



**FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR OF
FASHION CLOTHING BRANDS AMONGST GENERATION Z
FEMALE CONSUMERS IN DURBAN**

BY

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DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that the above-mentioned thesis is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment to another University or for another qualification.

.....
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.....
DATE

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved grandparents & late father

Moon & Mums Naidoo

& Thega Naidu

**Your lessons, unwavering love, compassion and humility has inspired and enriched my soul.
I thank you for instilling in me the value of family, education, kindness and for being my pillars
of strength. Through the both of you my possibilities always seemed endless.**

With all my love,

Rivani

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ABSTRACT

The competitive environment amongst fashion retailers is volatile. The need for differentiation has never been more important. At the heart of every business is the consumer. There is a new generation on the rise, 'Generation Z'. Understanding the factors that influence the consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands amongst female Generation Z consumers' will provide marketers with valuable insight in developing effective marketing programs in appealing to the youth market. This research paper seeks to investigate factors that are believed to positively influence the consumption behaviour of fashion brands amongst Generation Z consumers in Durban. These factors include: self-concept and brand-image congruity, perceived quality, reference groups and social media browsing. The study utilised a descriptive research design to accurately describe traits of variables regarding the phenomenon of interest. To accomplish this, quantitative methods were used to obtain relevant data. Self-administered questionnaires were utilised. The findings highlighted, depicted positive correlations between aspirational reference groups such as celebrity inspired trends and consumption behaviour. Quality was ranked strongly as an important consideration and influential factor when deciding to purchase fashion clothing brands. Furthermore, the study identified that smartphones were the most often used to connect to social media. YouTube, Instagram and Facebook were amongst the most popularly used and influential social platforms that should be strategically used in conversing with Generation Z consumers during their browsing activities. While there were no strong correlations between self-concept and consumption, it is evident that consumers purchase items of clothing from brands that reflect their lifestyles, personalities, attitudes and fashions styles. Therefore, fashion retailers should market their products with an element of personality that the youth can connect and identify with. Although this study offers valuable insight to fashion retailers, more in-depth analysis should be conducted utilising a larger sample across geographic locations, also taking sustainability into consideration, which is growing in importance each year.

Keywords:

Generation Z, Quality, Reference groups, Self-concept, Brand Image, Social Media Browsing, Fashion Clothing Brands, Consumer Behaviour.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is constantly evolving at a rapid rate. It is a matter of survival of the fittest. This is as true of the business world of marketing, with Generation Z on the rise. Generation Z refers to those individuals born in the mid-1990s, immediately after the Generation Y cohort, born between 1980 and the mid-1990's (Mak, 2016). Generation Z are said to be true digital natives, as they were born after the inception of the World Wide Web (Mak, 2016). Marketers need to heed the fact that this new generation is not a mini Generation Y but a whole new generation on its own that needs to be given specialized attention in all areas of marketing and consumer behaviour. Being the digital natives that they are, they actively participate in consumption patterns and consumer decision-making. Consumer decision-making involves the process through which consumers recognize a need, obtain information, evaluate their alternatives, execute their purchase decision and engage in post purchase evaluation (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010). The decision to purchase is the action towards purchasing the product and is the fourth stage under the Schiffman consumer decision-making model (Schiffman et al., 2010). The decision to purchase requires little effort amongst Generation Z, as they are well educated, well informed and surrounded by technological devices that aid in their consumption choices. For fashion brands to prosper and sustain themselves, marketers need to understand the internal and external factors that influence their purchasing decision. Understanding Generation Z consumer behaviour and decision-making towards fashion clothing brands will provide valuable insights and opportunities for the fashion industry.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The word "fashion" is revolutionizing the world and transforming thinking. What we wear today has become of greater importance than ever before. According to experts, women spend an average of - "16 minutes each week day morning contemplating what to wear and 14 minutes on Saturday and Sunday mornings" (The Telegraph, 2009). This is an indication of the time and effort that goes into this decision-making process. The reason for this was articulated during the polling of 2491 women, who said: "what you wear has a direct impact on how you feel about yourself and it is important that a woman feels exceptional in her outfit" (The Telegraph, 2009). An interesting observation by marketers targeting the youth was that the

