
The metonymy of #BlackTwitter: The effect of urban identification on hashtag activism

Received: 12th October, 2018



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Abstract 'Black Twitter' is the moniker for the cultural identity of African American Twitter users, the influence of which is spreading from mainstream Twitter to society-at-large. To investigate the influence of Black Twitter, this study posits a model of subcultural capital, conceptualising the knowledge, experience and skills that accompany hierarchy and influence within Black Twitter. Subcultural capital can be garnered in three ways: embodied, objectified and institutionalised. The study finds that the transcending, cross-cultural psychographic of urban identification is the requisite embodied capital that significantly predicts the number of tweets (objectified capital) within Black Twitter. The number of followers a Black Twitter user has (institutionalised capital) statistically mediates the relationship between urban identification and number of tweets. Contrary to intuitive belief, ethnic identity — as embodied capital — is a nonsignificant predictor of objectified and institutionalised capital within Black Twitter. This paper contributes to the marketing psychology literature by positing urban identification within a model of multicultural social media consumption. It concludes that for multicultural marketing via Twitter, the combination of urban identification, followers and tweets, is a better basis for segmentation than race and ethnicity. The paper also discusses managerial implications and additional theoretical considerations.

KEYWORDS: social media, Twitter, Black Americans, race, hip-hop influence, social influence

INTRODUCTION

Black Americans represent 13 per cent of the corporeal US population yet comprise 27 per cent of users on the social networking service, Twitter.^{1,2} These Twitter users have adopted the moniker 'Black Twitter'³⁻⁸ to represent their distinct cultural identity.

African Americans are using Twitter as a counter-public to encourage dialogue about social and political events of interest to the Black community.⁹ The topics within Black Twitter are diverse, ranging from issues of overall race relations, Afrocentric jokes/memes and popular culture. For

instance, many Black Twitter users discoursed during the television shows, 'Scandal' and 'How to Get Away With Murder'.¹⁰⁻¹² Interest in entertainment and celebrities is a strong predictor of Twitter adoption and use among African Americans.^{13,14} Other topics discussed within Black Twitter are rooted in social justice.¹⁵ For example, Black Lives Matter, the activist organisation campaigning against law enforcement violence towards Blacks, began within Black Twitter and now has its own distinct online and offline identity.¹⁶

The influence of Black Twitter has grown significantly in recent years. For example, when the twitterati mobilised to protest a white juror from profiting from a tell-all book following the controversial Trayvon Martin murder trial,¹⁷ Black Twitter was credited with thwarting the juror's publishing agreement. Equally noteworthy, this virtual collective rallied to protest companies selling products created by celebrity chef, Paula Deen, after she was accused of racism.¹⁸ In the aftermath of the aforementioned and additional successful advocacy, Black Twitter's existence became a legitimised phenomenon. Respected mainstream media outlets such as *The Smithsonian*,¹⁹ *The Atlantic*,²⁰ *The Daily Beast*,²¹ *The Huffington Post*,²² *The Los Angeles Times*²³ and *The Washington Post*,²⁴ among others, have acknowledged the critical influence of this virtual cultural identity. As a result, 'Black Twitter' has come to mean more than simply Black individuals who over-index on Twitter use with discourse among themselves.

In this context, this paper investigates the persuasiveness of Black Twitter on mainstream Twitter and offline society. In other words, what behaviour and Twitter characteristics constitute the driving force behind Black Twitter's influence? Given Black Twitter's transcending nature, it is posited that the influencers within Black Twitter may have a cross-cultural psychographic known as *urban identity*.²⁵⁻³¹ Urban identification is rooted in the attitudes

of African Americans and Hispanics residing in major cities; however, this psychographic is not exclusively defined by geographic or racial boundaries as it is inclusive of Asian Americans, whites and others who may or may not live in metropolitan areas.³² This paper contributes to the marketing psychology literature by positing this influential mindset within a model of multicultural social media consumption.

