer, Aimee Song, published a book in 2016 documenting her style success on Instagram, claiming the medium helped to take her fashion blog to new levels of success, enabling her to access new communities, including brands and audiences. Although she maintains her fashion blog, Instagram is clearly fundamental to the construction and communication of her personal style. Her book, *Capture Your Style*, is essentially a toolkit designed firstly to further raise her own profile as a leading fashion influencer and secondly to provide advice to others looking to build a social media following on Instagram. In particular, she highlights storytelling, engagement and immediacy as important features of the medium.

In terms of storytelling, Song discusses the intertextual aspect of Instagram, where photos or posts do not exist as stand-alone entities but form part of a user’s photo “waterfall” (p. 35). For those who wish to emulate her success, she advocates the application of a consistent aesthetic and narrative. She discusses engagement and the community appeal of Instagram and describes her inspiration as the need for social connection.

*I always make sure there’s harmony (or deliberate contrast) between my outfit and landscape. It’s all part of taking everyone on a journey with me* (ibid, p. 60)

Finally, Song emphasises the real-time nature of Instagram, where aspiring influencers can use the platform to reveal more personal aspects of their life, creating a behind-the-scenes appeal for their audience. She stresses the importance of being “real” (p. 84) and refers to what could be regarded as a contrast between the “organic” and the “curated” (p. 60). In essence, she regards her posts as depicting real-life moments but also alludes to the careful planning that goes into the communication of these. Indeed, the tension between the real and the constructed identity is a key theme in the literature and one that will be discussed further in Chapter 2. Arguably, the very fact that a book such as this exists illustrates the extent to which online identity construction has become widely accepted and welcomed by the masses.

Song reflects on the relationship between fashion and place as equally important elements in showcasing personal style:

*You can put the outfit before the location or the location before the outfit; just make sure they look good together (ibid, p. 81)*

### **1.3 Scotland as a context of study**

Scotland is a nation with great resonance amongst a global population, where there is a strong iconography surrounding its cultural history and tradition (McCrone *et al*, 1995). Although there is a growing body of research into how Scottish identity is constructed and understood (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond and Rosie, 2006; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009; McCrone 2017), there is limited research into how Scottish identity is actually communicated today. Crane *et al* (2004, p. 67) argue that “items of Scottish material culture are... dramatic, easily recognised, and market accessible”. These studies are discussed further in Chapter 3.

There are only a small number of studies that consider fashion and Scotland together and the majority of these focus on the production of Scottish textiles (Grierson *et al*, 1985; Butt, 1987; Cheape and Anita, 2005; Faiers, 2008; McKeen, 2009; Rae, 2016). The Scottish textile industry is both profitable and globally recognised: Scotland has a strong reputation for producing high quality, artisan garments, including Harris Tweed and Scottish tartan (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017; Scotland, 2017).

This is supported by the growing number of fashion and design graduates that are produced each year (Lennon, 2016).

There are a number of renowned designers and brands whose influences are rooted in Scotland. Indeed, the small body of work that exists in the area of Scottish fashion emphasises the importance of place and how this has influenced fashion design; for example, Patrick Grant, in Platman (2011, p. 22), describes Harris Tweed as “the world’s most iconic cloth” and “perhaps Britain’s greatest brand”. Harris Tweed is a brand whose very definition is deeply rooted in place, where use of the trademark is restricted to tweed that is sourced, spun and woven on the island.

Similarly, Fair Isle design in hand knitting became fashionable in the 1920s and has featured in cyclical fashion trends ever since. Although, due largely to its name, Fair Isle is recognised today as Scottish, its roots are more ambiguous. Thus it might be regarded as an early example of place-related branding.

*Fair Isle is a remote island situated between Orkney and Shetland to the north of mainland Scotland. Legend has it that Spaniards, stranded on the island after the break up of the Spanish Armada in 1588, taught the islanders to use the colours and patterns typical of Fair Isle knitting. However, there is also evidence that these design influences came from nearby Scandinavia (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2018, np).*

The influence of Scottish national dress is widely referenced in the fashion industry; for example, in 2012, Chanel hosted a fashion show for its pre-fall 2013 collection in the ruins of Linlithgow Palace in Scotland, Mary Queen of Scots’ birthplace (Figure 2). This showcased Karl Lagerfeld’s interpretation of Scottish dress, with tartan and tweed as the prevailing ideas (Alexander, 2012). Alexandra Shulman, editor in chief of *British Vogue* at the time, said: “to describe the setting as magical is an understatement” (ibid, np). The coverage of the event in *Vogue* claimed “there was something quintessentially Scottish in the air. ‘Barbarian romance’, Lagerfeld called it” (Blanks, 2012, np).





Figure 2: Chanel pre-fall 2013 collection (Blanks, 2012, np)

Chanel has used Scottish wool in its designs since the brand's inception in 1910; Coco Chanel, was famously inspired by the Scottish Highlands and some of the designs and textiles from the region. Young and Martin (2017, p. 140) describe her "love affair with tweed, which began back in 1924" when she was inspired by time spent in the Scottish Highlands with the Duke of Westminster. Tweed, tartan, cashmere and Fair Isle featured strongly in her subsequent collections (Blanks, 2012; Young and Martin, 2017). These Scottish influences are evident in her own personal style as well as a number of her collections, perhaps, most notably, the Chanel suit (ibid).

Vivienne Westwood is another designer who has brought Scottish national dress to the fore at various points in her career, frequently using tartan and tweed in her designs. Westwood's orb logo was inspired by the Harris Tweed trademark (Young and Martin, 2017) and this sparked debate when the Harris Tweed Authority tried to stop the designer from using the emblem in a long-running legal dispute; this was eventually resolved when it was decided that both parties could benefit from the mutual association (Westwood, 2013).

More recently, the English designer became a figurehead for Scottish identity when she famously – and controversially - spoke out in favour of Scottish independence in the run up to the 2014 Referendum, appearing in a series of images and sending her models onto the catwalk wearing "yes" badges (Marriot, 2014). Most other designers refused to

become involved in the issue so publicly. However, in the days leading up to the vote, the British Fashion Council and Alexandra Schulman, of *British Vogue*, spoke out against Scottish Independence, citing the excellence of Scottish textiles and Scottish design graduates as part of the success of British fashion (Jones, 2014, p. 2).

The Scottish landscape is also celebrated within the fashion industry, for example Pringle of Scotland (2009) showcased its heritage by teaming up with Scottish actress Tilda Swinton and Scottish film-maker Ryan McGinley. Together they created a short film, set in the ruins of Duffus Castle that showed the actress traveling through caves, forest and beach, chosen as key signifiers of Scotland (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Pringle of Scotland film (directed by Ryan McGinley, 2009)

The Scottish landscape is something that has influenced other designers such as Bill Gibb who was inspired by his upbringing in rural Scotland and incorporated nature and Scottish textiles into his iconic designs. In his short career, Bill Gibb was heralded as a world-class fashion designer, winning *British Vogue*'s "Designer of the Year" award in 1970 and influencing the work of others, perhaps most notably John Galliano and Christopher Bailey (Webb, 2008). He is remembered for his "love of romance, the soaring flights of fantasy, at times a seemingly unfathomable eclectic approach and a defiantly devil-may-care dynamic" (ibid, P. 1).

More recently, Sarah Burton, Creative Director of the Alexander McQueen brand, paid homage to Scottish place and heritage in the spring-summer 2017 collection (Figure 4) using traditional Scottish crafts from Shetland (Chen, 2016).



Figure 4: Alexander McQueen spring-summer 2017 collection (Mower, 2016, np)

Mower (ibid), in *Vogue*, reported the collection with a strong emphasis on place. The Scottish Highlands were described in stark contrast to the brand’s headquarters in London:

*They walked the dramatic landscapes, photographed wild flowers, watched birds wheeling in the skies, and surf crashing in on deserted beaches. They researched the living traditions carried out by the crofters, a tiny community which has knitted wool lace shawls for hundreds of years. Then they came back to the McQueen studio in gritty, urban London, inspired to make a show from everything they’d seen (Mower, 2016, np).*

The collection builds on the late Alexander McQueen’s earlier collections, which include *Highland Rape* (1995) and *Widows of Culloden* (2006; Figure 5). McQueen’s work is acclaimed for being well researched and its “ability to make historical themes relevant for a contemporary audience” (Young and Martin, 2017, p. 94). These “flamboyant” collections are proclaimed as a celebration of his Scottish ancestry and “a shout out against English designers” (Met Museum, 2011, np).



Figure 5: Alexander McQueen 2006 *Widows of Culloden* collection (ibid)

*Contrasts of darkness and light filled his work and for McQueen it seemed that fashion was not just a means of self expression but also a vehicle that allowed him to plunge the viewer into his dramatic world where witchcraft and violence coexisted with nostalgia and gentle sensitivity (Young and Martin, 2017, p. 143).*

These examples demonstrate that Scottish identity is both influential and recognisable in the increasingly globalised fashion industry. They also illustrate that heritage, history, craftsmanship and a strong sense of place are important in the case of Scottish identity and fashion.

#### **1.4 Rationale for the current work**

There are a number of key theories around the concept of national identity and how this is formed and understood. Amongst the most influential are: Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*, where he explores the nation as a construct, produced and understood by those who identify as part of it; and Billig's (1995) *Banal Nationalism* where he claims that the nation only makes sense only when viewed in the wider context of other nations, and that national identity is embedded in unconscious daily routine.

*It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 1983, p. 6).*

Anderson's theory speaks of nationhood as a construct that was built at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment; influenced by the demise of Latin as a global language, systems of monarchy, and the unquestioned acceptance of religion. On this basis, he argues, it was "no surprise that the search was on, so to speak, for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together" (p. 36).

Billig (1995) explores the concept of nationhood and national identity in the context of the UK in the early nineties. During the period of postmodernism, he observes what some regard as a decline in nationalism and the importance of a national identity. Billig highlights globalisation and the Internet as potential threats to nationhood, where, hypothetically, national identity might become less important and other identities might prevail. However, in spite of these threats, he argues that nationalism is still strong in what he describes as a "continued flagging" and "reminding" of nationhood in a "world of nations" (p. 7). What Billig refers to are not overt displays of nationalism or even patriotism but the "embodied habits of social life" that is embedded in thought and use of language (p. 8). This relates to Anderson's (ibid, p. 25) work, where he found that "representing" the nation or "imagined community", in, for example newspapers or literature, is critical to its persistence.

To both theorists, identity is no less important because it is "taken for granted" (Anderson, 1983, p. 12) or "forgotten" (Billig, 1995, p. 7); in fact, this might actually make it more powerful as a marker of personal identity.

During the campaign leading up to the Scottish Independence Referendum in 2014, there was much discussion of Scottish identity. The current research took place at an interesting time in the political landscape for Scotland, where there were discussions about the possibility of a second Independence Referendum following the UK's vote to leave the European Union in what has become known as *Brexit* (2016). Indeed, in the wake of the *Brexit* outcome, which saw every local authority in Scotland vote to remain in the EU and an overall UK-wide outcome to leave, McCrone (2017) observed that Scottish identity took on a new form as European. This idea resonates with a statement

made by Hugh MacDiarmid (1934, np), a Scottish poet and one of the founding members of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP):

*It is time we in Scotland put England in its proper place and instead of leaning on England and taking inspiration from her, we should lean and turn to Europe, for it is there our future prosperity lies.*

During this period, the positioning of oneself as a “Scottish” style influencer might assume a political complexion. Billig (2014, p.133) explores the impact of supranational identity (such as the EU) and sub-national identity “separatist movements” (e.g. “Scottish” as opposed to “British”) as potential threats to nations at large and notes that separatist movements are often driven by a strong sense of place. This is particularly relevant in the context of the current research where one might argue: “it is as if the whole business of nationhood is being unravelled” (ibid).

*Is it only imaging Scotland that keeps it alive?... Scotland is rich in dreams.  
There is no shortage in myth-making icons with which to imagine Scotland*  
(McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 196).

McCrone *et al* (1995) in *Scotland the Brand* provide a sound argument for focusing on Scotland as an example of a stateless nation. They argue that Scotland has a widely recognised iconography, comprising symbols or stereotypes such as tartan, whisky, castles and “a landscape bereft of people” to name just a few examples (p.6). They maintain there is a disparity between Scotland’s cultural and political identity and use the term “tartanry” (p.5) to explain the composition of the nation’s cultural stereotypes, many of which are based on a romanticised notion of Scotland’s past.

They propose the argument that Scotland might be a victim of its own rich heritage where there is too great a focus on the past, making it difficult to establish a modern sense of itself. However “in the quest for national (as opposed to state) identity, heritage is a vital source of legitimacy... in asking who we are, the totems and icons of heritage are powerful signifiers of our identity... they provide a source of readymade distinguishing characteristics” (p.7).

The current study is situated in the context of Scotland and is concerned with exploring the construction of Scottish identity and place amongst personal style influencers on

Instagram. The Scottish fashion industry is supported today by a growing number of fashion and design graduates (Lennon, 2016): it accounts for a number of jobs and contributes significantly to the Scottish economy and its culture. However, there is a significant lack of research and information on Scottish fashion and, where this does exist, it is predominantly driven by universities and government organisations.

Academic research in the area has tended to focus on Scottish textiles (Grierson *et al*, 1985; Butt, 1987; Cheape and Anita, 2005; Faiers, 2008; McKeen, 2009; Rae, 2016) and particular attention is given to tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Brown, 2010; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). Indeed fashion studies as a whole are still regarded as relatively new and a developing field of scholarship (Rocamora and Smelik, 2016).

Existing frameworks and symbols of Scottish identity have been heavily criticised (Nairn, 1981; Trevor-Roper, 1983; McArthur, 2003) and although some of these critics are regarded as cynical and potentially damaging to Scottish culture (Brown, 2010), they do suggest that existing representations might not reflect a modern Scotland. There is little doubt that tartan and tweed are important to Scottish identity and fashion but perhaps, as McCrone *et al* (1995) suggest, these textiles overshadow and discourage the evolution of other ideas and influences.

Marcella and Rowley (2015) explore the fashion sector as an example of the creative industries in Scotland and found that the Scottish fashion industry consists predominantly of SMEs in the following sub-sectors: retailers (independent boutiques – mostly employing only one or two members of staff), designers and communications (the latter is mainly agency based and may deal with a number of other sectors beyond just fashion itself). There is not a wealth of Scottish fashion media and, therefore, arguably personal style influencers are even more important in contributing to the wider view of Scottish fashion. They might be particularly significant in communicating a more contemporary sense of Scottish identity through their personal style.

*Narrative is important in the imagining of any nation, but in the absence of an independent state that can help define the nation through its actions, narrative becomes especially vital* (Martin, 2009, p. 2).

*Scot Street Style* is a social media movement that aims to “reinvigorate the perception of Scotland” through a growing community of creative influencers (Scot Street Style, 2018, np). Indeed, since its inception in 2014, #ScotStreetStyle has attracted over 75,000

individual posts on Instagram, all of which showcase imagery that might be regarded as representative of a Scottish style aesthetic (Figure 6).

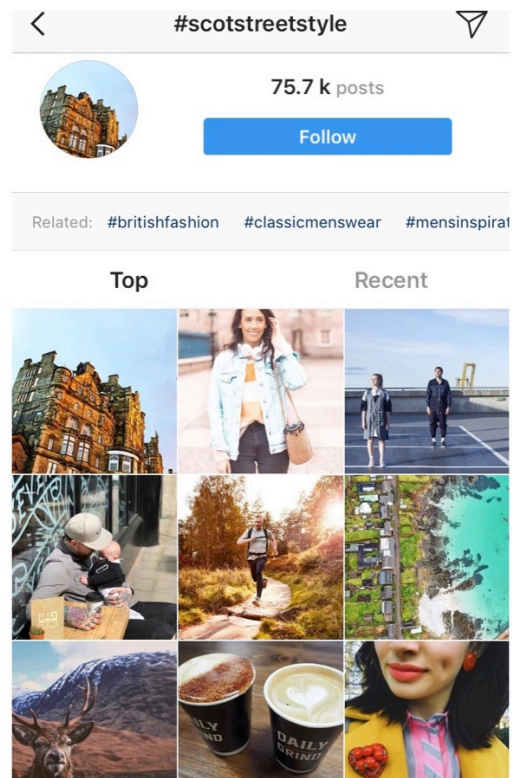


Figure 6: #ScotStreetStyle on Instagram (2017)

The very existence of a community such as *Scot Street Style* illustrates the power of social media today in shaping the perceptions of a modern Scotland for a potentially global audience.

Rocamora (2011a, p. 101) highlights the shift in fashion media landscape in the early wave of fashion blogging where the phenomenon widened the geography of fashion conveying “a fashion that is not centred on established designers and key cities only, on the voice of the traditional expert”. As fashion media has shifted online and where social media has superseded more traditional forms of fashion communication and criticism, Scotland might arguably have found its voice, amongst the “real people” who share their personal style on platforms such as Instagram (ibid, p. 102).

Equally, there is a common idea amongst theorists that seems to transcend the field of identity, national identity and Scottish identity more specifically; this is the appreciation



that national identities should be reviewed and reimagined periodically, that cultures cannot thrive if stagnant and undisturbed for long periods of time (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Crawford, 2007; Kjartansdóttir, 2011).

This argument is particularly pertinent at times of political change and where there have been dramatic shifts in society, such as the advent and evolution of digital and social media or debates around the state. It is believed that a study that seeks to explore the issue of Scottish identity in a more contemporary sense, to look not just at its formation and value but also at how it is constructed, projected and visualised through Instagram as an example of social media, is a valuable contribution to knowledge.

### **1.5 Aim and objectives**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the construction of national identity and place amongst style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. It is argued that their experiences and output can help build an understanding of modern Scotland in a new and unexplored context.

The following objectives demonstrate how the research aim was fulfilled:

- To explore the evolution of the style influencer in order to understand their impact on the fashion industry today;
- To review critically literature in the area of Scottish fashion and style in order to uncover themes and form a basis for investigating the research topic in a new and unexplored context;
- To appraise critically literature in the area of Scottish identity in order to understand what it means to be Scottish;
- To investigate critically the motivations behind the adoption and communication of Scottish identity by personal style influencers;
- To understand how personal style influencers make sense of their own national identity and the value they place on this;
- To investigate critically how and why Scottish identity is projected through Instagram.

The following two chapters discuss the key areas of literature that surround the present study.

The review comprises two chapters: Chapter 2 focuses on self-identity and its construction, with particular emphasis on blogs and social media; and Chapter 3 considers national identity in the context of Scotland in order to discover existing preconceptions and themes around its construction. Research questions arose and these are highlighted at the appropriate points and summarised at the end of the literature review (Section 3.7).

## Chapter 2 Identity and self-presentation

*Studies of identity cannot reasonably ignore psychoanalytic and social science and the studies situated within these (Hoover, 2004, p. 3).*

Identity is an area of literature that has attracted academic interest over a number of years, notably in the work of Erikson (1959) whose work is situated, most predominantly, in the field of psychology. He is said to be the first to apply identity in psychoanalysis (Hoover, 2004) and found that personal identity is a continuous evolution throughout an individual's life.

*Men who share an ethnic area, a historical era or an economic pursuit are guided by common images of good and evil (Erikson, 1959, p. 17).*

Erikson's (1959) work, *Identity and the Lifecycle*, gained acclaim and criticism in its novel approach to the study of human psychology. His theories build on the work of Freud and his studies are contextualised to adolescents. However, despite being criticised by some psychologists as vague and lacking in quantification, his work is also held in high regard and has since been applied to a number of identity studies across a variety of fields (Hoover, 2004); for example, Kroger (2004) upholds his theory that individuals continuously work to revise and maintain their identity having tested this approach on a post-adolescent, adult audience (ibid). Erikson's ideas are important in the context of the current research, in deepening understanding of how personal identity is formed and maintained.

*Erikson has conceptualised identity as the attainment of a place along a continuum ranging between two poles of identity achievement and role confusion (Kroger, 2004, p. 66).*

Erikson argues that identity is both fixed and fluid, conscious and unconscious, internal and external. He defines identity achievement as the ideal, which one is unlikely to ever achieve absolutely (as the metaphorical goal posts keep changing). Throughout their lives, individuals will assume functions and beliefs that they feel support their idealised identity. Role confusion, on the other hand, refers to experiences or behaviours that might be regarded as challenging this idea of the true self:

*Identity formation is an evolving, deepening sense of psychosocial commitment and of knowing what is worthy of one's fidelity in this world of many possibilities (Kroger, 2004, p. 66).*

Another applicable aspect of Erikson's work is his consideration of culture. Hoover (2004, p. 7) argues that this "ensures the relevance of his theory in a time of increasing recognition of cultural plurality". Erikson considers personal identity (that which is centred within the individual) and group identity (influenced by culture and societal groups) as one where "a confidence that the inner sameness and continuity prepared in the past (for oneself) is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (ibid, 1950, p. 261; 1959). The idea of a group identity is relevant in the context of Scotland as a nation and might also be linked to the notion of an online community, such as that of #ScotStreetStyle.

*What then, is an identity? The common sense answer is that it has to do with who we - and others - think we are (Hoover, 2004, p. 4).*

Kroger (2004, p. 73) maintains that "further research into social contexts and the ways in which they facilitate or impede ongoing identity development" are welcomed; it is believed that the current study contributes to this area, where Instagram serves as an example of a contemporary social context.

*The search for one stable identity (regardless of its actual existence) is a way to cope with an increasingly globalised world (Kinwall, 2004, p. 121).*

Hoover (ibid) explores Erikson's work and its relevance through a range of studies situated in the fields of psychology and sociology. Using Erikson's theories - reflecting on their application elsewhere and in his own research *Democracies and Identity* - he found that identity is made up of three elements: "what one does (competencies)"; "where one is from (community)"; and "who one is with (commitment)". With this in mind, national identity might fit into the community and/ or commitment components.

Goffman (1956), on the other hand, approaches the issue of identity from a social sciences perspective, exploring *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. He suggests that individuals seek to control the way they are perceived by others by managing their personal settings, appearance and manner. He is concerned with how individuals and

groups consciously portray their identity and how this differs in a private and public setting.

Some may argue that Goffman's dramaturgical theory is dated in that it takes place before the emergence of digital media and focuses on face-to-face interactions. However, his research is situated in the construction of identities both in the workplace and social life, where he applies the study of theatrical performance to everyday, real-life scenarios. As such, his theories are considered very relevant to the current study, where Instagram is a medium where individuals perform expressive behaviour and produce creative output to portray a style – often with a career goal in mind (Findlay, 2015; Abidin, 2016; Song, 2016).

Ultimately, Goffman (1956, p. 26) believes that individuals construct and manage their identities in a conscious manner, with underlying “motives” for doing so, whilst Erikson believes that there will be unconscious shifts. Goffman's theory that all individuals engage in impression management to at least some degree is arguably still relevant today, where his ideas are observable and, perhaps even more prominently discernible, on social media (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). When using Instagram, for example: personal identity is performed in front of an audience; individuals might wish to portray an idealised version of themselves; symbols might be used to help establish and maintain their identity; and, equally, some attributes might consciously be concealed. In order for a performance to be successful, “dramaturgical discipline” or an element of care and control over one's emotions is required (Goffman, 1956, p. 210).

*By keeping close to the facts it may be possible to safeguard his show, but this may prevent him from staging a very elaborate one (ibid, p. 214).*

Goffman's theories are not concerned with falsifying an identity. As illustrated in the quote above, he maintains that, in order to be believable, identity should be authentic, containing at least something of the real. This is intriguing and relates to McCrone *et al's* (1995) study of Scottish heritage, where they explore the issue of authenticity, which has become, in their view, highly stylised and exaggerated, albeit consistent and convincing. Equally, Song (2016) highlights authenticity as a key ingredient in the successful portrayal of personal style on Instagram. Erikson, Goffman and McCrone *et al's* ideas are central to this thesis, which seeks to explore the construction of Scottish identity amongst personal style influencers on Instagram.

Goffman's theories are based on a number of studies into social interaction, one of which actually took place in the Shetland Islands, in Scotland. He argues that identity and associated behaviour can be split into front and back regions, where the former represents the stage for which identity can be constructed and on which the idealised self is acted out and the latter represents the backstage reality, or the true self. In the context of the current study, Instagram could be regarded as the stage through which an individual might act out their identity online.

Goffman observes identity as a complex subject, whereby constructions are influenced by a number of motives, not least an audience's perception. This might be regarded as particularly relevant in an online context, which is highly interactive and where identity performance is subject to public scrutiny in the form of likes and interactions. Goffman (1956) also theorises that, over time spent "in character" (p. 166), "a performer may be taken in by his own act" (p. 86). Equally:

*As performers, we are merchants of morality. Our day is given over to intimate contact with goods we display and our minds are filled with intimate understandings of them; but it may well be that the more attention we give to these goods, then the more distant we feel from them and from those who are believing enough to buy them (ibid, p. 243-244)*

Butler (1988) is another pertinent theorist in the field of identity and whose ideas, like Goffman's, are applicable to blogs and social media (Van House, 2009; Findlay, 2015; Schwartz and Halegoua, 2015). Like Goffman, Butler considers the performative aspect of identity in what she terms the "stylised repetition of acts" (ibid, p. 519). However, unlike Goffman, Butler considers the idea that identity is influenced not so much by social motives but by common cultural discourse and points of reference. In her research, Butler (p. 520) posits gender as "a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief".

Van House (2009) explores Goffman and Butler's theories in her study *Collocated Photo Sharing, Story Telling and the Performance of Self* and her findings are interesting in the context of this thesis. She investigates "personal photography as a culturally and socially situated activity" in the field of human-computer interaction at a time where photo sharing was growing with the aid of digital cameras, camera phones and

applications (p. 1074). This study predates Instagram but the findings are relevant to the way in which people might use the medium to express their personal identity through photo sharing; indeed, the basic components of these media have remained the same, comprising the image itself and accompanying captions, hashtags and comments from viewers. Van House focuses on the key idea of “collocated sharing” where images are viewed as part of a larger set and collectively convey a story about a particular person or group where “meaning is constructed in part by the sequencing” (p. 1078). She explains:

*In Goffman’s terms, people manage the impressions that they convey to each audience by means of images and the narratives around them... In Butlerian terms, the subject is enacted in the activities depicted in the photos; in the making of the images; and in the sharing and story-telling (p. 1084).*

Van House (2009, p. 1075) investigates the sharing of personal photographs online and offline through a series of studies and found that these serve four social purposes: “personal and group memory, relationship creation and maintenance, self presentation and self expression”. She found that participants were conscious of their audience when sharing digital photos through social media. Although not cited, the study also echoes some of Erikson’s ideas around personal identity:

*Memories and the narratives by which we make sense of them play a major role in how we construct our self-narrative and self-understanding. These stories and our understanding of ourselves are dynamic. This process is both individual and collective (2009, p. 1082).*

If Instagram is to be regarded as a sub-field, in the Bourdieusien (1993a) sense of the term, his concept of habitus is also highly relevant. Habitus relates to an individual’s character and behavior and is influenced by the social structures and culture within which they reside. Rocamora (2016) explores this idea in relation to fashion specifically, applying his framework to the fashion media, in the form of magazines (2009) and blogs (2011b). She explains:

*Structured by their habitus, agents always seek to maximise their profit and follow the strategy most appropriate to their interest. It is a strategy, however, without a conscious strategist as it is the habitus itself that shapes agents’*

*positions and position takings. Their feel for the game is an incorporated disposition dictated by their habitus* (Rocamora, 2016, p. 241).

This thesis aims to build on these perspectives of identity in an attempt to uncover the motivations for and ways in which personal style influencers adopt and communicate Scottish identity, exploring their motivations, behaviours and experiences. Instagram is an application that allows users to interact and act out an identity (Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1988) through the “collocated sharing” of personal photographs (Van House, 2009, p. 1073). Scottish identity, as is discussed in Chapter 3, is steeped in cultural myth and frames of reference and therefore aspects of this identity performance might be unconscious and inbuilt (Butler, 1988). Indeed, Instagram itself could be studied as a sub-field of social practice that has, through its actors, formed and produced its own ideals and norms to which its agents will adapt and conform (Bourdieu, 1993a; Rocamora, 2016).

## **2.1 Identity construction on blogs and social media**

The advent of social media and networks appears to have triggered resurgence of interest in identity and, in particular, how personal identity is constructed and communicated through these channels. In fact, there are a number of researchers who explore identity construction specifically in the area of blogging and some of this research focuses on fashion specifically.

Turkle explores *Life on the Screen* at a time when computers began to construct what she terms a “culture of simulation” (1995, p. 19). She explores the significance of the computer as an “extension of the mind’s construction of thought” and an important cultural “object” (p. 22), an object to which Goffman’s (1957) metaphorical stage might easily be applied.

*In the real-time communities of cyber-space, we are dwellers on the threshold between the real and the virtual, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along* (Turkle, 1995, p. 10).

Turkle’s research focuses predominantly on online gaming forums and predates the advent of Web 2.0 in 2004, smart phones and social media, all of which have since



revolutionised the communication arena. However, as with some of the classic theories of identity that have already been discussed, much of what Turkle discovered is applicable to the present day. Indeed, as virtual identity has become more visible and indeed more visual, her theories are arguably even more fitting.

*I want to know what we are becoming if the first objects we look upon each day are simulations into which we deploy our virtual selves (ibid, p. 22).*

Turkle (ibid, p. 49) argues that computers gave individuals “new access to people and information” evoking a tension between the real and the realistic, which, again, raises questions around the authenticity of identity (Goffman, 1956; McCrone *et al*, 1995). She found that online identity is a “cultural work in progress” (p. 177) where “our rootedness to place has altered” (p. 178) as a result of online relationships and communities. Identity has become more fluid, something that one can mould, based on experience and audience reception (Erikson, 1959). The way in which online identity might be, in Goffman’s terms, acted out can involve the explicit adoption of a persona that is quite different from the offline, or the subtle moulding of an existing offline identity.

*A new variant on the story of Narcissus, people are able to fall in love with the artificial worlds that they have created or that have been built for them by others (ibid, p. 30).*

Turkle writes at the same time as Billig and McCrone *et al* (1995) and, therefore, also discusses postmodernism, with her theories swaying towards this epistemology at times. However, she ends by embracing the new phenomenon of online identity creation, stating that:

*We don’t have to reject life on the screen, but we don’t have to treat it as an alternative life either. We can use it as a space for growth. Having literally written our online personae into existence, we are in a position to be more aware of what we project into everyday life (p. 263).*

The idea that online and offline identity can work together in a complementary fashion is intriguing and might reflect quite accurately the way in which most people use social media today, building an online identity that is based on their offline identity and where

their audience is likely to comprise, at least, some of their offline peers. The words or ideas of online and offline are often expressed as a binary opposition and so Turkle's realisation of a hybrid identity is interesting. This resonates with some of the ideas that are discussed later in Chapter 3, where the notions of past and present might also be regarded as dichotomies, but, in the case of national identity and particularly Scottish identity (which is steeped in heritage), the ideas of past and present are brought together (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kjartansdóttir, 2011).

Lifestyle blogs are utopian (Dennon, 2014) or idealised spaces (Rocamora, 2011b), where bloggers can construct their vision. A theme in the literature is the extent to which individuals might adopt a number of identities (Turkle, 1995; Sika, 2014), attributing value to salient characteristics (Kleine and Kleine, 1993). This is visible in blogs, where new motives might be brought to the fore at different times in the life of the blog (Pedersen, 2010). This resonates with Erikson's (1959) theory of identity as an ongoing process that is never truly complete.

"Blogging facilitates the development of social identity" by enabling networks of friendship, connectedness and relationships to grow and become manifest (Moon *et al*, 2006, p. 4085). Role identity is also communicated through fashion blogs, with users choosing to identify themselves and their blogs within particular communities, for example motherhood or student bloggers (Morrison, 2011; Tuomi, 2014). The current research focuses on personal style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram; this could be considered part of their role identity but also facilitates a social identity through engagement with other Scottish style influencers through the use of hashtags such as #ScotStreetStyle.

Some researchers, for example Reed (2005), maintain that true blogging is about expression of the self, as opposed to other examples of written text, such as novels, where only a little of the self is revealed. He refers to bloggers as "online journal keepers" (p. 220) where, in its purest form, blogging is not conscious and constructed but rather therapeutic and cathartic, consisting of uncontrolled musings or a "dump" of the metaphorical mess from one's head (p. 228). Others conversely argue that intentionality is a key part of identity creation and communication on blogs, containing largely controlled messages about the individual (Farquhar, 2012). Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013, p. 106) found that bloggers intentionally and consciously present themselves in a particular way. Online communication enables "embellishment of self"

(ibid, 2013, p. 107), where participants admit to exaggerating aspects of their personality online through “identity indicators” (p.102) and “clues” (p. 106), which might not be possible in an offline situation (Farquhar, 2012). These theories draw on and extend Goffman’s (1956) ideas of identity performance.

Some research suggests that online identity formation is less concerned with the creation of a new identity than the division of an existing identity (Baptista, 2003), possible in a controlled online environment where one can adopt and test personas (Vaast, 2007; Whitworth, 2009). Bloggers may highlight aspects of their personalities through “identity indicators” but are reluctant to move away completely from their offline identity where they might share online identities with offline friends (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 102); Zhao (2006, p. 110) refers to these as “anchored relationships”. Nardi *et al* (2004) found bloggers were conscious of their followers when communicating and were keen to portray a consistent identity in line with audience perceptions. There is also evidence that followers associate a consistent identity, through posts over a period, with credibility and level of influence (Ahwa, 2010), whilst Titton (2015, p. 208) observes fashion bloggers’ “continuous struggle between consistency and discordance”.

These studies support Turkle’s (1995) conclusion that online and offline identity can work together in a healthy and complementary fashion, where an influencer might be able to transfer social capital from his or her offline life to their online world and vice versa. Goffman’s (1956) theory is also evident here in the selectivity and creativity that influencers might employ in their attempts to do so.

Hevern (2004, p. 331) argues that making the decision to keep a blog implies a desire to express identity publicly, observing the concept of “threaded identity” on blogs, whereby the blogger slowly reveals more about themselves across a series of posts, engaging the follower (Rocamora, 2011b). Reed (2005) suggests that bloggers are motivated by others visiting and interacting with their posts, giving them a sense of public acknowledgement; visitors are usually a mix of strangers, friends and acquaintances, and other bloggers. Interestingly, he found that bloggers tend to want to attract strangers more than friends, because the latter might restrict freedom of discourse and immediacy of blogging. This suggests that individuals might actually portray a more genuine version of themselves online than they do in an offline setting.

There are a number of studies that emphasise the importance of online blogger communities (Moon *et al*, 2006; Somolu, 2007; Ratliff, 2009; Downing Peters, 2015). There is also research that demonstrates the power of these communities, for example Ratliff (2009, p. 139) presents the idea of blogger “enclaves” where a community is formed, with key characteristics including blogs’ suitability for “intensely personal writing”, and where individuals operating within these enclaves are apt to exclude opposing views. A common theme in these studies is that the bloggers have a shared interest or identity uniting them. This resonates with McCrone (2017, p. 387) who observes the importance of offline communities in helping individuals make sense of national identity in terms of “place”, “interest” and “attachment”.

Rulyova and Zagidbalov (2012, p. 1525) investigate the construction of national identity amongst Russian and Chinese bloggers through quantitative and qualitative analysis of content in order to draw conclusions around how bloggers represent “the other” in their texts. They maintain that national identity portrayal online is “a narrative, or a story that people create to make sense of their social world” and highlight the significance of political context, mass media representation and cultural stereotypes (*ibid*).

By signalling themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram, personal style influencers are signalling themselves as part of a group or community. In order to explore this idea further, the current research sought to investigate: *Does community matter to Scottish style influencers and if so how does it influence their identity (RQ1)?*

The fashion blog allows individuals to experiment and construct an identity through the use of photography, text and clothing (Rocamora, 2011b). A number of exploratory studies consider the fashion blog as a medium for self-expression or “privileged spaces of identity construction” (*ibid*, p. 410). Chittenden (2010, p. 505) refers to “digital dressing up” as a means of identity construction. Her study focuses on self-expression amongst female fashion bloggers in their teens, and she suggests that the way in which they model themselves experimentally online might actually begin to influence their offline identity. The fashion blog can be characterised as a “space for play” (Palmgren, 2010, p. 513) or a “workshop for self-construction” (Luvaas, 2013, p. 62) in an evolutionary process (Erikson, 1959).

Blogging allows expression of two types of identity – “inner subjective” and “outer objective” (Palmgren, 2010, p. 19), as a result of the capacity for bloggers to view their

own identity, creating what Tutton (2015, p. 202) terms “fashionable personae”, also known as “self-branding” and “self-entrepreneurship” (Mora and Rocamora, 2015, p. 152; Duffy and Hund, 2015a).

This thesis focuses on Instagram as an exemplar of social media. There appears to be a surge of interest in Instagram within the academic community since 2015, suggesting it might be regarded as more significant than other social media. Some of this research considers the link between Instagram and narcissism (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017) where the medium has been associated with self-presentation in a way that some other networks and media are not. Both Dumas *et al* (2017) and Sheldon and Bryant (2015) found that Instagram users are supremely concerned with gaining gratification through receiving likes from their followers. They also highlight the motive of self-expression and creativity as unique and new to Instagram and this might explain its appeal as a sub-field of fashion (Bourdieu, 1993a). Sheldon and Bryant (*ibid*, p. 93) found other motives for using the medium were “surveillance/ knowledge”, “coolness/ popularity” and “documentation”, where: “Instagram acts as a kind of virtual photo album... those who travel and attend events often take many pictures and want to document their memories” (p. 94-95). Their findings suggest that Instagram users are more likely to share the most exciting parts of their lives with followers for two possible reasons: firstly, because they want to remember these moments over and above more ordinary experiences; and secondly because they think their followers will respond more favourably to these images. Dumas *et al* (2017, p. 1) refer to the latter as “like-seeking behaviours”.

Dumas *et al* (2017, p. 1) maintain that Instagram is “focused more on self-presentation and promotion” than other social media. They distinguish between natural or acceptable and more “deceptive like-seeking behaviours” on the medium, where their participants were found to use both (p.2). They argue that natural “like-seeking” is harmless, and perhaps even positive, but dishonest “like-seeking” is more closely linked to narcissism as a psychological trait (*ibid*). Their findings reinforce Goffman’s (1956) theory of identity performance as routine and acceptable when it is authentic and believable.

Existing research might lead one to believe that fashion bloggers and Instagram users are more likely than bloggers in other contexts to be self-conscious about their identity, more intentional in how they portray the online self and more aware of their audience. This thesis investigates this further in order to understand how a sense of national

identity and physical place can shape that identity in conscious and unconscious ways:  
*To what extent are personal style influencers conscious of their Scottish identity (RQ2)?*

## **2.2 Place in personal fashion blogging and social media production**

There are three studies that have investigated fashion blogs in the context of a particular region or place. Palmgren (2010) focuses on Swedish fashion blogs, specifically analysing bloggers' self-portraits. She suggests that the Swedish and Scandinavian fashion blogosphere is growing, and that Swedish bloggers take inspiration from each other, resulting in similar photos being used on their blogs. These initial studies suggest that fashion bloggers might form communities based on physical place and that these might result in a shared aesthetic or style (RQ1).

Similarly, Pedroni (2015) found that Italian bloggers are on the increase, with many motivated by the success of international fashion bloggers. He uncovers other motivations in the decision to set up a blog, such as: free time; a desire to share opinions; and to facilitate objectivity in fashion journalism. Pedroni (2015, p. 192) found that becoming a "career" blogger comes with "concerns" about remaining authentic and objective, whilst representing a brand. This notion of the "career" blogger is interesting and relevant to the current research, where the term influencer implies a professional motive.

Luvaas (2013, p. 56) found that Indonesian fashion blogs are helping position Indonesia as "a site for the creative production of fashion" in a region that was previously concentrated on retail and production. He suggests that blogging in Indonesia is an exclusive domain where Internet access is low and attention is focused on US and European bloggers. He observes that fashion bloggers are able to place themselves "both at home and abroad", where fashion bloggers can choose to align themselves to a place but they can also be selective in the places that they choose to reveal (p. 63). This shows that fashion bloggers are able to overcome physical barriers and showcase their personal style to a global audience. There is place and there is also placelessness, which, as with past/ present and online/ offline, might at first appear to present opposing ideas but where, in the context of an online identity, there is potential for a dichotomous hybrid.

Schwartz and Haleboua (2015, p. 1644) introduce the concept of identity performance and the communication of place through online media in what they refer to as the “spatial self”:

*The spatial self refers to intentional socio-cultural practices of self-presentation that result in dynamic, curated, sometimes idealised performances of who a user is, based on where they go (ibid, p. 1647).*

The idea of a spatial self links strongly to this thesis, which considers the construction of Scottish identity amongst personal style influencers who, as has already been discussed, might be even more selective and stylised in how they portray this. Schwartz and Haleboua’s theory provides a valuable framework, where they describe the “spatial self as a lens through which to read the myriad expressions and performances of identity and place online via social media” (p. 1647). In particular, they explore the spatial self as a construct, where users might present themselves in an unrealistic manner, selective in terms of the places they choose to share.

*By curating their experiences, people share only a portion of their daily life, mostly focusing on physical locations that can shape others’ perceptions of who they are (ibid, p. 1648).*

Their study highlights Instagram as a medium through which the spatial self is revealed through the explicit communication of offline place and how this is used to help shape identity online, e.g. through the use of geotagging or purposeful posts. This thesis, on the other hand, aims to build on these ideas through also considering some of the less explicit forms of communication around Scottish identity and place in posts, for example the clothes worn, the style that is represented, the setting of an image and the accompanying caption.

Whilst these studies introduce the idea of place and physicality in fashion blogging and social media production, there is no research that considers how national identity or a sense of place might actually influence personal identity and style online. Mora and Rocamora (2015, p. 151) highlight a need for further studies of “national fashion systems and traditions”. This thesis aims to address this gap through an investigation of Scottish identity, as a particular example of national identity and physical location, and how this is constructed online through Instagram. It seeks to discover the extent to

which a sense of place and national belonging is influential in online identity formation and how this is communicated visually in a fashion and style context on the medium. The thesis also considers some of the challenges and opportunities that might come with such an identity. The following research questions were identified: *How does physical place influence personal style (RQ3)? What are the challenges and opportunities associated with Scottish identity and place (RQ4)?*

### **2.3 Instagram and place**

*Instagram users selectively represent their lifeworlds by showcasing images they feel are suited for circulation. This also means they represent the city and their place within it in a curated manner... they share images as part of strategies of distinction: they picture themselves with friends, in nice outfits, in places that are special to them (Boy and Uitermark, 2016, p. 2)*

Although there are relatively few studies that focus on Instagram as a medium, interest amongst the academic community has grown steadily since 2015. Many of these studies highlight Instagram as a powerful tool for communicating place (Boy and Uitermark, 2016; Thelander and Cassenger, 2017; Utekhin, 2017; MacDowell and de Souza e Silva, 2018).

MacDowell and de Souza e Silva's (2018, p. 7-8) study investigates the communication of street art through Instagram. In their research, they observe Instagram's "platform vernaculars" as consisting of image (square and low resolution), filters (where the style and tonality of an image can be readily edited), image feed (where users are presented with a selection of posts from the accounts they choose to follow and where what is seen depends on an ever-changing algorithm) and hashtags.

Arguably there are two additional facets MacDowell and de Souza e Silva have missed: *Instagram Stories*, a relatively new feature, which was introduced in 2016; and the user's own profile where their posts are stored and can be viewed as part of a photo "waterfall" or "collocated" feed (Song, 2016, p. 35; Van House, 2009, p. 1073). Features that MacDowell and de Souza e Silver highlight are the real-time, behind-the-scenes and personal appeal of the medium: where images are viewed for their immediate visual



impact on a distracted viewer, who is motivated by the familiarity that Instagrammers share with their followers.

Song (2016) writes from her own perspective as a style influencer and blogger who uses Instagram as her primary tool. Her book is essentially a manual where she provides advice on best practice for using Instagram, based on her own experience and success. Although not academic literature, this book was useful in helping delineate Instagram, as it is used at this time (Section 1.3), where the book was published not long before the primary research was carried out. As social media, such as Instagram, are subject to constant change and evolution, context is important in helping understand the nature of the phenomenon. Perhaps the most relevant aspect of Song's book is that she highlights place as significant, where:

*Instagram has not only given me a voice but also has allowed me to learn about others' lives as well – in India, Africa, New Zealand – all in real time* (ibid, p. 13).

Throughout the book, Song expresses an interest in other people's cultures, and this appears to have been a motivation for starting her blogging career. Although she maintains a blog, she suggests that Instagram is more personal and the medium through which she engages most openly with her followers, revealing "people, places and moments" (p. 14). She also reflects on the *Geotag* feature of Instagram, which can be used to reveal their physical location and which could be as specific as the restaurant they are eating in or more elusive, e.g. a city or country; this demonstrates, in practice, Schwartz and Halegoua's (2015, p. 1647) concept of the "spatial self".

*The spatial self is constructed by many small, recorded actions at the coffee shop, the bar, the park, or the movie theatre, it is often experienced by the audience as an aggregated representation* (ibid, p. 1649).

Thelander and Cassinger (2017, p. 7) investigate the branding of places using Instagram and suggest that "everyday photography" might illustrate an authentic and creative image of a particular place, perhaps due to the spontaneity through which it is captured and shared. In this context, they argue that Instagram blurs the boundaries between "professional and amateur" and "strategic and non-strategic" due to the "performativity of social life" (ibid, p. 7; Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1988). They identify three user types:

“the acting tourist” seeking to portray a place as an interesting destination and enjoying adding a personal touch to his/ her image before sharing this instantaneously (p. 9); “the Instagrammer”, well practiced in the art of social media, whose place-based communications would be shared for personal interest and to increase their follower numbers on the medium (p. 10); and finally, “the professional” photographer who is focused on the creative art form and who is usually less spontaneous in his/ her use of Instagram. The idea of a style influencer might, at this point, be regarded as most closely related to their idea of an “Instagrammer” (ibid).

Interestingly, although Song (2016) emphasises the immediacy of Instagram as an attraction, she also reveals that users can apply a geotag to a post regardless of where they actually are at the time of posting. This raises questions around how authentic some of these seemingly real-time interactions might be. Thelander and Cassinger also challenge the notion of authenticity, specifically when communicating place, where social motives (Goffman, 1959) and existing cultural norms (Butler, 1988) might not be known. This demonstrates the need to explore with the creators themselves in order to uncover such explanations.

Utekhin (2017) observes two possible motives for sharing place-related photos on Instagram: to remember an experience and to add to a personal narrative; indeed, these motives are not mutually exclusive. He considers “people and place before and after Instagram” and observes the use of place as a mechanism for promoting self-image (ibid, p. 188):

*Instagram pictures are part of the rhetoric of the place that people are producing. We keep in mind, however, that an aggregate image of the place is a figure of speech: people share the same stereotypes and the visual culture of their group, but act independently and follow their own motives, so the images that people produce belong to them, not to the place (ibid, p. 189).*

Utekhin found that a variety of images are visible through location-based hashtags on Instagram and these include, but are not exclusive to, photographs of the place itself (e.g. landmarks, landscapes, etc), food, flowers and people. He suggests that place-related hashtags are used as part of a personal narrative and not just to increase the visibility of a post and attract more followers.

*In a word, they use Instagram to mark their place in the social structure and within a city (Boy and Uitermark, 2016, p. 2).*

Boy and Uitermark's findings illustrate again the idea of Instagram as a cultural sub-field in which actors might perform habitus (Bourdieu, 1993a). In the context of the current study, Instagram might be considered a sub-field of fashion or, indeed, Scottish identity.

Blogs and social media have undoubtedly opened up networks of shared interest, many of which cross national boundaries (Ratliff, 2009; Morrison, 2011; Tuomi, 2014). However, there is still an element of physical place where many influencers choose to reveal their physical location and national identity as part of their biography, location settings, or by using hashtags. This thesis aims to shed light on Instagram, as an example of visual social media that has experienced significant growth, through exploring the experiences of 14 Scottish style influencers. In light of existing literature, it was considered important to uncover, not just how Scottish identity and place were communicated through the medium but also: *Why is national identity and place influential in online identity formation (RQ5)?*

### Chapter 3 National identity

*Nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse (Anderson, 1983, p. 3).*

Despite acknowledging the difficulty in defining nationalism, Anderson (1983, p. 33) attempts to do that very thing in his work *Imagined Communities*. He observes “the possibility of imagining a nation” as a modern concept, which began in Western Europe at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of the Enlightenment, where there was a decline in the influence of Latin as a globally recognised language and the power of the monarchy, and where cosmology raised questions about religion. During this time, Anderson argues that individuals sought new modes of power and community.

*National identity is one of the most basic social identities... most people in Western societies hardly give it a second thought (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009, p. 1).*

Bechhofer and McCrone (2009) argue that national identity is ordinary and accepted where everyone, like it or not, has one, but where their definitions may vary, e.g. Scottish or British, and where people will attach varying levels of importance to it. Although some regard their national identity as unimportant, for others it is much more meaningful (ibid; Kiely *et al*, 2001); the value that individuals place on a particular feature of their identity is known as identity salience and something that is considered further in this thesis (ibid).

*The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed in the public building (Billig, 1995, p. 8).*

Billig’s study *Banal Nationalism* (1995) is cited widely in the field of national identity studies, some of which are situated in Scotland, e.g. Law (2001). Billig (1995) coined the phrase “banal nationalism” to explain everyday national convention or habits of a nation and its people. His study focuses on the reproduction of national identity through the media (Anderson, 1983) where he investigates the national press and, in particular, its use of deixis to signal national identity. He achieves this through a textual analysis of the content across the UK’s major newspapers during a specific day.

Billig's study of the press is relevant to this thesis in that the sample population for the current study is those who outwardly align themselves with a particular national identity. In both the case of the British press and that of Scottish style influencers, their main purpose is not to publicise or promote the nation. However, whilst Billig's study is relevant, Scottish style influencers are markedly different from the national press in that the purpose of communication is to portray their own personal identity as opposed to communicating a country's current affairs; although current affairs may form part of their communication.

Although Billig is cited widely in the field of national identity, his work has been criticised; for example in his approach to sampling, where smaller Scottish newspapers are omitted and where it is assumed that the British press flags a British identity to its readers (Rosie *et al*, 2004). Indeed it is argued that, depending on the publication and the reader, these media might actually signal a city or regional identity (*ibid*).

Anderson (1983) is an influential theorist in the area of national identity and speaks of a sense of national community, something that is evident in the fact that "we" read the same newspapers (Billig, 1995). However, the rise of online media has resulted in a shift away from this, where individuals can consume global news more readily and access global networks, meaning physical place and national media could become less important (*ibid*; Meyrowitz, 1989). Billig acknowledges that, at the time of writing in 1995, it had been suggested that Western society was moving towards a global rather than national community; where national identity had traditionally been regarded as a key differentiator for individuals, other more salient identities had emerged, for example local (at the city level) and gender-related, with more dynamic career or interest-driven identities coming to the fore. Billig himself challenges this argument by maintaining "there is an underlying permanence in national identity" that is not always present in other identities (p. 138-139). However, national identity is only relevant in a "world of nations" where cultural agreement is represented through specific symbols that become familiar (*ibid*, p. 8). This supports Anderson's earlier conclusion that nationalism is more relevant in the context of a global society where nations seek ways to differentiate themselves, e.g. through language or culture.

*Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (ibid, p. 6).*

There is a body of work in the area of Scottish identity specifically that highlights Scotland's position as a stateless nation and a country whose identity is entrenched in heritage and myth (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010a). Indeed, Scotland's national animal is the legendary unicorn, an association that is recognised as having stemmed from ancient Celtic folklore: "a symbol of purity and innocence, as well as masculinity and power" (Visit Scotland, 2018). Scotland's vast iconography might be widely recognised but it is also argued that some of these images are superficial, outdated and not necessarily representative of a more modern Scotland (McArthur, 2003; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Nairn, 1981; Trevor-Roper, 1983). These ideas are explored further throughout the current chapter and this thesis seeks to understand Scottish identity in its contemporary manifestation.

There are a number of studies in the field of national identity that recognise the significance of heritage and myth, where it is argued that researchers must seek to understand these as "there is a risk that in destroying the myth, the culture may also be destroyed" (Munro, 2010, p. 182; p. 185). Kjartansdóttir (2011, p. 462) maintains:

*The creation of national identities is never a once-and-for-all affair, but rather a recurrent activity that each generation needs to contribute to periodically. Hence in order to shape and sustain national cohesion, one must constantly evoke or recreate the various meanings of any national image/ identity and regularly revisit the variety of symbols, myths and rituals.*

This suggests that, in order to make sense of their present and their future, individuals are likely to turn to the past. However, it also intimates that reliance on the past is not enough and that, in order to be authentic and true, a nation's image must be reimagined for the present day. Kjartansdóttir's study focuses on Viking heritage, which represents another pocket of literature in the area of national identity. Cederlund (2011, p. 33) also explores the Viking "myth" and its relevance today. There are synergies between these studies and that of Scottish identity, with both cultures having strong and somewhat stereotypical symbolic features. Cederlund highlights the role of marketing in these ideas, where symbols of Viking culture have been reproduced and thus reinforced. In particular, Viking characteristics might be "the appreciation of strength, the adventurous spirit, and the drive towards expansion" (p. 17); thus the image of the Viking, albeit "historically clichéd" has become synonymous with these qualities (p. 19).

Nations conform to Barthes' (1957b, p, 131) concept of myth, which he describes as "a message". He explores the idea of myth as a language in a collection of essays, later brought together in the book *Mythologies*.

*It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photograph, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these serve as support to mythical speech (ibid).*

Billig (1995, p. 106) found that national identity is reinforced both through our thought processes and use of language:

*In the electronic age of remote communication, not only does the style of address change, but there is a complex deixis of little words. "We" may be used to evoke an identity between speaker and audience, but it is not always clear who constitutes this audience. Throughout this ambiguity of deixis, the little words can flag the homeland, and, in flagging it, make the homeland homely.*

Billig (p. 107) argues that the use of seemingly natural "deictic utterances" help cement a nation or place as the underlying context; e.g. reference to "the economy" where the context is assumed by the communicator and where "the" represents a collective sense of "our". He also found that home is important in the communication of national identity, and refers to "home-making phrases" as important where "national identity is a routine way of talking and listening" (ibid, p. 109).

Cederlund (2011, p. 5) identifies two further points of interest within the context of the current study. The first is that academics and theorists who focus on specific forms of national identity, often highlighting "spurious histories," might actually play a key part in their production. The second point is that a study that looks only at mythological language, whether written or image based, is not enough if one wishes to explore the deeper meaning behind these:

*It demands access to a vast array of iconographical material, covering symbols and symbolic actions, the collecting of texts from fiction, science and historical literature, and not least systematic interviews aiming at characterising people's evaluations and use of the concept in question. Such a study would show us a system of values with roots far down into the past, and*

*with connections to a wide range of different contexts in the world of today*  
(ibid, p. 5).

Cederlund is concerned here with the concept of the Viking as an example of a cultural myth that has been commercialised and, through its construction and strong iconography, come to symbolise a broader Scandinavian national identity. Scotland, arguably, presents a similar case in the extent to which the Highland myth has become popularised and representative of the country at large (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995).

This thesis contributes to these theories of national identity by exploring how Scottish identity is understood and constructed today. Sections 3.1-3.6 explore literature in the areas of Scottish identity, Scottish fashion and the relationship between fashion and place. Throughout the chapter, much of the discussion that takes place focuses on Scottish heritage, notions of the past and sociological structures within Scotland.

### **3.1 Scottish identity**

*Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,  
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth;  
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,  
The hills of the Highlands forever I love.*

*My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;  
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;  
A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.*

*Farewell to the mountains high covered with snow;  
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below;  
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods;  
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.*

*My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;  
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;  
A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.*

(Robert Burns, 1789)



This thesis is concerned with the construction of Scottish identity in terms of how this is understood and communicated online through Instagram by personal style influencers. It is therefore important to explore Scottish identity and its meanings, as understood in the literature to date. There is a reasonable wealth of literature in the area of Scottish identity. Much of this is situated in the fields of Scottish history or sociology, where this literature review focuses on the latter. Scotland is observed as a nation with great resonance amongst a wide population, with a strong sense of cultural history and tradition (McCrone *et al*, 1995).

