How Social Media Influencers Impact Consumer

Collectives: An Embeddedness Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Research has documented the emergence of embedded entrepreneurs within consumer collectives. This phenomenon is increasingly prevalent as social media enables ordinary consumers to become social media influencers (SMIs), a distinct form of embedded entrepreneur. Whilst research has considered the implications of embeddedness for embedded entrepreneurs themselves, we lack insight into embedded entrepreneurship's impact on consumer collectives. To address this gap, we draw from a longitudinal, qualitative study of the YouTube beauty community, where SMIs are pervasive. Informed by interactionist role theory, we document the Polanyian 'double movement' prompted by the emergence of SMIs within the community. We demonstrate that the economy within the community was initially highly embedded, constrained by behavioural norms linked to established social roles. SMIs' attempts to disembed the economy created dysfunctional role dynamics that reduced the benefits of participation for non-entrepreneurial community members. This prompted a countermovement whereby SMIs and their followers attempted to re-embed SMIs' economic activity via role negotiation strategies. Our analysis sheds new light on the negative implications of embedded entrepreneurship for non-entrepreneurial members of consumer collectives, highlights the role of social media platforms in negotiations of embeddedness, and advances wider conversations surrounding the evolution of consumer collectives and the impact of SMIs.

Keywords: Embedded entrepreneurship, consumer collectives, social media influencers, embeddedness, double movement, interactionist role theory

Consumer research has documented the emergence of embedded entrepreneurs within consumer collectives – individuals who leverage their insider knowledge of, and relationships within, the collective to profit from its other members, typically by pursuing entrepreneurial ventures for which they are the primary target market (Boyaval and Herbert 2018; Martin and Schouten 2014). This phenomenon is becoming increasingly prevalent as social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enable ordinary consumers to rise to fame within online consumer collectives and capitalise on this fame by becoming 'social media influencers' (SMIs) (Abidin 2015), a distinct form of embedded entrepreneur. Whereas prior accounts of embedded entrepreneurship focus on the development of innovative products and services that address unmet needs within consumer collectives, SMIs' entrepreneurship typically involves turning their online followers – fellow members of the collectives in which they are embedded – into the target audience for marketing messages in exchange for compensation from brands (Campbell and Grimm 2019). SMIs have emerged within many consumer collectives and are more popular than traditional celebrities amongst younger generations (Droesch 2020). Consequently, the influencer economy is booming, growing from $1.7 billion in 2016 (Helmore 2021) to a projected $16 billion in 2022 (The Economist 2022).

Despite the increasing prevalence of this distinct category of embedded entrepreneur, we lack insight into the consequences of their emergence for the consumer collectives in which they are embedded. Indeed, whilst wider research on embedded entrepreneurship has shed light on the implications of their embeddedness for entrepreneurs themselves (Boyaval and Herbert 2018; Cova and Guercini 2016), we have limited knowledge of the impact of embedded entrepreneurship on consumer collectives. Since embeddedness can limit economic activity, embedded entrepreneurs may be tempted to disembed their entrepreneurial activity from constraining social norms within consumer collectives to maximise their financial gains, a phenomenon that theorists of embeddedness argue can have significant social implications (Polanyi 1944). However, despite acknowledgement that embedded

entrepreneurship can create tensions within consumer collectives (Kozinets et al. 2010; Scaraboto 2015), we lack insight into its implications for the experiences and participation of collectives' non-entrepreneurial members and for the structure and dynamics of consumer collectives. Given the importance of consumer collectives in consumers' lives (Arnould et al. 2021), it is important to advance our understanding of embedded entrepreneurship's social implications. We therefore ask: How does embedded entrepreneurship impact consumer collectives?

We argue that interactionist role theory can shed new light on the implications of embedded entrepreneurship for consumer collectives. From this perspective, shifts in the social roles performed by an individual within a collective – such as the adoption of new commercial roles by an embedded entrepreneur – will inevitably impact those in related counter roles, who may attempt to renegotiate roles within the collective (Biddle 1979). Applying an interactionist role theory lens to a longitudinal, qualitative study of the YouTube beauty community, we elucidate the Polanyian (1944) 'double movement' – a dual process of disembedding and re-embedding – that occurs as beauty vloggers (video bloggers) within this community become SMIs. We reveal that beauty vloggers' attempts to disembed by becoming SMIs can create dysfunctional role dynamics that reduce the benefits of community participation for their viewers, as non-entrepreneurial community members. This in turn sparks a countermovement as both viewers and vloggers attempt to re-embed the vlogger's economic activity by employing a range of role negotiation strategies. However, we demonstrate that the YouTube platform enables SMIs to suppress this countermovement, reducing the extent to which they are required to re-embed their commercial activity, provoking alternative role negotiation strategies with important implications for the community. Our study provides new insight into embedded entrepreneurs' impact on consumer collectives by revealing the pervasive impact of their role shifts and documenting previously overlooked negative implications for collectives' non-entrepreneurial members. Furthermore, we illuminate processes of embeddedness negotiation within consumer

collectives, highlighting the role of social media platforms in this process, and demonstrating how consumer collectives can evolve as a result of these dynamics. We also extend research on SMIs by elucidating the nature and implications of their embeddedness.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We begin by defining embeddedness and reviewing research on embedded entrepreneurship within consumer collectives, before presenting SMIs as a distinct form of embedded entrepreneur. We then introduce interactionist role theory as a lens that can enrich our understanding of SMIs' embeddedness and the implications of their entrepreneurship.

Embeddedness, Disembedding, and Re-Embedding

All economies are embedded; entangled in, and thus inseparable from, webs of social relations that shape and limit economic activity (Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1944). In other words, economic exchanges are not driven simply by gain-maximising self-interest, but also by a desire to form and maintain social relationships by abiding by prevailing social norms (Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1944; Varman and Costa 2008). Research has recognised that social norms may manifest as social roles that individuals perform in their relationships with others, with distinct, normative behavioural expectations that must be upheld to avoid tensions and conflict (Grayson 2007; Montgomery 1998). Thus, an embeddedness perspective refuses to treat humans as atomized participants in an anonymous market, instead focusing on how their social context influences economic behaviour (Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1944), an approach that aligns well with theories of consumer culture (Kjeldgaard 2017).

Not all economies are equally embedded (Polanyi 1944; Granovetter 1985). Granovetter (1985, 491) argues that *"networks of social relations penetrate irregularly and*

in differing degrees in different sectors of economic life". Polanyi (1944) famously contrasted highly embedded non-market economies with more disembedded market economies. In non-market economies, economic action is heavily shaped by prevailing social norms and is often dominated by redistribution and reciprocity. In such economies, individuals are largely driven by their obligations to others, whilst self-interested attempts at individual gain are highly frowned upon (Polanyi 1944). In contrast, exchanges in market economies are driven by self-interest and wealth acquisition, largely unencumbered by limiting social norms and obligations (Polanyi 1944). However, Polanyi (1944) argued that, in practice, a truly disembedded market economy cannot exist. Instead, embeddedness exists on a continuum between these two extremes, with economies exhibiting varying degrees of embeddedness (Polanyi 1944). Indeed, even contemporary capitalist economies are never truly disembedded, as evidenced in accounts of commercial friendships (Price and Arnould 1999), moral or gift economies (Debenedetti et al. 2014; Weinberger and Wallendorf 2012), and hybrid economies (Scaraboto 2015).

The level of embeddedness within a given social context is not fixed but subject to a process of ongoing negotiation (Polanyi 1944). Since embeddedness constrains economic activity, which must adhere to limiting social norms, profit-maximising market actors may attempt to 'disembed' the economy by severing relational ties or breaking social norms (Polanyi 1944). Such attempted disembedding can have important social consequences, disrupting established hierarchies, norms, and obligations, and removing social protections (Polanyi 1944; Webber 2017). It is for this reason that Polanyi (1944) argued that a truly disembedded market economy cannot exist; attempts to disembed always prompt a reactionary 'countermovement', whereby societies strive to protect themselves by 're-embedding' economic activity. This process is referred to by Polanyi (1944) as a 'double movement' – a constant back-and-forth between disembedding and re-embedding. Webber (2017) documents a contemporary case of this double movement in his study of English football; initially embedded in local, working-class communities, attempts to impose a

'market mentality' through increasing professionalisation, commercialisation, and marketisation ultimately disembedded football clubs from the communities from which they arose. This sparked a countermovement as dissatisfied football fans formed the consumer collective 'Against Modern Football' to pursue re-embedding attempts. Webber's (2017) study demonstrates that Polanyi's (1944) double movement concept, initially intended to account for societal-level negotiations of embeddedness, can provide valuable insight into the negotiation of embeddedness within consumer collectives. However, we lack insight into the capacity for, and implications of, disembedding attempts performed by embedded entrepreneurs.

Consumer Collectives and Embedded Entrepreneurship

Arnould et al. (2021, 415) define consumer collectives as "*networks of social relations that arise around consumer goods, brands, other kinds of commercial symbols, and digital platforms".* Consumer research has studied a range of consumer collectives, from subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) and consumer tribes (Cova et al. 2007), to brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) and brand publics (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016), each with distinct qualities that have been extensively discussed and contrasted (Arnould et al. 2021). It is widely acknowledged that some members of consumer collectives become 'embedded entrepreneurs', attempting to profit from other members of the collective (Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto 2015; Boyaval and Herbert 2018). Embedded entrepreneurs initially engage with the collective as an ordinary consumer, without a commercial agenda. However, in accumulating insider knowledge of the collective, they later identify gaps in current market offerings that present entrepreneurial opportunities (Cova and Guercini 2018; Boyaval and Herbert 2018). Whilst these individuals have been variously labelled 'tribal' (Goulding and Saren 2007), 'liquid' (Biraghi et al. 2018), and 'communal' (Boyaval and Herbert 2018) entrepreneurs, we adopt the term 'embedded

entrepreneur' (Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto 2015), since it is not tied to any single form of consumer collective and neatly captures these individuals' embeddedness as a result of their membership of, and relationships within, a collective.

Prior research provides insights into the implications of embeddedness for the embedded entrepreneur's commercial ventures, revealing that consumer collectives can be both supportive and critical. Other members of the collective can encourage and support entrepreneurial efforts by crowdfunding projects, testing prototypes, offering suggestions for product improvement, and promoting the project within their online and offline networks (Cova and Guercini 2016; Boyaval and Herbert 2018). However, they may respond negatively when the project does not align with the collective's philosophy or values (Boyaval and Herbert 2018) or when the embedded entrepreneur prioritises their own commercial interests over the interests of the collective (Scaraboto 2015). Thus, in line with wider theories of embeddedness (Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1944), embedded entrepreneurs' economic activity is limited by the collective's social norms. Embedded entrepreneurs may therefore encourage favourable responses by employing gift-giving narratives (Scaraboto 2015) or involve collective members in product development to foster co-operation and support (Boyaval and Herbert 2018).

Whilst research has explored the implications of their embeddedness for embedded entrepreneurs' commercial ventures, embedded entrepreneurship's impact on the experiences and participation of the collective's non-entrepreneurial members has received less attention. Furthermore, we lack insight into the ways in which a consumer collective may change as a result of embedded entrepreneurship, particularly where it occurs on a large scale or is widespread. Beyond recognition that some members of consumer collectives are resistant to embedded entrepreneurship (Scaraboto 2015), its wider social implications for the collective have been largely overlooked. Brinks and Ibert (2015) note that members may leave a collective when they feel that embedded entrepreneurship alters its dynamics. However, the authors focus on the perspectives of entrepreneurial rather than non-entrepreneurial members

of the collective and therefore do not explore these individuals' motivations for leaving or identify alternative responses to embedded entrepreneurship. Thus, despite growing research into embedded entrepreneurship within consumer collectives, we lack insight into its wider social implications. Yet, profit-maximising embedded entrepreneurs may be tempted to disembed economic activity from constraining social norms, which may present significant implications for the collectives in which they are embedded (Polanyi 1944). This gap becomes increasingly salient as SMIs emerge as a prevalent form of embedded entrepreneur.

Social Media Influencers as Embedded Entrepreneurs

Social media platforms create a 'megaphone effect' (McQuarrie et al. 2013) whereby ordinary consumers can attract large, geographically dispersed audiences through displays of field-specific taste and expertise (McQuarrie et al. 2013; Smith and Fischer 2021). Consumers may engage in microcelebrity practices – forms of online self-celebrification that seek to accelerate their rise to fame (Senft 2013) - such as self-branding, self-promotion, and intimate self-disclosure (Abidin 2015; Marwick and boyd 2011; Senft 2013). Whilst few consumers successfully attract and sustain large online followings (Marwick 2017; Smith and Fischer 2021), those who do can become celebrities in their own right. Whilst the term 'microcelebrity' was initially coined to describe something one *does* (processes of online self-celebrification) rather than something one *is* (Senft 2008; Marwick and boyd 2011), some scholars use the term to refer to small-scale celebrities within niche online groups (see Marwick 2017). However, this usage is problematic since consumers can establish sizable online followings that rival those of traditional celebrities (Hou 2019). Consequently, we instead adopt the term 'social media celebrities', defined as celebrities whose "*fame is native to social media platforms*" (Hou 2019, 535). The defining characteristic of social media celebrities is not the scale of their fame but its origin - it does not predate their social media presence but stems from it.

