Visual Mapping of Identity: Negotiating Ethnic Identity

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Abstract

Purpose — the paper offers a novel participatory visual research method, the Mapping Of Identity (MOI) protocol that embraces the complex nature of contemporary consumers' lived reality.

Design/methodology/approach — the MOI protocol is a two phase methodology. The first phase includes collage creation, based on a taxonomy of attachments, followed by an elicitation interview structured around the participant's collage. In phase two, the categories elicited in phase one are synthesised into key themes in collaboration between the researcher and the participant.

Findings — MOI methodology provides an effective platform for participants to bring together disjointed memories, fragments and thoughts. Two individual cases are presented that seem similar on the surface; however, when deconstructing these narratives, their lived experiences and the effect that these narratives have on the construction of the self are very different. Treating participants as co-researchers and letting the choices they make in their collage creation lead the interview empowers the participant and enables the researcher to better understand their complex identity articulations.

Originality/Value —marketing literature recognises the complex nature of contemporary lived reality; however, some of the intricate aspects of this reality have not been dealt with in all their complexity. A reason for this gap is the paucity of suitable research methods. The MOI protocol presented in this paper addresses this, providing an effective visual tool to explore the complex web of contemporary consumer life.

Keywords: Visual Narratives; Collage Elicitation; Mind Mapping; Participatory Research

Today's consumers have a myriad of opportunities for social interaction and group assembly that extend far beyond their immediate physical or political locations (Pieterse 1992). These hyper-connected (Vermesan and Friess 2015) individuals, enabled by modern technology, are engaging in new forms of self-expression, be that posing for a selfie on Instagram, updating a Facebook status, or sharing a daily mash-up on Snapchat, all to a larger and more diverse audience than ever before. This Fourth Industrial Revolution, the global digital change of social life, is transforming many parts of contemporary consumers' lives. Signs and images originating from diverse and remote parts of the world are now accessible to all, along with our relationships, our communities, and our sense of self (Davis and Weinstein 2017).

Contemporary consumer research has been effective in capturing this change in consumers' lives. For example, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) literature retreats from the view of collective and individual identity as a static and constrained construct (see Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Belk 1988; Sherry 1991) to a more fluid (e.g. Bardhi et al. 2012; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) and fractured perspective (e.g. Firat and Schultz 1997). Many CCT scholars recognise that consumers' experiences and lived realities intersect and interlock to create complex forms of identities and social relationships (e.g. Epp and Price 2009; Canniford and Bajde 2015). Some of the intricate aspects of this reality, however, have not been dealt with in all their complexity.

One of the reasons for this gap is the paucity of research methods capable of following the perpetual process of negotiation, affirmation and change of multiple consumer identities (Triandafyllidou and Wodak 2003). This sentiment is echoed in the work of Kerrigan and Hart (2016), who argue that innovative research methods capable of ensuring 'accurate representations of self', whilst coping with the complexity of 'multiple temporal as well as contemporaneous selves' (p. 1717) are needed. Similarly, Schau (2018) call for novel methodologies that provides a better understanding of contemporary identity.

Consumer researchers are increasingly recognising that visual research methods offer a potential solution to this methodology gap (e.g. Penaloza 1994; Schroeder 2006). In that, consumers create and negotiate their identities within, and in collaboration with visual culture (Schroeder 2006). There is, however, still a lack of visual methodologies that focus on exploring the complexities of consumers' self-identity constructions in the contemporary market.

In this paper, we offer a participatory visual methodology, Mapping Of Identity (MOI), which draws inspiration from seminal visual work in consumer research that has utilised collage and photo elicitation techniques (see Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003; Heisley and Levy 1991). MOI protocol is a research methodology that facilitates the participant and researcher to explore the complex landscape of self-identity (White 2003; Henderson 2019). In designing our methodology we found there to be a prevailing lack of pragmatic guidance and consensus on how to use participatory visual methods, we therefore seek to address this void.

We share with the reader our experiences of using the MOI methodology to explore the identity constructions of second and third-generation British South Asians. The identity constructions of ethnic minorities is a more intense process than usual (Ali 2008), making it an interesting case to explore using the MOI protocol. We offer guidance on how to employ a participatory visual method through a detailed description and reflection of our experiences

of the MOI protocol. While doing so, we also consider the ethical and practical dilemmas we encountered while employing the MOI protocol.

Why Visual Methodology?

Contemporary consumers live in a hyper-visual world where they understand their lives and negotiate their identities in an increasingly visual way (Liebenberg et al. 2012; Schroeder 2002; Rose 2014; Zhao et al. 2008). Belk et al. (2003) point out that traditional non-visual methodologies fail to adequately reflect this reality. Instead, researchers can benefit from using visual methods that allow for the collection of complex narratives that are capable of telling multiple stories simultaneously whilst capturing the situational context and temporal nature of consumer behaviour (Denzin and Lincoln 2008; Rohani et al. 2014).

Visual methodologies enable the documentation of experiences in a much richer way, having 'the capacity for evoking meaning and feeling not available in written transcripts' (Gerstenblatt 2013, p. 302). They are extremely valuable where the researcher would like to generate self-reflexivity to understand identities that fail to fit neatly into pre-rehearsed personal or cultural narratives (Reavey and Johnson 2008, p. 389). This is particularly relevant when the research topic is difficult to explore in a traditional interview, for example, in the exploration of sensitive research topics, such as gambling (e.g. Cotte and Latour 2009). Visual methodologies offer participants a sense of agency, enabling the documentation of experiences from the participant's perspective (Lorenz and Kolb 2009). Consequently, visual methodologies can be cathartic and empowering (Riley and Manias 2004). Employing a visual methodology ensures that the researcher is 'more open to comprehensive interpretation than in a language-based exchange' (Rohani et al. 2014, p. 303). A visual methodology can therefore offer a rich understanding of the research phenomenon.