*Scotland's national and cultural identity is defined by our sense of place, sense of history and sense of self. It is defined by what it means to be Scottish; to live in a modern Scotland; to have an affinity to Scotland; and to be able to participate in Scottish society* (the Scottish Government, 2017, np).

Billig (1995, p. 25) observes the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as “the heyday of nation-making” when “many seemingly ancient traditions were invented... presented as if age-old”. The writer Sir Walter Scott famously proclaimed “there’s nothing so easy to invent as tradition”. His novels, spanning the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, are regarded as strongly influential in the romanticised view of Scotland held by many today, and further popularised by the media in what McCrone *et al* describe as “the Hollywood concoction” (1995, p. 5). His writing, or - as some might argue - rewriting of Scottish history is regarded as hugely significant in the case of Scottish heritage, affording Scotland the magical, myth-like status that McCrone *et al* refer to as “glamour” (*ibid*, p.7). It is worth noting, however, that Sir Walter Scott post-dates Robert Burns who had already created a myth of Scotland and imbued it with significance and a degree of glamour mixed with realism (Crawford, 2014). These examples illustrate the interplay between both the traditional and the Barthian (1957b) concept of myth.

McCrone *et al* (*ibid*) explore the construction of Scottish heritage, distinguishing between “history” – which they define as factual events in time - and the “past” – which they define as “our interpretation formed in the context of the present” (p. 1). They argue that Scottish myth and its vast iconography has, at times, come at the cost of genuine Scottish culture:

*If Scotland is heritage rich, then it could be because it has a past but not a present or a future* (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 7).

In the story of Scottish identity, tradition is important and relates to McCrone's notion of a "shared memory" (2017, p. 393). Tradition can be defined as beliefs and values passed on over generations or, as some theorists argue, traditions can be constructed (Lewis and O'Hammer, 2002; Hague, 2002a; Hague, 2002b). This argument could be applied to the case of Scotland, where it has been argued that a number of visual cues that have become symbolic of Scotland's national identity and are heralded as ancient tradition are actually more recent than they might appear, for example tartan and kilts (Nairn, 1981; Trevor-Roper, 1983; McArthur, 2003).

McCrone (2017) notes the Highland vision of Scotland, where symbols such as tartan, kilts and heather – that were synonymous of a more rural, Highland vision – have been appropriated to the wider context of Scotland. He reflects specifically on the "mythology of tartan" which he observes facilitated the growth of a heritage industry, "unmaking the past" and "inventing the present" (ibid, p. 409):

*Scotland as a "country" is a landscape of the mind, a place essentially of the imagination (McCrone, 2017, p. 406).*

The idea of the myth surrounding nations is supported in other contexts and with reference to specific countries (Barthes, 1957b; Billig, 1996; Cederlund; Kjartansdóttir, 2011). It is also visible in the context of fashion and style research (Maynard, 1994; Craik, 2009), which is explored in Section 3.6. In light of these constructs, some Scottish frames of reference have become clichéd and stereotypical, where, for example, styles of language, music and dress have become synonymous with Scotland (Reicher *et al*, 2006).

*Identity implies not only sameness, but also uniqueness. In defining our own identity, we draw upon what we have in common with others, while emphasising the differences (Lloyd, 2014, p. 150).*

McCrone (2017, p. 383) echoes Reicher *et al*'s (ibid) argument and builds on Herzfeld's (1997, p. 3) theory of "cultural intimacy", where self-stereotyping can both uphold claims of ownership over traditions but also further entrench negative connotations. Billig (1995, p. 8) maintains that nations can only exist within the "world of nations" where these are partly defined by their sameness (within the nation) and differences (from other nations). Nations may amplify these positive associations in order to

maintain a sense of cultural identity but, in doing so, they might also highlight and magnify negative stereotypes of other nations. This demonstrates that a national image is constructed internally and externally.

### **3.2 Understanding Scotland as a national identity**

Scotland conforms to what Billig (p. 24) describes as “the nation-as-people,” a nation without a state but with a profound sense of community (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 4; Law, 2001). There are a number of studies that focus on Scottish identity specifically, many of which argue that Scotland is particularly noteworthy for this reason (McCrone, 2017).

Billig (1995) found that Britain and Scotland pose an interesting distinction. He argues that, whilst nations tend to use collective nouns to describe the people that are part of it, people in Britain do not always classify themselves in this way; indeed many choose to identify as Scottish, English or Welsh. Moreno (1988) explores this tension in his research into Scottish and Catalanian people and developed a scale through which dual identity can be recognised. This was adopted in the current research and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

McCrone *et al* (1995, p. 182) use the Moreno question (1988) in their study of Scottish heritage amongst lifetime members of the *National Trust for Scotland* where they found that dual identity, with priority towards Scotland, was the most common choice. They also found that participants’ choices did not always reflect their political views: “you do not have to be a Scottish nationalist to be a cultural nationalist”.

Scotland’s history is well documented and there are a number of books that exist on the formation of Scotland’s identity as a nation, many of which focus on the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pittock, 1991; Shields, 2010; Houston, 2002; Glozier, 2013). There are also a number of papers relating to Scottish identity that have been published in the journal *Scottish Affairs*. McCrone (2017) explores Scottish identity in his books *Scotland the Brand* (1995) and more recently in *the New Sociology of Scotland* (McCrone *et al*, 2017). He argues that, as a stateless nation, with a strong iconography, Scotland poses a particularly interesting case.

McCrone (2017) highlights national identity as something that is deeply personal to an individual and its meanings multifaceted. He explores the idea of Scotland's contrasting imagery of the "densely populated [towns] dominated by tenements" and "people-less place" of the Scottish countryside (ibid, p. 374). The latter is regarded as a Highland vision and a particularly strong signifier of Scotland as a place (McCrone *et al*, 1995). This appropriation of the Highland aesthetic or identity is explored further in Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

McCrone's (2017) work aims to provide a comprehensive sociological understanding of contemporary Scotland, and a key part of this is to explore the relationship between people and place. He found that three of the main cities in Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee) have each developed more localised identities and these are branded and promoted as such: Glasgow as a centre for culture; Edinburgh as the cosmopolitan capital and home of the Scottish parliament; and Dundee as "the city of Discovery" (ibid, p. 374). However, Aberdeen is notably lacking such a localised identity aside from its, arguably limiting, affiliation as Europe's oil capital (ibid; Drysdale, 2015). McCrone's earlier work suggests that these local identities should be regarded with caution as political constructs that do not altogether hold true to historical events (McCrone *et al*, 1995). Indeed, it is argued that branding cities in such a way can be damaging, often surpassing more genuine examples of culture and identity; for example, urban "Clydism" in Glasgow, which is characterised by poor inner-city living conditions as well as political and religious unrest (ibid, p. 38).

McCrone (2017, p. 393) also found that "places of memory" and, in particular, "collective memory" are important contributors to strong feelings of national identity. This suggests that individuals might place higher value on places they associate with important life events, and which are accompanied by powerful emotions such as nostalgia. In addition, a sense of shared history or heritage is important in people's attachment to a place. This echoes Edensor's (1997, p. 175) earlier work, which explores the relationship between "symbolic spaces" and "national memories" in Scotland and suggests that these are important in the creation of national identity. Billig (1995, p. 108) maintains that "home is more than a physical place", with one's first childhood home providing a frame of reference around what home should be. McCrone (2017) argues:

*In Scotland, there is a common question which seems unique to this place: “where do you belong?” This is neither a question about where you were born nor whence you have travelled, but also more than a question about your attachment to a place, it elicits your roots, your origins, reinforced by a sense of home.*

Bechhofer and McCrone (2008) found that Scots were most likely to prioritise their specific town or city location when identifying themselves. This notion of a local identity was explored further in this thesis, first in the case of the North East of Scotland and Aberdeen, during the preliminary phase of the research, and then in the case of Scotland more broadly, during the main study. The literature would suggest that Scottish people might be more likely to regard themselves as belonging to a particular city, and this might be the place where they live at present and/ or where they have grown up, presumably amongst family and where they have built an identity and formed strong memories.

Bond and Rosie (2006, p. 623) investigate Scottish identity in terms of who is and who is not included in this definition. They found that national identity is concerned with both “belonging” to a national identity and “becoming” part of a national identity. This sense of “belonging” is echoed by McCrone (2017, p. 374), who argues that the question of belonging is both “common” and “unique” to Scotland where there is a high value placed on one’s “home”; this suggests that national identity might be more salient to those who identify themselves as belonging to Scotland than those of other nationalities.

Whilst, “nationality” is more commonly defined by birth and ancestry, Bond and Rosie (2006, p. 612) argue that “national identity” is more complex and takes other factors into account, like residency. This supports Kiely *et al* (2001) who identify the strongest markers of Scottish identity as birthplace, which ranked as the highest indicator, followed by ancestry and residency. Bond and Rosie (2006, p. 623) found that residency was important in the process they describe as “becoming” Scottish, where some Scottish residents who were born outside of Scotland began to regard themselves as increasingly as Scottish.

Bond and Rosie (2006) maintain that identity in this sense can be defined as what an individual chooses to portray to others where, for example, some might feel nationality is hugely important to their sense of self and others may not (Kiely *et al*, 2001;

Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008). Equally, some may feel loyal to one national identity and others may feel aligned to multiple (Moreno, 1988; Bond and Rosie, 2006). This supports findings from Kiely *et al* (2001, p. 33) who found that nationality in Scotland is influenced by a “sense of place” and “civic” identity rather than “ethnic” identity, where it is then possible, and quite common, to combine two separate national identities, e.g. “Scottish Pakistani” (Saeed *et al*, 1999). This sense of contemporary Scotland as inclusive and culturally diverse is echoed in Lloyd’s (2014) research into Scottish museums and their role in the construction of national identity.

It is certainly the case that, as Scottish politics has become more devolved, the Scottish Government is keen to present Scotland as a nation that welcomes cultural diversity. In the eyes of the world, this might arguably set Scotland aside from other parts of the UK, particularly in the wake of the *Brexit* vote, where Scotland’s local authorities voted unanimously to remain in the EU but the UK overall voted to leave. The vote created an ideological divide between Scotland and the rest of the UK but also, perhaps, a feeling of togetherness within Scotland as a nation that welcomes and values cultural diversity.

Bechhofer and McCrone (2008, p. 1) acknowledge the importance of politics in the case of Scottish identity, where they argue that “British” is used as an “umbrella identity” and many choose to define themselves more specifically as Scottish (Billig, 1995), and, interestingly, not just those who align themselves with the politics of the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). This supports McCrone *et al*’s (1995) earlier study and suggests that a strong feeling of national pride is common to people in Scotland, but that this does not always equate to political ideology. Bond and Rosie (2002, p. 35) explore national identity in post-devolution Scotland and found that there has been an increase in “Scottishness” and a “seemingly related decline in Britishness” since the early 1990s, in the run up and drive for Scottish devolution and the immediate aftermath. They also recognise an increase in academic and media interest in Scottish identity at this time; something that could arguably be said of the present as well when constitutional change has dominated the Scottish political agenda, chiefly in the form of the Scottish Independence Referendum (2014) and *Brexit* (2016).

Bond and Rosie’s (2002, p. 40) research aims to uncover the salience of national identity amongst Scots. They examine national identity alongside other identity markers, such as age, gender, social class and lifestyle elements such as being a parent or spouse. They found that “being Scottish is more frequently chosen than other identities long seen as

central to a person's sense of self, most notably class, age and gender". Although being a parent and/ or spouse ranked as more significant amongst their participants to whom these identities applied, this was only marginally so. Their study was conducted via a questionnaire amongst those living in Scotland and highlights a relationship between strong feelings of Scottish identity and support for the Scottish Parliament. Those who aligned their identity more towards wholly Scottish when asked the Moreno question (1988) were strongly supportive of the Scottish Parliament and felt it should be awarded more power. However, more surprisingly, they found that a number (over a third) of people who aligned more towards British identity also felt this way. They conclude, "once again we have discovered that national identity does not map onto political perspectives as neatly as we might suppose" (Bond and Rosie, 2002, p. 52; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Bond, 2000).

The current research took place at an interesting time for Scottish politics, where there has been resurgence in the debate around Scottish independence. This could hypothetically have resulted in heightened national identity amongst Scottish style influencers or, indeed, a desire for individuals to avoid aligning themselves to a Scottish identity. The interviews took place during the local and General Election campaigns of June 2017, when arguably Scottish politics was at the forefront of participants' minds. The Moreno (1988) question, in particular, might be regarded as particularly pertinent in the aftermath (or indeed amidst) debates around Scottish independence.

However, in the research to date, it would appear that national pride and feelings of Scottishness are not confined to those who choose to align themselves with Scottish independence (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond, 2000). Those who consider themselves Scottish are supportive of the Scottish Government and tend to feel that Scotland should be awarded more decision making power; however, the same holds true of many who regard themselves as British. This suggests that individuals might simply be more inclined to feel that the people living within a nation should make decisions at a local level. The relationship, as Bond and Rosie (2002) suggest, is not clear-cut and national identity is clearly about more than politics.

Kiely *et al* (2001) observe that national identity can come to the forefront and become intensified for individuals through cultural events; for example the 2012 Olympics and the 2011 wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, which were catalysts for strong feelings towards (or potentially against) British identity. They argue that this

idea is perhaps most strongly observable during sporting events, such as Wimbledon and the World Cup. Billig (1995) also found banal nationalism in the media to be particularly strong when discussing sport.

### **3.3 Constructing Scottish identity**

A theme in the literature concerning national identity is that this is constructed and only makes sense when viewed in the wider context (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010a; McCrone, 2017). The previous section considered how those who identify as Scottish make sense of their national identity. This section will explore how Scottish identity is actually portrayed and communicated.

In their research, Kiely *et al* (2001, p. 33) discuss “identity markers”, which are the shared features that individuals present, and “identity rules,” which dictate how these markers are received externally. They identify birthplace, ancestry, residence, background/ schooling, name, accent, appearance, dress and dedication to place as important markers of Scottish identity. They argue that the importance of these markers rests in how and why they are interpreted as “Scottish” and suggest that place of birth is the highest indicator of Scottishness, followed by ancestry and residence. Clearly, these are regarded as the strongest signifiers of what might be regarded as genuine Scottishness and this is supported by Bond and Rosie (2006). However, Kiely *et al* maintain that the other factors listed above are also significant and, interestingly, far more visible in a social setting (e.g. accent, appearance, dress). They discuss the fluidity of these other identity markers in contrast to birthplace and ancestry, which are fixed. It is interesting to note that the more fluid markers are also those that are most explicit.

When considered in the context of online identity, accent, which is perhaps the most obvious marker in a physical face-to-face encounter, could be less obvious. Where photographs are the primary method of communication, one’s accent might not be detected at all by an audience and might even be concealed by the creator. In the case of Instagram, as video blogging becomes more embedded on the platform, through the *Stories* function (2016), accent might become more significant.

Whilst accent might not always be observable online, language is a powerful way to convey a Scottish voice. Douglas (2009, p. 1) explores the relationship between Scottish



language and identity in the context of Scottish newspapers, maintaining that the Scottish language forms a “contemporary and significant part of most Scots’ national identity and daily experience”. In her research, Douglas analyses the use of Scottish lexis to signal Scottish identity. Billig (1995), on the other hand, investigates the use of banal, deictic phrases such as “we”, “our” and “the” to indicate a collective national identity. These ideas were considered in the current thesis during the analysis of participants’ Instagram posts.

McCrone (2017) explores symbols of Scottish identity and place and found the following to be meaningful: landscape; the Scottish flag; language; tartan; heather; paintings; poetry; history; authors/ publications; cultural output; wilderness as the “antithesis of culture” (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 199); and an attitude of determination amongst its people. In particular, he found that landscape was strongly influential in the associations that people make with Scotland, where a Highland vision has largely been appropriated to represent the whole of Scotland. Thus Scotland is often imagined as an uninhabited and isolated, yet beautiful, place through representations such as literature, poetry and paintings (Anderson, 1983).

As public figures, Scottish style influencers might be regarded as living embodiments of Scottish identity, in a contemporary sense. Their communication and iconography could be considered important to the narrative of contemporary Scotland in a global arena. This thesis seeks to investigate, through interview and analysis, the visibility of Scottish symbols; those that are already recognised in the literature as well as new and unexplored signifiers of Scotland and its people.

Kiely *et al* (2001) regard commitment to a place as significant, for example the choice to live and work in Scotland. In this thesis, commitment to Scotland is defined as influencers who use the terms “Scottish”, “Scotland” or who reference a Scottish city in the biography section of their Instagram profile. This explicit identification is considered to demonstrate a commitment to a Scottish identity.

Although there has been some research into what constitutes Scottish identity, no research has investigated how Scottish identity is communicated through personal style and in an online setting. This thesis aims to address this gap through a focus on how Scottish identity is constructed by style influencers through Instagram. This leads to the

following research questions: *How is Scottish identity understood and expressed through personal style? (RQ6) How is Scottish identity understood and expressed online? (RQ7)*

### **3.4 Scottish heritage and culture**

*We have constructed heritage because we have a cultural need to do so in our modern age. Heritage is a condition of the late twentieth century (McCrone et al, 1995, p. 1).*

In their exploration of *Scotland the Brand*, McCrone et al (1995) investigate the construction of Scottish heritage. This text was useful in explicating the context of the current study, which deals with the construction of Scottish identity amongst style influencers on Instagram. McCrone et al identify a surge in interest in heritage tourism, with visits to museums and stately homes forming a key part of people's leisure activities at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Access to these types of activities in Scotland is plentiful, where there are a number of heritage sites all situated within a relatively close proximity.

*In asking who we are, the totems and icons of heritage are powerful signifiers of our identity (ibid, p. 5).*

McCrone et al (ibid, p. 20) argue that, in trying to make sense of their own identities, people tend to look towards their heritage, which can be used as a form of "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986). In the context of Scottish heritage they explore the tension between what is real and "what is believable" (McCrone et al, 1995, p. 20). The question of authenticity is regarded as particularly important to the present study, which is concerned with the construction of Scottish identity in a highly stylised environment. McCrone et al's (1995, p. 86) ideas about authenticity are significant, not just in the context of Scotland and national identity, but perhaps also in relation to identity more generally in terms of how Scottish style influencers construct "the magic of the real" when portraying themselves online.

Billig (1995) reflects on the postmodern perspective on nationalism, where it was predicted that national identity would become less important in light of other markers, such as gender. In a setting where individuals could choose to appear placeless and

nationally impartial, many do not. The rationale for this thesis rests on the conviction that national identity is significant and used widely on social media, such as Instagram.

*Scotland's people are seen as an important part of the heritage, and in particular, at the intersection between landscape and culture (McCrone et al, 1995, p. 168).*

McCrone *et al* (1995) identify two movements that have influenced Scottish heritage: the first is tartanry, which, as has already been mentioned, derives from a Scottish Highland aesthetic and to which Scottish imagery has become strongly predisposed. A second movement came later in the form of Kailyardism, a literary style from 1880-1914, which McCrone *et al* argue further cemented the Highland myth and its iconography and also introduced new ideas around Scottish people and their personalities. Kailyardism has been described as “the fad for kitsch, sentimental response to deeply painful experience” (Brown, 2010a, p.8), where the people are “characterised by domesticity, rusticity, humour, humility, modesty, decency, piety and poverty” (McCrone, 1995, p. 61). The genre is generally regarded with criticism as overly sentimental and escapist, depicting Scots as couthy and happy with their lot, cleansed of real-life issues and problems (ibid; Crawford, 2007).

Although Kailyardism has been seen as damaging to Scottish identity, depicting Scots in a regressive light, Maloney (2010, p. 30) argues that “Kailyardism literature was not an inward-looking development, but a product at least partly aimed at wider markets”. He offers examples of popular culture such as Scotch comics who appeared on the stage from around 1860 and presented a comedic caricature of the Scottish Highlander. These were regarded, then and now, by critics as “cultural fraudulence” and “offensive [for its combination] of Lowland speech and manners with caricatured Highland dress, a juxtaposition that made a nonsense of history and culture” (ibid, p. 133).

Basu (2007) explores Scottish identity in an international context, for example American tourists exploring their Scottish ancestry. Hesse (2011, p. 165) maintains: “they usually have a harder time reconciling the romantic image in their heads and the realities of urban cosmopolitanism, tracksuits, pebble-dash, and deep-fried pizza”. In exploring the “Scottish dreamland” (p. 170), identity tourists “seek a past that is free from their own troubles” (ibid, p. 172; Basu, 2007).

A number of theorists question the authenticity of Scottish culture and its representation, regarding this as “vulgar” and, at times, “ridiculous” (Nairn, 1981, p. 162; Trevor-Roper, 1983; McArthur, 2003). Nairn (1981, p. 104) regards tartanry with particular distaste referring to “popular or Kitsch Scotland” as “the great tartan monster”. Trevor-Roper (1983) explores Scottish history as smoke and mirrors, notably citing the kilt as an English invention and not therefore belonging to Scotland. His theories were considered controversial at the time of writing and have since been discredited by other theorists and historians (Brown, 2010b; Pittock, 2010). McArthur (2003) analyses popular depictions of Scotland in Hollywood film, considering *Brigadoon* (1954) and *Braveheart* (1995) as particular examples. Whilst he found *Brigadoon* to present a highly romanticised, albeit harmless, vision of Scotland, he argues that *Braveheart* offers a more damaging distortion of Scottish history.

*Being able to show that heritage is not “authentic”, that is not “real”, however, is not the point. If we take the example of tartanry, the interesting issue is not why much of this is “forgery” but why it still continues to have such cultural power (McCrone et al, 1995, p. 207).*

McCrone *et al*'s views correspond more closely to Brown's (2010a) work *From Tartan to Tartanry*, which comprises a series of chapters from different authors on the subject of Scottish culture; these ideas are discussed further here and in Section 3.5. Brown (2010b, p. 123) maintains that, “material fact and media representation are never entirely separate, distant as they might seem at times” and his contributing authors acknowledge the mythical qualities of Scottish identity but also the truth that underpins these.

*That Scottish identity has largely been constructed on myth was a central argument of Scottish critics, particularly in the 1970s and early 1980s. Yet this is hardly new information: the foundation myths of, say, Rome were integral to the manufacture of Roman identity (Munro, 2010, p. 181).*

Anderson (1983) emphasises the importance of representations or reproductions of nationhood. These items help to keep the nation alive through the ages and Anderson maintains that the novel and the newspaper are particularly strong examples of this idea in practice. The idea of the nation being reproduced is perhaps evident in McCrone *et al*'s (1995) account of Kailyardism and McArthur's (2003) critique of *Brigadoon* and

*Braveheart*. Crawford (2007) explores *Scotland's Books* more widely and argues that Scotland has a rich literary history, much of which predates the nation itself:

*The present day nation is the inheritor of earlier cultural traditions and literary works associated with the territory we now call "Scotland", and Scottish literature for many centuries has circulated abroad, influencing as well as being influenced by other literatures (ibid, p. 6).*

Crawford maintains that, at its best, literature forms ideas and replaces old narratives, reimagining them and creating new ones. He argues that literary creativity of this sort can find new ways of imagining the nation. This same concept can be applied to new media in order to investigate whether Scottish style influencers portray a traditional and romanticised vision of Scotland, like that of tartanry (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010a), or a new and contrasting image.

*As a confident modern nation, Scotland can take pride in the many, sometimes ancient linguistic and cultural traditions which have nourished it and which, through writerly imaginations, are part of its literary glories (Crawford, 2007, p. 6).*

In 1905, *Vogue* highlights the influence of Robert Louis Stevenson on the city of Edinburgh, describing this as "the most picturesque city of the British Isles" (p. 93):

*He follows his celebrities, princely, political or literary, from residence to residence, and describes the great public buildings, monuments, and highways, enriching all with history and tradition, until the reader who has not been abroad is ready to vow that when it shall be his luck to cross the Atlantic no city shall detain him a single hour until he has seen and tasted Edinburgh (Vogue, 1905, p. 93).*

Crawford explores the influence of the literary styles that came later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as the works of Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid. They are described as realists, with darker views of the country and life on the land but who still evoke a passion about Scotland and wrote poetically about it. Indeed, MacDiarmid was one of the founders of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934 (Crawford, 2014). Both Grassic Gibbon and MacDiarmid were journalists,

communists and passionate advocates for Scotland who acknowledged the harshness of Scotland as a place (ibid).

McCrone *et al* (1995) observe that existing Scottish narratives are masculine and surmise that Scotland lacks a feminine identity. This idea is supported in Martin's (2009) exploration of Scottish identity as represented through literature and art.

*The quintessential image of a Scottish national dress and identity is the kilted Highlander, a stereotypical and anachronistic figure adopted in the early 19th century in the full flood of European romanticism (Cheape, 2010, p. 17).*

This is further demonstrated in Maloney's (2010, p. 132) study of the Scotch comic as an example of "intercultural mediation" (p. 143). Although this genre has received much criticism, Maloney (ibid, p. 149) maintains that it represented "the celebration and exploration of Scottish identity" through the ironic use of tartanry, raising "questions of Scottish identity and belonging".

*Since nationally and internationally the kilt is recognised as a symbol of Scottishness, comics are primed to use and subvert its iconography, confident that audiences will be complicit with the performance's irony and self-deprecation (Munro, 2010, p. 190).*

O'Donnell (2010) explores discourse surrounding the "Tartan Army", a phrase that became associated with Scotland's football fans in the 1980s when they began to wear the kilt as their uniform at football matches. In this instance, the kilt, perhaps for the first time, appeared in a casual style unaccompanied by the usual formalities of Highland dress; he describes this as the "working class appropriation of tartan" (p. 229). He found that fans were regarded internationally in a positive and celebratory light by the media who frequently referred to them explicitly as "the best fans in the world" (p. 219). The Tartan Army are enjoyed for their "boisterous but friendly" behaviour (p. 215) and are merry, even in defeat. They are unmistakably Scottish through their adoption of the kilt as a "shared cultural signifier" (Munro, 2010, p. 181) and much of the media discourse upholds the notion of a group identity, regarding them as "ideal fandom and the quintessence of football" (O'Donnell, 2010, p. 226).

The Tartan Army is interesting in the case of Scottish identity where, despite not necessarily knowing each other, they are regarded as a group – maybe even a team - and as close and cohesive (Anderson, 1983). When they became visible during the 1980s, they were seen as signifying a new and diverse ideal of Scottish identity; one that was - and still is - highly visible to an international audience. O'Donnell (ibid, p. 218) describes their image as one of “defiant” and “working-class” masculinity. The Scotch comic and Tartan Army as signifiers of Scottish identity are interesting in the context of the current study. Both are regarded as having made Scottish culture more visible to an international audience and both reinforce and reproduce a masculine image of Scotland (Anderson, 1983).

*The cultural association of Scotland with the figure of the brawny kilted Highlander necessarily obscured those elements of Scottish history or culture that it could not accommodate. The Jacobite rebellion, the mountains, the warrior-clansmen fit the bill (albeit in a distorted form); the Enlightenment and the Clearances, the densely packed cities and the industrial working class, the Edinburgh intellectual and the Glasgow capitalist did not (Martin, 2009, p. 8).*

Martin (2009, p. 5) maintains that Scottish identity most commonly takes the form of “primal masculinity”. She refers to this as “male troubles” (ibid), beginning with the work of Sir Walter Scott who, in his writing, constructs the dominant trope of a Highland Jacobite warrior image of Scotland. Scott positions this image in stark contrast with England, which takes on a more feminine identity in his work, preserving “Scottish identity by envisaging Scottish history and tradition in a way that would enhance rather than threaten the British union” (p. 10). Martin argues that this image was further reinforced through the depiction of deer stalking, an artistic trend in Victorian times, e.g. Edwin Landseer’s *Monarch of the Glen*:

*The figure of the magnificently antlered stag, about to meet his own death, embodied all that seemed fierce, tragic and heroically virile about Scotland (ibid, p. 40).*

Martin also highlights the work of Robert Louis Stevenson and his depiction of the Scottish Highlands as masculine where, in comparison, Lowland Scotland was positioned as more feminine. She argues that Stevenson’s work illustrates “the

impossibility and necessity of narrating Scotland – a nation that, with no state, is only narration” (ibid, 108). She observes the “split identity” (ibid) theme that runs through Stevenson’s work, which symbolises (at times more explicitly than others) the Highland/ Lowland divide. Like McCrone *et al* (1995), Martin argues that the dominant vision of Scotland overshadowed other features of Scottish identity and culture:

*What substance was there in the right of an Edinburgh intellectual or a Fife farmer or a Glasgow industrialist to the mantle of ancient Highland warrior, a mythic figure in whom they could not recognise themselves?* (Martin, 2009, p. 112)

However, Martin observes a shift that took place at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when female writers, such as Margaret Oliphant and the Glasgow Style Designers, most famously Charles Rennie Mackintosh, produced a more feminine image of Scottish identity. She maintains that Oliphant imagined Scotland “not as a rugged man but as a brave, suffering woman” (p. 132), an idea that was echoed in Alexander McQueen’s *Widows of Culloden* collection in 2006 (Figure 5).

*Oliphant also recognises Scotland in the widows and outspoken, effusive and humorous old maids of Scotland, quick of wit and wrath, fearing nothing and nobody, dealing in the broadest sarcasms and sharpest repartees* (ibid, p. 133).

Martin argues that, although the Glasgow style designers were influential, this was suppressed by the Royal Scottish Academy who protected the definition of what constituted Scottish art. This resulted in the movement being labelled Glaswegian and thus its impact on Scottish identity more broadly was not fully recognised until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Inspired by “Celtic art, myth and Scottish vernacular architecture” (ibid, p. 148), the Glasgow style aesthetic was regarded as European, contemporary, urban and feminine and its influence is evident in Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts movements.

*In their creative merging of modernity with tradition, industrial skills with art, foreign with native influence, and the feminine with the masculine, the Glasgow style artists challenged the myth of timeless Scottish masculinity and offered a modern, feminine way to understand Scottish identity* (p. 163).



Martin (2009) and Crawford's (2007; 2014) studies demonstrate the extent to which cultural artefacts are influential in the construction of national identities. Both writers acknowledge fictional writing as significant, where Crawford (2014, p. 14) argues: "imaginative writers are so important precisely because they are inventive". Indeed, "without Scottish writers' deeply flawed narratives of Scottish identity, there is no Scotland" (Martin, 2009, p. 127).

Crawford (2014, p. 1-2) explores Scottish literature in the context of Scottish Independence, where he argues, "mythology, imagination and the play of literature are not separate from real life". Both Crawford and Martin (2009) acknowledge the political undercurrent that influenced Romanticism in Scotland. They comment on the work of Robert Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson (both patriots) and Sir Walter Scott (a unionist) all of whom are considered part of this stylistic movement.

Crawford notes that Burns' work, although bold and daring in its distinctive nationalist connotations, was modern and forward-looking. In a Scotland that had seen significant political unrest in the aftermath of the Act of Union (1707) and the Battle of Culloden (1746), his work was celebrated then (as it is today) as contemporary and culturally relevant.

*He can be recognised as the master poet of democracy, not least because of the way he managed to fuse his own voice with the voices of the people he came from. He does this nowhere more arrestingly than in his songs of love, place and politics (ibid, p. 90).*

Crawford (2007; 2014) recognises the increasingly diverse work of authors throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century who identify as Scottish and who continue to create and mould myths of Scotland (Anderson, 1983).

This thesis investigates the construction of Scottish identity amongst female style influencers who operate in a global, online community but who choose to identify as Scottish. Although research into style influencers is a relatively new domain, fashion blogging has been explored quite extensively in the literature (Sections 1.1 and 2.1). Rocamora (2011b, p. 421) observes the significance of fashion blogs as "a space that echoes the position of women in contemporary society". She observes the power of the "female gaze" on fashion blogs (p. 420), where males previously dominated fashion

photography. With these ideas in mind, it is argued that the Scottish style infosphere (predominantly consisting of women) and the personal style influencers that operate within it are particularly significant in shaping a contemporary and, indeed, feminine image of Scottish identity.

### **3.5 Scottish fashion**

There are only a small number of studies that consider fashion and Scotland together and the majority of these focus on the production of Scottish textiles (Grierson *et al*, 1985; Butt, 1987; Cheape and Anita, 2005; Faiers, 2008; McKeen, 2009; Rae, 2016), with particular attention given to tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Hume, 2010; Pittock, 2010; Cheape, 2010; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017).

Crane *et al* (2004, p. 67) explore Scottish dress, ethnicity and self-identity through a study of Americans with varying degrees of Scottish descent, arguing that “items of Scottish material culture are so dramatic, easily recognised, and market accessible”. Their study focuses on dress, which can be used to “self-symbolise”, i.e. to signify a national identity or heritage and/ or to align with a group (p. 68). As this study is probably most closely related to the current research, their findings were considered important and their methodology helped inform that of the current study (Chapter 4).

Crane *et al* found the participants in their study differed in the value they placed on their Scottish ancestry. They also varied in the extent to which they felt complete in their Scottish identity. Clothing was found to be most important to those who were exploring their Scottish roots for the first time and wanted to communicate their Scottish identity in a more explicit manner: “once a respondent has constructed and feels complete in his or her ethnic identity, symbols are likely to become less important” (ibid, p. 79). Indeed Fulton (1991) describes the kilt as one of the world’s most recognisable forms of national dress. Similarly, the current research seeks to explore participants’ motives for constructing Scottish identity on Instagram and how they communicate this through their personal style on the medium.

Porac *et al* (1989) investigate the business of Scottish knitwear production that can be traced back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when sheep were introduced to the Highlands and borders, and where the popularity of the textile is thought to be a result of the climate.

There was a rise in manufacture during the Industrial Revolution and an increase in the production of cashmere as a result of importing finer wool from China. Some of the oldest Scottish knitwear companies were founded at this time, for example Johnstons of Elgin in 1797. Scotland is recognised in this area, throughout the world, as a producer of artisan garments, adopting a highly focused strategy towards the production of luxury garments, which are sold to both consumers and brands, e.g. Johnstons of Elgin are a supplier to Hermès and Burberry. Scottish location is still regarded as important to the production of cashmere today, where the quality of “soft” Scottish water is a key ingredient in its manufacture; cashmere is usually produced in more rural parts of Scotland for this very reason (Jones, 2015), which again reinforces the Scottish myth. Scottish textile brands have arguably benefited from the surge in heritage branding (Straker and Wrigley, 2016) where luxury fashion houses, such as Burberry, are keen to acknowledge them publicly as part of their story.

Platman (2011) tells the story of *Harris Tweed: from Land to Street* through personal anecdotes about and introductions to those who work directly in the industry. Her book consists primarily of photographs, most of which depict the Island’s iconic landscape. Harris Tweed is one of the strongest examples of a brand that is physically and not just symbolically entrenched in place. Where other fashion brands, such as Burberry, focus strongly on heritage and place in their marketing (Straker and Wrigley, 2016), Harris Tweed by its very definition is rooted to place; the orb trademark can only be used where the tweed has been sourced, spun and woven on the Island. Guy Hills describes Harris Tweed as “timeless” and “the very pinnacle of heritage” (Platman, 2011, p. 123). The visual nature of Platman’s work, as well as telling the tale of the iconic textile, demonstrates the extent to which the Scottish landscape and the people who live there are meaningful.

Tartan and national identity are inextricably linked. Fulton (1991, p. 7) describes clan tartan as “the most powerful worldwide symbol of kinship” and Cheape (2010, p. 16) as “a touch stone of Scottishness”. Although regarded today as quintessentially Scottish, tartan is discussed quite extensively in the literature as a by-product of the romanticised writing of Scottish history that took place in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> /early 19<sup>th</sup> century by writers such as James MacPherson, Sir Walter Scott and Colonel David Stewart (Fulton, 1991). Tartan and kilts, in particular, are recognised as having a more widespread place in Scottish history from this point on, propagated by their perceived historical importance (McCrone *et al*, 1995). Although the popularity of tartan and kilts

is only observable from the beginning of the 19th century, the history of tartan predates this and can be traced back to the 17th century in the Scottish Highlands, where it has been described as the “Highland response” to the Renaissance (Young and Martin, 2017, p. 17; Cheape, 2010).

Pittock (2010) puts forward a less cynical view of tartan as more than an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Trevor-Roper, 1983). He argues that, although tartan stems from the Highlands and was appropriated by other parts of Scotland, it is ultimately symbolic of a Scottish pride, which is a more genuine part of Scottish history. Given the fact that research into Scottish fashion is so heavily focused in this area, the power of tartan as a signifier of Scottish identity can hardly be disregarded. He argues:

*Understanding Scottish culture now – as in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – is not a simple matter of polarities, authenticity/ myth, actuality/ invention, but requires a more sophisticated grasp of the culture and interplay of history (p. 46).*

Young and Martin’s (2017) book *Tartan and Tweed*, is probably the most comprehensive and current account of Scottish fashion. They outline the history of these textiles as well as their current status, observing that tartan did not always hold such positive connotations since non-Highlanders once viewed it as a form of camouflage for thieves. In fact, tartan was banned for a period in the Highlands when, after the last Jacobite uprising, led by Bonnie Prince Charlie, it was seen as a symbol of rebellion (ibid). Interestingly, the Dress Act (1746) that followed shortly after the Battle of Culloden is claimed to have made tartan desirable, particularly in England, and production actually increased over this time, initially as the uniform of those serving in the Highland regiments as part of the British army (Brown, 2010a). Due to its use elsewhere and complexity in applying the law, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the ban was lifted and tartan continued to remain fashionable and sought after, “kept alive by romantic stories” and symbolic of an intriguing Highland connection (Young and Martin, p. 35; Pittock, 2010).

*The kilt and tartan came to signify the mystery of primitive society and consequently what had been lost since 1746 or had never been known was simply invented (McCrone et al, 1995, p. 51).*

1822 is seen as a landmark in the story of tartan, when Sir Walter Scott encouraged Clan Chiefs to greet King George IV who was dressed in full Highland regalia (ibid); this was the first time a monarch had set foot in Scotland since before the Battle of Culloden. McCrone *et al* observe this as the beginning of tartanry where tartan became symbolic of a romantic Scotland. The myth was further popularised when Queen Victoria acquired the Balmoral estate in 1852 and famously used this as a retreat to escape London life, taking refuge in the landscape and breathing the fresh Scottish air. This iconography has been referred to as “the Balmoral effect” (Fulton, 1991, p. 42), “Victorian fabrication” (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 5), and “Balmorality” (Brown, 2010a, p. 5). It enabled Scotland to be markedly different from England but part of Britain, which, it is argued, is exactly what Sir Walter Scott intended (McCrone *et al*, 1995).

With these events in mind, it could reasonably be argued that Sir Walter Scott was one of the earliest Scottish fashion influencers; he is credited (or sometimes criticised) with having invented tartanry through the mythology of his novels (Barthes, 1957b) and his orchestration of “the royal visit” in 1822 (Brown, 2010a, p. 5).

The classification of tartan to particular Scottish clans began soon after the royal visit, adding to the allure of the fabric and further entrenching its perceived historical importance (Brown, 2010a; Cheape, 2010). This also cemented tartan as a prime item of “Scottish material culture” awarding Scotland a degree of ownership of the cloth (Cheape, 2010, p. 14; Hume, 2010). Young and Martin (2017, p. 30) claim that “few other national costumes have such emotive meaning and, despite its conflicting history, the kilt stands strong as a stimulating symbol of Scottish identity”. Classification of tartan added to its appeal, making this appear to be an exclusive entity. However, this arguably connoted some negative ideas in the focus on a “family entitlement” to tartan, making heritage and “blood descent... a more important measure of nationality than it had been before” (Pittock, 2010, p.44).

The classification of tartan is often cited as evidence of its inauthenticity and regarded as proof that tartan is a more recent phenomenon of Scottish culture (Trevor-Roper, 1983). However, Brown (2010b) argues that there is evidence of barelegged dress from as early as 1093, tartan in Highland dress from as early as 1440 and specific tartans can be traced to families from at least the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the classification of tartan might be regarded as “exploitation rather than invention” (ibid, p. 104). Indeed, Hume (2010) found that the kilt hire business, which began in the 1970s, brought about

a renewed interest in the style, making the kilt more market accessible and less exclusive, allowing people to vary their choice of tartan for specific events. This accessibility might be further illustrated by the adoption of the kilt by Scottish football fans “the Tartan Army” (O’Donnell, 2010, p. 212).

*No other country I know of has a distinctive, almost infinitely variable (and therefore undefined) cloth pattern as a national brand. It endorses a recognition of difference, an inclusiveness that is sensitive to qualities of character, liabilities of preference, strengths and weaknesses that anyone can see at work in any family (Riach, 2010, p. 116).*

Riach (ibid) argues that tartan is symbolic of a Scottish identity which has “hybridity and migration” at its core (Brown, 2010b, p. 99). He argues that this diversity is visible throughout history and today in terms of geography, language, culture and preferences, to name just a few features. Today, tartan as a fabric and style aesthetic is readily available and a fundamental of cyclical fashion trends (Young and Martin, 2017). However, as McCrone *et al* (1995) observe, one need only to walk down the main streets of Edinburgh to witness tartanry in its full glory and, although more than 20 years has passed since their book was published, this is still the case today:

*The worst excesses of tartanry verge on the ludicrous, and yet in other manifestations, it is high fashion (ibid, p. 56).*

Young and Martin (ibid, p. 54) maintain: “tartan is a lot more than misty glens, bagpipes, haggis and shortbread – it can be rebellious, masculine and cool”. They observe tartan and its influence in contemporary fashion, notably amongst luxury fashion designers, with Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, Jean Paul Gaultier and Burberry being just a few of those whom they describe as “tartan visionaries” (p. 92). They also dedicate a chapter to Chanel’s use of tweed as well as tartan, cashmere and Fair Isle. As one of the longest-standing couture houses and luxury fashion brands, the fact that Scottish textiles have been a key component of Chanel’s designs since Coco Chanel began designing in 1910 is particularly illustrative of the quality of Scottish textiles.

*There is a suggestion that somehow there is a distance between being a modern Scot and embracing the Scottishness bound up in a tartan identity. Rather than distancing oneself from this, one might seek to understand its*

*riches (and poverties) and recognise its role in any development of a modern identity for Scots and Scotland (Brown, 2010b, p. 105).*

The influence of tartan is evident across a range of subcultures from the 1970s up to today, including Punk, Grunge and Hipster street styles all of whom could be said to have appropriated the cloth in new and diverse ways (Percival, 2010; Young and Martin, 2017). Street style can be defined as fashion that stems upwards from the masses (Woodward, 2009) and as a photography style that depicts the everyday against an urban backdrop (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008).

*London, New York or Paris life can be experienced through the vicarious appropriation of the cities' visual identities as epitomised on the bodies of their inhabitants (ibid, p. 191).*

Having stemmed from subcultural movements and niche magazines in the 1970s, it is argued that authentic street style should be original and unpredictable, in stark contrast to the style dictated by high-end designers and appropriated through fast fashion (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008; Woodward, 2009). Rocamora (2011a) maintains that fashion bloggers have brought street style to the fore and further established the aesthetic as a stronghold of contemporary fashion. She observes street style "in movement" and "at rest" (p. 102) as the prevailing aesthetic of the genre in presenting the city as "real" and "alive" (103).

*Tartan itself makes an unmistakable statement about individual personal style, evolving throughout history to represent more than just a geographic and cultural identity. Tartan has become a subversive fabric, adopted by the punk movement, the Bay City Rollers and pop stars including Madonna who dressed in tartan costumes by Jean Paul Gaultier (Young and Martin, 2017, p. 82).*

Through subcultural movements in particular it is argued that tartan has been "reimagined" (Percival, 2010, p. 203) signifying "both belonging and counter-cultural resistance" (ibid, p. 208), in what could be described as a historical throwback to its association with the Jacobite uprisings (Fulton, 1991). As Young and Martin (2017) and Percival (2010) suggest, the 1970s was an influential period, which saw tartan adopted and appropriated in new and interesting ways. This was brought to an international

stage through the Bay City Rollers who famously “turned the whole world tartan” (Lindfield-Ott, 2018, np):

*The Bay City Rollers are an intriguing case of tartantry. Of non-clan tartantry! Tartan here symbolises Scotland, and the Highland is happily matched with lads from Edinburgh. I’d love to see an article comparing Bay City Rollers tartantry with George IV’s tartan spectacular of 1822... (ibid)*

Young and Martin (2017) explore the use of tartan in popular culture, citing a number of examples which span a range of time periods: *La Sylphide* (1932), a romantic ballet performed at the Paris Opera, described as a “Scottish fantasy” (p.40); *Brigadoon*, a Broadway musical (1947) and film (1954) that tells the story of a New Yorker escaping busy city life and finding himself in a Scottish village called Brigadoon whose inhabitants wake only once every 100 years; Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1605), a play that portrays a historical but largely invented Scotland and which has been subject to a number of interpretations over the years; the *Braveheart* and *Rob Roy* films (1990s), which idealised a concept of the “Highland hero” (p.30). They reference the *Outlander* book series (1991) that was further popularised by the, more recent, television series (2014) and follow the protagonist in her journey through time, from 1945 (present day) to 1743 Scotland, just before the Battle of Culloden. Disney’s *Brave* (2012), they argue, further entrenches the Scottish myth, where “a fiery Scottish princess with flame-red hair finds herself caught up in the magic” (p. 51). These cultural productions have a number of aspects in common where they portray Scotland in a positive, albeit highly romanticised and mythical light.

*When we think of the kilt we think of Scotland, so entwined is this national dress within its country’s heritage (ibid, p. 30).*

The kilt and tartan are strongly interlinked but often regarded separately in the literature. Young and Martin (2017) argue that the kilt is highly visible today as a signifier of Scottish identity and they cite “the tartan army” where the kilt arouses a “warrior spirit” (p. 56); “the school girl look”, where the kilt is a common feature of public school uniforms – the tartan skirt made fashionable in the nineties through films like *Clueless* (1995) (Butt, 2010; Young and Martin, 2017). Of course the kilt is also strongly associated with Scottish celebrations and formal occasions, such as weddings (Fulton, 1991).



*Tartan's semiotic palette is complex and heterogeneous but its dominant signification is that of Scottishness (Percival, 2010, p. 196).*

In summary, the area of Scottish identity has attracted scholarly interest for some time, where renewed interest might be attributed to the dynamic political landscape, which included the Scottish Independence Referendum (2014) and *Brexit* (2016). However, research into Scottish fashion and style remains an underdeveloped field, with tartan and tweed remaining the focus of academic studies. Perhaps, as McCrone *et al* (1995) argue is the case with Scottish heritage more generally, tartan and tweed are such dominant signifiers of Scottish fashion, they eclipse any further conceptualisations of Scottish fashion and style that might exist. Perhaps, as academics, we are responsible in our focus on these signifiers for further entrenching the Scottish myth (Cederlund, 2011).

The current study is not concerned with exploring the authenticity of Scottish identity or the history of Scottish fashion. Instead, it seeks to explore perceptions of Scottish identity and style in a new context. This thesis provides valuable insights into contemporary Scottish fashion by investigating: *How do Scottish style influencers contribute to the narrative of Scottish identity and fashion (RQ8)?*

### **3.6 Fashion and national identity**

*Fashion is not just making clothes, but also an attribute that nations no longer seem to be able to do without. For a country or a city, expressing an immediately recognisable aesthetic has become an important corollary to communicate political and economic strength (Segre Reinach, 2015, p. 270).*

There is some research in the area of fashion that highlights the significance of place and national identity; for example, Segre Reinach (2010; 2015) explores the relationship between national identity and international recognition in the fashion sector, where she found that elements such as made-in country, as well as local design and production were important in helping a country define itself within an increasingly global industry. Through an investigation of the relationship between fashion and the communication of Italian identity, she found that history and myth play a significant part, supporting some

of the ideas that were discussed in Section 3.5 (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010a; Young and Martin, 2017).

Craik (2009, p. 410) explores the distinctiveness of Australian fashion and the challenges in defining national dress. She references Scotland as an example of a country whose national dress is instantly recognisable but cites a style that would not commonly be associated with Scottish people. This is interesting and suggests that Scottish fashion might not always be widely understood internationally as is presumed:

*There are some forms of dress that are automatically identified as a form of national dress: kimonos as Japanese, Aloha floral shirts as Hawaiian, berets as French, clogs as Dutch, saris as Indian, Mao jackets as Chinese, ponchos as Tibetan, sombreros as Mexican, "plus fours" as Scottish, batik shirts as Indonesian, and Mother Hubbard dresses as South Pacific Islander.*

Craik found that a sense of place, a sense of body and a sense of cultural heritage were distinct aspects of Australian style. She defines a national sense of style as communication of the "zeitgeist of a place... that occurs when three realms are synchronised: aesthetics, cultural practice, and cultural articulation" (2009, p. 413; Craik, 2002). Aesthetics refers to "national creativity" (Segre Reinach, 2015, p. 267) or the components that make a garment or style unique or different, e.g. Scottish tartan, tweed and wool; cultural practice refers to the acceptance of that fashion or style and rules as to when it should be adopted, e.g. the kilt as formalwear; and cultural articulation is where the style has become established both internally and externally as belonging to that country.

Craik found that the essence of Australian style is casual and comfortable, in line with the outdoor lifestyle that has become synonymous with the nation as well as the perceived laid-back nature of its people. Interestingly, as in the case of Scottish fashion, Australian style appears to stem from a romanticised past which considers early settlers and the outback landscape as influential (Fulton, 1991; Maynard, 1994; McCrone *et al*, 1995; McCrone, 2017). This is supported in Segre-Reinach's research where she found, from a brand perspective, "sartorial histories" and "identities" are important in the case of national identity and fashion (Segre Reinach, 2015, p. 269).

Skov (2010) argues that fashion designers are important signifiers of their national identity. Riegels Melchior (2010, p. 36) investigates the relationship between national identity and fashion design further through a case study of a Danish fashion company. She suggests that national identity as a design influence stems from the search for authenticity and competitive advantage in a global market (Teunissen, 2005). Denmark appears to present almost the opposite challenge from Scotland. McCrone *et al* (1995) argue that Scotland's iconography is so distinctive that it is difficult for contemporary designs and ideas to flourish. Meanwhile, Riegels Melchior (2010) maintains that Danish fashion has the reverse problem, whereby designs tend not to be attributed to Denmark as a nation because they are not immediately recognised as part of an existing aesthetic. However, this still suggests that only Scottish designs that include elements such as tartan, tweed and wool might be recognised as Scottish and contribute to their cultural capital in an increasingly global industry (Bourdieu, 1986; McCrone *et al*, 1995).

Goodrum (2009) explores the export of national identity in fashion through a case study of two luxury fashion brands. She found that ethnic or national symbols are important and that these should take audience perceptions into account. Some of these studies cite the importance of authenticity in the production of national fashion identity (Goodrum, 2009; Segre Reinach, 2010). In these examples the reception of identity was found to be most successful when perceived as genuine and real, for example through the use of local materials, designs and/ or workmanship; this is visible in the case of Harris Tweed, the success of which could be attributed to its authenticity (Platman, 2011). This again highlights the concept of authenticity as a theme that permeates literature in the fields of identity, national identity, Scottish identity and fashion.

It is important to note that, as with fashion and style more generally, national identity as communicated through dress, is not fixed. Items will become dated, experience periods of resurgence and some styles might disappear completely (Craik, 2009). It has been argued that the Scottish kilt has experienced a revival (Leaper, 2018). Indeed, national fashion and style and the rules surrounding this are contextual and, what is culturally appropriate in one setting by one individual could be deemed inappropriate in another (Craik, 2002); for example, a kilt would be regarded as acceptable as formalwear but generally not in work or more casual settings. However, there are some examples where fashions have appeared and been accepted out of context, such as in the case of subcultures and the Tartan Army (O'Donnell, 2010; Percival, 2010; Young and Martin, 2017). These examples further demonstrate the fluidity of fashion and style.

The issue of cultural appropriation is debated fiercely in today's fashion media where it is argued: "the world is vast and information is free, but appropriation without citation by those in power erases the culture being referenced" (Calmese, 2017, np). The term has become widely associated with Western theft of traditional ethnic symbols from non-Western cultures. In recent years, a number of designers have been accused of cultural appropriation; for example, Marc Jacobs showcased his spring-summer 2017 collection at New York fashion week using predominantly white models with their hair styled in dreadlocks. Critics argued that dreadlocks are "more than simply a fashion vogue and could not simply be culturally appropriated without an acknowledgement of their origins" (Oppenheim, 2016, np). Others argue that cultural appropriation can have more positive effects:

*Well-intentioned appropriation can be a force for good, creating a cultural exchange and enriching the available vocabulary for designers, artists and image-makers — even for chefs, filmmakers and architects. It can be an engine that drives culture forward and breaks down borders and divisions, rather than dividing them (Ahmad, 2017, np).*

Hague (2002a) discusses the appropriation of Scottish culture and national dress in US Tartan Day and reflects that the event is evidence of a rising American interest in Scotland, in particular amongst Scottish-American groups and those with Scottish ancestry. This idea was also reflected in Basu's (2007) study of Scottish-American tourists and how they imagined Scotland based on a romantic idea of their heritage.

Rocamora (2009) in *Fashioning the City: Paris, Fashion and the Media*, explores the power of the fashion media in shaping the identity of the city. In contrast with Scotland, Paris is recognised as the world's fashion capital, through its historical status and the wealth of fashion media who uphold the city's mythical position. Equally, in contrast with Scotland's predominantly masculine identity (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Martin, 2009), Paris is recognised as inherently feminine largely through its array of female cultural icons (Rocamora, 2009).

*In the French media, fashion still means Paris. Regularly anchoring fashion to the Parisian territory, the media have long naturalised the signifying relation between the French capital and la mode (ibid, p. 66-67).*

In her study, Rocamora uncovers the distinction between a Parisian identity as chic and the perception of a Provincial Frenchwoman as less stylish. The fact that Paris dominates the fashion media so strongly arguably masks the identity of *la Province* (ibid, p. 38) in a way that might be compared to the Highland vision that overrides other cultural identities within Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Martin, 2009). Indeed, as is arguably the case with Scotland (Martin, 2009), Rocamora (2009) argues that Parisian iconography is so strong that the city “cannot be thought of outside [its] many texts – books, paintings, films or photographs” (p. 16).

Although a number of these representations are historic cultural artefacts, such as the Eiffel Tower, Rocamora also identifies contemporary representations of Paris through the fashion media. In particular, the impact of street style is observed, where she reflects on the relationship between place, fashion and identity:

*Vestimentary styles are also the means by which, in the chaos and anonymity characteristic of city life, strangers who pass each other by in the street create sense and meaning by seeing clothes as a legible surface that can reveal the other’s personality* (p. 127).

Rocamora argues that Paris, like Scotland, has achieved a mythic status, through its rich iconography and discourse.

### **3.7 Key themes and research questions**

Chapters 2 and 3 have addressed the key areas of literature that surround this topic of study in order to uncover themes that exist in the literature regarding Scottish fashion and style and to appraise critically literature in the areas of Scottish identity and identity construction online. The following themes were identified: identity construction as a feature of social media and, particularly, fashion blogs, which are highly stylised; the emergence of online communities of interest; national identity as a construct; national identity as an important but, often, unconscious feature of personal identity; Scottish identity as mythical and strongly influenced by heritage and the past; the dominance of a masculine identity of Scotland; and Scottish style as most commonly associated with traditional textiles such as wool, tartan and tweed.

Although there is a significant wealth of research in the areas of national identity (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995) and, more specifically, Scottish identity, these tend to focus on its attributes (Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond and Rosie, 2006; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008; McCrone, 2017), symbols and the significance of history and heritage in, what might be regarded as the Scottish myth (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010a; McCrone, 2017). This thesis seeks to explore the construction of Scottish identity more intimately and personally with a group of Scottish influencers who communicate their own personal style on Instagram.

The relationship between fashion and place is recognised in the literature (Craik, 2009; Goodrum, 2009; Rocamora, 2009; Riegels Melchior, 2010; Segre Reinach, 2010; Skov, 2010). Although there is some literature in the area of Scottish fashion, these studies tend to take a retrospective outlook and focus predominantly on wool, tartan and tweed (Porac *et al*, 1989; Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). There is therefore a notable gap in the area of contemporary Scottish fashion in terms of how this is understood, informed and communicated as part of a personal style. It is believed that this is the area in which the current thesis might have the most impact.