Previous accounts of embedded entrepreneurship typically involve a product or service innovation informed by insider knowledge of the collective's needs (Boyaval and Herbert 2018; Martin and Schouten 2014). However, social media celebrities typically capitalise on their fame by becoming 'influencers' - *"individuals who post to their social media accounts in exchange for compensation"* (Campbell and Grimm 2019, 110), which may include either monetary fees or non-monetary incentives such as free products and services. Whilst traditional celebrity endorsement typically involves celebrities appearing in brand advertisements on paid media channels targeting a mass audience (e.g., TV and magazine advertisements) (McCracken 1989), influencers post incentivised brand endorsements on their own social media profiles, directly targeting their own followers (Campbell and Grimm 2019). Furthermore, influencers are not simply models, as is typical in celebrity endorsement (McCracken 1989), but are content producers who integrate marketing messages into their social media content in a way that will appeal to their followers (Campbell and Grimm 2019; Kozinets et al. 2010).

Traditional celebrities may also become influencers, using their social media presence to generate an additional revenue stream. For instance, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo and reality TV star Kylie Jenner are amongst the highest paid Instagram influencers (Sweney 2021). However, social media celebrities are a distinct form of influencer due to their embeddedness within the consumer collectives that they are targeting with marketing messages. Their origins as ordinary consumers and subsequent rise to fame within consumer collectives means that social media celebrities typically form strong relationships with other members of the collective through intimate disclosure and online interactions (e.g., 'liking' or replying to comments from their followers) (Abidin 2015; Berryman and Kavka 2017). Since they are seen as fellow members of the collective, they are bound to uphold its social norms (Cocker et al. 2021). Thus, social media celebrities are distinct from traditional celebrities because they are deeply entangled in webs of social relations within online consumer collectives, and this embeddedness shapes the collective's response to their commercial

activities as they become embedded entrepreneurs. In line with existing research, we therefore refer to social media celebrities who become influencers as 'social media influencers' (SMIs) (Abidin 2015) to differentiate them from other forms of celebrity influencer.

As in previous accounts of embedded entrepreneurship, SMIs' embeddedness within consumer collectives may both facilitate and constrain their commercial activity. The feelings of friendship that SMIs followers' experience can motivate them to support SMIs in their entrepreneurial ventures (Abidin 2015; Berryman and Kavka 2017), excuse their transgressions (Cocker et al. 2021), and defend them against criticism (Mardon et al. 2018). However, members of the collective may express scepticism and even hostility when SMIs are perceived to prioritise their own commercial interests over those of the collective (Cocker et al. 2021; Kozinets et al. 2010; Mardon et al. 2018). SMIs may attempt to manage these tensions by ensuring that brand endorsements align with their online identity narratives and organic content, as well as wider norms within the collective (Cocker et al. 2021; Kozinets et al. 2010), demonstrating passion and transparency in their entrepreneurial activities (Audrezet et al. 2020), engaging in emotional labour to shape the collective's emotional response, and removing negative comments to silence critiques (Mardon et al. 2018).

Whilst prior literature has highlighted the commercial implications of SMIs' embeddedness, we know surprisingly little about the implications of SMIs' embedded entrepreneurship for the broader collective. Despite acknowledgement that SMIs' embedded entrepreneurship can create tensions within consumer collectives (Kozinets et al. 2010; Mardon et al. 2018; Cocker et al. 2021), we lack insight into how such tensions are experienced by the collective's non-entrepreneurial members, how they attempt to resolve these tensions, and how the collective might evolve as a result. However, the need to understand the wider implications of embedded entrepreneurship becomes particularly salient in the context of SMIs due to the distinct nature of their entrepreneurship, their fame, and their prevalence.

First, whilst other accounts of embedded entrepreneurship document product or service innovations intended to offer value to the collective by enhancing its focal consumption activity (Martin and Schouten 2014), SMIs target their followers with incentivised marketing messages that can reduce others' enjoyment of their social media content (Cocker et al. 2021; Kozinets et al. 2010). Furthermore, whilst use or purchase of embedded entrepreneurs' products or services is typically optional, incentivised endorsements constitute an increasing portion of SMIs' content and disclosures are not always clear (Cocker et al. 2021), making it difficult for consumers to avoid them and increasing their likely impact on the wider collective.

Second, SMIs are deeply embedded due to their fame within the collective. The embedded entrepreneurs previously studied were typically ordinary members of the collective prior to their entrepreneurial ventures (Martin and Schouten 2014; Scaraboto 2015), and thus likely had pre-existing relationships with only a select few members of the wider collective. In contrast, SMIs have typically established intimate relationships with a large portion of the collective, who view them as friends (Abidin 2015; Berryman and Kavka 2017). Changes to these relationships as SMIs' fame grows and becomes commodified are therefore likely to have significant implications for the wider collective.

Finally, SMIs are typically highly prevalent within online consumer collectives. Whilst scholars have acknowledged that multiple embedded entrepreneurs can emerge within a consumer collective (Brinks and Ibert 2015), prior research tends to focus on either a single entrepreneurial venture or a small number of distinct entrepreneurial projects (Martin and Schouten 2014). In contrast, multiple members of a single online consumer collective typically become SMIs simultaneously and often engage in highly similar entrepreneurial activities (Cocker et al. 2021; Gannon and Prothero 2018; Mardon et al. 2018). Such widespread embedded entrepreneurship is likely to have significant implications for the collective.

Thus, SMIs present a distinct form of embedded entrepreneur that highlights the importance of understanding the implications of embedded entrepreneurship for the wider consumer collective. To better understand the nature of SMIs' embeddedness and the implications of their entrepreneurship, we draw from interactionist role theory.

Understanding Embeddedness through Interactionist Role Theory

Interactionist role theory is not a singular theory, but a set of inter-related perspectives and concepts underpinned by a focus on the performative, relational, and dynamic nature of social roles (Biddle 1986). From this perspective, actors occupy multiple social roles, each associated with distinct, normative behavioural expectations (Biddle 1986; Goffman 1959). Roles cannot be performed in isolation since an actor's role performance is interdependent with the behaviour of those in related 'counter roles' (Biddle 1979; Sluss et al. 2011). Consequently, roles are continually negotiated between those in the role and its counter role(/s), and dysfunctional role dynamics may emerge. For instance, the adoption of a social role may force others to take on related counter roles (Biddle 1979), a behaviour referred to as 'altercasting' (Weinstein and Deutschberger 1963), and actors may experience role captivity when altercast in an undesired role (Skaff and Pearlin 1992). Furthermore, role multiplicity - when an individual occupies multiple roles performed in relation to different but co-present audiences (Sieber 1974) - may lead to role conflict, where the behavioural expectations associated with these roles are contradictory (Ebbers and Wijnberg 2017; Van Sell et al. 1981). Actors may attempt to resolve such dysfunctional role dynamics by employing role negotiation strategies, such as redefining or clarifying their roles' associated behavioural expectations (Sluss et al. 2011), using repudiative tactics to distance themselves from undesired or problematic roles (Leary 1995; Goffman 1959), or communicating a role

salience hierarchy (i.e., clarifying which roles are considered most important) (Stryker 1968) to diffuse tensions.

Interactionist role theory can enrich our understanding of embedded entrepreneurship and its implications. From this perspective, embedded entrepreneurship occurs when an individual occupies existing social roles within a consumer collective, before subsequently performing additional commercial roles that altercast fellow members of the collective in commercial counter roles. Role theory has previously been used to understand embeddedness in the context of commercial friendships (Heide and Wathne 2006; Grayson 2007) but has not been leveraged in studies of embedded entrepreneurship within consumer collectives. Whilst prior research has acknowledged that consumers may occupy various roles within consumer collectives (Veloutsou and Black 2020; Fournier and Lee 2009; Leigh et al. 2006), and that they may simultaneously occupy multiple roles (Thomas et al. 2013; Martin and Schouten 2014), interactionist role theory enables us to advance this work by recognising and exploring roles' relationality – i.e., the way in which roles are defined in relation to, and negotiated with those performing, connected counter roles (Biddle 1979). This perspective enables us to recognise the dysfunctional role dynamics that can be created by the emergence of embedded entrepreneurs within consumer collectives and to explore how a collective's members may attempt to negotiate roles to resolve these dynamics. In doing so, this lens equips us to better understand the impact of embedded entrepreneurship on a collective's non-entrepreneurial members, and on the structure and dynamics of the wider collective. To do so, we draw from an immersive, qualitative study of SMIs within a beauty-focused community on YouTube.

METHOD

Research Context – The YouTube Beauty Community

The YouTube beauty community surrounds beauty-related video content uploaded to the platform by vloggers and watched by other members of the community (viewers). We refer to this consumer collective as a community since previous research has observed key markers of community in this context, such as consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Cocker et al. 2021; Gannon and Prothero 2018). However, as we shall discuss, we found that the community's characteristics evolved over time. Akin to other, previously documented, consumer collectives (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), the YouTube beauty community has a concentric social structure, consisting of hard-core, soft-core, and peripheral members. Hard-core members included vloggers and those viewers who regularly interacted with other community members by commenting on vloggers' videos or social media content or by attending offline community events. Soft-core members were passive viewers who rarely interacted with other community members directly but felt that they were part of the community. Peripheral members were viewers who watched vloggers' videos but did not interact with other community members or feel part of the community.

We selected the YouTube beauty community as our research context for several reasons. First, embedded entrepreneurship was widespread; many beauty vloggers had risen to fame within the community, attracting hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of subscribers to their YouTube channels. As a result of their fame within the YouTube beauty community, many beauty vloggers had become successful SMIs, earning tens of thousands of pounds for a single paid endorsement (Petter 2019). Second, beauty vloggers' embedded entrepreneurship had created significant tensions within the community (Cocker et al. 2021; Mardon et al. 2018), providing an ideal context in which to examine how non-entrepreneurial members of consumer collectives experience and respond to tensions surrounding embedded entrepreneurship. Finally, the research team were deeply immersed in the community prior to the study's commencement (having watched beauty vlogs regularly since 2012, 2010, and 2014 respectively), which sensitised us to the community's norms, terminology, history, and

evolving structure and enabled us to situate the emergence of embedded entrepreneurship

within the community's broader historical context.

Data Collection and Analysis

We conducted a longitudinal, qualitative study of the YouTube beauty community from 2016

to 2021, using netnography, ethnography, interviews, and archival research (table 1).

TABLE 1

OVERVIEW OF DATA SOURCES AND THEIR PURPOSE IN OUR STUDY

Method	Data sources	Purpose
Netnography	The YouTube channels of our focal beauty vloggers (video uploads and corresponding viewer comments), plus their blog and Instagram content (and corresponding comments). Observation of 2 online forums dedicated to discussing SMIs, focusing on threads pertaining to our focal beauty vloggers.	To trace shifts in vlogger/viewer roles and observe how community members experience and negotiate these role shifts. To capture the more critical viewer perspectives that are typically excluded from the vlogger's YouTube channel and other social media profiles via the platforms' content moderation tools, but persist on these forums.
Ethnography	Attendance at 6 YouTube conventions: Summer in the City London (2016, 2017, 2018); BeautyCon London (2016, 2017) and VidCon London (2019), captured via field notes, photographs, and videos.	To observe offline interactions between vloggers and viewers. To gain additional insight into the role of market actors (e.g., brands, marketers, management teams, platforms) in vlogger/viewer role shifts.
Depth interviews	18 depth interviews with viewers of our focal beauty vloggers' YouTube content.	To gain deeper insight into the impact of role shifts on viewers' experiences of, and participation in, the community. To capture the perspectives of a range of viewers, including the soft-core, peripheral, and lapsed community members that were typically inaccessible via other methods.
Archival research	25 podcast interviews with our focal beauty vloggers (published 2016-2021). 39 magazine and newspaper articles (e.g., *The Guardian, Cosmopolitan*) and 11 TV shows/ documentaries (e.g., BBC Three's *Rise of the Superstar Vloggers,* YouTube's *The Creators*) featuring our focal beauty vloggers (published/aired 2012-2021).	To capture the perspectives and experiences of beauty vloggers. To gain insight into vloggers' shifting roles in the collective, and how they negotiate these role shifts. To understand the broader media narratives within which vlogger–viewer interactions were situated and to account for the role of the media in vlogger-viewer role shifts.

Netnography. We employed nonparticipant netnographic observation (Kozinets 2020) to trace

shifts in vlogger/viewer roles as the community evolved. Defining a netnographic research

TABLE 2

FOCAL BEAUTY VLOGGERS

Vlogger Name(/s)	YouTube Channel Name*	Number of Subscribers**	Earliest Available YouTube Upload***
Zoe Sugg	Zoella	11 million	December 2009
Tanya Burr	Tanya Burr *(formerly Pixi2woo)*	3 million	October 2009
Patricia Bright	Patricia Bright *(formerly BritPopPrincess)*	3 million	July 2010
Louise Pentland	Louise Pentland *(formerly SprinkleOfGlitter)*	2.5 million	April 2010
Samantha & Nicola Chapman	Sam & Nic Chapman *(formerly Pixiwoo)*	2 million	November 2008
Samantha Maria	Samantha Maria *(formerly Beauty Crush)*	2 million	September 2009
Fleur Bell	Fleur DeForce	1.5 million	September 2009
Estée Lalonde	Estée Lalonde *(formerly EssieButton)*	1 million	April 2011
Victoria Magrath	Inthefrow	500,000	May 2013
Amelia Liana	Amelia Liana	500,000	May 2013
Lily Garnham	Lily Pebbles *(formerly WhatIHeartToday)*	500,000	January 2012
Anna Newton	The Anna Edit *(formerly ViviannaDoesMakeup)*	500,000	September 2010

* Vlogger's primary YouTube channel (some had multiple channels, in which case all were studied)
** To the nearest 500,000, as of October 2021
*** Earlier videos may have been deleted or hidden from public view by the vlogger

field by platform is increasingly problematic due to the fragmented and delocalised nature of many online consumer collectives (Weijo et al. 2014). Indeed, whilst vloggers' YouTube videos are the community's primary gathering space, members also interact outside of the YouTube platform, on vloggers' blogs and Instagram profiles, in discussion forums, and at offline events. Since the research field could not be defined by location, we instead defined its boundaries by selecting 13 focal beauty vloggers (who run 12 YouTube channels, since one channel is operated by a vlogging duo) around which to centre our netnography (table 2). We selected UK beauty vloggers that had achieved a notable level of celebrity within the community when the study commenced and whose presence as a vlogger within the community pre-dated the proliferation of influencer marketing activity within this space. We

selected only UK vloggers in recognition of location-based differences in regulations and social norms. However, we acknowledge that whilst many of our focal vloggers' viewers were UK based, others were spread across the globe.