overall youth spending accounted for over R120 billion in 2015 (Taylor, 2016). Interestingly, when this youth market was asked what they spend their pocket money on, clothing was the top priority, “not only as a necessity, but as a form of self-expression” (Taylor, 2016). According to Thulo (2016), South Africa has “26.7 million people under the age of 24 and this number is likely to double by 2045” (Thulo, 2016 cited in Taylor, 2016). Mocanu (2013) suggests that brands and the values consumers attach to them have become a communication tool to express who they are and to gain social acceptance and assurance from their peers. It is therefore imperative for marketers of fashion brands in South Africa to tap into the Generation Z segment and understand the factors that influence their consumption behaviour in order to cater to their needs and preferences effectively.

This research topic presents a conceptual basis on three dimensions, namely consumption behaviour, Generation Z and fashion brands. Generation Z refers to the youth segment born from 1995 to present. These consumers use fashion brands to reflect their own identities and choose brands that share commonalities with their lifestyles and priorities (Pike, 2016). Consumption behaviour involves understanding the logical process that consumers go through when purchasing a product or service. This behavioural process includes “searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that will serve a need or want” (Schiffman et al., 2010). Lastly, fashion brands refers to a “cyclical reflection of social, cultural and environmental characteristics, unique to a certain time as a means of self-expression to others” (Lorna, 2014).

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research aimed to investigate factors influencing female Generation Z consumers’ consumption behaviour with regard to fashion brands in Durban. The market place today is fast-moving and constantly changing, and it is imperative for marketers to know all that they can about their target consumers. Generation Z are the new cool kids on the block, relatively different from the Generation Y cohort. Businesses face pressure from their external environment with regard to political and economic instability, rapidly growing technological trends and social influences that play a role in influencing consumer behaviour. Therefore, the aim of this research paper was to investigate factors that are believed to positively influence the consumption of fashion brands amongst Generation Z consumers. These factors include: self-concept, brand-image, perceived quality, reference groups and social media browsing. There are related studies conducted on the Generation Z segment and their decision-making

behaviour, but there are very few studies conducted in South Africa, especially in the Durban region. Durban is growing significantly in terms of new shopping malls and new international retailers, such as Zara, H&M, Cotton On and Factorie, which are exerting pressure on local retailers such as Stuttafords, Mr Price, Edgars and so forth. It is imperative for marketers of local retailers to understand the Generation Z cohort and the factors that influence their decisions to purchase. This will assist them to position their marketing and product strategies in ways that effectively appeal to Generation Z (Gen-Z).

1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of the study is to investigate factors believed to positively influence the consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands amongst Generation Z females in Durban. The research will provide marketers with valuable insight in developing effective marketing programs in appealing to the youth.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands in Durban?
2. What is the relationship between perceived quality and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban?
3. What is the relationship between reference groups and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban?
4. What is the relationship between social media browsing and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the relationship between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
2. To evaluate the relationship between perceived quality and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
3. To investigate the relationship between reference groups and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
4. To determine the relationship between social media browsing and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review aimed to evaluate the proposed factors influencing female Generation Z consumption behaviour of fashion brands amongst other consumers in Durban.

1.7.1 Consumer Behaviour and Generation-Z Consumers

Consumer behaviour is at the heart of any marketing strategy. Understanding the needs and wants of your target population is imperative for the success of any business. Consumer behaviour can be described as the behaviour displayed during the process of - “searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that are expected to provide a certain level of satisfaction” (Schiffman et al., 2010). Generation Z is on the rise. These consumers were born between 1995 to present and are being described as empowered, edgy and about to influence the world (Leshilo, 2015). The youth, as consumers, are becoming more brand conscious in the choice of clothing they wear to enhance their “personality, social status, recognition, affiliation or to attain their desire of uniqueness and newness” (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015). However, this group is diverse in lifestyles, attributes and purchasing decisions (Fernandez, 2009). Reaching this elusive group has become challenging for marketers, and understanding the factors that play a role in influencing female consumption behaviour of fashion brands will be valuable in understanding the needs and wants of these consumers and developing an effective marketing strategy accordingly.

