

Educating Brands? How Integrating Behavioural Insights, Influential Marketing and Consumer Decision-Making Can Elevate Consumer Literacy in Fashion Branding.

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the influence of behavioural insights and marketing techniques on fashion consumer decision-making. It strategically identifies core behavioural elements, assesses their application in marketing, and examines consumer perceptions. Understanding and leveraging these insights enables businesses to effectively tailor their marketing efforts to resonate with their target audience. The reviewed literature provides a comprehensive integration of research from marketing, psychology, and behavioural science. The research methodology involves a qualitative survey encompassing 197 fashion consumers, as well as interviews with a psychologist and a digital merchandiser. Through this approach, the study sheds light on the impact of emotional factors, cognitive biases, social influence, and personality on decision-making. These findings illustrate how marketing strategies utilize these insights to influence consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. The study highlights the utilization of AI technology to target consumers based on behavioural data, with potential implications for transforming market research. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to comprehensively understand fashion consumer behaviour, given that self-reported data may not fully represent actual behaviours. The outcomes of this study not only validate existing research but also contribute to a more holistic understanding of fashion consumer behaviour. Future research initiatives could explore demographic variables, levels of fashion involvement, and cross-cultural comparisons. Moreover, combining self-reported data with objective measures promises to provide deeper insights into the subconscious factors that influence decision-making.

Keywords: behavioural insights, influential marketing techniques, fashion consumer decision-making, consumer behaviour, brand

INTRODUCTION

The foundation of effective marketing efforts lies in prioritizing the customer over the product, recognizing customers as the driving force behind demand (Jackson and Shaw, 2017). In today's market, consumers wield significant power, with unfettered access to brand information and constantly evolving needs. To maintain competitiveness, companies must devote themselves to understanding the preferences of their target audience (Jackson and Shaw, 2017). Consumer behaviour is intricate and changeable (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2018). By applying psychological theories and principles, marketers can gain insight into and influence consumer decision-making, thus reclaiming influence in the market (Foxall, 1997). In the fashion industry, a thorough understanding of consumer behaviour is pivotal to devising successful marketing strategies (Haugtvedt, Herr, & Kardes, 2018) and forecasting consumers choices (Jackson and Shaw, 2017).

Marketers can employ persuasive techniques based on psychological factors to craft impactful campaigns (Baryshnikova, 2017). In the digital sphere, behavioural data and insights serve as potent instruments for digital marketers, enabling the analysis of consumer behaviour patterns, formulation of targeted strategies, and development of resonant products (Rathore, 2018).

This paper offers a novel perspective on the factors that influence fashion consumer decision-making and their application to marketing strategies aimed at influencing consumers towards desired outcomes. The convergence of marketing, psychology, and behavioural science presents a comprehensive understanding of their interconnectedness, amplifying this particular field of research that lacks in-depth investigation. The interdisciplinary nature of the study affords a significant advantage, enabling a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in fashion consumer behaviour. By challenging the assumption that consumers always possess a clear and accurate understanding of their own preferences and behaviours, this research presents a distinctive viewpoint. It transcends superficial observations by bringing attention to potential disparities between self-perception and authentic decision-making processes. This psychological perspective provides a more encompassing understanding of the multifaceted factors underpinning consumer decisions, including personal identity, social influences, and emotional motivations. These critical considerations are frequently overlooked in studies focusing solely on marketing strategies or consumer behaviour. By addressing these aspects, this research contributes to a more conscientious and precise understanding of fashion consumer decision-making. Furthermore, this research showcases how psychology can be leveraged to comprehend consumers, conceivably even better than they understand themselves. If brands possess a comprehensive understanding of their customers, it is plausible that they can regain influence. The findings not only enhance the understanding of consumer behaviour but also furnish actionable insights for fashion businesses looking to create deeper connections with their target audiences.

The research aims to explore the influence of behavioural insights and persuasive marketing techniques on the decision-making process of fashion consumers. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the fundamental behavioural insights that impact fashion consumer decision-making.
2. To evaluate the application of these behavioural insights in persuasive marketing techniques.
3. To gauge consumer perceptions regarding the implications of behavioural insights in fashion marketing.

THE SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND

Behavioural insights of consumers in the fashion industry

Consumer behaviour investigation holds significant importance, as existing literature affirms that fashion marketers have the potential to formulate influential strategies that resonate with consumers on a psychological level. This resonance can result in increased engagement, brand loyalty, and targeted effective sales outcomes (Haugtvedt et al., 2018). Rathore (2018) defines consumer behaviour as the series of steps individuals take to select, acquire, utilize, and terminate goods, services, concepts, or experiences in order to satisfy desires and needs. Consumer purchasing behaviour is fundamentally influenced by self-concepts derived from both internal (psychological and physical) and external (sociological and demographic) factors (Jackson and Shaw, 2017). The decision-making process is initiated when individuals encounter situations that impact their internal and external characteristics. Szmigin and Piacentini (2018) underscore the significance of delving into various aspects of behaviour shapers, such as consumer traits, personality, motivation, perception, cognitive biases, social influence, self-concept, and emotions.

Influential marketing techniques

The prevailing consensus in marketing literature is that understanding consumer behaviour and devising strategies to preempt and address it are pivotal to achieving success (Baryshnikova, 2017; Foxall, 1997; Nash, 2019). By employing purposive influential marketing techniques that resonate with the specific attributes of diverse consumer groups, it becomes feasible to shape and foresee consumer behaviour (Baryshnikova, 2017). The consistent implementation of persuasive techniques across all facets of the marketing mix is paramount in shaping consumer purchasing decisions (Foxall, 1997).

In divergence from traditional methodologies that accentuated product attributes, contemporary digital fashion marketing focuses on immersive consumer experiences that transcend the product itself, considering and leveraging cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors influencing consumer behaviour (Rathore, 2018). Rathore (2018) contends that pivotal strategies encompass storytelling, influencer collaborations, and ethical sustainability narratives. Social media and influencers play an essential role, tapping into both social and psychological catalysts, while sustainability-focused campaigns address personal and cultural factors, as brands focus on crafting narratives that align with consumers' lifestyles, values, and aspirations (Nash, 2019). Consumer preferences drive fashion trends, and concomitantly, strategic marketing strategies are influenced by consumer purchasing behaviour (Rathore, 2018).