We studied our focal vloggers' YouTube, blog, and Instagram content and corresponding comments, capturing data relevant to our study's research question. We accessed content dating from our focal vloggers' earliest available posts through to October 2021. Research has highlighted censorship within the YouTube beauty community, with vloggers deleting undesirable comments from their YouTube channels and other social media profiles (Mardon et al. 2018), obscuring more critical viewer perspectives. To capture a wider array of viewer perspectives, we therefore observed two popular discussion forums, each with over 200,000 members, where more critical viewers congregated to discuss vloggers. We read all forum threads posted prior to October 2021 that pertained to our focal vloggers.

Ethnography. We complemented our netnographic data with ethnography, gaining a more complete picture of the community by observing offline interactions between vloggers and their viewers at UK YouTube conventions Summer in the City (2016, 2017, 2018), BeautyCon London (2016, 2017), and VidCon London (2019), documenting our observations via fieldnotes, photographs and videos. Attending these conventions over several years enabled us to observe changing vlogger-viewer interactions, whilst attending panel discussions on 'creator days' targeting aspiring vloggers provided additional insights into the capacity for market actors such as management agencies, marketers, and social media platforms to influence role dynamics.

Depth interviews. Between 2018 and 2021 we conducted depth interviews with viewers, exploring their perceptions of our focal beauty vloggers and their broader experiences of the YouTube beauty community. Prospective interviewees completed a

screening form and participants were selected purposively to ensure variance in the duration and nature of community engagement, enabling us to capture the views of the soft-core, peripheral, and lapsed community members that were difficult to access via other methods. We also ensured that all interviewees regularly watched at least one of our focal beauty vloggers, enabling triangulation of data sources. Eighteen interviews were conducted in total, typically lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Eleven interviews were held face-to-face and seven were conducted via video call.

TABLE 3

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Pseudonym	Age*	Duration of Community Involvement*	Nature of Community Involvement*
Abigail	20	2010 - present	Peripheral (previously soft-core)
Lucy	32	2010 - present	Peripheral (previously hard-core)
Keira	31	2010 - present	Peripheral (previously hard-core)
Sophie	29	2011 - present	Soft-core
Freya	31	2011 - 2018	Lapsed (previously hard-core)
Bethan	31	2011 - present	Soft-core
Alice	33	2012 - present	Peripheral
Carys	32	2012 - 2017	Lapsed (previously soft-core)
Rhiannon	26	2012 - present	Soft-core (previously hard-core)
Hannah	23	2013 - present	Peripheral
Emily	31	2013 - present	Peripheral
Katy	20	2013 – present	Peripheral
Imogen	26	2014 - present	Peripheral
Olivia	23	2014 - present	Peripheral
Chloe	21	2015 - present	Peripheral
Charlotte	26	2016 - present	Soft-core
Lauren	22	2016 - present	Peripheral
Jessica	33	2017 - present	Soft-core

*At time of interview

Archival research. To further capture vloggers' perspectives, we analysed podcast interviews with our focal beauty vloggers as well as magazine and newspaper articles, TV shows, and documentaries featuring our focal beauty vloggers. This provided valuable

insights into vloggers' experiences of the role dynamics documented and enabled us to account for the influence of the mainstream media in vlogger-viewer role shifts.

Data analysis and interpretation. Consistent with prior research (Debenedetti et al. 2014; Giesler 2008), we followed Thompson's (1997) approach to hermeneutic analysis, iterating between intratextual analysis, intertextual analysis, and comparisons with extant literature. Our intratextual analysis sought to identify the behaviours, behavioural expectations, role negotiation strategies, experiences, and consumer collective characteristics evident in each piece of data (e.g., each video, comment, interview, or podcast episode). Our intertextual analysis sought to identify recurring patterns across the wider dataset. For instance, we identified groups of behavioural expectations that formed specific roles and explored how these roles related to one another and evolved over time, as well as relating these evolving role dynamics to reported experiences of community participation and the changing structure and dynamics of the community. In line with established techniques of hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997), we moved back-and-forth between emergent codes, our data, and extant literature, holding regular meetings to discuss our interpretations until we arrived at a final, holistic interpretation of our dataset.

FINDINGS

We begin by providing insight into the nature of vloggers' embeddedness by documenting their initial performance of social roles within the community, closely interwoven with counter roles performed by its other members. In doing so, we provide context for our subsequent discussion of vloggers' attempts to disembed by becoming SMIs, which involved enacting new, commercial roles that were inconsistent with behavioural expectations tied to their existing social roles within the community. We demonstrate that these new roles created dysfunctional role dynamics, reducing the benefits of participation for the community's non-

entrepreneurial members. We then document the resultant countermovement, whereby vloggers and viewers attempted to re-embed the SMI's economic activity via various role negotiation strategies, arriving at a level of role consensus that minimised dysfunctional role dynamics. However, we reveal that this role consensus was achieved in part via countermovement suppression, with vloggers actively censoring viewers' attempts to further re-embed, resulting in alternative role negotiation strategies with important implications for the community.

Embedding: Initial Social Roles

We found that vloggers and viewers became embedded in the community through the occupation of social roles performed in relation to other community members. Two role dyads initially characterised the community - Guru-Learner and Friend-Friend.

The Guru-Learner Role Dyad. Consistent with prior research (Gannon and Prothero 2018; Scholz 2021) we found that the YouTube beauty community initially took the form of a 'community of practice' (Wenger et al. 2002), with vloggers and viewers participating to share their passion for beauty consumption and to showcase and/or develop their beauty-related knowledge and skills. Initially, beauty vloggers' YouTube uploads consisted of detailed, and often critical, reviews of beauty products, as well as tutorials demonstrating their application, which viewers found instructive and educational, as illustrated by interviewee Rhiannon:

> *They basically taught me everything I knew about beauty* […] *I watched tonnes of YouTube videos. Learned how to blend my base, apply liquid eyeliner, the lot. There was a tutorial for pretty much everything. They* [beauty vloggers] *were really good at explaining things in a simple way, and I'd follow along at home.* (Viewer interview, Rhiannon)

Here our vloggers draw parallels with the gurus in Leigh et al.'s (2006) study of the MG subculture of consumption, acting as a mentor by sharing domain-specific knowledge

and skills with other members of the collective. Viewers also valued beauty vloggers' honest

product reviews, which enabled them to make better-informed consumption decisions:

I got so many great product recommendations from them in those days. They'd only recommend things that were genuinely good. And if something was shit, they wouldn't hold back, they'd be like, brutally honest. They warned me off so many crap products. They tried them so we didn't have to. […] They saved us all a lot of money. (Viewer interview, Lucy)

Here, we see that vloggers also acted as opinion leaders (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955), using

their category-specific knowledge to influence the opinions and purchase decisions of other

community members. Additionally, vloggers acted as "tastemakers" (McQuarrie et al. 2013,

147), engaging in displays of taste that viewers imitated in their own consumption:

I used to copy everything Zoe [Sugg, aka Zoella] *wore, her hair, her makeup. Looking back now it's a bit cringey! Zoe got balayage* [a hair colouring technique], *so I got balayage. Zoe wore a red lip, so I'd try a red lip. […] I learnt a lot of basic makeup skills from them* [beauty vloggers], *but I also used to watch them just for inspiration, to see what was trendy, see what looks I should try out next.* (Viewer interview, Bethan)

Thus, vloggers performed the role of 'Guru'. Whilst previous research has

acknowledged that community members may adopt a guru role by serving as a mentor for

others (Leigh et al. 2006), the Gurus in our study were not only expected to mentor their

viewers by sharing knowledge and transferring skills, but also to act as opinion leaders (Katz

and Lazarsfeld 1955) by providing unbiased, trustworthy product recommendations, and as

tastemakers (McQuarrie et al. 2013) who inspire the consumption choices of others.

Viewers adopted the counter role of Learner (Fournier and Lee 2009) in relation to

this Guru role, seeking to improve their knowledge and skills. Hard-core viewers adopted a

more active Learner role by requesting advice and recommendations from vloggers and

sharing their own knowledge with other viewers. For instance:

Viewer: *I have really oily skin & find my makeup is gone by the end of the day, any tips on keeping it on but without caking myself in powder???*

Sam Chapman (replying): *Maybe you could try using a primer, most of the cosmetic houses sell them now, if you find this still is not working, get an oil free moisturizer. Estee Lauder do a good one 'day wear oil free' or mac oil control lotion is good. Go into your nearest counter and ask for a sample before you buy it. Let me know how you get on.* (Comments on Sam and Nic Chapman's YouTube video, January 2009)

You used to have actual conversations in the comments back in the day. […] One time a girl was commenting saying she loved the Essie nail varnish in the video but it was out of stock everywhere, so I suggested a dupe [a communal term for a very similar beauty product] *[…] Another time I commented saying 'I wish I had hair like hers'* [the vlogger's] *and that I hated my curly hair, and people* [other viewers] *commented saying 'same!' and giving me suggestions for products […] In those days it did feel like we were all helping each other out, like a little community of beauty obsessed weirdos!* [laughs]. (Viewer interview, Freya)

In contrast, soft-core and peripheral viewers adopted a passive Learner role, watching videos for advice, recommendations, and inspiration, but refraining from posting comments.

In line with prior studies of embeddedness, this role dyad was grounded in trust (Varman and Costa 2008); both viewers and vloggers were expected to provide honest advice and recommendations to their fellow community members, and vloggers in particular were expected to exhibit unwavering honesty due to their trusted Guru position. The trust that underpinned this role dyad was deepened by the equally important Friend-Friend role dyad.

The Friend-Friend Role Dyad. Consistent with prior research (Scholz 2021), we found that despite inherent heterogeneity in community roles and status (with vloggers as content producing 'Gurus' and viewers as content consuming 'Learners'), viewers initially perceived a high level of homogeneity and unity between themselves and the vloggers they watched. Videos typically depicted vloggers sitting in their bedrooms, filming on inexpensive webcams or video cameras, and speaking directly to viewers in a chatty, personable manner. Consequently, viewers perceived vloggers as highly relatable. For instance, interview participant Abigail explained that she was drawn to vlogger Zoella's relatable content:

I thought she seemed quite normal […] they seem like just normal people, like your friends, not like celebs, although it's kind of changed now. But it felt like quite a small community back then. […] She was just in her bedroom, talking about products that were quite affordable, high-street stuff. (Viewer interview, Abigail)

In addition to their relatability, the Friend role was also enforced by vloggers' apparently intrinsic motivation for community participation. When our focal beauty vloggers began posting beauty content to YouTube (some as early as 2008) they received no financial reward

for their content. Beauty vloggers used their YouTube channels to connect with like-minded others and share their knowledge in a way that was helpful to other consumers:

> *I started YouTube because none of my friends were really into beauty that much and I just thought it was a great way to kind of chat about beauty to other people.* (Fleur De Force, YouTube video, March 2011)

> *We just enjoyed that process of actually helping people with things that you didn't have someone to teach you. You know, it was like having a makeup artist in your bedroom to say like this is what you do, this is how you do it.* (Nic Chapman, podcast interview, May 2017)

> *It was different back then, they were just ordinary girls who loved beauty, and they were sharing videos because they wanted to, because they liked talking about their favourite products. They weren't making money out of it, like they are these days, they were just posting because they wanted to.* (Viewer interview, Carys)

Thus, in addition to appearing relatable, beauty vloggers exhibited the intrinsic motivation that is central to friendships (Grayson 2007; Price and Arnould 1999).

Beauty vloggers further reinforced perceptions of friendship by cultivating perceived intimacy amongst their viewers (Abidin 2015). Vloggers established 'reciprocal intimacies' (Abidin 2015) by routinely interacting with their viewers in the comments section of their videos, responding to viewers' video requests and producing 'Q&A' videos answering viewers' questions. Vloggers also established 'interactive intimacies' (Abidin 2015) by interacting with viewers in offline settings, such as small, informal 'meet and greets' in shopping centres and parks. Finally, vloggers cultivated 'disclosive intimacies' (Abidin 2015) with their viewers, sharing their personal struggles and key moments in their personal lives. In cultivating these intimacies, vloggers enforced viewers' perceptions of them as friends:

> *She just felt like a friend, you know? Like, I watched her wedding video, I know her Mum's name, her husband's name, her dogs' names, I know her favourite foods. I've seen every room of her house. It sounds crazy, but I probably knew more about her than I did about some of my friends.* (Viewer interview, Lucy)

Thus, beauty vloggers came to be perceived by viewers not only as fellow community members, but as 'Friends'. The Friend role enacted by our focal beauty vloggers was characterised by the intimacy and intrinsic orientation that mirrors accounts of the friend role adopted in commercial friendships (Grayson 2007; Price and Arnould 1999), but also included additional expectations of relatability. This Friend role enhanced the Guru role by

increasing viewers' trust in their advice and recommendations, since the vlogger was seen as a Friend with their viewers' best interests at heart.