Justification for Participatory Research

The importance of comprehensive interpretation of increasingly multi-modal and complex data leads us to discuss the second element of our MOI protocol - participatory research. Participatory research is well established in the marketing literature (e.g. Gabel and Ritson 1997; Ozanne and Saatcioglu 2008). It is an approach based on a commitment to egalitarianism, pluralism and interconnectedness in the research process (Bader 1998). It is driven by the ideology that participants who are committed and active collaborators are invested in generating a thorough account of the research phenomena (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

Collaboratively produced visual data can empower participants, giving them control over the artefacts used to represent themselves and/or aspects of their culture (Morphy and Banks 1999; Russell 2007). Schäfer (2012) explains that 'visual methods are not used simply to generate visual data, but also as a tool for reflection, engagement and representation of and by participants in the research process' (p. 149). Our MOI protocol is built on the premise that to study 'how individuals present themselves, understand their own life story, and connect with the social world' (Gauntlett 2007, p. 3) participants should be invited to collaborate in the reflection and analysis of the data they generate.

Participatory research may adopt a variety of formats. Building on the work of Bates et al. (2017), we suggest that there are three distinct formats for participatory research: *Participant-Driven* (open), where participants are asked to provide materials they feel

relevant to the research phenomenon; *Guided Participant-Driven* (semi-structured) where the researcher makes participants aware of a set of questions and asks them to utilise relevant materials that align with these; and *Researcher-Driven* where the researcher provides the materials for the interview and uses these as stimuli to promote discussion. The choice between these options should be aligned with the nature of the research question(s) and the researcher's epistemological stance.

In taking a participatory approach, the authority of the author needs to be considered. Traditionally, the power in research tends to be firmly situated with the researcher, who decides the agenda, what data to collect, how to collect the data, and then how to make sense of the data. Several scholars (e.g. Mayall 1994; Coad 2012; Gabhainn and Sixsmith 2006), assert that this produces results that reflect, rather than drive and challenge the researcher's pre-determined ideas, and posit that the data analysis stage is where power differentials are most clearly experienced. We recognise the tension between those who assume that participants lack conceptual and theoretical knowledge, so only trained researchers have the ability to analyse the data (Mayall 1994; Harden et al. 2000), and those who believe that for research to be fully participatory, participants need to contribute to each stage of the research process, including data interpretation and analysis (Thomas and O'Kane 1998; Christensen 2004; Sinclair 2004). This is a discussion that is almost absent in visual consumer research, and we endeavour to correct in our MOI protocol.

We now discuss collage and photo elicitation; two important elements that inspired and informed the construction of our MOI methodology.

Collage Creation and Photo Elicitation

The use of collage to explore consumer behaviour is well-established. In a seminal study by Belk et al. (2003), collage was used to capture the essence of participants' "desire" for consumption. Participants were asked to create a collage that expressed the concept of desire using cutouts from popular magazines and then write down their interpretations of what their collage represented. In the context of self-identity, Chaplin and Roedder (2005) asked participants to construct collages to address the question, "What makes me happy?". Here, collages were constructed using materials provided by the researchers, with little freedom for participants to decide how to design the collage and to provide a narrative interpretation of their collage to explore the multiplicity, temporality and alternative self-concepts. In developing our protocol we build on this work, however, we opt for a participant-driven approach to collage assemblage to map consumers' self-narratives rather than a researcher-driven approach.

Photo elicitation also inspires our MOI protocol. Photo elicitation is defined by Harper (2002) as using 'virtually any visual image' (p. 13) to add a different dimension to narrative interviews, through mining 'deeper shafts into a different part of human consciousness' (p. 22) in the course of a research interview. Heisley and Levy (1991) also assert that photographs encourage participants to actively contribute to the research by demystifying the image(s). It has been used in marketing research to explore the unconscious and implicit elements of consumer behaviour (Soley 2010; Rohani et al. 2014).

Heisley and Levy (1991), in their work on family meals, emphasise the participatory nature of photo elicitation, and the collaborative nature of the data analysis, which they define as

"autodriving" (p. 268). van House (2006) elaborates that 'viewing the images with the participants gave us details and meanings that we could not have developed on our own' (p. 1467). Despite promoting participatory research, Heisley and Levy (1991) and van House do not offer practical guidance for researchers wanting to follow their collaborative approach. Our MOI protocol takes inspiration from these studies, adapting the techniques of participatory photo elicitation to collage elicitation and providing guidance on conducting collaborative research.

Doing MOI

The discussion thus far has focused on how and why our methodology might add value to consumer research projects. We now offer a detailed and reflective step-by-step account of the MOI protocol.

Epistemological Stance

As mentioned in our introduction, conversations in the CCT literature have shifted towards a liquid, fragmented and liminal description of culture and identity. Arnould and Thompson (2015) push this further, claiming that approaches to cultural categories and identities need to be revised. They exert that existent accounts are 'wedded to a holistic ontology' that presume that somehow disparate cultural elements are cohered into unified categories 'as a kind of Gestalt' (p. 8). They suggest that researchers should develop 'theory that explain how different elements come into contingent alignments and recursively shape their contextualized meanings and effects, and, in turn, how these extant relations shift as different elemental arrangements arise'.

Hall (2014) explains the empirical implications of this conversation. He claims that if we cannot speak about 'one experience, one identity' (p. 112), we should acknowledge the ruptures and discontinuities of identities which constitute, precisely, the "uniqueness" of self-identity. Hall (2014) claims that research should focus on these discontinuities and points of *difference* which constitute "what we really are'" (p. 37). He goes on to explain that identity is a matter of "becoming", belonging to the future as much as to the past as it transcends place, time, history and culture, undergoing constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in an essentialised past, identities are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. Identity research should, therefore, reach beyond mere "recovery" of the past, and seek 'the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within and between, the narratives of the past' (ibid).

The epistemological implications of this conversation are dramatic. Our methodology should help us to see and understand the fluidity of a consumer's identities on the basis of their combination with other contexts, and the meaning that this combination brings. Hojholt (1997, p. 1) explains:

> When we look at social contexts in isolation they are in danger of losing their meaning for participants. Social contexts get their social meaning through their connection with other contexts.