Finally, identity studies are plentiful (Goffman, 1956; Erickson, 1959; Butler, 1988) and there has been renewed interest since the advent of social media (Turkle, 1995; Reed, 2005). Equally, there are a number of studies that consider fashion blogs as a means of self-expression where individuals can construct their identity (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Duffy and Hund, 2015a; Titton, 2015). Although there is a recognised interest in studies that link fashion bloggers and place (Mora and Rocamora, 2015), there are still very few studies that merge these ideas (Palmgren, 2010; Luvaas, 2013; Pedroni, 2015).

The impact of Instagram has been acknowledged and there has been an increase in academic interest in this area, particularly in relation to fashion and style influencers (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e Silva, 2018). However, the medium is still considered relatively new and, despite a recognised shift from fashion blogging to Instagramming (Klein, 2014; Blalock, 2016; O'Brien, 2016; Bobb, 2018), the medium has not yet attracted the level of academic attention as that of the fashion blog.

The following eight research questions have evolved from gaps in the literature:

- RQ1: Does community matter to Scottish style influencers and if so how does it influence their identity?
- RQ2: To what extent are personal style influencers conscious of their Scottish identity?
- RQ3: How does physical place influence personal style?
- RQ4: What are the challenges and opportunities associated with Scottish identity and place?
- RQ5: Why is national identity and place important in online identity formation?
- RQ6: How is Scottish identity understood and expressed through personal style?
- RQ7: How is Scottish identity understood and expressed online?
- RQ8: How do Scottish style influencers contribute to the narrative of Scottish identity and fashion?

## **Chapter 4      Methodology**

This chapter will present the methodological design and approach for the present study. This takes an interpretative phenomenological (IPA) approach. A preliminary study comprising 11 qualitative interviews with fashion bloggers in the North East of Scotland was conducted to help inform the design of the main study. The main study consists of 14 qualitative interviews with female style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram.

### **4.1      Research philosophy**

There are a number of schools of thought around which research method is best suited to a particular study. Saunders *et al* (2007) maintain that the main influencing factor in this choice is research philosophy. They define research philosophy as “assumptions... [which] underpin the way you view the world” (p. 101). An understanding of one’s own research philosophy can help ensure objectivity and self-reflexivity when carrying out research and assure greater validity of findings because research biases can be understood, uncovered and reduced (Cranfield, 2009).

The philosophical approach that underpins this thesis is that of interpretivism: “which is to see the world through the eyes of the people being studied, allowing them multiple perspectives of reality, rather than the ‘one reality’ of positivism” (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 433). The roots of interpretivism can be traced back to ancient Greece and Max Weber (1949) is recognised as a central theorist who brought this philosophy to the fore in qualitative social research (*ibid*). This thesis explores the construction of national identity amongst style influencers that position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. As has already been outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, identity and, indeed, national identity is deeply personal to an individual (McCrone, 2017); therefore it should be approached from a perspective that emphasises “the meaningful nature of people’s character and participation in social and cultural life” (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 433).

The purpose of this study was not to make generalisations about the behaviours, experiences or opinions of the participant influencers, who are each considered unique and valuable in contributing to an understanding of the research phenomenon. This



thesis aims to build a deep understanding of lived-in personal experience. In order to make sense of the context in which the phenomenon is situated (national identity, fashion and social media production), it is important that these experiences be studied as part of the wider environment in which they exist (Schutz, 1932).

One of the challenges faced in undertaking this research was the relative newness of fashion communication as a subject of study and consequently the extent to which the research draws on a variety of disciplines, each with its own research traditions. Such research that has been undertaken in fashion communications has tended to draw on discourse and textual analysis (Bourdieu, 1993b), as well as semiotics (Barthes 1967), exploring the messages conveyed and behaviours manifest in these communications, and learning from the content of the message itself (Allen, 2009; Chittenden, 2010; Pham, 2011).

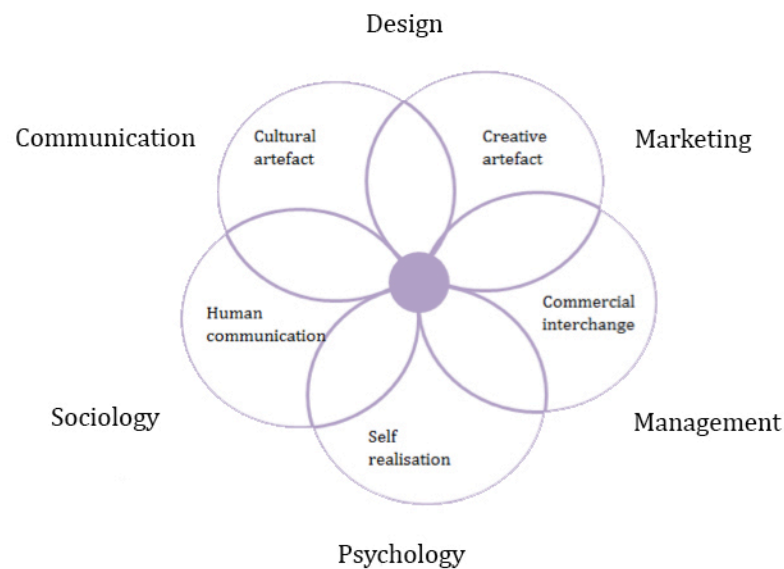


Figure 7: Theoretical perspectives on fashion communication (author)

Figure 7 sets out the disciplinary context within which fashion communication might be studied, with the present research sitting within the categories of communication, cultural studies and identity. The current research methodology has been informed by an analysis of previous research in fashion and style communication (Section 1.1),

identity studies (Chapter 2) and national identity (Chapters 3). These studies draw on the disciplines of communication, sociology and psychology.

The context of the current research, fashion and social media, is dynamic and constantly changing (Rocamora, 2011a; Dhillon, 2015; Hope, 2016), therefore lending itself to an interpretative, phenomenological epistemology, where the purpose of the research is to explore a particular instance of a phenomenon that is deeply rooted in the unique, lived experience of a selection of “social actors” (Saunders *et al*, 2007, p. 107; Larkin and Thompson, 2011). A challenge when conducting this type of research is for the researcher to be able to understand an experience from the point of view of the individuals concerned and not to impose bias upon the results, whilst executing the delicate balance between the participant’s “voice” and researcher’s ability to “make sense” of this (Larkin and Thompson, 2011, p. 101).

In order to better understand the research context and access participants, it was necessary to become immersed in the world of blogging and social media. A blog was established and used in the early stages to openly discuss the research problem and review literature. In addition, whilst undertaking the primary research, the researcher maintained a public profile on Instagram. This adoption of insider status rests on two important points: firstly the capacity to assume the role of an official fashion communicator and researcher; and secondly the ethical challenges of insider activity in a public domain, where openness and researcher intent with regard to the use of research data must be carefully considered (AOIR, 2012).

This does raise the question of researcher bias, where assumptions may already have been formed about the group studied. However, the focus of this research was on how Scottish style influencers form and make sense of their own national identity and how they construct this through Instagram, from the point of view of the influencers themselves. The methodology was designed around phenomenology as a theoretical belief and interpretivism as a philosophical standpoint (Saunders *et al*, 2007). It considers the German concept of “Verstehen” or “understanding” in the research process (Schutz, 1932, p. 12) where it is important to make sense of “both the intention and the context of human interaction” (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 435).

This involves two levels of interpretation, firstly from the point of view of the research participants and secondly on behalf the researcher (*ibid*): participant influencers were

required, during interviews and through photo elicitation, to interpret the meaning behind their own experiences and behaviour; and then these experiences were subject to further interpretation by the researcher in order to make sense of this meaning in the wider social and cultural context.

An inductive approach to data analysis was deemed appropriate, where the aim was to build on existing ideas and studies that are explored in the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3): to develop these ideas, elicit new themes and contribute new knowledge, particularly an understanding of Scottish identity and style and how this is communicated today.

## **4.2 Research approach**

In deciding the approach to take, both grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1997) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2004) were considered as both are recognised as useful ways of evolving theory from data. IPA is a qualitative approach that seeks to “explore in detail participants’ personal lived experience and how participants make sense of that personal experience” (Smith, 2004, p. 40) with a focus on the specific rather than the typical (Larkin and Thompson, 2012). The approach was developed by Smith (1996) in the field of psychology, where much of its use to date has been in the field of health psychology, but where it is believed to be particularly valuable when exploring issues in personal identity; in fact Smith invites its use in other contexts outwith the medical domain. Although there are some key underlying principles of this approach, which make it particularly suitable to the current research and which are discussed in this chapter, IPA in general is regarded as flexible and highly adaptable (Smith, 2004; Larkin and Thompson, 2011).

According to Smith (*ibid*), the approach is idiographic, interrogative, inductive and highly qualitative, and a small sample is advocated to allow for in-depth analysis. This approach was considered suitable for the current research in helping to explore the complex and deeply personal area of identity; in terms of how this is constructed in a visual, online and public setting and, in particular, how Scottish identity forms part of this. The participants in the research are “personal” style influencers (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 2009; Rocamora, 2011b) and, it is assumed, given the amount of time and effort individuals devote to this activity that it is something they care about. IPA is

particularly well suited to topics where the subject is important to the research participants and where it is expected that they can provide a valuable viewpoint (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). In IPA, research questions tend towards an individual's ability to make sense of their own experiences and, in this particular case, their social media output.

*Independently from how successful a blogger becomes, his/ her trajectory may be considered as a "career" starting from an initial point, progressing through early and critical steps, and leading the author to occupy a precise space in the blogosphere (Pedroni, 2015, p. 184-185).*

This research is concerned with exploring the experiences and motivations of personal style influencers who characterise themselves as Scottish. Although the number of followers is often viewed as an indication of success, this was not deemed important in the context of this thesis. Follower numbers were recorded and reported, ranging from 143 to 54k (Tables 2 and 3). The participant influencers represent a range of stages in their career: some could be described as early career influencers while others were more established in either their blog or Instagram profession. Indeed, criteria for inclusion was simply the use of a Scottish identity and a public Instagram profile where hashtags were used regularly and where the content included fashion as a prevailing theme.

The current study was inductive, where the purpose was to build on existing theory with primary research: namely in the field of self-identity, fashion communication and Scottish identity and style. An indicative review of literature in the areas of fashion and online identity informed a preliminary research study, which consisted of eleven qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a group of fashion bloggers from the North East of Scotland. Data obtained from these interviews, alongside a review of wider themes in the literature (e.g. around Scottish identity more broadly), helped shape the direction of the main study, which consisted of a further 14 interviews with Scottish style influencers. IPA advocates this approach and it is often advised that second interviews take place when further research questions arise (Smith, 2004); thus two participants from the first set of interviews were re-interviewed in the main study. As well as producing some valuable findings, data obtained from the preliminary study informed the sampling and design for the main study.

The data set for this thesis consists of the 14 interview transcripts and a corpus of 77 Instagram posts that participants were asked to select and provide in advance of the interview; these posts were discussed during the interviews and analysed thereafter (Section 4.5). They were used as an aid to encourage deeper reflection on the part of the interviewees, as well as forming a data set for further analysis to inform conclusions about their communication of Scottish identity.

The aim of this thesis was to explore the construction of national identity and place amongst style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. It is argued that the experiences and output of the participant influencers uncovered new knowledge, particularly in the areas of contemporary Scottish identity and Scottish fashion. Figure 8 illustrates the research objectives and maps these to the methodology.



Figure 8: Visual representation of methodology (author)

#### 4.2.1 Development of research questions

An ongoing literature review was conducted throughout the period of research. This utilised a number of databases, including *Taylor and Frances Online*, *Business Source Complete* and *Edinburgh University Press*.

The review began with an indicative review in the area of fashion and identity online. *Fashion Theory: the Journal of Dress Body and Culture* proved to be particularly useful in helping shape the research problem and identify gaps in the literature (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Indicative literature review (author)

Upon carrying out the initial review, it became clear that there was a growing body of work in fashion blogging and identity. These studies suggest that identity is constructed and, at times, superficial (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Luvaas, 2013; Titton, 2015). However, amongst these studies, there was only limited reference to physical place. Some regional studies of fashion blogging existed at this point, three of which could be considered relevant (Palmgren, 2010; Luvaas, 2013; Pedroni, 2015). Despite a recognised interest in place and fashion more generally (Mora and Rocamora, 2015), there is no literature that explores how a sense of place and national identity can influence online identity. Equally, there is a significant body of work in the area of Scottish identity and how this is formed (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond and Rosie, 2006; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008; McCrone, 2017). However, there is limited research in the area of Scottish fashion and style and these studies tend to focus on traditional Scottish textiles (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017); it was felt that the latter is where the current research could have most impact (Figure 10).

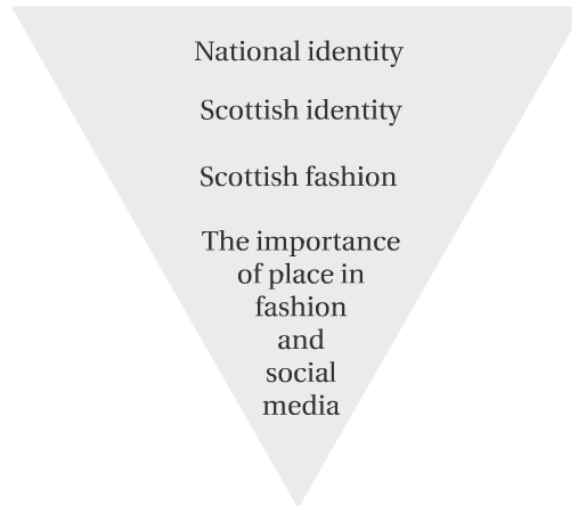


Figure 10: Literature review (author)

Throughout the duration of the research, Boolean logic was used to retrieve the subject as indicated in Table 1. Sets for each of the component concepts were created and combined using the Boolean operator “and”.

Table 1: Boolean search parameters	
Self-identity online	
Concept 1	(Fashion? <b>OR</b> dress? <b>OR</b> style?) <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 2	Online? <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 3	Blog? <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 4	Instagram? <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 5	Fashion? <b>OR</b> dress? <b>OR</b> style? <b>WITH</b> identity? <b>WITH</b> online? <b>OR</b> blog? <b>OR</b> Instagram?
Scottish fashion and national identity	
Concept 1	(Scotland? <b>OR</b> Scottish?) <b>WITH</b> fashion? <b>OR</b> dress? <b>OR</b> style?
Concept 2	(Scotland? <b>OR</b> Scottish?) <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 3	National? <b>WITH</b> identity?
Concept 4	Fashion? ( <b>WITH</b> place? <b>OR</b> national identity)
Concept 5	Place? <b>WITH</b> (blog? <b>OR</b> Instagram? <b>OR</b> online?)



The literature review did not rely entirely on the use of keywords and also tracked relevant literature through citations in the reference lists of journal articles and books where appropriate.

Significant gaps in the literature were uncovered and eight research questions were developed (Figure 8). The current study was designed to fill some of these gaps and attempts to answer the research questions in the findings that are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

### **4.3 Preliminary study**

A preliminary set of 11 qualitative interviews were carried out with North East of Scotland fashion bloggers. The data that was obtained during these preliminary interviews are discussed here in terms of how they informed the design of the main study but are not reported as part of the findings of the current thesis (Chapter 5). The preliminary interviews were semi-structured and evolving and the purpose of these was to look behind the online content at the individuals who create that content, to consider not what their productions said about them but how they understood and thought about their own production of fashion blogs. The interviews lasted between 40 and 80 minutes and were carried out face-to-face or via video call.

*Exploratory work has long been characterised as a brief, fleeting, preliminary stage in the research process – the sooner the better – to the real thing*  
(Stebbins, 2001, p. v).

The preliminary research sought to explore the phenomenon and uncover answers to the following questions: How did fashion bloggers in the North East of Scotland construe their blogging identity? What motivated fashion bloggers residing in the North East of Scotland? What were the issues and challenges associated with being a blogger in the North East of Scotland? How did their North East of Scotland location influence their blogging identity?

The sample was drawn purposively from the North East of Scotland, but no other demographic parameters were imposed at the outset of this research. Initially, three fashion bloggers from the researcher's own professional network were identified and

these formed a group who were asked to recommend other potential interviewees in a snowball sampling approach; this is regarded as particularly useful when the number of potential participants is low and/ or concealed (Browne, 2007). Indeed, a significant challenge in carrying out this research was the difficulty in measuring the full research population due to the number of bloggers who chose not to disclose their exact location and the number of inactive blogs existing in the blogosphere. Table 2 shows the participant profiles for the preliminary study; all participants were present on a range of social media, including Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

Participant	Age	Date of blog	Followers (approx.)	Occupation
1	23	2011	4,119	Student
2	21	2012	694	Graduate
3	32	2009	5,619	Event planner and blogger
4	31	2011	4,585	Beauty sales rep and blogger
5	21	2011	442	Student
6	23	2009	246	Retail merchandiser
7	27	2009	143	Administrator and blogger
8	24	2013	2,605	Sales assistant / supervisor
9	19	2010	1,503	Student and blogger
10	20	2011	1,310	Student and blogger
11	21	2010	1,513	Sales supervisor and blogger

The preliminary study took place in the North East of Scotland, a geographic location with a thriving albeit turbulent business economy, where the major conurbation of Aberdeen, often referred to as Europe's "oil capital", boasted a booming economy in spite of the recession until recent fluctuations in oil prices introduced some uncertainties (Drysdale, 2015, np). Scotland is recognised as a country ensconced in history, tradition and cultural myth (Pittock, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010) and McCrone (2017) found that, of the four major Scottish cities, Aberdeen is the least well defined in terms of its cultural identity.

Although there are a small number of fashion brands operating in the North East of Scotland with a strong heritage, such as Johnsons of Elgin, the fashion industry in the area is small in scale, with a focus on the manufacture of traditional Scottish fabrics and retail as dominant sectors (Marcella and Rowley, 2015). As a result, fashion-specific media is sparse beyond individual blogging activity. One fashion and lifestyle magazine

exists, *Trend Magazine*, which together with coverage by the local press and other local lifestyle journals is responsible for all North East Scotland fashion output. Only *Trend Magazine* has an online presence. Other more tangentially related media include those of a model agency, local retail malls and independent brands/ designers/ retailers. Social media has created a forum for the exchange of fashion-related content for such companies and has facilitated the rise of a small network of fashion bloggers in an area that would not previously have been considered a centre for fashion commentary (Rocamora, 2011a).

Although the sample for the preliminary study was drawn from the North East of Scotland, the researcher did not apply as a criterion that participants revealed their location or national identity explicitly on their blog in order to take part in the research. This resulted in a dichotomy between bloggers who positioned themselves as being Scottish or based in Scotland and those who did not wish to state their location in such obvious terms. In fact, during the preliminary phase of this research, it became clear that few fashion and style bloggers positioned themselves as based in the North East of Scotland specifically. This was not a strong part of their identity for a variety of reasons including a lack of blogger opportunities and a region that was not considered fashionable. However, many of the bloggers spoke about their identity as “Scottish”, and saw this as a unique selling point, something that made them stand out in an increasingly crowded blogosphere. This is interesting as it contradicts Bechhofer and McCrone’s (2008) argument that Scottish people were most likely to associate their identity locally, at a town or city level. This was considered and reflected on in the design of the interviews for the main study, where style communicators who referred to themselves: as “Scottish”; as physically placed in “Scotland”; or who referenced a Scottish city or town explicitly in their Instagram biography were selected for interview.

Participants in the preliminary study also varied in terms of how they categorised their blog: some felt it was solely focused on fashion and others categorised their blogs as lifestyle, where they reflected on food, travel, etc. There were a number of reasons for this, ranging from personal interest but also regional challenges, where some felt it was more difficult to construct fashion content in an area where there were few fashion events and opportunities. Participants also reflected on the suitability of backdrops for photoshoots and not having someone to take their photo. With this feedback in mind, the main study was designed to use the more open term “style” instead of fashion when

categorising participant influencers: a term that could cover other elements of personal identity.

A pilot interview was carried out as part of the preliminary study and, as no major changes were made, this interview was also used as a data source. Interviews began by asking respondents to tell the story of how they came to set up their blog; encouraging the participants to engage in story-telling (Mishler, 1986; Hollway and Jefferson, 2008) and helping to uncover deeper insights into the identity of each participant blogger. This approach helped the participant feel at ease when talking about their blog at the beginning of the interview. It was interesting to note that, throughout the interview, participants took what appeared to be genuine pleasure in discussing their blog, appearing engaged and animated on the subject; three actually reflected that they tended not to talk about their blog in this way and enjoyed the opportunity to do so. Their blog was not something they tended to share with their offline friends and so their identity as a style influencer in the North East of Scotland was a fairly solitary one.

Interviews were semi-structured yet evolving, where an initial set of themes and questions were developed and labelled: setting the scene, where participants were asked to reflect on their choice of name for the blog, the length of time blogging and their age; blog inception, where participants were asked to reflect on the story behind the setting-up of their blog and influences; current status, where participants were asked about their current motivations; and engagement, where participants were asked about their relationship with their followers and other bloggers (see Appendix I: Preliminary Interview Script). For the most part, participants spoke at length around the questions and this resulted in further enquiry. However, when one interviewee was not very talkative, there was little opportunity to probe further and any attempt to do so was quite unsuccessful. This was considered in the design of the second round of interviews where participants were asked to reflect on the research topic prior to the interview, and select a set of Instagram posts they felt were representative of their identity as a Scottish/ Scotland-based style influencer.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed in paper format, first individually and then across the set for commonalities. Key themes emerged that were investigated further in the full study, mainly the importance placed on Instagram as a medium for identity construction and fashion communication and a commitment to the

Scottish aspect of their identity, rather than more specific North East of Scotland/ Aberdeen location.

It became clear that bloggers were present on a number of social media, most commonly Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Participants unanimously agreed that Instagram was the most important in that this was most closely linked to their blog: it was where most of the traffic came to their blog; it was where they posted most frequently, on average at least once a day; it was where they themselves discovered and engaged with other bloggers; and it was where they were most conscious of what they posted, adopting a preferred and consistently applied aesthetic. This is in stark contrast to their use of other media, where some of the participants spoke about using Twitter in a more cathartic way and Facebook was generally reserved for offline relationships. Participants also reflected that they were more likely to reveal personal and location-based content on Instagram than on their blog. The prominence of Instagram in the fashion industry is a talking point for the sector (Abidin, 2016; Song, 2016) where “Instagram-only” blogging is increasingly common (Darwin, 2015, np). The findings of the preliminary research therefore suggested that a study focusing on a specific medium (Instagram) but in the context of a broader physical location or nation (Scotland) would provide valuable insights.

#### **4.4 Research population**

The second stage of the research methodology, or what is hereafter referred to as the main study, comprised a further set of 14 qualitative interviews with individuals who use Instagram to communicate personal style content in a public manner. Participants could, therefore, be categorised as style “influencers”, in line with what has become an industry-accepted term (Abidin, 2016, p. 86).

Kiely *et al* (2001) explore commitment to a place as the choice to live and work in Scotland. For the purpose of this thesis, commitment to Scotland is defined as influencers who explicitly use the terms “Scottish”, “Scotland” or refer to a Scottish city in the biography section of their Instagram profiles. Billig (1995, p. 146) refers to this as “voluntary identification”.

There is an active Instagram profile that is dedicated to *Scottish Fashion Bloggers*, which has attracted 975 followers (Instagram, March 2017) and, although this could have been used to gauge the size of the study population on Instagram, it would not capture influencers who do not blog and therefore the population could be estimated as higher than this. As this research was qualitative and followed an IPA approach, the purpose was not to generalise findings and represent a norm; therefore it was not considered important that the sample was representative of a wider population.

When undertaking qualitative research, and more specifically IPA, small sample sizes are recommended in order to facilitate deep and meaningful analysis (Smith, 2004). It is argued that data becomes saturated beyond the point of 12 interviews; this is supported by findings from the preliminary research and Crane *et al's* (2004) study of *Scottish Dress, Ethnicity and Self-identity* that consisted of 11 interviews and where they reported data saturation by interview 9. Equally, Bullingham and Vasconcelos' (2013) study of *the Presentation of Self in the Online World: Goffman and the Study of Online Identities* comprised of 10 interviews.

The current research consisted of 14 interviews to ensure that data saturation had definitely been reached in a subject that is individual and deeply personal to each interviewee. In addition, participants were asked to provide and discuss a selection of texts (Instagram posts) that they felt represented their Scottish identity. During interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their choice of texts, and this helped the researcher engage with interviewees in a manner that was agreeable and meaningful to them, which is appropriate when using an IPA approach (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). These texts amounted to a corpus of 77 Instagram posts, which were subject to further interpretation by the researcher during the analysis phase (Section 4.6).

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling approach, which is recommended in IPA (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). Two individuals from the preliminary study were re-interviewed on the basis that they were still active as Scottish style influencers (through their blog, Instagram and other social media channels) and because they felt that their Scottish identity was important. Further interviewees were purposively identified through hashtags, such as #ScotStreetStyle and #ScottishBloggers, and through snowball sampling (Browne, 2007). Instagram users are not searchable by location or biographical description and so snowball

sampling was useful in helping identify a larger pool of participants from which to draw and who might not use Scottish hashtags. The participants self-selected as part of a purposive sample of targeted individuals who met the sought criteria and were invited to participate in the study. This resulted in 29 potential participants, who were contacted via a private message on Instagram (Appendix III) and which resulted in 14 respondents, all of whom were interviewed. This meant there was a lack of diversity amongst the group: all participants were women aged between 19 and 30 years; all were students or educated at a university level; and all were white. Table 3 represents the profile of research participants.

Pseudonym	Age	Date of Instagram	No. of followers	Main occupation	Physical place
Arran	25	2012	7,378	University lecturer	Aberdeen
Barra	26	2013	428	PR Account manager	Aberdeen
Cara	21	2012	6,446	Student	Glasgow
Danna	27	2013	17.8k	Stay at home mum/ influencer	Australia
Eday	20	2015	2,175	Student	Edinburgh
Fara	30	2013	5,223	Researcher/ influencer	Aberdeen
Gunna	24	2013	1,573	Merchandising assistant	London
Hirta	24	2013	511	Marketing officer	Aberdeen
Iona	23	2013	1,556	Influencer marketer	London
Jura	25	2013	54k	Influencer	Glasgow
Lungay	24	2012	1,949	Communications executive	Glasgow
Mull	29	2012	1,942	Personal assistant	Aberdeen
Skye	23	2011	597	Student	Aberdeen
Tiree	19	2012	709	Student	Edinburgh

The participants in this study could be categorised as micro-influencers with follower numbers ranging from 428 to 54,000; where micro-influencers are typically defined as having between 1k- 50k followers but much higher engagement levels (Moss, 2017), making them increasingly attractive assets to brands who seek to market their products in this way. The participants represented different stages in their Instagram career (Pedroni, 2015). Although most of them had been active on the medium for a number of years, some had only recently begun using it in a more professional manner. Although knowledge of the Scottish style influencer population is imprecise, there are very few who, like Jura, have broken the barrier of 50k followers.

## **4.5 Interview design**

As is appropriate in an inductive approach, the interviews were designed around the research questions identified in Chapters 2 and 3 and outlined earlier in Figure 8. They were also informed by the preliminary study and Crane *et al's* (2004) research into *Scottish Dress and Self-identity*. A pilot interview was carried out and, as no significant changes were made, this was also used as data. As a result of the pilot interview, some questions were reordered or rephrased so as to ensure clarity of meaning. The only impact this had was that the following interviews were slightly shorter (between 40-60 minutes in length, as opposed to 80 minutes).

The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of purposive questions, helping uncover deep insights into the identity of each participant and enabling further questions to be asked. Participants were interviewed and, where possible, interviews were face-to-face. Where a face-to-face interview was not possible, e.g. participants living in London or where one participant lived overseas, a video call was arranged.

### **4.5.1 Photo-interview approach**

In advance of the interview, participants were asked to provide a selection of posts they felt most strongly demonstrated their identity as a Scottish style influencer. This enabled the researcher to gain an objective sense of how participants viewed themselves and their own identity (Reed, 2006) and how Scottishness or their Scottish location influenced this. The inclusion of these additional texts was important in helping draw meaningful conclusions around the complex area of identity in a strongly visual setting and where a verbal narrative was not deemed sufficient to convey this (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). It also created a data set of texts for analysis that could be regarded as illustrative of Scottish identity and style.

Although, as an approach, photo elicitation is recognised in social-science research, this has traditionally involved the researcher selecting the images and showing these to participants during the interview in order to analyse their response (Collier, 1957). There are a number of studies that use photo interviewing in this way as a method for gathering data from children and young people (Alejandro-Wright, 1985; Capello, 2005; Epstein *et al*, 2006; Croghan *et al*, 2008).



However, there has been a shift towards using participants' own photographs (Croghan *et al*, 2008) in photo elicitation, and this is sometimes referred to as photo voice (Wang and Burris, 1997; Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001) or reflexive photography (Ziller, 1990) where participants are asked to take photos that tell a story about a particular issue, event, experience or place (Photovoice, 2017); these might then be discussed during a subsequent interview or in focus groups. Yip-Frazer *et al* (2015) carried out a study using Instagram in what they describe as an updated form of photovoice, where adolescents were asked to use the medium to share photos documenting their experience with diabetes.

Croghan *et al* (2008) use photo elicitation to explore products and the meaning they hold for young consumers. They argue that the method allows researchers to explore "subjective meanings" and "elicit more concrete information, act as a trigger to memory and are likely to evoke a more emotional many-layered response in participants" (*ibid*, p. 346); their findings support that of Prosser and Schwartz (1998), Collier and Collier (1986) and Samuels (2004). Instagram and blogs are recognised as idealised spaces (Rocamora, 2011b; Dennon, 2014) where individuals can construct their identity and, during the preliminary interviews for this thesis, Instagram, in particular, was found to be a place where personal style influencers aspired to curate the "best" version of themselves, with one participant describing this as: "a fantasy of my life... the best bits, you know, the highlights". Vila (2013) supports the view that photo interviewing is particularly useful in helping understand the construction of identity.

Van House (2009, p. 1077) uses the photo-elicitation technique in her study into self-presentation through personal photographs. Participants were given camera phones and access to relevant applications and their usage was observed and formed part of a later interview. She identifies that, when using a more "interventionist" technique such as this, it is important to allow time for participants' activity to "stabilise", which she found tended to take up to eight weeks. Van House's research also involved observing participants who were already using the technologies in what she terms a more "naturalistic" approach (*ibid*).

There are a number of studies that use photo interviewing as a technique to facilitate what Anderson (2004, p. 254) describes as "conversations in place", whether this be physical place or issues of ethnicity. Tonge *et al* (2013) explore visitors' attachment to an Australian national park through the use of photo elicitation and suggest that, when

accompanied by an interview, the method can “evoke or elicit responses of greater emotional depth” (p. 43). Baxter *et al* (2015) explore the role of the main street in strengthening individuals’ sense of place and cultural identity in the Scottish rural town of Kirkwall. Their approach used existing photographs – old and new – from the town’s main street but also incorporated face-to-face interviews and discussion groups as well as online dialogue through Facebook.

Leddy-Owen (2013) uses participatory photography to explore the issue of belonging, national identity and place amongst residents of a suburb in South London. Participants were asked to take photographs that represent Englishness in the context of their suburban London setting, one of which was a photograph of the Royal Wedding on the television and others of pubs and streets. Allen (2012) describes the data that is obtained during photo-elicitation interviews as personal narratives where photos can be used in this way to tell a story and convey the experiences of research participants. Photo elicitation appeared to be particularly well suited to the present research, which combined these themes of place, belonging, national identity and the visual communication of these concepts.

The current study used a form of photo elicitation in which participants were asked to provide a selection of Instagram posts (comprising photos and written text) that they felt reflected their identity as a Scottish style influencer. They were asked to discuss the posts further as part of a qualitative interview, expanding on their choice and reflecting on how they went about choosing the texts and how easy they found this process. This is a novel approach, in that it differs from other examples of photo elicitation: in the present study the individual posts participants were asked to provide and discuss already existed on Instagram, taken and posted by the participant independently. However, the interview enabled these to be grouped together and considered in a set for the first time.

By asking participants to choose a sample of posts, this gave them freedom in terms of the number of images they wished to provide. Image sets ranged from four to 12 images per participant, providing a total of 77. It was interesting to observe the speed with which some participants were able to provide their image set; some responded almost immediately and within an hour of receiving the request and others took time to consider this more deeply, taking two or three days to provide posts. Participants were

asked to describe the process of collating their photos during the interview and whether they found this easy or difficult.

As indicated in Chapter 2, there is a body of literature in the field of blogging, social media and identity construction in a fashion and style context. However, most of this is informed by the analysis of texts (posts and images) (Allen, 2009; Pham, 2011; Rocamora, 2011a; Chittenden, 2013; Luvaas, 2013; Findlay, 2015; Titton, 2015; Downing Peters, 2015). There is only a small number of studies that directly involve the producers of these texts, for example: Reed (2005) and Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) who explore identity construction on blogs through interviews; Palmgren (2013) who carried out textual analysis and email interviews with Swedish fashion bloggers; and Pedroni (2015) who interviewed fashion bloggers in Italy around the motivations and career aspirations for their blog. This, in itself, constitutes a gap in a growing body of literature. Furthermore there is currently no research in the field that involves participants' individual reflection and interaction with their own output, and therefore the present research has taken a novel methodological approach.

#### **4.5.2 Interview structure and questions**

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to define their national identity both openly and also using the Moreno question (1988); participants were then asking to explain their choice. This methodological instrument was developed by Luis Moreno during his PhD thesis where he sought to explore the issue of dual identity amongst Scottish and Catalanian people; it has since been used in other studies of Scottish identity (Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002; McCrone *et al*, 1995). The tool is usually implemented as part of a survey, where respondents will self-select their national identity from one of the following five options: *Scottish not British; More Scottish than British; Equally Scottish and British; More British than Scottish; or British not Scottish.*

Research participants in the current study included a Scottish resident who was born overseas and a Scottish-born individual who was living overseas. In addition, three English-born participants living in Scotland and two Scottish-born participants living in England formed part of the sample. All made claims to a Scottish identity in their

Instagram biographies and communications. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss dual identity in their responses to the Moreno question (1988).

In their study of *Scottish Dress and Self-identity*, Crane *et al* (2004) opened their interviews with questions around ethnicity, as their research took place in the US and therefore focused on Scottish heritage rather than nationhood. Participants in the current study were asked how important their national identity was to their sense of self. This section sought to uncover how participants understood, prioritised and made sense of their national identity.

The second part of the interview focused on Scotland specifically, so as not to assume that all participants would immediately recognise their national identity as Scottish; indeed most participants recognised a dual aspect to their national identity. These questions explored the extent to which participants consider Scotland as salient in their identity and whether this had changed over time (Bond and Rosie, 2006).

The researcher also sought to investigate the symbols that participants associated with Scotland, building on the work of Crane *et al* (2004), in order to uncover and understand the signifiers that participants associated with Scottish identity and place. Their use of symbols was built upon later in the interview and during the analysis of posts (Section 4.6).

During the preliminary interviews, there was a divide between those who considered place as important and those who enjoyed the relative “placelessness” of Instagram. Participants in the main study were asked to reflect on place and how this influenced their identity in terms of fashion and style choices (Saeed *et al*, 1999; Kiely *et al*, 2001; Lloyd, 2014). They were also asked to reflect on where they considered “home”, where they felt they belonged in the world, where they lived and how these factors of place influenced their online identity (McCrone, 2017).

The interview then moved towards a focus on participants’ use of Instagram in terms of why they conveyed Scottishness identity and place through the medium and how they went about doing so. Participants were asked, at this stage, about their choice of posts - how and why they selected these and whether this was something they had found easy or difficult. Participants were also asked to reflect upon potential opportunities and challenges surrounding their Scottish identity on Instagram. This particular question

sought to build on the preliminary interviews, where participants reflected on the challenges and issues of a North East of Scotland location, particularly in relation to a fashion identity.

It has already been noted that an online community of Scottish style influencers exists (Scot Street Style, 2018). McCrone (2017) maintains that community is an important factor in feeling part of a national identity. The final part of the interview sought to explore whether community was important to Scottish style influencers and if so how this influenced their identity. Participants were asked whether they were aware of and engaged in a Scottish community on Instagram, and were then probed to reflect on engagement with Scottish brands and designers as well as other Scottish style influencers.

#### **4.6 Analysis of interview data**

Interviews were recorded, fully transcribed and analysed thematically, using an inductive, IPA approach (Smith, 1996; 2004). Codes were applied to the data and these were initially very open and then applied on an individual line-by-line basis (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). During the interviews, and where apparent, the researcher took notes on non-verbal cues such as body language, tone of voice and emotion; these were then added to the codes.

Each interview was considered unique and, therefore, individual analysis was carried out shortly after the interview took place (Smith, 2004). As the focus is on the idiographic in IPA, themes are not always considered to be more important because they appear across a number of interviews (ibid). This is, at times, evident in the way in which the findings are reported and discussed (Chapter 5). However, after themes had been identified from individual cases, these were considered across all the interviews for commonalities across the sample to identify macro-themes (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). The final stage of analysis involved re-examining some of the more “explicitly interpretative ideas”, at which point the analysis took on “a more speculative, questioning dimension” (ibid, 2011, p. 109).

In their research, Bond and Rosie (2002) found that Scottish identity ranked highly against other markers such as age, gender, social class and other lifestyle elements, e.g.

mother, wife. This idea was taken into account in this study, where participants' Instagram biographies (i.e. the text that appears on the user's profile and which amounts to a maximum of 150 characters) were analysed for additional markers of identity; it was a sampling requirement that participants stated Scottish, Scotland or their Scottish city as part of this (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Example Instagram profile and biography (Author, 2018)

NVivo software was utilised as an electronic method for interacting with the data; this was useful when applying and managing codes and organising these into themes. Using software can help ensure more rigorous analysis of the data but a combination of electronic and paper-based techniques are usually advised when carrying out qualitative research (Welsh, 2002). NVivo is not designed to undertake analysis and, in fact, was only used as an electronic means of coding the interview data, where codes and themes were electronically stored and could be easily retrieved (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). This meant themes could be structured more logically, which helped with the writing up of findings (Larkin and Thompson, 2011).

#### 4.7 Semiotic analysis and iconology

Barthes studies fashion as a social construct in a number of his texts, most notably in *The Fashion System* (1967) where he explores fashion communication as it appears in magazines. By observing clothing as real, written and image based, Barthes investigates the components within these and how they relate to one another. Barthes' theories provide valuable insights into the communication of fashion and style and form grounding for further analysis of participants' texts. Although Barthes' theories predate the advent of social media, which are heralded as having revolutionised fashion communication (Allen, 2009), they are still very relevant in helping make sense of the components within images, mainly "people, places and things" and the meanings they represent (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 92; Rocamora, 2011a). He is regarded as seminal in the field of semiotics and significant in the context of fashion communication, where his theories are cited widely in the field (e.g. Allen, 2009; Rocamora, 2011a; Pedroni, 2015; Titton, 2015).

Barthian semiotics (1957a) and Panofskian (1955) iconology are concerned with deconstructing the layers of meaning within an image. Denotation or representational meaning is the first level of understanding that can be taken from what is portrayed in an image (e.g. a photograph depicting a camera) and this is sometimes referred to as the "literal" meaning (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 94). Connotation is the second level of meaning and is concerned with understanding the image in terms of what it signifies and how – sometimes referred to as the "symbolic" meaning (ibid); for example, where a photograph of a camera (denoted) might connote creativity and a technical competence for photography. When considered within the context of a style influencer on Instagram, the image might suggest that the creator values a professional photography style and takes his or her own photographs.

Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 98) recommends the development of an "inventory of techniques" when carrying out a semiotic analysis of images. For the purpose of this research, Barthes' (1957a) framework was used to underpin the analysis of the 77 Instagram posts that the participants provided. Barthes identified three elements through which an image can be analysed: "the linguistic message" (p. 37); "the denoted image" (p. 42); and the "rhetoric of the image" (p. 46). These three elements are all observable in the sample posts and were analysed in order to make sense of the overall

post through examination of the written caption (the linguistic message), the image as represented (denoted as reality) and the image as understood (connoted).

Iconology is rooted in the field of art history and considers the broader picture by combining visual semiotic analysis with “contextual research”, e.g. the form of comparison across a body of works/ texts and the context in which they were produced (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 101); this is sometimes referred to as “integrative interpretation” or “iconological symbolism” (ibid, p. 115-116). In iconology, meaning might be limited to a specific audience and so the use of terms such as “suggest” and “allude” are recommended when discussing representations (ibid, p. 108).

The posts and photographs that were analysed during this study could be regarded as documentary in style or as a form of photo journalism, where context is an instrumental part of the viewing experience (Becker, 1995; Becker, 1998); contextual understanding could be obtained through historical reference, intertextuality or, indeed, comparison across a set of images. On Instagram, the sequence in which photos appear, as part of a photo waterfall, might also be regarded as important (Song, 2016).

For the purpose of this research, contextual research would be secondary data from the literature review and discussion of the sample posts during interview. A contextual limitation of this approach is that the analysis was carried out in Scotland by a Scottish researcher and follower of style influencers. Thus, some indicators of Scottishness, in this context, might be more readily identified and understood, e.g. recognition of a specific location or setting and associated meanings.

A review of literature in the area of Scottish identity revealed the following as prevailing symbols of Scottish identity: landscape; the Scottish flag; language; tartan; heather; paintings; poetry; history; authors/ publications; cultural output; wilderness as the “antithesis of culture” (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 199; McCrone, 2017). Crane *et al* (2004, p. 72) refer to these as “ethnic symbols”, Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 95) as “cultural attributes” and Barthes (1957a, p.24) as “object signs”. This type of meaning transfer is referred to as “iconographical symbolism” where an individual, object or place is likely to transfer some (or indeed many) accompanying associations (Panofsky, 1955, p. 54).

Interestingly, this idea is widely recognised in relation to Scotland as a nation in the symbols and imagery that surround it (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010). In this



context, Scotland itself could be regarded as a “figurative symbol” made up of a series of signs (VanLeeuwen, 2001). Van Leeuwen relates the latter theory to ideological meaning, which is relevant in the context of the current study, where Scottish identity is explored in terms of how it is understood and how and why it forms part of influencers’ online identities.

In his book *Mythologies*, Barthes (1957b) explores the notion of myth through a collection of essays on topics that include everyday items, brands and individuals. He explores the meanings that have become associated with these objects as observed through the use of a consistent narrative and style of language. The concept of myth is regarded as particularly significant in the present study where language is recognised as important in the construction and maintenance of national identity (Anderson, 1983; Billig, 1995). Incidentally, myth in the more traditional sense of the term is also observable in the Scottish context, where McCrone *et al* (1995) maintain that much of Scotland’s iconography and cultural associations stem from legend and a romanticised notion of the past, which has been amplified over decades of reproduction, through its depiction in literature, art and popular culture (Crawford, 2007; Martin, 2009).

*Pictures, to be sure, are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analysing or diluting it... a photograph will be a kind of speech for us in the same way as a newspaper article; even the objects will become speech, if they mean something* (Barthes, 1957a, p. 133).

This analysis sought to draw conclusions around, not just why, but how Scottish style influencers communicate national identity and place through Instagram. The sample texts and their connotations of “Scottishness” were analysed in order to draw conclusions around how Scottish identity is understood today and communicated online. In order to enable this type of analysis, it must be possible to say – with relative certainty – that an image depicts a specific person/ object or place (VanLeeuwen, 2001). Participants were asked to self-select Instagram posts that they felt represent their identity as a Scottish style influencer. Therefore, it can safely be assumed that these texts convey this idea in the eyes of the influencers themselves.

It is believed that asking participants to self-select the posts for analysis ensured that no pre-supposed assumptions were made on the part of the researcher as to what Scottish identity and style might be (Van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001). This also enabled

participants to select as few or as many posts as they wished which, in its self, is revealing in terms of the visibility of Scottish identity and participants' consciousness of this.

The current study took the following techniques into account when analysing the images: pose (people and objects); styling (colours and filters); photography (lighting, framing and distance); foreground; and background. Each image was analysed individually and themes were identified. The accompanying captions were also analysed to uncover meaning and participants' use of language was also considered, e.g. use of Scottish words, in line with Douglas (2009), and examples of banal nationalism, in line with Billig (1995).

It is important to emphasise that, although the sample texts were analysed fully, this analysis did not take place in isolation. Participants were, in the interviews, asked to reflect on their understanding and use of Scottish symbols and discuss their choice of posts. This is important as McCrone (2017, p. 402) reflects on the tension between "culture" and "nature" in the depiction of national identity, where photos are not always factual because the creator has adopted their own "way of seeing" things, e.g. Scottish landscape (Berger, 1972, p. 10).

The sample texts were discussed as part of an interview and thus their analysis was three-fold: first the texts were discussed in the interview and the interview transcript was analysed thematically; secondly the sample posts were analysed separately for their denoted and connoted meaning (Panofsky; 1955; Barthes, 1957a); and thirdly, the posts were analysed alongside themes in the interview data and literature in order to explore them within the wider context of Scottish identity as expressed through personal style. This level of interrogation is considered appropriate in an IPA approach where multiple interactions with the data are advised (Smith, 2004).

#### **4.8 Ethical considerations**

As the research is concerned with Instagram as an example of social media, it is particularly apt to consider the ethical tensions around interaction with human subjects in this domain. The Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR, 2012, p.6) sets out ethical guidelines that relate to "human subjects", "public/ private" and "data (text)/

persons”, which were followed in the design and execution of the research. In terms of human subjects, an open policy of full disclosure of research intent was operated and the research was not conducted in a covert manner. In terms of the public/ private sphere, the AOIR recommends that the researcher consider always the fact that “people may operate in public spaces but maintain strong perceptions or expectations of privacy” (ibid). In terms of data (text)/ persons, the AOIR’s guidelines are particularly pertinent in that they question the extent to which a virtual entity equates with a human subject: “is one’s digital information an extension of the self?” (p.7). This might be considered particularly relevant in the context of this study, which explores the construction of Scottish identity and personal style through Instagram.

Participants in this study could also be labelled as research subjects, in that the texts they provided and discussed were subjected to further interpretation by the researcher. Participants were made aware of this at the outset before agreeing to participate in the research. This raises the question as to whether or not participants were more selective on this basis – potentially omitting more personal images. However, the fact that these posts were available publicly on Instagram would suggest that this was unlikely. Participants’ consent was sought electronically through the initial correspondence, where the purpose of the research was made clear (see Appendix III).

Pseudonyms are used throughout the findings and discussion in order to protect participants’ identities (Chapter 5). In line with the context of this study, participants are named after Scottish Isles. It should be noted that these locations serve no purpose beyond providing a means of differentiation, whilst assuring anonymity, and to humanise individual participants when discussing findings; something that was believed to be important in this qualitative study of identity.

Participants’ Instagram posts are introduced and discussed at relevant points during Chapter 5. Where this is the case, usernames are omitted or obscured, as well as the names of any followers who have interacted with the post. Only those posts that were provided directly by participants were included and participants gave consent for these to be reproduced in the PhD thesis.

#### **4.8.1 Anonymity of research participants**

The issue of anonymity was a key consideration and something that evolved during the research process. As has already been discussed, participants were assured of anonymity at the outset when consenting to take part in the research. It is important to acknowledge that participants were assured anonymity at the beginning as this might have led them to respond in a more open and honest manner. However, when writing up the research findings, interview data in the form of quotes and imagery were synthesised and the issue of anonymity became problematic.

When presenting the research findings, a consistent pseudonym was used for all quotes and imagery relating to each individual participant. This presented an ethical dilemma in that participants might be recognised due to the visual nature of their Instagram posts (many of which convey the participants themselves) and if participants could be recognised from their posts then their interview responses would no longer be anonymous. In particular, given that participants were self-selecting and drawn purposively from a small sample of Scottish style influencers, they might be recognised by each other.

It was necessary to reengage with participants and obtain a more formal letter of consent (Appendix IV) in order to ensure that the thesis could be made available: to future researchers through RGU's open access repository; to the participants themselves; and for research output in the form of journal articles, books and conference papers. The issue of anonymity was highlighted in an accompanying email to participants (see Appendix V) and they were given: a document containing all direct quotations associated with their pseudonym; their pen portrait; their information extracted from Tables 3, 4 and 5; and the abstract for the thesis. At this stage, participants were also given the option for their pseudonym to be removed from any quotations that they would prefer to remain anonymous. The decision was made to redact one participant's imagery, who did not respond to this more formal request for consent within the allocated period of time.

#### 4.9 Evaluation of methodology

The current research represents a substantive body of work that was undertaken over a period of around 36 months. The study was carried out in an efficient and thorough manner, with new literature and changes in social media being reviewed on a regular basis.

This qualitative study drew findings from a small sample of 14 participants, as is considered appropriate when using an IPA approach (Smith, 2004). Similar studies reported data saturation at around 10-12 interviews, e.g. Crane *et al* (2004) and Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013). Furthermore a small sample size was considered appropriate as the issue of personal identity is complex and the purpose of the study was not to make generalisations but to advance theory and contribute to knowledge across the fields of identity, national identity and fashion communication. The sampling criteria for this research was that participants identified as Scottish, Scotland-based or within a Scottish city in their Instagram biography; this self-selection resulted in a lack of diversity amongst participants who were all white women, aged between 19 and 30 years and were either students or educated at a university level. This could be perceived as a limitation and something that should be taken into account in future research.

A preliminary study helped inform the main study and ensured that the study was appropriate and fit for purpose. Equally, the use of a photo-interview technique acquired a corpus of 77 Instagram posts, which were subjected to further analysis and provided a rich source of data.

The research context is considered dynamic in its focus on Instagram as an example of social media and where the fashion industry is fast-paced. The main implication is that Instagram became more significant and that studies focusing on this medium are increasingly being published (e.g. Abidin, 2016). This meant that the literature review remained an ongoing process throughout the research timeframe, where literature was reviewed right up until the final stages of writing up the thesis in July 2018. This study is exploratory in that it sought to investigate the ideas of national identity and style in a new context. As such, limitations and implications for future research are particularly important and should be acknowledged. Contribution to knowledge, limitations and implications for future research are addressed as part of the conclusions in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 5 Findings and discussion**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the construction of national identity and place amongst style influencers who position themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. It is argued that their experiences and output can build an understanding of modern Scotland in a new and unexplored context. The following objectives relate specifically to the primary research findings that are discussed in this chapter:

- To investigate critically the motivations behind the adoption and communication of Scottish identity by personal style influencers;
- To understand how personal style influencers make sense of their own national identity and the value they place on this;
- To investigate critically how and why Scottish identity is projected through Instagram.

These findings are based on semi-structured interviews with 14 Scottish style influencers and a corpus of 77 Instagram posts that participants provided in advance of the interview. These posts formed part of the interview where participants were asked to discuss and reflect upon these. The interview data and posts were analysed separately and then considered together for commonalities across the data; this level of interaction is advised when using an IPA approach to ensure that suitable depth is achieved (Smith, 2004; Larkin and Thompson, 2011). The findings are discussed in this chapter with reference to existing literature in the fields of identity, Scottish identity and fashion and existing studies of fashion blogs and influencers.

Eight research questions were identified during the literature review (Chapters 2 and 3). As is often the case in IPA, and where an inductive approach is adopted, these questions are not answered in isolation within a particular theme. The discussion begins by addressing the construction of Scottish identity on Instagram more broadly and is then structured into the following macro-themes: Scottish identity as unique and attractive; Instagram versus reality; personal style as influenced by place; symbols of Scottish identity; celebrating Scottishness; Scottish people as welcoming and friendly; London comparisons and the profession; and the significance of home and belonging to a place. Participants are introduced in pen portraits at relevant points throughout the chapter and sample posts are included and discussed where appropriate. Although research questions are not constricted within a particular theme, where findings do

relate directly to a research question these are signposted. Key ideas are summarised at the end of each sub-section and a chapter summary is included.

## 5.1 Constructing Scottish identity on Instagram

*If you would change the national identity to like “Instagram” identity then I would say 100% Scottish (Fara).*

Throughout the interviews, participants were encouraged to discuss Scottishness, their understanding of their own national identities and their communication of this on Instagram. For the most part, participants understood what was being asked of them and discussed these ideas fully during the interviews, each of which lasted between 40 minutes and 80 minutes. This study sought to build on existing research in the field of Scottish identity, investigating how this is constructed, communicated and potentially reimagined by participant influencers through the personal style they convey on Instagram.

Table 4: Participants’ national identities				
Participant	Age	National identity (Moreno, 1988)	Physical location	Home
Arran	25	More Scottish than British	Aberdeen	Aberdeen
Barra	26	Equally Scottish and British	Aberdeen	Scotland
Cara	21	Equally Scottish and British	Glasgow	Glasgow
Danna	27	More Scottish than Australian	Australia	Aberdeen
Eday	20	Equally Scottish and British	Edinburgh	Edinburgh
Fara	30	More Greek than Scottish	Aberdeen	Nowhere
Hirta	24	More British than Scottish	Aberdeen	Scotland
Gunna	24	More Scottish than British	London	Scotland
Iona	23	More Scottish than British	London	Edinburgh
Jura	25	Equally Scottish and British	Glasgow	Glasgow/ London
Lungay	24	Scottish not British	Glasgow	Scotland
Mull	29	Equally Scottish and British	Aberdeen	Scotland
Skye	23	Equally Scottish and British	Aberdeen	Scotland
Tiree	19	More Scottish than British	Edinburgh	Edinburgh

First of all, it is important to note that not all participants felt complete in their Scottish identity (Crane *et al*, 2004). This is illustrated in Table 4, where most participants struggled to identify themselves as wholly Scottish (Moreno, 1988). There were various

reasons for this but generally it was because they had been born outside of Scotland, e.g. Greece or England, or that they were now living outside of Scotland, e.g. London or Australia. This is quite surprising, given their choice to identify as Scottish/ Scotland-based on Instagram, but is in line with other studies of Scottish identity, where it was found that dual identity and dual identity with priority towards Scotland tends to be the most popular choices (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002).

Participants were all found to be constructing an image of Scottishness and Scotland, projecting this through Instagram and its various features. The quote at the beginning of this section is taken from Fara, a participant who was reluctant to define herself as wholly Scottish, having been born and spent most of her life in Greece. However, this same participant felt and understood that her Instagram identity, and indeed her success, was almost entirely dependent on her Scottish identity. She even claimed to have lost some of her audience during a spell where she was visiting her family in Greece. This suggests that place and national identity, or at least consistency of place, is important to a style influencer's identity in terms of how this is received by their followers. The idea that influencers are interested in portraying a consistent place as part of their Instagram identity, and that this is influenced by a sense of their audience, supports studies in the field of fashion blogging where consistency was found to be important to bloggers and their followers (Nardi *et al*, 2004; Awaha, 2010; Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Titton, 2015; Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017).

Pen portrait 1: Fara is a self-proclaimed nomad and one of the more career-focused participants who spoke about herself as a "brand". Although she identified herself predominantly as Greek, having been born and lived there most of her life, she appeared to have built strong ties with Scotland and these are enhanced through her online identity (blog and Instagram); which she labelled "100%" Scottish. Having been voted amongst the "top 10 Scottish bloggers", an accolade that appears in her Instagram biography, she acknowledged that her followers respond most favourably to Scottish content and that this was an influence for her in terms of how she styled her online identity.

Participants varied in the extent to which they were conscious of their Scottish identity, with some appearing to communicate this more naturally, evolving as a circumstantial part of being in Scotland, living their day-to-day life and sharing parts of this on Instagram. One participant, who seemed to be more consciously promoting her Scottish



identity, was Eday. She also struggled with her feelings of authenticity as a Scottish style influencer, referring to herself initially as “half Scottish, half English” and then concluding that she was probably more English saying “I guess that’s obvious from the way I sound”; perhaps this was as a result of being interviewed by someone who is audibly Scottish.