In return for this performed relatability and intimacy, viewers were expected to act as supportive Friends and were praised by vloggers for behaviours such as subscribing to their YouTube channel, watching and 'liking' their videos, and posting positive video comments:

> *I just want to thank all of you so much for watching my videos, for all the lovely comments I've received over the last two years and for all your support. I just absolutely love making videos for you guys because there's nothing more exciting to me than when it's time to upload a video and then I read all your comments coming in, so on that first day I just sit there reading all your comments, replying to you and it just makes my day, it really does ... I love you guys.* (Tanya Burr, YouTube video, Oct 2011)

It is worth noting that whilst hard-core and soft-core viewers came to see vloggers as friends, despite soft-core members rarely interacting with the vlogger directly, peripheral members of the collective did not, typically remaining solely in a Learner role.

Thus, both vloggers and viewers were embedded within the wider collective due to their occupation of established social roles with distinct behavioural expectations. Whilst an economy existed within the community at this point – for instance, knowledge and performed intimacy were exchanged for attention and status within the community – it was a highly embedded economy (Polanyi 1944), governed by the behavioural norms associated with the role dyads documented above. This embeddedness had important implications as vloggers attempted to disembed by pursuing commercial roles that did not adhere to these norms.

Disembedding: Emergent Commercial Roles and Dysfunctional Role Dynamics

Whilst the initial Guru-Learner and Friend-Friend role dyads structured early interactions within the community, two additional role dyads - Influencer-Target Audience and Celebrity-Fan - later emerged. These new, commercial roles represented an attempt by vloggers, and other market actors that encouraged and facilitated the emergence of these roles, to disembed the economy from communal norms to more effectively profit from their trusted position

within the community. Consequently, what was once an economy characterised by a reciprocal exchange of resources such as knowledge, intimacy, support, and praise, governed by norms tied to established social roles, became increasingly disembedded as vloggers exhibited the self-interested profit motive that characterises a more disembedded economy (Polanyi 1944). This attempted disembedding represents the first phase of Polanyi's (1944) double movement, which he argues has negative social consequences, a claim supported by our findings. Since these commercial role dyads contradicted the behavioural expectations associated with existing social roles within the community, they created dysfunctional role dynamics, and we shall conclude this section by documenting viewers' experiences of role conflict and role captivity.

The Influencer-Target Audience Role Dyad. Over time the YouTube beauty community was 'co-opted' (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007) by marketers wishing to capitalise on vloggers' trusted Guru role within the community by incentivising them to promote products and services to their viewers. Brands initially sent vloggers free products and invited them to press events in the hope of generating coverage, whilst vloggers used affiliate links to earn a commission from retailers when their viewers purchased recommended products. As beauty vloggers' fame and influence within the community grew, brands also began to utilise them in their marketing via paid advertisements, over which they had a level of creative control, and for which they were willing to pay increasingly substantial fees. Between 2010 and 2014, our focal beauty vloggers were signed by talent management agencies who connected them with potential advertisers and negotiated endorsement deals. Consequently, paid endorsements became more commonplace and increasingly lucrative. Vlogger Zoella, for instance, signed to talent management agency Gleam Futures in 2013 and was reported to be earning upwards of £50,000 per month from her online presence by 2014 (Oppenheim 2016). She is now reported to charge upwards of £12,000 for a single Instagram post featuring a brand (Petter 2019). In receiving compensation from brands in return for

promoting their products to their viewers, vloggers adopted the role of Influencer. Akin to the bloggers acting as 'marketing agents' in Kozinets et al.'s (2010) study, marketing teams expected vloggers acting as Influencers to promote products to their viewers, portraying them in a favourable light.

In adopting this Influencer role, vloggers altercast their viewers in the role of Target Audience; they were expected to watch and engage with the Influencer's advertising content, and indeed the financial viability of the Influencer role was dependent on them doing so. As the Influencer role grew in prominence, many vloggers left their jobs to become full-time Influencers and thus became dependent on their viewers' performance of the Target Audience role for income. Thus, resource dependence (Thomas et al. 2013) in the collective changed due to the emergence of the Influencer role; whilst vloggers were initially intrinsically motivated by a passion for beauty consumption and a desire to connect with and help other like-minded consumers, the emergent Influencer role added an additional, financial motivation for community participation. Indeed, in stark contrast to the initial social roles adopted within this consumer collective, the Influencer role involved the self-interested wealth acquisition associated with highly disembedded economies (Polanyi 1944). The mainstream media reported on vloggers' commercial success (e.g., '*Meet the world's highest earning beauty influencers*', Vogue, June 2017), highlighting the presence of the Influencer and Target Audience roles to viewers and the broader public. The Influencer-Target Audience role dyad shaped the emergence of another, closely related role dyad; that of Celebrity and Fan.

The Celebrity-Fan Role Dyad. As the YouTube beauty community grew, we observed the emergence of a Celebrity-Fan role dyad. Initial vlogger celebrification was largely performed by community members themselves - both vloggers and viewers. Beauty vloggers performed the microcelebrity practices of self-promotion (Senft 2013; Marwick 2015) and

FIGURE 1

ILLUSTRATION OF THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF BEAUTY VLOGGERS' VIDEO CONTENT

Zoella

| 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 |

June Favourites — February Favourites | Zoella — August Favourites | Zoella — September Favourites 2017 | Zoella

The Anna Edit (formerly Vivianna Does Makeup)

| 2011 | 2013 | 2015 | 2017 |
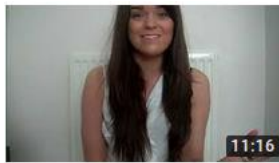
April Favourites | ViviannaDoesMakeup — February Favourites | ViviannaDoesMakeup — March Favourites | ViviannaDoesMakeup — April Favourites: Beauty, Bullet Journals & Boots | The

self-branding (Khamis et al. 2017), encouraging viewers to 'like' and 'share' their videos and 'subscribe' to their YouTube channels, creating logos and attractive 'video thumbnails' (preview images, see figure 1), and adding opening title sequences to their videos. They also began using increasingly advanced filming equipment (e.g., expensive cameras, professional microphones, lighting equipment) and creating designated 'filming spaces' with artfully designed backgrounds, giving their videos a more professional and uniform finish. One of the primary motivations for this increased professionalisation by vloggers was financial gain; aside from attracting larger audiences and thus higher potential advertising revenue, more professionally produced content was attractive to potential advertisers, thus complementing the Influencer role. In turn, some viewers altercast vloggers in this new Celebrity role by performing the role of Fan, posting adoring comments on vloggers' videos, setting up fan social media accounts, sending both digital and physical fan mail, and even congregating outside vloggers' homes in the hope of meeting them:

Thank you SO much for mentioning me and my gift! […] You are one of my idols and have one of the kindest hearts! I adore you and everything you do and hope to aspire to be half the amazing person you are! (Viewer comment on Tanya Burr's video, March 2014)

The relationship between YouTubers and viewers is changing and how much more excited people are becoming and how there's this celebrity culture around it […] sometimes I feel like it would be nice to have a bit more privacy, I do have some viewers that know where I live and stand outside. (Zoella, The Creators Documentary Film, March 2015)

Thus, as vloggers' audiences grew, vloggers and some viewers began to perform Celebrity and Fan behaviours. Not all viewers were keen to adopt the Fan role, as we shall discuss below, however this role was actively embraced by a vocal subset of hard-core viewers.

The Celebrity-Fan role dyad was reinforced at offline community events. Earlier events were smaller and more egalitarian, with vloggers and viewers informally mixing. However, as attendance grew, they became increasingly formalised. At the conventions we attended between 2016 and 2019, vloggers spent most of their time in backstage, 'VIP' areas, emerging only for on-stage panel appearances in front of large audiences of viewers (figure 2), or for formal, ticketed 'meet-and greets' with viewers (figure 3). Thus, as the community grew, the divide between vloggers and viewers became more pronounced at offline events, perpetuating the roles of Fan and Celebrity.

FIGURE 2

VLOGGER PANEL FEATURING FLEUR DE FORCE (FAR LEFT) AND SAM AND NIC CHAPMAN (CENTRE), BEAUTYCON LONDON 2016.

FIGURE 3

QUEUES FOR VLOGGER 'MEET AND GREETS', SUMMER IN THE CITY 2017.

Other market actors also played a role in the celebrification of vloggers. Vloggers' talent management agencies attempted to amplify their fame (and thus maximise their profitability) by guiding their content creation strategies and microcelebrity practices, as well as securing mainstream media coverage that enforced their Celebrity role (e.g., '*Zoella, Tanya Burr and the UK's YouTube superstars*', Telegraph, August 2014). Vloggers began to appear on national TV and on the covers of leading magazines; for instance, in 2015 Zoella was a celebrity contestant on hit TV programme *The Great British Bake Off*, whilst Tanya Burr graced the cover of British *Glamour* magazine in the same year. Talent management agencies also encouraged vloggers to outsource content planning, filming, and editing to maximise their productivity, further contributing to the professionalisation discussed above and framing vloggers as the 'stars' of larger, increasingly outsourced productions.

During this time there was also a noticeable change in the focus of vloggers' video content, which shifted from beauty consumption to vloggers' everyday lives. Documentary style 'daily vlogs' became an increasingly prominent video format, whilst many beauty vloggers rebranded themselves as 'lifestyle vloggers', sometimes involving a change in their YouTube channel's name (e.g., ViviannaDoesMakeup became The Anna Edit, Beauty Crush became Samantha Maria). Vlogger Tanya Burr described this shift in a newspaper interview:

> *It started as strictly beauty because that was all I knew. I didn't think people would want to watch stuff about my life. But as I started getting more viewers and got to know them, I realised they were just interested in me and what I was up to. I found I was passionate about sharing everyday stuff and people could relate to it. So now that's mainly what I film.* (Tanya Burr interview in The Guardian, April 2015)

Thus, as some viewers adopted a Fan role, expressing an eagerness to know more about their idols, vloggers adjusted their content accordingly. This shift supported the Influencer role by enabling vloggers to accept a wider array of commercial opportunities, engaging in paid endorsements for products and services that would not have aligned with their original focus on beauty (e.g., hotels, cars, supermarkets). In other words, the Celebrity role supported the self-interested profit-maximisation central to disembedded economies (Polanyi 1941). This role shift had important implications for the YouTube beauty community. Whilst it initially

took the form of a 'community of practice' (Wenger et al. 2002) with a focus on beauty consumption, the emergence of the Fan-Celebrity role dyad altered the structure and dynamics of the community, which came to resemble multiple brand communities surrounding vloggers as celebrity brands. Furthermore, whereas viewer-to-viewer interactions were a key element of the community when it resembled a community of practice, these interactions became increasingly rare. Instead, fan-like viewer-to-vlogger interactions (e.g., adoring comments) became the main form of interaction and often remained unreciprocated by vloggers. Thus, the emergent brand communities resembled 'hubs' (Fournier and Lee 2009), whereby individuals *"have strong connections to a central figure and weaker associations with one another"*.

The emergence of the Celebrity-Fan and Influencer-Target Audience role dyads produced dysfunctional role dynamics in the form of role conflict and role captivity. These dysfunctional role dynamics were experienced most deeply by long-term community members, who were most committed to the role dyads of Guru-Learner and Friend-Friend as performed prior to vloggers' embedded entrepreneurship. In contrast, those who entered the community following the emergence of the newer, commercial role dyads did not experience the community, and its initial social roles, in their earlier forms and thus did not experience dysfunctional role dynamics to the same degree. We first discuss role conflict, before turning our attention to role captivity.

Role Conflict. Role conflict occurs when an individual simultaneously occupies multiple roles with incompatible behavioural expectations (Ebbers and Wijnberg 2017; Van Sell et al. 1981). Vloggers' emergent Celebrity and Influencer roles produced role conflict as long-term viewers perceived them to negatively impact vloggers' ability to perform their established Guru and Friend roles. For example, the emergent Celebrity role's focus on the vlogger's everyday life impacted vloggers' ability to meet the expectations of the Guru role, with its emphasis on sharing beauty-related knowledge, recommendations, and inspiration:

I literally can't remember the last time Zoe [Zoella] *posted a proper sit-down makeup tutorial and actually talked about products in any detail. It's just like a documentary of her life now, and she'll maybe give a 5 second mention to a beauty product if she feels like it, but that's it. I mean, maybe that's what some people want these days, but I feel like… what about me? What about the people who came here for beauty content?* (Viewer interview, Freya)

Thus, viewers felt unable to fulfil their desired Learner role as vloggers' Guru roles were compromised. Conflict was also evident between the vlogger roles of Celebrity and Friend:

I hate to say this, but I've become less and less interested in YouTube as I've seen the community change. When I first started watching (back in like 2009) it was very community-based, and you felt like you were on the same level as the people you were watching […] Five years on and some of the channels I watched have completely blown up and I'm happy for their success but it's weird and uncomfortable for me. YouTube celebrities get treated more like actual celebrities. It feels less equal and a lot more "us & them". (Viewer comment on Louise Pentland's YouTube video, May 2014)

Thus, viewers felt that the hierarchical relationship of Celebrity and Fan was incompatible with the behavioural expectation of relatability associated with the earlier Friend role. The Celebrity role also challenged expectations of intimacy associated with the Friend role, with viewers expressing frustration at the involvement of vloggers' management teams and employees in the planning and production of their video content:

A lot of her videos have someone else filming now, and a lot of the time it's a faceless nameless voiceless person too. It's more like she's a "celebrity" or it's a reality TV show or a talk show. There's someone else there, so it's by default less personal. It feels incredibly contrived. Before she was talking to us through the camera, now she's speaking to a camera held by her appointed camera person. The whole "Look at me, I'm just like you!" doesn't really work anymore. […] I'm not really sure who she is anymore. (Viewer comment on Estée Lalonde's YouTube video, August 2015)

This viewer not only felt that the vlogger had become unrelatable, but also that they no longer intimately knew the vlogger. Thus, the new Celebrity role conflicted with the Friend role, leading many viewers to interpret vloggers' new Celebrity behaviours as transgressive.