The decision-making process of a fashion consumer

The process of decision-making encompasses several integral stages, including the identification of wants or needs, evaluation of alternatives, decision making, and subsequent assessment (Lunenburg, 2010). Consumer decisions are influenced by prior experiences, advice from acquaintances, interactions with sales professionals, and individual product research. Furthermore, environmental factors provided by marketers, such as advertisements, store classification, and pricing, exert a substantial impact on consumer choices (Payne et al., 1991). Payne et al. (1991) assert that this process is psychologically distinct for every individual, taking into account personal inclinations, contemporary trends, financial considerations, and various other influences, including affective states. Stankevitch (2017) delves into the intricacies of consumer behavioural psychology, identifying trends such as variety and experiences, hyper-efficiency, and super-personalization (Stankevitch, 2017). The research underscores the growing significance of environmental and social causes in consumer decision-making, underscoring the imperative for brands to genuinely align with these values. According to Stankevitch (2017), consumer decision-making procedures have transcended the traditional funnel model, necessitating a more sophisticated approach. A thorough comprehension of the attributes of contemporary generations is pivotal for establishing meaningful connections with consumers throughout various touchpoints during their shopping journey and post-purchase. Additionally, the study proposes an exploration of generational disparities in consumer behaviour.

Consumer personality and brand preference

The primary aim of a marketer is typically to establish a meaningful connection with customers, rather than focusing solely on making individual sales. Ideally, this relationship entails a bond between the buyer and the brand. Alreck and Settle (1999) propose six strategies for cultivating this bond: linking the brand to a specific need, associating it with positive emotions, appealing to unconscious motivations, conditioning buyers to favour the brand through rewards, overcoming cognitive barriers to create preference, and providing appealing role models for buyers to emulate.

Malär et al. (2011) conducted a comprehensive study to examine the alignment of a brand's personality with the consumer's authentic or ideal self. This study offered a nuanced exploration of the contrast between the traditional emphasis on ideal beauty and the burgeoning trend towards authenticity and realism in

branding. The research findings indicate that brands tailored to consumers' authentic selves are markedly more effective in cultivating emotional connections. Factors such as product involvement, self-esteem, and self-consciousness were identified as pivotal determinants in the efficacy of both authentic and ideal self-congruence. Furthermore, the study challenges the efficacy of aspirational branding strategies, positing that while they may yield favourable outcomes in specific contexts, they necessitate judicious consideration to preclude the formulation of unrealistic brand promises. Malär et al. (2011) advocates for authentic branding strategies congruent with consumers' authentic selves, presenting compelling evidence of their superiority in fostering emotional brand attachment, particularly in contexts where consumers may derive benefit from self-enhancement or where low product involvement predominates.

In support of Malär et al. (2011), Bairrada et al. (2019) conducted an investigatory inquiry into the influence of brand personality on brand love and its subsequent ramifications on various consumer behaviours. The findings underscore the considerable impact of brand personality on brand love, subsequently influencing a spectrum of outcomes encompassing brand loyalty, word-of-mouth endorsement, resilience to adverse information, willingness to pay a premium, self-disclosure, and active engagement. Bairrada et al. (2019) accentuate the significance of emotional connections between consumers and brands, emphasizing the pivotal role of brand love in steering consumer behavior, thereby suggesting that the cultivation of brand personalities resonating emotionally with consumers can yield favourable outcomes within the domain of fashion marketing.

In a study complementing the undertakings of Malär et al. (2011) and Bairrada et al. (2019), Mulyanegara et al. (2009) explored the ramifications of specific dimensions of "The Big Five personality traits" on preferences for various facets of brand personality. This study proffered profound insights into the nexus between consumer personality traits and brand preferences. For instance, conscientious individuals were demonstrated to evince a proclivity for 'Trusted' brands, while extroverted individuals were discerned to be swayed by 'Sociable' brands. Mulyanegara et al. (2009) posited that personality-based segmentation can be adroitly harnessed to target varying customer segments through the promotion of brand personalities resonant with individual personality traits, while also highlighting gender disparities in brand preferences, particularly pertaining to 'Trusted' brands, thereby impelling specific implications for brand managers endeavouring to engage male and female consumers.

Irrationality and cognitive biases

Numerous economic models and theories have been formulated based on the premise of "Homo Economicus" or the "economic man" concept. According to this concept, individuals are perceived as rational decision-makers who consistently endeavour to maximize their utility and adhere to their 'true' preferences (Smith, 1776). However, research in behavioural economics has revealed that human nature is susceptible to biases, heuristics, and irrationalities, significantly impacting consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of purchasing decisions (Reisch and Zhao, 2017). Five key biases have been identified as strongly influencing consumer behaviour in the fashion market: anchoring bias, availability heuristic, confirmation bias, authority bias, and social proof (Xiang, 2021). For instance, the anchoring bias, as proposed by Tversky and Kahneman (1974), pertains to the inclination of individuals to base their judgments on the initial piece of information received, known as the anchor. Within the context of fashion, this bias is observable as consumers heavily relying on the initial price they encounter, irrespective of its true value (Xiang, 2021). Similarly, the availability heuristic, outlined by Tversky and Kahneman (1973), posits that individuals often make decisions based on readily available information. In the fashion market, consumers may gravitate towards purchasing products extensively featured in advertisements or on social media, assuming their popularity or trendiness. Furthermore, cognitive biases significantly influence how individuals perceive and conform to social influences in fashion. For example, confirmation bias, identified by Wason (1960), embodies the tendency to seek information that confirms existing beliefs or preferences.

In the fashion context, this could lead to consumers dismissing numerous positive reviews in favour of a single negative one, thus reinforcing their decision not to make a purchase (Yin et al., 2016). Additionally, consumers exhibit authority bias (Milgram, 1963), tending to trust experts or perceived authorities in the fashion industry, such as designers or fashion magazines, assuming that their popularity signifies a wise choice. This behaviour aligns with social proof, as described by Cialdini (1984), occurring when individuals conform their choices to the behaviours and preferences of others.

Socially influenced consumer preferences

Loureiro et al. (2017) offer valuable insights into the multifaceted factors driving consumer behaviour in the fashion industry. Firstly, participants are motivated by various factors, including inspirational ensembles, product and brand endorsements, self-identification with style, and considerations of value. Secondly, there is considerable impact of social influence over individual vanity in shaping the predisposition to acquire and utilize fashion items. Additionally, exhibitionist tendencies, exemplified by the inclination to attract attention through discussions about fashion, which correlates with the intensity of their desire for fashion are worth mentioning. Loureiro et al. (2017) underscore the scrutiny of narcissism components in the fashion context, illuminating the interplay between social and individual motivations in fashion acquisition. Loureiro et al.'s (2017) research significantly advances the understanding of the intricate psychological drivers underpinning consumer decision-making in the fashion milieu.