TWITTER, SUBCULTURAL CAPITAL AND DEVIANCE

Since its launch in the mid-2000s, Twitter has become the real-time brand of social media because of the speed of its propagation of news, information, and messages.^{33,34} As a result of its popularity, Twitter has created and contributed a distinct terminology to our lexicon, most notably, tweets, followers and hashtags. Registered Twitter users share tweets (text messages up to 280 characters long) with their followers (Twitter users who elect to subscribe to another user's feed of tweets).^{35,36} Registered Twitter users can follow another user's tweet feed without permission or reciprocity. The hashtag is created using the pound or number symbol, '#', followed by a phrase or words to indicate the topic of the tweet (eg #BlackTwitter). Many Twitter users search for and follow a sequence of specific hashtags, referred to as trending topics.³⁷

Consumer culture theory studies the post-modern collective identities behind consumption, specifically, shared beliefs, meanings, mythologies, rituals, social practices and status systems.^{38,39} Based on Bourdieu,⁴⁰ Arthur and Sherman⁴¹ introduce the term *subcultural capital* to describe the knowledge, experience and skills that accompany hierarchy within a subculture. Subcultural capital can be garnered in three ways: embodied, objectified and institutionalised.

Embodied capital is demonstrated through the knowledge of traditions,

culture and ritual that reside within an individual. Explicitly, African American Vernacular English — colloquially defined as slang — and the presentation of content specific to the Black community are indicative of Black cultural competency.⁴² More specific to Black Twitter, the ritual of hashtag activism, taking a stand on either a benign (pop culture) or serious issue (race relations) by posting hashtagged content is the innate ability to curate culturally-nuanced hashtagged tweets around a theme and endorse the hashtag for other Twitter users.⁴³

Objectified capital is defined as the external demonstration of symbolic consumption — a Twitter user's visage and lingual persona (tweets). Tweeting content is a way for Twitter users to attract new followers.⁴⁴ When comparing Twitter users, the more active user may be perceived as having more recent information. Twitter users, who frequently tweet material, are presumably doing it because they have something to say and want others to pay attention.⁴⁵ Shared content creates the necessary criteria and structures for a successful online interaction to occur.⁴⁶ A cultural fusion develops through online sharing within a hierarchical group structure.⁴⁷ As a socially-constructed collective, Black Twitter would not be possible without the active participation of Black users sharing intimate cultural conversations among themselves.⁴⁸ Black Twitter users will examine the tweets, photos and other visual cues of a particular user, using such data as a heuristic for judging how trendy their information is and if it is worth following this specific user or retweeting — forwarding another user's tweets — content to their own followers.

Institutional capital is the value that is created through social networks. Kozinents⁴⁹ defines a virtual community of consumption as subgroups of digital communities that converge on consumer-related interests.

Social media platforms have been ubiquitously adopted and leveraged into a medium for mobilisation among users of diverse beliefs and interests.⁵⁰ Institutional capital is dependent on how much-objectified capital is expended to mobilise one's social network. In other words, those with many or important connections (followers) have manifested an abundance of institutional capital, which may result in an elevated status within Black Twitter.

Table 1 lists the number of tweets and followers of Twitter users who have curated or promoted hashtags, influencing mainstream trending topics within Black Twitter. From the visage of their Twitter profile and related pictures, it can be assumed — but not guaranteed — that they are all Black users or people of colour. If they are not Black, these users understand the cultural nuance and normalised etiquette of Black Twitter. These users have a sizable number of tweets (objectified capital), indicative of their activity on Twitter. These users also have a significant number of followers (institutionalised capital), which is a heuristic for their influence. The Twitter user @yusufyuie, who curated the hashtag, #ThanksgivingWithBlackFamilies, stated that he had a substantial Twitter following and within 4 hours, the hashtag he created became a trending topic.⁵¹