Role conflict also emerged between the Influencer role and the more established roles of Guru and Friend. For instance, when vloggers produced paid brand endorsements, they were bound in direct financial agreements that granted the endorsed brand a level of creative control over their video content, conflicting with the established Guru role's behavioural expectations of unbiased, honest reviews and trustworthy product recommendations:

I feel like it's less trustworthy now. If they're being paid to promote a brand, you don't really know how entirely truthful they are being about the product. So, like, they could find the lipstick to be not good, it doesn't last long, but because they're getting paid to promote the brand, they can't exactly say it's bad. So, they're going to say 'yeah, it's really good, I really enjoy the product', and then it's quite false. So, I don't like that. (Viewer interview, Lauren)

It was not only paid endorsements that prompted viewers to doubt vloggers' trustworthiness. Viewers questioned whether vloggers could continue to perform the role of impartial and honest Guru when using affiliate links from which they earned a brand or retailer commission, attending lavish press events, or receiving free products or services from brands. For instance:

You are NEVER going to give a truly unbiased opinion on the products of a brand if they've just whipped you away on a luxury holiday! So I can't trust you, even if I wanted to. It's all a big shame. You all gained a following due to your relatability. Not one of you is relatable to me now... ☺ (Viewer comment on Patricia Bright's YouTube video, December 2018)

Here, the Influencer role not only contradicts the Guru role, but also the Friend role and its expectation of relatability. The Influencer role also contradicted the expectations of intrinsic motivation associated with vloggers' Friend role, causing viewers to doubt their intentions:

I just don't trust their intentions anymore. Like, do they actually still love uploading content, like they claim, or are they just in it for the money? Sometimes I feel like they just see us as their meal tickets. I don't know whether they really care about us anymore. […] I just don't feel the same connection to them now that it's all ads, ads, ads. (Viewer interview, Lucy)

Here, our findings draw parallels with prior literature on commercial friendships, which has observed that the behavioural expectations associated with the Friend role can conflict with expectations surrounding commercial roles (Price and Arnould 1999; Grayson 2007).

This role conflict eroded the Guru-Learner and Friend-Friend role dyads that initially attracted viewers, reducing the value they perceived in community participation:

I just felt like I wasn't really getting much out of it anymore. Like, I can't really trust their recommendations. Most of them barely even talk about beauty anymore. No-one really talks to each other in the comments. They [vloggers] just ignore your comments entirely. So, you just think to yourself 'why am I staying?' (Viewer interview, Carys)

Thus, the erosion of the original role dyads of Guru-Learner and Friend-Friend as a result of role conflict reduced the value many viewers perceived in community participation.

Role Captivity. Role captivity refers to scenarios where individuals are unwillingly placed in roles, typically due to altercasting (Skaff and Pearlin 1992; Weinstein and Deutschberger 1963). Many viewers, particularly long-term community members, experienced role captivity in the new roles of Fan and Target Audience, in which they felt they had been altercast by vloggers and, to some extent, by viewers who more readily enacted these roles.

> *Quite a few YouTubers talk about their viewers as if we're all incompetent screaming, obsessed little girls. Believe it or not, some of us are civilised beings who watch videos for entertainment purposes and are not obsessed.* (Viewer comment on Louise Pentland's YouTube video, May 2014)

> *I feel like people started to see us as dumb fan girls who worship their* [vloggers'] *every move and it's… it's just a bit embarrassing to be part of. I feel embarrassed and awkward, I don't want to be seen as an adoring fan, but it feels like that's the only option you have now if you want to be part of it* [the community]. *If you comment anything even slightly critical it will either be ignored completely, or you'll be jumped on by fan girls who call you a 'hater' for daring to criticize their idol, or they'll* [the vlogger will] *just delete your comment anyway.* […] *I feel frustrated because it's like… we made them who they are, we were there from the start, and now it's like if you're not willing to be an adoring fan 100% of the time you can get out, see ya!* (Viewer interview, Lucy)

Consistent with prior research (Mardon et al. 2018), we found that critical or undesirable comments were often deleted by vloggers and their management teams using YouTube's comment moderation tools or were policed by other viewers who more readily embraced the Fan role and jumped to the defense of the vlogger. Consequently, many viewers felt the only way they could participate in the collective's central gathering space of the YouTube comments section was if they unwillingly enacted the role of an adoring Fan. It was evident that increasing censorship and policing of viewers' comments by vloggers and other viewers contributed to viewers' feelings of role captivity.

Viewers not only experienced role captivity in relation to the Fan role but also in their role as the Target Audience for vloggers' advertisements. Many viewers described feeling "bombarded" by, and thus unable to avoid, vloggers' advertising content:

> *When we watch a commercial before the video starts, only to watch a video of an ad, and have a commercial in the middle of the video…it makes* [us] *turned off to watching the videos. I'm not being mean, I understand this is your job, but we as viewers don't always want to feel*

like consumers, we are bombarded with it every second of every day. Give us real life.
(Viewer comment on Samantha Maria's YouTube video, June 2017)

Viewers thus felt unable to avoid the Target Audience role due to the increasing prevalence

of advertising in vloggers' social media content. We observed viewers expressing frustration

at being unable to discern, prior to watching vloggers' YouTube content, whether the video

featured a paid-for advertisement and would therefore cast them in the role of Target

Audience. Viewers reported feeling "duped" or "tricked" into watching an advertisement,

contributing to feelings of role captivity. For example, a viewer commented on Fleur De

Force's YouTube video: "*I saw the thumbnail, read "my morning routine", and clicked. Now*

I'm watching an advert for Liz Earle. I feel like I've been tricked when people do that"

(December 2016). Viewers explained that feelings of being held captive in the Target

Audience role impacted their perceived role in the community:

> *It's frustrating because we* [viewers] *made them famous, and they've used their fame to fill*
> *YouTube with adverts, when what we originally liked about the community in the first place*
> *was that it was real, genuine opinions from real, genuine people. And we can't do anything*
> *about it. It feels like we either put up with the adverts and act like we don't mind, or... I*
> *mean, there is no 'or' really is there? The only options are put up with it or stop watching...*
> [shrugs] […] *I don't know whether I feel like part of the community anymore.* […] *I want to*
> *watch their videos, but I don't want to be constantly sold to.* (Viewer Interview, Keira)

Here we see that the sense of belonging provided by consumption community participation

(Schouten and McAlexander 1995) can be eroded by role captivity. Viewers frequently

expressed frustration at their captivity but felt powerless to escape these roles.

Thus, vloggers' attempts to disembed produced dysfunctional role dynamics in the

form of role conflict and role captivity, which reduced the benefits that many viewers gained

from community participation. Next, we explore community members' attempts to resolve

these dysfunctional role dynamics by re-embedding the economy.

Re-Embedding: Role Negotiation as a Countermovement

Polanyi (1944) argued that disembedding attempts are ultimately unsuccessful as they

produce negative societal implications that provoke a countermovement that attempts to re-

embed the economy, reinforcing existing social limits on economic action or introducing new limits. Consistent with this claim, we observed that dysfunctional role dynamics motivated a countermovement whereby vloggers and viewers collectively attempted to re-embed the economy by employing role negotiation strategies. Whilst prior research emphasises how SMIs, and other forms of embedded entrepreneur, attempt to resolve tensions surrounding their entrepreneurial ventures (Audrezet et al. 2020; Boyaval and Herbert 2018; Kozinets et al. 2010; Scaraboto 2015), role theory posits that roles are jointly negotiated (Biddle 1979). With this in mind, we document the role of both embedded entrepreneurs (vloggers) and non-entrepreneurial community members (viewers) in processes of re-embedding via role negotiation. Viewers were motivated to re-embed to minimise the impact of dysfunctional role dynamics on their own participation in a community that provided valuable resources, including information, inspiration, connection with likeminded others, and a sense of belonging. Although vloggers had attempted to disembed to maximise their financial gains from the community, they quickly recognised that they needed to resolve the resultant dysfunctional role dynamics to maintain their role within the community and ensure the longevity of the community itself. We observed four role negotiation strategies employed by vloggers and viewers to re-embed the economy: *role distancing*, *role prioritisation*, *role reconciliation,* and *role labelling.* Through these strategies, they were able to achieve a level of role consensus within the community - agreement as to how these roles should be performed (Biddle 1979) - thus re-embedding by introducing new role expectations that served as social limits to vloggers' entrepreneurial activities.

Role Distancing. Vloggers engaged in role distancing (Goffman 1959), using repudiative tactics (Leary 1995) to publicly dissociate themselves from the contentious Celebrity and Influencer roles, despite continuing to perform behaviours associated with these roles. For instance:

Over the past few years, my life seems to have taken a complete 180. Did I set out for it to become that way? Of course not. Did I ever expect it? Hell no. Did I ever plan on making a living from it? Nope. I was quite set on just making videos to make people happy, regardless of how many people watched them, and that is still my main aim. It just so happens that there is now A LOT of people […] People ask me if I'm a celebrity, and the answer is no. I'm not. I just make videos that lots of people like to watch. (Zoella, blog post, May 2014)

The pressure of everything got so much. Like, I was put on this pedestal and reminded daily that I was a role model, and you shouldn't do that, and you should be saying this, and you should do that, and all those things can feel so suffocating […] I'm a small gal from a little village and all of a sudden it's just like, 'whoa this is a lot' […] I was struggling with the, like, fame stuff. I hate the word fame. (Zoella, YouTube video, April 2017)

In the above excerpts, Zoe employs a strategy that Goffman (1959, 20) terms 'calculated unintentionality', portraying her occupation of the newfound Celebrity and Influencer roles as a coincidence rather than a conscious strategy. She also vocalises role captivity, as well as role strain (struggling to fulfil the behavioural expectations of the role) (Goode 1960) as repudiative tactics to distance herself from these roles. Many viewers accepted this role distancing strategy, repeating vloggers' narratives of calculated unintentionality:

It's not like they set out one day to become these famous vloggers and make a load of money from their viewers. Most of them just started filming videos as a hobby, because they loved beauty, they never expected it would turn into this. (Viewer interview, Bethan)

I enjoy your content because I see a woman that never signed up for this fame and success and the seldomly talked about pitfalls that come along with it all. But through it all has managed to stay incredibly grounded and true to herself. (Viewer comment on Zoella's YouTube video, August 2018)

In accepting and reinforcing vloggers' narratives of calculated unintentionality, these viewers simultaneously distanced themselves from the corresponding Fan and Target Audience roles.

To distance themselves from the contentious Influencer role, vloggers routinely expressed their dislike for the term 'influencer', instead preferring to use the term "vlogger", "blogger" or "content creator". They stressed that they engaged in different behaviours to those typically associated with the Influencer role, particularly as performed by reality TV stars:

The influencer word is the one that's been given kind of blanket approach to anyone that creates content online, which I completely disagree with. I personally call myself a content creator or a blogger […] those that come under the term influencer are maybe people who have like one channel, their kind of aim is to sell, sell, sell, talk about a new dress or a new top or a new pair of pants every single day to influence people to buy huge amounts and quite

often these people have one channel only and that's kind of like their forte. However, there's a lot of content creators out there that are very multi-platform. Me, for instance, I'm on Twitter, Pinterest, my blog, my YouTube channel, Instagram, I'm now on Tik Tok […] *so for me I'm more of a content creator, I create content continuously for each and every channel, each one is quite different. Also, for me, as well, I started this 7 or 8 years ago before there was any money in it, before there was any hope of any money in it, and it was a hobby, so for me being seen as someone who's influencing people isn't really the way I like to see it.*
(Inthefrow, YouTube video, April 2020)

The role distancing strategy used here shares some similarity with the discursive practices used by fashion bloggers to actively misrecognise their changed status from ordinary consumer to influential blogger (McQuarrie et al. 2013). However, rather than feigning similarity to her viewers or using self-deprecation and self-ridicule to minimise her accomplishments, as was the case in McQuarrie et al.'s study, vlogger Inthefrow distinguished herself from the typical 'influencer' by emphasising her different origins, motivations, and practices. Again, many viewers accepted and repeated these narratives:

I think there's a big difference between a content creator and an influencer. Influencers tend to come across as though they are just doing a job/making money rather than like you say creating something that people want to see and would be interested in buying alongside great content (Viewer comment on Inthefrow's YouTube video, April 2020)

They're not your standard Love Island [reality TV programme whose contestants are known for becoming influencers following their appearance on the show] *influencers who'll just accept brand deals for anything that comes their way. I feel like it's not fair to put them in the same category. They* [vloggers] *have built up an audience from scratch and they know that they need to be picky about what ads they do, they won't just advertise anything. You can tell they value their audience much more than other types of influencer. They're not going to sell them anything they don't actually like.* […] *I would trust their recommendations, whereas I wouldn't trust a Love Island influencer's ad.* (Viewer interview, Jessica)

Reiterating vloggers' role distancing narratives surrounding the Influencer role enabled viewers to reduce their own experiences of role captivity, by distancing themselves from the Target Audience role, and reduce role conflict by perpetuating the view that the Influencer role, as adopted by vloggers, was not as contrary to the Guru role as one might imagine.