Emotional aspect of decision-making

Atalay and Meloy (2011) conducted an in-depth inquiry into the psychological underpinnings of retail therapy, presenting empirical evidence derived from comprehensive studies. Their research unearthed that individuals partake in unpremeditated purchases to regulate their emotional state, particularly amidst negative affective states. Contrary to prevailing assumptions, these purchases yield enduring positive effects with minimal adverse consequences, thereby challenging the conventional notion of post-purchase regret or cascading behavioural patterns. The authors posited that retail therapy constitutes a constructive consumer behaviour aimed at mood modulation, thus enriching our understanding of the intricate interplay between mood states, impulsive purchasing, and consumer welfare within retail settings.

Achar et al. (2016) complemented the seminal findings of Atalay and Meloy (2011) regarding impulsive purchases as mechanisms for mood amelioration, delving into the pervasive influence of emotions on consumer decision-making processes, whether they are embedded in marketing stimuli or emanate from extrinsic sources. Emotions wield a significant sway over decision-making dynamics, both when conjoined with the product and when incited by unrelated stimuli. Despite prevailing perceptions of emotional influence as deleterious, the research amplifies the potential benefits of emotions, including their facilitative role in self-regulation and promotion of judicious decision-making. Consumers' strategic orchestration of emotional regulation through consumption, as exemplified in "retail therapy," and in decision-making endeavours conducive to emotional equilibrium is noteworthy to observe. The investigation emphasizes the imperative of an enhanced comprehension of the emotive influence on decision-making processes and persuasion strategies within the realm of fashion consumer behaviour.

Persuasive marketing techniques and consumer decision-making

The fashion industry is significantly influenced by emotional connections, which play a vital role in shaping brand evaluation and fostering consumer loyalty (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). It is essential to deeply understand consumer desires, aspirations, and experiences to formulate effective brand strategies that go beyond traditional product attributes. Emotional branding strategies such as sensory branding, storytelling, cause branding, and empowerment have proven effective in engaging consumers and creating lasting brand

associations (Kim & Sullivan, 2019). In marketing, both positive response strategies and deliberate evocation of negative emotions are employed to influence consumer attitudes. For instance, negative emotions are often deliberately evoked in charity campaigns to raise awareness about poverty in third-world countries, prompting consumers to contribute and increase social awareness (Coyle & Thorson, 2001).

The popularity of online platforms such as YouTube and Instagram has increased consumer reliance on user-generated content (UGC) for product information, particularly in the fashion domain, where peer opinions significantly influence purchase decisions. UGC is viewed as more credible than producer-generated content (PGC), as it portrays authenticity and impartiality (Cheong & Morrison, 2008). Social media influencers, especially in the fashion domain, have a substantial impact on consumer trends and purchase behaviours. They exert influence through their endorsements, highlighting the importance of understanding the factors that shape consumer attitudes towards influencers, including perceived credibility, trust, subjective norms, and expertise (Chetioui et al., 2020).

Given the burgeoning impact of social media on fashion marketing, an in-depth understanding of the influence exerted by FIs on consumers becomes imperative. By applying the theory of planned behaviour, Chetioui et al. (2020) delineates the factors shaping attitudes towards FIs. The intrinsic correlation between positive attitudes towards FIs and both brand sentiment and purchase intention are present. Additionally, perceived credibility, trust, behavioural control, subjective norms, expertise, and perceived congruence assert a positive influence on attitudes towards FIs. The profound impact of FIs in shaping consumer perspectives of brands through their endorsements is worth noting. Hence, a comprehensive comprehension of this construct would enable marketers to foster trust beyond producer-generated content through the strategic employment of suitable influencers to cultivate credible social proof.

The creation of a sense of limited availability or time-sensitive offers has a positive impact on product desirability; it stimulates a fear of missing out and encourages swift purchase decisions (Amaldoss and Jain, 2005; Inman et al., 1997; Van Herpen et al., 2009). Koch and Benlian (2015) investigated how scarcity and personalization affect consumer referral behaviour, particularly in online fashion services, which are crucial in today's digital era where word-of-mouth recommendations are omnipresent. Their findings indicate that scarcity cues increase referral propensity, especially when the offer value is high. Additionally, personalisation boosts referrals, particularly in existing consumer-marketer relationships. However, the effectiveness of personalization diminishes when scarcity cues are present, indicating a crowding-out effect. These strategies drive referral behaviour by creating urgency and fostering gratitude. Further research is recommended to explore gender-specific effects, applicability across different models, and their impact on subsequent referral stages. Understanding consumers' perceptions of exclusive versus inclusive offers is imperative for marketers (Barone and Roy, 2010). Their research reveals that the perception of exclusivity significantly influences evaluations of customized price promotions. Depending on factors such as demographics and transactional histories, consumers may prefer exclusive deals or inclusive offers. There is a preference for exclusivity among consumers with independent self-construal and male consumers who previously purchased from the marketer (Barone and Roy, 2010). However, consumers lacking a strong loyalty to the brand may respond better to inclusive deals. The effectiveness of exclusive promotions depends on consumer self-construal, gender, and relationship equity with the marketer. Barone and Roy (2010) argue that tailored promotions can influence consumers' actions when aligned with their self-construal and past brand relationships.