The body of uniqueness literature demonstrates that individuals innately desire to differentiate themselves from others.⁵²⁻⁵⁴ Deviance regulation theory suggests people maintain positive public and private self-concepts by choosing desirable ways and avoiding undesirable ways of deviating from social norms — leading to non-obvious predictions about the nature of social influence and the structure of informal social coercion within and across society.⁵⁵ Innovators, who deviate from social norms by infusing trends into mainstream culture, are ethnic minorities of negligible status.^{56,57}

Table 1: Tweets and followers of Black Twitter's influencers and their curated or promoted hashtags

Hashtag	Tweets	Followers
#ThanksgivingWithBlackFamilies (https://twitter.com/yusufyuie)	879,000	21,500
#JurorB37 (https://twitter.com/moreandagain)	522,000	15,000
#MemeHistory (https://twitter.com/TylerIAm)	498,000	60,200
#OscarsSoWhite (https://twitter.com/ReignOfApril)	452,000	135,000
#MigosSaid (https://twitter.com/pipe_tyson)	341,000	2,500
#BlackTwitter (https://twitter.com/drgoddess)	286,000	27,400
#SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen (https://twitter.com/Karnythia)	293,000	99,900
#PaulasBestDishes (https://twitter.com/brokeymcpoverty)	217,000	156,000
#BlackGirlMagic (https://twitter.com/thepbsg)	214,000	12,000
#IfTheyGunnedMeDown (https://twitter.com/CJLawrenceEsq)	157,000	6,554
#TrapCovers (https://twitter.com/VictorPopeJr) (https://twitter.com/NathanZed)	12,500 32,300	197,000 561,000
#BlackLivesMatter (https://twitter.com/opalayo) (https://twitter.com/aliciagarza) (https://twitter.com/OsopePatrisse)	15,100 14,500 7,215	41,900 69,600 49,400

Sharma⁵⁸ posits that working-class Blacks dominate the dialogue within Black Twitter, which can spill over to general trending topics on the microblogging platform. A commensurate trendsetting subculture that deviates from established norms and is linguistically-rooted in the African American experience is the hip-hop subculture and the related psychology of urban identification.

HIP-HOP SUBCULTURE AND URBAN IDENTIFICATION

Hip-hop culture — unique and distinct from African American culture — is

generally defined as the shared art, fashion, dance, music, experiences, attitude and language of anyone participating in or consuming at least one of hip-hop's four specific activities: graffiti art, break-dancing, deejaying and emceeing.⁵⁹⁻⁶¹ To generate excitement for the deejay, the emcee greeted the audience with verbal exchanges that developed into a stylised ritual, later referred to as rap.⁶²

Rap music, a form of conversational folklore, is known for its emphasis on lyrics. There is high-level synergy present between the speaker and his or her audience in an African American communication setting.⁶³ This back-and-

forth interaction between the audience and communicator is an art form that provides the audience with an opportunity to react favourably to the message while helping the communicator establish a rapport between himself or herself and the audience.⁶⁴ For example, call-and-response interactions at Black religious events are ubiquitous.⁶⁵ The Black Twitter user's tweet provides the cultural context of a hashtag — a *call* awaiting a *response*.⁶⁶ In turn, the hashtag begets a call-and-response to the initiator or sender of the tweet. As a result, the hashtag may become a trending topic. The phenomenon and perceptibility of early racialised hashtags associated with Black Twitter, eg, #AtABlackPersonFuneral and #OnlyInTheGhetto, connotes Black expression in the form of humour and social commentary and was integral to the early notion and discovery of Black Twitter.^{67,68}

Rap music often opposes mainstream convention, challenging societal norms while conveying the struggles, frustrations and joys of the African American experience.⁶⁹ What separates hip-hop from other music genres is that hip-hop gives a voice to those who have been disenfranchised and adapts to local socioeconomic and political concerns traditionally linked to empowerment and social justice.^{70,71} As a result, hip-hop has become increasingly associated with the aforementioned equity standard and has lost much of its original racial connotation.^{72,73} Presently, Hip-hop embodies the essential characteristics of cool: rebellious, glamorising the hustler and initiating trends in fashion, appearance and attitude (deviance),^{74,75} while maintaining its activist roots.