Pen portrait 2: Eday is an Edinburgh-based student and passionate about Scottish fashion, culture and politics. She was reluctant to categorise herself as wholly Scottish due to the fact she was born and had spent most of her life in Birmingham. She presented strong opinions on what she feels is a lack of a Scottish fashion industry, and saw it very much as the role of style influencers, like herself, to promote this. Her enthusiasm is visible in the images she chose where she is, in her own words, “championing” Scottish brands in all the sample posts. Most of these appear stylised, suggesting she is conscious in her communication of these.



♥️ 💬 📍 📌  
Liked by Jules, 134 others  
urbanity\_uk Totally in love with my new @oliviarosethelabel top 😍 Available at @sdxffashion  
💕 Picture by @symolachan  
View all 134 likes  
134 likes

Figure 12: Eday near her home in Edinburgh

Figure 12 is illustrative of Eday's sample posts, most of which were taken outside and where she is wearing and actively promoting Scottish designers. The photo is romantic in style, both the garment itself and the background, which feature a historic built environment that Eday reveals is close to where she lives. The black outfit contrasts with her pale skin and hair and the contrast in fabrics gives this style an edge against a more muted backdrop, offering a sense that she might stand out in this setting. The backdrop conveys a village-like feel, despite being taken in Scotland's capital, Edinburgh.

Throughout the interviews it was apparent that, like Fara and Eday, some participants were more conscious of the image they were projecting than others. Fara, in particular, reflected on audience perception often during the interview, suggesting she considers this quite deeply. This supports studies in fashion blogging where the relationship between bloggers and their followers is regarded as equal (Pham, 2011; Rocamora, 2011b).

*I don't mention Greece that much so I think that people might think that I'm Scottish but I never denied the fact that I'm Greek. So I might confuse people... I think they do think I'm Scottish, because I feature Scotland so much (Fara).*

Fara described her use of everyday images of Aberdeen, where she lives, works and studies. She felt that, as a style influencer, it was her role to promote Aberdeen as an attractive place to visit, work and study; in fact, she was particularly interested in promoting Aberdeen to prospective students. This is interesting because, as someone who came to Aberdeen herself for the first time as a student, it seems that she feels she is feeding her audience with the types of images she herself would have liked to see before moving there.

In terms of how Fara communicated her identity as Scottish and Aberdeen-based, she was most commonly found to be sharing photos of her daily life, e.g. going for coffees and riding her bicycle. These activities in themselves could be placeless, except that their settings form a key part of the photograph in all cases. She appeared most interested in sharing images of Old Aberdeen where she lives, works and studies and spoke about her continuous search for new corners and places to share. This suggests that, although her communication of Scottish identity began quite naturally, as her audience grew and responded positively to these posts, she began to perform more to this vision of herself and her location (Goffman, 1956). During the interview, she spoke

of her career as an influencer and the “effort” she made with her Scottish imagery where she aimed to “show the best bits”. This level of attention and selectivity demonstrates what Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013, p. 107) call “self-embellishment”, but Fara aimed to embellish herself through the place with which she had become strongly associated:

*So then I was like, ok Aberdeen should take off, my Instagram should focus more on Aberdeen, where I live, what I do on a daily basis and that's Old Aberdeen. So I started using the same filter, I started trying to portray Aberdeen, not as a grey place, but as a place with nice architecture, with soft tones (because I apply a nice warm filter), with cobbled streets, with sash windows, loads of greenery. So, yeah, I just try to find beauty in places.*

Two participants lived in London. Although they still regarded themselves as Scottish, having been born and lived most of their lives there, they posed a stark contrast to those living in Scotland, where their communication of Scottish identity was far less linked in their day-to-day activities.

Pen portrait 3: Iona has lived and worked in London for the past six months, but was born and spent most of her life in Scotland. In the interview, she reflected on her perception of her own national identity before and after moving to London where, for example, she used to try and tone down her Scottish accent but now embraces it. Of all the interviewees, Iona appeared the most varied in her style, and this is evident in her sample posts (Figure 13). She even refers to herself as a “chameleon” in one of these (Figure 43).



Figure 13: Iona's sample posts

When reflecting on her Scottish identity, Iona said that it was something she rarely mentioned directly on Instagram (in written terms) and when she did it was in a fleeting way. This suggests that Scottishness is a natural part of her identity, and not something she thinks about often (Billig, 1995; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009), or that she might be communicating this in other ways, i.e. through her style and images. She was found to refer to herself as a “Scottish girl” in some of her posts and spoke of using the hashtag #ScottishBlogger in all her posts. She explained: “I feel like a bit of a phony calling myself a London blogger, because I feel like at heart I’m still a Scottish blogger”. This supports work in the field of Scottish identity where it is suggested that a sense of home and belonging is particularly important to Scottish people (Bond and Rosie, 2006; McCrone, 2017).

In terms of her appearance, Iona imagined herself in a somewhat stereotypically Scottish way, reflecting, for example, on her sensitivity to the sun. Her style was vibrant and amplified by her bright red hair, which she admitted is dyed. She reflected on her colourful style in the interview and felt that her hair was a large part of her aesthetic appeal, making her distinctive and memorable:

*If I wasn't Scottish I possibly would have been less inclined to style myself in this way...*

Iona rejected her London identity and preferred to think of herself as Scottish and so her exaggerated style is perhaps influenced by the fact she was living outside of Scotland. The idea of Scottish identity as more important and conscious when living outside of Scotland was also reflected in the experiences of the other participants to whom this applied (Gunna and Danna).

Pen portrait 4: Gunna was born and brought up in Scotland but was living and working in London at the time of interview. She reflected on feeling more attached to her Scottish heritage since moving to London. She felt more conscious of her Scottish identity in London and regarded this as important in defining her sense of self. When choosing her sample posts, Gunna appeared to do so with a strong sense of her personal style in mind. Three of the garments (silver boots, white trainers, jeans) appear in more than one of the posts (Figure 14).

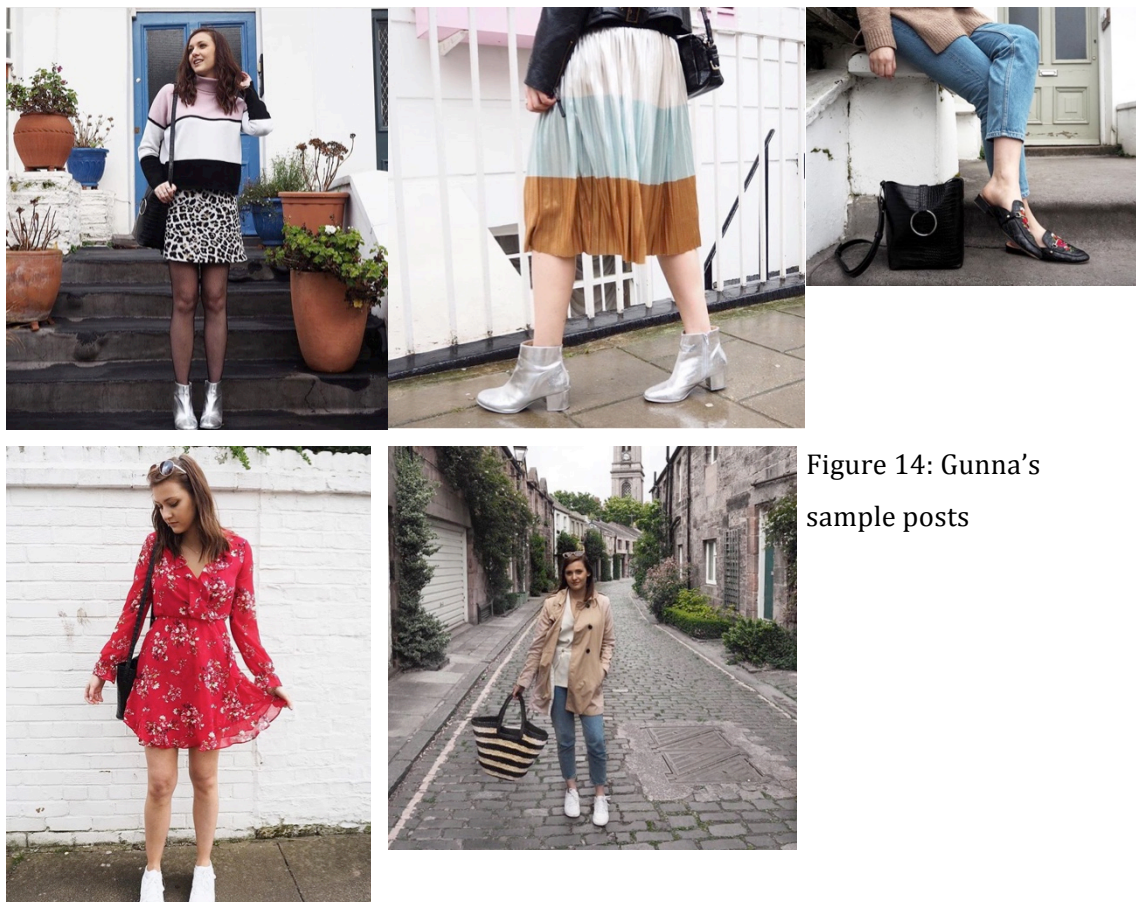


Figure 14: Gunna's sample posts

Both Iona and Gunna reflected on their Instagram identities and how these differed when they were in London versus Scotland, in terms of the styling of photographs and how they went about sharing these with their followers. The contrast between London and Scotland as separate entities is explored further in Section 5.6. Both participants felt that, when they were visiting family in Scotland, this marked an occasion and the posts tended to be more personal and memorable. Sometimes these posts appeared to be constructed around what they saw as a Scottish image or identity; for example, when discussing Figure 15, Iona indicated that her outfit and location were planned to synchronise (Song, 2016): she was experimenting with a new style and felt a certain setting was needed to showcase this.



Figure 15: Iona's dark and brooding look

In the interview she explained that the photo was taken directly outside the driveway leading to her family home:

*I knew I was coming home for the weekend and I knew I wanted to get some photos because it was just such incredible scenery I had to take advantage of*

*it... It's definitely quite a dark and stormy look and I feel like that's quite reflective of Scotland as well...*

She described this image, part of a series that appeared on both her Instagram and blog, as one of her favourite shots, due to its moody atmosphere. It connotes her rural Scottish “home” as remote and peopleless (McCrone, 2017). Her use of the hashtags #autumn and #winter suggest a cold climate. Although the image could be described as street style (Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008), Iona’s description indicates that it is constructed and styled rather than immediate and natural (ibid; Rocamora, 2011a).

Some participants appeared less conscious of their Scottish identity and how they communicated this, considering it more deeply during the interview, perhaps even for the first time. When asked how she communicates her Scottish identity online Arran revealed: “that’s an interesting question and at first I wondered if I did...”

These participants found the process of choosing posts that represented their Scottish identity more difficult, for example one participant reflected:

*I found it quite difficult because on my Instagram I don't really think “oh I'll post this because it'll make it obvious I'm in Scotland” or “oh that was Scottish”... (Skye)*

Arran is a participant who posed an interesting case:

Pen portrait 5: Arran has lived in Aberdeen most of her life and considers the city her home. She lives with her parents in the same house in which she grew up and talks fondly of this as a period granite property, in a style that she would aspire to own one day. The house features strongly in her Instagram identity, with all outfit posts photographed against her white front door. Although she lives with her parents, both of whom she describes as “proud to be Scottish”, they now split their time between Aberdeen and Italy. This, alongside the influence of her boyfriend, who she describes as “anti social media”, presents a struggle for Arran who, despite strong ties to her hometown, chooses to reveal very little of her city. She prefers to share experiences of visiting other parts of Scotland where she might be less physically traceable.

Although initially unsure about how, or indeed if, she communicated her Scottish identity on Instagram, Arran provided the largest sample of posts for analysis. It is also interesting that, despite being asked to choose photos that represent her own identity, almost all her sample posts do not feature her; in fact she only appears in two of these. This suggests that she felt more was revealed about her Scottish identity through the photos she takes, where the audience is seeing the world (or in this case Scotland) through her own eyes (Figure 16).

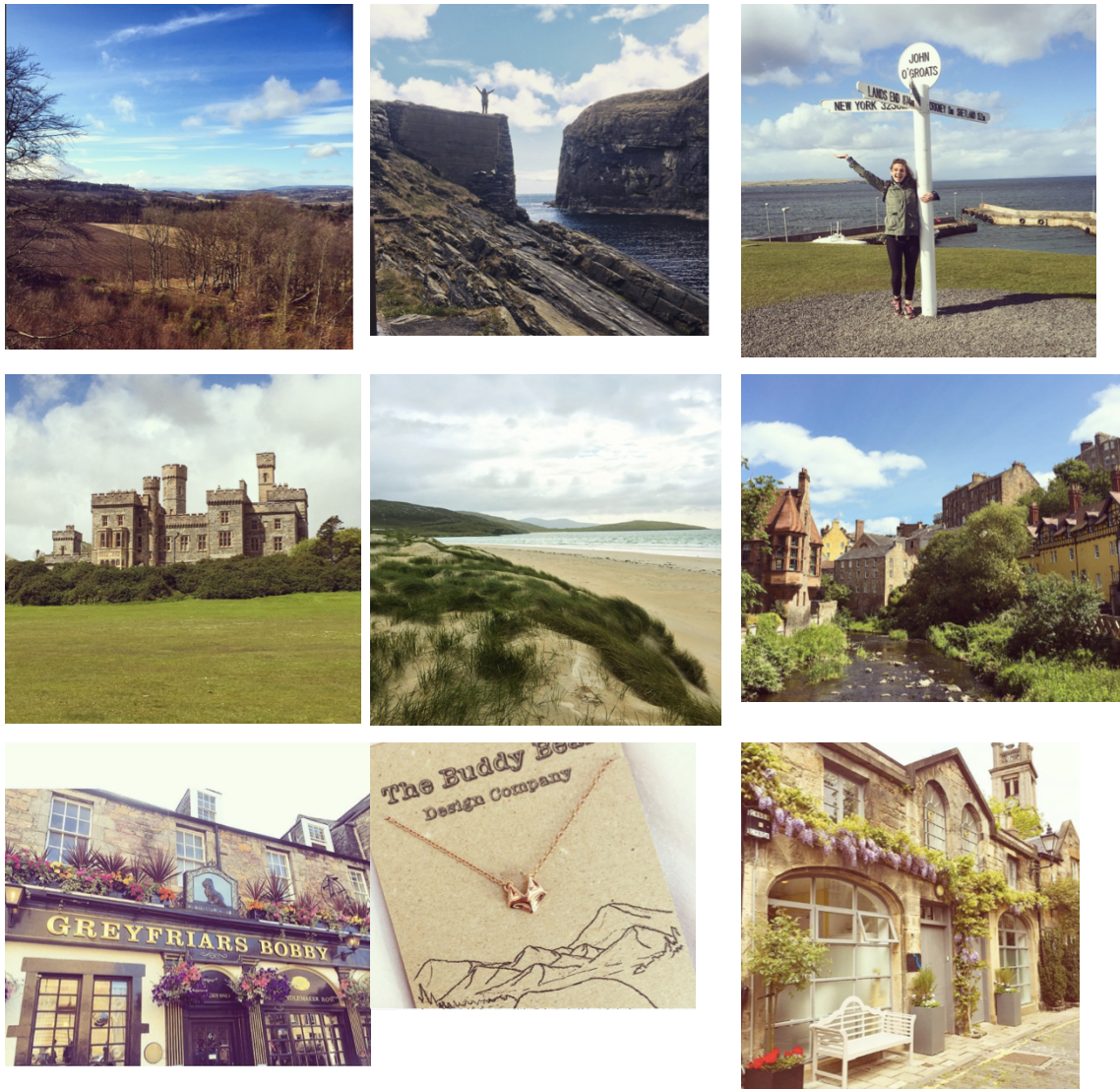






Figure 16: Arran's sample posts

When asked to reflect on her choice of posts, Arran felt that her style posts (which were all quite carefully constructed and taken outside the front door of her family home) did not depict her Scottish identity. This is particularly interesting given the granite backdrop - something she spoke of as a key signifier of Aberdeen. Most of Arran's sample posts highlight adventures she has had outwith her own city. This is in stark contrast to Fara, who shared mostly images of Aberdeen despite not having any longstanding emotional connection to the city.

These examples show that some participants communicated Scotland and Scottishness in quite an obvious way, e.g. Iona, Skye and Arran, but this was not always conscious and intentional. It was only when they were asked to reflect upon their Scottish identity (during the current research) that they appeared to become aware that they were communicating this at all, despite signalling Scottishness in their Instagram biography.

Other participants, like Fara, Eday and Cara, were more intentional in their construction of Scottish identity:

*I push the Scottish thing a lot, because I feel like not as many people do... Because, for me, that's kind of my brand to an extent. I think [it's] what helps me stand out a bit from like the blogging crowd as a whole... the fact that I am a Scottish, Glasgow, blogger (Cara).*

Although all participants considered themselves to be Scottish, at least on some level, and this was something they communicated through Instagram, some appeared to regard their Scottishness as more salient on Instagram than others (Kleine and Kleine,

1993). This is demonstrated in the following examples, both taken from Glasgow-based participants: Jura, the most career driven of the participants reflected on her Scottish location as merely a backdrop for her street-style posts saying “obviously I know the streets here, but would other people recognise that? Maybe they do?” Whereas Lungay, the only participant who regarded herself as wholly Scottish (Table 4) was more passionate about her Scottishness, confessing “I don’t feel that I [communicate my Scottish identity] as well as I could” and “I’d like to use it more”. This illustrates that Lungay felt her Scottishness was an important part of her identity, whereas Jura regarded this as more incidental.

The examples that have been discussed here show that participants varied in the extent to which they were conscious in their construction of Scottish identity on Instagram (RQ2). All participants identified as Scottish and most claimed a dual identity or indicated a preference towards Scotland when asked the Moreno question (1988). Participants approached the task of choosing a sample of posts that represent their Scottish style identity in various ways and some appeared to find this easier than others. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the process of choosing their sample posts and those who found it more difficult were still able to provide as many – sometimes more – posts. This suggests that an influencer’s Scottish identity was not necessarily any less visible on Instagram because it was less consciously constructed.

## **5.2 Scottish identity as distinctive and attractive**

*I guess it's just part of me and... it is my identity, but it's more just... everyone online is like a girl online living in London. I feel like, a lot of people live in London... but I think it's a differentiating factor, you're not from here (Gunna).*

Scotland is regarded, in the literature, as highly recognisable internationally (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010). There is a vast and visual iconography that is associated with Scotland and this includes items of “material culture” like tartan, which are widely available for purchase (Crane *et al*, 2004, p. 67; Cheape, 2010, p. 14; Hume, 2010). The allure of Scotland and Scottish identity is attributable to a sense of heritage and myth that surrounds these images of Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Munro, 2010) and has been reproduced throughout the decades in literature and film (*ibid*; Young and Martin,

2017). Indeed, art and literature itself has influenced this at times (Crawford, 2007; Martin, 2009).

It became apparent, throughout the interviews, that all interviewees regarded Scotland, for the most part, in a highly positive light. Participants spoke very fondly about the nation and some of the traditions and symbols with which they associated it. This supports Anderson's (1983) argument that it is the manner within which communities are imagined that makes them unique. It also upholds McCrone *et al's* (1995, p. 207) belief that the Scottish myth (in terms of whether or not it is real) is unimportant and instead one must seek to explore its cultural meaning in the present day.

It is perhaps not surprising that participants regarded the nation in a positive manner, given they had chosen to associate themselves with Scotland on Instagram and were all attached to the country in some way. However, this allure of Scotland as an attractive and distinctive place seemed to be one of the key motivations for the construction of Scottish identity on Instagram. It also appeared to be one of the key reasons as to why participants felt attached to the nation.

Perhaps, also, it is not surprising that the participants who were living outside of Scotland appeared to be more conscious of their Scottish identity. They saw themselves as different and felt their Scottishness made them stand out, both on Instagram and in their day-to-day lives. Thus this was another fundamental motivation for the construction of Scottish identity on Instagram.

*I suppose because I've realised it is such a big part of my identity. Partly because it's a good way to identify me. At work there's actually five people called [name] so I can be the Scottish one (Iona).*

Some participants felt their Scottish identity was most prevalent on Instagram, a way of being individual and standing out in an increasingly crowded realm:

*I think it can be hard to be unique on Instagram because a lot of people post about the same lipstick or stuff like that (Tiree).*

Tiree spoke of using her Scottish location to create interesting and distinctive content, for example supporting local Scottish businesses and using unique backdrops in her

posts, e.g. Scottish beaches.

Pen portrait 6: Tiree is a fashion student who splits her time between Edinburgh, where she considers home, and Aberdeen, where she lives and studies during term time. Throughout the interview, she reflected on her experiences of studying abroad whilst at school and university. These experiences have made her more conscious of her Scottish identity in terms of what this means to her and what it might mean to others.

During the interview, Tiree reflected on the reception she received as a Scottish person during trips abroad and when living and studying abroad on two separate occasions. All participants reflected on positive experiences of being Scottish outside of Scotland – when travelling, visiting and/ or living in other countries. They seemed to feel that a Scottish identity was a recognisable and attractive trait. This is something that they transferred to Instagram as a medium that has the power to reach a global community (Song, 2016) and where their Scottishness might be regarded as unique and interesting. Only three participants were living outside of Scotland: two in London (Gunna and Iona) and one in Australia (Danna).

Pen portrait 7: Danna is a Scottish born and bred ex-pat, living in Australia under dual citizenship. To Danna, Scotland has a strong connotation of home and family. It is also the place where memorable life events took place, such as her wedding. She feels her Instagram identity is strongly influenced by her Scottish roots in terms of her lifestyle and values. She described her Instagram as “a bit like a diary” and uses this, at times, to feel closer to her family from which she is physically separated; for example, posting photos that remind her of home to alleviate homesickness – potentially reinforcing her Scottish identity not just to her followers but also to herself.

Danna, who was living in Australia at the time of interview, reflected on her Scottish identity as a point of difference, both offline, where her Scottish accent attracted attention in everyday situations like the supermarket, and on Instagram, amongst her audience. As one of the participants with the highest follower numbers (Table 3), she was highly conscious of her Instagram audience and appeared to be influenced by their enjoyment in seeing the Scottish side of her identity during trips “home” to visit family (Van House, 2009; Rocamora, 2011b; Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017). This, she felt, endeared her to her Scottish followers, who were better able to relate to the familiarity of her Scottish lifestyle, even though she was living in Australia. Her

Australian audience, on the other hand, was able to enjoy new experiences and a contrasting lifestyle through her Scottish content. This idea is illustrated in Figure 17.



Figure 17: Dana visiting home

Dana explained:

*Aberdeen [Christmas] market... I felt like that was a really good one because, obviously... everyone here [in Australia] is in the midst of summer and all running around the beach in bikinis. And we'd kind of been open about the trip, so like showing when we were leaving with all our suitcases and at the winter markets and stuff like that. And it's so different to what it is here so... again... Loads of people messaged me like "oh my god, that looks so nice to have a Christmas somewhere cold" and "oh I'm so jealous you're going to have a white Christmas" and I was like "well we probably won't" {laughs}. Erm, so that really, like I got a lot of response, like private messages and stuff like that so from that one as well...*

All participants felt it was important to engage with their followers and spoke of taking the time to read and respond to comments. This is perhaps also exemplified in the fact they agreed to be interviewed for the current research through a request made through Instagram. This sense of support and community is explored further in Section 5.5.5. In Figure 17, Danna appeared to be influenced by a sense of her audience (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b) and a desire to document her trip home to visit family (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017). For Danna, Australia and Scotland as presented through Instagram, represented two separate ideas, both of which were important to her. She was able to construct herself in an original way online through her dual identity, using images and experiences that would enthuse and surprise her followers.

Throughout the interviews, participants reflected on how their Scottishness was received outside of Scotland. Generally, these were times when they had been recognised for their accent (Kiely *et al*, 2001). Scottishness was described as a conversation starter:

*I spent time in the summer interning in New York a couple of years ago and I felt very proud of being Scottish. I suppose partly because it was my identifying factor, something that made me different. Erm, and people were really interested in me, they wanted to know about me, they loved my accent, they loved the way I look, they wanted to know about my culture. And it was a bit of a shock coming back to Scotland and no one batting an eyelid at me and that was very strange (Iona).*

This suggests that, by labelling themselves as Scottish on Instagram, participants might hope to attract positive engagement from people online, mirroring their offline experiences. It did not seem to be these participants' intentions to blend into an existing community of Scottish style influencers, so much as to expand their own appeal beyond this, utilising what they saw as the positive reception of Scottishness. Instagram might therefore be regarded as another destination outside of Scotland, where an influencer can be unique and stand out. This suggests that style influencers might use national identity and place, consciously or unconsciously, as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Across the sample, a desire to stand out in an increasingly crowded infosphere and to

use Scottish identity and place as a mechanism through which to do so, appeared to be a key motivation for participants (RQ5).

### 5.2.1 The past

Throughout the interviews, participants reflected on symbols and signifiers of Scottish identity; these are discussed further in Section 5.5. Participants were generally quick to distinguish between what they saw as true and “stereotypical” signifiers of Scotland, which they felt did not necessarily signify an authentic and up-to-date impression of Scotland and the people who live there. Interestingly, a number of participants regarded tartan in this way and some chose not to mention this at all. Although some Scottish symbols were regarded as outdated, the participants still observed these “cultural intimacies” in a positive light and as important in terms of how the nation might be perceived and understood more widely (Herzfeld, 1997, p. 3; McCrone 2017). They also felt these symbols had a genuine place in Scotland’s history and were not necessarily untrue (Brown, 2010).

It is a theme in the literature that individuals are apt to look to the past when trying to make sense of their identity (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kjartansdóttir, 2011). Scotland is regarded as a country with a rich history and heritage (Pittock, 1991; Houston, 2002; Shields, 2010). Scotland’s heritage and the past are discussed as a key feature of Scottish identity in a stateless nation of people (Billig, 1995) who are brought together by a sense of “national memory” (Edensor, 1997, p. 175; McCrone 2017). Indeed, McCrone *et al* (1995, p. 196) wonder “is it only imagining Scotland that keeps it alive?” (Anderson, 1983).

McCrone (2017, p.1) distinguishes between history and “the past”, where the past connotes a more romantic idea of historical fact; he argues that this is highly visible in the way in which Scotland is remembered. A sense of Scottish past and heritage seemed to be particularly important to some of the participants in this study; for example, Barra felt that “history” (or what might more accurately be termed “the past”, *ibid*) was an important signifier of Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 1). Throughout the interview, she reflected on time spent visiting historic attractions in Scotland, such as castles, stately homes and gardens; these types of leisure activities were reflected in the experiences of other participants and the sample posts they provided.

This supports the findings of McCrone *et al* (1995) who observed an increase in heritage tourism from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, interestingly, none of the participants seemed to regard historic buildings and destinations as constructions or products of a Scottish heritage industry as McCrone *et al* (1995) suggest. Those who spoke about visiting these attractions regarded them as authentic and true signifiers of Scotland and its history. These outings were considered time well spent, as meaningful and fulfilling experiences. Some participants appeared enthusiastic about sharing these trips on Instagram:

*I don't know if people really pay attention to what is around us, like a lot of people are like "what are we going to do today? Let's go to the cinema or to Union Square" but in this area you just have to leave the city for like 5 minutes and you've got, you know, Dunnottar, Crathes, Drum... (Barra)*

Pen portrait 8: Barra is a self-confessed "history geek" but who enjoys reading "fluff" in her spare time. She described her Instagram as "young" in that she has only really begun to use it professionally; she saw it as a place for escapism, inspiration and entertainment. Although she lives and works in Aberdeen, she did not appear to be strongly attached to the city, and felt her identity was more strongly linked to Scotland as a whole. Having recently acquired membership of the National Trust for Scotland, inspired by her "love" of "history", she has made it her mission to encourage followers to get out and explore the history of their surroundings.

McCrone *et al* (1995) found that heritage tourism is highly constructed and that those who visit heritage sites seek authentic experiences. In this sense, the word "authentic" takes on a slightly different form where experiences that take place in the present day might be exaggerated in order to appear more interesting and exciting for visitors. McCrone *et al* maintain that, in this sense, authenticity is not concerned so much by what is real as what is believable and convincing.

The findings of this thesis do not support the argument that heritage activities might, in fact, be inauthentic in their attempt to appear authentic. Participants perceived these experiences as valuable and wished to promote them to their followers. However, it might be argued that Barra's, almost emphatic, emphasis of her "love" of "history" over and above more mainstream and placeless outings, such as shopping or to the cinema, suggests her leverage of Scottish heritage as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; McCrone



*et al*, 1995, p. 20). It also demonstrates Schwartz and Halegoua's (2015, p. 1644) idea of the "spatial self" where it is assumed that an audience will form opinions of people based on the places they go. In constructing herself in this way Barra is able to capitalise on her unique and potentially intriguing historic Scottish surroundings.

When discussing history, Barra made intertextual references to a popular book and TV series set in historic Scotland and a blockbuster film. She was very open about the fact that her enjoyment of history had stemmed from her enjoyment of popular culture, and this illustrates the significance of representations of national identity and the need for interaction between past and present (Anderson, 1983).

*I started watching Outlander – I don't know if you've seen it? When they talk about how... the Highland clearances and how clans and how everyone disappeared. I was like "well like what happened to us? What happened to our clan?" And then, I don't know, it's like such a massive part of history! So, yeah, I had a bit of a look into that and it turned out that the only castle that our clan had was where my dad grew up! So, it was really exciting. I'm just a total history geek! {laughs} (Barra)*

There is a tension between Barra's earlier dismissal of the cinema and her reference to a popular television programme. This illustrates McCrone *et al*'s (1995) notion of the past as romantic idea that is formed in the context of the present and where popular culture has the power to influence this.

Figure 18 could be categorised as a signpost to Barra's blog and the main signifier here would be her own style as conveyed through clothing and occasion, both of which she draws attention to in the written text. However, the background is also emphasised and the post is illustrative of her enjoyment of the outdoors and exploring historic buildings in Scotland. Her outfit appears formal, perhaps well suited to the idea of "afternoon tea" as a special occasion rather than an average weekend. In the interview, Barra reflected upon this post as connoting a happy memory where she had spent the day with her boyfriend. Interestingly, Barra was also using this as her profile picture at the time of the interview, which suggests this was a special, even favourite, image.



A sense of Scottish past and history seemed to be important for participants in helping them feel connected to Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kjartansdóttir, 2011). This idea was expressed most strongly in relation to heritage tourism as a lifestyle element on Instagram but also in some of the anecdotes that participants shared:

*I'd say a time when I felt maybe more Scottish was actually recently when I was in Aberdeen and working in Boots. Because an elderly gentleman came in a few times and - I think he was probably just lonely but - he would always stop and chat to me. And at one point the conversation got on to the fact that he has family in the Highlands, that have the same last name as my mum - like a clan, the Taylor clan. And then he was really excited about it and spoke to me, and that made me happy. And then the next week he came in and brought in this lambs' wool scarf from the clan to show me and then he actually gave it to me to take home. It was just a random man that I didn't know and he was just so happy about it and that's what I like about Scotland, that made me feel proud to be Scottish (Tiree).*

Tiree's story emphasises a sense of shared history and the extent to which this might bring two people together that have no other similarities beyond that of Scottish identity (Edensor, 1997; McCrone, 2017). This idea was also conveyed through the online relationships participants had formed with other Scottish influencers and is discussed further in Section 5.5.5.

Fara regarded history as important and influential in defining a nation. Knowing that her interviewer was unfamiliar with the small town in Greece where she had grown up, she chose to emphasise the following:

*So Alexander the Great went through there and it used to be a massive centre during the Byzantium era. Erm, so we have a castle city. It's like really, really old, from like the 6<sup>th</sup> century before Christ, a very historic place.*

Fara was strongly attracted to places with history or where a place might have intriguing stories attached to it. She appeared keen to build these into her own narrative on Instagram, mainly by sharing photos of old buildings and street corners on Instagram.

Most participants expressed an interest in sharing photos that they had taken in unique or intriguing settings; settings that might, at first glance appear to simply be a background, but which were often quite important to the participants. At times these backgrounds were discovered and then shared in an impulsive manner, usually only when they were new to the participant. More often, they were quite carefully constructed, where the participant had set out to intentionally use a background as part of a photoshoot. In these cases, the background of the photo might say more about the participant's Scottish identity than the foreground of the image. The very fact that attention was not always drawn to these backgrounds in an explicit way, despite being purposefully selected, could demonstrate a wish for such images to be seen as a perfectly normal and unremarkable vision of Scotland.

The use of historic backdrops as a canvas on which to showcase personal style was common throughout the sample, where a number of posts included cobbles, old buildings, stone walls, etc. However, many of the sample posts also contained an element of nature, whether simply greenery as illustrated in Figure 20, or sometimes, personal style was shown against a more dramatic setting, e.g. Figure 19.

The captions here are interesting where Eday appeared to be influenced by the cultural aspect of her backdrop as a feature of her everyday surroundings (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 20). Hirta, on the other hand, appeared influenced by a historic aesthetic and preferred to use these as a backdrop for her style posts. Figure 20 shows an example of an image, which conveys street style "at rest" (Rocamora, 2011a, p. 102) but where the street is reimagined in a historic rural setting.



View this post on Instagram  
 12 likes

I love my @birdsofprayersscotland tent dress. I could fit another three people in this. Oversized and baggy to the max but still chic 😍😍  
 Thanks @style\_stamps for the picture!



View this post on Instagram  
 100 likes

I absolutely love this outfit! New post over on my blog

View all 22 comments  
 3 JUNE 2017

Figure 19: Eday at the Dominion Cinema in Edinburgh

Explanation: *that's the Dominion Cinema and that's like Scotland's oldest cinema and it's right next to where I live.*

Figure 20: Hirta posing against a stone wall in Aberdeen

Explanation: *I just like the old stone walls and stuff*

These examples demonstrate that a sense of Scotland's past was important to participants. This influenced some of their lifestyle choices and preference for certain types of aesthetic on Instagram, for example in the background settings of outfit posts. It could, therefore, be argued that one way in which these participants constructed Scottish identity online was through the use of such images and experiences that connote the idea of a rich and intriguing Scottish past and heritage. It has already been argued that a key motivation for the construction of Scottish identity amongst participants was that this might be regarded as a distinguishing and attractive feature and something that made them stand out from the crowd. Therefore, reference to Scottish past and heritage experiences appears to be a mechanism through which participants were able to explore and reinforce their Scottish identity as unique and distinctive (RQ7).

### 5.3 Instagram versus reality

*Instagram permeates all walks of modern life, and many of you may be familiar with the fine art of employing just the right photographic filter to turn the ordinary into the extraordinary (and then pass it off as the ordinary)*  
(Morris, 2017, np).

Section 5.2.2 introduced the question of authenticity in relation to Scottish heritage, and this section will explore the idea further in the context of Instagram as an example of social media.

A key aim of this thesis was to explore critically not just how style influencers communicate Scottish identity online but how they actually construct this through Instagram; i.e. analysing how aspects of Scottish identity are intentionally built, uncovering the mechanisms that might be used to fashion Scottish identity and the motives for doing so. This thesis builds on Goffman's (1956) work, which explores the construction of identity in everyday activities and social settings. He discovered that individuals tailor their behaviour in order to conform to the impression that they wish to portray in a particular setting. It is believed that, in today's increasingly digital world where social media permeates social interaction, his theory is not only relevant but perhaps even more visible and relevant than ever before (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013).

Instagram is recognised as a medium that lends itself to the construction of an idealised identity through predominantly visual cues, photographs and written text, similar to fashion blogs (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Luvaas, 2013; Titton, 2015). It has been described as a tool for self-promotion (Dumas *et al*, 2017) and is linked strongly with the phenomenon of micro-celebrity (Maghfiroh and Hapsari, 2015; Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016). In the context of the current study, participants' Instagram identities, as public entities, could be viewed as their frontstage identity, whereas their private lives represent their backstage identity and, ultimately, their reality (Goffman, 1956).

*I mean my Instagram is not my reality. And judging by my Instagram, you might think that I travel a lot of time, that I might live in the most beautiful place, that my mornings are like relaxed and all that when my life is like the most hectic life! I'd never imagine my life to be like that... when people are in*

*their offices and they have a lunch break they like scrolling through pictures and like travelling with me in a way (Fara).*

All participants in this study were found to be consciously constructing an identity on Instagram and, for some, Scotland and Scottishness formed an important (even critical) part of their frontstage identity (Goffman, 1956). For others, the Scottish aspect of their identity was more subtle, and, although their Scottishness and/ or Scottish location influenced their online identity, this was not the focal point; for example, where their frontstage identity was focused more towards fashion (Jura), psoriasis (Lungay) or motherhood (Danna). This supports earlier studies into bloggers who were found to adopt a number of identities (Turkle, 1995; Sika, 2014) and where motivations for blogging will evolve throughout the lifetime of the blog (Pedersen, 2010).

Bond and Rosie (2002) explored the salience of Scottish identity against other indicators and found that this was an important marker of participants' identities; however, this ranked as marginally less important than being a spouse or parent amongst those to whom these roles applied. This idea of identity salience (Kleine and Kleine, 1993) is intriguing and has been explored in the context of blogging and social media through the observation of "identity indicators" and "clues" (Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013, p. 102; p. 106). With these ideas in mind, participants' Instagram biographies could be considered to be revealing more explicit indicators of their online self (ibid).

Table 5 sets out the words that participants used to describe themselves in their Instagram biography, which is limited to a maximum of 150 characters. Participants were selected based on their self-identification as Scottish and/ or Scotland-based. Some chose to highlight a Scottish city specifically.

Table 5: Participants' Instagram biographies	
Arran	Fashion + lifestyle blogger, daydreamer and lover of all things shiny, from bonnie old Scotland
Barra	Lifestyle blogger and PR account manager, handy baker, Aberdeen, Scotland
Cara	Clothes, cats and cake. Lifestyle, fashion, travel, food & beauty blogger from Glasgow, Scotland
Danna	{name of husband}, {name of son}, {names of cats}, Scotland, Australia, Qatar (soon)
Eday	Edinburgh fashion blogger, fashion communication student, the Scottish Design Exchange, Fashion fix daily, SHOWstudio
Fara	Musings of a life enriched with travel. UK luxury travel blogger. Top 10 Scottish blogs. Researcher at ***
Gunna	Style blog. Scottish girl in London, fashion and personal style blogger
Hirta	Lifestyle blogger, wife of ***, vegan, Aberdeen
Iona	Blogger at ***, journalist, I like nice clothes, Scottish girl in North London
Jura	Streetstyle, lifestyle, beauty & travel, Glasgow
Lungay	#psoriasis warrior   blogger   traveller, Glasgow, Scotland
Mull	Style and travel enthusiast, Aberdeen, Scotland
Skye	Scottish blogger, vegetarian, cat mother, book enthusiast, all round music junkie and chocolate addict
Tiree	Scottish lifestyle blogger and fashion student, currently in Edinburgh. Fitness, travel, personal development

Most of the participants in the current study chose, at first, to indicate a genre. This is illustrated in Table 5 where, for example, they referred to the fashion and/ or lifestyle and/ or travel element of their identity. A number of participants also chose to refer to themselves as a blogger. These indicators signal a level of professionalism that might be associated with their Instagram identity.

Of the participants, three stood out as having an identity that supersedes their nationhood on Instagram. Lungay referred to herself as a “#psoriasis warrior” and this was a strong part of her Instagram identity. Hirta is vegan and this is a focus of her identity in terms of fashion and lifestyle choices. Although Danna does not refer to herself as a mother directly, the use of her family members’ names suggests a focus on them and motherhood was the predominant focus of her identity on Instagram. Interestingly, three participants refer to their cats, which demonstrates personality, as does participants’ use of humour at times, e.g. “lover of all things shiny”. The subtle introduction of personality through humour might be considered an “identity clue” (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 106).

Some participants referred to themselves directly as a “Scottish blogger”, “Scottish girl” or an “Edinburgh blogger” and these arguably connote Scottish identity more pointedly than those who simply state their location, e.g. Hirta and Jura. However, there did not



seem to be a correlation between those who chose to refer only to their location and the strength of their feeling of national identity; e.g. Lungay and Hirta were both very passionate about their Scottish identity (Bond and Rosie, 2002).

Lungay reveals a dual Scottish identity, signalling her city and national identity, as do Barra, Cara, Mull and Tiree. Tiree indicates the transience of her city identity, stating that she is “currently in Edinburgh” and therefore suggesting that this is not always the case. Both Gunna and Iona also signal a dual identity by referring to themselves as Scottish girls in London. Their phrasing of this connotes an emphasis on their Scottish identity, where they are still Scottish (perhaps even more so) even whilst living in London.

Fara’s biography stands out in that she did not refer to herself directly as Scottish, having been born and spent most of her life in Greece. Equally, she did not refer directly to her Aberdeen location. However, this was implied in her “researcher” role, which has been redacted. She is the only participant who used an accolade to symbolise her identity as not only a Scottish blogger but also one of the top ten. Again, this implies a level of self-awareness and professionalism. It also suggests that, although Fara’s professional identity (frontstage) was Scottish, she felt uncomfortable in describing her offline self (backstage) in this way (Goffman, 1956).

Most participants regarded Instagram as a source of enjoyment, something that enriched their lives in some way, where they could record and showcase aspects of their lives from the “amazing scenery or places you’ve been” (Mull) to the evolution of their own personal style (Chittenden, 2010; Palmgren, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Luvaas, 2013).

Pen portrait 9: Mull initially appeared a little less passionate about her Scottish identity than some of the other participants, reflecting fondly on her love of travel and enjoyment of time spent in London. However, as a self-proclaimed travel lover, she was conscious of promoting Scotland as a tourist destination through sharing landscapes and creative photographs she had taken in Scotland. For this reason, she appeared to be certain her Instagram audience would identify her as Scottish.

During interview, Mull spoke about the importance of creativity on Instagram, for example showing originality through fashion, place and lifestyle and doing so with good-

quality images. She felt that her Instagram identity was reflective of her offline personality but showed this “in a more creative way”. This demonstrates that, although participants’ online identities were, at times exaggerated or glamourised, they were generally not too far removed from their offline identities; Goffman (1956) suggests this is normally the case with the performance of social identity. The participants in this study were not found to be creating a new identity but, instead, fashioning their existing identity (Turkle, 1995; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013).

Participants all appeared conscious of their personal style aesthetic on Instagram. This was something they felt had become more practiced over time, some reflecting that they were now happy with how their Instagram identity looked. This illustrates that, firstly, participants were conscious of their identities and spent time scrutinising these, often appearing to seek an indefinable perfection. This search for an ideal identity could be seen as an extension of Erikson’s (1959) classical theory of identity where individuals spend their lives seeking to achieve an authentic vision of themselves. This has since been defined as the pursuit of a “stable” identity (Kinwall, 2004, p. 121) or “commitment” to a particular identity (Kroger, 2004, p. 66). It also demonstrates that the pursuit of an ideal identity on Instagram is a work in progress, which will evolve and is perfected over time. Turkle (1995) explored *Life on the Screen* at a time when online identity was a relatively new phenomenon and before the advent of social media. Like Erikson, she found that (online) identity was an evolutionary process but, in the case of social media, one that is acted out in front of an audience (Goffman, 1956).

When discussing their personal style on Instagram, some participants reflected on a signature pose or image composition, e.g. “that’s pretty much my pose that I do” (Lungay). This implies audience consciousness: an appreciation that followers might have come to expect a certain style or approach from participants and that such uniformity was important, which further emphasises the idea that an ideal identity should be a consistent one (Erikson, 1959; Kroger, 2004; Kinwall, 2004).

Pen portrait 10: Lungay is a keen traveller and passionate about her home in Scotland and the “warm and welcoming” people that live there. She was the only participant to categorise herself as wholly Scottish. Although Lungay regarded her Scottish identity as a strong feature on Instagram, her role as a champion of psoriasis sufferers and fashion was probably a stronger part of her online identity and this was where she felt most of her engagement and opportunities came from.

*People will always say to me “like I can tell your image straight away”. Like it’s easily identifiable within Instagram, which is difficult because Instagram is so oversaturated with people (Jura).*

Pen portrait 11: Jura has the largest audience of the participants (in excess of 50k) and regards Instagram as a key element in her career as a professional influencer and her main source of income. Her preference is for high-quality images, taken on a camera and edited before being shared on Instagram. Jura’s personal style on Instagram is consistent in terms of her pose, fashion, setting and tonality of colour. She lives in Glasgow and is passionate about showcasing street style, meaning all her posts take place outside and therefore showcase the city. However, in her posts, she reveals very little of her lifestyle and appears, almost, placeless.

As the most career-minded of the participants, the portrayal of a consistent and distinctive style identity was particularly important to Jura. She chose to edit her images before uploading these, moving away from the real-time appeal that is usually associated with Instagram (Song, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e Silver, 2018). This backstage element of Jura’s identity contrasts with her adoption of a frontstage street style “in movement” aesthetic (Rocamora, 2011a, p102). The end result is a grey-toned image cropped at her mouth or where she is purposefully looking away from the camera; the framing of an image in such a way is recognised as a style that has been adopted since the early days of fashion blogging (Rocamora, 2011b).

In the interview, Jura revealed that her choice to withhold more personal, lifestyle elements and her full face was conscious in order to ensure her Instagram remained focused on fashion. Jura did not regard her offline Glasgow-based reality as sufficiently glamorous and therefore chose to reveal very little of this on Instagram:

*The best piece of advice I’ve ever been given is that to sell clothes... people want to envisage themselves in the clothes. So, I don’t sell a lifestyle, I live in Glasgow, I’m not in France every other week, I don’t live in New York. I’m not selling a lifestyle, I’m selling the clothes.*

She reflected on her choice of posts saying “they speak of me so strongly, they just have my style written all over them” and this demonstrates that she was not only very conscious of her own personal style in clothes, but also her own personal style in posts.

She revealed, “they’re the kind of ones that do the best”, suggesting she had tailored her Instagram to reflect the preference of her audience (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b). So, although Jura chose not to reveal day-to-date aspects of her offline life, she felt her fashion choices as constructed online, revealed her personal style very strongly; this could be described as her “dressed identity” (Findlay, 2015, p. 171; Chittenden, 2010). For Jura, it seemed that an ideal identity on Instagram had already been achieved and now she was working to maintain this through a consistent style, which could be applied to her clothing, setting, photography and pose.

Other participants agreed that consistency and originality was important, even though some were more modest and did not feel they had yet managed to achieve this; for example Eday, who felt that, for the most part, her images were not carefully curated and beautiful; reflecting light heartedly - “which is probably why I’m not that successful”. This is interesting and demonstrates the relationship between an ideal identity on Instagram (Erikson, 1959), a consistent or stable identity on Instagram (Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004) and success on the medium, where, if using Jura as an example, success might be defined in follower numbers, level of engagement and commercial opportunities (Pedroni, 2015).

Jura appeared to regard her Scottish identity as incidental and a byproduct of her preference for street-style imagery (Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008). She revealed her physical location through her Instagram biography, the use of the *Geotag* function and as a background for her fashion posts but did not feel that her Scottish/ Glasgow identity was particularly influential beyond this. However, she recognised that she stood out more in Scotland, reflecting, for example, on being one of the first people to “do street style”, which she feels helped her carve out a niche in the influencer community on Instagram. She also spoke about being recognised in Glasgow and this shows that, having achieved the status of a micro-celebrity, she was also able to stand out in an offline setting (Maghfiroh and Hapsari, 2015; Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016). Jura’s consistent personal style is illustrated in her sample posts (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Jura's sample posts (redacted for use online)

Other participants, like Mull, who were less established in terms of follower numbers and were not using Instagram in such a business-like way, reflected on using the medium to experiment with new and untested styles, in order to find out what their audience enjoyed, as well as what they themselves liked best (Vaast, 2007; Whitworth, 2009; Chittenden, 2010; Palmgren, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Luvaas, 2013).

*I feel like I'm still getting there {laughs}. I'm still finding out what I like and what I don't like, I'm definitely still experimenting (Tiree).*

Tiree was the youngest participant (19) and felt that, when it came to personal style and her Instagram identity, she was “still working it out”. Despite the fact that most participants did not feel they had discovered their ideal identity on Instagram yet, there was a sense amongst the interviewees that identity achievement on Instagram was a realistic ambition. However, as Erikson (1959) suggests, identity achievement may be a never-ending process where motivations and aspirations will change throughout the lifetime of an individual. Equally, in a fashion and social-media context, styles and

aesthetics change, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Once an influencer has achieved their ideal identity, like Jura, they must then work to retain this level of accomplishment.

Titton (2015) observes the “struggle between consistency and discordance” amongst fashion bloggers. In the current research, there appeared to be a relationship between the communication of a consistent style aesthetic (which was also akin to an ideal identity) and authenticity (as perceived by followers); where participants felt that an audience would perceive the portrayal of consistent style on Instagram as more genuine and believable. Although Jura admitted her photos were “highly edited”, she still felt these portrayed a realistic version of her offline style, where they showed her in and around Glasgow (the city where she lives) in the clothes she was wearing that day. She reflected on movement as a key feature of this:

*Whereas just putting on jeans and a t-shirt and a blazer – that, like, literally it is my day. I wear that on a daily basis and I go out and shoot. It’s just, I wanted it to be real...*

However, this is interesting given her career as a professional influencer and where her offline style is influenced by her need to be photographed in order to fulfill commercial obligations as well as create exciting content for Instagram and her blog. This demonstrates the idea that online identity can, at times, influence offline identity (Turkle, 1995; Chittenden, 2010).

Although not her primary income, Fara regarded Instagram as something of a career and reflected on using the medium for business rather than pleasure, referring to herself as a “brand” during the interview (Duffy and Hund, 2015a; Titton, 2015). Most participants did not appear to think of themselves in such business-like terms, indeed, only Jura, Fara and Cara referred to themselves as a brand. Fara reflected on the evolution of her brand - or ideal identity (Erikson, 1959; Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004) - over time through experimenting with different types of images:

*I started using the same filter, I started trying to portray Aberdeen, not as a grey place, but as a place with nice architecture, with soft tones (because I apply a nice warm filter), with cobbled streets, with sash windows, loads of greenery. So, yeah, I just try to find beauty in places.*

Fara felt that her audience responded best to her images in and around Aberdeen, showing everyday aspects of her life, and this led her to focus her identity primarily around the same streets (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b). This suggests the deliberate construction and maintenance of Fara's online identity, which was influenced by her audience.



♡ 💬 📍 📌

Liked by [@scottmiller](#) and 370 others

I've decided to name my bike Emma! She's my best friend when it comes down to exploring and she's always happy to go for a ride! 🚲

☀️

Here's naughty Emma standing in front of people's doors. .

Figure 22: Fara's lifestyle

She explained:

*So, when I find a nice place, but something is missing, like a cup of coffee or flowers, I always have Emma [bicycle], so Emma will be there, she will make the picture look prettier and that's it. And also... when they think of me, I want people to think of a girl who has a bike and just goes around Old Aberdeen (Fara).*

Fara's description of Figure 22 is intriguing. It illustrates her commitment to making ordinary, everyday parts of her life more beautiful, and the conscious styling and threading of such moments together into a story through the introduction and recurrence of key signifiers such as her bicycle or coffee cup. The latter was influenced by the fact she did not always have someone with her to take her photograph and so needed to express herself in other ways through her photographs. The use of the coffee cup and bicycle as signifiers - or props (Goffman, 1956) - allowed her to retain a consistent and unique aesthetic, thus photos of Aberdeen (that could have been taken by anyone) could remain visually recognisable as her own. This also allowed her to maintain a level of consistency in terms of how frequently she could post even in times when she did not have anyone to take her photo. Fara was not actually visible in most of her sample posts, which suggests, like Arran, she reveals more of her Scottish identity through the photographs she takes. The fact that their Scottish setting formed a key part of these posts, shows that participants were not just styling themselves in these posts but also styling Scotland as part of this.

Iona was the only participant who spoke of styling herself on Instagram with her Scottish identity in mind, reflecting, for example, on her choice of unnaturally bright red hair. She felt her hair style was influenced by both her Scottish identity and her Instagram identity respectively; she recognised red hair as a stereotype of Scottish people and felt that the unnatural brightness of her own hair and her vibrant fashion choices made her stand out on Instagram.

Figure 23 shows what could be described as Iona's trademark red hair. In this post, she highlights her identity as a blogger and uses a lighthearted, happy image as a signpost to a blog post on the more serious subject of feminism. In Figure 23, Iona appears as a confident woman but one that does not take herself too seriously, as is evident from her pose and expression, as well as her use of more stereotypically Scottish hashtags such as "#ginger".





Instagram post interface showing icons for heart, comment, share, and bookmark. The caption reads: "I'm talking about fashion and feminism on the blog today 🙌 link in bio! #londonblogger #scottishblogger #girlpower #feminism #ootd #fashionblogger #edinburgh #orange #redhead #ginger" dated 9 APRIL 2017.

Figure 23: Iona's Scottish style

Iona explained her outfit choice:

*It's a very thrifty outfit. It was all very cheap – like Primark and eBay, etc, and that's another thing about Scottish influencers... I mean I can't really think of any who exclusively wear designer stuff. I've seen way more people write about their Primark finds than anything else.*

Iona's hair is intensified but also complemented by a red PVC skirt and slogan t-shirt; her bright and colourful style is something she reflected on in the interview and Figure 23 could be regarded as typical of her Instagram identity.

For the participants in this study, the stylisation of content on Instagram was not just concerned with how fashion and appearance were portrayed but also in their lifestyle choices:

*There are definitely times when I'll think "oh this would be good for an Instagram post" (Mull).*

The idea of constructing a lifestyle for Instagram is exemplified in Figure 22, where Fara's vintage-style bicycle might signify her main mode of transport and a personal preference for a slower and more mindful way of life; or it might simply be a fashionable and attractive object, which she felt would be enjoyed by her followers on Instagram. The choice of a vintage-style bicycle blends in well with her historic Old Aberdeen setting, helping Fara portray a consistent and perhaps, therefore, authentic lifestyle.

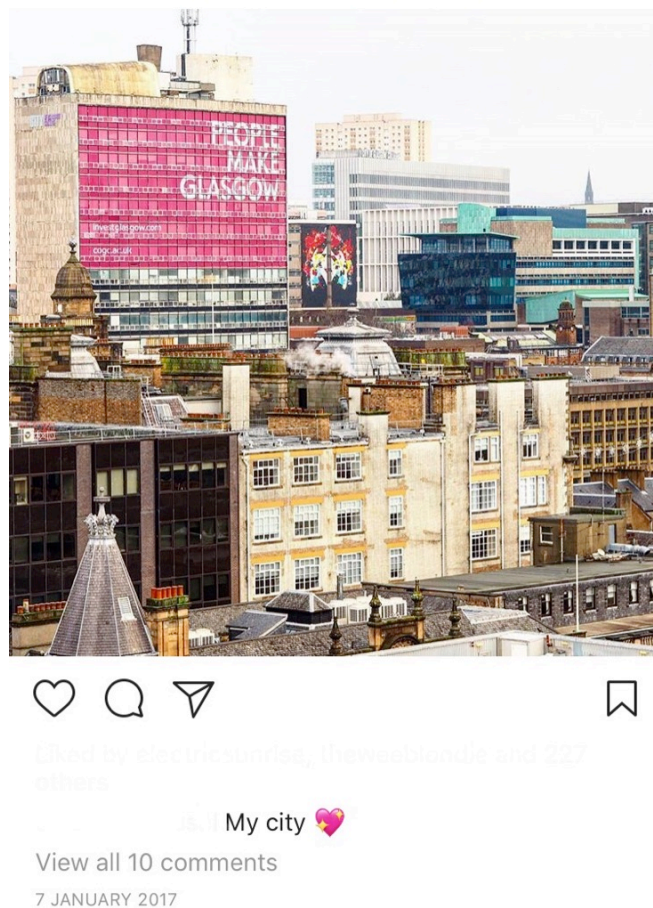


Figure 24: Cara's city

Cara described the story behind Figure 24:

*Sometimes I'll see the picture or I'll see a shot kind of and I'll think "oh that'll look really good on my Instagram". Sometimes it is more spontaneous. But, to*

*be honest, that "People Make Glasgow" one was totally pre planned {laughs}. I dragged him [boyfriend] up the top of the lighthouse so I could take that picture and that was a lot of steps. I was like "this is just for my Instagram!" {laughs}.*

McCrone *et al* (1995) explore the construction of city identities, citing the example of Glasgow's ascendance to the title of *UK City of Culture* in 1990. In his later work McCrone (2017) also argues that Scottish people are more likely to associate themselves within their city than wider Scotland. It is interesting to note that some of the participants, particularly those based in Glasgow and Edinburgh, did appear to be particularly attached to the city in which they lived, which supports this argument (McCrone *et al*, 1995; McCrone, 2017).