The consumer landscape is witnessing a growing inclination towards tailored shopping experiences driven by individual preferences and facilitated by 'Big Data' analytics (Silva et al., 2019). Fashion retailers are increasingly utilizing historical purchasing patterns to customize their offerings, meeting the escalating demand for personalized experiences. This alignment with trend forecasting platforms such as Edited and

WGSN reflects a noticeable shift towards data-informed decision-making. Moreover, real-time analysis of social media data empowers brands like Zara and Burberry to capitalize on emerging trends, thereby enriching consumer experiences (Silva et al., 2019). Furthermore, 'Big Data' plays a pivotal role in reducing returns, optimizing inventory, and streamlining supply chains, ultimately leading to enhanced operational efficiency and profitability. Through the application of advanced analytics and AI, retailers can proactively anticipate consumer needs, optimize production processes, and mitigate operational risks. Collaboration between fashion brands and data analytics firms to harness the full potential of 'Big Data' underscores the significance of data-informed practices and underscores the need for investment in data literacy programs to gain a competitive advantage in the digital marketplace (Silva et al., 2019). Shankar et al. (2021) delve into the transformative impact of AI-driven technologies on retailing, consumer behavior, and marketing, highlighting the increasing consumer preference for seamless experiences across multiple channels. This trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to widespread adoption of online ordering, click-and-collect, and robot-assisted operations. These technologies influence both the demand and supply sides of retailing as well as delivery. It is advisable to employ theoretical frameworks to comprehend the role of technology while addressing concerns related to privacy and trust (Shankar et al., 2019). Beyond reshaping retailing, technology enables adaptability to unforeseen circumstances. Davenport et al. (2020) propose a framework to comprehend the impact of AI, focusing on intelligence levels, task types, and AI integration with robots. AI's effectiveness lies in augmenting, rather than replacing, human managers, emphasizing the significance of human input in AI-driven marketing decisions (Davenport et al., 2020). Contrary to media hype, the researchers emphasize that AI's short to medium-term impact may be more moderate. They advocate for the marketing field to take the lead in discussions on AI, emphasizing a research agenda covering shifts in marketing strategies, customer behaviours, and concerns about data privacy and ethics. The study underscores the importance of ongoing AI research, highlighting its evolving impact on marketing. Davenport et al. (2020) recommend perceiving AI as a tool to enhance marketing strategies while preserving human expertise and ethical decision-making.

Trzaskowski (2011) advocates for the integration of insights from behavioural economics and neuroscience into the legal framework governing consumer behaviour. It is argued that understanding consumer decision-making beyond rational calculation is critical, particularly in the context of fashion marketing. The research underscores the significance of meticulously evaluating the impact of unfair commercial practices on the average consumer's economic behaviour and emphasizes the intricate nature of identifying and regulating such practices. This highlights the need for a profound understanding of consumer decision-making processes. Trzaskowski (2011) recommends the careful consideration of expert opinions from behavioural economics and neuroscience by the European Court of Justice when interpreting the directive, aiming to ensure that fashion brands align their marketing practices with principles of transparency and authenticity, while rigorously avoiding misleading or aggressive tactics.

Consumers reaction

The Cognitive Component Change Strategy, as expounded by Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010), encompasses a quartet of marketing strategies oriented toward the reconfiguration of attitudes, namely: altering beliefs, transposing significance, incorporating beliefs, and revising the ideal. This framework predicates that the alteration of consumer beliefs precipitates shifts in attitudes, thereby instigating organic alterations in behaviour. Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) underscore the behavioural facet, which delineates individuals' proclivities in relation to an activity or product, often preceding or conflicting with cognitive and emotional dimensions.

Riquelme's study in 2001 challenges the accuracy of consumers' self-awareness in decision-making and their ability to identify preferences. The research suggests that consumers may benefit from a clearer understanding of their mental processes. It argues that relying on mathematically calculated utilities, rather

than consumers' self-reported considerations, may yield more accurate predictions of preferences. In their 2010 work, Vazire and Carlson delve into the topic of self-perception accuracy using three distinct approaches: comparing self-perceptions to objective criteria, comparing self-perceptions to others' perceptions, and investigating individuals' awareness of the impressions they make on others. The study reveals that while individuals possess some degree of self-insight, substantial disparities exist between self-views and external perceptions, influenced by biases and motivated cognition. The findings underscore the importance of maintaining a balanced perspective on self-perception that acknowledges its inherent limitations.

The review of the scientific background provides valuable insights connecting behavioural insights, influential marketing, and fashion consumer decision-making. The research underscores the significance of aligning brand personalities with consumers' self-concepts to cultivate emotional connections and brand loyalty (Malär et al., 2011; Bairrada et al., 2019; Mulyanegara et al., 2009). Cognitive biases play a pivotal role in driving irrational consumer behaviour (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Xiang, 2021). Furthermore, social influence (Loureiro et al., 2017) and emotions are instrumental in shaping consumer decision-making (Atalay & Meloy, 2011; Achar et al., 2016). Persuasive marketing strategies, encompassing emotional marketing (Kim & Sullivan, 2019), social proof (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Chetioui et al., 2020), scarcity, exclusivity, and personalization (Koch & Benlian, 2015; Barone & Roy, 2010), exert a substantial influence on fashion consumer decision-making. Additionally, from a retail perspective, recent studies highlight the escalating significance of data-driven marketing and AI-driven technologies in monitoring and influencing purchasing behaviour (Silva et al., 2019; Shankar et al., 2021; Davenport et al., 2020). The findings underscore a gap in the literature: while individual studies may focus on specific aspects of this expansive subject, no single study explores how behavioural insights and influential marketing directly impact fashion consumer decision-making. Moreover, the literature does not address fashion consumers' awareness of their purchasing behaviours or their attitudes toward behavioural marketing. Further research is imperative to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

METHODS

To achieve the study's aim to explore the influence of behavioural insights and persuasive marketing techniques on the decision-making process of fashion consumers, both, primary and secondary research methods were employed. To accompany the scientific background data, qualitative research data were collated to explore consumer opinions, perceptions, and insights in a form of a survey.

According to Groves et al. (2009), a survey represents a systematic approach utilizing a predetermined set of inquiries to obtain data from a designated group (individuals or a subset of a population), resulting in numerical summaries that delineate the characteristics of the broader population to which these individuals belong. Surveys are frequently administered through online platforms and are tailored to elicit opinions, attitudes, behaviours, and demographic details, making them invaluable tools for market analysis and social science, facilitating orderly data collection and analysis (Jansen, 2010). The principal strength of surveys resides in their capacity to efficiently amass data from numerous respondents, rendering them a pragmatic option for studying extensive populations (Alessi & Martin, 2010). Standardized questions ensure uniformity and enable straightforward comparisons of responses. Furthermore, the provision of respondents' anonymity fosters forthright survey answers. Nevertheless, dependence solely on closed-ended questions mandates recognition of the limited context they offer for comprehensively understanding respondents' perspectives, leading to diminished insights, particularly pertaining to complex issues (Jansen, 2010). Furthermore, the reliance on self-reporting introduces potential influences from memory and social desirability, thus impinging upon the accuracy of the collected data (Doran & Hanss, 2017).