The Urban mindset, otherwise known as urban identification, embodies the influences of the diverse tastes, attitudes and lifestyles of hip-hop culture as well as inner-city life.^{76–82} For example, the website, www.vibe.com, skateboard

(skater) subculture, the Sean Jean clothing line and the X-Games can all trace their influences back to urban culture. An epitome of a post-modern segment,^{83,84} urban identifiers are anchored by a cultural trifecta of fashion, music sports and — to a lesser degree — health, business and entertainment, and are characterised as trendy and having edgy, iconoclastic attitudes.^{85–87} This segment takes multiculturalism as a given and sees the world in areas of cool — areas of unique Black aesthetic contributions to broader society — or uncool.^{88–90} While urban identification does transcend and is defined less by race and ethnicity, African Americans set the pace for this psychographic as well as overall popular culture.^{91,92} Specifically, Black people are seen as trendsetters to mainstream society regarding music, fashion and lifestyle.^{93–96}

Individuals with higher desires for uniqueness prefer greater differentiation from others on a more consistent basis. Individuals care more about being unique in domains that they find personally meaningful.⁹⁷ Those who actively affiliate with the attitudes and lifestyle of urban identification can be acknowledged as trendsetters. As a result, urban identification is conceptualised by two segments: leaders and followers. Leaders, composed of urban-identified individuals that most actively affiliate with hip-hop culture, are the tastemakers for establishing the tone for the greater urban-identified segment, but exert an impact on preferences, style and culture among the mainstream population.^{98–102} The followers, meanwhile, are those who are directly or indirectly influenced by the aforementioned urban-identified leaders; recognising, validating and adopting trends established by urban leaders.¹⁰³ Symbolic modeling^{104–06} explains the urban leader/follower dynamic through: *attention* (recognition of a leader's actions), *retention* (remembering the behaviour of leaders), *reproduction* (followers mimicking the actions of leaders) and *motivation* (reward

encouraging the behaviour to be replicated). Relative to Black Twitter, symbolic modelling is observed in terms of tweets, followers and retweets of information through Clark's¹⁰⁷ 'six-stage process of being Black Twitter': (1) self-selection into the Black Twitter community, (2) identification of Black social identity, (3) performance of Black identity (tweets and/or hashtags), (4) affirmation and (5) re-affirmation of cultural values and (6) vindication through social change.

URBAN IDENTIFICATION AS EMBODIED CAPITAL

With the aforementioned background and context established, Legaspi *et al.*¹⁰⁸ demonstrated that urban-identifiers actively post — rather than passively read — tweets. Similarly, Cabosky¹⁰⁹ explained that Black Twitter has a higher predisposition to share opinions, compared with mainstream Twitter. As Black Twitter is a counter-public to mainstream Twitter, the belief in counter-culturalism suggests that societal standards stymie individuality and inspiration, leading to widespread conformity — similar to the fringe, contrarian ideas shared by urban identifiers.^{110,111} This sentiment would suggest that urban identification is the necessary embodied capital to have crossover influence within and outside of Black Twitter. In other words, higher levels of urban identification (embodied capital) are posited to directly predict higher levels of tweets (objectified capital) within Black Twitter. As there is a relationship between tweeting and garnering followers, this link may be better explained through the number of followers (institutionalised capital) Black Twitter users have gained, through the expenditure of objectified capital (tweets). Formally:

H_{1a}: The higher the level of urban identification (embodied capital) within Black Twitter, the higher the number of tweets (objectified capital).