Role Prioritisation. Role salience refers to the importance and value that individuals attribute to the various social roles that they occupy (Stryker 1968). Our focal vloggers

attempted to resolve dysfunctional role dynamics by communicating role salience hierarchies to their viewers, a strategy that we refer to as role prioritisation. They did so by claiming to prioritise the initial roles of Guru and Friend over their emergent roles of Celebrity and Influencer, and by engaging in behaviours that evidenced this prioritisation. For instance, vloggers offered critical reviews of products sent to them by brands' PR teams or criticised the products of brands that they had previously been paid to endorse. For example:

I'm going to be completely honest here […] I wanna be completely transparent […] I've been using the Wild deodorants ever since they sent them to me as a gift, but I'll be completely honest here now when I say I have stopped using them as of last week because the white marks were too much for me, too much. The black items that I wear and my black bras are covered, and I mean covered *in white stains from these and it was getting too much […] I feel awful saying it.* (Inthefrow, YouTube video, October 2021)

Here, vlogger Inthefrow's behaviour indicates to her viewers that she prioritises the Guru role (and viewers' expectations of honest product recommendations) over the Influencer role (and marketers' expectations that vloggers will portray 'gifted' products in a favourable light). In the comments of this video, viewers praised Inthefrow for this act of role prioritisation:

Saying the reality of a product as it is without sugar coating it for the sake of viewers/consumers who go out and spend their hard-earned money on products, is called integrity and is very appreciated. Thank you Victoria. (Viewer comment on Inthefrow's YouTube video, October 2021)

Other vloggers described pushing back against brands' expectations of the Influencer role to ensure that they were able to meet viewers' expectations in relation to the Guru and Friend roles, and declining commercial opportunities deemed incompatible with these roles:

You are kind of in the middle […] I am always thinking 'are the brand going to get what they want out of this', but I'm also… my priority is that my audience are happy […] [I'm] just trying to constantly educate brands on little things like that and how this isn't an advert, I can't follow a script, it has to be natural, in my own voice […] it's just about being honest and over the years I have turned down so many amazing jobs moneywise […] I probably turn down 8 out of 10 jobs that I get [offered] *[…] I would never risk everything just for a bit of money or whatever to work with a brand.* (Lily Pebbles, podcast interview, April 2018)

Many viewers accepted and perpetuated these narratives, as in the below data excerpts:

Fleur seems to be making enough money to be able to pick and choose sponsorships. I bet there's many that she's refused because she does not like the product (Viewer comment on Fleur De Force's video, August 2017)

I was definitely concerned when they first started doing ads. I was thinking 'how can you give an honest opinion if they're paying you?' But I don't worry about it now. […] They're

really good at putting their viewers first. They turn down so many opportunities, they don't do ads for any products they don't actually like, they're really selective. So, I do still trust their advice. (Viewer interview, Bethan)

Thus, vloggers' role prioritisation narratives assuaged many viewers' concerns surrounding the viability of the Guru-Learner role dyad in light of the Influencer-Target Audience role dyad.

We also observed vloggers going 'back to basics', reviving old techniques such as filming on more basic cameras or on their mobile phones and without a carefully staged and professionally lit 'backdrop'. For instance, Tanya Burr promoted a new makeup range whilst sitting on her hotel room floor wearing her dressing gown, after telling her viewers that she had "*just set up a very makeshift tripod on some boxes that don't look very stable!*" (figure 4). Similarly, Fleur De Force informed her audience: "*I'm actually filming on my vlog camera which is a little bit different […] it's like less high quality but a little bit more on the fly and obviously a lot less zoomed in, you can see the room behind me and stuff*" (figure 4).

FIGURE 4

DE-PROFESSIONALISATION OF BEAUTY VLOGGERS' VIDEO CONTENT (LEFT: TANYA BURR, 2017 RIGHT: FLEUR DE FORCE, 2018)
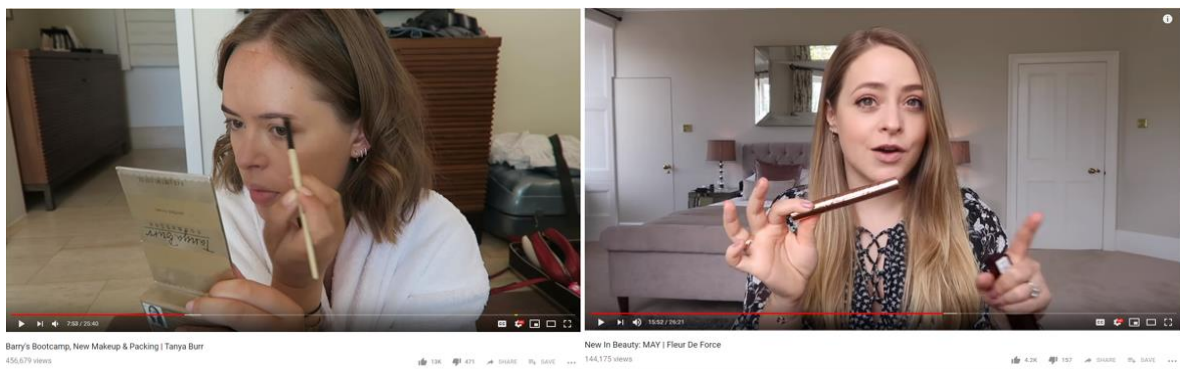
In the following podcast extract, beauty vloggers Lily Pebbles, The Anna Edit and Tanya Burr reflect on this shift:

Lily Pebbles: *I haven't touched my big SLR camera or studio lights for over a year now and I'm thinking of just getting rid of them, it's just weird.*

Tanya Burr: *Yeah, well we don't have any in the house now, we have some at the office space, but I definitely like vlogging more now and I find it hard to find a reason to do a really like highly produced video because I think I want to sit and chat to my audience…*

The Anna Edit: *It's nice, it feels more personal and I feel like we're all making content that we watch. It got to the point where I was like, I don't really tend to watch 3-minute look book videos, I want like a 20-minute, 25-minute vlog, sit-down chat where you feel like you're getting to know your friends and I think it's interesting how it's kind of done a full circle, back to almost where we started.*

(Tanya Burr interviewed on Lily Pebbles and The Anna Edit's podcast, July 2018)

The three vloggers described how they reverted to earlier filming styles and production values. In doing so, the vloggers prioritised the earlier Friend role, and viewers' expectations of relatability and intimacy, over the Influencer role and marketers' expectations of high-quality, professional content. Vloggers thus attempted to resolve dysfunctional role dynamics by demonstrating loyalty to the collective, prioritising the needs of its members over their own commercial interests and the interests of the marketer. This role prioritisation strategy reassured many viewers that, should conflicts arise between their multiple roles, vloggers would prioritise the Friend and Guru roles, thus avoiding negative implications for the community.

Role Reconciliation. Role reconciliation involved vloggers reconciling the demands and expectations of their earlier community roles with those of their emergent, commercial roles. In role theory, role enrichment refers to instances whereby the performance of one role improves the performance of another role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006). Whilst the new roles of Celebrity and Influencer do not at first glance appear to enrich the roles of Friend and Guru, and indeed create role conflict as documented above, role reconciliation involved vloggers identifying and highlighting ways in which their new, commercial roles could enrich the initial roles of Friend and Guru that were so integral to the community.

Tanya Burr's footage from her Glamour magazine cover shoot provides an example:

Today is the day that I'm allowed to reveal to you guys the cover and show you on this vlog […] I hope you guys enjoyed seeing like behind-the-scenes on the shoot and like how the pictures were created. […] I organised a competition with Glamour because I said I really

wanted to go for afternoon tea with my viewers, I thought that would be such a cute idea so all you have to do [to enter] *is rip out this page.* (Tanya Burr, YouTube video, October 2015)

In the above excerpt, vlogger Tanya Burr performs the Celebrity role by attending a magazine cover shoot but presents this as beneficial to her viewers by offering them behind-the-scenes footage, thus performing in line with the expectations of the Friend role by offering intimacy (Price and Arnould 1999). Tanya further enforced the Friend role by emphasising her desire to socialise with her viewers, thus communicating the intrinsic motivation that initially underpinned this role. She also ensured that her Celebrity behaviour benefited viewers by providing an opportunity for them to win a desirable prize, thus perpetuating the norm of reciprocity associated with highly embedded non-market societies (Polanyi 1944) by rewarding viewers' attention and continued support.

Vloggers also performed role reconciliation in the context of the Influencer role, explaining that their income from paid endorsements allowed them to continue to produce the organic content that viewers favoured:

I get to work with some of the most prestigious and established brands in fashion, beauty and beyond by teaming up alongside them to launch, celebrate and promote their products and causes. I also spend a huge amount of time creating organic content like so many of the editorial blog posts, YouTube videos and Instagram creations you see on a weekly basis, and the paid campaigns I take part in allow me to continue to produce so much organic content in-between. (Inthefrow, blog post, February 2021)

In other words, it is the Influencer role (and its monetary compensation from brands) that allows vloggers to continue their performance of the Guru role (by producing organic content). Vloggers also reconciled the Influencer role with the earlier Friend and Guru roles by articulating how working with brands allowed them to share information on new product launches and run exciting giveaways for their viewers. For example:

The whole point of me being an ambassador really is to kind of help you guys hear about new products, new product launches, things I'm loving the most. You know, because a lot of you guys follow me because you like what I recommend and I guess as an ambassador in this way it's just a nice way for me to kind of be able to talk to you guys about what I'm enjoying, what I'm using all the time, new product launches that I think you'll be interested in. (Inthefrow, YouTube video, January 2018)

In another example, Patricia Bright explained that receiving free PR products from brands enabled her to run exciting giveaways that benefitted her viewers:

I'm, you know, lucky enough to be a YouTuber, I'm so privileged to receive items like this. I did a huge giveaway in February and I've picked six winners who have all been DM'd [direct messaged] […] *As much as I can try to give back, I do.* (Patricia Bright, YouTube video, March 2018)

Reminiscent of the embedded entrepreneurs in Scaraboto's (2015) study, Patricia minimises tensions arising from her commercial role in the collective by employing modes of exchange that emphasise gift-giving and the logics of mutuality and reciprocity associated with highly embedded non-market economies (Polanyi 1944).

Whilst role reconciliation strategies did not eliminate the contradictions between roles, they rendered vloggers' new roles more acceptable to their viewers, many of whom accepted and reinforced their role reconciliation narratives:

I appreciate it when she [Inthefrow] *does giveaways and free samples, things like that. I think it's nice that she's using her position to benefit us, giving something back to her viewers. It's like a way of saying 'I appreciate you'.* (Viewer interview, Sophie)

I personally like the ads because part of the reason I'm following you is to learn about what products are out there because I certainly don't have time! I also like that you're making ad money so that you can continue to post free content! :) (Viewer comment on Estée Lalonde's video, Feb 2019)

Accepting and reinforcing vloggers' role reconciliation strategies in this way enabled many viewers to minimise their experiences of role conflict and to continue community participation.

Role Labelling. Role labelling strategies involved vloggers clearly labelling role transitions, clarifying when they were and were not performing the Influencer role. Role transitions refer to movements between roles (Ashforth 2000) and can involve both macro role transitions (changes between sequentially held roles) and micro role transitions (movements between simultaneously held roles). Vloggers regularly engaged in micro role transitions between their established Guru role (whereby they provided honest and unbiased opinions) and their Influencer role (whereby their recommendations were biased by

incentives received from brands, who expected positive coverage). Vloggers' micro role transitions to the Influencer role were initially obscured from viewers; vloggers referred to content vaguely as 'supported by' certain brands, thanked a brand for 'making this video possible', or simply omitted mention of brand involvement entirely. However, some viewers commented on vloggers' video content accusing it of being an undisclosed advertisement and/or asking for clarification on brand involvement. Indeed, a small number of viewers reported vloggers' content to the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Whilst there were no specific guidelines for influencer marketing on social media at this time, several vloggers' posts were subsequently banned by the ASA for failing to abide by the regulator's general advertising code, which stated that advertisements *"must be obviously identifiable as such"*.