An extensive survey was conducted to further augment the primary research. The survey specifically targeted individuals with adequate disposable income for clothing purchases, with the objective of gathering diverse consumer opinions and perspectives. As a result, individuals under 18 were excluded given their lower likelihood of being employed or possessing significant disposable income. The inclusive nature of the participation aimed to broaden perspectives and gather diverse viewpoints to affirm the accuracy and reliability of the data. Deliberate inclusion of participants across various age demographics was intended to align with the study's emphasis on distinguishing consumer categories through behavioural insights. This deliberate approach toward a broad age range ensures accurate observations of variations in purchasing behaviours among diverse consumer segments and aims to secure a substantial sample for a comprehensive and representative understanding.

The survey was generated utilizing Google Forms and distributed across various social media platforms, including Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook, with the aim of maximizing response rates. Subsequently, responses were automatically tabulated and assessed, and visual representations of the findings were derived from graphs produced in Google Forms. The debriefing form delineated the study's objectives, elucidated the roles of participants, expounded upon potential benefits, and proffered information pertaining to privacy and confidentiality. Following this, participants confirmed their comprehension and provided consent. The survey encompassed queries of both open-ended and closed-ended nature, thereby affording participants the option to select from predetermined responses or elucidate in their own terminology. The inquiries delved into a range of themes encompassing emotional determinants, cognitive predispositions, brand predilections, social influences, persuasive marketing methodologies, as well as participants' perceived comprehension of marketing and purchasing behaviours.

The survey was distributed to 197 participants and the sample was primarily characterized by individuals aged 51-60 (35.5%) and 18-25 (29.4%). The gender distribution indicates a higher representation of women (77.2%) compared to men (22.8%). Notably, the largest occupational category comprises students (19.8%), followed by engineers (3.55%) and managers (3.05%). This diverse representation of age and occupational demographics provides valuable insights into distinct behavioural patterns related to age, gender, occupation, and purchasing behaviours.

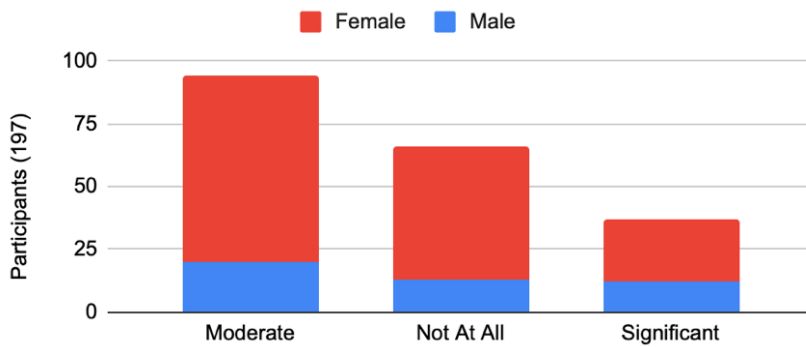
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings have been categorized based on inquiries into fundamental behavioural insights, encompassing emotions, bias, social influence, and personality. Subsequent to this categorization, there are inquiries assessing persuasive marketing techniques. Finally, the study presents findings from inquiries delving into consumers' perceived understanding of marketing and their purchasing behaviour.

The survey was designed to gather behavioural insights directly from consumers (Objective 1), to test the effects of marketing techniques (Objective 2), and to evaluate consumer awareness and ethical concerns (Objective 3). Distinct categories of responses meticulously collated from a representative sample encompass brand-image preference (Fig.1), brand resonance (Fig.2), retail therapy, the importance of online reviews, the external valuation (Fig.3), convenience, acquaintances opinions (Fig.4), societal expectations and peer pressure (Fig.5), brand loyalty, brand perceptions (Fig.6), and psychological awareness.

In the survey, it was found that 33.5% of the participants indicated that brand image similarity had no influence on their brand choice, while 18.8% stated that it significantly affected their decision (Fig.1). Furthermore, 47.7% of respondents reported a moderate influence of brand image similarity on their brand choice.

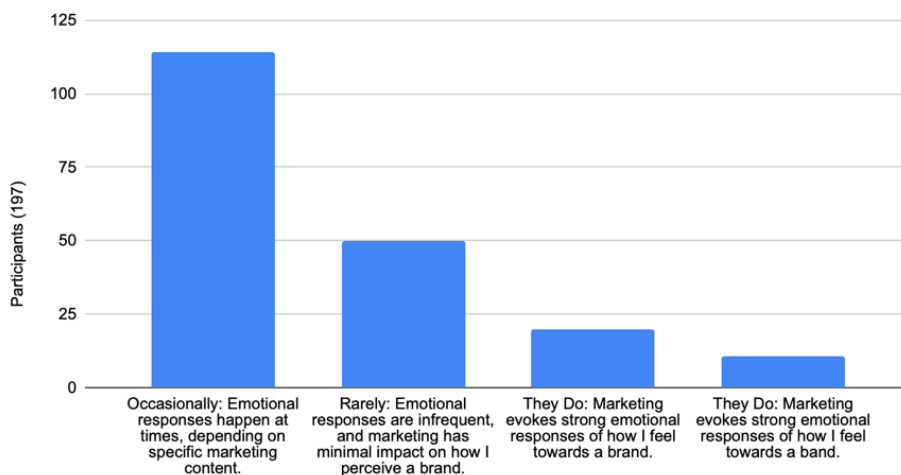
Figure 1: Brand image preference



Source: (authors’ own, generated from the survey)

The data indicates that promotional endeavours and brand associations embodying consumers’ self-concept or values possess the capacity to influence brand perception in 58% of respondents, with 25% expressing negligible impact (Fig.2). Moreover, 12% of respondents reported alterations in their emotional affinity toward a brand resulting from such initiatives.

Figure 2: Brand resonance



Source: (authors’ own, generated from the survey)

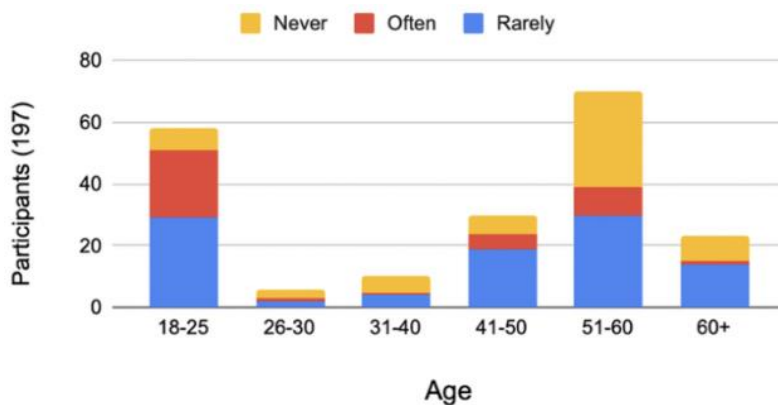
According to the survey data, 54.3% of the participants acknowledged utilizing “Retail Therapy” as a strategy for mood management, particularly prevalent among younger consumers, while 45.7% indicated abstaining from this practice.