H_{1b}: The number of followers of Black Twitter users (institutionalised capital) will mediate the relationship between the level of urban identification (embodied capital) and the number of tweets (objectified capital) within Black Twitter.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AS EMBODIED CAPITAL

Tajfel¹¹² posits cultural identity as an individual's self-concept that comes from their knowledge of membership of a social group, in tandem with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Explicitly, one's ethnic identity is defined as: a feeling of belonging to one's ethnic group, a clear understanding of the meaning of one's ethnic membership, positive attitudes toward the ethnic group, familiarity with the ethnic group's history and culture, and involvement in the ethnic group's practices.¹¹³ As urban identity is not monolithic with respect to race and ethnicity, there will be different sentiments relative to racial and ethnic identity. Specifically, whites tend to have a lower level of ethnic identity while African Americans have the highest level.^{114,115} Additionally, racial identity is by and large a social construct impressed upon a racial group by other persons or entities.^{116,117} In other words, ethnic and racial identity, as embodied capital, may not be a meaningful predictor of objectified or institutionalised capital within Black Twitter. While there is a strong, prerequisite Black cultural identity within Black Twitter, a fervent racial identity may not be influential. Strong racial or ethnic identity may limit the appeal to other users as shared information and their network may reach a narrow ethnic or racial user base. Therefore, it is proffered that there is no relationship between the strength of one's ethnic identity, tweets and followers within Black Twitter. Given that urban identifiers are multicultural,¹¹⁸ social identity theory^{119–123} is a more

commensurate explanation of ethnic and racial identity for this study, compared with Nigrescence theory, which elucidates the stages African Americans go through in acquiring their Black identity.^{124,125}

Formally:

H₂: Ethnic identity (embodied capital) will be a nonsignificant predictor of tweets (objectified capital) and followers (institutionalised capital) within Black Twitter.

METHODS

Procedure

Previous studies — specifically Hargatti and Litt¹²⁶ — have surveyed participants in the physical environment via laboratory experiments about their Twitter use. For this research, it was essential to query Black Twitter within the virtual environment as it is the user's avatar¹²⁷ response that is desired and not the response of their physical self. Additionally, Black Twitter is not a defined entity. As such, this called for a new approach to sampling with methods taken from the electronic commerce and information systems literature.

An anonymous online survey, designed with the propensity to go viral and become a trending topic within Twitter, was tweeted with a call-to-participate to Black Twitter users, borrowing survey methodology used by Barnes and Böhringer¹²⁸ and Pentina *et al.*¹²⁹ A 'dummy' account was created on Twitter to promote a Qualtrics-based survey link, hashtagging #BlackTwitter, to encourage Black Twitter to participate in the survey. In preparation for this research, cultural entrée¹³⁰ was employed and demonstrated that #BlackTwitter is an extremely active hashtag with random users tweeting to it every few seconds to few minutes depending on what is trending in the real world. This activity provided a random sample to tweet the survey via

mentions, Twitter updates that contain a Twitter user's handle, eg, '@username', in the body of the tweet. The survey link was sent to users who hashtagged #BlackTwitter, mentioning that user in the tweet (eg @username #BlackTwitter: https://qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9n6D9pDxNxmKERL). Every mention also retweeted #BlackTwitter, thus, socialising the survey to those following the hashtag, making the survey a trending topic. Before completion of the survey, a tweet button at the end of the questionnaire, to retweet the survey, was incorporated to further promote the survey within Black Twitter.

As this was a viral survey, additional precautions were taken to preserve external validity. To ensure participants came only from twitter.com, the HTTP Referrer Verification option in Quatrics was selected. Additionally, to verify country of origin, the respondent's IP address was captured to estimate the location where the survey was completed. Overall, this viral variation of the snowball technique yielded $n = 106$ observations for further analysis. The sample size is within the range of the final usable sample size received by Barnes and Böhringer¹³¹ ($n = 131$) and Pentina *et al.*¹³² ($n = 84$), using the same methodology.

The sample was 50.9 per cent male, 90.7 per cent American (with other countries including Canada (1.9 per cent), UK (1.9 per cent), other European nations (2.8 per cent), Caribbean nations/US territories (0.9 per cent), South Africa (0.9 per cent) and other South American nations (0.9 per cent)); and 63.4 per cent Black or African American (with other races and ethnicities comprising white (13 per cent), Hispanic (7.5 per cent), Black biracial (5.7 per cent), biracial — non-Black parents from different racial or ethnic groups (3.8 per cent), Native American (0.9 per cent) and other race/ethnicity (5.7 per cent)). Respondents fell into three age rages: 18–29 years (33 per cent), 30–49 (55.7 per cent) and 50–64 years old (11.3 per cent).