These banned vlogger videos attracted widespread media coverage, which brought the non-disclosure of advertising content by vloggers, and thus the concealment of their shift to an Influencer role, to the attention of more viewers. This, in turn, increased the number of critical video comments surrounding suspected covert advertising, as well as the number of vlogger videos reported to the ASA. In response, the ASA released new guidance specifically for vloggers in 2015, requiring paid brand endorsements in vlogs to be labelled clearly as advertisements in the video's title or thumbnail picture. The UK's ASA, CAP (Committee of Advertising Practice), and the CMA (Competition and Markets Authority) have since published several updates to these regulations, and now require the use of affiliate links and the receipt of free or discounted products or services from brands to be similarly disclosed. These regulations played a key role in shaping the behavioural expectations associated with the Influencer role as viewers expected vloggers to abide by these regulations by clearly labelling this micro role transition and praised them for doing so:

> I love how you put (ad) in the title of the video and not try to play it off like most beauty gurus. Love you lots girl! (Viewer comment on Estée Lalonde's video, April 2015)

Viewer: *thanks Fleur, for being transparent and following the rules. I've been watching you since nearly the beginning of your channel, I trust that you're giving an honest opinion and that you're working with brands that you respect and like... There is a large group of your viewers who recognize your integrity, let their voices be louder.*

Fleur (replying): *Thank you for your sweet comment ... I always try my absolute best to follow the rules and disclose properly, and 100% believe in being totally truthful for you guys :) xo* (Comments on Fleur De Force's video, June 2017)

In line with Cocker et al. (2021), we found that viewers made it clear when their expectations surrounding role labelling were not met and used the current regulations to support their criticism. We observed that SMIs responded either by adjusting their behaviour accordingly or by clarifying the current regulations:

Viewer: *This video should have AD in the title since there was items and a trip gifted by a brand.*

Inthefrow (replying): *According to the new CMA guidelines AD should only be used if there was payment from a brand (this can be financial or PR gifts) AND creative control over the content. I have checked this is correct and they have informed me that their guidelines are 'not an either/ or' there HAS to be both creative control and payment (in either form) for AD to be used :) This is how you clarify an advertorial from organic uncontrolled content, and this has had no brand control over any part of it x* (Comments on Inthefrow's YouTube video, Feb 2019)

Thus, in line with Polanyi's (1944) work on embeddedness negotiation, we found that regulations can contribute to a protective countermovement by facilitating consensus surrounding behavioural expectations; the current regulations surrounding advertising disclosure were used by both vloggers and viewers to achieve a consensus as to whether and how micro role transitions should be labelled.

Role labelling made it easier for viewers to establish whether the vlogger was performing their Influencer role and thus discern which counter role they should perform; a sceptical Target Audience member viewing an advertisement or a trusting Learner following a respected Guru's advice.

I think it's much easier now they have to write AD on the posts, because then you take it with a pinch of salt. It's fine as long as they make it clear it's an ad. They get to make money and support themselves, but we know not to take that video, or that recommendation, as seriously. […] I wouldn't be rushing out to buy it if they've mentioned it in an ad video, because I know they're only mentioning it because they've been paid to. I'd pay more attention to things they recommend in the videos that aren't ads, because I know that's their genuine opinion. So, as

long as it's clear which one's which, I don't mind, and most of them [vloggers] *are pretty good at including 'ad' on their posts these days.* (Viewer interview, Charlotte)

Thus, role labelling reduced role conflict, enabling viewers to retain their trust in the Guru role.

To summarise, dysfunctional role dynamics motivated a countermovement whereby vloggers and viewers jointly attempted to re-embed the economy using role negotiation strategies that introduced new norms surrounding when and how various roles should be performed. This created a level of role consensus that minimised dysfunctional role dynamics within the community. However, as we shall discuss below, this role consensus was achieved, in part, by suppressing the countermovement, silencing those who sought to further re-embed.

Countermovement Suppression and Alternative Role Negotiation Strategies

Role negotiation typically involves a back and forth between actors as they try to agree upon acceptable role enactments, however actors' capacity to negotiate roles can be constrained by societal norms, or by an actor's limited social status (Biddle 1979). In this case, we found that platform affordances – specifically the comment moderation function on YouTube and other social media sites, which enabled vloggers to delete or block viewer comments – significantly limited viewers' capacity to negotiate community roles. Whilst YouTube's comment moderation tools empowered vloggers by giving them greater control over their YouTube channels, these tools simultaneously disempowered viewers by limiting their ability to have their voice heard in the community's central gathering space (Kozinets et al. 2021), thus restricting their capacity to negotiate community roles through open discussion with other community members. Some viewers, in particular long-term community members who were highly committed to the community's initial role dyads, felt that further re-embedding was necessary but found that their attempts to initiate further role negotiation were silenced as

their comments were blocked or deleted. In other words, vloggers were able to achieve role consensus within the community in part by suppressing the countermovement. Some viewers therefore attempted to resolve dysfunctional role dynamics through alternative approaches that involved altering their participation in the community.

Role Distancing via Community Disengagement. Some viewers distanced themselves from the Fan and Target Audience roles by actively avoiding behaviours associated with these roles. For instance, viewers would distance themselves from the Fan role by reducing their participation in the community and identifying simply as a 'viewer' rather than as a 'Fan'. Viewers who were previously hard-core community members stopped commenting on vloggers' videos and social media content, whilst both hard-core and soft-core members described viewing vloggers' videos less frequently. For example, interview participant Lucy described her transition from hard-core to peripheral community member:

> *I do watch her videos from time to time, but not religiously like I used to. Nowhere close. Literally like, maybe once a year I might go on YouTube and see what everyone's up to, whereas I used to watch their videos every single day without fail! And I never comment anymore. I'd say I haven't commented for maybe, 5 years, if not longer. […] I wouldn't say I'm part of the community in the way that I was. I'm just a nosy person who pops back in every now and again, has a quick look around, and leaves again. It's not for me anymore, I don't feel like I'm a part of it.* (Viewer interview, Lucy)

Viewers' role distancing strategies were reflected in our focal vloggers' engagement statistics. Unlike the fashion bloggers in McQuarrie et al.'s (2013) study, who experienced an upward trajectory with an increase in blog readers, we observed that many of our focal vloggers had experienced a notable decrease in video views and engagement (video likes and comments) in more recent years. Vlogger Estée Lalonde reflected:

> *I remember, back in the day, we could put up a beauty tutorial and it would get 500,000 views in a day. Those days have come and gone my friend […] well they've come and gone for me at least.* (Estée Lalonde on her own podcast, April 2019)

Indeed, at the time of writing, Estée's most recent YouTube video had received 39,000 views in 24 hours – a stark contrast. Thus, we observed a significant shift in the structure of the

community as many community members became less engaged, adopting a more passive role.

Viewers also altered their behaviours to distance themselves from the Target Audience role they had been altercast in. For instance, viewers described skipping the advertising portion of vloggers' videos, entirely avoiding videos overtly declared as, or later discovered to be, advertisements, and refusing to click on affiliate links:

> *I don't click on their links, like their affiliate links under the video on YouTube or the swipe ups on Instagram. I always make a note of the product name and then I search for it on Google instead. I just don't personally agree with them* [vloggers] *making money off us* [viewers]. *It makes me feel uncomfortable.* […] *Searching for products myself makes me feel like I'm more, like, in control. I can take their recommendations without giving them money. I feel more comfortable with that. I can't stop them posting affiliate links, but I can choose not to click on them.* (Viewer interview, Rhiannon)

Whilst some viewers felt able to continue their participation in the community by engaging in these role distancing behaviours, other viewers decided to stop watching vloggers' videos entirely. Interviewee Freya, previously a hard-core community member, explained her decision to leave the community:

> *I haven't watched them* [beauty vloggers] *for over a year now. I just didn't feel I was getting anything from the videos anymore, it felt like they weren't for people like me. I used to get all these great recommendations, actually learn something new, whereas now they only talk about products that they're paid to talk about. It does feel a shame.* […] *If we could go back in time to the old days I would 100% go back. I would love it. I miss those days when it was a little close-knit community, and it felt like they* [vloggers] *actually cared about us, they were one of us. But it's not like that anymore, and I'm not going to stay just to be sold to at every opportunity.* (Viewer interview, Freya)

Here we see that dysfunctional role dynamics have eroded the value that Freya gains from community participation and thus the resource dependence that can maintain continuity in the face of communal tensions (Thomas et al. 2013) has broken down.

These viewers were not actively trying to re-embed vloggers' economic activity through their role distancing strategies. Instead, their perceived powerlessness in role negotiation led them to distance themselves from the undesired roles of Fan and Target Audience via various levels of disengagement from the community.

Role Inversion and Re-Embedding via Anti-Fan Communities. Whilst some viewers simply distanced themselves from the Fan and Target Audience roles, others instead rejected these undesirable roles by creating a new role for themselves – the Anti-Fan. This role was an inversion of the Fan role that many felt had been forced upon them and involved engaging in online critiques of vloggers and attempts to further re-embed their economic activity.

Viewers performed the Anti-Fan role within anti-fan communities (online gossip forums dedicated to providing critical commentary on SMIs) rather than on the YouTube platform itself. Members of these anti-fan communities described how they formed and gained momentum due to the increasing censorship of the YouTube comments section by vloggers:

> *I was so hoping people would call her out for that in the comments, but it's just full of sycophants! Do they not realise that deleting negative comments is a lot of the reason forums like this exist? Because normal people can't stand echo chambers!* (Forum post, February 2020)

Prior consumer research has acknowledged that the infusion of market logics in communities can prompt some members to leave and form oppositional communities to connect with similarly dissatisfied consumers and collectively make sense of changes that prompted them to leave the community (McAlexander et al. 2014). Indeed, research on anti-fan communities within fields such as media studies has described how their members can establish a high level of camaraderie (Duffy et al. 2022; Gray 2005). Similarly, we observed that viewers participated in anti-fan communities to connect with other disillusioned members of the YouTube beauty community and to make sense of shifting community roles. However, we found that anti-fan communities also enabled viewers to escape role captivity experienced in relation to the Fan and Target Audience roles. Indeed, the Anti-Fan role was positioned in opposition to the Fan role, with Anti-Fans expressing their disdain for viewers who embraced this role (emically referred to on these forums as "minions", "crazy fan girls" and "sycophants") and vloggers who cultivated it:

> *I hate this overly positive-to-the-point-of-delusion, back-off-haters attitude we are supposed to have these days where any level of critical thinking or reflection is seen as "bad vibes".*

[…] These crazy fan girls who praise these vloggers for the bare minimum of effort and the vloggers that lap it up are stunting the growth of this sector of YouTube and turning it vapid, and us here who have valid opinions about the morality and honesty of these vloggers are haters and get deleted. Yay. (Forum post, October 2018)

Viewers described being dismissed by vloggers and other viewers as "haters" for posting video comments offering what they perceived to be constructive feedback intended to help the vlogger perform their commercial roles in a manner more acceptable to the wider community – in other words, for their attempts to re-embed. The anti-fan community therefore presented an opportunity to escape from the Fan role by acting instead as an Anti-Fan, critical of the emergent role dyads.

Anti-Fan communities were not only a space to vent, however. Anti-Fans remained engaged with, and invested in the future of, the YouTube beauty community, and saw the anti-fan community as a means to further re-embed its economy. Anti-Fans perpetuated the belief that vloggers and/or their management teams were reading their forum posts, and therefore used the forums to attempt to negotiate community roles. They suggested alterations to vloggers' role performances and interpreted any related changes in vloggers' behaviour as a direct response to their forum discussions:

Is it just me or were all the questions Zoe [Zoella] *was allegedly sent in for her* [Instagram] *story just all the recent comments we've called out about her over the past couple of weeks*

Reply: *there's no way people sent her those questions! It's like you say, she just responded to all the posts on here!*

(Forum posts, August 2020)

Popping in to point out that since we discussed her low blog traffic and how she doesn't even promote articles to her audience, she HAS started sharing them on Instagram stories. So to the super tiny Inthefrow team reading this thread, you're welcome for the common sense advice! (Forum post, June 2021)

Furthermore, Anti-Fans attempted to shape vloggers' performance of the Influencer role by reporting vloggers who did not abide by current advertising disclosure regulations to relevant regulatory bodies in the UK such as the ASA and CMA, and encouraging others to do the same:

I'm going to report every vlog that's not disclosed to be an AD, if you guys have time, you should do the same. It's the only way to teach her, take the money away and maybe she will wake up. (Forum post, October 2018)

They [the CMA] *don't open cases on behalf of individuals so I won't get any updates on this particular case. I get the impression they just keep a bank of these complaints so it's worth posting on here to bitch and moan and then sending a quick link to the offending post to their general enquiries email address at the same time - make it your routine and maybe our small little community can enact some change. (Forum post, Sept 2019)*

Thus, rather than attempting to engage directly with the vlogger in their YouTube videos' comments sections, and risk being censored, ignored, or dismissed, these viewers sought out anti-fan communities where they could exercise their voice and collectively attempt to force the vlogger to adapt their performance of the Influencer role.

DISCUSSION

When Embedded Entrepreneurship Disembeds: Implications for Non-Entrepreneurial Members of Consumer Collectives

Our interactionist role theory lens provides new insights into the nature and implications of embeddedness in cases of embedded entrepreneurship. We have demonstrated that embeddedness can involve the occupation of social roles within a consumer collective, with associated behavioural expectations that impose limits on economic activity. Existing research has acknowledged that embeddedness can involve the occupation of social roles (Montgomery 1998; Grayson 2007). However, we examine this form of embeddedness in the context of a consumer collective and demonstrate that interactionist role theory can shed new light on processes of disembedding and their implications. In our research context, embedded entrepreneurship involved attempts to disembed (Polanyi 1944) as vloggers adopted new, commercial roles that contradicted behavioural expectations associated with their existing roles, thus deviating from social norms in the pursuit of personal gain. It is important to note that embedded entrepreneurship does not inherently involve disembedding. Depending on the nature of an individual's embeddedness in the collective (i.e., the social roles they currently occupy, their associated behavioural expectations, and connected counter roles) and the nature

of their entrepreneurship (i.e., the new commercial roles that they adopt, associated behavioural expectations, and connected counter roles), contradictions in roles' associated behavioural expectations may or may not occur. However, our study provides insight into the social implications of embedded entrepreneurship that *does* involve disembedding attempts.