In accordance with the survey findings, 72.1% of respondents articulated an unwillingness to disregard positive reviews in the event of a single negative review. However, an analysis of divergent age cohorts disclosed disparate reactions. The younger demographic exhibits a proclivity to accord significance to negative reviews, with a substantial segment manifesting scepticism towards positive reviews in the face of a singular negative review. Conversely, the elder demographic evinces a less discernible response to this phenomenon. The findings provide some valuable insights in relation to confirmation bias and consumers’ behaviours.

According to the data, 49.7% of respondents rarely consider fashion authorities for inspiration, while 19.8%

report being often influenced by them, and 30.5% stated that they never rely on authorities for fashion guidance (Fig.3). Significant variations are evident across different age groups, with a larger proportion of younger consumers expressing receptiveness to fashion authority influence compared to older demographics. Particularly noteworthy is the finding that a significantly larger proportion of consumers aged 51-60 declared that they never seek fashion guidance from authorities. The data unveil findings on the relationship between authority bias and consumers' purchasing preferences.

Figure 3: Authority bias

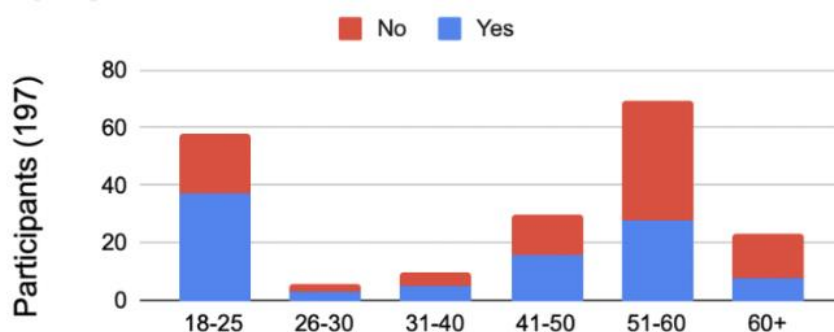


Source: (authors' own, generated from the survey)

The majority of respondents (57.9%) have conveyed that their purchasing decisions driven by convenience are contingent upon the nature of the product being offered. A significant percentage (24.6%) have expressed a tendency to abstain from the purchase of convenience items.

The findings derived from an extensive survey regarding the impact of peer fashion preferences on individual style decisions reveal a well-balanced distribution of perspectives among the surveyed population. The data shows that an equal number of respondents expressed being influenced and not influenced by their friends' fashion choices, with 49.5% affirming this influence and 50.5% negating it. Furthermore, a comparative analysis highlights age-related disparities, pinpointing younger consumers as more susceptible to the influence of their friends' fashion preferences.

Figure 4: Acquaintances' opinions

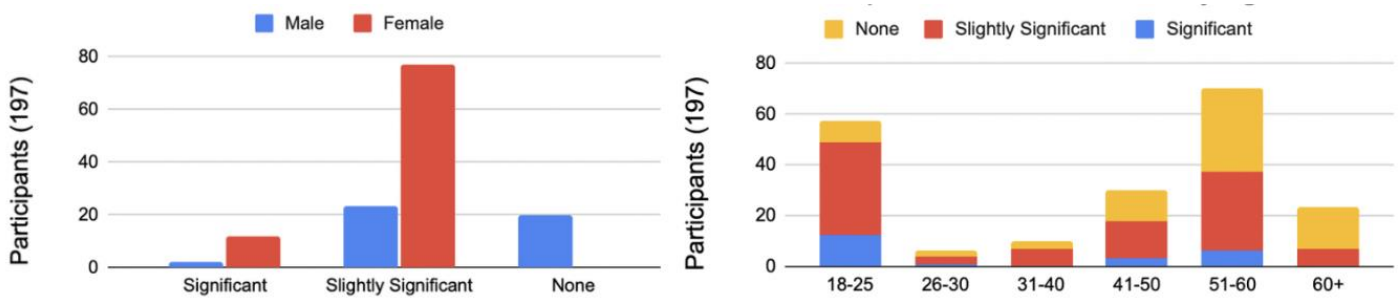


Source: (authors' own, generated from the survey)

The data pertaining to peer pressure and societal expectations indicates that 37.8% of respondents perceive no influence, while 11.2% consider this influence significant, and a majority of 51% perceive it as slightly significant. Moreover, the data suggests that female participants are more inclined to feel significantly

influenced by these external factors than their male counterparts. None of the female respondents reported that individual motivation outweighs peer pressure and societal expectations. In contrast, despite their significantly lower participation number, some male respondents felt no influence from peer pressure or societal expectations. Additionally, younger consumers demonstrate a higher prevalence of perceiving societal expectations as either slightly significant or significant in influencing their fashion purchases. As age increases, fewer respondents report feeling societal pressure, and a growing proportion indicate no influence from peer pressure or societal expectations.

Figure 5: Societal expectations and peer pressure

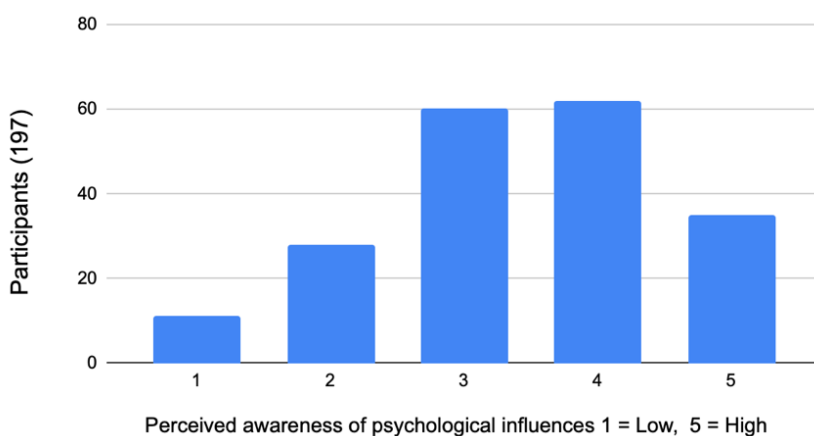


Source: (authors' own, generated from the survey)

According to the findings of the survey, 49.2% of the participants have indicated that they have developed a sense of loyalty to a fashion brand due to its alignment with their personality. Nevertheless, a slightly larger proportion (50.8%) have stated that they have not developed a sense of loyalty.