There are clear visual implications of this conversation to our MOI protocol. We cannot interpret one single image independently or privilege it over another. Instead, each image must be understood within its context, history and in combination with other images. We

take support from van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001, p. 4) who write:

> ...[photographs] should not be isolated from the series of images to which they belong...single images and images without extensive contextual annotation are problematic for research purposes

Forming the Research Team

Embarking from our epistemological discussion and taking inspiration from the work on action research (see Ger 1997; Wallerstein et al. 2006) we view collaboration between researchers and participants as a "*project community"* that works together to achieve agreed outcomes. Ger and Wallerstein et al. both claim that it is important for the members of the research team to self-reflect on what they bring to the project: their capabilities and potential liabilities, historical and current relationships and experiences.

Our research team evolved in different stages: author I developed and refined the initial protocol of MOI and then conducted data collection and analysis and author II conducted data collection and analysis.

Author I has a wealth of experience in psychological research. He is also an immigrant who came to England with his wife and young children. Raising children within a minority community and new national culture drives his interests in self-identity, ethnicity and religion. It was experiencing the nuances and negotiations of belonging and identification that encouraged him to explore the availability of research tools that are sensitive enough to capture the full picture of self-identity. Cautious of his desire to justify his own experiences he chose another community rather than his own to conduct his research.

Author II grew up in a rural Caucasian community in northern England. Her interest in how individuals negotiate identity stems from her own experiences of negotiating gender and traditions throughout her formative years and working life. She also brings her experience of working in the market research industry, which sparked her passion for visual research methods, where she saw the richness that they afford.

We consider that as researchers we bring different and complementary skills to the research team. Author I's keen interest in negotiating identity and belonging to an ethnic minority helped him to establish a strong rapport with participants. Author II brings with her a different point of view of the host society and her own identity negotiations together with commercial experience of developing research methodologies. This assemblage of experiences and expertise ensured that the MOI protocol was developed in a robust and vigorous manner.

Participant Recruitment

The participatory nature of our MOI protocol means that it is demanding emotionally and cognitively for participants and more time intensive than a traditional researcher-driven approach. We overcame obvious barriers to participation by providing food, drink and covering any expenses incurred by the participants, such as the cost of materials incurred in creating the collage. Participation was also encouraged by generating honest and open conversation regarding the research objectives; an upfront detailed explanation of the research method; and providing written and narrative documentation regarding the steps

taken to ensure personal data security. Participants were consulted at every stage of the research process. They had an influence on the design of the tool, the way the interview was conducted and the data analysis. This collaborative approach created researcher-participant respect and commitment to the research objectives.

The recruitment process was in two stages, each consisting of different briefs, objectives, and interviews: the first stage was recruitment for a pilot study to develop the collage protocol, and the second recruitment stage was for the research project itself.

Collaborators for the pilot study (72 participants) were university students from a wide range of nationalities, races, religions and ethnicities. Each participant was briefed regarding the purpose of the study and how their confidentiality would be ensured. They were then provided with a brief that was adapted and refined over the course of the pilot study.

In the second stage of recruitment, for the research project itself, a snowball sampling technique was used to gain access to 13 participants (seven female and six male, aged 20 to 30 years old) who identified themselves as being second and third-generation British South Asians. Using snowball sampling technique, three early participants were asked to suggest others with particular characteristics to ensure the participant profile was developed to capture the potential diversity of identity amongst British South Asians.

The MOI protocol

A step-by-step overview of the MOI protocol is now offered.

Initial Participant Briefing

The main distinction in briefing participants in participatory collage-elicitation research is that there are two phases of briefing (Bates et al. 2017). The first briefing focuses on informing the participant of the ethics of the research, the research topic and areas to be captured in the interview and research question(s), along with providing guidance on creating the collage, such as what to include. The participant is then asked to assemble their collage.

Collage Assemblage

In the pilot study, which set out to develop the MOI protocol, participants were initially given an unstructured and open brief. Participants struggled to create their self-identity collages without guidance on what to include. Not limiting the contents of the collage also created a challenge for time management in interviews, with some participants including only a few images on the collage and others including an abundance of images. An early case also raised an ethical concern. A participant included an image of a pistol on his collage, and during the course of the pilot interview, when asked for the meaning of the image, he replied that he often contemplated shooting himself. All required steps were taken in raising this as a duty of care, however, this incident, and others, made it clear that a more focussed brief was needed.

This led us to pilot a participant driven semi-structured approach. Inspired by the work on dialogical self in narrative psychology, we adapted Raggatt's taxonomy of attachments, to include 18 types of attachment (see Table 1). This offered a loose framework for the collage and interview, with participants instructed to include one image for each of these attachments, which were organised into three categories: *people*, *objects-in-the-world*, *life events.* The aim of this structure was to capture an individual's central life concerns in the social, temporal, physical/environmental domains. Initially, we included the fourth category

in Raggatt's taxonomy, *body parts*. However, participants in the pilot study expressed confusion about what to include in this section that they had not already included in other categories. One participant also mentioned that she felt uncomfortable with including body images. Following this input, we eliminated this category and found it did not jeopardise the quality of the data generated.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Attachment Type

[Table 1]

After the initial briefing participants were given three weeks to create a poster size collage. This duration takes into consideration that participants are required to compile a mix of existing and new photographs along with other formats of images of their choice. Inspired by Harper's (2002) advice on the importance of framing the photo education interview from the onset to ensure a reflective state of mind, we asked each participant to place a photograph of themself in the centre of the collage and to begin the conversation from here. This relatively loose brief yielded a wide range of collages (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Examples of Collages

[Figure 1]

If the reader wanting to follow our MOI is looking to find patterns and similarities, the collage brief should be more specific, leaving less space for participant choice and interpretation.

Second Participant Briefing

The next stage of data collection is an interview. We recommend that a second briefing takes place at least one week before the interview. These briefings were conducted either by phone or in-person, with participants provided with a detailed account of the purpose of the research and the type of conversation we anticipated to have. The second briefing offers participants time to ask questions about the research and for the researcher to address any concerns they might have. It also provided participants with ample time to ponder the research topic before the interview, which facilitated reflective rather than spontaneous or spur of the moment responses. This strategy enables the development of openness, trust and rapport between the participant and researcher during the interview.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants selected an interview location where they felt comfortable talking about their self-identity collage. Most interviews were conducted in a private room with a table large enough for the collage, such as participants' homes, offices, a mosque and even a café. The interviews lasted between two to five hours. Author I offered female interviewees the opportunity to be interviewed by a female interviewer or to have a female companion. No participants chose this option.