We demonstrate that embedded entrepreneurs' attempts to disembed can create dysfunctional role dynamics. Whilst previous research has identified a range of isolated social roles within consumer collectives (Fournier and Lee 2009; Leigh et al. 2006; Veloutsou and Black 2020), we extend this work by demonstrating that embedded entrepreneurs' role shifts can have important implications for the roles performed by non-entrepreneurial members of a collective. We reveal that role multiplicity emerging as a result of embedded entrepreneurship can produce role conflict that can negatively impact the entrepreneur's performance of their pre-existing social roles within the collective and render non-entrepreneurial members unable to satisfactorily enact their own desired roles. Furthermore, we recognise the capacity for embedded entrepreneurs' role shifts to altercast other, non-entrepreneurial members of a collective into new roles. We reveal that, in such instances, the collective's non-entrepreneurial members may experience role captivity. As we discuss further below, these feelings of role captivity are amplified when non-entrepreneurial members' capacity to negotiate these roles is restricted. These findings provide new insights into the implications of embedded entrepreneurship for non-entrepreneurial members of consumer collectives, shedding light on these individuals' experiences and demonstrating the capacity for embedded entrepreneurship to reduce the benefits they perceive in participating in a consumer collective.

In doing so, our study helps us to understand consumer collectives' resistance to embedded entrepreneurship. Prior research acknowledges that tensions emerge when embedded entrepreneurs prioritise their own commercial interests over the needs or values of the collective (Boyaval and Herbert 2018; Scaraboto 2015), an observation supported by our

findings. However, we have shown that embedded entrepreneurship can not only create issues surrounding the embedded entrepreneur's own perceived trustworthiness and loyalty to the collective but can also reduce the benefits other members gain from participation. Here, we see an illustration of the 'enactment tensions' discussed by Thomas et al. (2013) whereby tensions arise as heterogeneous community members engage with the collective in divergent ways that impact the identity enactments of other members. Whilst Thomas et al. examined tensions that occur when new and more diverse members enter a consumer collective, we show that enactment tensions can also arise when an existing member of the collective undergoes a significant role shift, and in doing so impacts the roles performed by its other members.

Embeddedness Negotiation and Disempowerment in Consumer Collectives

Our analysis provides insight into evolving levels of embeddedness within consumer collectives, highlighting the capacity for role shifts and role negotiation to contribute to a wider process of embeddedness negotiation. Consistent with Polanyi's (1944) conceptualisation of the double movement, we have shown that embedded entrepreneurs' attempts to disembed are unsustainable, met with a protective countermovement that attempts to re-embed the economy via role negotiation. Previous research has acknowledged that embedded entrepreneurs, including SMIs, may attempt to resolve tensions surrounding their entrepreneurial ventures (Kozinets et al. 2010; Scaraboto 2015), however roles cannot be negotiated in isolation (Biddle 1979). We therefore extend prior work by documenting a relational process of role negotiation performed by both embedded entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurial members of consumer collectives, with both parties motivated by the resource dependence discussed by Thomas et al. (2013). We show that these role negotiation strategies enable the community to re-embed the embedded entrepreneur's economic activity, reaching

an apparent consensus surrounding behavioural expectations relating to their new, commercial roles. However, whilst a degree of consensus appears to have been reached within the community, we have shown that this is in part due to the suppression of the countermovement. SMIs re-embedded to the level required to satisfy a sufficient portion of the collective to maintain their audience and thus their commercial appeal for brands. However, they silenced the more vocal and critical minority who felt that further re-embedding was necessary. We reveal that the YouTube platform, and other social media platforms, played an important part in countermovement suppression, preventing the fulfilment of the double movement as described by Polanyi (1944).

Recent consumer research has drawn attention to the constraining effects of platform affordances (Kozinets et al. 2021) and scholars have called for more research on the role of platforms in shaping interactions within consumer collectives (Dalli 2021). Our study responds to this call by highlighting the capacity for social media platforms' affordances to influence community members' power over social roles within the collective, and thus over the structure and dynamics of the collective. Our study shows that the voice-based power (Kozinets et al. 2021) of non-entrepreneurial community members is restricted by platform affordances, which enable vloggers to limit the types of opinions that can be vocalised within the community. Whilst prior research has acknowledged SMIs' censorship of critical opinions (Mardon et al. 2018), we reveal previously unrecognised implications for role negotiation within the collective. We found that some viewers were unable to attempt to negotiate community roles on the YouTube platform itself, motivating them to employ alternative role negotiation strategies with distinct implications for the community. We found that non-entrepreneurial community members engaged in distinct forms of role distancing that involved disengaging, to varying degrees, from the community. Whilst Thomas et al. (2013) propose that resource dependence can motivate community members to strive to maintain community continuity, we show that, where dysfunctional role dynamics erode the benefits of community participation, this resource dependence may no longer be sufficient to

retain all members of the collective. Alternatively, they may adopt a role inversion strategy, forming related anti-fan communities that enable them to attempt to further re-negotiate roles and thus re-embed the embedded entrepreneur's economic activity. Despite anti-fan community members' claims that vloggers were reading their posts, the anti-fan communities appeared to have limited impact upon roles within the central community, however anti-fan community participation enabled these individuals to attempt to regain the voice-based power that they lacked on the main YouTube platform.

Embedded Entrepreneurship and the Evolution of Consumer Collectives

Our research highlights the capacity for embedded entrepreneurship to influence the characteristics of a consumer collective, thus shaping its evolution. For instance, whilst prior research proposes that consumer collectives tend to focus on a specific brand, consumption activity, or consumption ideology (Thomas et al. 2013), we found that the focus of the community changed over time from a consumption activity (beauty consumption) to a series of individual brands (SMIs themselves as celebrity brands). Consequently, what began as a united community of practice (Wenger et al. 2002) transformed into a series of related brand communities. Furthermore, we show how interaction within a consumer collective can change over time. In its early days as a community of practice, communication between viewers and vloggers, and between viewers themselves, was commonplace, with interactions typically centred around beauty consumption. As a result of role shifts surrounding embedded entrepreneurship, interaction between viewers became less common, and viewer comments directed towards vloggers resembled fan interactions. As some interaction remains, the collective cannot be classed as a brand public (Arvidsson and Caliandro, 2016). Instead, the community increasingly resembled the hubs described by Fournier and Lee (2009), lacking the viewer-to-viewer interactions that are key in contributing to community belonging.

McQuarrie et al. (2013) noted that communities become less communitarian as SMIs emerge and our findings extend their work by providing insights into how and why this can happen.

We also shed new light on consumers' motivations for leaving consumer collectives. Prior research identifies a range of motivations for leaving, such as the growing costs of participation (Seregina and Weijo 2017) and disillusionment due to the introduction of disruptive market logics (McAlexander et al. 2014). Extending this work, we show that dysfunctional role dynamics can erode the benefits consumers gain from the community, thus reducing their motivation to engage in role negotiation strategies that would enable them to continue their participation. Furthermore, we extend extant research that recognises the capacity for consumer collectives to give rise to new, related collectives, and provide new insights into motivations for participating in these collectives. McAlexander et al. (2014) have shown that those that leave consumer collectives may form oppositional collectives, which provide an opportunity for connection with other lapsed members and sensemaking surrounding their choice to leave. We show that such oppositional collectives may also emerge as a result of a suppressed countermovement in the collective's central gathering space and may offer an alternative space whereby community members can attempt to further re-embed the economy and regain control over role negotiation, thus presenting new ways to escape role captivity and to attempt to resolve role conflict. We also offer insight into the relationship between these oppositional collectives and the collectives that they are positioned in opposition to. Like the oppositional collectives studied by McAlexander et al. (2014), the anti-fan communities studied were positioned relative to the original community. However, unlike the oppositional collectives in McAlexander et al.'s study, these anti-fan communities continued to engage with, and attempted to shape, the original collective.

Social Media Influencers as Embedded Entrepreneurs

Our study contributes to the growing, interdisciplinary literature on SMIs. Prior research highlights the benefits of SMIs' embeddedness, observing that their followers' trust in, and parasocial relationships with, SMIs can make them successful endorsers (Breves et al. 2021). However, our study reveals that SMIs' embeddedness also limits their economic activity as SMIs must abide by normative expectations associated with their existing social roles within the consumer collectives in which they are embedded. Failing to uphold these norms – i.e., disembedding - creates dysfunctional role dynamics that prompt a countermovement, requiring the SMI to attempt to re-embed their economic activity through role negotiation. Whilst research has provided insight into the emotional (Mardon et al. 2018), attention (Brooks et al. 2021), and visibility labour (Abidin 2021) undertaken by SMIs to acquire and monetize their audience, we extend this work by revealing the skilled role negotiation required for SMIs to profit from their audience in an enduring and sustainable way.

Furthermore, whilst prior research has explored the value consumers derive from SMIs (Scholz 2021), our study reveals the negative implications of SMI's emergence and evolution for the individuals who follow them. Our study reveals that SMIs can disrupt consumers' enjoyment of consumer collectives that were once important to them, potentially forcing them to disengage from or leave the collective. Our research also contributes to existing work in media studies on SMIs and anti-fandom. Prior research acknowledges that anti-fan communities provide a space for consumers to critique SMIs that they perceive as lacking in authenticity (Duffy et al. 2022). However, we show that consumers may also participate in SMI anti-fan communities when countermovement suppression within another collective prompts them to seek an alternative space where they can attempt to further re-embed its economy. In doing so, we account for the prevalence of anti-fan communities in the context of SMIs.

Future Research Directions

Whilst we studied a single consumer collective with distinct characteristics, the role dynamics described are unlikely to be unique to this context. SMIs have emerged within a variety of consumer collectives on a range of social media platforms. The Instagram cleaning collective and the BookTok collective on TikTok are just a couple of consumer collectives in which social media content creators and their followers have experienced role shifts that draw parallels with those documented in our study, and we anticipate that similar role dynamics would therefore emerge in these contexts. However, variations may occur. For instance, members of brand publics may be less averse to these role shifts since they are typically less invested in the collective than members of consumption or brand communities (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016). Furthermore, distinct comment moderation mechanisms across various social media platforms may result in different role negotiation strategies becoming prevalent, with implications for the collective's evolution. Research should explore how the characteristics of consumer collectives and the affordances of social media platforms influence role dynamics surrounding SMIs' emergence.

An important question raised by our study is whether similar role dynamics would emerge surrounding embedded entrepreneurs that are not SMIs. Dysfunctional role dynamics are particularly prevalent in the context of SMIs because they develop close relationships with a mass audience within the collective, and therefore their subsequent role shifts disrupt many role relationships. Whilst members of offline consumer collectives can achieve celebrity status within the collective without the use of social media (Thornton 1995), this occurs less frequently as it is much harder for ordinary consumers to rise to fame without the aid of social media's 'megaphone effect' (McQuarrie et al. 2013). Where members of consumer collectives are only known by a small number of fellow members, their embedded entrepreneurship is less likely to create significant role dysfunction. However, many consumer collectives exhibit a hybrid form; even collectives that regularly meet offline also

have online gathering spaces where members may use the megaphone effect to rise to fame (Seregina and Weijo 2017). Future research should explore the implications of this hybrid nature; how might role dynamics differ in consumer collectives that exist largely offline? What role negotiation strategies emerge in offline spaces, and how do they differ from those enacted in online spaces?

Our findings are not directly applicable to other forms of celebrity influencer. Whilst many traditional celebrities also act as influencers, consumers may respond differently to their enactment of this role due to differences in the origins of their fame. Social media celebrities exhibit a distinct form of embeddedness since they occupy existing social roles within online consumer collectives *prior* to the occupation of Celebrity and Influencer roles. This is not typically the case for celebrities whose fame pre-dates their relationships with their online followers. This is not to say that other types of celebrity cannot become embedded. Indeed, traditional celebrities use social media to cultivate more intimate relationships with their audiences (Marwick and boyd 2011). Thus, just as work on commercial friendships has considered both instances in which friendships become commercial relationships (Grayson 2007), and where commercial relationships become friendships (Price and Arnould 1999), there is value in exploring how traditional celebrities may become embedded through their social media use and unpacking the implications this may have on their role as an influencer.

Finally, we have shown that social media platforms may grant some individuals more power than others in shaping their role within, and indeed the wider structure of, online consumer collectives. Given the importance of these collectives in consumers' lives, this unequal power distribution warrants further investigation. Research should explore the implications for consumers' identity projects when their limited capacity to negotiate their role within online consumer collectives forces them to distance themselves from or leave collectives that were previously important to them, as was the case for many consumers in our study.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

All authors collected the netnographic and archival data between 2016 and 2021. All authors conducted ethnographic research at Summer in the City London in 2017 and 2018 and at BeautyCon London in 2017. The second author also collected ethnographic data at Summer in the City London in 2016, at BeautyCon London in 2016, and at VidCon London in 2019. Interviews were conducted between 2018 and 2021 by the first author and a research assistant. All authors jointly analysed the data. All data is currently stored on OneDrive and the Open Science Framework under the management of the first author and accessible to all authors.

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