Measures

Number of tweets and followers

Respondents in the survey were asked to record the actual number of tweets and followers from their Twitter profiles. The number of tweets is operationalised as objectified capital. The number of followers is operationalised as institutionalised capital. Toubia and Stephen¹³³ state that the distribution of social media characteristics is nearly a truncated power law, typical of social networks. As result, a base-10 log transformation was performed on the number of tweets and the number of followers — similar to Quercia *et al.*¹³⁴ — which provided a normal distribution of these continuous variables, suitable for subsequent analysis:

$$M_{\text{Log(Tweets)}} = 4.03, SD = 0.84; M_{\text{Log(Followers)}} = 2.80, SD = 0.66.$$

Urban identification scale

Measured on a seven-point scale, the 30-item psychometrically-tested urban identification¹³⁵ scale is operationalised as a measure of embodied capital. The 30 items in the urban identification scale had

a Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = 0.90$). Given this high level of consistency, all items were averaged together for a single continuous measure of urban identification: $M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.86$. Please see the appendix for a list of the items.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R)

Measured on a seven-point Likert scale, the MEIM-R¹³⁶ is an alternative measure of embodied capital to test H_2 . The items of the MEIM-R scale had a Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.89$). As a result, the six-item scale was averaged together for a single continuous measure of ethnic identity: $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.40$. See the appendix for a list of the items.

Direct and indirect effects of urban identification as embodied capital

As referenced in Figure 1, urban identification predicted log(followers) (a path: $b = 0.23$, standard error [SE] = 0.07, $p < 0.00$) and the log(tweets) (c path: $b = 0.28$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < 0.00$). Log(followers) also predicted the log(tweets) (b path: $b = 0.86$, $SE = 0.09$, $p < 0.000$). Gender (1 = male,

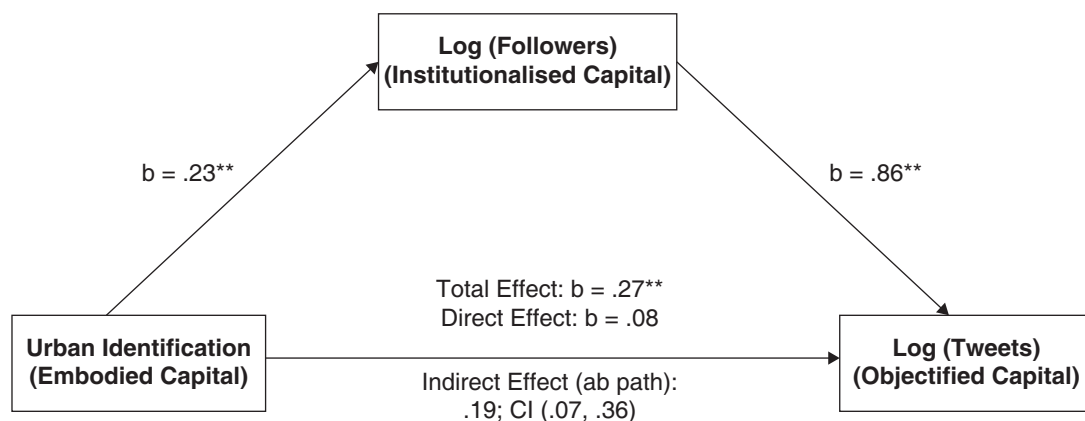


Figure 1: Mediation model of urban identification and Log(Tweets) through Log(Followers) within Black Twitter

Note: Path coefficients represent nonstandardised regression weights; $**p < 0.01$.