1.7.2 Self-concept and Brand image

Existing literature suggests that the relationship between the similarity of self-concept and brand-image is the driving force in consumers’ choice of product consumption. This is evident in Sirgy’s (1982) theory of self-concept, in which he holds that the “product-image needs are in line with the actual self for the consumer to feel motivated enough to make the actual purchase” (Park & Lee, 2005). Research conducted by other theorists over the years has proved this theory to be true. Jamal and Goode (2001) suggested that congruity can influence product preference and purchase intentions (cited in Ilaw, 2014). Belk (1988) determined that preferred products matched self-concept influenced purchases, as this acted as a form of self-expression (Ilaw, 2014). Essentially, all these theories support Rosenberg’s (1981) definition of self-concept as the “totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object”. This is evident in South Africa as the youth generation spends most of their pocket money on clothing as a form of self-expression (Taylor, 2015). Graff (1996) believes that the

promotional message of the brand influences the congruency between brand image and self-image (Park & Lee, 2005). He further stipulates that the message makes consumers more aware of their own self-image, thereby eliciting favourable attitudes towards a brand that is congruent with their self-image (Park & Lee, 2005). It is important to note that marketers tend to base their brand evaluation on how well it improves the self-image of the consumer (Khare, 2009). If consumers are able to resonate with the brand, then the likelihood of brand loyalty and repeat purchases is feasible.

1.7.3 Reference groups

Humans are social beings that are always looking for validation in any shape or form, especially in terms of the choices they make. Reference groups provide that validation. A reference group can be described as a group or individual that provides a framework with which a consumer identifies in terms of values, beliefs and overt behaviour (Sirgy et al., 2014). It is vital for marketers to understand the concept of reference groups in relation to a specific generation cohort, as brands utilize reference groups to form brand associations that contribute to a consumer's ideal self-concept (Sirgy et al., 2014). Understanding Generation Z's self-concept in terms of aspirations and the way in which they would like to be seen will allow marketers to create a strong stimulus toward products that will allow them to be their "ideal self" (Atkinson, 2014). This was evident from the study conducted by Akir and Othman (2010), which revealed that their respondents ranked fashion clothing as their most important purchase decision. For example, an aspiring fashion designer may choose her clothing carefully to gain the respect of that category of membership. A study conducted in the Czech Republic, indicated that the impact of reference groups varies in terms of age. The study indicated that consumers aged between 16- and 19 years of age were influenced by their friends and opinion leaders when deciding on a particular item of clothing (Turcinkova & Moisisdis, 2011). This indicates the need to validate their choice and ensure that it is within the boundaries of social acceptability. On the other hand, the younger age group were influenced more by their parents (Turcinkova & Moisisdis, 2011). Understanding the influence of reference groups amongst the Generation Z youth in Durban will be valuable in building a successful brand, increasing revenue and developing a competitive edge.

1.7.4 Perceived Quality

The statement by Anais Nin, “We don’t see things as they are. We see them as we are”, provides substance to the term, ‘perceived quality’ (Somma, 2014). Perceived quality can be described as the judgements consumers make about the superiority of the product/brand using intrinsic and extrinsic cues that guide their decision-making towards a product/brand choice (Schiffman et al., 2010). A study conducted by Ting and Foong (2014), revealed that customer perceptions with regard to the quality of a product led to a positive influence on the consumers’ purchase decisions at apparel outlets. Undoubtedly, people tend to make purchases when they believe in the value of what they are getting and this is a strong motivator in their purchase decision. Understanding Generation Z’s notions of perceived quality and the importance they attach to it will provide marketers with insight into their product development strategies and negotiations with suppliers. This will help to achieve quality fashion clothing that consumers can affiliate with and the development of brand loyalists.