The data elucidates the participants' perceptions of their cognizance regarding psychological factors influencing their discernment of fashion items that could be utilised by brands. Responses exhibited variance across a five-point scale, with the preponderance of participants (31.6%) denoting a heightened level of awareness by selecting number 4 on the scale, closely pursued by 30.6% expounding a moderate level of 3 (Fig.6). Conversely, minute proportions positioned themselves at the extremities of the awareness spectrum, with 5.6% expressing minimal awareness and 17.9% imputing themselves with the utmost level of awareness. These findings collectively underscore individuals' self-perceptions regarding their comprehension of psychological influences in fashion, signifying disparate degrees of attentiveness to these factors among consumers.

Figure 6: Brand perceptions



Source: (authors' own, generated from the survey)

The survey responses regarding the utilization of behavioural insights in advertising encompass a spectrum of viewpoints. A notable proportion of respondents (27.67%) perceive it as advantageous, citing tailored recommendations and efficiencies in time utilization. Another faction (23.36%) raises apprehensions about its potentially manipulative or intrusive nature, emphasizing concerns related to privacy and individual autonomy. A subset of respondents (18.49%) adopts a judicious standpoint, postulating that its acceptability hinges upon contextual and individualized circumstances. Meanwhile, a smaller cohort (9.27%) adopts a neutral position or expresses no definitive viewpoint, and another segment (8.26%) articulates ethical reservations regarding the practice. By and large, the debate orbits the equilibrium between the personalized marketing advantages and the prospective ethical ramifications of leveraging consumer data for advertising purposes.

In order to formulate potent strategies that deeply resonate with consumers on a psychological level (Haugtvedt et al., 2018), it is imperative for brands to prioritize the cultivation of immersive consumer experiences that extend beyond the mere product. Understanding and leveraging cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors are inherently paramount in influencing consumer behaviour (Rathore, 2018). A refined and sophisticated approach to marketing stands as a *sine qua non* for establishing meaning-laden connections with the current generation, who demand a more intricate understanding of their characteristics (Stankevitch, 2017). Through the adoption of such an approach, brands can elevate engagement, cultivate brand loyalty, and attain targeted and effective sales objectives. The primary aim of this study was to comprehend these behavioural insights, influential marketing strategies, and their profound influence on the decision-making process of fashion consumers, thereby effectively acquiring the research objectives.

The cited literature encompasses publications by Malär et al. (2011), Bairrada et al. (2019), Mulyanegara et al. (2009), Tversky and Kahneman (1974), Xiang (2021), Loureiro et al. (2017), Atalay and Meloy (2011), Achar et al. (2016), Riquelme (2001), and Vazire and Carlson (2010). These sources elucidate various aspects of consumer behaviour, including the alignment of brand personalities with consumers' self-concepts, the influence of cognitive biases, the impact of social influence on consumer preferences, and the role of emotions and self-perception in decision-making. The research findings substantiate the prevalence of 'retail therapy' as a phenomenon whereby consumers engage in spontaneous purchases to boost their mood, particularly evident among younger consumers using it to manage their emotional state. This challenges the common presumption that impulsive purchases invariably yield regret or negative consequences, thus warranting further investigation. Moreover, the study identifies a prevailing reluctance among the majority of respondents to exhibit confirmation bias, indicating its limited relevance to marketers. This differs from the findings of Yin, Mitra, and Zhang (2016), who underscore how confirmation bias may lead consumers to disregard positive reviews in favour of a single negative one. Additionally, the authority bias resonates significantly with a notable portion of participants, particularly younger individuals who often seek fashion inspiration from authoritative sources, aligning with the concept of social proof put forth by Cialdini (1984) and supported by the work of Milgram (1963). The research suggests that irrational and impulsive decisions made by fashion consumers may stem from a lack of information, cognitive biases, and emotional responses. This insight can be harnessed by marketers to predict irrational purchases, emphasizing the need to consider both rational and irrational elements in consumer decision-making processes.

The Cognitive Component Change Strategy proposed by Hawkins & Mothersbaugh (2010) entails the modification of consumer beliefs to influence attitudes and behaviour. According to the authors, although marketing may not directly alter cognitive processes, it can influence the presentation of information to consumers, thereby impacting their attitudes and behaviours. The four marketing strategies – changing beliefs, shifting importance, adding beliefs, and changing the ideal – indicate that marketers can shape the presentation of information to consumers to influence their perceptions and priorities (Hawkins &

Mothersbaugh, 2010). This underscores the interconnected nature of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects in consumer decision-making, emphasizing the potential influence of marketing efforts. Accordingly, it is implied that fashion marketers should meticulously curate the information they provide, ensuring that it aligns with the targeted beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

The empirical evidence and antecedent scholarly works (Amaldoss & Jain, 2005; Inman et al., 1997; Van Herpen et al., 2009; Koch & Benlian, 2015) collectively affirm that instilling a perception of constrained availability or time-sensitive offers yields a positive impact on product desirability and engenders expeditious purchase decisions. This concurs with survey findings delineating that individuals exhibit proclivities toward impromptu fashion acquisitions predicated on exclusivity and limited availability, irrespective of initial purchasing intentions. Barone and Roy's (2010) research identified a predisposition towards exclusivity among male consumers with previous brand affiliations. Nevertheless, survey outcomes evince commensurate propensities across genders for engaging in impromptu purchases, indicating that the influence of exclusivity on purchase behaviour may not invariably manifest in gender-specific patterns. To gain nuanced insights into these differentiations, additional scrutiny may seek to replicate Barone and Roy's (2010) study within the current milieu, employing a sample composition and methodology parallel to the initial survey. This could reveal whether divergences stem from shifts in consumer conduct over time or other factors associated with the study's configuration and sample attributes. The research findings and extant studies underscore the efficacy of scarcity marketing methodologies, including the promotion of restricted availability or time-bound offers, in propelling sales. Nevertheless, maintaining equipoise between exclusive propositions and inclusive marketing stratagems is imperative to sustain brand versatility and broaden appeal to a comprehensive consumer base. Moreover, fashion marketers should eschew circumscribing scarcity marketing endeavours to a specific gender, instead striving for wider audience outreach. Ongoing research remains imperative for fashion marketers to vigilantly monitor consumer trends and predilections.