Once the participant was settled into the interview environment the conversation begun with the researcher pointing at the picture of the participant on the collage and asking:

- Please could you talk through your choice of this photo of yourself and explain why you chose this photo.

The participant was then asked to lead the conversation through the rest of the images in any direction they chose. Participants were prompted with questions, such as:

- Please explain why you chose this image.

● Why is [pointing to an image] an important aspect of your life or who you are?

The questions did not direct the nature of the discussion. Instead, the images framed the structure of the interview, with the items included on the participant's collage determining what and why issues were discussed. At the end of the interview, participants were asked if there was anything else they wanted to discuss about their life experiences and self-identity that were not depicted on the collage or discussed in the interview. This left the control of the interview process with the participant as much as possible.

All interviews were recorded (audio and video) and then transcribed. Following the interviews, we faced the challenge of how to confidentially store the collages. It was decided to take a photograph of each collage, to store and save electronically in line with data management principles. We recommend, based on our experiences that, where possible, future researchers employing MOI methodology ask participants to create a digital collage.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis, as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted of the multiple texts (visual collages and verbal narrative of the collage elicitation interview).   Thematic analysis is a useful analytical tool for examining how 'events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society' (p. 81).   It was used to develop rich descriptions of participants' lived experiences and to invite each participant to learn about themselves.

The collages created a variety of narrative and visual data that brought a deep and rich range of narrations. Liebenberg at el. (2012) explain that coding collage should be approached differently from coding narrative interview data. It is impractical to adhere to strict line-by-line or item-by-item coding when working with large volumes of visual data. Taking the large number of images included on each collage into consideration, we coded relevant segments or "chunks" of visual data in accordance with the research question, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Visual Segment Coding

[Figure 2]

Each text, be it visual or verbal, tells its own unique story, yet all texts share a relationship in documenting the experiences of each participant. In this regard, the texts hold multiple stories that integrate and influence one another, which we label as *intertextual relations*. During the elicitation interview, the participant connects one text to another by presenting stories about particular incidents or people through the perspectives of their photographic images and narration (see Figure 3A). Exploring the intertextual relations allows the researcher the opportunity to understand how the texts relate to each other. Patterns or themes can arise by noting such things as phrases, words or perspectives that a participant uses. In different types of texts, the participant might rephrase or reconstruct an idea to justify their perspective, interpret or imagine an event and what it means or make inferences about the meaning of the behaviours of others (Bazerman 2004). In other cases, intertextual contradictions emerged. For example, the participant Mirza's collage (Figure 3B) illustrates the theme of having fun, including smoking shisha. In the course of the interview, he discusses not wanting to hurt his parents with this behaviour.

Figure 3: Intertextual Relations - Annissa and Mirza

[Figure 3]

Reading the relationships between texts can focus specifically on connections, parallels and differences between the multiple texts (Bazerman 2004). Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest that when reading for holistic content, an initial *general reading* of all texts for each participant is helpful, with the researcher recording initial impressions of such aspects as unusual features, metaphorical representations, reflexive comments, focused attention and other aspects of interest. It is also important to note instances in the interview text where the visual text(s) is either highlighted or referenced.

The visual text facilitates the participant in referring to other texts (e.g. from verbal to visual, or visual to verbal). This can enhance or deepen the meaning of the participant's story, allowing the researcher to understand the complex web of issues the participant associates with one image (e.g. alienation, faith, law and order and more). The visual text from the collage minimises the problem of the context being lost in the course of thematic analysis (see Bryman 2001), with the collage offering references to the context and cultural environment.

Synthesising Voices

The second phase of data analysis is the use of an initial category reduction tool to assist the researcher and participant in sorting through the categories created in the collage elicitation interview. This process involves the researcher refining the initial categories into themes and then into a small set of narrative identities and placing these on an initial categorisation form (see Table 2). For reference, in our research, we found the ideal number of categories at this stage to be 30-40, with this providing a manageable number of categories to synthesise.

Table 2: Excerpt from Bally's Categorisation Form

[Table 2]

Each participant was then asked to look through the initial categorisation form (see Table 2), with this forming the basis for the second meeting. The form was sent to each participant at least one week in advance of the meeting to comment on the extracts and whether they agreed or disagreed with the categorisation. For a researcher considering triangulation, this stage could be quantified with the use of a Likert scale to indicate how much the participant agrees with the categorisation. In the context of our research, we opted for the qualitative option, seeking to discuss issues with the participant.

In the next stage of data analysis, the participant and researcher create a mind map together (see Figure 4), using the codes from the categorisation form (Buzan and Buzan 2006). The mind map helps to visualise the relationship between the codes and to create themes between codes.

Figure 4: Bally and Sunni's Self-Identity Mind Map

[Figure 4]

Once the mind map was compiled, the participant then synthesises the data, putting it into a smaller number of themes that address the research question. In the context of our research, this ranged from four to six self-narratives for each participant. Figure 5 demonstrates the outcome of the synthesisation of voices from initial categories into self-narratives for two participants.

Figure 5: Bally and Sunni's Synthesisation of Voices

[Figure 5]

Dissemination

Following data analysis, decisions need to be made on how to disseminate findings, particularly how to utilise images generated in participants' collages. Recently, visual dissemination methods, such as photo essays (e.g. Harris 2017; Wade 2017), have risen in popularity with visuals predominantly drawn on to portray the research phenomena. However, it is fair to say that the majority of mainstream visual research publications reproduce little of the visual data collected from participants. For example, Heisley and Levy (1991), in introducing the concept of photo elicitation use six photographs, with Chaplin and Roedder (2005) and Belk et al. (2003) including seven images in their papers. One exception is Clark-Ibanez (2004), who includes 26 of her participants' images in her article using photo elicitation interviews. There is currently no consensus about the right format to disseminate visual research outputs. We therefore encourage the visual research community to develop this conversation further.

In designing our MOI protocol one of the challenges faced was finding the best way to share with the reader the dynamic and complex picture of how participants negotiate their multiple identities. Since this is a methodological not empirical paper we use the findings section to demonstrate the capabilities of our MOI protocol in exploring the complexities of self-identity. We decided to take a case study approach to allow us to capture the richness of data and reveal how the protocol is capable of coping with the contemporaneous and fluid nature of consumer identity, and drawing out how the participant's identity projects interplay with one another. We share in-depth cases of two participants' identities rather than snapshots of all 13 participants.