1.7.5 Social Media Browsing

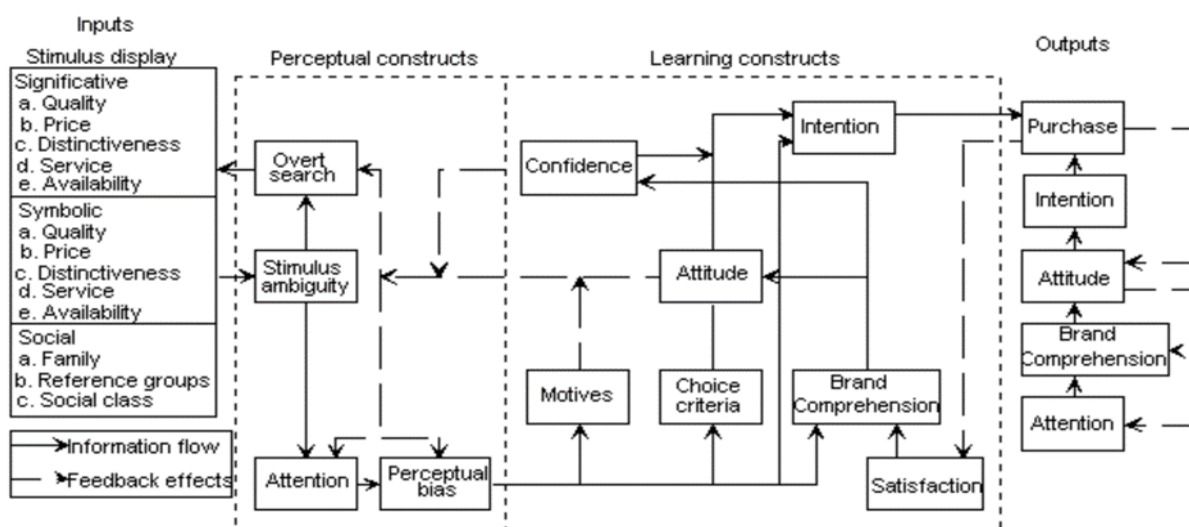
The marketing communications landscape has transformed drastically over the last 100 years. This has created opportunities for marketers to engage the new age consumer. Social media has brought life to the business world and has transformed the term consumer-engagement. Generation Z are considered ‘digital natives’, as they have not experienced life before the internet. Understanding the mediums through which consumers communicate and gather information is essential in providing insights into their consumer buying behaviour and in developing effective marketing communication strategies. According to Marbry (2008), consumers rely on social media as an information source that provides truthful, clear and updated information (cited in Ramnarain, 2011). In contrast, a study conducted by Turcinkova & Moisisidis (2011) found that the target group 13-19 rarely uses the internet when searching for information about new clothing. This is an interesting observation considering that social media is a popular tool amongst the young generation. There is a need to investigate the impact of social media browsing in influencing the consumption of fashion brands in Durban.

The need to understand consumers’ behaviour in relation to the marketing concept is essential for a prosperous business. In the context of this research the above-mentioned factors are vital to understanding the consumption behaviour of female Generation Z consumers. Marketing research with regard to consumer behaviour is an on-going process, because as each generation

evolves and a new one enters the market, their needs and wants differ. The marketer needs to understand the new age consumer to best execute product and marketing strategies to flourish and grow their business.