Covariates: age and gender

Path a: $F(3, 102) = 4.35$, $p < 0.01$, $R^2 = 0.11$

Path b and c': $F(4, 101) = 27.04$, $p < 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.52$

Path c: $F(3, 102) = 3.42$, $p = .02$, $R^2 = 0.09$

0 = female) and Age (1 = 18–29, 2 = 30–49, and 3 = 50–64) are covariates in this analysis to eliminate the spurious effect of these variables (see appendix for a correlation table of all variables). Hayes Process: Model 4¹³⁷ procedure and corresponding SPSS macro were employed to test for an indirect effect of urban identification on log(tweets). A 1,000 bootstrap resample revealed an indirect effect of urban identification on log(tweets) ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.07 to 0.34). Because the CI did not include zero, this indicated that the effect of urban identification on the number of log(tweets) was statistically mediated by the number of log(followers). Furthermore, the effect of urban identification on log tweets became nonsignificant after log(followers) was entered in the model (c' path: $b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.29$). This pattern of findings confirmed that log(followers) mediated the effects of urban identification on log(tweets), supporting H_{1a} and H_{1b} .

Ethnic identity as embodied capital

To test for ethnic identity as embodied capital, the same analysis was duplicated with the MEIM-R as the independent variable in the model. The a path ($b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.46$), c path ($b = 0.17$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = 0.31$) and indirect effect ($b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI, -0.04 to 0.12) are all nonsignificant, ruling out ethnic identity as embodied capital, supporting H_2 .

DISCUSSION

Managerial implications

Segmentation provides guidelines for operationalising an organisation's marketing strategy and resources.¹³⁸ The results of this research call into question whether racial/ethnic segmentation is valid¹³⁹ for Twitter, Inc. The microblogging service does not query users about race or ethnicity but categorises users based

on their tweets and whom they follow.¹⁴⁰ Twitter usage by race and ethnicity is primarily reported by the Pew Research Center. While mostly representative of the Black diaspora (African American and Black biracial), Black Twitter is not solely Black, despite the appellation. Black Twitter users are white, Hispanic, Native American, biracial and other races and ethnicities, much like the diverse racial and ethnic makeup of urban identifiers. Black Twitter is also international, similar to urban identification.¹⁴¹ Multicultural marketing tactics using Twitter — specifically to target African Americans — encourage content sharing, using influencers with many Twitter followers.¹⁴² Therefore, leveraging urban identification in addition to followers and tweets provides a better basis for segmentation than race and ethnicity.

Limitations and theoretical implications

Even with the external validity controls in place, the virtual field study has limitations. The method of snowball sampling — concerning retweets — could have introduced selection bias in the data collection. Pure random sampling in subsequent research with Black Twitter is recommended to reduce the influence of such bias. Additionally, the sample size is a limitation. The viral variation of the snowball technique yielded 174 total responses. The minimum age for someone to open a Twitter, Inc. account is 13 years old. As Twitter users had to be 18 or older to participate in this study due to internal review board restrictions, a portion of the sample was excluded due to age restrictions. Additionally, screening for missing data multivariate outliers and variations of responses yielded $n = 106$ usable observations for further analysis.

The influence of the big five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism),

social and cognitive motivations, socioeconomics and coping mechanisms on Twitter behaviour was not investigated in this research (eg James¹⁴³). Quercia, *et al.*¹⁴⁴ found that both popular and influential users on Twitter are low in neuroticism, high in openness and high in conscientiousness. Hughes *et al.*¹⁴⁵ demonstrated that less sociable individuals, seeking cognitive stimulation, tend to use Twitter. However, more sociable users tend to be opinion leaders who tweet about diverse topics, have broader geographic connections and express positive and negative emotions in their tweets.¹⁴⁶ Additionally, the higher sentiment of a geographic community's tweets, the higher that community's socio-economic status.¹⁴⁷ Lastly, coping mechanisms (wishful thinking, social support, detachment and problem-focused) have been posited to predict one's preferred social media platform for venting.^{148–150} Specifically, Twitter use has been posited as a preferred platform for coping among wishful thinkers.¹⁵¹ As urban identifiers can be segmented along psychographic, geographic and demographic dimensions,¹⁵² it can be hypothesised and investigated that any of the big five personality traits, sociability, a need for cognition, socio-economics or coping mechanisms, may act as moderators within the posited Black Twitter subcultural capital model to better explain the direct effect of urban identification and the mediated effect of followers on tweets.