We now present the cases of Sunni and Bally because each case offers an interesting insight into how the methodology enables a complex web of narratives to emerge. The cases of Sunni and Bally demonstrate how the MOI methodology provided them with an effective platform to bring together disjointed memories, fragments and thoughts to explore their self-narratives. On a superficial level Sunni and Bally represent very similar characteristics, both are British Sikh, a similar age, live in the same area of England and have achieved the same level of education, therefore, one might expect similar patterns to come up from their data. We now share with the reader a sample of the data our MOI protocol elicited.

Case One: Sunni

Sunni, aged 23, is the third-generation of a British-Indian (Sikh) family. She is married with no children and lives with her husband in a middle-class area of a small town in the Midlands. Sunni is an accountant, a career that she has decided to step away from and to return to university to gain a postgraduate degree. The interview took place in her office.

The concrete stimuli of the images on Sunni's collage produced an in-depth conversation during the collage elicitation interview that tended to flow seamlessly from one topic to the next. If the discussion based on one image began to wane, a shift to the next image renewed interest and focus. Utilising the images on her collage in the interview led to rich and insightful conversations on a variety of topics such as her religion, community, family,

social circles, race, fashion and beauty, food, home design, British identity, relationship with India as her parents' country of origin, professional identity, marriage, hyphenated identity, body image, lifestyle and above all to some of the personal traumatic events in Sunni's past that influence her self-narratives.

Using Collage to Enhance Aspects of Identity

Sunni used her collage to enhance, construct and negotiate her self-narratives. The collage elicitation interview then allowed Sunni to expand on the content of her collage, distancing herself from, or exploiting the visual claims her collage appeared to sustain. Her interview was used to clarify and repair any problems in her presentation of self and to explore its consequences in a broader social context. Through commenting on the motivation behind images on her collage, Sunni had the opportunity to downplay or emphasise the significance of her choices and ward off potential adverse or favourable judgments by the researcher. Sunni clearly used some of her images to characterise herself as a British-Indian, trendy, professional individual who maintains a healthy lifestyle (see Figure 6).

> **Sunni:** *I want my friends to describe me as easy-going, trendy, and fun to be with. I'd like them to appreciate me for who I am, my cultures and skills and abilities.*

Figure 6: Sunni's Clothing Preferences and Liked Associates

[Figure 6]

It is important for Sunni to differentiate herself from her own community and emphasise her Caucasian friends.

> **Sunni:** *...most of my friends are white and not of my own religion, maybe it's a lack of trust. I tend to go towards people who are more appreciative of* [slight pause], *who view you as an individual.*

Interestingly, the basis of differentiation Sunni chooses in reference to her circle of friends is by their skin colour. Contrariwise, the differentiation from her community is on the basis of religion. Later in the interview, she explains that her belonging to that group is based on her preferred lifestyle.

> **Sunni:** *...with this bunch* [pointing to photograph of her Caucasian friends]*, I'm more chilled out, relaxed. You can act stupid around them and they won't judge you. The others* [friends from Sikh community] *I can have a laugh with but have to behave more.*

In discussing her husband's career, Sunni hints at her multi-layered relationship with her host society.

> **Sunni:** *...my husband works full time as an assembly worker. He never went to university or college or anything like that. But maybe later he'll have another chance. It's never too late.*

Sunni feels the need to justify her husbands' career choices, and by doing so, accept the dominant western neo-liberal discourse of a "proper" career. She chose to represent her husband on her collage by using an amiable caricature image (see Figure 7A).

Figure 7: Sunni's Important People and Life Events

[Figure 7]

Using Collage to Access Sensitive Parts of Identity

The self-identity collage allowed Sunni to introduce sensitive aspects of her life, such as bullying and bereavement, as shown in Figure 7B. The inclusion of such images on her collage gave Sunni the opportunity to provide a verbal account that contextualised the images in the elicitation interview.

The traumatic experience of being the victim of bullying in her childhood is evident in Sunni's collage (see Figure 7C). The collage elicitation interview allows her to expand on this, for example, she explains that the bullies had been from "friends" in her Sikh community.

> **Sunni:** *Well some were supposed to be my friends but weren't because they used to instigate, well, initiate the bullying ... it's like they're supposed to your friends ... Strangely enough, I think it may be linked to those who bullied me as they were mainly Sikh.*

The enduring impact of this experience on Sunni's identity negotiations was evident, with this being a dominant narrative that has had a sempiternal impact on her life decisions and choices, and in turn her self-narratives. The collage elicitation interview allowed her to explore the consequences of bullying on her self-identity negotiations. For example, Sunni spoke of how her childhood experience of bullying continued to have a negative influence on her self-esteem and fear of peer rejection.

> **Sunni:** *And it does sort of psychologically affect you because I'm not as confident as maybe I would have been if I didn't go through that but because I did, it has affected the way that I am as well ... Maybe they were jealous, maybe they didn't like what I wore, maybe it was because I was Asian.*

Sunni's need to be accepted also extends to her possessions, such as in the decoration of her home. Here, Sunni places great importance on the opinions of other people.

> **Sunni:** *I have decorated my home for months. I worked really hard on it for four months and now I love getting compliments on it. It's very rewarding. It's my sanctuary…Yes, you want other people to come and say good things.*

The momentous impact of childhood bullying on Sunni's identity negotiations is also revealed in her choice of a liked public figure, Richard Branson (Figure 8). When expanding on her choice, Sunni focuses on part of Branson's character that relates to her self-narrative.

> **Sunni:** *I chose him because he's successful and because he's dyslexic... Yes, just because he's dyslexic, he doesn't let something like that get in his way. And that fact that he always tries new things and even if it fails he just moves onto the next thing that he wants to go into.*
>
> **Interviewer:** *Are you dyslexic?*
>
> **Sunni:** *No I'm not dyslexic. It's just about not letting your weakness get in the way.*

MOI conversation brings up another traumatic experience of bereavement for Sunni, following the loss of her father a year ago. She describes how the death of her father left an empty space in her life. He was an authoritative figure in her childhood who helped her to

deal with her experience of bullying. In the elicitation interview, she explains how his death was difficult for her and continues to impact her self-identity.