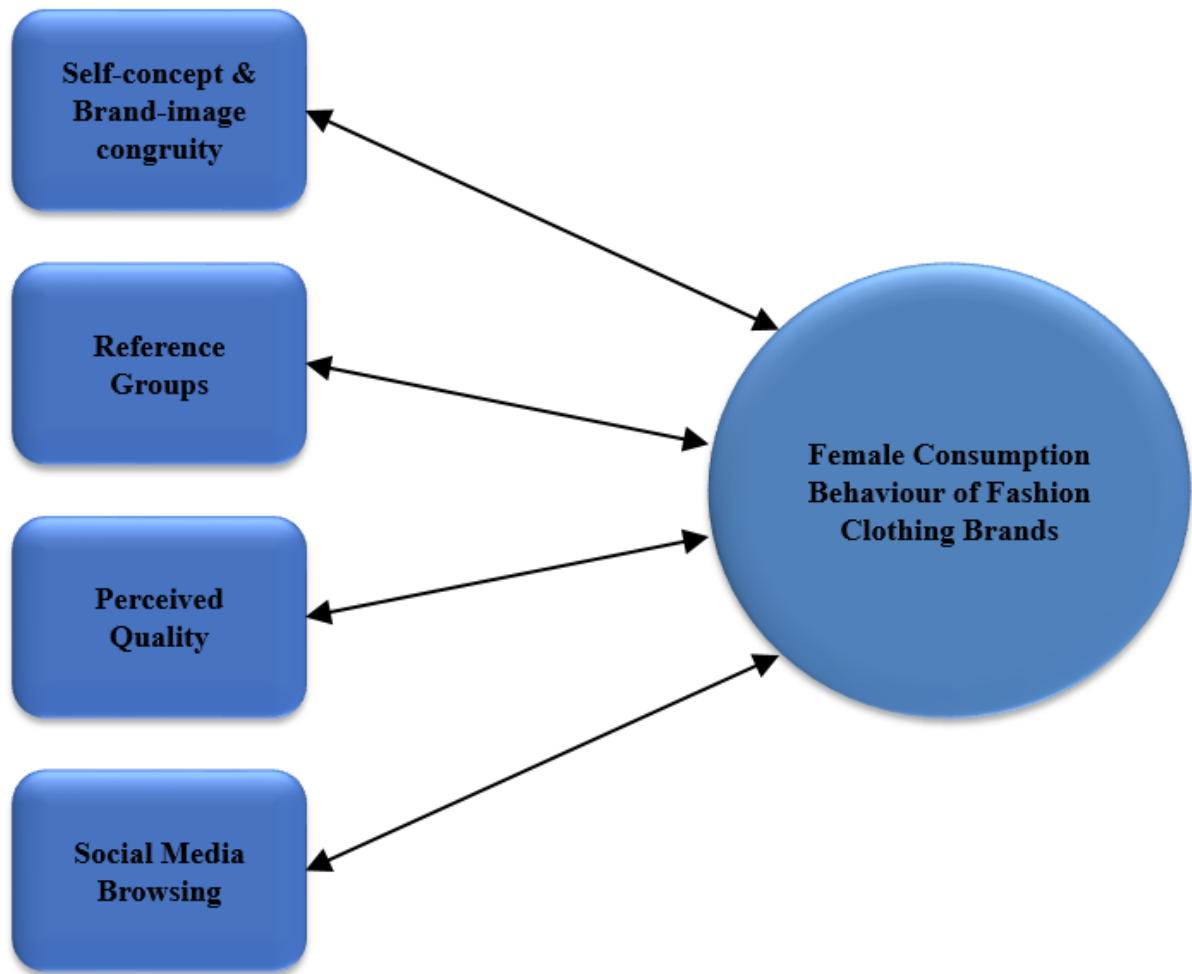
1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/ CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study investigated the factors influencing the consumption behaviour of female Generation Z consumers with regard to fashion clothing brands in Durban. The Howard-Sheth Model of buyer behaviour depicted in Figure 1.1 highlights the integration of psychological, social and marketing influences on consumer choices and the way in which they process information (Parsad & Jha, 2014). This model proposes four major sets of variables: “inputs, perceptual constructs, learning constructs and outputs” (Parsad & Jha, 2014). This model is constructive in linking variables/constructs that possibly influence consumers’ decision-making and assists in understanding the way in which the relationships between those variables lead to purchase intentions (Citeman, 2011). This model is relevant to the study being conducted as it refers to the internal, (self-concept, brand image, perceived quality) and external (reference groups and social media) factors influencing the consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst female Generation Z consumers. This Howard-Sheth Model has been widely utilised in analysing various aspects of consumer behaviour across numerous disciplines. This model is comprehensive and reliable as it has been tested in depth (Parsad & Jha, 2014). The limitation of this model is that certain variables/constructs cannot be realistically tested as the stimuli may not be applicable in every society (Parsad & Jha, 2014).



Source: Howard, and Sheth, (1969:32).