However, some were less inclined towards identification with their city, and this tended to be those who were based in Aberdeen, a place that McCrone (2017) describes as notably lacking in cultural identity. This suggests that city branding and a sense of cultural identity can be quite powerful in shaping people's attachment to a place; this is discussed further in Section 5.8.

However, McCrone *et al* (1995) are also sceptical about the city identities they describe, which they feel are constructed and often mask the real heritage of that place; for example, Glasgow's cultural identity, which masks a history of inner-city deprivation. These ideas bring to light a critical perspective on Figure 24, where the *People Make Glasgow* billboard might be dismissed as the latest in a series of attempts to promote Glasgow. However, the campaign is clearly recognisable to the people of Glasgow and means something to them, but the question is - what? For Cara, it resonates with her sense of belonging to that city, which she wishes to promote to her followers. So much so that she set out in pursuit of the best view in order to share this with her followers on Instagram.

Pen portrait 12: Cara was born in Manchester but grew up in Glasgow. She has strong connections to both of these cities, through her parents. However, she is more attached to her Glaswegian identity, which she regards as more strongly affiliated with her sense of self, through her sarcastic sense of humour and her accent which – despite being, in her own words, “posh” - is certainly Scottish. She described her Instagram identity as real and relatable in style.

Cara expressed a desire to appear relatable to her Instagram audience; she felt that it was important to portray a realistic lifestyle to her followers. She regarded her Instagram identity as open and honest and her personal style as authentic. Some of her sample posts show Cara out and about in real-life situations. However, three of the sample posts she provided could be described as flat-lay style images.

*The goal of a flat lay is to show off a group of curated items – clothing, accessories, jewellery, even electronics – in a pleasing innovative presentation... arranging items in a way that looks good but also creates a covetable environment (Song, 2016, p. 152).*

By their very definition these posts are less natural and more stylised and Cara admitted to taking time over these, trying “hundreds and thousands” of combinations before she was happy; in fact, she revealed she was rarely completely happy with the end result. Again this alludes to the pursuit of perfection on Instagram, where a flat-lay image that is posted through the medium is representative of the person posting it; it connotes their own style and identity through the various elements that are portrayed.

Cara confessed a love of flat-lay images and saw these as an opportunity to be creative, confessing to having “a ridiculous amount of confetti on standby”. This style of photography, in particular, might be considered as a form of self-expression through Instagram (Van House, 2009). Figure 25 illustrates one of Cara’s flat-lay posts, and one that she admits was carefully styled. However, even though the image itself is arranged, Cara attempts to keep it real for her followers in the accompanying caption, through the use of colloquial language and Scottish lexis (“love a wee”). She also reveals a personal insight into what she was doing when she posted the photo - eating a biscuit and drinking her tea – if she is to be believed.



Liked by thewastlandofgaberry and 98 others

My Saturday snacks are usually nowhere near this good! Love a wee @biscuiteersltd with my cuppa ☕ the @glasgowcomedy festival is in town just now, and I can't wait to check it out for myself next Saturday thanks to @myscotrail! #GLICF

View all 3 comments

11 MARCH 2017

Figure 25: Cara's flat lay

Cara described this post as expressing “the cultural side” of her identity through reference to two Scottish businesses. The colour scheme is interesting and connotes Scottishness, with white and blue as the main colours in the image, referencing the Scottish saltire. This could be accidental, with Cara designing her flat lay around the colour scheme of the biscuits she was sent and which are branded in the ScotRail colours. However, the whole image, intentionally or not, speaks strongly of her Scottish identity. Although Cara did provide other flat-lay posts as part of her sample, this was the one she spoke about most, suggesting she had given it the most thought, possibly because she had been gifted the biscuits and comedy tickets by a business.

Barra also confessed to being a perfectionist in that way she curated and portrayed herself on Instagram:

*I'll take like 50 pictures of a cake before I'm happy with what I'm putting up and even still I'm like “that's not the best it could be”.*

Participants agreed that, when possible, they spent significant time scrutinising pictures before posting them on Instagram. However, this level of attention was not always possible when composing posts made up of photographs of themselves since their photographer (usually a friend, boyfriend or family member) generally did not take enough photos to enable them to do this. In these examples, participants were often torn between their desire to portray themselves in a suitable way and their need to engage regularly with their followers.

Participants tended to agree that they portrayed an accurate version of their personal style on Instagram. However, this did not always correlate exactly to their backstage identity (Goffman, 1956) where, for example, Gunna admitted she was more likely to share photos of herself when “dressed up” (Chittenden, 2010; Findlay, 2015). Most participants revealed that they were selective in the parts of their style they chose to share, essentially showing the best or most exciting bits where, for example: “it’s not just... your everyday outfit, it’s more like a fun weekend outfit if you know what I mean?” (Gunna). This intentional and selective approach to portraying personal style on Instagram supports research in blogging (Farquhar, 2012; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013) and fashion blogging (Chittenden, 2010; Palmgren, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Luvaas, 2013; Findlay, 2015; Titton, 2015).

Perhaps it is not surprising, given their status as style influencers, that participants were conscious of their personal style and how this was portrayed through Instagram. Throughout the interviews it was clear that this was something they cared about and were willing to commit time and energy to building and maintaining. As with fashion blogs as a genre, Instagram was regarded as a place where participants could experiment with their personal style (Turkle, 1995; Vaast, 2007; Whitworth, 2009; Palmgren, 2010; Luvaas, 2013) and hopefully gain acceptance from their audience (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b). Participants were found to pursue an ideal identity (Erikson, 1959; Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004), something that was regarded as an achievable goal. This was evolving and influenced most strongly by a sense of their audience. Participants also recognised it was important to portray a consistent identity on Instagram, especially when it came to personal style, where there was a perceived link between consistency (identity as constructed by the influencer) and authenticity (identity as received by the follower).

As McCrone *et al* (1995) found to be the case with Scottish heritage, the concept of authenticity is interesting in the context of the current thesis. Participants were not found to be constructing an Instagram identity (frontstage) that was vastly different from their offline identity (backstage), however they often chose to amplify a preferred rather than an everyday representation of personal style (Goffman, 1956); this was evident in terms of the fashion choices and lifestyle activities they chose to share. Participants were selective in the content they posted (Chittenden, 2010; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013) and, at times, their offline activities and fashions were actually influenced by a desire to share these with their followers through Instagram.

The most career-minded of the participants (Jura and Fara) seemed to have discovered their style on Instagram and used this to carve out a niche on the medium. This suggests they believed that the achievement of an ideal identity on Instagram could be measured through follower numbers, audience engagement and commercial opportunities. The findings suggest that once an ideal identity is achieved (Erikson, 1959), influencers will begin to stabilise their style (Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004). However, given it was only the most career-minded of participants who seemed to feel they had achieved their ideal identity on Instagram, and how conscious they were of their audience, this might suggest a more artificial level of achievement.

The relationship between consistency and authenticity that is revealed here therefore suggests that, if an influencer's style is reinforced for long enough, it will become their own and an audience will accept it as real and authentic. However, they will then need to work to maintain that identity in a realm that is recognised as increasingly fast-paced, dynamic and unpredictable (Rocamora, 2011a).

These findings illustrate a spectrum of identity evolution in influencer behaviour online, ranging from what might be regarded as the more exploratory and natural to the more constructed and stylised. The participants who used Instagram in what they regarded a more creative and less career-minded manner seemed to enjoy content creation more. The concept of authenticity was complex. The more career-minded participants were arguably presenting a less authentic version of themselves in that they chose to portray themselves in a particular way: enhancing specific aspects frontstage, whilst concealing other elements of their backstage self (Goffman, 1956) and these decisions were influenced most strongly by a sense of their audience. All of the participants, regardless

of where they were on the spectrum, appeared to pursue the achievement of an ideal identity on Instagram (Erikson, 1959).

#### **5.4 Personal style as influenced by place**

The participants felt their style was strongly influenced by place, and throughout the interviews gave examples of this, drawing on experiences within and outside of Scotland. In these cases, influence tended to stem from climate, setting and popular culture. For those living in Scotland, weather had a fundamental influence on their style and choice of clothing. Most of the participants reflected on a practical need to wear layers and warmer clothing due to the Scottish climate.

In fact, participants who had been born and spent most of their lives in Scotland tended to express, not just a need but also a preference for autumn-winter styles. Some of these participants actually felt quite uncomfortable with the notion of spring-summer styles, which they could never fully embrace. However, Fara felt quite differently, having been born and brought up in the warmer climate of Greece. She felt her fashion choices had changed dramatically since being in Scotland, or perhaps more accurately, since being away from Greece, and that this was visible on her Instagram. She felt quite restricted in her style, and this was something she appeared to have thought quite deeply about:

*Ok, so a thing, like I'm so like heartbroken about. I can't wear summer clothes, so when everyone on Instagram is promoting nice summer outfits I can't, I'm freezing. I'm not suntanned, there is no sunshine, there is rain, so I can't wear like a nice summer dress if the ground is wet. Everyone will be like "oh she's...!" and I want everything to be natural, I don't want to be, like, fake (Fara).*

The quote above suggests that it might only be a consciousness of her audience that would stop Fara embracing spring-summer styles, despite the Scottish climate. However it also demonstrates the power of Instagram where part of the reason she felt so "heartbroken" about her inability to embrace spring-summer styles is that she was continuously reminded of these through Instagram:

*I like my colourful, like, pinkish, floral, clothes in Greece... my summer wardrobe. So, like, it has changed a lot. I mean I wouldn't think of it, if it*



*wasn't for my Instagram. So, if I didn't have Instagram, I would just say "oh you know, I'm the same" but no it does change. And, when I was in Marakesh, everything was more colourful on my feed, and like the way I got dressed. And I wanted to buy these nice sandals and bags and carry them in Scotland but I would look like a lunatic, so I didn't.*

This is another example of a participant using Instagram as an insight into her own style and identity evolution, where Fara was able to use Instagram to observe her personal style and how this had changed as a result of her physical place. Scottish weather as a style influence is considered further in Section 5.5.4.

Fara also spoke about brand collaborations, revealing that place played a key part in the styling of these; for example, she spoke proudly about an ongoing relationship she had with a global fashion brand, where she would purposely visit the countryside to be photographed wearing the brand in honour of the collaboration:

*So, closer to autumn, not right now but, closer to autumn, I tend to wear my [brand] jacket, go into the countryside and get like loads of shots and also having like a tea cup, like a travel mug. And people love these kinds of posts – they love me talking about autumn, and things to do during autumn, and what to do in the countryside during autumn.*

Although the brand Fara spoke of is British, she felt that it lent itself very well to her Scottish surroundings and, in particular, a more rural setting and the autumn season.



Liked by jurestrandar, hapsai and 226 others

Good morning everyone!  
Busy day ahead, filming 🎥 for a big project, meeting with [redacted] for a wander around Old Aberdeen and then back in the lab for more work 🧪 .  
What are your plans for today? I hope you all have a lovely day no matter what you are doing x

👤 @farastrandar

Figure 26: Fara's spring style

When discussing her sample posts, Fara reflected again on planning her style with a sense of place in mind. Figure 26 illustrates an outing to the Botanical Gardens in Old Aberdeen, where she explained that her style was strongly influenced by the place and the season (Figure 26):

*I think it was one of the first days of spring; it wasn't that cold, so I wore white jeans on purpose and the navy top, and it was at the Botanical Gardens. And I wanted people to know that there are, like, botanical gardens in Old Aberdeen, you can just go and have a look.*

This suggests that both her style and the outing in Figure 26 were constructed for the sole purpose of her online identity (Turkle, 1995; Chittenden, 2010) and reinforces Song's (2016) argument that, in order to successfully convey personal style on Instagram, place is important. Mull and Barra's styles also appeared to be very strongly influenced by place, for example they spoke of planning outfits around their travels,

often before even leaving Scotland:

*Like when I went on holiday recently to France I was, you know, wanting to look very South-of-France-esque, I was wearing stripes {laughs} and trying to, I guess, take inspiration from... I love French... I love their effortless style.*  
(Mull).

Mull's reflection on wearing stripes during a recent holiday to France demonstrates a somewhat stereotypical attitude to French style. However, she did then go on to reveal other styles such as Bardot tops, which were a trend at the time and a fashion that she felt coordinated well to the South of France as a place.

Barra revealed a preference for more colourful styles when holidaying at her parents' house in Spain, a white and more minimalist style on a recent trip to California and cosy knitwear for a trip to Yorkshire in the winter. She explained:

*I enjoy that. I like picking out things for specific occasions. So, whenever I go on holiday I have like a list of outfits, roughly what I'm going to wear... I guess a part of it is fitting into that place because you don't want to really stand out and look ridiculous and part of it is also... I guess a lot of it's to do with imagery... Imagery is massive! You know how a lot of people say "dressing for Instagram", "baking for Instagram", that kind of thing... I think place has got a lot to do with.*

This suggests that, for these participants, fashion was an important part of their experience when visiting new places and they took great enjoyment in planning their style around their sense of a place. This was influenced by a desire to share these experiences on Instagram and look convincing in the role (Goffman, 1956).



♥ 💬 📍 📌  
Liked by ysaheless, xchilstyle and 61 others  
julesbrankin Exploring Scotland's castles - new blog  
post up on v [www.julesbrankin.com](#) 🏰 🐾 🏰  
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9 MAY 2017

Figure 27: Barra at Fyvie Castle

Although Barra did not include Figure 27 in her initial sample of posts, she referred to it during the interview, telling the story of her style and how this had been influenced with her surroundings in mind. She felt there was a connection between history, place and style and that it was possible to find oneself figuratively transported back in time when wearing a style, or visiting a place with historic significance. This shows that style was important to Barra, not only when visiting new countries, but also when visiting places or pursuing specific activities within Scotland.

Mull admitted to feeling more adventurous with her style choices in larger cities, giving the example of London, where she felt anonymous and could take greater risks with her style. In comparison, she felt her style was more casual when at home in Aberdeen, in keeping with her lifestyle, where she was doing less exciting things on a day-to-day basis. Other participants agreed with this: Lungay felt her style was more extravagant when visiting bigger cities; and Gunna described her style as more “confident” in London, where “there’s like a million people and everyone’s dressed differently”.



I love Edinburgh soooo much ~  
especially when you find the cutest little streets AND  
when it decides not to rain for once 🌿✨🌿🍀

Figure 28: Gunna's Scottish style

Gunna did not include Figure 28 within her initial set of sample posts but referred to it throughout the interview as an example of her personal style and how this differs depending on her place. She felt Figure 28 was strongly demonstrative of her Scottish style, which she described as “more classic casual” than in London, where her style is more “girly and playful”. Her classic, casual style is illustrated here in the garments themselves, with jeans and trainers as signifiers of a dressed-down and practical, yet fashionable look. The casualness of the image is perhaps also illustrated by the muted beige tones of her outfit, which blends in with the backdrop of the photo. Gunna's pose appears natural and this adds to the casual look she describes as her Edinburgh style. The caption speaks strongly of her love for her picturesque hometown but with a light-hearted reference to the rain, reminding the audience that her feet are planted firmly on the ground and a jacket is always required. Her reference to “finding the cutest little streets” suggests that this is not a staged post and reflects a more genuine fashion and lifestyle element. However it also suggests that the discovery of a “cute little street” such as this is, in itself, worthy of sharing with her followers.



Starting to think that Summer is never coming - must book a holiday asap 🆘!?!🚫

Figure 29: Gunna's London style

Figure 29 illustrates what Gunna regards as her London style. In comparison with Figure 28, this is indicative of a different style in clothing and photography. Here, the garment appears to be the focal point, overshadowing the white and nondescript backdrop and, indeed, Gunna herself. In looking down at the garment she draws attention to the dress and her “girly” London style is connoted through the floral pattern and her youthful pose. In contrast with the summer style that is connoted in this photo, the caption suggests that the weather is not in keeping; this further emphasises the sense of confidence that she associates with London, where – even in bad weather – she is comfortable wearing a dress with bare legs. When reflecting on the story behind this image, Gunna revealed that she chose it because it was a dress that her mother had bought her when they were in Scotland.

In comparison with some of the participants who felt more confident in their style in bigger cities, like London, Hirta felt differently:

*I feel like here I can be much more individual because I feel like there's a much more diverse fashion culture up here [Scotland]... people are much more accepting up here. So I feel much more like I can flash my tattoos or I can wear risqué kind of things, like I can wear short skirts and fishnet tights and - I dunno - like I feel so much more comfortable (Hirta).*

This suggests, perhaps, that Scotland as a place lends itself to less conventional styles, those that are perhaps deemed less current or fashionable.

Pen portrait 13: Hirta, who was born and had grown up in Buckinghamshire, presented an interesting example in terms of national identity. She did not feel that she could class herself as wholly Scottish because she was born in the South of England and had spent most of her life there. However, she spoke very passionately about Scotland during the interview and how much Scotland means to her as a place, somewhere she felt comfortable and at home. She reminisced about childhood holidays where she would visit family in Scotland, living in Aberdeen as a student, and meeting her husband. The pinnacle of her Scottish identity appears to have been getting married in Scotland.

As has already been mentioned, participants felt it was important to appear authentic and relatable to their followers. Relatability was more important to some participants than others and something they referred to a lot during the interviews. It is important to note that, in this context, relatability online did not necessarily equate to reality offline; it was more concerned with portraying a realistic and down-to-earth lifestyle to which they felt their followers could relate:

*I'm just kicking about Glasgow, sharing the food I want to eat... I'm not... for example the London scene - where it's all super glossy and fancy restaurants and like the amazing outfit shots in front of the big white houses... It's just kind of a lot more me instead of like a magazine-style glossy editorial kind of thing (Cara).*

This quote from Cara is interesting; it shows that she regards her Instagram identity as more authentic than that which might be presented, in comparison, by a London style influencer. This assumption appears to be almost entirely based on her idea of herself as a Scottish blogger where the idea of being relatable seemed to stem from a sense of physical place. Note, however, that she is still sharing the food she *wants* to eat and not

necessarily always the food she is actually eating. The comparison between London and Scotland is explored further in Section 5.6.

Although participants regarded Instagram predominantly as a tool through which they could communicate their own personal style, they also saw it as a place for fashion and lifestyle inspiration through following other accounts and engaging with other influencers and brands. Some participants felt the most inspirational content came from other Scottish influencers, to whom they could relate, as opposed to “people in London wearing these massive furry jackets and sequins and... ok I wouldn’t wear that walking down Buchanan Street” (Cara). Perhaps it is this enjoyment of relatable content that made some of the participants feel it was important to reveal open and honest moments from their own lives, so they could inspire others in the same way:

*Especially in Scotland, like if I know them as well, if I’ve met them in person that just makes them a lot more relatable, it’s like “oh they’ve done that, so I can do it as well”. There’s one girl, I don’t know if you know her [Cara]? Yeah, I think her post recently, like she’s definitely upped her content. She’s been a lot bolder with her outfits and that has actually inspired me to just not really care what other people think and just try things even if you’re not sure about them and just see (Tiree).*

As the youngest participant, Tiree’s reflection serves as a reminder that style influencers are also followers of others whom they might look up to and admire. Findlay (2015) reflects on this relationship in the context of fashion blogs where bloggers are inspired by others in the field. Throughout the interviews, participants referred to other influencers by whom they felt inspired, at times referencing other participants. The quote above also illustrates the idea that Scottish style influencers might be bold and daring in their fashion choices, an idea that is discussed further in Section 5.5.4.

Even the most career driven of the participants felt the openness and honesty that she shared with her followers played a part in her success:

*I get a lot of messages from people, like I get messages all day and I feel like people think that they can relate... because I’m just from a – like people see Glasgow as being quite small. It is small, especially compared to other places (Jura).*



Jura felt that it was very important to engage with her followers and made a point of taking the time to respond to their emails and comments. Although not all her followers were based in Scotland, she felt that her Scottish location made her appear more attractive to her audience, for example those based in America. This reinforces the idea of a positive reception to Scottishness. She also referred to Scotland as a “small place”, which perhaps makes it more feasible for Scottish influencers to produce recognisable content for their followers, e.g. through the use of familiar imagery.

Participants reflected quite strongly on the *Instagram Stories* feature, which was launched around a year before the interviews took place. They tended to agree that they revealed more about their lives on this feature, feeling more comfortable about releasing personal information knowing that it would only be accessible for 24 hours. Some participants revealed that they would even talk, sometimes directly to the camera, in their *Stories* and this flagged up additional identity cues, like accent, that would not previously have been identifiable on Instagram but might connote Scottish identity quite strongly (Kiely *et al*, 2001). Cara spoke about forming new relationships with other influencers through the *Stories* feature, which might stimulate a backstage dialogue with someone through private messages (Goffman, 1956). Participants tended to use the *Stories* feature to communicate in a more open, cathartic and immediate manner. This was largely because they did not feel constrained by the pressure of curating a consistent photo waterfall or grid (Song, 2016), which they knew was how they would be judged by prospective followers and brands that might be looking to work with them.

These findings suggest that participants’ personal style was influenced strongly by a sense of place and that this ultimately extended from their offline to their online identity. However, the experiences of these participants also illustrates that an awareness of their online identity and how this was constructed through Instagram was influential in not just their fashion choices but their choice of place. As Barra suggests, influencers might not only be dressing for Instagram but indeed choosing their place for Instagram (RQ3 and RQ5).

### 5.4.1 Mood, place and personal style

*So I think, for me, my style changes with my mood or where I am (Gunna).*

Participants recognised a relationship between personal style, mood and place, and reflected on how this was enacted through Instagram (Goffman, 1956):

*Something I've noticed about myself, so like the more I am sad, the more colourful I'm getting dressed. So I feel I bring my own sunshine with me. I read a quote once, like "she painted her buttons yellow so she could carry the sunshine around with her". And I feel that way, like I wear colourful clothes because they'll always remind me of Greece. Erm, so like, Greece in my heart is like a colourful rainbow and Scotland is like a shady grey rainbow if it makes sense. So I always like getting dressed – not today – with like colourful colours because I feel like I bring my own sunshine with me (Fara).*

Fara reveals here a conscious need to dress colourfully at times when she felt unhappy. Cara also spoke of dressing for her mood using bright colours. However, in contrast to Fara, Cara felt that she naturally opted for brighter colours when she felt happy. This is illustrated in her sample posts (Figure 30), which contained a mix of colourful and more muted styles. This could suggest that Cara is revealing her mood through Instagram but in a subtle way.



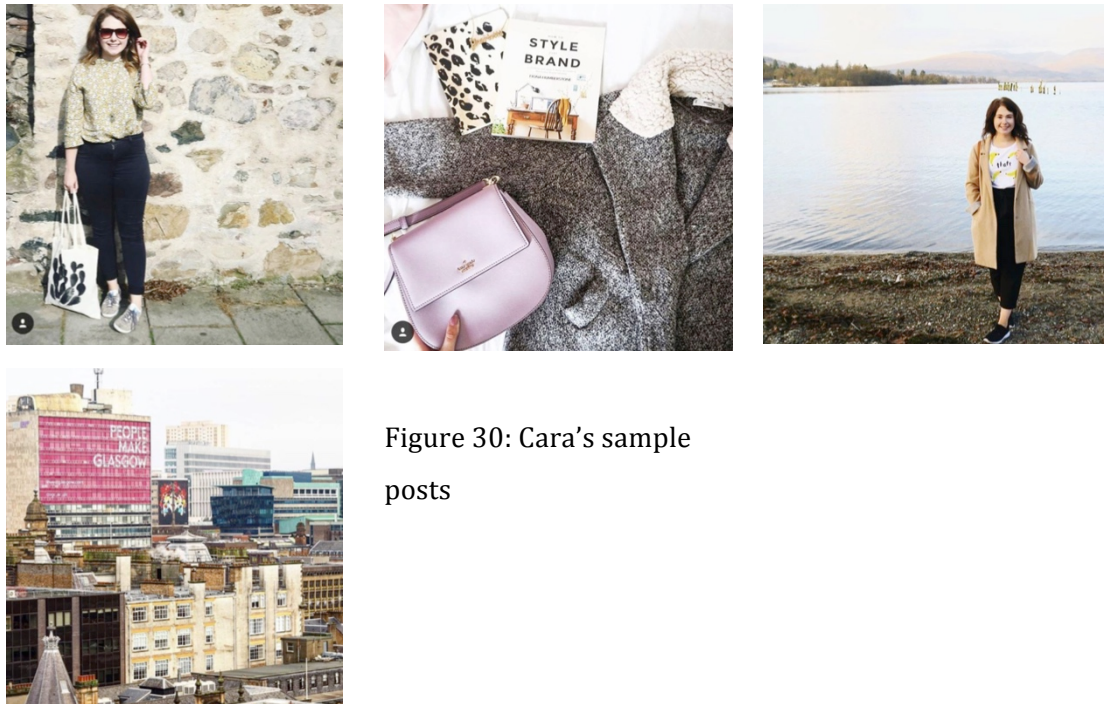


Figure 30: Cara's sample posts

Tiree and Cara reflected on times when they had felt unhappy and had chosen to distance themselves from Instagram. Participants across the sample were concerned about showcasing a positive outlook on Instagram and sharing happy moments from their life; presenting a one-sided view of themselves. In addition, some participants suggested that they sometimes associated feelings of dissatisfaction with the consumption of idealised and aspirational lifestyles on Instagram. This is intriguing and shows that, although these participants were reluctant to reveal negative moods on Instagram, their negative mood was often influenced or exacerbated by the people they followed who were doing exactly the same.

Lungay was the only participant who admitted to revealing more serious subjects like her own mental health on Instagram – this openness and honesty was something she regarded as a symbol of Scottish identity.

Although participants were generally keen to portray a more positive outlook on Instagram – choosing not to focus on more negative moods – they did not necessarily regard Instagram as a wholly positive place. Cara reflected on her “new approach to Instagram” where she only followed people who inspired her and made her feel good:

*I found that it wasn't a place I wanted to be anymore. I felt it was just overwhelming, I followed too many accounts and they were always in like the Maldives or just somewhere and it made me feel bad about myself. So now, the approach I kind of take... I only follow the things that inspire me... I've done my best to make sure it's a place that inspires me and doesn't make me feel worse, if that makes sense.*

This illustrates the relationship between mood and place, whereby Cara associated portrayal of places like the Maldives on Instagram with an unattainable lifestyle to which she could not relate.

*It's somewhere that I can express myself. It's my own little corner of the Internet. Erm... it's also almost like a tool for validation because you get so much like love and support and stuff like that over the Internet. So I guess that that's why I like it so much, you can get so much positivity – I mean it can be so negative but I've not had a negative experience myself (Hirta).*

Hirta's idea of Instagram as a mechanism for validating her sense of self supports Pedersen (2010) who found that this was a key motivation for bloggers. This idea is also explored in Rocamora's (2011b) study where she found that fashion blogs were used in this way. However, although fashion blogs were traditionally regarded as spaces that attracted positive affirmation (ibid), Hirta suggests the capacity for negative identity feedback through Instagram.

The findings reveal a relationship between mood and place and how this might be acted out through Instagram (Goffman, 1956); for example, within Hirta's sample of posts there are two images that are particularly intriguing. Figure 31, she revealed, was taken on a walk with her husband where she felt "happy and sassy"; this signifies a happy memory. However, Figure 32 was taken on a recent trip to visit her parents in Buckinghamshire, where she felt "grumpy but still sassy"; this signifies an unhappy memory. For Hirta, place was very strongly linked with her mood and indeed her sense of psychological wellbeing: she felt more confident and comfortable, both physically and psychologically, when in Scotland.



Liked by xchristyle, dunnympink and 105 others

I absolutely love this outfit! New post over on my blog

[View all 22 comments](#)

3 JUNE 2017

Figure 31: Hirta in Aberdeen



Liked by xchristyle, dunnympink and 57 others

It was too hot to smile today 😓 off out for dinner with the family earlier! 💕 😊

[View all 15 comments](#)

8 JULY 2017

Figure 32: Hirta in Buckinghamshire

In Figures 31 and 32, Hirta's personal style, in terms of the clothes she is wearing, is very similar ("sassy"), but otherwise her style appears very differently. She looks off camera in both posts but appears strong and confident in Figure 31 and this is evident in the way she is standing, her expression and even her hairstyle. However, in Figure 32, she assumes what is still arguably a strong pose, but one that is more aggressive. Her hair appears lank – perhaps because of the unexpected rise in temperature she alludes to in her caption. In Figure 32, Hirta does not look as though she wants her photo taken at all and, interestingly, in the interview she revealed that her husband suggested the photo because he liked her outfit. This suggests that, if it were up to her then this post (which she feels more negatively about) would never have appeared online. However, although Figure 32 represents a less happy moment for Hirta, the caption connotes a light heartedness where she jokes "it was too hot to smile today", casually reflecting on her negative mood and perhaps also connoting Scottishness through her discomfort in the warm weather.

Other than this specific example, participants did not appear forthcoming in revealing what could be regarded as less positive experiences through Instagram as part of their online identity. They preferred to present a healthier and more positive identity for

their followers. One participant revealed:

*I've had eating issues for a long, long time. So I always try to make myself look bigger. So I'll wear a size four, but you wouldn't tell that from the images.*

Participants in this study made the connection between Instagram and mood, with the medium connected to both positive and negative feelings. They were all found to be constructing their identity through Instagram as a “positive place” (Barra), a destination within which their followers could escape and be inspired. However, in order to do this, most participants considered it important to conceal more negative backstage moods and experiences (Goffman, 1956). Two participants spoke of having to remove themselves from Instagram or unfollowing accounts that made them feel bad about themselves; in both cases this appeared to be related to content that portrayed idealised and unattainable lifestyles that made the participants feel dissatisfied with their own lives. This is particularly interesting because it might be suggested that, in their own construction of a positive identity on Instagram (through sharing only the best bits or happy moments in their life), they could actually be having a similar effect on their own followers.

Participants identified a clear relationship between fashion choices and mood, specifically through the use of colourful clothing: where colourful clothing might be worn to alleviate a negative mood (in Fara's case); or colourful clothing might naturally be chosen at times when one is feeling happy and secure (in Cara's case). A colourful grid on Instagram might therefore signify a positive or negative mood depending on the participant. The fact that Fara had spent most of her life in Greece and referred to colourful clothing as her “sunshine” demonstrates the relationship between fashion and place, with colour representing familiarity and a preference for the Greek climate for Fara.

The relationship between personal style and place is further evidenced in Hirta's sample posts, where two photos that were taken in two different locations signify opposing moods. These findings illustrate some of the ways in which personal style and identity can be influenced by physical place and how this might be constructed online through Instagram (RQ3).

## 5.5 Symbols of Scottish identity

Throughout the literature, symbols of Scottishness are identified and discussed in terms of evolution, authenticity and impact (Brown, 2010; McCrone, 2017; Young and Martin, 2017). It appears that “in Scotland there is no shortage of myth-making icons” (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 196).

Crane *et al* (2004) found that symbols were important for people who were in the process of discovering their Scottish identity in the US. McCrone (2017) found the following symbols of Scottish identity to be particularly important: landscape; the Scottish flag; language; tartan; heather; paintings; poetry; history; authors/ publications; cultural output; wilderness; and an attitude of determination. This study did not seek to prove or disprove these findings but rather explore the visibility of such symbols and potentially uncover new and contemporary symbols of Scottish identity and place through the experiences and output of Scottish style influencers on Instagram.

Participants were asked to identify symbols they associated with Scotland and Scottish identity. They were quick to distinguish between what they regarded as stereotypes and more genuine characteristics of Scotland and Scottishness. Participants seemed to regard place-related symbols, such as heritage sites and the green landscape as true symbols of Scotland. They also regarded some people-related symbols as important and genuine, reflecting, for example, on Scottish people as warm, welcoming and friendly; the latter theme was strong throughout the findings and is discussed further in Section 5.5.5.

In terms of more stereotypical symbols of Scotland, participants reflected on: physical characteristics like ginger hair, pale skin, and freckles; and what could be regarded as material products of Scotland, such as whisky, tartan, tweed, bagpipes, thistles and the Scottish flag (Crane *et al*, 2004, p. 67; Cheape, 2010, p. 14; Hume, 2010). Participants did not appear offended by these stereotypes and found them fun and amusing, describing times when they had experienced these. This suggests that some of the symbols that are most widely recognised as “Scottish” were not regarded by the participants in this study as reflective of a diverse and contemporary Scotland. However, the fact that most participants mentioned at least some of these symbols shows they are understood to be representative of Scotland in an international context (Crane *et al*, 2004). Equally, the fact that participants regarded these as positive, albeit not always realistic, symbols of

Scottish identity reveals that they are not only understood but also appreciated as “cultural intimacies” (Herzfeld, 1997, p. 3; McCrone, 2017, p. 383; Billig, 1995; Reicher *et al*, 2006).

Unlike more material symbols of Scottish identity, like tartan (Cheape, 2010; Hume, 2010), what participants regarded as true signifiers of Scotland were more difficult to define tangibly; for example, participants reflected on their physical surroundings as “green” and “beautiful”, made up of countryside, lochs, mountains, historic buildings and fresh air. The fact that these surroundings were free and easily accessible even to those living in a Scottish city was considered a real advantage of being in Scotland:

*Little things we maybe like take for granted but when you go somewhere else, they're like “oh that's amazing! You've got all this on your doorstep!” (Barra)*

Participants were asked to consider their own identity as a Scottish person, in terms of personality, appearance and style. In terms of personality, participants spoke again about Scottish people who they felt exuded a general friendliness, openness and warmth; this is something that they felt was reflected in their own personalities.

*I remember being in New York and somebody speaking to me and being like “oh are you Scottish?” and saying “oh you look Scottish. Your face is very Scottish” and I didn't really know what that means but I just looked like a Scottish person (Lungay).*

Like Lungay, some participants were able to identify occasions when they had been recognised as being Scottish based on physical appearance alone. However, most participants were less comfortable with the concept of “looking Scottish”. Five of the participants reflected with amusement that their pale skin might be considered Scottish:

*I'm pale {laughs}. But I'm still just as pale in Birmingham {laughs} (Eday).*

As mentioned in Section 5.1, Iona was the only participant who seemed to have consciously styled herself more intentionally around some of these Scottish stereotypes:

*I mean because I'm Scottish, I do have a colouring that lends to it... and it's funny because although my hair's not naturally this colour, I can't actually*



*imagine being anything other than a shade of ginger. I just feel like it's the hair colour I was supposed to have. It's what looks good on me. And I guess part of that's, I do actually play upon the fact I'm just a wee Scottish ginger even though it's not strictly true {laughs}.*

Iona's red hair and pale skin, which might be described as a self-stereotype of Scottish identity, was further emphasised through Instagram, using hashtags such as #ginger (Herzfeld, 1997; McCrone 2017). Her use of humour and light heartedness in this way suggests an open and friendly manner.

The Scottish sense of humour was remarked upon as distinctive, where participants felt Scottish people were sarcastic and down-to-earth, choosing not to take themselves too seriously; again, some felt that this related to their own personality. Participants' application of, what they regarded as, broader symbols of Scottish people to their own personalities again suggests a "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld, 1997, p. 3; McCrone 2017), where individuals will use common and distinctive features as a basis for making sense of their own identity (Billig, 1995; Lloyd, 2014).

### **5.5.1 Scottish accent**

In the field of Scottish identity studies, Kiely *et al* (2001) found that Scottish accent was a particularly strong identity marker. When reflecting on symbols of Scottish identity in a less general sense and in relation to their own identity, participants in the current study agreed that accent was one of the strongest signifiers: "as soon as I start talking people know where I'm from" (Lungay).

Participants appeared to regard their accent as, not only a marker, but as a permanent and important signifier of Scottish identity, something that connected them to their heritage. Scottish accents were regarded as varied, often strong, and always distinctive. Most participants reflected positively on their accent and felt that this was an attractive attribute.

Participants felt accent was something that would remain with them as a constant reminder of their identity. Arran expressed concern about "losing" her Scottish accent and reflected on a period living away from Scotland where she consciously emphasised

her accent so as to retain it. Danna, who had lived in Australia for a number of years, also felt her accent was valuable and acted as a point of interest amongst non-Scottish people. It was something that helped her bond with fellow Scots abroad and that she wished to retain. Other participants reflected on the ease with which Scottish accent is recognised:

*When I come back from London at the weekend, as soon as you come off the train and hear the Scottish accents... When you live there it's just normal but when you come back it's "oh my god I'm Scottish it's so nice" {laughs} (Gunna).*

Accent is an interesting symbol in the context of the current research, which explores the construction of identity online through predominantly visual and written cues. Participants felt accent was the main signifier of a personal Scottish identity during face-to-face interactions, but how does this translate to Instagram? When discussing accent, participants referred, again, to the *Instagram Stories* feature, where some liked to narrate or talk directly to the camera in a video interaction. Perhaps accent is something that will become a more significant marker of online identity as this feature becomes more popular (Kiely et al, 2001; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013).

One of the key ways in which accent featured as part of participants' online identities was through their use of Scottish language, through words and phrases in the written captions of their posts. Participants spoke of using words like "wee" and "bonnie" in their posts quite regularly and their use of these appeared, for the most part, conscious rather than natural. In some cases, the use of Scottish words was the reason why participants chose the post as part of the sample, e.g. Arran in particular spoke about this. Scottish words and phrases were visible in a number of the sample posts where, even some of the participants without Scottish accents, like Hirta, were found to use Scottish words in their posts to convey a Scottish "voice". This supports Douglas (2009), who found Scottish language to be important in the construction of national identity through the media.

In their use of Scottish language, participants were found to use terms that are widely understood rather than more obscure expressions. This is probably because, even those with smaller follower numbers, understood that their audience was not exclusively Scottish, and did not want to alienate existing or prospective followers from outside of Scotland. Figure 25 illustrates Cara's casual use of Scottish language to connote

familiarity with her followers. The fact that participants were using only familiar expressions and in an intentional manner suggests that this is an important way in which Scottish identity is constructed more consciously on Instagram (RQ2).

### **5.5.2 Scottish landscape**

In order to explore contemporary symbols of Scottish identity, a verbal narrative was not deemed sufficient (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). Participants were also asked to provide a sample of posts that they felt represented their identity as a Scottish style influencer and these were discussed as part of the interview (Collier, 1957). The analysis of these images was three-fold where: the images were discussed in the interview; the interview transcript was analysed thematically; and the posts were then analysed separately. This latter stage of the analysis was informed by Barthesian semiotics (1977) and Panofskian (1970) iconology, taking into consideration their denoted and connoted meanings, as Barthes suggests. They were then analysed alongside themes in the interview data and literature in order to explore these within the wider context of Scottish identity as expressed through personal style (Panofsky, 1955). The analysis of participants' posts helped to uncover symbols that are considered significant and relevant in terms of understanding contemporary Scotland and how Scottish identity is constructed today.

Through this analysis, one of the strongest visual symbols of Scotland appears to be the Scottish landscape, and this resonates strongly with a romantic Highland vision of Scotland as peaceful and people-less (McCrone *et al*, 1995; McCrone, 2017). The participants in this study – many of whom were self-proclaimed travel enthusiasts or had spent significant periods living outside of Scotland – seemed to regard the Scottish landscape as a true and authentic symbol of modern Scotland; something that was unique and special and which set Scotland apart as distinct from other places they had visited.

The word participants most commonly used when describing the Scottish landscape was “green”, where Scotland was seen as synonymous with a natural and, often, rural outlook. Participants spoke of hills, lochs and fresh air, and this type of setting was regarded as beautiful. The Scottish landscape featured in a number of sample posts, which included lochs, beaches, rivers, forests, parks and gardens. Sometimes these were

portrayed as a landscape, from the perspective of the influencer themselves, but more often as a backdrop to their own personal style.



Figure 33: Cara at Loch Lomond

Cara’s Loch Lomond post (Figure 33) demonstrates a particular style of image from the sample posts, in which participants posed using the Scottish landscape as a backdrop. These examples connote an enjoyment in exploring nature and spending time outdoors. Cara reflected on this post as “a very strong Scottish visual with the loch in the background and the hills”.

As a style influencer, Cara’s decision to appear as a signifier in this post suggests an emphasis on herself and her clothing. Thus, depending on the viewer, the loch appears as a backdrop to her own style rather than as the main signifier within the image. The use of landscapes in this way again illustrates the ways in which Scottish influencers are reinventing traditional ideas of street style; in this case

choosing to appear against a rural and remarkable setting rather than using the street as a blank canvas (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008).



Bonnie view of the Scottish countryside today, this is just five minutes away from my uni! ☀️🌲 #AvoidingCoursework #Scotland #Countryside #View #Landscape #Sky #Clouds #CloudPorn #Pretty #BlueSky #Sunshine #Nature #Forest #Trees #Picoftheday #Photooftheday #Thursday #Follow 💙

Figure 34: Arran's university campus

Throughout the interview, Arran discussed her enjoyment of nature and exploring new places in Scotland. However, in Figure 34, she posted a view that was part of her daily life and that she appreciated:

*I was very much admiring the beauty of the landscape. I had referred to my university so I was being a bit personal. Like "look how beautiful it is - my university is literally on this land!"*

Arran's reference to the "land" signifies Scotland quite strongly where representations of Scotland, e.g. literary and artistic, are found to depict Scotland in a similar light, citing the land as unique and distinctive (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Crawford, 2007; McCrone,

2017). Figure 34 connotes a similar meaning where Arran signals the view as something special and unique, which she is able to enjoy every day. Her use of Scottish language in the word “bonnie”, alongside relevant hashtags, reminds her audience that this is a Scottish landscape. Use of the hashtag #AvoidingCoursework also connotes a sense of escapism that is sometimes associated with the Scottish landscape, an idea that is discussed further in Section 5.6.1. Although Arran herself is not pictured here, she still reveals aspects of her identity, e.g. that she is a student. A number of the sample posts included landscape-style photographs that were very similar to Figure 34 in that they connote an idea of Scotland as natural, calm and “bonnie” but perhaps also empty, lonely and bleak; the interpretation of an image such as this is likely to depend on the viewer and may be influenced quite strongly by the accompanying caption.

### 5.5.3 Outdoor lifestyle

Participants appeared to take genuine enjoyment from their Scottish setting, and this often stemmed from an appreciation of the landscape and countryside. Most participants claimed to enjoy spending time outdoors and this was reflected in their Instagram posts. Indeed, almost all of the sample posts were taken outdoors.

*I think being inside is always so much more difficult to take pictures... But being outside when it's like sunny... I don't want it to be somewhere that talks about positivity but I want it to be a place that is positive (Barra).*

Barra reflected on her preference for outdoor images on Instagram. She felt that being outdoors was synonymous with positivity and spoke throughout the interview about spending time outdoors and exploring historic attractions, which she regarded as a more meaningful way to spend leisure time. The idea of an online identity that is situated in the outdoors is interesting and, in the early days of the internet before camera phones and mobile applications, would not have been possible or certainly much less accessible to most people (Turkle, 1995).

The theme of spending time outdoors and pursuing more meaningful activities was strong throughout the interviews. Skye was fervent in her pursuit of outdoor activities, which she saw as a worthy way of spending what she felt was very precious leisure time. There was a sense amongst nearly all participants that getting out and enjoying their

surroundings was important: whether this was because they felt their leisure time was precious; or because it was important to make the most of good weather in a climate that is more prone to the cold, “appreciating the weather while it’s nice” (Skye). As the interviews took place during the summer months of June, July and August, spending time outdoors might have been a more appealing prospect at this time.

Pen portrait 14: Skye expressed appreciation of the ordinary, everyday beauty of her surroundings and reflected on her enjoyment in spending time exploring outdoor Scotland. In terms of how she constructed her Scottish identity online, this appeared to be driven more by a sense of place than a sense of national identity. A sense of Scottish place and the lifestyle that stemmed from this formed a key part of her personal style on Instagram, alongside her love of autumn, which she felt had come from having been born in this season.

*I think that Scotland really promotes the outdoorsy aspect and that’s a big part of how I identify myself: like quite open and welcoming to new experiences and wanting to explore. And again I think that comes from my surroundings, growing up my family were always like “let’s go outside, let’s go get walks, take in that fresh air” and that’s always stuck with me. And it’s made me very open to meeting new people and exploring new places and I think that comes from being part of Scotland because, I mean... I don’t think you’d get that in the same way in other countries or in other parts of the UK (Skye).*

The theme of adventure and exploring Scotland, in relation to the outdoors, was strong throughout the interviews. This idea was denoted through a number of the sample posts. All but two of the participants chose to share posts that included an element of exploring Scotland. They felt this side of their Scottish identity was something that their audience enjoyed, whether Scottish or otherwise. Participants tended to feel their Scottish followers enjoyed the recognition this afforded, where they were able to identify places. It was felt that non-Scottish followers enjoyed these posts just as much, but for the very opposite reason, where they were able to appreciate something new and different through Instagram.

Some participants spoke animatedly about exploring Scotland during recent holidays. Even some of those who had lived in Scotland all their life saw such holidays as

adventures – something new that they had never done before; for example, Arran’s sample posts included a number of images from a recent tour of Scotland with friends. She seemed to enjoy sharing these experiences more than day-to-day activities:

*But I think everyone’s like that aren’t they? You are a tourist. You’re doing something new. You want to... I think it’s difficult because when you are in your own hometown, you don’t really feel like a tourist, you’re like “I’ve been here a million times, I don’t really need to take a photo of it” (Arran).*



John O' Groats, Scotland · August 2017 · 205

Had a fantastic weekend with best friends exploring the North Coast of Scotland, and we even made it all the way to John O' Groats 💙 ✨  
#JohnOGroats #LandsEnd #Scotland  
#HighlandGetaway #ScottishHighlands #Adventure  
#Wanderlust #Amazing #Sea #Sun #Beautiful  
#Orkney #Amazing #Holiday #TouristAttraction  
#Travel #TravelScotland #TravelPhotography

Figure 35: Arran exploring Scotland

Figure 35 is one of a number of Arran’s sample posts that showed her adventures in Scotland, but is the only one where she herself is clearly visible; most of her sample posts were photographs she had taken. Figure 35 is an example of her “threaded identity” (Hevern, 2004, p. 331; Rocamora, 2011b) where her Scottish holiday might be viewed as part of a “collocated digital feed” or personal narrative on Instagram (Van



House, 2009, p. 1074; Allen, 2009; Utekhin, 2017); it connotes the end of her Scottish holiday, which – as is suggested in her expression and caption - she has enjoyed.

Arran's pose signifies an achievement: having made it to "Lands' End", the most northerly point of Scotland that is a distance from her hometown of Aberdeen, due to its remote location. Her fashion choices denote a practical style, authentic and in keeping with the outdoor nature of her holiday. This idea was echoed by some of the other participants:

*I really like travelling within Scotland and showing how beautiful it is and that kind of shot, just enjoying the Scottish countryside and enjoying the quietness... Getting out and exploring your own country, not just other people's (Lungay).*

This quote is interesting, firstly because travelling within Scotland is clearly regarded as a highly visual experience and therefore one that can be communicated effectively through Instagram. Lungay refers, not just to the holiday, but the "kind of shot" or photograph that might be used to convey the experience, and this demonstrates the part that Instagram might play in such an experience. Secondly, the notion of own versus other people's countries is intriguing and her suggestion that, in Scotland, people should make more of their surroundings.

Skye remarked that she had become more adventurous in her Scottish surroundings because she had not been able to go "on holiday" this year and was surprised to find that "you don't always have to go abroad to have a good time". Again, the Scottish weather could be regarded as a challenge.

The decision to share posts that showcased Scotland as an attractive and interesting place to visit seemed to be very conscious for the participants who had built this into their Instagram identities. This appeared to stem from a sense of pride in what they regarded as beautiful surroundings and something that they wanted to promote to others. It was also driven by participants' desire to document their experiences whilst travelling and exploring new places (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017; Utekhin, 2017).

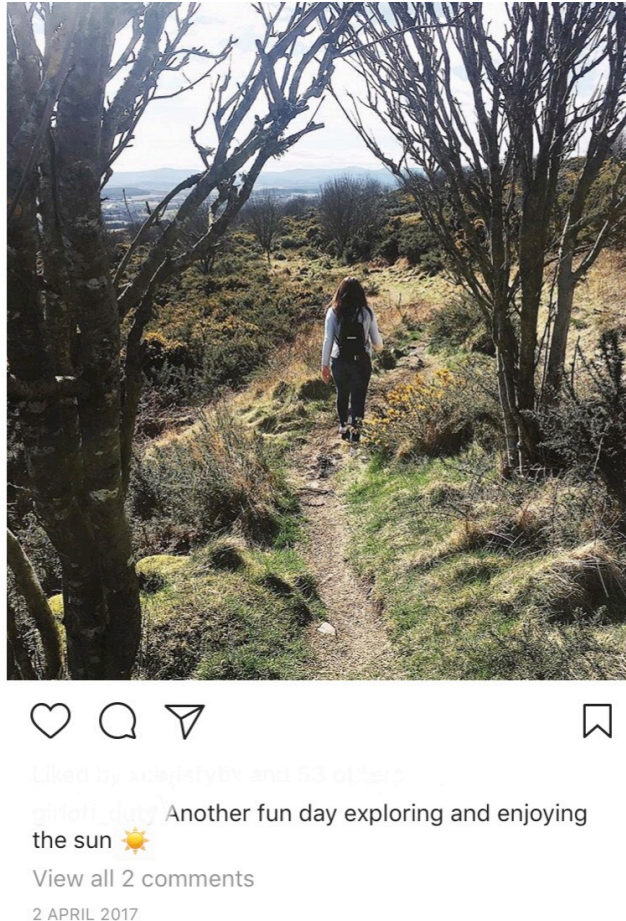


Figure 36: Skye exploring Scotland

Figure 36 is strongly demonstrative of the theme of adventuring and exploring Scotland. Skye is depicted walking away from the camera in what is a recognised style in fashion photography, that of “the disappearing woman” (Evans and Thornton, 1989, p. 104; Rocamora, 2011a, p. 101).

Participants felt that Scottish people are very lucky to have such free and easy access to outdoor attractions and experiences where simple activities such as a walk or a view are there to be enjoyed. However, they also suggested that Scottish people are guilty of not making the most of their location. The findings suggest that Instagram might actually have encouraged some of the participants to slow down and enjoy their unique surroundings, demonstrating Turkle’s (1995) idea that the adoption of an online identity might have a positive impact on offline identity.

Two other lifestyle elements were highlighted during the interviews. Firstly, all of the participants were either students or had experience of being students in Scotland: Skye

highlighted this as a lifestyle feature within Scotland, where university study was regarded as a more realistic option due to the funding that is currently available for Scottish students. Crawford (2007) and McCrone (2017) maintain that education is a fundamental aspect of Scotland’s culture, and a key aspect of Scottish heritage, demonstrated by the wealth of Scottish literature and its four ancient universities.

Secondly, it was highlighted by one participant that Scots are people who “like a drink” (Lungay; Figure 37). Although other participants did not express this as explicitly, they reflected on going out for drinks with friends as a leisure activity. This was something that was often shared on Instagram and usually offered an opportunity to dress up.



♡ 💬 📌 📌  
It's time to get drunk // #wiwt  
View all 41 comments  
15 JULY 2017

Figure 37: Lungay’s signature pose

Figure 37 could be regarded as a typical outfit post, where Lungay and her outfit are the focal point; this is further emphasised using the #wiwt (what I’m wearing today) hashtag. Lungay’s choice of background further emphasises participants’ frequent use of

historic backdrops in their imagery. She described Figure 37 as demonstrative of her signature pose and dressed up style (Findlay, 2015; Chittenden, 2010).

#### 5.5.4 Scottish fashion

Scottish fashion is not widely researched and this is considered a key area to which the current thesis contributes. The literature that does exist tends to focus predominantly on traditional Scottish textiles such as tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). Tartan, in particular, is regarded as a key symbol of Scotland and the term tartanry has been adopted to signify the appropriation of a mythical and romanticised Highland vision of Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010). Items of material culture (Crane *et al*, 1995, p. 67; Cheape, 2010, p. 14) such as tartan are regarded as an important part of a nation's fashion system (Segre Reinach, 2015) where a sense of history and place are key components (Craik, 2009; 2002). Although it has been argued that tartanry is a prohibitor in Scotland that might restrict new forms of culture or "national creativity" from emerging (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Segre Reinach, 2015, p. 267) the production of these iconic textiles is undoubtedly a successful feature of the Scottish fashion industry (Young and Martin, 2017). Indeed, Riegels Melchior (2010) observes Danish fashion, which she argues suffers the opposite problem. This suggests that, if Scotland did not have a rich (albeit clichéd) fashion heritage then it would most likely be searching for and constructing one.

When discussing Scottish style more broadly and then reflecting on their own style, participants did not discuss tartan or these textiles in any great detail. Some mentioned tartan briefly but felt it was stereotypical and not representative of modern Scottish fashion:

*I remember when I first started an internship in London and I wore, like, tartan trousers and it was like the worst idea ever: like the classic Scottish person wearing tartan {laughs}. But I feel like it was just on trend at that time, it was just a coincidence. Nothing happened, I just felt like "maybe I shouldn't be wearing this to work" because people are going to think I'm just wearing it because I love Scotland so much {laughs}. And actually, yeah, I do love it but it is in fashion right now as well so it's semi-acceptable {laughs} (Gunna).*

Gunna was very passionate about her Scottish identity but felt that wearing tartan in the wrong context could be damaging to her personal identity.

*The day of the Independence Referendum, I decided to put on a tartan skirt and walk about {laughs} (Arran).*

Arran reflected on her decision to wear a tartan skirt on the day of the Scottish Independence Referendum vote; she identified herself as pro-Scottish independence and admitted that her outfit choice was entirely influenced by her political view on this day. These examples illustrate, from two very different viewpoints, that the choice to wear tartan as a Scottish person might be regarded as synonymous with a heightened feeling of Scottish pride.

Arran was the only participant who expressed an enthusiasm for tartan and, in particular, scarves. She associated this type of Scottish style with quality and traditional Scottish textile brands that she admired but which were not affordable. She then went on to describe her experience of shopping at local charity shops and high-street fashion retailers, supporting Iona's idea of Scottish influencers as "thrifty" when it came to their fashion choices (Figure 23). This might be due to the participants' ages and the fact that they were not long settled in their careers.

Barra remembered a "tweed-esque phase" she "went through" as a student but was quick to dismiss this as simply a trend at that time. She also spoke fondly of Arran knit jumpers, but, again, did not seem to regard this as part of her current style. This demonstrates the extent to which traditional Scottish textiles are a part of cyclical mainstream fashion trends and that Scottish people also view these in this way.

Only two of the sample posts contain tartan (Figures 38 and 46). Figure 46 is a post from Danna's wedding in Scotland where her husband's kilt is just barely visible. Danna reflected on her choice to get married in Scotland, whilst living in Australia, as a key symbol of her Scottish identity and has posted a number of wedding photos on Instagram. However, the fact that she chose an image that does not fully depict her husband's kilt suggests that this is not why she chose the post and that the tartan component of the image is less important than it might seem. This example suggests, again, that in the case of Scottish identity and fashion, tartan is regarded with caution and perhaps only acceptable in a particular setting; in this case as formalwear.



Like my blog, twenty-somethings and the other?

Watch me strut my stuff in my new @chouchoucouture Hollyhood Kitty Tartan on now 🐱🌸 and find out what my three winter wardrobe essentials are! ❄️ Thanks to the amazing @ for the photos! 💕 #fashion #copperpink #edfashion #scotstreetstyle #ootd

Figure 38: Tiree wearing tartan

Figure 38 shows Tiree on a cobbled street in the city centre of Edinburgh in what could be described as a street-style post in the more traditional sense of the term (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008). In her description of the garment, she revealed it had a faux fur hood and cat ears – a youthful and original take on the traditional tartan scarf that it initially seems to be. Tiree chose this post, not because of the tartan but because the garment was designed by a Scottish designer; she was gifted the scarf as a thank you after completing a student internship. Her hair is blowing in the wind and this, alongside the lighting and warm clothing, connotes an autumn-winter feel. In this setting, the scarf appears authentic and practical as well as stylish.