> **Sunni:** *He passed away last October. It has affected my life quite a lot and that is one major down points for me...I never been to a funeral before and it was my own father's so it was hard … it had a big impact on the way I am now*

Negotiating Indian-Sikh Identity

The MOI collage enabled Sunni to negotiate her self-identity across multiple identity positions. Here we illustrate an example of how she deals with the two narratives of identity and freedom concerning her Indian-Sikh culture. In the collage elicitation interview, it becomes evident that she has a complex relationship with her community and faith in relation to her identity and freedom narratives. Involving Sunni in the data analysis allows for her to synthesise these voices.

Sunni makes the point that India is not an important part of her life, explaining that India is the country of origin of her parents and a very abstract concept in her life.

> **Sunni:** *I went to India when I was about 3 or 4 and I can't remember it — only from what mum and dad have told me. My entire family is in Canada so the only way I know India is from family stories, Bollywood and TV channels.*

Sunni's collage, however, depicts India as a central place in her self-identity negotiations (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Sunni's Religion

[Figure 8]

The negative role of religion in Sunni's narrative is also reflected visually in her self-identity collage (Figure 8) and then reinforced verbally in her interview.

> **Sunni:** *So they're the negative people and I don't like religious extremists — I think people who strongly believe in their faith should do so without being nasty to other people or forcing other people to be the same way or inflicting pain on people because they think they are supreme. So they are my negative public.*

Conversely, Sunni's collage also depicts that her religion is an important source of her self-identity and moral guidance, through the inclusion of an image of the Khanda (the symbol of Sikh faith). Later in her collage elicitation interview, she converses that her religion is important to her, stating that:

> **Sunni:** *I think Sikh is more who I am.*

Involving Sunni in the synthesisation of these opposing voices the MOI mind mapping reveals that Sunni considers herself to have South Asian and British self-identities. In this process, we are able to see that Sunni separates her identities, positioning her faith under her South Asian self-narrative (see Figure 4).

This is reinforced in Sunni's discussion of a life partner, where it is clear that her South Asian identity takes a priority.

> **Sunni:** *I would not be happy if I marry a white man. You're supposed to marry into your own culture because they'd understand your religion and life would be easier.*

Negotiating British identity

Having close Caucasian friends, Sunni is socialised into the western discourse of beauty. She feels a pressure to attain these standards of beauty, feeling the need to conform.

> **Sunni**: *...I think English girls are really good because, as in, their hair's naturally really, well I don't know…it's very, very silky, just naturally, some, some, generally have, silky hair whereas Asian, I find, you've got, it's very rare you can just naturally leave it open, because it gets really frizzy or it's really, my hair is really, thick, it's out here if I didn't straighten it, I think that's more of an image thing to look good, I don't feel like, good if my hair's out there and, it looks like a mess, even though it's combed it's just thick and the volume's just huge, but when it's straightened I feel neater, feel like I've made an effort.*

There is a contradictory voice to Sunni's preference for Caucasian standards of beauty. The extract from Sunni's collage in Figure 9 illustrates that she chooses non-white models and celebrities to identify with and to express her fashion, life style and beauty choices. Sunni's consumption preferences further demonstrate the interplay of her British-South Asian identity, and how her identity is the product of alternatives.

> **Sunni:** *I bought it from Boots my main consideration was if it went with my skin tone. It had to be easy to apply too. There was also the East/West influence to wear in a variety of events.*

Figure 9: Sunni's Fashion Choices

[Figure 9]

The use of collage allowed us to capture Sunni's dialogic voices. Creating the collage allowed Sunni to introduce and reflect on aspects of her self-identity, with the collage elicitation interview giving her the freedom to fine tune certain identity positions on her collage. The MOI methodology allowed Sunni to combine verbal and visual forms of self presentation to present and synthesise complex, ambiguous and contradictory versions of her self-identity.

Case Two: Bally

Bally is aged 22, male, British-Sikh, works as a shift manager in a customer service centre and lives with his parents in a small town in the Midlands. He is a talented musician, playing the dhol (a double-headed drum) having played and toured with a well-known British Bhangra rapper.

Bally is an interesting case - his collage (Figure 10), in contrast to Sunni's included very few personal images of family and friends. However, the pairing of Bally's collage with the photo elicitation interview led to an unexpected depth of discussion. The rich personal data that emerged from each artefact on Bally's collage, even if these look initially impersonal, was fascinating. Bally's interview revealed a wide range of dichotomous identity negotiations,

such as Indian-British, Traditional-Modern and Individual-Collective. The creation of the mind map (Figure 5) then allowed Bally to consciously synthesise and shape these negotiations (Figure 6) and share with us his coherent self-narrative.

Figure 10: Bally's Self-Identity Collage

[Figure 10]

Collage Elicitation Produces "Thick" Data

An example of what we call anchoring (the use of relatively generic images to create personal and elaborated articulations) is Bally's choice of three football related images on his collage: a football; the Manchester United logo; and a picture of Maradona a well-known former professional football player. One might be satisfied to conclude that football holds an important place in Bally's life. However, his collage elicitation interview revealed deeper and wider conversations where football was only the context for issues such as inclusion and exclusion, national and local identity, and Bally's experiences of racism where he presents a different outlook from Sunni on his relationship with British society.

Bally begins the conversation explaining how important football is to him, describing his involvement in a local football league. Bains and Johal (1998) claim that South Asian communities found it difficult to integrate and gain social acceptance into the local British football. Bally confirms this observation and shares his experiences of racism in his local football league:

> **Bally:** *I play 11-a-side football as well and I've noticed even around my home town when we've got a predominantly Asian team, got a few white people, black people some people from different countries playing in our team we go to outskirts of our town and stuff in the more village rural areas … We used to go and the amount of racial stuff that you hear 'Paki this and Paki that'. … And they were singing come on England, come on England like we were both from a different country. We are all from here anyway...sometimes we drive through the town just to get to the football pitch the amount of people that turn and look at us. And it's like we're just driving cars, it's not like. Yeah it's like five Asian cars come together…its like certain areas you go into they don't see brown faces, they are shocked to see you.*

Bally is a loyal Manchester United fan, which is visualised on his collage through the inclusion of their logo. Local football clubs constitute an intriguing site for fans to construct and perform local identity within contemporary culture (Crawford 2004). Football teams, at all levels, claim to represent their local community as they compete for pride and glory at the expense of their geographical "rivals" (Dunning 1999). Despite living in the immediate locality of his local football team, Bally does not get involved with the local fans' community.