Figure 1.1: Howard-Sheth Model of Buyer Behaviour



Source: Naidu, 2017

Figure 1.2: A Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model in Figure 1.2 explains the positive relationships between the factors and their influence on female consumption behaviour regarding fashion clothing brands. The model depicts five independent variables. (self-concept, brand-image, perceived quality, reference groups and social media browsing) and their influence on the dependent variable, which is female consumption behaviour regarding fashion clothing brands. The congruency of self-concept and brand image and the influence it has on the consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands (Toth, 2014; Ilaw, 2014). Evaluation of the relationship between perceived quality and consumption amongst the youth. (Zeithaml, cited in Baines, 2014; Ting & Foong, 2014). Investigating the relationship between reference groups and the consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst the youth (Fernandez, 2009; Britsman & Sjolander, 2011; Akpan, & Nkan, 2013; Turcinkova & Moisisdis, 2011). And lastly, determining the relationship between social media browsing and the youth consumption of fashion clothing brands (Chahal, 2016; Pawlas, 2016; Ramnarain, 2011; Zondi, 2014). Each construct plays a pivotal role in

understanding the Generation Z consumer and the relevance of these factors in driving their consumption behaviour. Understanding the influences of these factors puts marketers in a better position to cater for Generation Z and to target them more effectively through a well-executed marketing communication strategy.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE/IMPORTANCE/CONTRIBUTION

Generation Z is growing in importance amongst many businesses. Soon many of them will be the working majority with an earning potential far greater than that of Generation Y. Undertaking this study is necessary for understanding the consumption behaviour amongst females and what drives their decisions with regard to fashion clothing brands. If marketers are able to understand the way this generation shops, engages in online activities and makes decisions, they will be more able to satisfy these consumers' wants and needs and create a relationship between them and the brand, which could lead to brand loyalty.

1.10 JUSTIFICATION/RATIONALE

Generation Z is a new segment of the population with diverse needs and tremendous market potential. Understanding the factors that influence their consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands is key when deciding on new products and services and planning marketing communication strategies. Ignoring this generation can be detrimental for any business. This generation is likely to outgrow those that came before. Therefore, understanding them and how they consume and make choices is vital for the survival and prosperity of a business.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design is a vital component of empirical research. The research design consists of exploratory, descriptive and causal research that is often utilised to test a hypothesis (Baines, 2014). This research project undertook a descriptive research design to accurately describe traits of variables regarding the phenomenon of interest (Baines, 2014). To accomplish this, quantitative methods were used to obtain relevant data to deduce statistical representations of the phenomenon that could be generalized to the larger population (Wyse, 2011). This methodology works well with a questionnaire design tool, enabling a greater understanding of the phenomenon through facts and figures.

1.11.1 Study Site

A study site is the actual place where the research was conducted. This study took place at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in the vicinity of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, - of South Africa. Specifically, the study was conducted at the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance at the Westville campus.

1.11.2 Target population

The target population can be described a representation of all people or objects that reflect traits that the researcher wants to study (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The population for this study was all female students between the ages of 18- and 21 at UKZN's School of Management, Information Technology and Governance Faculty.

1.11.3 Sampling Strategies

Sampling can be described as the “process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of making observations or statistical inferences of the whole population” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). There are two types of sampling methods: probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves random sampling, where there is an equal chance of being selected in the sample (Dane, 2011). On the other hand, non-probability sampling “is a technique in which some units of the population have a zero chance of being selected” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). For this study, non-probability sampling was used, where a faculty of students were selected by means of the researcher's judgement.

1.11.4 Sampling Technique

For this study, purposive sampling was used as this research requires a specific group of individuals in a specific setting to derive important information necessary for the study (Maxwell, 1999, cited in Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This technique was selected as it is easy to administer, works well under time constraints and supports a sample size large enough to represent the population.

1.11.5 Sample and Sample Size

A sample refers to the “actual unit of the population selected for observation” (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The sample size of 60 respondents was selected from the target population. This sample size was sufficient to meet the research objectives and sufficient to represent the population.

1.12 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data was collected from the target sample of students by means of self-administered questionnaires with closed ended questions. Sixty questionnaires were distributed over two days on the Westville campus around the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance faculty.