More recent Pew Center research shows 38 per cent of Blacks use Instagram, a photo and video-sharing social media platform.¹⁵³ Given the over-indexing consumption of Blacks on Instagram, does a 'Black Instagram' subculture à la Black Twitter exist? Urban identifiers actively post on Instagram.¹⁵⁴ Eponymously-named Black Twitter communities exist prominently in the online image-sharing community, Imgur, and the social media news aggregator, Reddit, which are less racially and ethnically diverse than Twitter, but are more congruent

with urban identifiers posited to be majority white.^{155–158} Institutional and objectified capital are valued differently in these social media platforms compared with Twitter. Further research into urban identification as embodied capital within these social media subcultures can further generalise the model of subcultural capital in multicultural virtual communities of consumption within the consumer culture theory literature.

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APPENDIX

Urban ID scale

To what extent does each of the following characteristics describe you? (Measured on seven-point scale where 1 = not at all, 4 = somewhat and 7 = very much.)

1. Multicultural
2. Have 'attitude'
3. Listen to rap music
4. Purchase rap music
5. Familiar with hip-hop slang
6. Familiar with hip-hop fashion
7. Influenced by hip-hop styles/culture
8. Spend money (vs saving)
9. Adventurous
10. Not happy with the status quo
11. Expressive
12. Individualist
13. Sexy
14. Cool
15. Appreciate hip-hop
16. Up-to-date/trendy
17. Had experience with life in a large city
18. Comfortable/familiar with African American culture
19. Flashy
20. Rhythmic
21. Young-hearted
22. Use/understand slang
23. Read or follow the *Source/Honey/Vibe/Savoy* magazines
24. Dance
25. Resourceful (can always make do)
26. Animated
27. Like flashy clothing
28. Like flashy car rims
29. Fashion leader
30. Trendsetter

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure – Revised (MEIM-R)

To what extent does each of the following characteristics describe you? (Measured on seven-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = neutral and 7 = strongly agree.)

1. I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions and customs.
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.
3. I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me.
4. I have often done things that will help me understand my ethnic background better.
5. I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my ethnic group.
6. I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.

Survey questions

Which of the following best describes your age?

1. Under 18
2. 18–29
3. 30–49
4. 50–64
5. 65+

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?

1. Asian, Asian American
2. Hispanic or Latino
3. White, Caucasian, not Hispanic
4. Native, American Indian
5. Biracial, mixed — parents are from two different racial/ethnic groups
6. Black or African American
7. Black biracial/mixed — one parent is Black and the other another race
8. Other race/ethnicity

What country is your country of residence?

1. USA
2. Canada
3. Jamaica
4. Other Caribbean nation/territory
5. United Kingdom
6. Other European nation
7. South Africa

8. Nigeria
9. Other African nation
10. South American nation
11. Asian/South Pacific nation
12. Australia/Oceania

What is your gender?

1. Female
2. Male

For the following three questions, please open or have access to your Twitter profile (open ended response)

- # of tweets (write in whole numbers, eg enter 125K as 125,000)
- # following (write in whole numbers, eg enter 10K as 10,000)
- # of followers (write in whole numbers, eg enter 200k as 200,000)

Table A1: Correlations for all variables used in mediation analysis

	Urban identification	Log(Tweets)	Log(Follow)	Ethnic identity	Age
Log(Tweets)	0.297**	–			
Log(Follow)	0.154	0.444**	–		
Ethnic identity	0.289**	0.077	0.113	–	
Age	–0.126	–0.220*	0.003	0.108	–
Gender	–0.017	–0.051	–0.200*	–0.228*	0.111
(0 = Female, 1 = Male)					

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.