> **Bally:** *...I will not probably be able to go to local football match because of the sort of people because you know you kind of feel out of place. I don't think, I don't think I feel comfortable in that sort of environment*

Bally reserves his support for Manchester United, a team he considers as more accessible than his local team. Burdsey (2007) explains that the prominence of strong global football

brands like Manchester United, combined with the proliferation of official merchandise, makes it possible for people like Bally to align themselves with these clubs and show their support without the need to attend live matches.

> **Bally:** *I put it here* [pointing at image of Manchester United's logo] *because obviously just the way they are as a team and the people, just everything about them, I have obviously grown up supporting them all the time and that is just been positive thing for me*

> **Interviewer:** *Do you wear their kit?*

> **Bally:** *Yeah every year. I've bought the shirt . Not too much merchandising little bits and bobs here and there but it's more support when I am watching TV. I have not been to watch them live, I have had a couple of chances but...I never actually had a chance to go down*

The conversation became even more dramatic when we moved on to discuss Bally's selection of the footballer, Diego Maradona as an inspirational figure. Bally's selection of Maradona is intriguing, since he is not a popular character amongst English football fans. This is in light of the infamous 1986 football world cup match between Argentina and England, four years after the Falkland war between Argentina and the United Kingdom, a match where Maradona scored two notorious goals. It was therefore interesting to hear why Bally chose Maradona as his inspirational public figure. Firstly, he mentions Maradona's personality:

> **Bally:** ...he is world class someone I inspire to play like...generally I do aspire to be as successful as him

Bally then moves the conversation quickly on to describe his turmoil in supporting the English football team.

> **Bally:** *...I don't mind supporting* [England] *obviously it's your country you want them to do well but then I think the fans more than anything they put me off supporting England. The way they come out with, you know the racial stuff. I'm not saying all England fans.*

The inclusion of three football images on Bally's collage demonstrates how the images served as anchors to a much deeper and wider issue than football. It is clear that without Bally's selection and interpretation of the football images we could miss an extremely important part of his identity constructions. Similarly to Sunni, the MOI collage gave Bally the chance to address delicate and painful aspects of his lived experience. The inclusion of the football images on his collage allowed Bally to provide verbal accounts that contextualised these images in relation to areas such as his national identity, experiences of racism and feelings of inclusion or exclusion.

Navigating and Negotiating Identity

Bally embraced the MOI experience, reflecting at the end of the data analysis that the visual nature of the MOI conversation suited him as a "man of few words". As the interview progressed, Bally became increasingly animated, realising that he was able to explain issues important to him. The conversation in the collage elicitation interview developed into a

reflection on the different aspects in his life where he constructs multiple negotiations on the axes of religion, tradition, and nationality whilst moving quickly between parallel individual identity positions that stem from global and popular cultural resources.

For example, Bally included two maps on his collage, one of India and one of England as important places to him. In the elicitation interview, a tension emerges between how he feels towards England and India, with Bally initially describing how he positions himself between two narratives, South Asian and Western.

> **Bally:** *In between yeah, because I'd like to say I could see myself as completely British because I've got probably more in common in terms of the way I live my life being British, morally, just general lifestyles things than probably being Indian, but I still couldn't say that because I don't see myself as being that.*

The British identity positions presented by Bally (rejecting) and in the previous case of Sunni (embracing) are described in previous work on ethnicity in the marketing literature (e.g. Askegaard et al. 2005). However, MOI offers much richer data on these identity positions and a better understanding of how these are created.

The mapping of Bally's identity gets more complex when Bally compares India to Britain and emphasises how he feels safer and more at home in England.

> **Bally:** *I mean i could not associate myself with that mentality* [Indian]*...here is much more cultured. There [India] if someone has done something to your daughter that person will get killed. Here* [England] *you cannot do the same thing...if someone will do something like that* [in England] *you are going to tell the police, I mean they could do the same thing but they are going to jail for the next 20-30 years.*

The collage elicitation interview further reveals the complex navigation and negotiation of Bally's Indian-British identity:

> **Bally:** *It's like, culturally I wouldn't say, when I go to India I couldn't really say I was an Indian. I come here* [England] *and I can't fully say.*

A further example is given of this negotiation later in the interview when Bally refers to the image of one of his preferred clothing brands, Lacoste. In his contextualisation of the image, Bally mentions that wearing such clothes in India makes him stand out, and feel isolated from local Indian people.

> **Bally:** *They know straight away even from looking at you. Even the clothes you wear they'll know straight away*

In the background of these vagabond like movements between Bally's identity positions are negative personal stories that influencing his identity constructions. The elicitation interview demonstrated how Bally's personal issues integrate and interfere with his political and social stance. For example, pointing to a photograph of his girlfriend, he explains she is British-Hindu, then describes how her family rejects him because of his Sikh identity and his belonging to the wrong caste.

> **Bally:** *Culturally it's hard. It's probably more difficult on her side of the family.*

The inclusion of an image of his girlfriend on his collage gave Bally the opportunity to provide a critical account of the caste system.