1.12.1 Self-administered Questionnaires

Self-administered questionnaires are cost effective, as they can be distributed to a large number of individuals at low cost, thereby increasing the likelihood of a greater number of respondents, which can give a broader and more accurate consensus of the study (Sekran & Bougie, 2009). Questionnaires allow data to be obtained easily and can be simply coded, thereby providing valid and reliable results (Sekran & Bougie, 2009).

1.13 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

1.13.1 Pretesting and Validation

A pilot study is an essential component when conducting good research. A pilot study is often used to test the adequacy of research instruments, in this case, a questionnaire (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). This process involves a trial run that includes a representative group of the population in the sample (Saunders et al., 2003). Validity refers to the concern that the measurement procedure is measuring what the researcher expects it to measure and the results from the small sample are generalizable to the larger population (Cooper & Schindler, 2001) The questionnaire was given to a limited number of university students to test the validity of the research instrument.

1.13.2 Measurement

Measurement is necessary in conducting empirical research, as it makes reference to observations of the real world by measuring the relationships between constructs

(Bhattacharjee, 2012). A five-item Likert scale was used for this study, to determine the influence of internal and external factors on female consumption of fashion clothing brands. A Likert scale involves basic statements that require a level of agreement or disagreement ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Bhattacharjee, 2012). A Likert scale was effective in measuring the degree to which self-concept, perceived quality, reference groups and social media browsing influence consumption behaviour.

1.14 DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of analysing data is to acquire valuable information to best describe and understand the phenomenon in question and arrive at conclusions or possible solutions. A quantitative analysis was adopted for this research study. Quantitative analysis involves the collection of numeric data using statistical tools and can be conducted through a descriptive analysis or an inferential analysis (Bhattacharjee, 2012). In this case descriptive statistics were used to describe responses and the sample and inferential analysis were used to identify relationships between variables and constructs and forecast conclusions for the research topic in question.

1.15 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are important to take into account before proceeding with any study, because if the study has not been approved then prior research, time and effort will have been in vain. Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Research Ethics Committee was requested and once that was granted, a gatekeeper's letter from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Westville campus) was required. This study upheld respect for the individuals participating in the study by addressing ethical factors such as informed consent, privacy and confidentiality by ensuring that the participants' identities remained anonymous and they agreed to participate voluntarily.

1.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the study is that the focus of this research is on UKZN students in a specific geographic location. The study is therefore limited in scope. However, the time constraints and lack of resources did not allow for a larger study across all Generation Z consumers in different geographic areas to be conducted.

1.17 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This dissertation consists of six chapters:

Chapter One

The introduction and overview of the study is presented in this chapter, specifically highlighting the problem statement, research objectives, significance, rationale and theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning the study.

Chapter Two

This chapter presents literature regarding the factors that influence the consumption behaviour of Generation Z females. These factors include reference groups, quality, self-concepts and brand image congruity and social media browsing. The characteristics of Generation Z and consumer behaviour are also highlighted.

Chapter Three

This chapter includes a discussion of the research methodology, which includes the research design, sampling design and procedure, data collection methods and measuring instrument, data preparation and analysis procedure and the ethical considerations that were taken into consideration in conducting the study.

Chapter Four

This chapter includes a presentation of the empirical findings in a graphical format from the data that was collected.

Chapter Five

In this chapter, a comprehensive discussion of the findings in relation to the objectives and previous literature is presented. Conclusions are drawn based on the empirical findings and discussions of the previous chapter. Recommendations for retailers of fashion clothing brands regarding Generation Z and the factors that influence their behaviour are addressed. Recommendations are made for future research.