The empirical evidence indicates that the establishment of an emotional bond is exceedingly pivotal in cultivating an initial rapport with a brand, thereby underscoring the indispensability of storytelling as a fundamental constituent in efficacious brand establishment. This corroborates the paramount importance emphasized by Kim and Sullivan (2019) on emotive branding methodologies, particularly storytelling, as a means to engross consumers profoundly and instigate favourable brand affiliations. Furthermore, the survey findings accentuate the substantial reliance on social influence among the younger demographic, necessitating meticulous consideration for future marketing strategies. This bolsters the propositions set forth by Chetioui et al. (2020) regarding the pivotal role that fashion influencers and industry authorities exert upon the consumer perception of a brand, irrespective of the robustness of the brand's narrative. This dovetails with the argument delineated by Cheong and Morrison (2008) regarding the prioritization of user-generated content over producer-generated content. Moreover, the findings delineate discernible disparities across age cohorts, with the 18-25 age bracket espousing user-generated content and the 51-60 age cohort evincing a predilection toward brand narratives. Consequently, it is cautioned against the indiscriminate generalization of these findings across all age strata. To ensure seamless brand uniformity, fashion marketers are exhorted to embrace an omnichannel approach. Cohesion with influencers can efficaciously target the younger audience, whereas emotional branding strategies, inclusive of storytelling, resonate across all age brackets, particularly with older consumers who espouse the utmost faith in brand narratives. A harmonious amalgamation of user-generated content and riveting brand narratives holds sway over diverse age cohorts. Marketers should be cognizant that the amiss propagation of affirmative social influence surrounding their brand may consign their branding narratives to obsolescence, particularly vis-à-vis younger and forthcoming audiences.

The survey data illustrates that a majority of participants perceived themselves as possessing heightened awareness regarding the psychological factors influencing their perceptions of fashion items. Specifically,

31.6% rated themselves as a 4 out of 5, while 30.6% rated a moderate 3 out of 5. Additionally, 17.9% reported the highest level of awareness, with only a small proportion (5.6%) indicating minimal awareness. Sole reliance on observational data, such as sales patterns and results, is limited in perspective. This contrasts with Riquelme's (2001) suggestion of using mathematical predictions for consumer preferences. Vazire and Carlson's (2010) research suggests that individuals may possess limited insight into their psychological processes and behaviours, which could account for the observed discrepancy between the participants' self-reported high awareness and their actual understanding. The survey results unveil diverse consumer perspectives on utilizing behavioural insights in marketing to influence purchases. The prevailing viewpoint is its beneficial nature, as it can lead to tailored recommendations and save time, signifying that consumers are amenable to this approach when it is advantageous to them. However, many view it as manipulative or invasive, raising concerns about privacy and autonomy. It is advisable for businesses to enhance consumer literacy to ensure individuals comprehend how their data is used and how marketing strategies may influence their purchasing decisions. Moreover, a commitment to improving well-being can help ensure that the use of behavioural insights is perceived as advantageous rather than detrimental to consumers. By equipping consumers with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions, businesses can cultivate a sense of trust and transparency, as also underscored by Trzaskowski (2011) and Shankar et al. (2020). This can alleviate ethical concerns and pave the way for personalized experiences rooted in authentic consumer preferences rather than manipulative tactics.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the influence of behavioural insights and marketing techniques on the decision-making processes of fashion consumers. It utilized an interdisciplinary approach that synthesized principles from psychology, marketing, and behavioural economics to address a discernible lacuna in the extant literature, elucidating the intricate interplay of these disciplines. Through the amalgamation of theories and concepts from disparate fields, the study generated findings that exhibit both theoretical rigor and pragmatic applicability. Leveraging behavioural insights, fashion marketers are empowered to craft precise strategies that resonate with consumers, exert influence on their behaviour, and their perceptions, attitudes, and actions toward predefined objectives. Subverting the convention of rational decision-making, the study brought to light disparities between consumers' perceived awareness and their actionable behaviours, thereby underscoring the imperative for an interdisciplinary framework that seamlessly integrates psychology and behavioural science to achieve a more profound comprehension of consumers. This, in turn, enables marketers to devise strategies of heightened effectiveness.

To enhance marketing strategies and wield a profound influence on consumer decision-making, it is advisable for brands to collaborate with psychologists or behavioural scientists. This collaboration would aid in the development of evidence-based approaches that consider the intricate psychological factors at play. Furthermore, proactively monitoring and engaging with user-generated content (UGC), such as responding to customer reviews, encouraging user-created content, and leveraging positive UGC in marketing campaigns, can significantly contribute to building consumer trust and credibility. A comprehensive analysis of consumer behaviour requires the amalgamation of self-reported data with psychological theories and empirical research to obtain a more accurate understanding, thereby mitigating reliance solely on self-reported or observational data. Lastly, brands should endeavour to enhance consumer literacy by educating individuals on the usage of their data and the potential influence of marketing strategies on their purchasing decisions. This approach fosters a sense of trust, transparency, and ethical considerations.

Future research recommendations include conducting cross-cultural investigations to compare fashion consumer behaviour and perceptions across different contexts and exploring the influence of specific cultural elements on consumption patterns and preferences. Examining potential conflicts or synergies

between fashion categories, such as fast fashion and sustainable fashion, and exploring how consumers navigate these competing priorities is advisable to steer the direction of future studies. Exploring the intersection of demographic variables to identify distinct consumer profiles and customize marketing strategies accordingly might unravel new insights. If replicating the study, narrowing the sample to a specific culture or fashion type to reduce variables might bring some new findings. Integrating self-reported data with objective measures, such as collaborating with neuroscientists to conduct neuroimaging studies, to gain objective insights into the cognitive and emotional processes underlying consumer decision-making could support further research. For example, studying the activation of reward centres in the brain or the emotional responses induced by specific marketing messages. Comparing the neuroimaging data with the self-reported survey responses can help identify potential discrepancies and understand the subconscious factors influencing consumer behaviour.

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