*I don't necessarily pick anything out and think "oh that's really Scottish" but in terms of dressing warm and... practically. Sometimes, I think that's how the Scottishness sort of comes through in terms of my fashion (Skye).*

All participants felt their fashion choices were influenced, at least on some level, by the Scottish weather as a natural circumstance of their location. Across the sample, there was a general sense of “dressing for the weather” (Arran). Most notably, however, the majority of participants expressed a preference for autumn-winter styles; for example citing the layering of garments and items such as scarves, jackets and boots as key components of their personal style.

*I love a jacket {laughs}. You can't really cope without a jacket, so yeah. I love a jacket. And I'm also really drawn to, like, boots. I don't really like buying sandals and things like that, you know good footwear. I feel that that's maybe influenced by the Scottish weather {laughs} (Lungay).*

Danna observed her status as a Scottish style influencer living in Australia:

*I love winter fashion and I can feel myself swaying towards it earlier in the summer... It's so hot here but I always want to get straight into the winter and the layering and all that kind of stuff. Whereas people here hate when it comes into winter and they don't really... I've noticed even a lot of the style influencers I follow here, I'll love their style in the summer and then it gets to winter and they'll walk around just in like trackies and stuff like that and I'm just like “mmm”... so that's something that I love, embracing the winter fashions as well.*

Danna reflected on the rain as something that makes her feel at home and claimed to miss this in Australia. This idea of feeling more comfortable in Scotland was strong amongst participants, who generally appeared less at ease when contemplating summer styles.

*In general I prefer winter to summer because I prefer dressing in winter... maybe that's because I'm used to it. But when it comes to London, like, as much as it's nice, it's sunny and I'm like “oh my god what am I supposed to wear? A dress and, like, no jacket? This is weird!” Whereas when you go to Scotland, it's all about layering. I prefer that definitely (Gunna).*

Gunna observes that her preference for autumn-winter styles might simply stem from familiarity, and this is supported by the fact that Fara (having been born and spent most

of her life in Greece) was the only participant who expressed preference for spring-summer styles. She described herself as “broken hearted” that she was less able to embrace these fashions whilst living in Scotland. It could be argued that a preference for autumn-winter styles might be Britain-wide, rather than Scotland-specific. However, the two participants who were living in London felt that they were more able to experiment with spring-summer fashions whilst in London because the weather tended to be warmer.

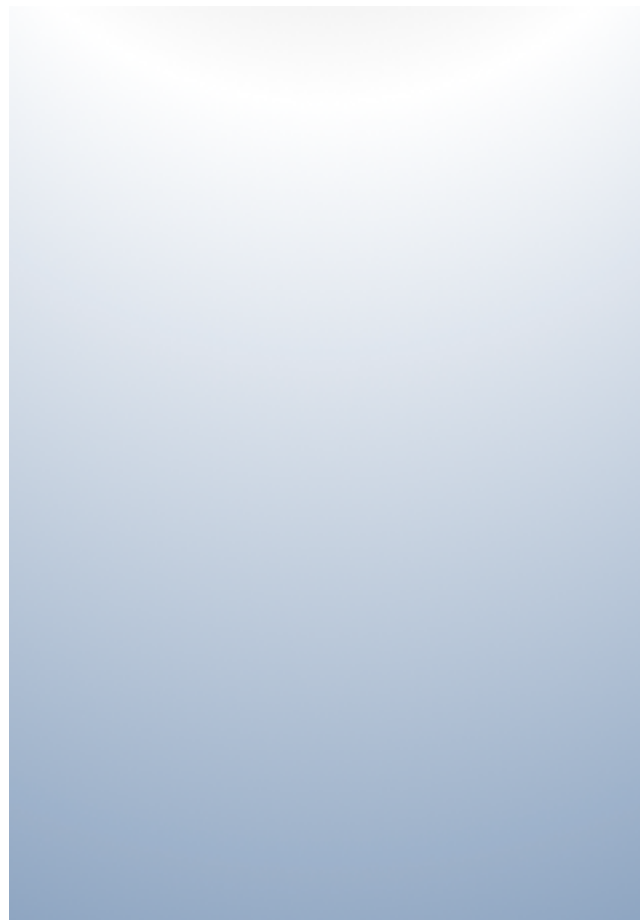


Figure 39: Jura’s spring-summer style (redacted for use online)

Interestingly, the more career-minded of participants saw this as a real limitation when working with brands that might specialise in these types of styles or when engaging with a global audience, who might wish to see summer fashion. Jura reflected on this in her description of Figure 39:



*One thing that I struggle with is because a lot of my audience – like I could show you my Instagram stats – is mainly London and then New York, Istanbul and Paris are my other main audiences – a lot of these places are warm just now. So I have to think about the content that I’m producing for my audience. Even though it’s not warm here, I’ll sell more if I wear things that are like that. So you’ve got to kind of take that into consideration too. Even though I’d wear that if it was warmer, it’s not an outfit that I wouldn’t wear. I would wear it but maybe it’s just not as warm as I’d like it to be (Jura).*

This suggests that, while Jura regards her personal style in Figure 39 as authentic – in that it represents her preferred aesthetic and that which her audience has come to expect from her – her choice of clothing was influenced by a sense of her audience and her career as a style influencer. Would she have worn this if not for her frontstage identity? Possibly not. Thus Jura’s style here is influenced most strongly by a sense of her frontstage self as a style influencer (Goffman, 1956; McCrone *et al*, 1995). The findings suggest that preferences for autumn-winter styles and reluctance to fully embrace spring-summer fashions are key features of Scottish style.

One element that appeared problematic for participants was when bad weather conditions, most notably rain, made it difficult to spend time outside. As discussed in Section 5.5.3, participants were enthusiastic about spending time outdoors and this formed a key part of their online identity but they also recognised that this was less enjoyable when the weather was bad (which they agreed was quite often the case):

*If the weather was a bit better I think it would be one of the best destinations in the world because it can be really stunning. But when the weather is like this! {points outside} (Arran).*

Participants felt that weather had a strong impact on their Instagram identity, particularly as they relied so heavily on outdoor imagery as part of this. Jura observed some positives in the Scottish climate when it came to photography, where her design aesthetic appeared to be both influenced by and a product of her Scottish location and the climate. She even admitted to editing all her images to make them “more grey”:

*Glasgow’s grey, like even the sky’s grey. So you can even see that in the images as well {laughs}. It’s actually best to shoot in weather like today when it’s*

*overcast because of the style of image I like, like a darker style. So bright sunshine doesn't really work for me. So I suppose it is good to be here, but only when it doesn't rain – which is 90% of the time.*

A number of the sample posts that participants provided could be described as grey and bleak in terms of weather and lighting. For those who were living in Scotland, the climate was an uncontrollable element that they could either embrace (as Jura appears to have) or attempt to conceal (through editing their images or by pursuing indoor activities).

A number of the participants highlighted autumn as a particularly influential season in terms of their personal style and how this was conveyed through Instagram. Skye, in particular, was very passionate about autumn and the whole aesthetic that accompanies it (Figure 40).



Figure 40: Skye's autumn window

She described Figure 40:

*It's kind of got an autumn feel to it and that's like, my favourite time of the year, so... I love it in Scotland actually. I think because of the cold weather and you can wrap up and stuff. I think just the sunsets in Scotland I really like and I think that's a big part of my personality, just enjoying that time of year (Skye).*

Skye spoke about the significance of autumn and felt that the season marked the start of new things. Having recently graduated university, she spoke about the new semester, her birthday, which was in autumn, and other aesthetics such as coffee cups, leaf-lined streets and sunsets.

The findings suggest that existing literature in the area of Scottish fashion does not sufficiently reflect Scottish fashion in a modern context. Although the focus on traditional textiles such as tartan and tweed is useful in helping understand the Scottish fashion system in terms of how this influences Scottish identity, fashion design and cyclical fashion trends, further work is needed in helping understand contemporary Scottish identity and style.

The participants discussed in this thesis are Scottish style influencers: individuals who publicly promote their personal style and identify themselves as Scottish on Instagram. As was discussed in Section 1.1, fashion influencers have evolved from fashion bloggers and these groups are recognised as important in the increasingly fast-paced fashion communication and digital media landscape (Rocamora, 2011a). In a nation where traditional fashion media is sparse (Marcella and Rowley, 2015), it is argued that Scottish style influencers might be even more significant. In signalling themselves as Scottish on Instagram or placing their online self within Scotland, participant influencers are considered key contributors to a sense of contemporary Scottish style; in terms of how this is constructed and understood in a potentially global context.

Participants used the term “Scottish weather” to convey poor weather conditions that were cold, wet and generally “dreich”. This was regarded as influential on their style choices, where participants expressed a preference for layers, scarves, boots, colours, etc. However, Scottish weather was also regarded by some participants as challenging for their Instagram identity, it made it difficult to: embrace spring-summer styles, which might be a problem when working with brands; pursue outdoor activities as part of

their lifestyle; and take photographs outdoors. However, the Scottish climate was also seen as somewhere that lent itself very naturally to participants' preference for an autumn aesthetic and this attracted successful collaborations with certain types of brands.

Thus Scottish weather can be regarded as an influential factor but also a challenge associated with participants' Scottish location. It demonstrates a potential conflict between offline (backstage) and online (frontstage) identity where the (often) harsh reality of the Scottish weather might constrain an influencer's ability to project their ideal identity through Instagram (Goffman, 1956; Erikson, 1959).

### **5.5.5 Scottish people as warm, welcoming and friendly**

*The friendliness and the warmth you give people whether they're someone you've known for ten years or someone you've known for ten seconds. That's being Scottish (Lungay).*

Throughout all the interviews, participants reflected on Scottish people and what it meant to be Scottish. They agreed that a Scottish personality was distinctive and recognisable in real life and through Instagram.

*I try to have a feed where, like, my personality comes across, I think so much of my personality is influenced by the fact that I'm Scottish, I think it just kind of naturally shines through (Cara).*

It is probably not surprising that participants reflected on Scottish personality when asked to consider their own personality and the ways in which this was influenced by their Scottish identity. However, what was more interesting is that participants tended to reflect on this very early in the interview, before they were asked to consider their own personality. When asked to consider typical symbols of Scottish identity, participants spoke about Scottish people and their behaviour; in particular the welcoming and "general friendliness" they felt Scottish people exuded (Iona).

*If you say you're Scottish people are like "oh yay you're friendly! We can have a laugh! You like to drink alcohol! We can have fun!" I mean if you go to America*

*and say you're Scottish they're like "oh we're Scottish too" and you're like "where from? Where have you been?" and erm... "no, I'm from Mississippi. I've never been to Scotland". But people want to be Scottish and I think that's the beauty of it (Lungay).*

Scottish people were regarded by most of the participants as friendly, open and even funny; with some participants referring to a "sarcastic" (Lungay) or "self-deprecating" (Cara) sense of humour. The notion of a Scottish sense of humour is observable in Maloney (2010), Munro (2010) and O'Donnell's (2010) accounts of the Scotch comic and the Tartan Army in terms of their impact on Scottish culture and how Scottish identity is understood internationally.

Participants spent time reflecting on experiences of meeting new people from other nationalities and travelling. They felt that they received a warm reception simply on the basis of being Scottish and that this was because Scottish people were seen as likeable and inclusive, where "Scotland is a country that always welcomes all nationalities" (Tiree).

Fara spoke about her experiences of moving to Aberdeen and how people made her feel welcome:

*It's how people made me feel. They made me feel welcome, they made me feel settled here. They were very polite, very gentle. As we say in Greece... they have warm hearts. And that's why I wanted to stay there. Because I think that's what matters the most, to feel that you are accepted (Fara).*

It is understood from the literature that Scotland is regarded as a diverse and inclusive nation, which has "hybridity and migration" at its core (Brown, 2010, p. 99; Moreno, 1988; Riach, 2010). Riach (ibid, p. 116) argues that tartan – in its "almost infinitely variable" design – is symbolic of the diverse nature of Scottish people. McCrone *et al* (1995, p. 168) also recognise that Scotland's people are an important part of its heritage, describing them as "the intersection between land and culture".

Fara also made an interesting observation in the interview about the term "expat" and how Scottish people seem to prefer this term when they move elsewhere. She

said she regarded herself as an “immigrant” in Scotland rather than an “expat” of Greece, and this suggests that Scottish people as a group might tend to remain Scottish, even when living outside of Scotland. This idea is not unique to Scotland and is observable across other cultures, however it was supported by other participants who were living outside of Scotland; for example, Iona and Gunna in London, and Danna in Australia, who retained a strong sense of Scottish identity both online and offline. McCrone (2017, p. 374) observes the value placed on “home” as “common” and “unique” to Scottish people. Lungay saw this as an advantage of her Scottish identity when travelling, where “the great thing about the Scottish people is that you always find a diaspora of them wherever you are”.

As well as categorising Scottish people as friendly and welcoming, some participants felt that Scottish people were discernable as free thinkers who did not always follow the crowd.

*I think, as Scots, we don't really let other people tell us what to do. We're not one to be told, like, sit down and shut up (Cara).*

Participants felt that this “attitude” (Jura), as a symbol of Scottishness, was visible across many facets of Scottish culture, including people, politics, style and design. Hirta spoke of individuality and felt this was demonstrated in her own personal style, e.g. her tattoos, which she felt more confident showing off when in Scotland. She spoke about having her own tattoo artist in Glasgow, who she would visit frequently and discuss ideas with, revealing her most recent addition of a highland cow.

*I feel like a lot of Scottish people are quite brave in their appearance? I think, although we're quite, we can be quite insecure, I think a lot of people express themselves easily, or they're quite proud, they're quite brash in their appearance – like brightly coloured hair or they're not really that scared (Tiree).*

Some participants felt that this individuality of attitude was also evident in Scottish style more broadly, observing, for example “bold” style choices as common amongst Scottish people and influencers (Tiree). This idea is perhaps further evidenced through participants’ passion for small independent brands:

*I think there's a [big] independent scene in Scotland. Erm, particularly in Glasgow. But also, like Edinburgh and Aberdeen as well... It's more about, like, mix and match, find your own style. I suppose smaller, independent businesses. I suppose we kind of make our own fashion. I find it's very mix and match and kind of eclectic. Like it's not just following everything that's in Vogue or buying something because someone told me to. It's like you buy it because you want to... it's kind of like a defiance... (Cara).*

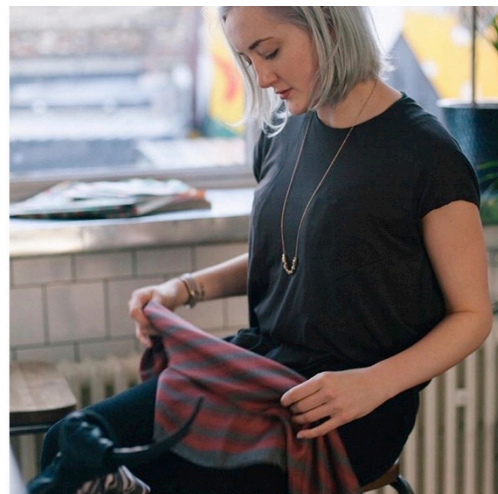
Cara's quote further illustrates the idea that Scottish fashion could be regarded as individual and cites small, independent brands as an example of a way in which Scottish people might be original in their style choices. She also makes a connection between Scottish culture and fashion where her idea of "defiance" could be applied to politics, fashion and Scottish culture more broadly.

A number of the sample posts included Scottish brands, where participants had collaborated with a brand as part of a business arrangement (Figure 41) or where participants were especially passionate about promoting local design talent (Figure 42).



In love with this cute wee necklace from @buddybeardesign 🌿💖 From every sale Buddy Bear donate 10% to the 'Trees for Life Charity', which means your purchase can directly help to support the recreation of Scotland's ancient Caledonian forest. Being a lover of nature and Scotland, this is something I absolutely love and support. 💙🏠 Please visit their page/ website for more information and treat yourself to some gorgeous jewellery too! ✨

Figure 41: Arran's gifted necklace



New post on the blog (link in bio): Green Is The New Black, all about why #sustainable and #ethical fashion is more than just a 'trend'. Picture by [unclear] ft my favourite @nublvck scarf and @hayleymcsporrn\_top 🍷 #shopscottish

Figure 42: Eday's favourite scarf

Figures 41 and 42, although from two separate participants, are interesting when viewed together. Figure 41 shows a product that was gifted to Arran from a Scottish jewellery designer; she chose this post because it showcases a Scottish brand. The Scottishness of this post is conveyed through her description of the brand and the local, charitable incentive to purchase; also in her use of the word “wee” (Douglas, 2009). Reference to the “ancient Caledonian forest” denotes Scotland’s past (McCrone, 2017), which has already been identified as a key signifier of Scotland and influencer of strong feelings of Scottishness amongst participants (Section 5.2.1). The packaging denotes a mountainous landscape, which could easily connote Scotland, and the design itself is arguably more modern than the story behind it; this again illustrates the natural landscape as both an ancient and contemporary symbol of Scottish identity. Although Arran describes herself as “in love with this cute wee necklace”, this could be regarded as hyperbole. The image itself does not connote the same level of enthusiasm for the brand or product; the necklace remains unopened in its packaging, rather than worn around her neck.

Figure 42 denotes Eday holding a scarf. This post does not convey a business relationship, aside from that of a fashion student who works at the Scottish Design Exchange and who is passionate about Scottish brands. From the post it is clear that she has chosen to promote an independent brand, which is both ethical and sustainable. Although she does not directly mention Scotland in the caption, this is highlighted in her use of #ShopScottish; a marker of Scottish identity that she admitted to using in all of her Instagram posts that promote Scottish brands (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). The photo denotes a much more intimate moment between the participant and the garment, where Eday interacts with the scarf, holding and examining it closely. Therefore it could be argued that Figure 42 connotes a more genuine passion for the garment and brand that is represented.

A number of the participants spoke of promoting Scottish brands and seemed to regard this as part of their role as a Scottish style influencer. Figures 41 and 42 illustrate two examples of how this might occur and be conveyed through Instagram. These examples suggest that promotion of this sort might be more believable when it occurs and is expressed more naturally: as a result of a genuine passion for the brand and the product; and when this enthusiasm is expressed through the image.

Relatability, as has already been discussed (Section 5.4), was a quality that participants



felt was important in the way in which they constructed themselves online and through their personal style. This is something that appeared connected with the idea of themselves as Scottish people who were welcoming and friendly, open and honest. Participants felt this was more important amongst Scottish style influencers who operated as part of a small community and where most fell into the category of a micro-influencer, who typically have smaller follower numbers (under 50k) but much higher engagement from their audience (Moss, 2017; Table 3).

When discussing the concept of being relatable, participants tended to draw on their experiences as followers of other style influencers on Instagram, and distinguished between aspirational (Findlay, 2015) and relatable influencers as opposing ideas. Relatability was linked to friendliness, openness and honesty, features that participants felt were visible amongst Scottish people and could be successfully translated to Instagram:

*I talk very openly about psoriasis. I talk very openly about my mental health. I talk very openly about my fashion choices. It's very open and honest. And I feel... yeah that's something else with Scottish people, it's kind of what you see is what you get, we wear our hearts on our sleeve, we tell it like it is and that's my blog and Instagram (Lungay).*

Although participants regarded relatability as important, not all participants were as open in revealing less positive parts of their life online, such as negative moods or experiences; this was discussed in Section 5.4.1. Lungay appeared to be unique amongst participants in the extent to which she opened up online.

However, as is one of the key appeals of micro-influencers, participants tended to feel close to their followers and liked to engage with them by replying to comments and private messages (Moss, 2017). This emphasises the mutual relationship between an influencer and their follower that has long been cited as the appeal of fashion blogs (Allen, 2009; Pham, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b) but where, as follower numbers have grown, the maintenance of such a relationship might become difficult. Participants felt that their friendliness online was influenced by their Scottish identity; for example, Jura, who had in excess of 50k followers on Instagram and received a high level of engagement in comments and messages said:

*What a lot of people say to me is that I come across warm. So I would say that's kind of a Scottish thing. On Instagram I'll speak to everyone; I'll never not respond to a message, like these things. And a lot of people don't do that, and it's almost like they don't care. A characteristic that I feel like is Scottish and I see it in a lot of other Scottish bloggers is that kind of warmth of always happy to speak to people.*

The notion of an online community (Moon *et al*, 2006; Somolu, 2007; Ratliff, 2009; Downing Peters, 2015) or enclave (Ratliff, 2009) of Scottish influencers on Instagram was strong throughout the interviews. For the most part, the Scottish style community on Instagram was regarded as highly supportive, where members had formed genuine friendships as a result. Song (2016) highlights community as a key attribute of Instagram, describing the medium as a window to different cultures, where those from different backgrounds and upbringings can connect irrespective of their physical distance. McCrone (2017) found that offline communities were influential towards strong feelings of Scottish identity. In this context, the online community of Scottish style influencers might signify a group identity (Goffman, 1956) and be similarly influential. The community of Scottish style influencers on Instagram is discussed further in Section 5.7.2.

Almost all of the participants used the word “warm” during the interview to describe Scottish people. This is an intriguing term and one that contrasts with their sense of the physical climate in Scotland, as cold and wet. Arguably the “warmth” of Scottish people cannot truly be conveyed through Instagram but this was constructed most strongly through: a down-to-earth lifestyle and fashion choices; positive and upbeat content; two-way engagement with followers; and through participants’ design aesthetic (where most participants expressed preference for brighter colours and warm tones).

The perception that Scotland’s people are welcoming and friendly is supported by existing studies into Scottish identity and culture (Moreno, 1988; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010; Riach, 2010). It is interesting that participants regarded this feature, not just a personality trait but as a behaviour that might be recognised internationally as symbolic of Scotland. This was also reflected in an online setting where participants felt that this trait made Scottish identity more attractive and distinctive.

Participants appeared to position themselves as relatable and felt it was important for their audience to be able to see something of themselves in their content, for example through the use of familiar, location-based imagery or through revealing more personal information about their life. Scottish style influencers display the characteristics of a micro-influencer (Moss, 2017) and the close influencer-follower relationship participants reported might therefore be regarded as an appeal for brands as well as followers.

This section has explored the symbols that participants identified as particularly Scottish and identified some of the ways in which Scottish identity is understood and expressed through personal style and how this is conveyed online using Instagram (RQ6 and RQ7). Participants were found to avoid what they regarded as more obvious or stereotypical symbols such as tartan; they understood that these were valid and representative of Scotland but did not feel these were sufficiently diverse and inclusive of other more genuine symbols of Scottish identity and style. It should be acknowledged that, given participants in the current study chose to consciously identify as Scottish on Instagram, it is likely that they are passionate about and feel positively about what it is to be Scottish. Throughout the interviews, participants tended to regard Scottish identity in a sentimentalised manner and in this sense made claim to the positive attributes that they regarded as Scottish (Herzfeld, 1997; McCrone, 2017). Therefore, although the tendency to regard Scottish people in a celebratory light is a strong theme that transcended the interviews, it was almost certainly influenced, at least to some extent, by the selection criteria for the interviews.

Participants communicated their Scottish identity most strongly by promoting Scotland as a destination, sharing beautiful landscapes, heritage and outdoor lifestyle aspects (RQ7). They were found to convey a Scottish voice through the use of colloquial phrases that were discernably Scottish but familiar enough to be more widely understood by other nationalities (RQ7). In terms of appearance, Scottish identity seemed to be far less obvious in all but one case (Iona). Participants' personal style was influenced subtly by the Scottish climate, and all but one participant expressed a preference for autumn-winter styles (RQ6). They communicated Scottish fashion more explicitly at times through their promotion of Scottish designers, most of whom were small, independent brands (RQ6). This idea was reflected in their own fashion choices more broadly: participants regarded their style as original and, at times, alternative. They flattered themselves that they did not necessarily follow the crowd when it came to fashion

trends; an idea that some of the participants felt stemmed from the Scottish bravery and attitude to life (RQ6).

## **5.6 London comparisons and the profession**

Literature in the field of Scottish identity highlights a romantic image of Scotland constructed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and promoting Scotland as mythical and peopleless (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; McCrone, 2017). This Highland vision was popularised through literary and artistic representations as well as through tartan (ibid). Sir Walter Scott is cited as a significant influencer of the time, “inventing tradition” through his writing and orchestration of the royal visit (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Hume, 2010; Brown, 2010). It is argued that the Highland vision that has been appropriated to the whole of Scotland, masks other, arguably more genuine, identities and cultures (McCrone *et al*, 1995). Anderson (1983) argues that nations are imagined communities, kept alive by stories and representations. McCrone *et al* (1995) argue that the point is not to focus on the truth behind the Scottish myth but to explore why it is still active today (Brown, 2010b).

The Victorian era is regarded as influential in the story of tartanry or the Highland vision of Scotland (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010). Queen Victoria and her husband Albert acquired the Balmoral estate in 1852, and from then on used this as a retreat to escape from London life. This provoked a public interest in Scotland as a place, positioning the nation further as distinct from England, and influencing the development of a heritage tourism industry within Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995).

Throughout the interviews participants drew comparisons between Scotland and London. The two places were regarded, at times, almost as if they were polar opposites: where London was viewed as a hub for fashion media, and in which style influencers were plentiful; Scotland, on the other hand, was regarded as cut off from the fashion industry and many of its opportunities, where some felt that an influencer is “just not really a feasible career in Scotland” (Iona).

The realm of style influencers was seen as underdeveloped in Scotland and the community relatively small. There was a sense that everyone knew each other. It is also the case that Scottish style influencers tended to have smaller follower numbers and

thus typically fell into the category of micro-influencer (Moss, 2017); only one participant (Jura) had over 50k followers. Some felt that, in order to forge an Instagram career, it was necessary to physically take oneself out of Scotland and go to London.

*I feel that what I want and personal... Life goals, career goals it would be better for me. It is better for me, I've been there. I know it's better for me. I just go there all the time (Jura).*

Jura saw moving to London as the next step in her career as a style influencer, although she did not have any concrete plans in place to do so at the time of interview. She spoke of visiting London regularly to attend fashion events. However, interestingly, she did not seem enthused by or attached to London as a place; for Jura, the attraction appeared purely professional. Indeed, London was convenient in its proximity to Glasgow, where she could visit friends and family whilst realising her career ambitions:

*Funnily enough, I mean I love to go there... I don't know that I would say it would be my first choice to live, in terms of if I could live in any city in the world – would I live there? Probably not. But, because of how close it is to here, for like, because [boyfriend] and I... all our families and stuff. It's obviously close enough to Glasgow and I suppose obviously it's within the UK, it would be the easiest move for us to make, like financially etc. So, I suppose that would be the main reason. But whether it speaks to me? I don't think so. But no, maybe it's just because it's a city as well and I love that city vibe compared to anything else (Jura).*

Participants also presented another side to the London comparison. This mainly came from those who had experienced London life and were able to appreciate some of the opportunities that Scotland had to offer: fresh air; wide open spaces; and the ability to stand out better in a less fashion-focused setting where there were fewer style influencers. The idea of fresh air and open spaces is akin to Queen Victoria escaping London life and it is intriguing that Scotland is still viewed in this way nearly two centuries later.

Participants felt that London had far greater opportunities in the way of events and access to brand headquarters. Generally, it was felt that London, as a bigger place, had more potential for Instagram content than anywhere in Scotland, whether this involved

attending events, engaging in paid opportunities or simply because they had access to more places to take photographs. However, some participants who had experience of working with smaller brands felt that the industry was experiencing a shift, where brands were seeking micro-influencers (Moss, 2017) with smaller follower numbers but also a more relevant following and a close relationship with that audience – thus their ability to influence and inspire that audience could be greater. This was felt to be a potential opportunity for influencers living in Scotland who attracted a local and more engaged audience.

Not surprisingly, Iona and Gunna, who were living in London at the time of interview, were particularly conscious of the differences between Scotland and London, and not just in terms of the places themselves but also in terms of how these influenced their own personal style and online identities. Iona reflected on the ways in which her Instagram identity had changed since moving to London, six months prior to the interview. She referred to Figure 43 as an example of how this has changed:



Feeling like a chameleon next to this wall 🤩 I discuss inbetweenie dressing on the blog today. perfect for dull days like this! #ootd

Figure 43: Iona's Scottish outfit post

Iona felt her posts had become more “professional” since moving to London, where for example, she had access to photographers. Her use of the word “professional” again suggests that the career of an influencer is more realistic and feasible in London. Figure 43 shows Iona outside her old student accommodation in Edinburgh, where her flatmate had taken her photo. She described this:

*I think it's very reflective of Scottish bloggers in that a lot of us don't have the resources for professional photo shoots. So we have to take pictures ourselves or we have to get our friends to take them for us, so... I think quite often we can be a lot more simple in our approach than London bloggers. But, that being said, I still really love that shot: I think my outfit's really cool, I think the colours work really well and it was just a case of using what I had to hand really.*

Although Iona was adamant that her Instagram had become more professional since moving to London and that living in the capital had opened up more opportunities for her, she still chose to position herself as Scottish. In fact Iona and Gunna both felt that they could benefit from the dual identity of being a “Scottish girl in London” (Table 5), distinctive in both communities. Gunna explained:

*It's just normal to live in London but it can be perceived as exciting or interesting. So from, like, a different side, I think people from Scotland are probably interested in that (Gunna).*

Participants observed two major contrasts between London and Scotland in terms of their personal style and how this was conveyed through Instagram. The first was a recognised difference between London and Scottish style, or how participants chose to style themselves in each of these settings, and the second was the setting or backdrops of their photographs.

In terms of personal style, Iona reflected: “people assume London bloggers are more stylish”. London is recognised as a fashion capital and one that is host to a number of events each year and the headquarters for a number of global fashion brands. All the participants reflected on times they had visited London and some on living there for a period. Some admitted to being more conscious of their style in London, where they made more of an effort to dress up: either because they felt that they were surrounded

by other stylish people and wanted to impress and fit in; or because they had more occasion to dress up when in London, e.g. attending events. Some participants also felt they were able to be more adventurous in their fashion choices when in London. Mull reflected on her style during a short stint living in London:

*You're more anonymous, you can take a bit more risk I think. Like I love more seventies style. I love that vintage look so I remember wearing like the seventies platforms to work and dresses – you could never do that here! Well you probably could in the right environment, but I think Aberdeen's more... a lot more casual...*

Lungay felt that it was not so much a case of dressing for London, but rather dressing for a big city or fashion capital. She described her London/ New York style as “probably... some sort of t-shirt dress and either my Nike trainers or my Jeffrey Campbell cut out boots and a bag” and her Scottish style as “jeans, my Converse, some form of t-shirt, or a cami-top and a slouchy cardigan – that’s kind of uniform”. For Lungay, London represented cosmopolitanism. Gunna also reflected on her style as different in London and Scotland in her discussion of Figures 28 and 29 (Section 5.4).

In terms of setting, participants drew lifestyle comparisons between London and Scotland, where the latter was regarded as more “outdoorsy” (Mull), and where London was recognised for its urban vibe and presented more opportunities for traditional street-style imagery (Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008) that included interesting facades. Fara, in particular, reflected on a lack of attractive shop fronts in Aberdeen as a limitation of her physical location. The fact that style influencers were not well recognised in Scotland also made street-style photography problematic, even in bigger Scottish cities like Glasgow:

*If you're shooting – like I'll do Royal Exchange Square, which is like a huge... I don't know if you know, in Glasgow, but the man with the cone on his...? So it's busy all the time and people will shout stuff and walk next to me and pretend like they're on a runway sort of thing. And it's funny and it's typical Glaswegian for someone to do that (Jura).*

Street style was regarded as doable in Scotland and this is evidenced by the number of street-style posts that were included as part of the sample images. However, there were



seen to be fewer locations that worked well and some participants felt they had exhausted these locations and sought other ways in which to be creative and produce new and original content:

*I'm sure if you pay attention, the only thing I play around is seasons. So it's the same corners, different seasons. So, when I was in London, there's so many places to take [photographs] (Fara).*

Even participants with no real ties to London referred to and seemed to naturally draw comparisons between London and Scotland. The reason for this appeared to stem from the fact that London was seen as the epicenter of the UK fashion industry. They did not seem to be particularly attracted to London as a place beyond the opportunities it might offer their career as a style influencer. In comparison to London, Eday described the Scottish fashion industry as “non-existent” and felt that it was part of her role, as an influencer, to build an industry by drawing attention to Scottish talent:

*We have to create the fashion industry that's here. We can't wait for it to happen. And because the industry here - not the textiles industry obviously because that goes way back - but the kind of modern fashion industry, like it's established in London... [We're] basically building it from scratch.... So we need to, like, have conversations about how we want to do that and whether it's going to be like everywhere else in the world, or doing it completely our own way - which, I think, we should because that's what Scottish people do, they go against the norm (Eday).*

Of all the participants, Eday was particularly passionate about Scottish fashion. To her, it appeared that Scotland was caught in a cycle, whereby people felt they had to leave Scotland and move to London in order to succeed in the industry. This included style influencers, which is supported by the findings of this thesis through the visibility of Scottish style influencers in London (Iona and Gunna) and Jura's plans to relocate to the capital. Eday's quote illustrates that style influencers could be regarded as influential in not just communicating Scottish fashion but actually building an industry that, at present, does not exist, beyond traditional textiles. This idea is also evidenced in the academic literature, which focuses on the production of iconic textiles such as cashmere, tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). In constructing a contemporary fashion industry, Eday, again, emphasises the fashion and

culture that participants felt was synonymous with Scottish identity, where they viewed this as bold and defiant. She continued:

*The British Fashion Council totally ignore Scotland, we have great courses and great fashion here as you know, but most graduates feel the need to go to London because there's no opportunities here, there's no funding available. There's basically not an existing fashion industry here and the way people react to that is to leave, instead of staying and making that fashion industry. So I guess I'm like very passionate about like persuading people to, instead of complaining that there is no fashion industry, to make one. And to support companies like the Scottish Design Exchange and Scotland Design and Creative Scotland that are actually trying to build something. But it won't happen if all the talent leaves. Like, you know, you think of Scottish fashion designers and you think of Christopher Kane and Holly Foulton and Charles Geoffrey. But they're all based in London now; they're not doing anything for the Scottish fashion industry anymore. And it's just a big issue and I'm friends with a lot of fashion designers and they all have so many problems setting up a business here. So there needs to be more awareness basically. I could rant for ages about this... (Eday).*

There seemed to be a consensus amongst the participants that it was important to support small Scottish businesses. Many felt that they were more inclined to follow, engage with or promote a brand out of good will if that brand happened to be Scottish:

*Scottish brands are incredible! We have some amazing brands and there's brands out there that people talk about all the time and don't realise are Scottish. And I think it's so important to highlight that they are. Just because they're great! And like we're such a wee nation and we should be proud of what we're producing and, you know, saying, you know what "yeah we're Scottish!" And I think that adds value (Lungay).*

Participants recognised that the small scale of the Scottish fashion industry could be viewed as an opportunity, where people tend to know each other and this allowed more meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships to be built, both on and offline, between brands and influencers.

*Well we live in... this is an influencer economy and there's a, like countless studies of the reasons people buy things. And it'll usually boil down to what they've seen online, whether that's a blogger or a brand or whatever. So I think that what you post online, whether you have 20, 000 followers, 2, 000 followers (like me), or 20 followers, what you post online can influence someone (Eday).*

As mentioned previously, participants were, for the most part, very aware of their audience and seemed to consider them quite deeply, not just when posting on Instagram but when planning and creating content, e.g. fashion and lifestyle (Van House, 2009; Rocamora, 2011; Section 5.3). Participants had an idea of where their followers came from geographically and how they reacted or engaged with Scottish (or indeed not so Scottish) content:

*I think most of them are from Scotland. Yeah, but the fact I've moved to London hasn't put Scottish followers off. I think they're still interested in what I'm producing (Iona).*

In terms of actively promoting Scotland, some participants were very concerned with promoting Scottish brands (Eday, Lungay, Tیره and Hirta, in particular) and others were more concerned with promoting Scotland as a destination:

*I think it is quite important because you want to take pride in where you live and you want to communicate that to people. Because Scotland is a big tourist destination to a lot of people, because of the outdoor aspect and the beauty of it (Mull).*

Perhaps not surprisingly, the two most career-minded participants (Fara and Jura) seemed to be particularly conscious of the impact that place had on their engagement and follower numbers on Instagram; both gave examples of negative reactions to new content from a different location. They understood that their location, and the consistency of this location, was an important part of their appeal. This reaffirms the idea that an ideal identity on Instagram is consistent and stable and that place is influential in its construction (Erikson, 1959; Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004). It also illustrates that an audience can be instrumental in shaping that identity (Goffman, 1956; Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b). Whilst Fara reflected on her time spent visiting

family in Greece and a change in setting and content, Jura considered this in terms of how a change in place had affected her style:

*I was in Florida, what, two weeks ago? And my images don't do well, it's not my style. People seem to like that grungy, street style better than anything else. On my feed that's what people like. So, obviously - I run a business - I'm always thinking about what people want to see, and what people like.*

Overall, in terms of place, style and the career of a fashion and style influencer, London and Scotland contrasted strongly. This is particularly interesting in light of Eday's comments about the lack of Scottish fashion industry. This supports the idea that Scottish influencers can be powerful signifiers of Scottish fashion and style (RQ8). Participants observed some challenges relating to their Scottish identity and location, which mainly related to a lack of career-related opportunities or Scottish weather. These limitations were often contrasted with opportunities, most notably the ability to stand out as a Scottish influencer; these influencers regarded themselves metaphorically as bigger fish in a smaller pond (RQ4).

The findings also illustrate that the Victorian idea of Scotland (Fulton, 1991; McCrone et al, 1995; Brown, 2010) as tranquil and a place for escape is still strong today.

### **5.6.1 Scotland as a place for escape**

*You can tell you're in Scotland. As soon as you get off the train in Edinburgh, you just feel like you're in Scotland and it's like you can breathe better than you can in London {laughs} (Gunna).*

Throughout the interviews, participants spoke about Scotland as a place for escape. This was firstly because it was regarded as peaceful, in contrast to big cities like London (Fulton, 1991; McCrone et al, 1995; McCrone, 2017). This vision of Scotland was a theme that pervaded almost all the interviews and which is illustrated in a number of the sample posts, many of which show people-less landscapes and natural elements.

*There's green stuff and there's fields. And hills and {laughs} that's like weirdly important now because it's just so nice. And I think everyone in London feels like that at some point, that they just want to get away to that sort of environment and I'm lucky that I can (Gunna).*

Secondly, Scotland was regarded as a place in which it is possible to escape city life even when living in a city. Most of the participants recognised the ease with which they could escape to the countryside as an advantage of living in Scotland:

*I like that Scotland has both of those things to offer. And it is just so beautiful (Tiree).*

Having grown up and spent most of her life in Greece, Fara seemed particularly conscious that her audience enjoyed the Scottish aspect of her identity. She spoke about how she felt her followers often “mistook” her for being Scottish because of the nature of her photographs and her competency in written English. She also revealed that she had lost followers during periods of travel, demonstrating that her audience preferred the Scottish content that they associated so strongly with her personal style on Instagram.

Some participants reflected on escape in relation to Instagram specifically, admitting that they themselves liked to consume other lifestyles and visit other destinations through Instagram, transported by the “spatial self” (Schwartz and Halegoua, 2015, p. 1644) and enabling them “to dip into the screen and be there and experience it” (Fara).

The ability to escape day-to-day life was a key attraction of Instagram for participants, for example as a way “to take like five/ ten minutes out of being stressed at work” (Barra). This idea of escape in relation to Instagram itself could be related to other leisure activities such as watching TV or reading a book, but the way in which participants spoke about this was interesting. The immediacy with which they could access their online self and view content on Instagram whilst living their everyday reality, backstage, made this even more appealing (Goffman, 1956; Song, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e Silver, 2018). Participants frequently referred to Instagram as a “place” both: in relation to Instagram as a medium through which they were able to escape and consume other people’s lives; and in reference to their own identity on Instagram, to which they felt their followers could similarly escape. Instagram might therefore be considered a destination in and of itself but one that acts as a hub, enabling

access to an infinite variety of virtual places and identities.

## 5.7 Celebrating Scottishness

Throughout the interviews, participants tended to regard Scotland in a celebratory light. They also reflected on Scottish celebrations themselves as unique and recognisable, suggesting that these signified Scotland and brought together a number of iconographical symbols; perhaps most notably in the use of Scottish national dress as formalwear (Fulton, 1991; McCrone, 2017). Participants drew on examples from Scottish celebrations, and associated these with strong feelings of community and national belonging.

Fara regarded national celebrations as traditions and felt she had accumulated some of these customs whilst spending time in other countries, most notably Greece and Scotland, reflecting her dual identity (Table 4; Moreno, 1988). She explained: “my life has been shaped by the places I’ve lived” (Fara).

*The song Loch Lomond {laughs} - you can't go to a party in Scotland without hearing that (Cara).*

When referring to celebrations, participants most commonly spoke about weddings as Scottish, choosing the term “Scottish weddings” rather than referring to weddings in Scotland and suggesting that these are distinctive. Indeed, those who mentioned Scottish weddings during the interview seemed to feel this was the case. In her interview, Skye highlighted music as a strong symbol of Scottishness, and something that made her more conscious of her Scottish identity.

*Being at a Scottish wedding is so different from an English wedding. I think music is a big part of Scotland so, like a ceilidh band. I think that is so typically Scottish and it gives you a sense of pride in your country when you hear that music, or when you're at a ceilidh with your friends or you hear bagpipes. I think that's probably the times when I feel most Scottish compared to any other time, or where I really notice it (Skye).*

Four participants chose to share photos of either their own wedding (Danna and Hirta),

or attending someone else's wedding (Mull and Tíree):

*My sister's wedding, that was in Scotland, in Perthshire. It was a Scottish wedding so there were kilts, there were bagpipes, there was a ceilidh. And my relatives from London – they had never been to a ceilidh! (Mull)*



Bridal party at Errol Park. Beautiful memories at my sister's wedding last year ✨👰🌸  
#tbt #bridalparty #bridalphotography #errolpark  
#perthshire #bridesmaids #softlilac #bestdayever  
#lace #coast #beautifulbride #scottishwedding

18 MAY 2017

Figure 44: Mull at her sister's wedding

It is perhaps remarkable that, although Figures 44, 45 and 46 were provided by individual participants, they had an underlying similarity; that they had been shared retrospectively, after the event and where the participant was looking back and remembering. This is in contrast to some of the other posts provided, many of which were taken and shared in and of the moment and represented something that was happening there and then. Indeed, this immediacy of posting is regarded as one of the key characteristics of Instagram (Abidin, 2016; Song, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e

Silver, 2018). Figures 44, 45 and 46, therefore, represent examples of Instagram being used in a different way. This builds on the previous theme of escapism, where the participants were using Instagram to reminisce and escape the here and now. Instagram has already been acknowledged as a powerful tool that can be used to document experiences (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017; Utekhin, 2017) but the use of Instagram to actually relive these experiences appears novel. The relationship between memories, attachment to a place and how these ideas are conveyed through Instagram is explored further in Section 5.

Although Mull spoke of Scottish symbols when describing Figure 44, none of these are actually denoted in the photo. This is interesting because it demonstrates the power of the memory behind this post, which is strongly linked to Mull's sense of Scottishness, through the location and her family as well as the more symbolic aspects of the celebration itself. However, she does convey Scottishness in her use of place-related hashtags and #ScottishWedding.



♡ 💬 📍 📌

👉 by [sirlol july, fooflequins and 121 others](#)

year 🗓️ We moved into the flat of our dreams yesterday! Still got so much to do, but we are just so excited to finally be in our new place! 💕 😊

[View all 5 comments](#)

Figure 45: Hirta's wedding



Similarly, Hirta’s post (Figure 45) includes no distinctive symbols of Scotland. However, she referred throughout the interview to her “Scottish wedding” as strongly influential in her attachment to Scotland. Figure 45 is vibrant in colour and exudes sunshine and warmth, with the couple portrayed outdoors after the ceremony.

In contrast, Figure 46 signifies Scotland in a more obvious manner, through the groom’s kilt, which is visible – albeit not in its entirety. Danna’s own style might be described as bohemian, wild and natural. This is largely connoted through her hairstyle, which corresponds well with the natural, outdoor setting. The photo has had a grey filter applied, giving it a soft, faded and nostalgic mood, which might further connote the idea of a memory, reflection or dream.

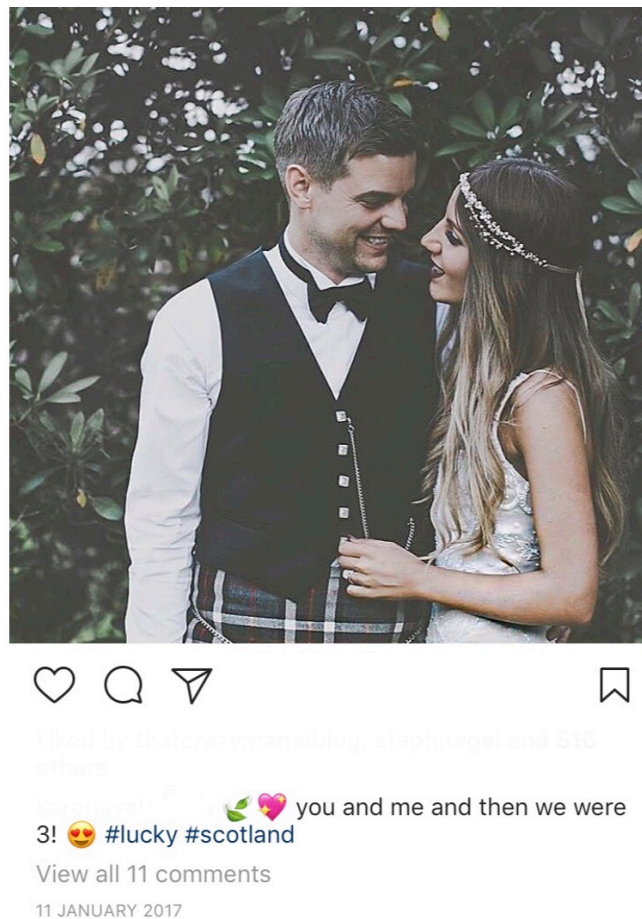


Figure 46: Danna’s wedding

Danna described this post:

*So like, everything in that photo reminds me of Scotland... the greenery, like, [husband's] kilt... everything. So that would be a big thing with that picture that I feel kind of communicates the Scottish thing.*

Danna's use of the term "reminds me" is interesting here. This, again, suggests that the post is motivated by a desire to escape the present moment, or perhaps even Australia, and remember Scotland using Instagram. Danna reflected on her experience of Scottish celebrations, which appear to have become even more important to her since living in Australia:

*Like, traditions and stuff. So like on New Year, that sounds really silly – no one calls it Hogmanay here and I'm like "what are you doing?" and no one knows... One day some things will make you miss home and make you feel more Scottish and sometimes you've just got to like kind of educate others on your culture as well...*

This suggests that Danna's construction of Scottish identity on Instagram is influenced in part by homesickness and also by a desire to inform her international followers about Scottish culture.

Some referred to Scottish holidays as a cause for celebration, like St Andrew's Day and Burns Night. Arran was the only participant to include a reference to a national holiday amongst her sample posts (Figure 47). However, the extent of this celebration appears to have been posting about it on Instagram, and she admitted she only shared Figure 47 because she happened to notice that someone else had. This, again, illustrates the link between Instagram and memories where it is quite possible - likely even - that Arran would not have realised it was St Andrews day were it not for Instagram.



Figure 47: Arran's St Andrew's Day post

She explained her choice to share the image:

*I think that just reiterates the fact that I'm really proud to say that I'm Scottish and just celebrate something like that... I was obviously feeling very patriotic that day.*

Therefore, despite perhaps only engaging with the holiday in a superficial way, Arran reveals through her post a sense of Scottish pride, remembering her Scottish identity, flagging her homeland and, in doing so, reminding others (Billig, 1995). Celebrations were another symbol through which participants were able to express their Scottish identity online. Participants were more likely to share these experiences and also more likely to reshare them and reminisce using Instagram (RQ7).

### 5.7.1 Proud to be Scottish

*Realistically, I don't think you'd get ... a bigger sense of identity and a national community as you do in Scotland. And even though we have so much diversity, especially in Aberdeen – we have such a diverse community here – but even so... it's still so united in so many ways. I mean nothing's perfect and there are definitely ways we could be more inclusive but yeah (Hirta).*

In almost every interview, participants used the phrase “proud to be Scottish” and appeared to be genuinely passionate about Scotland. Even participants, who did not feel they could define themselves as wholly Scottish, because they had been born elsewhere and had only lived in Scotland for a few years, reflected on Scottish pride as a cultural symbol. This passion was regarded by participants as both appropriate and positive.

*I think maybe it's just the sense of pride. Because I think that's a big trait in Scottish people, they're very like patriotic and this sense of pride that I didn't expect to have (Eday).*

Eday felt unable to identify as wholly Scottish because she had been born and grew up in Birmingham and yet still expressed a sense of pride, so strong that it took her by surprise. This was also evident in her fervent promotion of Scottish fashion and suggests that Scottish identity and pride is inclusive and unrestricted. It could be argued that pride in the country is a key component in “becoming” Scottish (Bond and Rosie, 2006, p. 623).

Scottish pride was connoted in a number of the sample posts and supported in the discussion of these; for example, participants expressed a conscious desire to “show off Scottish places” (e.g. Arran) or to promote Scottish brands (e.g. Eday), almost solely because they were Scottish.

When describing the posts she chose to share, Arran referred frequently to Scottish pride. She appeared to interpret the request for posts that represented her identity as a Scottish style influencer a little differently from the other participants. She reflected on her choice stating she felt these were more “patriotic... than, let's say a picture of a coffee”. It is interesting to note at this point that two of the other participants, who were also passionate about their Scottish identity, provided posts that were just that. In these

examples, the coffee cup was a travelling item, perhaps symbolic of the influencers themselves, and held up against intriguing Scottish scenery that was part of their everyday life.



Instagram post interface showing icons for heart, comment, share, and bookmark. The caption reads: "I woke up with an urge to have a cappuccino, which is very unlike me as I rarely ask coffee first thing in the morning. While drinking the said cappuccino, I realised that what I wanted the most is to enjoy the campus whilst it is still quite, before the student buzz and fuss begins. And it was brilliant! ☕"

Figure 48: Fara’s coffee cup



Instagram post interface showing icons for heart, comment, share, and bookmark. The caption reads: "Good morning Glasgow // #coffee". Below the caption, it says "View all 29 comments" and "4 AUGUST 2016".

Figure 49: Lungay’s coffee cup

In these examples, both coffee cups are from local businesses that the participants visit most days; these are used as a prop to draw attention to their surroundings (Goffman, 1956). Figures 48 and 49 represent just one in a series of posts with the same coffee cup, photographed against different backdrops from the same city but on different days. The use of coffee cups on Instagram is a fashion in and of its self and often makes up a key component of flatlay or indoor imagery (e.g. Figure 25). However, their use in a street or landscape setting, such as these, is more intriguing. Fara mentioned in her interview that she would sometimes add a coffee to a photo to bring it to life, when she could not be photographed herself and Lungay referred to Gordon St Coffee as “the best”. These add a unique personal style element to a photo that could otherwise belong to anyone. The use of coffee cups in this way is also perhaps relatable: used as a mechanism through which to connect with their followers, toasting their surroundings and perhaps

also their audience and knowing that many of them will also be enjoying their morning cup of coffee.

Throughout the interviews participants made statements like: "I'm proud of my Scottish heritage" (Iona); "I'm really proud to be Scottish and English" (Cara); "I'm really proud to live in Scotland" (Cara); "I'm really proud to say I am Scottish" (Arran); "Proud to be Scottish but I'm still very proud to be British" (Barra); "I still feel so proud to be Scottish" (Danna); "I'm proud to be Scottish so yeah I tell people" (Gunna); "I am happy to be Scottish and I am proud of it" (Tiree). The emphasis on Britain is also interesting here. It suggests that participants thought it important to emphasise that, in identifying as Scottish, they were not rejecting a British identity. This further supports the idea that Scottish pride is inclusive and open minded.

On the other hand, participants still regarded Scottish identity and culture as distinct from British; for example, Hirta reflected on growing up just outside of London versus visiting family in Scotland:

*The whole pace of life is different I think. And Scottish people's attitudes to life in general – like everyone is so much more relaxed. And I still think you get the driven attitude from everyone but it's at a much more caring and, like, inclusive level if you know what I mean? Like, you can walk down the street and just be a number, a random face in England and when you're here people stop and say "hi" and you don't get that... People are in a rush and they don't want to talk to you.*

A key reason that some of the participants chose to reinforce the British side of their identity when asked the Moreno question (1988) seems to stem from the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum. All participants mentioned this at some point in the interview (completely unprompted). Most participants were keen not to be regarded as anti-British in any way, even those who revealed that they voted for Scottish independence. Participants were split in their views on Scottish independence, with around half the sample in favour and the other half against.

It is interesting to note that even those participants who were antipathetic towards Scottish independence were still very passionate about their Scottish identity:

*During the Referendum - as in the Scottish Referendum - there was, like... I probably shouldn't go into politics but I voted, erm, to remain part of the UK. But I think that then maybe there was kind of a thing where people were like – if you voted to remain - “oh you're not proud to be Scottish then”. I actually am really proud to be Scottish but I actually just really want to remain part of Great Britain (Barra).*

This supports other studies in the area of Scottish identity that found strong feelings of national identity did not necessarily correlate with nationalist political views and strong feelings towards an independent Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Bond and Rosie, 2002). Indeed, the participants in this study might be regarded as what McCrone *et al* (1995, p. 182) refer to as “cultural nationalists”.

Although not asked specifically about politics during the interviews, participants often reflected strong political views around the subject of Scottish independence. It is worth noting that interviews were carried out over a period where there was campaigning for the UK General Election of 2017, with interviews carried out before and after the election. They also took place in the period following *Brexit*, a second referendum involving Scotland and which highlighted concern over Scottish voices being lost amongst the UK political system. The majority of Scottish local authorities voted in favour of remaining in the EU but the UK as a whole voted to leave. These findings further demonstrate a Scottish identity that is inclusive and can be part of a wider British and European culture (McCrone, 2017).

The participants seemed to feel that the political landscape in Scotland had made them more aware of their Scottishness:

*I think that just brought about a big sense of pride and, it was nice to want that for your country... I think something like that made me realise I was very proud to be Scottish and I wanted great things for Scotland. And I think, if we didn't have that, I probably wouldn't have thought about it as much. I think, from that experience I did become very, you know, more aware of my Scottish identity and broadcasting that (Arran).*

Cara felt these political events had made her construction of Scottish identity more intentional:

*I think [the Referendum] was kind of when I really started to, not necessarily brand myself as Scottish, but I started to make a bigger deal of it because I wanted to talk about it and I didn't want people to think "aw she's just piping in on something she knows nothing about". So I made a big deal about how like I am Scottish, these things do affect me, I do live here and I love it here, kind of thing. I was... to start I was very anti-independence but – by the end of it – I voted yes. And if there was a referendum now I'd vote yes again. Even though I do have that really strong relationship with England, because I live here I would rather we were independent.*

Political influences seem to be particularly important in the case of Scotland, where some participants felt an affinity with what they regarded as a Scottish political mindset. This was viewed as left wing and open-minded and compared antithetically to a right-wing UK Parliament, which did not always reflect the views of the people of Scotland. These participants seemed to regard the Scottish political mindset as down-to-earth, level headed and fair.