> **Bally:** *So, it's like nowadays it doesn't make a difference* [the Indian caste system]. *You don't know who is who, to some extent. And it's quite shocking sometimes to still think that you are still thinking like that when that stereotype almost is nothing in relation to him now. I mean Jatt was supposed to be a farmer in Sikh, if you are a Jatt that's like the top-class basically. And now I could say you could define me as a Jatt, but what have I got to do with farming? I live in a house, I don't own a farm, no tractor. It's like that doesn't relate to us.*

The cases of Sunni and Bally appear similar on the surface. They come from similar backgrounds, yet the narratives they bring to their self-identity collages and elicitation interviews, and the effects of these narratives on their lived experiences are very different. Sunni positions herself between two categories: British and Indian, and embraces her hyphenated identity. For Bally, on the other hand, his British and Indian cultures intersect with one another. Our MOI protocol is capable of drawing out the complexities of their identity negotiations. Structuring the elicitation interview around the collages also took participants, like Sunni, back to critical points in their lives, such as traumatic childhood experiences of bullying, which allowed them to evaluate these points from a new perspective. The mind mapping stage of the protocol also helped participants to analyse the complexities of their self-identity. For Bally, it was at this stage where he became conscious of the integral role of his Sikh community and its traditions to his identity constructions.

Discussion

The motivation of this paper is to offer a participatory visual methodology, Mapping Of Identity (MOI). The cases of Sunni and Bally demonstrate that our MOI protocol brings rich (in quality and variety) data that affords multi-dimensional insight into complex research phenomena such as self-identity. The creation of the participants' self-identity collages, along with the reflection process offered in the elicitation interview gave participants multiple opportunities to express their stories, observations, ideas, emotions, and activities visually and verbally. This afforded rich insight into the complexities of their self-identities, with the collage serving as a platform on which they brought together disjointed memories, fragments, and thoughts through emplotment (the assemblage of multiple narratives within one overall "plot").

We distance ourselves from the view that visual artefacts hold concrete meanings. Instead, we consider that each visual artefact our participants chose to assemble in their collage has a wide range of possible meanings. Visual experiences can mediate and have very different functions depending on how they are produced, consumed and reused in different contexts. Hence there is an agency for our participants which is understood as a process of choice between these possibilities and negotiating what these possibilities determinate. These possibilities are of course constrained by available historical and social conventions and distribution of power (Foucault et al. 1998).

One of the most fundamental aspects of working with visual artefacts and reflecting on them is that they offer the opportunity for the participants to see things in a new and different way.

Engeström (1990) points out that humans need and use mediating artefacts to stabilize future-oriented images or visions of their activities. Understanding the use of images in this sense, and being aware of this kind of future-oriented function of visual artefacts is a challenge for visual researchers. Taking into consideration the nature of negotiating the meaning of visual artefact, it is clear that close collaboration between researcher and participant is required in the MOI collage. The outcomes of the MOI protocol demonstrate that it encouraged thoughtful reflection, wider discussion and emotional engagement by participants.

The participatory process of the MOI methodology ensured our participants felt that they were meaningful collaborators in knowledge production. We contend that asking participants to collect visual artefacts from different corners of their lives is effective in grounding the data in the setting of interest (e.g. self-identity) and better representing the participants' lived experiences, which increases the validity and relevance of the data. This strategy proved successful with participants enjoying the process of pondering what images to select for the collage. The two stages of participant briefing, along with the pre-interview activity removed barriers to participation and inhibitions about revealing sensitive information with MOI proving to be an effective tool at converting passive informants into active participants.

Ethical Considerations

The use of self-identity collages that consist of images and photographs of participants, their friends or family members raises the concern of preserving anonymity and confidentiality. The use of these images potentially brings greater risk to individuals living in marginalised communities where increased visibility potentially compromises their safety or their position in the community (Griffith et al. 2017). A further ethical predicament was the confidentiality of the content presented in photographs. For example, a participant might select an image containing information that should not be disclosed or presented outside its existing context about the participant or others, such as sensitive information that might compromise a member of their family. On the other side of the dilemma of maintaining participant confidentiality is a debate on the implications of directing or limiting what research participants capture. To resolve this dilemma, pseudonyms, selected by the participant were used, and any identifying features on photographs or images were blocked out before external dissemination of participant visuals by the researchers (Pink 2012, p. 21). Before participants created the collage they were briefed that if photographs selected depicted other individuals they needed to obtain consent from the relevant party before using it on the collage.

Overcoming Challenges of MOI and Future Research Directions

A pragmatic challenge of implementing self-identity collage-elicitation as a data collection method is the potential of damaging artefacts with sentimental value, such as precious family photographs. To overcome this, in the initial briefing, participants were encouraged to take a photograph of the image they want to use, to avoid using original photographs.

A key challenge of MOI is that it is time-consuming for the participant. To sustain the relationship with each participant we were clear with the participant from the recruitment stage about how time intensive the protocol was. We discussed all of the elements involved (data collection and data analysis) with potential participants, reinforcing the importance of

each stage. We found that the participants enjoyed the methodology and involvement in the data analysis, with many remarking on how therapeutic they found the methodology.

The rich data the MOI protocol generated demonstrates that visual resources are a powerful tool, particularly where the research subject is complex, multiple and/or liquid. We encourage researchers to relinquish the expert position to the participants and to involve them in the data interpretation and mapping of the findings.

A next step might be for researchers to use the protocol to conduct a longitudinal study. The recording of participants' identity negotiations at different points in time, and under different circumstances would provide an even richer insight into the fluidity of consumer identity. Having applied the MOI protocol to the exploration of consumers' narratives, we can see that it is a suitable tool for other areas of marketing. One clear direction is the use of MOI in research on branding and customer experience.

We hope that our MOI protocol encourages the development of alternative ways to conduct visual participatory research that gives place to participants' multiple and fluid voices. We encourage future researchers to use visual research tools, like our MOI protocol, to engage individuals and communities whose voices might otherwise be unheard, and to empower participants through allowing for the documentation of experiences from their perspective (Riley and Manias 2004) and to in turn bring hidden voices to light.

Conclusion

Existent research tools have been inadequate in their quest to create a more elaborated, historically situated, culturally aware and less simplistic model of the self (Kerrigan and Hart 2016; Schau 2018). Our MOI protocol, through the employment of visual collage and mind mapping, provides a promising method for exploring and celebrating the complexities of self-identity that is capable of pursuing a more colourful, vivid and invigorated mapping of self-identity. We provide detailed guidance on how we took a collaborative approach to data generation, interpretation and analysis. Our MOI protocol, as a participatory visual method that is inclusive and empowering for both the participant and the researcher, and afforded a richer insight into the complexities of the self, as constituted by multiple dialogues and narratives that a non-visual research method might struggle to access.

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