Cara referred to "big events [such as these] where people come together" as making her feel more Scottish. This suggests that the independence debate perhaps engaged people on a cultural as well as a political level (Kiely *et al*, 2001). However, one participant who voted against Scottish independence felt that the whole debate had a detrimental effect in dividing a nation that was usually so unified:

*I felt like my own identity was challenged very much through the Referendum period and that was really difficult particularly in the sense of like... in a sense of like... I felt so connected to Scotland, it was so challenging being, having this accent at that time was difficult, especially as my husband's Scottish (Hirta).*

Some of the other participants echoed this feeling of division during the Independence debate but felt Scotland had since overcome this through a sense of unity in opinion around other political matters such as *Brexit*:

*When I saw that the entirety of Scotland had voted to remain I thought that that was very nice. I feel like there's almost this kind of sense of we do kind of stick together (Arran).*



Eday felt that the political mindset in Scotland had made her more passionate about Scotland and, ultimately, more Scottish where she “identified more with the culture and the politics” in Scotland than in England:

*When big things happen in Scotland that I relate to, like a big movement that is political or to do with fashion and culture and arts that I believe in. And I feel there is more connection to the views of the masses, as opposed to in England. So I guess like, I got really passionate about the Referendum, which I didn't expect I was going to, stuff like that. And like, you know all the things that are happening in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh at the moment, all these developments. And they just seem really relevant to what I feel. So yeah I guess as time has gone on and I've got more and more involved in these things then I've maybe felt more connected to Scotland.*

Throughout the interviews, participants reflected very positively on Scotland and Scottish people; these were regarded in a celebratory light. This is probably not surprising in that they all chose to identify as Scottish on their Instagram.

*I've never heard somebody say anything bad about it to me. You know, noone's ever had anything negative to say about being Scottish I don't think... Or not to my face {laughs} (Gunna).*

However, it was only when discussing politics that some more negative ideas and experiences emerged. Jura, who was opposed to Scottish independence, reflected on feeling “ashamed” of her Scottish identity at this time, where she felt the campaign elicited “hate” from pro-independence campaigners. Some participants expressed concerns that the campaign made Scotland appear uninviting and they did not want Scotland to be viewed in this way. In some ways, this concern for Scotland in the wider sense also illustrates the extent of their passion, which was, at least partly, motivated by a sense of Scotland as an open and inclusive culture that was attractive to an international audience.

The only other negative characteristic that participants referred to was the poor weather. Weather-related comments were mostly made in a light-hearted way after which participants went on to talk about a preference for autumn-winter fashions, born of the Scottish climate. As participants drew on London as a strong basis of all

comparison during the interviews (Section 5.6), Scotland was viewed as being quite far removed (physically and psychologically) from the centre of fashion activity and thus cut off from some of the opportunities that accompany this. However, this was sometimes regarded as a positive, with Scotland seen as somewhere to escape the busy and hectic lifestyle of London, where one can both literally and figuratively step off the train and take a breath of fresh air.

It is perhaps not surprising that influencers who choose to reveal their Scottish identity on Instagram are proud to be Scottish, but the different experiences and opinions that were presented reveal the extent to which national identity is deeply personal to an individual (McCrone, 2017). It also further emphasises some of the reasons why national identity can be important in the formation of online identity and human experience more fundamentally.

### **5.7.2 Use of hashtags to flag identity**

*I think because, for me, that's kind of my brand to an extent. I think what helps me stand out a bit from like the blogging crowd as a whole is the fact that I am a Scottish, Glasgow, blogger. Because compared to the entire blogging scene - even though the Scottish scene is huge - it's nowhere near how big it is in the rest of the UK and I think that kind of differentiates me as well (Cara).*

Billig's (1995, p. 7) ideas of banal nationalism, or daily flagging of nationhood through "forgotten reminders", are perhaps most visible in participants' use of hashtags on Instagram. These were used by participants, usually at the end of a post, or as a further comment, which appeared to be a trend at the time of research: Iona explained this was "so people aren't liking [a post] and seeing all these hashtags and thinking 'ok she's being a bit desperate trying to get all these likes'". The use of hashtags in this way is interesting and demonstrates that participants were keen to be seen as natural in their approach and where they did not want to be regarded as "like-seeking" by their followers (Dumas *et al*, 2017, p. 2).

All participants used hashtags to promote their posts and flag aspects of their identity. In the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their use of hashtags and Scottish hashtags in particular. Participants were not always conscious in their use of

hashtags and some referred to having a list of hashtags (usually around ten) that they automatically applied to each post, regardless of the content. Others were more conscious in their use of hashtags and varied these depending on the nature of the post:

*When I post about Scotland or Aberdeen, I'm gonna use like #VisitScotland... I use #Aberdeen a lot (Fara).*

Participants used hashtags to engage in two ways. The first reason relates to the commercial side of Instagram in which participants were acting as style influencers and attempting to attract brands and paid opportunities. They felt that brands and PR agencies would use hashtags to search for influencers to work with and gave examples of occasions where the use of hashtags such as #ScottishBlogger, #AberdeenBlogger, #EdinburghBloggers and #GlasgowBlogger had led to commercial opportunities:

*I want to be more visible to Scottish companies and I think when Scottish companies are looking for influencers they look for Scottish bloggers (Lungay).*

When participants used hashtags in this way, they seemed to feel it was also important to indicate their city identity as well as Scotland more broadly:

*I think I do it for most posts because I think #ScottishBloggers and #AberdeenBloggers is quite good for people knowing who you are and where you are but also, like, say there's maybe an opportunity in Aberdeen... (Barra).*

Participants' reliance on Instagram as their main outlet posed a problem when they were unable to keep up with frequent changes in the algorithm, which made it difficult for them to promote their posts using hashtags. The most career-focused of the participants reflected on this as a genuine concern:

*I don't actually use them anymore because – I assume you know all about the Instagram algorithm? - It's been a fucking nightmare – they push your post down. I don't know if this is a rumour or not but I heard that if you were using hashtags in the comment box below that it would push your post down (Jura).*

The second way in which participants used hashtags to engage was to identify as part of a group, or community. Some participants spoke about finding other influencers through hashtags and felt others might find them in a similar way:

*I think that's the key thing and I find people through those hashtags as well, people have, like, similar interests as you are also posting similar street style to you (Gunna).*

When using hashtags to identify as part of a community, participants referred most frequently to #ScotStreetStyle, #ScottishBloggers, #GlasgowBloggers and #EdinburghBloggers:

*I do tend to use the Glasgow-specific ones. Whereas before, I used to go for the more broadly Scottish ones but now I feel like there's so many Scottish bloggers that people do tend to hone in on their home cities. So I'm trying to bring that in a bit more (Cara).*

This is interesting and suggests that, as the Scottish style community continues to grow on Instagram, influencers might seek new ways in which to signal their identity as unique. It suggests that place is becoming more localised on Instagram and social media.

One participant avoided the use of certain hashtags so that she would not be associated with a community, where she wished to remove herself from the Aberdeen blogger/ influencer community, which she found unsupportive, competitive and quite damaging. Aberdeen was the only community that was regarded in this way, which is interesting in the context of Aberdeen's lack of a cultural identity (McCrone, 2017). This is perhaps reflected in a sense of cohesion and purpose amongst style influencers in Scotland generally, Glasgow and Edinburgh but where the Aberdeen community was viewed as more competitive and less unified. It also suggests that supportive and inclusive communities are important in the formation of cultural identities within a city or region.

Participants recognised that hashtags were important when building a following on Instagram and were something they all used, even Jura who initially claimed not to; although she did appear to use these less frequently. Hashtags were used as a way of discovering and connecting with people and places through hypertext (Rocamora, 2011a).

Although hashtags were used predominantly to engage as part of wider networks on Instagram, at times they were used as part of a personal narrative (Utekhin, 2017). Participants used hashtags as clues to their identity (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013), for example: #AvoidingCoursework (Arran); #MyMindfulYear (Fara); #GoAndExplore (Mull); #EthicalFashion (Eday). Sometimes these were used to convey a sense of personality and humour, for example: #Ginger (Iona); #CloudPorn (Arran); #GetYourSkinOut (Lungay).

Participants also felt that the positioning of these hashtags or the style in which these were presented was important. Participants spoke about the various ways they might do this and some had clearly given it a lot of thought:

*I'm an "in the comments" type of girl {laughs}. I just think it looks tidier {laughs}. But I always put like one hashtag. So, I write my caption and then I do two forward slashes and one hashtag and then the rest of the hashtags in the comments. And that's kind of my style of posting on Instagram... Unless it's a sponsored post and they've said not to. So when I worked with [brand] I had to use specific hashtags in the caption and I wasn't allowed to use any other hashtags apart from that (Lungay).*

This again demonstrates that hashtags were used both as part of the narrative and to promote a post (Utekhin, 2017). Lungay regarded the presentation of hashtags as an important element in how she conveyed her personal style online and liked this to be consistent. The quote above demonstrates the idea that creativity and artistic license might be restricted when working with brands. Participants were conscious of how their audience might view their use of hashtags:

*I'm kind of still deciding on that one. At the moment I'll just post them, like on the line next from my caption. Sometimes I will post them as the first comment but I don't really like doing that now because you can't edit it after. And if I want to add another one and a few people have commented that just looks weird. So I kind of just put the first one. Like I know a lot of people try to hide the hashtags, but I don't put like 50. I don't really have that many so I don't feel that it like damages the viewers' experience I don't think (Tiree).*

Tiree was still very much exploring her personal style online and this is evident in her

reflection on her use of hashtags. Like Tiree, some were less commercially focused in their use of hashtags but appeared to use them to promote their values and inspire others. During interview, Eday consulted her Instagram profile to review her most recent choice of hashtags:

*I'll hashtag #ShopScottish... Looking at that, it's not that popular... But... In fact, looking at it now and like every single post under that hashtag is a post, like, I've done {laughs}... So, yeah... there you go.*

These findings show that hashtags were predominantly but not exclusively used to increase visibility, attracting brands and followers. Participants also used hashtags to flag their identity and, indeed, their Scottish identity (Billig, 1995). They regarded these as important and appeared to use them both consciously and unconsciously, depending on the post and the amount of time they were able to dedicate towards constructing it (RQ2). In particular, the use of hashtags such as #ScottishBlogger had become banal, in that these were applied to every post on Instagram, irrespective of content. Participants' banal use of Scottish hashtags perhaps further illustrates the idea of Scottish identity as a form of symbolic capital on Instagram (Bourdieu, 1986); where these were used to attract commercial opportunities, to identify as part of a community and/ or as part of their own personal narrative.

This section has further emphasised the idea of a Scottish influencer community, which the participants in this study reflected on positively, regarding it as friendly and supportive (RQ1). These findings also reveal the power of sub-communities on Instagram, at a city level, where participants used these, particularly in an attempt to attract local opportunities and brands. It was recognised that these sub-communities might become more important as the Scottish style community expands. However, notably in the example of Aberdeen Bloggers, these connections were sometimes regarded as competitive and damaging to identity.

## 5.8 Home and belonging to a place

*As soon as I arrive back in Scotland I feel at home (Danna).*

Billig (1995, p. 108) maintains “home is more than a physical place”. The introduction of home and belonging to the interview questions stems from existing studies in the area of Scottish identity that found this to be an important influence (Bond and Rosie, 2006; McCrone, 2017). McCrone (2017) suggests that Scottish people are particularly concerned with belonging to a place and might commonly ask the question “where do I belong?” It was clear throughout the interviews that Scottish identity was important to participants and some felt more strongly about this than others (Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2006; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009).

It is the case that not all participants felt they could consider their national identity as wholly Scottish (Table 4); indeed three participants were born outside of Scotland (Greece and England) and had only lived there for a relatively short time, around five years. Of these participants, two demonstrated a strong attachment to Scotland and spoke of belonging to and feeling at home in Scotland for a variety of reasons, including: the presence of family; happy memories; key life events that had happened since being there; the people; and political mindset. This supports Bond and Rosie (2006) who explored the journey of becoming Scottish and found that people’s sense of Scottish identity can become stronger the longer they live there. Participants all identified, at least to some extent, as Scottish and most regarded Scotland as their home and where they belonged. However, this was often more specific than Scotland, with some feeling more attached to a specific city (McCrone, 2017).

Many of the participants considered the place that they grew up as home. In most cases this was where their family still lived and therefore somewhere they could visit regularly; a number of them spoke of “going home” to visit family. Billig (1995) observes the importance of the first family home in shaping an idea of what home should be. Participants were all aged between 19 and 30 years, only two were married and one had a child; this might be why they still considered their home as where they went to be with family and not necessarily where they actually lived day-to-day. In these cases the idea of home was synonymous with family and a sense of familiarity, stability and security.

However, there were some examples where participants spoke of a place or places where they felt they had formed an emotional attachment:

*When people ask me where I'm from, I'll always say Edinburgh - I never really say Elgin, unless I explain I'm going to visit my family. I'll say I'm from Edinburgh, I guess because I don't really identify with the place. I miss it every day, I'm homesick for Edinburgh but I'm not homesick for my actual home, so I'd say that's where I belong (Iona).*

In this example, Iona reflects on a strong connection with the city of Edinburgh, despite the fact that she was brought up in the North East of Scotland (in a small town called Elgin) and lived in London. Edinburgh was somewhere that she felt inspired by and that she had connected with more deeply than either of these places. This aligns with McCrone's (2017) argument that Aberdeen is least developed in terms of its cultural identity and shows that this might affect people's attachment to the North East of Scotland. It also demonstrates the earlier finding that, despite observing an obvious attraction to London for their career, none of the participants felt attached to the place.

When asked why she felt so attached to Edinburgh, Iona spoke about the culture, the people and the scenery. She felt that Edinburgh offered the sophisticated city vibe that she enjoyed but in a much more relaxed and calm atmosphere than London; for Iona, Edinburgh encompassed the best elements from two distinct locations. Iona had grown attached to Edinburgh during her time there as a student and regarded the city with a fondness, indicating that she would like to go back and settle there one day.

Similarly, Cara spoke of her attachment to Glasgow, a city she had lived in from a young age and where she had spent what she describes as her "formative years", whilst at school and university. This relationship between formative years and attachment to a place is interesting where other participants appeared to have formed an attachment to the place where they had studied (e.g. Iona and Hirta). Cara regarded place as very important to her sense of self and described time spent in other locations where she was less happy, e.g. living in Aberdeen for a short period. This reference to Aberdeen again suggests that the city is lacking in some way, perhaps in terms of culture and community (McCrone, 2017).



*I think it's the people. Like there's such a good atmosphere, like everyone's really friendly and they'll talk to anyone... You just can't escape the chat {laughs}... It's definitely the community that makes Glasgow home to me I think.*

Cara felt her attachment to Glasgow was a strong part of her Instagram identity and was conscious of sharing “stuff to do in Glasgow”, passionate in her pursuit of promoting her city identity. Lungay was also passionate about Glasgow and used the following example to illustrate why:

*So when you arrive in Glasgow – if you're a refugee - you get a Refuweegie box and it has essentials: it has a Glasgow welcome; it has a letter from a local. And that letter from a local is welcoming you to the community and giving you some hints and tips as to why we're so pleased to have you here joining our community. And what's absolutely beautiful about Refuweegie is that every box is given an individual letter. So that means that they have thousands of letters that have been written for refugees. And I think that's just such a beautiful sentiment and it absolutely encapsulates what it is to be Glaswegian and what it is to live here.*

The “Refuweegie” charity campaign that Lungay describes is something she felt moved by; it made her more conscious of her Scottish identity: proud to call Glasgow her home and something she shared enthusiastically on Instagram. This initiative also illustrates an image of Scotland, and in this case Glasgow more specifically, as inclusive, welcoming and diverse (Figure 50).

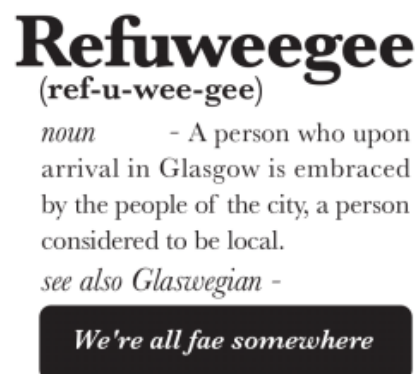


Figure 50: Refuweegie charity (Refuweegie, 2018)

For some participants, who felt that they belonged in a city and were more drawn to the idea of constructing their identity in this way, this seemed to stem more from a stylistic preference; for example, Skye reflected: “I prefer like city street style to countryside street style”. Skye, who lived in Aberdeen at the time of interview, also felt she was more drawn to Edinburgh and Glasgow as bigger, more lively cities that she felt had more to offer in terms of exciting cultural and lifestyle experiences. Tíree had grown up in Edinburgh and agreed with this:

*Well I like Edinburgh because it is such a big city and it is so diverse I guess - so many different people and so many things to do. I love the architecture. I feel like it is quite an open city, like it's always up for trying new things, like new developments and welcoming new exhibits and there's always something going on.*

Although she expressed a preference for traditional “city street style” in the interview, Skye also provided posts that might be regarded as the “countryside street style” that she described. Indeed, the idea of a rural street-style aesthetic is intriguing and highly observable throughout the sample images, shedding new light on what the definition of Scottish street style might be (Rocamora and O’Neill, 2008).

Arran presented an interesting case in terms of her city identity. Despite the fact that some of the other participants lived in Aberdeen, had spent significant time there or had grown up in Aberdeen, Arran was the only participant who described the city as her home. She reflected in detail on her time growing up in the city, where she still lived with her parents in the house that she had grown up in and where her grandmother lived nearby in the same tenement in which her mother had grown up. She spoke animatedly about the Aberdeen cityscape:

*I love Aberdeen! Especially in the sunshine because I would say the granite, like, shines. And you always see it shining and I feel very fortunate because I actually live in a granite house and I just love it.*

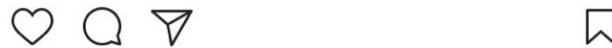
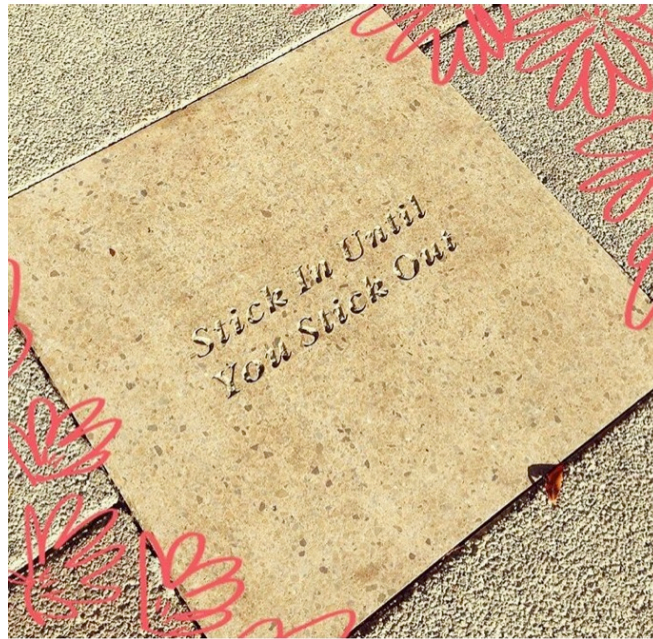
Although Arran was passionate about Aberdeen as her home, she was more reserved in sharing this part of her identity on Instagram. Indeed, only two of her 12 sample posts were taken in Aberdeen. Arran revealed that on Instagram she was far more likely to share her visits to other places, reflecting on time spent living in Edinburgh and a recent

Scottish holiday. This, again, might suggest that Aberdeen is not seen as an attractive and appealing place; despite being Europe's "Oil Capital" (Drysdale, 2015), it might not attract any cultural capital in a wider context (Bourdieu, 1986; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Schwartz and Haleboua, 2015).

However, Arran's decision to reveal less about her Aberdeen location did not appear to stem from disenchantment with Aberdeen as a place but from concerns about security and potential visibility as a public figure:

*I don't think I'd be as open about that if I was in Aberdeen... Obviously I do still share photographs of Aberdeen but maybe just like a front door or a park... (Arran)*

This seemed to stem from a sense of safety that she associated with being at home, which she did not want to compromise; somewhere she preferred to keep backstage and private from her online audience (Goffman, 1956). Her outfit posts, which she did not choose to share as a representation of her Scottish identity, were all taken at her front door. Her family and boyfriend, who she described as "anti social media", also appeared to influence this concern.



Lovely wee quote that was engraved into the path at the park... Stick in until you stick out! 🍌🌻🌿🍁🌟

Figure 51: Arran's Aberdeen post

Figures 34 and 51 are the only posts from Arran's sample that show Aberdeen, which she describes as her hometown. During the interview, she spoke of the memory behind Figure 51. She had been visiting Hazlehead Park in Aberdeen with her mother and noticed this quote on one of the paving stones. Her mother told her it was a North East of Scotland saying. To Arran, this post signified her sense of home and belonging, which were influenced by her family and growing up in Aberdeen (McCrone, 2017).

Eday, who lived in Edinburgh, reflected on Glasgow and Edinburgh as places to which she had become attached, cities she found to be inspirational and she described as having "made an impression" on her. Interestingly she had also spent a short period in Aberdeen but did not refer to the city as influential in any way. Although she had spent a large part of her life in Birmingham and did, to some extent, consider this to be somewhere she felt at home, she did not feel that this was true of England more broadly and said so quite explicitly.

Participants reflected on the connection between belonging and the family “home”. Most had lived with their family until starting university at 17 or 18 years old and, indeed, some continued to live at home whilst being a student or after graduating. Some participants had grown up with family in more rural settings but all now resided in cities, which they agreed had more to offer in terms of their career and social life. In particular, a sense of belonging was linked to the idea of somewhere that they would eventually settle:

*I do feel I belong in Scotland. So if I was ever to leave and go somewhere else I think I would eventually come back to Scotland, to like live out the rest of my days or whatever {laughs} (Skye).*

Indeed, Iona and Gunna both felt that they would eventually move back to Scotland and that their life in London was temporary; something they wanted to experience.

Family and upbringing was something that participants referred to continually throughout the interviews. This appeared to be one of the most significant influences for them when making sense of their national identity, over and above other markers such as birthplace and residency (Kiely *et al*, 2001).

It was interesting that some participants spoke about what they regarded as a mixed heritage, even when this was limited only to Britain, or in some cases Scotland; for example, Iona referred to herself as “brought up in Elgin, my mum’s from Ayr and my dad’s from Keith so, erm, a bit of a mix”. This suggests that heritage might be more locally defined than nation. Cara felt that her heritage was mixed, having grown up with a Scottish father and English mother. She described her mother as very passionate about Manchester, where she had grown up, and how she had “instilled” some of this passion into the household. During the interview, Cara reflected on an attachment to Manchester for this reason and, although she did feel more passionate about her identity as a Glaswegian, she felt that the two cities had some things in common.

Some participants felt that their sense of Scottish pride was something that had come directly from their parents. Arran spoke about this during the interview, feeling she had grown up with a passionate sense of belonging to Scotland, enhanced by the fact her close family had been born and brought up in close proximity.

*I really love going to visit my grandma. My grandma is really old school, she's Doric, she speaks Doric... Erm, she was very working class and it's so nice going to visit her because she is your classic North East woman, this classic little housewife who has just been cleaning all her life. She stays in, like, Froghall area, she's lived there her whole life, she's lived in the same little tenement but, erm, so it's nice... It's nice to see that's how my mum grew up and how, her life's changed but still in the same city.*

Visiting family was an influence for participants, whether in Scotland, Britain or internationally. Participants reflected on memories of visiting family throughout the interviews and these places, which elicited strong memories, seemed to have influenced an attachment. Mull spoke about visiting family in London, Danna of visiting family in Aberdeen, whilst living in Australia and Hirta of visiting family in Scotland, whilst growing up in the South of England:

*I spent so much of my childhood here because all my family are Scottish. Erm, so I've always been drawn to come back here, for that reason. I've always been kind of connected, because of my family and then now I've met my husband and we're just going to keep trying to build our life here (Hirta).*

Barra was one of only two participants who appeared to have taken an interest in her heritage beyond her direct family and she spoke about researching her family history, describing herself as "Scottish through and through":

*I've always been a bit of a history geek and I think my dad has all this research on our tartan and whatever. But our surname, my cousin is the last of our surname if that makes sense... So like where is everyone else? Where are all these people? Because I think it'll actually be quite sad, when our name is... Because it's not a very common surname...*

Lungay had also researched some of her family history and interestingly used the exact same wording as Barra, describing herself as "Scottish through and through", noting also that "there was nothing exciting slipped in there". She was the only participant to categorise herself as *Scottish not British* when asked the Moreno question (1988) and felt that to call herself British would be to call herself English as the two identities were synonymous in her mind (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008).

Danna was the farthest removed from her family physically. Although she appeared happy in Australia and had recently claimed citizenship there, she spoke about missing family and feeling homesick. She seemed to take comfort in imagining her family “at home” in Scotland, reflecting “I like to always feel like my roots are in Scotland” (Danna).

Danna’s sample posts were all of a family nature and spoke strongly of her Scottish “roots”, at least to her. Although she had one of the larger followings on Instagram (in excess of 19k), she was one of the only participants who described her Instagram as “like an online diary”, suggesting that her main motivation for using the medium was to curate her own memories, rather than for commercial gain (Reed, 2006; Dumas *et al*, 2017; Sheldon and Bryant, 2015). In terms of the posts she chose, Danna appeared to have chosen these entirely due to the memory she had attached to them:

*I could have probably picked quite a few more but those were the ones that kind of stuck out to me where, I probably have posted them at times when I’m feeling homesick or like, posted them when I’m thinking of home. So, for me, it’s probably more obvious in my head that they mention Scotland and stuff than to the outside eye. But, people always seem to know I’m Scottish.*



♥ 💬 📍 📌

Liked by maternitymamaiblog, missandru and 1,928 others

katrinalalima Lunch date with mummy!!! I'm only ordering items with chilli in an attempt to speed things up 😂👶🍌🍌 #comeonbabyT #39weekspregnant #sundayfunday #maternityfashion

Figure 52: Danna meeting her mother for lunch

Figure 52 demonstrates Danna’s use of Instagram and her construction of Scottish identity, which was most evident in her frequent references to family and trips home. It is interesting that she chose this post as representative of her Scottish identity when it was taken in Australia and where there is no direct reference to Scotland; indeed even her reference to “mummy” could be understood to signify herself, as she is so obviously pregnant. However, this is an example of what Hevern (2004) refers to as the online threading of identity where Figure 52 formed part of a series of posts referencing the upcoming visit of Danna’s mother:

*That was a time when like my mum had just arrived and it was literally the last few days of my pregnancy and I'd been so homesick and then she arrived and I was feeling so much better and stuff like that. So I think it was just like that family aspect, showing that like being Scottish, you don't just have to be at home, your family can come and see you as well. And it's not so much the place... I do feel good when I'm back in Scotland but it's more the family thing.*



*For me, that's why I picked that photo, to show like your family come over here and visit – it's a huge deal to you, the journey and stuff like that.*

Of all the participants, Danna's Scottish identity, as it appears through Instagram, seemed to be most strongly influenced by a sense of home and family. This might be: because she was motivated most strongly to document her life; because she was physically removed from her family and felt more of a need to connect to them in this way; or because her online identity was most strongly constructed around herself as a mother.

Danna also felt Australia was important to her sense of self; somewhere she had bought her first home, had her first child and where she and her husband had spent most of their life as a couple. This shows, as is also suggested by Cara's reference to "formative years", that important milestones and events can contribute towards an individual's sense of belonging to a place, where national identity is not always fixed (Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2006). This idea is illustrated further in the cases of Hirta and Eday who had grown attached to Scotland. For Hirta, in particular, this was influenced by childhood memories of visiting family and by more recent events, most notably her wedding:

*So moving here was a whole new fresh start for me. I got to create my own identity and be the person I always wanted to be (Hirta).*

This suggests that Hirta saw her move to Scotland as a new beginning, where she could construct an improved version of herself: one that she liked better and that she felt was more authentic and true (Erikson, 1959).

Both Gunna and Iona, who were living in London but frequently visited family and friends in Scotland, regarded these trips as meaningful:

*I think it's just important to know where your roots lie and... You know, always go back to see family... That's where I feel most at home still (Gunna).*

Arran was the only participant who seemed to be strongly attached to the place she had been born, but this appeared to be influenced by the fact she was surrounded by family and (apart from a short period studying abroad and an internship in Edinburgh) had

lived there all her life. Therefore, participants' sense of belonging to a national identity stemmed most notably from their family, upbringing and through growing attached to a place (Edensor, 1997; McCrone 2017).

*I don't think to me it's important where I was born – because I'm so detached from that (Hirta).*

There was consensus among most participants that they belonged *somewhere* and, for most of them, this was Scotland, or a Scottish city, e.g. Glasgow or Edinburgh. Fara was the only participant who did not feel she belonged in a particular place. To the outside eye, her Instagram identity might appear as imbued with wanderlust and influenced by a love of travelling. However, during the interview, Fara actually appeared quite unhappy in her current status:

*I don't think I have a home... I mean for the last decade I have been living out of luggage. I have visited and I have stayed in so many places in the UK. Even, when I go back home in Greece I feel like it's home and I should belong there, but after like a month my brain is wandering and I want to do things. I can't stay in one place for a long time. So I don't think I have a home. I don't know where I belong anymore. And I don't have foundation, like I don't have a house. I've always been living out of different places, different houses, different rooms, renting places, all over the place. So I don't think I have an identity. I'm – actually – I'm grateful I have an accent, because it will always remind me of where I come from, it will always define me in a way. Like "oh she's not British or Australian" or whatever. I don't think I have a home. I can't go back home, I can't stay here either. Like, I don't have a home.*

Fara's observation of herself as figuratively homeless is perhaps due to the fact that she was not settled into a permanent career and had not yet acquired her own home. In fact, at the time of interview, she was living in Aberdeen as a full-time doctoral student whilst making some income as a style influencer. She reflected on her life as unstable and felt it was difficult to imagine where she might eventually end up, and therefore where she might belong. However, throughout the interview, she referred to "going home" to visit her family in Greece, suggesting this might be the closest thing to home. Fara, at 30 years old, was the eldest participant in the study and nearing the end of her studies. Perhaps

this goes some way towards explaining why she had been content to travel up until this point but had recently begun to feel she should be settled somewhere.

Fara went on to reflect on the various places she had been and places she might like to live where she seemed to have become attached to Scotland. She appeared to be drawn towards places with history and this was reflected in her personal style on Instagram, with most of her posts structured around the setting of Old Aberdeen. This might also have been influenced by where she grew up, which she describes as an old town in Greece and she spoke passionately about its history and imagery. This suggests that Fara was influenced quite strongly by her personal style and that this aesthetic might actually influence her choice of where to settle. Some of the other participants described this type of attachment, where they felt their personal style was particularly attuned to the zeitgeist of a place (Craik, 2009) they had visited and recognised that they could be happy living there, e.g. Barra spoke of Los Angeles in this way.



Old Aberdeen has been an absolute dream today 💕  
We had ice-cream (two scoops each-salted caramel and espresso coffee flavours) and went for a walk with Cruz. Bliss! .

Figure 53: Fara's Old Aberdeen

Throughout the interview, Fara reflected on her Instagram identity, which she felt was very strongly influenced by her Scottish location. Figure 53 illustrates a typical post, where she had photographed something that she walked past every day but aimed to show Aberdeen in a “more beautiful” and unique way. In this particular post, Fara has chosen to photograph a white house, which she felt was unusual to find in Aberdeen, where more historic areas tend to be dominated by granite. She also felt that this view was remarkable due to the flowers that were in full bloom, and thus she was able to enjoy this familiar sight in a different way that particular spring morning. Fara’s sample posts follow a consistent aesthetic and some, like Figure 53, were purely scenic, where she posted a personal anecdote about her day alongside an image of Old Aberdeen. Fara’s portrayal of such a stable and consistent aesthetic on Instagram appeared to contrast with her feelings offline.

Lungay spoke of times when she had travelled and referred to a diaspora of Scots that tended to be present wherever she had been. The general feeling that Scottish people were welcoming and friendly in nature overlapped a little with participants’ feelings around home, where this, for some, seemed to evoke an attachment:

*When I’m in Glasgow I feel at home, when I go back to Aberdeen I feel at home. And I think it’s because of the people that are around you. It’s that - and I’ve said it before - it’s that friendliness, knowing someone for ten seconds or ten minutes. It’s going up to someone and asking them to help you and they will. Home is being comfortable (Lungay).*

Skye agreed with this:

*That’s not to say that you don’t feel at home in other countries but I think that’s a big part of having your nationality, seeing yourself represented in other people, feeling a part of something, that comes from your nationality.*

It is interesting that some of the participants who recognised London as somewhere that offered them greater career opportunities (Iona and Gunna) did not feel they belonged there in the long term. Eday also reflected on this explicitly as somewhere she “could never belong”, largely due to its scale.

Jura was the only participant who felt she might belong in London and, at the time of

interview, was considering the move to fulfill career aspirations as a full-time style influencer. However, even she seemed hesitant when contemplating the thought of London as somewhere she might call “home” and seemed to decide that home might in fact remain in Glasgow, where she would continue to go and visit family:

*Obviously I've grown up here, in the city or just five minutes outside it. I feel like it will always be my home. But I don't think that long term I belong here. Growing up here, in Glasgow, has helped me (without sounding, like almost sappy) become who I am. It's made me, like strong and determined and sarcastic.*

The findings suggest that a sense of home and belonging might extend to a place's input into the formation of personality. In this example, however, Jura separates the notion of belonging and the idea of home.

*We came here on holiday and stuff like that but I didn't really connect with it until we lived here and I actually got involved with it as an adult, rather than as a child... On Monday night, I met up with a friend of mine who grew up in London and we were just talking about how much like Glasgow and Edinburgh have made an impression on us - even though we're not from there - and, yeah, we were kind of talking about this kind of thing. Erm, and like it has made quite a big impact on my choices I think (Eday).*

It is significant that the two participants who appeared to be communicating Scottish identity and style most forcefully were two that had been born and spent most of the lives elsewhere. For Eday and Hirta, their attachment to Scotland seemed to stem from feeling happy and settled in that place. Both participants spoke about feeling more confident in Scotland, and they felt this was reflected in their style choices:

*I feel more confident... Because I feel more connected than people who might have grew up there you know. Yeah, so I guess where I am and how much I know my surroundings and the people around me will make me feel more confident and therefore like you know, happier and more upbeat (Eday).*

This idea supports McCrone (2017) who found that involvement in communities is influential towards strong feelings of national identity.

Although Fara did not appear to be happier or more settled in Scotland, she did feel that Scottish identity was a crucial part of her Instagram identity. For Fara, this construct seemed to be influenced by viewing her Instagram identity as a brand or a business (Duffy and Hund, 2015a; Titton, 2015), in which Scotland and Aberdeen played a significant part (Goffman, 1956). Scotland was where she had recognised success, as measured through audience engagement and commercial opportunities. Fara spoke about “being shaped” by the places she had lived and felt that, although she would always carry her Greek values and accent around with her, she had incorporated new values from Scotland.

Participants’ style and mood were influenced by place and a sense of belonging. Cara, who was particularly drawn to Glasgow, reflected on time spent in Aberdeen:

*I suppose in a way, it kind of relates to how a place makes me feel. So, for example, when I lived in Aberdeen, I wasn't happy and I think that's kind of reflected in how I act and like how I put myself forward. Whereas I think moving back home to Glasgow made me realise just how much I love the city. And it kind of gave me more confidence in a way, which has kind of helped me figure out where I am.*

Hirta remembered childhood holidays in Scotland and these happy memories were inextricably linked to her feelings towards Scotland and had influenced her decision to study there and escape her life in Buckinghamshire, where she admits she was not happy. Hirta has since gone on to celebrate more happy memories during her time in Scotland, graduating and getting married. The combination of these factors led her to associate Scotland with feelings of happiness, achievement and sanctuary. In this situation, Scotland is perhaps more circumstantial but nevertheless demonstrates the relationship between feelings of familiarity and comfort, memories and attachment to a place.

Overall, these findings suggest that a sense of belonging, home and national identity formation are, as McCrone (2017) suggests, closely linked. The participants in this study spoke in depth and with genuine enthusiasm about this idea, which suggested that this was deeply personal and meaningful to them. In particular, family and personal memories were influential towards feelings of belonging and the idea of home. Home was generally regarded as the place where one would go to be with family and signified

stability, comfort, familiarity and safety. This is perhaps partially due to participants' ages and lifestyles.

A sense of belonging somewhere was not always synonymous with ideas of home. Indeed, many participants had moved to larger cities, which they felt were more suited to their lifestyles, and, in these examples, they expressed a sense of belonging to these cities. Equally, participants did not always feel that they belonged to the city in which they currently lived, most notably in the cases of Aberdeen and London. Sometimes a sense of belonging was influenced by personal style preferences, where cities or places were regarded as more picturesque; this might be considered an example of online identity influencing an individual's offline lifestyle choices (Turkle, 1995; Chittenden, 2010).

This, again, demonstrates the variety of ways in which participants made sense of their national identity and how this might influence and translate to an online identity (RQ5). For the participants in this study, belonging was concerned most notably with attachment to a place, and this usually stemmed from strong memories that were situated within that place. This idea is discussed further in Section 5.8.1 where memories and attachment to places and the desire to capture these moments through Instagram were strongly influential in shaping how participants presented themselves online.

### **5.8.1 Memories and attachment to place**

In their consideration of Scottish identity and their own style, participants reflected strongly on the influence of personal memories. This illustrates the power of Instagram as a medium through which they could preserve these memories visually (Dumas *et al*, 2017; Sheldon and Bryant, 2015). These findings build on the work of McCrone (2017, p. 393), who found "places of memory" to be important in the case of Scottish identity. Throughout the interviews, participants revealed the stories from behind their posts, often remembering fondly the day the photo was taken:

*It was actually raining in that photo [Figure 54] and it just made me laugh because on Instagram you'd think "aw that's such a nice photo" but actually it was pouring with rain. That's in London as well. Yeah it does rain. In fact, most*

*of the time when I take photos (well not as much in the summer)... We went through a stage when my flatmate and I, every time she took photos of me, it rained. She's Scottish as well so we're both used to that (Gunna).*



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[laurenroseb](#) Sassy skirt for a Sunday ✨✨✨

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29 JANUARY 2017

Figure 54: Gunna's rainy day post

This thesis adopted a novel photo-elicitation (Collier, 1957) approach. This was perhaps most closely linked to photo voice (Wang and Burris, 1997; Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001), where participants are asked to take photos that tell a story about a particular issue, event, experience or place. Van House (2009, p. 1082) found that “memories and the narratives by which we make sense of them play a major role in how we construct our self-narrative and self-understanding,” and this idea is supported strongly in the current research. This approach helped to further understand a number of the research questions, including the influence of national belonging and place on online identity and personal style (Vila, 2013).

Participants were asked to provide a sample of posts, in advance of the interview, that



they felt represented their identity as a Scottish style influencer, and encouraged to reflect on these in the interview, in terms of why they chose them and how easy they found this. When discussing their posts, most participants spent significant time revealing the memory behind the photographs, and, in most cases, this seemed to be the reason why they were chosen:

*I feel like my shots in Scotland have more of a story behind them. Maybe because it was a bit harder for me to actually get photos, or because I have memories attached to them. Whereas here, my outfit posts, I've put on the outfit purely for that shoot. Erm, and I love the photos, I love the outfits, but there's not an emotional connection like there would be with the Scottish ones (Gunna).*

Participants seemed more attached to posts that elicited happy memories and felt that Instagram made it possible for them to look back at these and reminisce anywhere and at any time. This tendency to select posts that were influenced by a backstage element of the image, which might not be immediately understood online by their audience, is intriguing (Goffman, 1956). This suggests that, although participants were constructing a Scottish identity, their audience did not always influence this particular element.

Gunna, who was living in London, appeared to be more attached to the posts she shared whilst visiting family in Scotland and felt their style was more authentic in this setting. This idea is illustrated in Barra's sample posts, which she compared in the interview (Figure 55 and 56).



Enjoying some sun ☀️🍹 Outfit details up on [www.julesandthecrown.com](http://www.julesandthecrown.com) #outfit #ootd #outfitoftheday .

Figure 55: Barra at the Kelpies



Bringing out my summer stripes and dresses 🌸 New style post with outfit details on [www.instagram.com/p/...](https://www.instagram.com/p/...)

Figure 56: Barra's outfit post

To an audience, Figures 55 and 56 are perhaps very similar; they show the same person, styled in a similar way, the settings are beautiful but unremarkable and the weather appears sunny; thus the personal style that Barra presents here is consistent and appears authentic. However, to the influencer, these posts represent different memories and meaning.

Barra described the differences between these two posts: Figure 55 shows a photo taken on a family trip to visit the Kelpies, a Scottish tourist attraction, which she remembers fondly as a time when she was “happy”; Figure 56, in contrast, represents a series of photos she shared on Instagram to promote her personal style. Barra explained that she teamed up with another local style influencer on a sunny day to take photos and, although this was enjoyable, she described Figure 56 as something she would “happily delete” from her phone, indicating no real attachment to the image.

This is the only example where a participant spoke so explicitly about a pre-planned outing to take a series of photos that could be used as “filler-in” Instagram content on a rainy day. However, this was often alluded to and it was clear, throughout the interviews, that participants placed higher value on posts that they felt depicted more authentic styles and experiences.

Participants expressed the desire to document their style evolution as a motivation for using Instagram. This demonstrates the value that these participants placed on their style and that fashion and style alone (as documented through Instagram) had the power to elicit a powerful memory.

Participants' posts were discussed throughout the findings and these connote Scotland in a variety of ways (RQ7). At times this is explicit and intentional, for example: the use of distinctive locations in the form of backdrops and landscapes; the promotion of Scottish brands; the use of recognised Scottish phrases; and the use of Scottish hashtags. Of the more traditional Scottish symbols that are observed in the literature, tartan is notably lacking but landscape and heritage are signified strongly throughout the sample (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010; McCrone, 2017; Young and Martin, 2017).

However, the construction of Scottish style through physical appearance and fashion was generally more subtle (RQ6); only one participant appeared to style herself in a stereotypically Scottish way, which was emphasised using hashtags such as #RedHead and #Ginger. Participants were found to construct Scottish identity in some of the following ways: lifestyle choices as portrayed through Instagram (outdoors, adventuring, mindful); preference for relatable content and styles (within their audience's means); preference for autumn-winter fashion; and original and distinctive fashion choices (bold and defiant, positioning themselves as leaders rather than followers).

Even the participants who did not feel their Scottish identity was particularly salient on Instagram, or something they were very conscious of promoting, felt that their audience would recognise them as Scottish through the use of these symbols and their personality as friendly, open, honest, down-to-earth or through their sense of humour. In particular, participants recognised a warmth that they associated with Scottish people and felt this was reflected in their online identity.

### **5.8.2 Reminders of Scottish identity**

Billig's (1995) theory of *Banal Nationalism* is concerned with the construction and consumption of nationhood in an ordinary everyday setting. His study is situated in Britain and he investigates this through the national press as a media outlet. He suggests

that, in an increasingly global context, where national identity is no longer fixed but fluid, it might become less important. Equally, the advent of social media and online identity allows individuals to appear placeless (Luvaas, 2013). However, Billig (1995, p. 7) argues that nationalism is underlying and that the nation is continuously reproduced each day through “forgotten reminders”.

As explored in Chapter 1, there is a growing infosphere of style influencers, many of whom still choose to identify within a nation and thus, in doing so, reproduce that nation through their content. The findings of this thesis suggest a number of reasons as to why an influencer might choose to position themselves as belonging to a nation. In a Scottish context, participant influencers did not regard their national identity as ordinary and banal, they saw this as an important and attractive attribute. It was something that they felt made them distinctive in both an offline and online setting.

However, throughout the interviews, participants also spoke of being “reminded” of their national identity. This supports Billig’s (1995) idea that nationhood can be an important but often underlying part of identity; always there but not always conscious. Some of the participants reflected on the interview itself as something that had made them think more deeply about their Scottish identity.

Participants gave examples of instances when their Scottish identity had been brought to the fore. A number of participants reflected on feeling more Scottish as they grew older: their Scottish identity was something they felt had become more important in recent years. Due to the relatively young age of participants, it is important to note that, in referring to their younger selves, they looked towards their childhood and teenage years. Iona described herself as rebelling against her Scottish identity as a teen, when she felt restricted in her rural, North East of Scotland home. However, this appeared to change when she moved to Edinburgh as a student and fell in love with the city:

*The fact that I miss Edinburgh every single day - even though I only lived there for a very short period of my life. The fact I will say that I'm from Edinburgh - even though it's not actually where I was born. I think is quite telling as well.*

Iona felt her Scottish identity had become even more important since moving to London and for these reasons she started to embrace it. She got back in touch after the interview with an additional post (Figure 57), and explained: “speaking to you definitely got me

thinking a lot about my Scottish identity... I was definitely thinking about my Scottish identity when I posted that”.

Figure 57 is interesting in its conscious and explicit connotations of Scottishness and the use of tartan and the Scottish flag to symbolise Scottish pride and heritage. Iona’s dress showcases tartan but in a modern fashion. Her red hair and pale skin further illustrates a more stereotypical Scottish style that Iona admitted was not wholly natural but had consciously stemmed from a desire to emphasise her Scottish identity.



Figure 57: Iona’s Scottish style and heritage

Eday also shared a post after the interview, which was linked to a blog post she had written about contemporary Scottish style (Figure 58). Although Eday also conveys a hint of tartan in her trousers, the image is remarkably different from Figure 57, in that it denotes an altogether more muted and androgynous style. Both Iona and Eday blend into their backdrops, where they appear to have selected settings that correspond

rather than contrast with their clothing. The participants appear strong, confident and happy in these images. Although these are staged photographs, Iona and Eday appear relaxed and comfortable in their surroundings, where Figure 57 was taken in Manchester (where Iona now lives) and Figure 58 in Edinburgh (where Eday still resides).



Figure 58: Eday's modern Scottish style

A sense of becoming more conscious of Scottish identity whilst being somewhere else in the world was strong throughout the study and a number of participants reflected on feeling more Scottish when outside of Scotland. Some actually admitted to consciously amplifying their identity outside of Scotland in order to retain their heritage and others felt more Scottish because of the way other people reacted to them, which often stemmed from having a Scottish accent.

The fact that Iona's style in Figure 57 is so explicit in its Scottishness might actually be

regarded as a product of her Manchester location. In living outside of Scotland, Iona stood out. She was more conscious of and passionate about her Scottish identity for these reasons and this led her to construct a more exaggerated image of Scotland. It should also be noted that this post is almost certainly staged as part of a pre planned photo shoot and that, although it was posted in celebration of St Andrew's Day, it was probably taken beforehand.

Another theme that emerged is the significance of recent political events, such as the Scottish Independence Referendum and *Brexit*. The political landscape in Scotland was regarded as vibrant over the past few years: participants were passionate about politics and chose to reflect on Scottish politics at various points in the interview. These political events had made participants more conscious of their own identity and what it means to be Scottish. This idea builds on the work of Kiely *et al* (2001) who found that sporting and cultural events can positively influence people's feelings around their national identity; in this case momentous political events appeared to engage participants in a similar way.

The relationship between Scottish identity and Instagram as a powerful tool for remembering things and reminding others is significant. Participants saw it as their role as influencers to promote Scotland as a destination and Scottish brands and in doing so constructed an image of Scotland, which was rooted in their own personal style. Turkle (1995, p. 177) refers to online identity as a "cultural work in process" and this idea could be considered particularly pertinent in the context of this thesis where participants' own identities might be regarded as cultural productions of Scotland. In signalling their Scottish identity, it is argued that these influencers contribute to the wider narrative of Scottish identity and build upon "the rhetoric of the place" (Utekhin, 2017, p. 189).

## **5.9 Summary of key findings**

The aim of this thesis was to explore the construction of Scottish identity and place amongst personal style influencers on Instagram. The findings from the primary data have been discussed in this chapter with reference to literature in the fields of identity, national identity and fashion in the context of Scotland. Instagram is regarded as an example of social media that is particularly relevant for its visual storytelling

mechanisms and adoption in the fashion industry (Abidin, 2016; O'Brien, 2016; Song, 2016).

Participants felt that their identity as projected frontstage through Instagram was truthful and often relatable, where they presented a realistic version of themselves in line with their offline, backstage identity and style (Goffman, 1956). However, participants revealed they were conscious of their audience when posting and that prospective audience response and engagement often influenced their behaviour on Instagram (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b). Participants had different motivations for using Instagram and some were more career-minded than others. The more career-minded of participants presented a more stable identity and style, whereas those who were less career-focused appeared to regard their online identity and style as more exploratory and a work in progress (Erikson, 1959; Turkle, 1995). All participants appeared to be working towards an ideal identity and those who felt they had already achieved this (based on engagement, follower numbers and paid opportunities) were working to maintain this status.

Participant influencers were very conscious of their personal style and how this appeared on Instagram and admitted to spending a lot of time constructing this. So, although portraying real moments, experiences and opinions, these were often presented in a highly stylised way; for example, seeking out specific backdrops and editing images. Although participants felt that their identity on Instagram was open and honest, they tended to be selective in what they chose to share (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013); favouring happy, positive content that they felt would inspire their followers. There were some more consciously constructed examples of self presentation such as: photoshoots that were held to stockpile imagery that could be staggered and revealed over time; and the pursuit of offline activities for the sole purpose of sharing these on Instagram. Through their selectivity in the experiences they chose to share and the stylisation of their imagery, participant influencers were found to be both curating and constructing their identity online.

Participants felt that their Scottish identity was important but did not necessarily reject other national identities, such as British, Greek or Australian; only one participant identified as wholly Scottish when asked the Moreno question (1988). Even those who were most passionate about their Scottish identity tended to regard Scotland as inclusive and diverse and this was reflected in their own personalities. Scottishness was



regarded as salient regardless of circumstances and changes in life. Indeed, there was a sense amongst these participants that national identity had become more important as they grew up and the further they were from home.

For these participants, national identity was recognised across a variety of aspects of personal identity, including: accent or voice; heritage; personality; and political beliefs. Overall, participants were motivated in their Scottish identity by a sense of belonging and home. They all regarded Scotland as home and some felt more attached to a particular city. Home and family were usually analogous and almost synonymous for participants and family and upbringing were referred to throughout the interviews as influencing strong feelings of national identity.

Participants recognised that they could use their Scottish identity and place as a means to stand out in an ever-expanding infosphere where even the UK style influencer community was regarded as vast. Participants regarded the Scottish fashion industry as lacking in opportunities and made constant comparisons between London and Scotland, where the two places were positioned as, almost, polarised opposites or dichotomous. Although participants felt that there were more commercial opportunities for style influencers who lived in London, they appeared to be more attached to Scotland; none were attached to London – even those who lived there. A personal attachment to Scotland was also reflected in participants' sample posts, most of which were chosen because of the memory behind them.

All of the participants lived in cities and Scotland was regarded as a place for escape, where individuals could escape from a busy urban setting, such as London, or to the countryside from a Scottish city with relative ease. Instagram was referred to throughout the research as a “place”, suggesting that this in itself might represent a destination outside of Scotland, where followers might be physically placed in Scotland (representing a community) or elsewhere in the world. Participants reflected on Scottish identity as an attractive feature: they felt this was something that was received in a positive way outside of Scotland and that this might translate to Instagram.

Participants were not always conscious and explicit in their construction of Scottish identity but they tended to recognise that this was an important element of their online identity, which was revealed most obviously through place (where the Scottish setting might be the foreground or background of an image) and relatable content, which they

felt reflected the Scottish personality. This did influence their style but in a subtle manner, where participants expressed preference for autumn-winter styles and a bold sense of fashion that did not always stem from current trends.

The next chapter will conclude the thesis by addressing the research objectives.

## **Chapter 6      Conclusions**

This thesis aimed to explore the construction of national identity and place amongst style influencers who positioned themselves as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram. In order to achieve this, six research objectives were set out. This chapter will address the research objectives and highlight the main conclusions from the study. The current study contributes to knowledge in the fields of identity, Scottish and national identity, photo elicitation in qualitative research, and what was found to be an underdeveloped field of Scottish fashion.

### **6.1      Addressing the research objectives**

This research sought to explore the construction of Scottish identity amongst personal style influencers on Instagram. The decision to focus on Instagram as an example of social media is supported by the literature review and a preliminary study that was carried out, with fashion bloggers in the North East of Scotland. This revealed that Instagram was an important tool through which fashion bloggers communicated their personal style and Scottish identity most strongly. The participants in the preliminary study felt conscious of their Instagram identity, regarding this as important in its own right and the main outlet through which followers might access their blog.

#### **Objective 1: To explore the evolution of the style influencer in order to understand their impact on the fashion industry today**

The evolution of the style influencer was explored in order to understand their impact on the fashion industry today; this was achieved through a review of relevant literature in the area of fashion blogging and Instagram (Section 1.1). Therefore, the term influencer was understood and observed from a fashion communication perspective, where personal fashion bloggers are regarded as having revolutionised a realm that was previously reserved for the industry elite (Rocamora, 2011b). The accessibility of social media, such as Instagram, as well as an awareness of the opportunities that can accompany such an identity (Pedroni, 2015) has resulted in a new wave of style influencers and, notably, those who focus their efforts on Instagram (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016).

Social media and fashion bloggers, in particular, have reignited academic interest in identity studies, where blogs are regarded as idealised spaces through which individuals can construct a vision of themselves (Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b; Denon, 2014; Schwartz and Halegoua, 2015; Titton, 2015). Classic theories of identity, most notably Goffman's (1956) theory of self-presentation in everyday social situations, are arguably highly visible in such an environment (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). These ideas were explored in Chapter 2.

Although interest in regional studies of fashion blogging and influence have been invited in the field (Mora and Rocamora, 2015) and place is recognised as playing a part in the construction of online identity, there are still relatively few studies that merge these ideas (Palmgren, 2010; Luvaas, 2013; Pedroni, 2015; Boy and Uitermark, 2016; Song, 2016; Thelander and Cassenger, 2017; Utekhin, 2017; MacDowell and de Souza e Silver, 2018). This study has aimed to fill this gap and, in this sense, contributes to the developing field of fashion communication.

**Objective 2: To review critically literature in the area of Scottish fashion and style in order to uncover themes and form a basis for investigating the research topic in a new and unexplored context**

A thorough review of literature that exists in the field of Scottish fashion and style was required in order to uncover themes and form a basis for understanding this (Section 3.5). It was found that Scottish fashion is an underdeveloped field of study. Existing research highlights the impact of Scottish fashion (mainly through textiles such as tartan, tweed and cashmere) by documenting its evolution and impact on the fashion industry more broadly (Fulton, 1991; Cheape, 2010; Hume, 2010; Pittock, 2010; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). The most relevant study is that of Crane *et al* (2004) who explored *Scottish Dress, Ethnicity and Self-identity* in the US amongst those who were exploring their Scottish heritage; they found that Scottish national dress (i.e. the kilt and tartan) was most important to those who felt less complete in their Scottish identity and felt a need to validate this. However, there is limited research that explores Scottish fashion in a more contemporary context.

There is no shortage of examples of the use of Scottish textiles by luxury brands, such as Chanel, Alexander McQueen and Vivienne Westwood and these tend to be positioned as

a mark of heritage and quality for these brands. However, these styles tend to position Scotland in a more mythical light, evoking and reproducing the Highland vision of tartanry.

This thesis has aimed to fill a gap in research into contemporary Scottish fashion and style. As was discovered when exploring the evolution of the fashion influencer, fashion communication has changed dramatically since the advent of social media (Rocamora, 2001), where fashion bloggers and influencers have democratised the industry (Allen, 2009; Rocamora, 2011a). In a nation where there is a shortage of more traditional fashion media and where London is the epicentre of UK fashion, Scottish style influencers might be regarded as even more significant in defining and communicating contemporary Scottish fashion.

### **Objective 3: To appraise critically literature in the area of Scottish identity in order to understand what it means to be Scottish**

The context of the current research was Scotland. There is a wealth of literature in the field of Scottish identity where Scotland, as a stateless nation with an enthusiastic sense of community, is considered an interesting case (Moreno, 1988; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond and Rosie, 2006; Bechhofer and McCrone, 2008; Douglas, 2009; Brown, 2010; McCrone, 2017). National identity is thought to be deeply personal to an individual and more salient to some than others (Billig, 1995; Bond and Rosie, 2006; McCrone, 2017); indeed Scottish people were found to attribute salience to their national identity when considered alongside other identity markers such as gender (Bond and Rosie, 2002). Moreno (1988) explored the idea of dual identity amongst Scottish and Catalanian people and developed a scale through which individuals could signal such an identity; this tool was incorporated into research interviews as part of the methodology.

Anderson (1983) argues that nations are imagined and kept alive by their people and representations. This idea is highly visible in Scotland and, indeed, forms the basis for a number of studies into Scottish identity (Martin, 2009). Crawford (2007) observes that literature has played a significant role in the creation of the Scottish nation and does not simply reproduce existing meanings but creates new ones. Scotland's iconography is vast and distinctive and this is regarded as both a strength (Brown, 2010; Cheape, 2010;

Hume, 2010; Maloney, 2010; Munro, 2010; O'Donnell, 2010; Pittock, 2010) and a weakness for the nation (Nairn, 1981, p. 162; Trevor-Roper, 1983; McArthur, 2003). It is argued that the Scottish myth is so strong that this masks other more genuine identities and cultures within Scotland (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Martin, 2009). Indeed it is believed that Scotland's identity is so deeply rooted in the past that it is difficult to imagine Scotland in a more contemporary way (McCrone *et al*, 1995; McCrone, 2017).

Literature in the field of Scottish identity highlights the overpowering Highland vision of Scotland as remote, people-less and tranquil; thus Scotland is often viewed as unchanged and uninterrupted (McCrone, 2017). McCrone *et al* (1995) refers to this iconography as tartantry and Brown (2010) explores this concept further in the context of Scottish culture and the representations that reinforce this vision of Scotland (Anderson, 1983). In Brown (2010), which comprises the work of several authors, tartantry is portrayed in a sympathetic light. The authors maintain that tartantry has a genuine place in Scottish history and culture and the idea should not be rejected but rather understood and explored in a modern context (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Munro, 2010).

McCrone *et al* (1995) explored *Scotland the Brand* through a study of the Scottish heritage industry. They study the mythology of Scotland and the concept of authenticity, arguing that audiences have become less concerned with what is real and more concerned with what is believable. In seeking an authentic vision of Scotland, they often invite an exaggerated image that might be quite far removed from reality, often through the use of Scottish symbols, such as tartan.

In an increasingly global and digital age, it has been argued that national identity and physical place might become less important. Billig (1995) explores these ideas in *Banal Nationalism*, where he found that nationalism was still highly observable in the British press through the use of small familiar phrases. He argues that the unconscious and forgotten reminders of nationhood are evidence that nationhood is still strong. Similarly, it was found during the preliminary study and when sampling participants for the main study, a number of Scottish style influencers chose to identify very openly as Scottish or Scotland-based on Instagram.

When exploring national identity, there is a recognised tension between past and present (Kjartansdóttir, 2011) and this is perhaps particularly evident in the case of

Scottish identity (McCrone *et al*, 1995). It is argued that, in order to endure, nations must be reimagined within the present day (Anderson, 1983; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Crawford, 2007; Kjartansdóttir, 2011). At a time when the political landscape in Scotland has been dynamic, this study could be regarded as particularly timely (McCrone, 2017). Equally, in an online world, where individuals might choose to remain anonymous or conceal their national identity and place (Turkle, 1995), many choose to reveal this as a salient part of their online identity and style.

These studies (Chapter 3) helped to understand Scottish heritage and, in particular, how the past has influenced the image of Scotland that exists today. Scotland, through its romanticised history and representations, has acquired a mythical status, one that McCrone *et al* (1995, p. 7) refer to as “glamour”.

#### **Objective 4: To investigate critically the motivations behind the adoption and communication of Scottish identity by personal style influencers**

This thesis sought to investigate critically the motivations behind the adoption and communication of Scottish identity and place by personal style influencers. It was found that the main motivation for influencers to identify as Scottish on Instagram was to stand out in an ever more densely populated infosphere. Participants had experience of travelling and living outside of Scotland and found that, when doing so, they stood out as unique and interesting and were received in a positive way. They felt this was as a result of their Scottish identity where Scottish people were perceived as inclusive, friendly and welcoming.

Although Scottish identity was regarded as distinctive and attractive, this was not the sole motivation for these participants. Some were motivated by feelings of Scottish pride; they were passionate about Scotland and this is illustrated in their promotion of Scotland as a destination and Scottish brands. Indeed, they seemed to see it as part of their role as style influencers to promote Scotland in this way. All of the participant influencers reflected on Scottish pride as a symbol of Scotland and as a trait they recognised in themselves. Participants spent time reflecting on political events and Scottish independence and it was interesting to note that a sense of pride was not exclusive to those who favoured the idea of Scottish independence. The sample was almost evenly split in their views on this matter and, as such, these individuals might be

described as “cultural nationalists”, where they recognised Scottish identity as distinctive but did not wish to reject other identities (McCrone *et al*, 1995, p. 182).

Participant influencers referred to their Instagram identity as a “place”, suggesting they saw this as a destination in and of itself to which their followers might wish to escape. They recognised that their audience was not restricted to Scotland and, indeed, they did not wish it to be, and this meant that they might stand out online as Scottish amongst non-Scottish people in a similar way to their offline experiences of travelling.

Participants regarded Scotland as a place to which it is possible to escape and enjoy more simple pleasures, such as the fresh air and outdoors; this echoes the Victorian ideal of Scotland that is argued to have further reinforced tartanry (Fulton, 1991; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010). This idea was most strongly concerned with escaping to the countryside from a busy urban lifestyle and something that all the participants felt they could relate to. Scotland was regarded as an attractive place because of its small scale and the freedom and ease with which one can combine city and country life. Some participants used the phrase “best of both worlds” to describe Scotland. These participant influencers, whose ages ranged from 19 to 30, wanted city life and the opportunities that this offered but they also sought sanctuary in slower and more relaxed settings.

The idea of escapism was also related to Instagram specifically as a medium through which it is possible to escape real life. Participants admitted to using Instagram in this way where they could revel in their own identity and enjoy experiencing that of other people. Thus Instagram was regarded by participants as more akin to a book or film than to other examples of social media. In this respect, the output of these style influencers could be regarded as cultural productions of the present day (Crawford, 2007; Martin, 2009). In choosing to highlight Scotland as a key marker of their online identity these influencers are constructing and reinforcing contemporary narratives and imagery of Scottish identity and style (Anderson, 1983; Crawford, 2007; McCrone, 2017).

There is growing interest in Instagram within the academic community (Dumas *et al*, 2017; Sheldon and Bryant, 2015) and in the area of fashion and style influence on the medium (Marwick, 2015; Abidin, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e Silva, 2018). In this sense, it is argued that Instagram lends itself particularly well to Goffman’s theory of



self-presentation (1956). Indeed, participants' identities were most strongly influenced by a sense of their audience, where feedback was highly evident in terms of (positive and negative) engagement on a specific post (likes and comments) or through experiencing a (positive or negative) surge in followers.

Previous research into fashion blogging observes that these are positive spaces that generally invite positive feedback (Rocamora, 2011b) and whilst largely true for participants, they did not always regard Instagram as such a positive place. Some of the negative effects of Instagram were noted and participants spoke of: communities that were competitive and damaging; unattainable and unrealistic content (appearance, lifestyles, etc) that made participants feel dissatisfied with their own life; and the potential to receive criticism and negative feedback. Not all of the participants in the current research had received criticism but they recognised that this was a possibility.

Participants in this study could be regarded as micro-influencers (Moss, 2017). They all used Instagram in a professional and public manner but most of them did not regard this as their main career. Erikson's (1959) theory of identity evolution was strongly evident in the findings, where participants appeared to be seeking identity achievement through the medium. A successful identity on Instagram, or the achievement of an ideal identity (Erikson, 1959), appeared to be measured at least in part by the acquisition of followers, subsequent engagement on the medium and increasing access to commercial opportunities. All participants appeared to be working towards the achievement of an ideal identity on Instagram and some felt they had already achieved this. They all spoke of constructing and curating their personal style on Instagram: this is something that they felt was important and to which they devoted significant time and energy.

Instagram is recognised in the literature as a tool that aids memory through recording experiences but also one that lends itself to narcissistic traits (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017). Some of the participant influencers described their Instagram identity as something of a diary through which they could document experiences, which were embedded in a sense of place and style. In particular, participants spoke about recording their travel experiences and their style evolution. This suggests that participants' Instagram identities (frontstage) do not deviate vastly from their offline realities (backstage) (Goffman, 1956). Thelander and Cassinger (2017, p. 9-10) identify three user types on Instagram and these were all observable in the experiences of the participant influencers: "acting tourists" actively promoted Scotland as a destination and

recorded their travel experiences outside of Scotland; “Instagrammers” were primarily career-minded and most conscious of their audience; and “professionals” took pleasure in the art of content creation, e.g. curating and styling the perfect flat-lay image. Most participants fell into more than one of the categories.

Although participants felt they portrayed a genuine version of themselves online through Instagram, they all admitted to being selective in the styles, places and experiences they chose to convey, preferring to highlight what they regarded as the best bits of their style and promoting a positive attitude online. In their pursuit of an ideal identity on Instagram (Erikson, 1959), there were some examples where participants admitted to planning an offline activity for the sole purpose of sharing this on Instagram. These examples illustrate that participants’ consciousness of their online identity actively influenced their offline activities and lifestyle (Turkle, 1995). Participants were found to be curating a style and identity in the selectivity they applied to their content creation.

In constructing their personal style identity, participant influencers were also found to pursue a stylistic ideal where they admitted to dedicating significant effort to taking the perfect photograph. Although Instagram is still largely used as a mobile application and one that enables users to edit their images using filters, some participants preferred to take photos on a professional camera and edit using specialist software before posting them on Instagram. It is worth pointing out that this is quite an arduous process.

Participants alluded to the use of pre-planned imagery, gathered and used sporadically as filler-in content. This demonstrates that a frontstage Instagram identity is not always acted out in backstage real-time (Goffman, 1956). Indeed, posts might be held and shared sporadically in order for an influencer to retain a level of regularity in output. Thus, unless the influencer reveals the nature of these posts as part of their narrative, the audience is being deceived or at least not fully informed.

Song (2016) notes the *Geotag* function as a useful feature on Instagram where users can signal their location and connect to each other through a hypertextual map. However, she also reminds readers that this function is not limited to mobile location settings and users can signal any location in the world regardless of where they are physically placed at the time of posting. These factors all suggest that style influencers are moving away from the immediacy of “authenticity and truth” that was originally cited as the appeal of

Instagram (Abidin, 2016; Song, 2016; MacDowell and de Souza e Silver, 2018), fashion blogs (Rocamora, 2011b) and also street style as a photography genre (ibid; Rocamora, 2011a, p. 102).

Participants admitted to viewing their own identity on Instagram and were often motivated by a genuine enjoyment in being able to reminisce and relive past experiences. This ranged from remembering special events and happier times, to outfits that participants enjoyed wearing. Participants were found to reminisce publicly on Instagram by resharing posts. This demonstrates a new motive for using Instagram, where participants were able to remember the best bits of their offline identity in a nostalgic and positive light and where this reminiscing was acted out publicly in front of their audience (Goffman, 1956).

The findings illustrate that personal identity, as it is presented on Instagram, is curated and constructed, influenced by a sense of audience, self, style and place. In this sense, participant influencers pursued the attainment of an ideal identity (Erikson, 1959).

#### **Objective 5: To understand how personal style influencers make sense of their own national identity and the value they place on this**

This study sought to understand how personal style influencers make sense of their own national identity and the value they place on this. Participants were encouraged to reflect on this idea quite generally and then encouraged to consider it more specifically in the context of Instagram. Participants all identified, at least to some degree, as Scottish. All the participants felt that their national identity was important (Bond and Rosie, 2002; Bond and Rosie, 2006), but not to the point of defining them wholly. When asked the Moreno (1988) question, most participants identified as having a dual identity, with preference towards Scotland. This stemmed more from the fact that they did not wish to reject their British identity than the fact that they felt any less Scottish.

This idea was further reflected in the main “identity marker” (Kiely *et al*, 2001, p. 33) that participants associated with Scottish people, whom they regarded broadly as warm and welcoming. This was expressed differently by the variety of participants but seemed to amount to the fact that Scottish identity was friendly, diverse, inclusive and welcoming of other nations and that this quality was demonstrated through its people.

The idea of Scottish people as warm is intriguing in its contrast with the Scottish climate as cold. Participants seemed to feel they were able to convey their warmth successfully through Instagram by appearing friendly and responsive towards their followers as well as through the production of a relatable lifestyle.

The idea of inclusivity was further demonstrated through participants' omission of what they saw as more stereotypical Scottish symbols, like tartan. Participants did not reject the idea of tartantry – those who mentioned tartan recognised it was part of Scotland's history (Brown, 2010). However they did not see it as sufficiently contemporary and progressive, inclusive of a more diverse and wider definition of Scotland and its people.

Participants, overall, felt a sense of belonging to Scotland; most of them regarded the nation as home and somewhere that they felt comfortable and secure (Bond and Rosie, 2006; McCrone, 2017). A sense of home and a sense of belonging were imagined differently, at times. It was when reflecting on where they belonged that participants tended to identify most strongly with a more localised city identity (McCrone, 2017). However, this appeared to be less influential in the case of Aberdeen, where only one participant (Arran) referred to Aberdeen as somewhere she felt she belonged. Interestingly, this same participant chose to share relatively little of her home city on Instagram. Participants did not always regard the place in which they were living at the time of interview (e.g. London or Aberdeen) as the place to which they belonged ultimately. They associated belonging more strongly with a sense of feeling settled and where they would eventually end up. In this sense, participants appeared to agree that their sense of Scottishness had grown and would remain salient.

Participants tended to be more passionate about Glasgow and Edinburgh as a city identity than Aberdeen. The Aberdeen-based influencers tended to align themselves more with a Scottish rather than city-based identity and this idea was conveyed through their posts and their engagement in online communities. The rejection of an Aberdeen identity and preference towards a Scottish identity was also highlighted in the preliminary study. McCrone (2017) argues that, of the Scottish cities, Aberdeen is most lacking in a sense of cultural identity and this could be a factor in how influencers felt about Aberdeen. Participants appeared to feel that Aberdeen, as a city, was less exciting and had less to offer in terms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; McCrone *et al*, 1995). However, the participants who did live in Aberdeen appeared to be particularly conscious in their promotion of Scottish heritage (e.g. Barra and Skye) and historic

settings (e.g. Fara). This suggests that, whilst Aberdeen as a city might be perceived as having little to offer in terms of cultural capital, the surrounding countryside provided more opportunities. Aberdeen-based influencers also appeared critical of the Aberdeen influencer community, whereas Edinburgh and Glasgow influencers observed a strong and positive community. This suggests that community is influential in the construction of Scottish identity and place on Instagram.

Participants tended to associate home with the family home (Billig, 1995) and somewhere to which they would return regularly to visit family, and parents in particular. This was at least partially due to the fact that participants were young – many were not long graduated from university – and did not always see themselves as settled in a job or place. Belonging, on the other hand, was influenced most strongly by memories and a sense of kindred spirit. Attachment to place in this sense was a much more powerful influencer towards strong feelings of national identity than place of birth, residency and heritage (Kiely *et al*, 2001; Bond and Rosie, 2006). Heritage was still important and ideas of home and family were inextricably linked for most participants. Some were particularly interested in their heritage and viewed this as “mixed” (due to the varied Scottish locations) even when they described themselves as wholly Scottish; this again suggests that a Scottish and national identity is not straightforward and easily defined.

Many of the participants had other “identity indicators” that were strongly observable on Instagram, e.g. mother and psoriasis champion (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013, p. 102). Although they signalled their Scottishness on Instagram consciously and openly in their biography section (Table 5), most of the participant influencers felt that the portrayal of their Scottish identity through posts was not always intentional or obvious. These examples might therefore fall under Bullingham and Vasconcelos’ (2013, p. 106) definition of “identity clues”.

When selecting posts they felt were demonstrative of their identity as a Scottish style influencer on Instagram, participants presented very different ideas, including landscapes, the promotion of Scottish brands and the use of a Scottish voice. The underlying theme, observable across the sample, was that the chosen posts were particularly meaningful to participants who often recalled the memory behind the post in incredible detail and began to understand more about themselves in doing so.

## **Objective 6: To investigate critically how and why Scottish identity is projected through Instagram**

The final objective was to investigate critically how and why Scottish identity is projected through Instagram. Participant influencers were asked a variety of questions and given the task of self-selecting a sample of posts that were provided before the interview. These posts were discussed during the interview and then subject to further analysis in terms of their denotation and connotation, in line with Barthes (1957a) and Panofsky (1955). The photo-elicitation approach that was designed and adopted in the current thesis uncovered unconscious motivations, feelings, attitudes and memories. It is believed that these posts help to convey a sense of contemporary Scottish identity and style.

Participants were found to construct their Scottish identity consciously and unconsciously, explicitly and subtly. Conscious constructions were most strongly identifiable in the use of Scottish phrases (e.g. “wee” and “bonnie”) and hashtags (e.g. #ScottishBlogger). In their use of these hashtags and small, familiar phrases, participants were able to appear relatable within the Scottish style community but also stand out in the wider infosphere, appealing to audiences beyond Scotland. They believed that this might make them appear unique and interesting, opening themselves up to commercial opportunities from brands that might hope to reach a Scottish audience and also benefitting from what they regarded as the positive audience perception of Scotland. Although these examples are considered conscious and explicit, participants were also found to use these in a banal manner (Billig, 1995). A number of participants reflected on their use of hashtags such as #ScottishBlogger where these did not necessarily correspond with the content of a post and were simply applied to all posts regardless of their meaning. It might therefore be argued that these style influencers used their Scottish identity on Instagram as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Participant influencers observed accent as one of the most fundamental markers of national identity (Kiely *et al*, 2001). Although very explicit in an offline setting, accent is perhaps less obvious in an online setting like Instagram, where text and still imagery are still the main forms of communication. However, participants observed the use of a Scottish voice (Douglas, 2009) on Instagram. They felt this was conveyed explicitly through the use of Scottish phrases like “bonnie” and “wee” but also more subtly,

through a self-deprecatory or sarcastic humour, a warm, friendly personality and through the depiction of a relatable lifestyle. Participants spoke of engaging with their audience and taking the time to respond to comments and messages.

Participants were also found to construct an image of Scotland in their use of place and setting (Utekhin, 2017). They adopted unique backdrops for style posts mostly in the form of natural settings or those that connote a sense of history or heritage. Whether this was through the use of cobbled streets in Edinburgh, visiting heritage attractions in Aberdeenshire, or through the depiction of an uninterrupted Scottish landscape, participants expressed a preference for these aesthetics as part of their personal style on Instagram. In doing so, Scottish style influencers are arguably redefining the traditional ethos and image of street style (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008). Sometimes participants were conscious in their use of these backdrops, setting out and planning a post, and at other times this was more impulsive, where the discovery of an interesting setting would inspire them to post. However, these settings were always regarded as important. With this in mind, through their own identities, participants were also styling a vision of Scotland in front of a potentially global audience.

Many of the sample posts that participants provided were chosen entirely because of the memory behind these and therefore might not connote Scottishness to an audience on Instagram. This illustrates the interaction between a backstage, contextual identity and the frontstage, public persona (Goffman, 1956; Butler, 1988). In these instances Scottish identity was portrayed in a subtler manner and might not be identified at all by an audience (Goffman, 1956). Participants were more attached to those images that evoked strong memories and placed a higher value on these than other images, e.g. those that were more stylised and perhaps taken as part of a fashion photo shoot. This suggests that photographs that were taken in a more natural and impulsive manner (i.e. those that had been given less thought) were often more meaningful to the influencer than those that were constructed and thought out. Given that participants spent time viewing their own identity on Instagram, these more implicit reminders of their Scottish identity might actually be very significant.

Some participants felt that a key challenge in the upkeep of their Instagram identity was that they did not always have someone at hand to take their photo and, in these instances, they had to improvise with other ideas such as coffee cups. The fact that a number of the sample posts did not actually picture the influencers themselves, suggests

that the photos participants themselves took might sometimes be more revealing of their Scottish identity.

Another way in which participants were found to construct a vision of Scottish identity was through their preference for outdoor imagery. This was partly due to the Instagram trend towards professional clean imagery that lent itself better towards outdoor lighting (Song, 2016). However, this also stemmed from an outdoor lifestyle, or the construction of an outdoor lifestyle, where participants were selective and preferred to share these types of activities. Participants chose to share what they regarded as more mindful and authentic routines such as visiting heritage sites and taking walks. They were keen to use Instagram to show the beauty of their everyday surroundings, promoting Scotland as an attractive destination. This seemed to stem from a sense of pride in their Scottish surroundings, which they felt would be appreciated by others.

In terms of fashion, participants appeared uncertain about their presentation of Scottish style. Most participants, when asked directly, did not regard their style as Scottish and only one participant admitted to styling herself consciously with her Scottish identity in mind (Iona). They could not articulate fully a sense of Scottish style nor did they express a desire to do so. However, throughout the interviews some key themes emerged that relate specifically to fashion. The first was that participants were highly influenced by place when it came to making fashion choices. They liked to plan their style and felt that this should correlate to the vibe of a destination. The findings uncovered a relationship between place, mood and fashion: at times, their fashion was influenced by their mood and their mood was influenced by comfort in their surroundings and physical place. Some participants reflected strongly on their style as being more confident in certain places, for example in London where they felt more anonymous or in Scotland where they felt more relaxed.

All participants expressed comfort in familiar styles and this was most notable in their preference for autumn-winter fashion, which they associated with the Scottish climate. Three participants who no longer lived in Scotland (two were living in London and one in Australia) still expressed a preference for these seasonal styles, e.g. boots, layers, jackets. This is something that perhaps connects more with those living in highly seasonal zones of the world.



In terms of Scottish style, there was a sense amongst most participants that this was conveyed through an indefinable attitude. This seemed to stem from the fact that they saw certain personal characteristics as Scottish, such as feeling unconstrained by trends and seeing themselves as fashion leaders rather than followers. This was something they perceived as stemming from their Scottish mindset and culture where Scottish people were regarded as bold, strong-willed and defiant.

Although research into Scottish fashion has focused on traditional textiles, most notably tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017), participants did not reflect strongly on these during the interviews. Indeed, only two sample posts contain tartan. The findings further support the idea that these textiles are important to the Scottish fashion industry and form a key part of mainstream cyclical trends. The choice to wear tartan was found to resonate with connotations of amplified patriotism that might be deemed inappropriate in the wrong setting. One participant felt restricted in her ability to wear tartan as a Scottish person outside of Scotland, where she worried she might be viewed as an object of amusement.

All participants were found to be conscious of their Instagram identity and felt that it was important to them. They were selective in what they chose to share (e.g. often preferring to share only the most positive experiences) and how they chose to share things (e.g. the positioning of hashtags and the use of a specific filter). In this sense, participants were found to be constructing a frontstage identity through Instagram by curating and styling their backstage reality (Goffman, 1956). In some cases, their backstage reality was actually influenced by a sense of their frontstage identity (Turkle, 1995).

These participants saw Instagram, at least partly, as a profession and were found to pursue an ideal identity through the medium (Erikson, 1959). For many, this was considered an exploratory work in progress but one, which they felt, might eventually be complete and fully realised. Those who were working towards the achievement of an ideal identity appeared, for the most part, to regard Instagram as a creative outlet, a social space where they could experiment, to a degree, with their style. They were open to identity and style inspiration as well as feedback from their growing audience and they tended to draw on their own experiences as followers of other style influencers.

The findings suggest that once participants feel they have achieved an ideal identity on Instagram they will then stabilise their personal style and portray a less varied and multi-faceted version of themselves (Kinwall, 2004; Kroger, 2004). Two of the more career-minded participants appeared to feel they had reached this stage. This was represented through the application of a consistent aesthetic and personal style and was something that they worked on maintaining. These participants appeared to have a heightened awareness of their audience and spoke about metrics and analytics. They also appeared to be more constrained in their use of Instagram and enjoyed using it less than those who were able to explore their identity and personal style more freely.

The complex notion of authenticity is highlighted in the variety of works that underpin this research topic, for example Scottish identity (McCrone *et al*, 1995), online identity (Turkle, 1995), fashion bloggers (Titton, 2015), fashion influencers (Marwick, 2015), fashion and national identity (Goodrum, 2009) and the street-style aesthetic (Rocamora, 2011a). This thesis further illustrates the complexity of this concept. McCrone *et al* (1995) maintain that, in the case of Scottish heritage, audiences are more concerned with what is believable than what is actually real and this often results in an exaggerated experience. The same is arguably true of the way in which participant influencers pursued an ideal identity. An ideal identity was associated with a sense of consistency and stability and where participants felt that projecting themselves in this way would be regarded as more original and believable by their audience through the “stylised repetition of acts” (Butler, 1988, p. 519); this might be termed external authenticity. However, the achievement of an ideal identity on Instagram required them to curate and stylise themselves in an intentional and one-sided, rather than a natural and multi-faceted manner.

The maintenance of an ideal identity (once it has been achieved) appears to rest more on external influences such as audience perception and understanding of the Instagram algorithm rather than internal influences, which were more manifest in those who were still exploring their identity on Instagram. Therefore, the more career-minded participants were arguably presenting a less open and genuine version of their offline self. Figure 59 illustrates this idea:

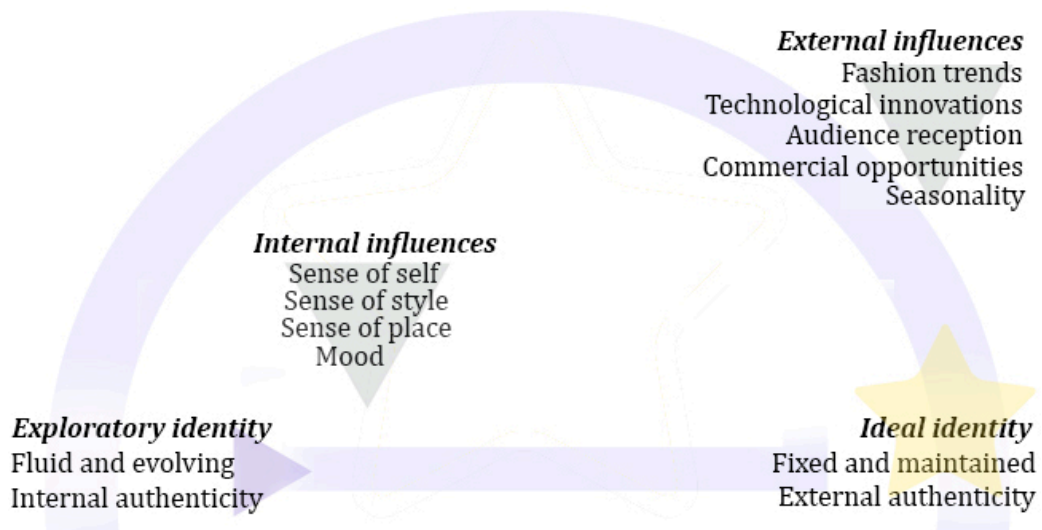


Figure 59: Spectrum of identity evolution on Instagram (author)

### 6.1.1 Contemporary Scottish identity and style

It is argued that the experiences and output of these participant influencers can help to understand contemporary Scottish identity and style. The following photo waterfalls seek to express the key ideas that were conveyed throughout the sample posts: Figures 60, 61 and 62 are illustrative of Scottish fashion and Figures 63 and 64 are representative of Scottish lifestyle.

Traditionally, street style has been most strongly observed as part of an urban, city backdrop (Rocamora and O'Neill, 2008; Woodward, 2015). This idea was recognisable in Jura's personal style where she presents herself in and around the same streets of Glasgow against a grey, urban backdrop. Jura recognised her identity professionally and as predominantly fashion-focused. She saw herself as something of a mannequin focused upon selling clothes, preferring, for example, not to reveal her face (Rocamora, 2011a). Although she regarded Glasgow as home, she spoke of plans to move to London in order to be closer to fashion brand headquarters and major fashion events. For this reason, her Scottish identity on Instagram was a backdrop, which signified little more than a circumstantial physical location – albeit one that lent itself well to her preferred grey-toned aesthetic.

However, apart from Jura, every other participant in the study regarded their Scottish identity as a much more important part of their Instagram identity and sought to

promote aspects of this online. Figure 60 is illustrative of Scottish street style as distinct from the traditional definition, where participant influencers sought historic and nature-inspired landscapes upon which to present their personal style. It is worth noting that despite the often rural feel of these images, all of the participants in this study resided in cities and were attached to the idea of living within a city. Five of these photographs were taken in Scottish cities and the remaining three were taken in more rural locations.

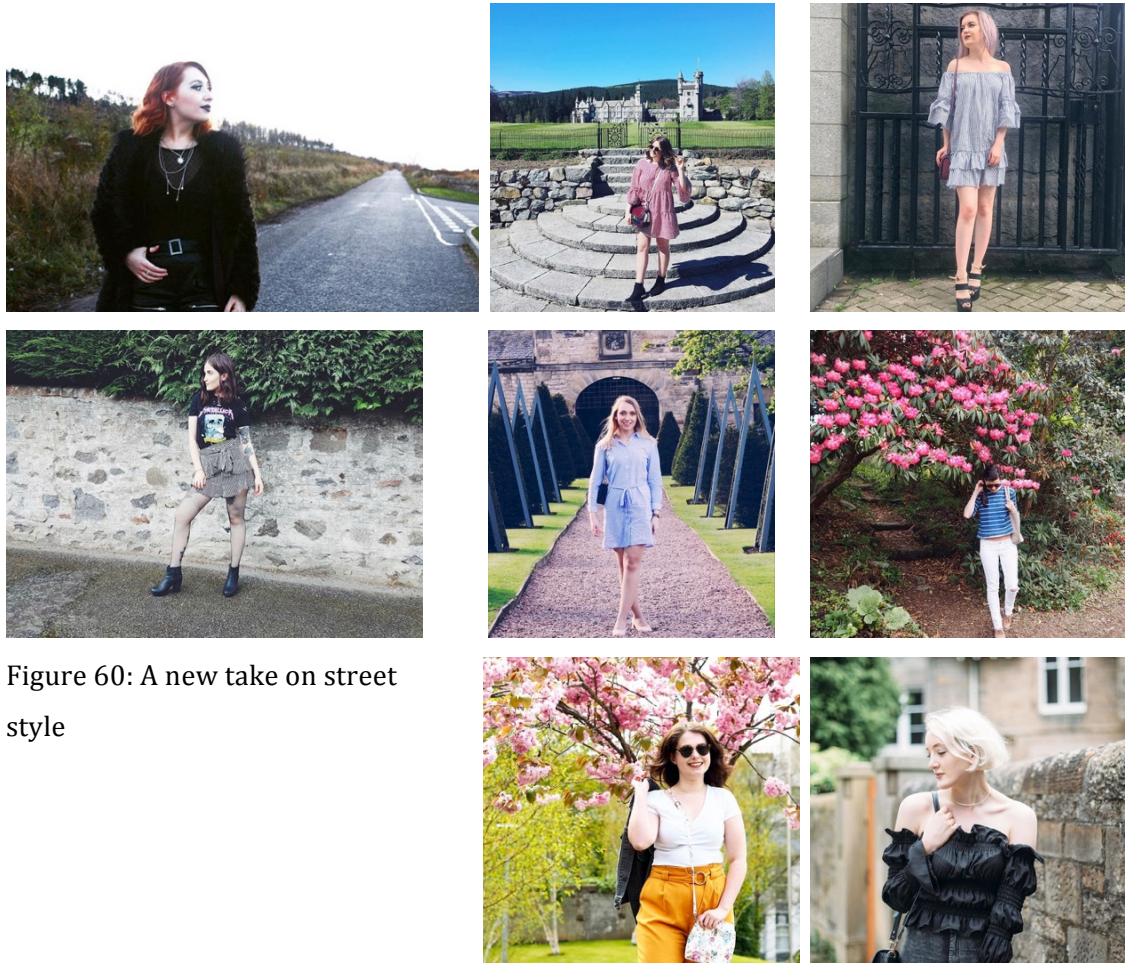


Figure 60: A new take on street style

In Figure 60, it is the settings that are important in the construction of Scottish identity and style. Although the garments themselves are not discernably Scottish, the participants described these as “outfit posts” and so in these examples, Scottish identity played a key part in how they showcased their fashion choices.

In all instances, the Scottish backdrop appeared peopleless. Some further examples of street style are demonstrated in Figures 61 and 62 but where the garments were also influenced by participants' Scottish identity.

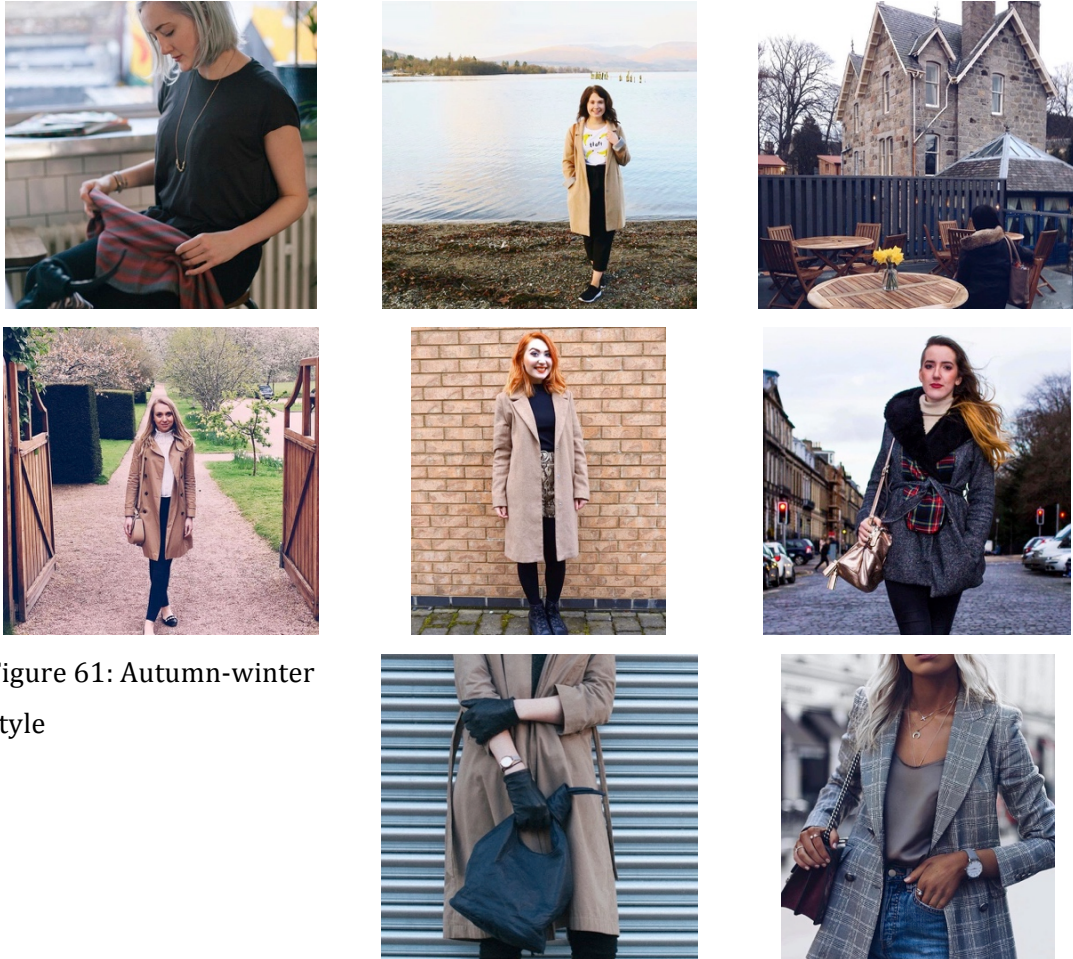


Figure 61: Autumn-winter style

Figures 61 and 62 illustrate the two predominant themes that were found in relation to Scottish fashion. Participants expressed preference for autumn-winter styles, for example coats, scarves and boots. Figure 61 represents the posts that might be associated with autumn-winter style and these were made up of a muted colour palette of beiges and greys. Some participants were so committed to the autumn aesthetic that they spoke of editing their imagery using warm tones. It might be argued that the use of warm imagery and filters contrasts symbolically with the idea of Scotland as cold and grey but supports the idea of Scottish people as warm and welcoming.



Figure 62: Bold style

Figure 62, on the other hand, demonstrates what some participants labelled the Scottish attitude to fashion, associating their style with an attitude of defiance, where they tended to opt for bold fashion choices that made them stand out rather than blend in with current trends. These examples included bright colours and contrasts, statement t-shirts, tattoos and bright lipstick. Figure 62 represents the sample posts that convey this idea most strongly.





Figure 63: Exploring Scotland



In terms of Scottish lifestyle, participant influencers saw themselves as explorers and took pleasure in what they referred to as being tourists in their own country. A number of sample posts depicted the participants as adventurers (Figure 63).

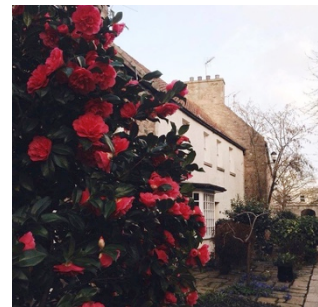


Figure 64: Everyday beauty



The idea of participants as individuals who enjoyed spending time outdoors and exploring their surroundings was also strong in what could be labeled their *presentation*

*of self in everyday life* as acted out through Instagram (Goffman, 1956). Figure 64 illustrates participants' choice to share what they regarded as the beauty of their everyday surroundings; each post represents an outlook that the participant walked past every day but were still able to enjoy and see in new ways, e.g. during the different seasons. In these examples, Fara and Lungay's travelling coffee cups were part of an ongoing narrative on Instagram and served as props (ibid) – a reminder that followers are seeing the world (or in this case Scotland) through their eyes.

This idea demonstrates a regard for Scotland more broadly, where participants tended to see Scotland as somewhere in which they could escape and pursue more mindful activities, taking pleasure in the simple and the natural; which strikes a stark contrast with the material objects of fashion and the more commercial side of Instagram that participants associated most strongly with London as the centre for UK fashion.

## **6.2 Contribution to knowledge**

This research has uncovered that Scottish identity has resonance for individuals today and that it is applied and communicated in the context of fashion and style. This sense of national identity is not wholly banal (Billig, 1995) and is, at times, deeply meaningful and links with both internal motivators (e.g. a sense of pride and belonging) and also serves an externally motivated purpose in achieving positive audience reception. Whilst the style influencers in the current study wished to actively support and promote Scotland and Scottish brands, they were not able to fully articulate what was Scottish about their style: however, there are indicators that these reflect autumn-winter fashions and a bold and convention-defying attitude. Participants were found to be constructing and curating their identity through Instagram in the selectivity that they applied to their content creation, in which their Scottish setting and place formed a salient part.

This thesis has contributed to knowledge in four key areas: 1) contribution to literature in the field of national identity and identity studies by exploring these ideas in a new context; 2) building on the growing body of work in fashion studies, particularly in the area of fashion communication and social-media production; 3) the design and application of a novel photo-elicitation technique that could be adopted in future studies of online identity and social-media production; and 4) leading the way for new research



into contemporary Scottish fashion.

### **1) Contribution to literature in the field of national identity and identity studies by exploring these ideas in a new context**

Instagram is regarded as a particularly influential medium in the fashion industry and one that lends itself to the construction of an idealised self (Sheldon and Bryant, 2015; Dumas *et al*, 2017). Personal style is considered an important way through which individuals can express their identity and one that is increasingly acted out online (Rocamora, 2011a). This study has demonstrated that classic theories of identity, most notably the work of Goffman (1956) and Erikson (1959), are highly observable through the experiences of personal style influencers on Instagram. This thesis reveals that Scottish style influencers constructed an ideal identity through curating and styling their offline self (Erikson, 1959). This was influenced by their personal style preferences and audience reception (Goffman, 1956; Chittenden, 2010; Rocamora, 2011b).

It was argued, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, amidst globalisation and the Internet, that national identity might become less important (Billig, 1995). Other identities, such as those concerned with gender and career, were growing stronger and might be considered more salient than nationhood, which was becoming increasingly fluid (*ibid*). However, Billig (1995, p. 8) argued that national identity was still important, perhaps even more so amidst a “world of nations”, but this has become banal and is reproduced unconsciously. This thesis demonstrates that national identity remains important as a source of pride, belonging and differentiation.

Instagram was regarded by participants as a destination and place for escape; more akin to a book or film than other social media. This idea, in particular, demonstrates that, in choosing to identify as Scottish on Instagram, style influencers might in and of themselves be considered as important cultural productions of Scotland. Literature in the field of national identity emphasises the importance of such representations (Anderson, 1983; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Crawford, 2007), both in terms of upholding the nation and in actually defining it. In particular, it has been noted that Scottish iconography is outdated (McCrone *et al*, 1995) and this idea was upheld in the current research. Although participant influencers did not reject tartanry (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010), they were found to be styling Scotland in new ways. A lack of feminine

Scottish identity was observed in the literature (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Martin, 2009) and it is therefore also believed that in a realm where women are the key actors, this thesis addresses a further gap in knowledge. In this sense, it is argued that Scottish style influencers play a significant role in defining modern Scotland, in terms of cultural identity and style.

A key theme in the literature that exists in the field of national identity is that it is important to periodically review these and reflect on these in the context of the present. It is believed that the current research contributes to a contemporary understanding of Scottish identity (Anderson, 1983; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Crawford, 2007; Kjartansdóttir, 2011).

## **2) Building on the growing body of work in fashion studies, particularly in the area of fashion communication and social-media production**

Fashion studies are an area of research that has grown steadily over the past decade. There is a wealth of literature in the field and the definition of fashion is now regarded as wider than clothes: “dress, appearance and style... fashion as material culture and symbolic system” (Rocamora and Smelik, 2016, p. 2).

There is a body of work that exists in the area of fashion blogging and this was explored in Section 1.1. In particular, fashion blogs are acknowledged as having revolutionised fashion communication, turning a previously exclusive realm on its head (Allen, 2009; Rocamora, 2011a). The fashion industry is fast-paced and, as digital media has grown in terms of its innovation, immediacy and reach, Instagram, in particular has been embraced and a new wave of influencers has been recognised (Abidin, 2016).

There are a number of studies that consider identity construction on fashion blogs and social media (Section 2.1). However, the majority of these focus on the output of the bloggers themselves and sometimes their motivations for blogging. The findings of this thesis suggest that as the style influencer community continues to grow, actors seek new ways in which to be distinctive and that the adoption and construction of national identity and place are ways in which an influencer can stand out.

This study has explored, in its focus on Scottish identity, the interaction between the

online and offline self and how these ideas interrelate. This was achieved through an IPA approach, exploring the personal experiences of fourteen participant influencers. The findings reveal new knowledge around how and why people use social media to communicate personal identity and style. A spectrum of identity evolution (Figure 59) was developed, which builds on the work of others in the field of identity (Goffman, 1956; Erikson, 1959; McCrone *et al*, 1995; Turkle, 1995).

### **3) The design and application of a novel photo-elicitation technique that could be adopted in future studies of online identity and social media production**

In exploring the production of an online identity through a medium that is largely visual, a verbal narrative was not deemed sufficient to convey this and draw meaningful conclusions about a notionally complex issue (Larkin and Thompson, 2011). Previous studies of fashion blogging and social media production have largely focused on the output of the bloggers in order to make sense of the phenomenon as an audience might receive it.

This research adopted a novel photo-elicitation technique, which builds on the Collier (1957) approach and more contemporary methods that use participants' own photographs (e.g. Croghan *et al*, 2008; Van House, 2009). Participants were asked to self-select posts from their Instagram profile, in advance of being interviewed, and encouraged to reflect on these during the interview.

This approach enabled easy engagement with the participants and encouraged further revelations through asking participants to reflect on how they went about choosing their posts. Participants spoke passionately and at length about the images and their discussion of these allowed further themes to emerge: particularly the importance of personal memories, where participants expressed varying levels of attachment to the photographs and the meaning behind these. Reflecting on their identity in this way evoked strong memories and the expression of greater self-awareness by participants, enabling them to gain new insights into their own beliefs about nationality. It is believed that this approach could be very useful in future studies of self-presentation online.

#### **4) Leading the way for new research into contemporary Scottish style.**

Research in the area of Scottish fashion is sparse. Where this does exist it tends to take a retrospective approach, observing how Scottish fashion has evolved and focusing on traditional textiles such as cashmere, tartan and tweed (Fulton, 1991; Platman, 2011; Young and Martin, 2017). Undoubtedly, these are important characteristics of Scottish fashion and highly observable in cyclical fashion trends and a key component of luxury fashion. If Scotland did not have such a claim to fashion heritage, then it is more than likely it would be searching for and attempting to construct one (Riegels Melchior, 2010).

However, as with Scottish identity more generally, it could be argued that these iconic textiles are not sufficient in conveying Scottish fashion in its broader definition, in terms of “dress, appearance and style” (Rocamora and Smelik, 2016, p. 2). This thesis has helped to uncover insights into contemporary Scottish style through exploring the experiences and output of a group of Scottish style influencers.

Participant influencers felt that Scotland was lacking a fashion industry; they mostly felt that this was something it should have, given the rich heritage of its textile industry (Young and Martin, 2017). Although Scotland is part of the UK and London is its fashion capital, participants continually drew comparisons between Scotland and London. They felt that the two places were very different in terms of lifestyle and fashion. London was regarded as a preferable location for those who wanted to fulfill a career in fashion, but Scotland, overall, was regarded as a more desirable place to live.

In terms of professionalism, there was a sense that opportunities in Scotland would increase through the growing visibility of a community of style influencers in Scotland. Participant influencers spoke about working with independent Scottish fashion brands but there was also a sense that larger-scale international brands were beginning to look towards micro-influencers who could access a more specific audience over whom they might have more influence (Moss, 2017). One participant reflected particularly strong opinions on this, observing the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead in building a Scottish fashion industry “from scratch”.

It is argued that this thesis builds further understanding of Scottish fashion in terms of how this is understood and conveyed in a contemporary context. Participant influencers

appeared to embrace but also challenge the traditional idea of Scottish fashion that exists in the literature to date. They offered a new and contemporary perspective on Scottish style and projected this through their own identity and experiences online; as such, it is argued that these are important cultural productions.

### **6.3 Implications for future research**

Firstly, it has been noted that, although Instagram is considered particularly relevant as an example of visual social media, these are dynamic and, often, transient. However, as with previous studies of online identity, which focus on gaming and blogging (e.g. Turkle, 1995; Reed, 2006, Rocamora, 2011b; Titton, 2015), it is necessary to investigate these phenomena in new and unexplored territories like Instagram. The actual media in these instances are arguably unimportant and potentially transitory, beyond the social experiences and human behaviour for which they provide a platform.

As a medium that has achieved considerable success and attention from fashion brands (Abidin, 2016), Instagram is evolving and, even during the relatively short timeframe in which this research has been carried out, there have been updates; for example, the *Instagram Stories* feature in 2016, which allows users to reveal additional identity cues through temporary posts and videos. Equally, Instagram has become more commercially focused and this raises further questions around identity authenticity amongst influencers whilst working with brands and when seeking to achieve and present an ideal identity (Erikson, 1959). In light of these new developments, further research exploring these ideas, in particular, would be beneficial.

This thesis comprised an all-female sample. This is considered reflective of the Scottish style community on Instagram where no male influencers who met the research criteria were found at the time the primary research was carried out. Although the inclusion of male influencers might have been interesting and arguably even desirable, this was not considered essential, as the aim of this study was not to generalise; recognising that identity is deeply personal to an individual. Equally, it has been argued that fashion bloggers and street style as an aesthetic are predominantly female domains and that this is part of their appeal in an industry that had previously come under the male gaze (Rocamora, 2011a). It has also been argued that Scottish identity is comprised of predominantly masculine imagery (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Martin, 2009). Therefore, the

all-female sample that is represented in the present research is useful in understanding Scottish identity from a new and significant perspective. As the Scottish style community on Instagram grows, it would be interesting to explore the construction of Scottish identity amongst male influencers.

The research focuses on Scottish identity, where Scotland was regarded as a particularly interesting case as a stateless nation but one with a rich heritage and distinctive iconography (McCrone *et al*, 1995; Brown, 2010; McCrone, 2017). Research into Scottish fashion is lacking and focused largely on the production of textiles such as tartan, tweed and cashmere. The findings of this thesis suggest some key aspects of Scottish style, which will inform the agenda for future research into Scottish fashion. This might include further elicitation of images of contemporary Scottish style and the exploration of the potential of existing networks to evolve the Scottish fashion landscape. Scottish identity and place was important to the participants in this study. The findings also suggest that as the infosphere continues to grow, identity might become more localised. With this in mind, it would be interesting to conduct a similar study in the context of another nation, in order to draw comparisons and further understand the phenomenon of national identity and how this is constructed online.

The participant influencers who are discussed in this thesis are considered to be important signifiers and cultural productions of contemporary Scotland. In their open and explicit identification as Scottish, and the way in which they styled themselves online using Instagram, they are argued to also be styling perceptions of Scottish fashion and indeed Scotland itself. This idea is considered central to the thesis and will form the basis for its subsequent output in the fields of Scottish identity and fashion studies.

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## **Appendix I: Preliminary interview script**

### **Background**

Blog name:

Length of time blogging:

Number of followers:

Social media presence:

Gender:

Age:

To what extent do you consider blogging as a career?

### **Section 1: Blog inception**

- 1) Can you tell me the story of how you came to set up your blog?
- 2) Who or what inspired you?
- 3) Did you have a predetermined view of what your blogging identity would be?  
Can you tell me about this? How close was this to your offline identity?
- 4) How did you describe yourself? How has this evolved?
- 5) How did you design your blog to reveal this idea? How has this evolved?
- 6) How important do you see the visual design of your blog?

### **Section 2: Location**

- 7) Where were you based when you first created your blog?
- 8) How has location influenced your blogging identity?
- 9) Can you tell me about any challenges your location presents in terms of your blog?

### **Section 3: Current status**

- 10) How would you categorise your blog?
- 11) How regularly do you post?
- 12) Has the level of fashion featured on your blog changed at all? What has influenced this?
- 13) How much do you share about yourself as an individual? How has this evolved?
- 14) Do you talk much about others? How has this evolved?
- 15) To what extent does your North East of Scotland location feature in your blogging identity?
- 16) What are your current motivations for blogging/ to continue blogging?
- 17) How important is identity in fashion blogging?

- 18) To what extent are you conscious of your own blogging identity?
- 19) How deeply do you consider content before posting?
- 20) How do you feel your identity translates to other social media?

**Section 4: Engagement**

- 21) Where do your followers come from?
- 22) How do you engage with followers?
- 23) What are your expectations around followers on your blog and social media?
- 24) How many blogs (roughly) do you follow?
- 25) How would you describe your relationship with these bloggers?
- 26) To what extent are you able to relate to the bloggers you follow?

## **Appendix II: Interview script for main study**

### **Background**

Instagram name:

Length of time on Instagram:

Age:

Occupation:

Physical place:

### **Section 1: Self-definition**

- 1) How would you describe your national identity?
- 2) What do you consider your national identity to be? Please choose your answer from the following (Moreno, 1988):

Scottish not British	More Scottish than British	Equally Scottish and British	More British than Scottish
British not Scottish	Other description	Don't know	

*In Scotland, there is a common question which seems unique to this place: 'where do you belong?' This is neither a question about where you were born nor whence you have travelled, but also more than a question about your attachment to a place. It elicits your roots, your origins, reinforced by a sense of home (McCrone, 2017).*

- 3) Where do you belong?
- 4) How important is this to your sense of self?
- 5) How and why is your identity influenced by a physical place?

### **Section 2: Scottish identity**

- 6) How does Scotland feature in your national identity?
- 7) How important is Scotland in defining your national identity?
- 8) How has the degree to which you feel Scottish changed throughout your lifetime?
- 9) Can you give me an example of a time that you felt more or less Scottish?
- 10) What symbols/ characteristics do you associate with Scottishness?
- 11) What aspects of your own personal identity do you feel convey Scottishness?
- 12) What aspects of your appearance do you feel convey Scottishness?
- 13) What aspects of your style do you feel convey Scottishness?

### **Section 3: Instagram**

- 14) How do you communicate your Scottishness online?
- 16) Can you talk me through the images you selected?
- 17) How did you go about selecting these?
- 18) Why did you select these particular images?
- 19) How easy did you find this process?
- 20) Can you give me an example of an opportunity that you have received as a result of your Scottish associations on Instagram?
- 21) Can you give me an example of a challenge that you have faced as a Scottish/ Scotland-based influencer?
- 22) How do you feel your Instagram content is influenced by your Scottish identity?

### **Section 4: Community engagement**

- 23) Who do you choose to engage with on Instagram and why?
- 24) Do you use any of the following hashtags?  
#Scotstreetstyle #Scottishblogger(s); #Scotblogger(s); #Scottishfashion; #Scottishstyle;  
#Scottishdesign; #Scottishfashionblogger(s); #Scotlandfashion; #Fashionscotland;  
#Scottishlife; and #Scottishlifestyle
- 25) How do you use these?
- 26) Why do you use these?
- 27) To what extent is engagement in the Scottish fashion and style community on Instagram important to you?

### **Appendix III Interview request**

Dear {name}

I am a fashion lecturer and researcher at Robert Gordon University and carrying out research into Scottish style influencers as part of my PhD. I'm hoping to interview a small sample of style influencers who categorise themselves as Scottish and/ or Scotland-based in their profile in order to investigate why and how Scottish identity is adopted and communicated in a fashion and style context online.

I'd be delighted if you would be willing to take part in the study and would just require two hours (maximum!) of your time for an interview as well as a selection of posts that you feel communicate your identity as a Scottish fashion and style influencer. Your identity will be confidential and no personal information will be revealed in the study. All responses will be recorded and reported using a pseudonym and any images or posts that are shown will not include your name or profile information.

Please let me know, by way of reply to this message, if you are interested in taking part. Your input is very much appreciated and I'd like to thank you in advance for taking the time to read this.

Kind Regards,

Madeleine Marcella-Hood

## Appendix IV Informed consent for use of images and interview data

**Informed Consent** for use of interview data and self-selected Instagram posts in PhD thesis entitled *Scottish style: the construction of Scottish identity amongst fashion and style influencers on Instagram* and subsequent publications

**Please put a cross in the appropriate boxes**

I understand that although a pseudonym has been used, and therefore my name and Instagram username are not revealed, it might still be possible that I could be recognised in the thesis due to the visual nature of the posts

I give permission for the information (interview data, quotations and Instagram posts) I provided to be used for research purposes as detailed below:

- PhD thesis entitled *Scottish style: the construction of Scottish identity amongst fashion and style influencers on Instagram*
- Subsequent research papers/ output (these could include books, academic journal articles and conference papers)

I give permission for the interview data, quotations and Instagram posts that I provided to be deposited in RGU Open Air (RGU's open access repository) so it can be used for future research and learning.

If there are any quotations that you would prefer not to be associated with your pseudonym please indicate below:

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Signature of participant**

Signature:

Date:

**Signature of researcher**

Signature: Madeleine Marcella-Hood

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018

## Appendix V Email requesting informed consent

Hi {name of participant}

Thank you again for consenting to take part in my PhD research entitled *Scottish style: the construction of Scottish identity amongst fashion and style influencers on Instagram*. I'm delighted to let you know that I have passed with only minor amendments. My examiners really enjoyed the work and felt it was a valuable contribution to the field of fashion studies.

In order for me to share my PhD thesis with you and for this to be made available to my other participants and future researchers, I require a more formal letter of consent. As per our original agreement I have not used your name or Instagram username at any point in the thesis. A pseudonym is used throughout for each participant to report the findings of the study. However, due to the visual nature of the posts you provided and the use of quotes from our interview, there is a possibility that you could be recognised and so I want to make sure that you are ok with this.

Please find attached a word document containing all your quotations and imagery that are used within the PhD thesis and that might therefore be used for subsequent research publications. I also attach a consent form, which I would be very grateful if you could complete and sign; an electronic signature by way of reply to this email will be perfect.

Hopefully this is ok but if there are any quotations that you would like me to disassociate with your pseudonym then please can you copy and paste these into the box in the attached form. If you have any questions at all or if anything is unclear then please feel free to ask. I've also attached the abstract to my PhD for your interest and look forward to sharing the final piece of work with you soon.

Thank you very much for all your help and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

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