1.18 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the study. The research design and methodology were carefully articulated followed by the research questions and objectives. The motivation and rationale of the study was clearly stated. The limitation and ethical considerations were identified, followed by the dissertation outline. The next chapter discusses the literature on the above-mentioned factors and variables relating to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review in this chapter assesses the factors that influence female consumption of fashion brands amongst the Generation Z female consumers. A brief outline of Generation Z characteristics and consumer behaviour is clearly articulated, and is accompanied by an assessment of factors such as self-concept, brand image, reference groups and social media browsing, which play a role in influencing youth consumer behaviour.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the competitive environment amongst fashion retailers is volatile. The need for differentiation has never been more important. At the heart of every business is the consumer. There is a new generation cohort, Generation Z, which is on the rise. Understanding their characteristics and the factors that influence their consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands will provide marketers with a foundation for developing effective marketing programs that appeal to Generation Z. Understanding consumer behaviour is a necessity when it comes to executing the best marketing campaigns and this involves understanding the processes that consumers go through before making the final decision to purchase. Factors that influence this process fall into two categories: internal and external. For the purpose of this dissertation, internal factors (self-concept, brand-image and quality) and external factors (reference groups and social media browsing) will be assessed.

2.2 GENERATION Z

The world is constantly evolving and so are the human generations. A human generation can be defined as “a group of people born within a certain time frame, experiencing the same events (Rammopo, 2016). At one stage, Generation Y took the world by storm, but seeing that they no longer characterise the youth, it is now Generation Z that is revolutionizing the world of business and impacting their surroundings in meaningful ways. As mentioned above, understanding who they are, the impact they have and the characteristics that define them will be beneficial to marketers of various fashion retailers.

2.2.1 Who is Generation Z?

Generation-Z represents the group of tweens, teens and the young adults of a global society, born between 1995 and 2010, with the eldest being 21 years of age (Hope, 2016). These consumers were raised in a consumption-driven society and are said to have considerable influence and spending power (Merriman, 2015). The Sunday Times Generation Next Report (2016) confirmed that – “50% of the South African population is 25 and younger, with a reported spend of R134 billion in 2016”. So, with influence beyond their years, their impact is of a social, visual and technological nature. It is imperative for marketers to understand what drives them and to study their behaviour and characteristics so that they can connect with them on a meaningful level and give them exactly what they want. In doing so, they need to pay attention to factors that affect their purchasing behaviour, such as self-concept, social circles, quality, brand perceptions and so forth.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Generation Z

The most popularly known characteristics associated with Generation Z are that they are tech savvy, socially aware, seek trends and experiences, communicate through symbols and images, adopt entrepreneurial qualities and actively engage on social media. These characteristics will be discussed in greater depth in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2.1 *Tech innate*

Generation Z are born into a world of boundless access; they are known as the ‘always on’ generation. According to Adweek staff (2017), they are “relentlessly addicted to tech and building their online personas”. Their obsession with the digital world has led to a preference of socializing online rather than in real life. In this case, one can assume that the attention, feedback and intimacy they receive online is on a far greater scale than in person. To a certain extent, this is confirmed by JWT Intelligence (2012), which stipulates that “more than half of Gen-Z agree that it is easier to chat digitally, or more convenient” (cited in Merriman, 2015). Apart from having constant interaction with friends and family, Generation-Z are able to connect with brands and business on a global scale, and gravitate to people or organizations that have like-minded interests (Fromm, 2016). Social media has become an important platform in reaching young consumers. Fromm (2016) holds that these consumers believe in sharing only “specific stories with specific people on specific social channels and Instagram and Snapchat are considered their specific choice”. This tech-savvy generation, born in a smart

phone era, prefer to use their mobile phones than their desktops when shopping online, and are able to navigate well between multiple screens simultaneously (Doupnik, 2017). It is vital for marketers to learn their social media habits and to prioritise mobile-friendly shopping platforms, so that connection and engagement is seamless and meaningful.

2.2.2.2 *Socially aware*

A defining characteristic of Generation Z is that they possess self-awareness rather than the self-centeredness of Generation Y (Merriman, 2015). They see the world in all its glory and destruction and strive to make it a better place. According to Merriman (2015), “The youth see their role in the world as part of a larger ecosystem and believe they have a responsibility to improve it”. Generation Z is aware of social issues such as environmental problems, women and child abuse, obesity and human rights. This has led to the youth becoming more involved in social issues. Peterson (2014) confirms that “60% want to have an impact in changing the world and 1 in every 4 Generation Z members are involved in volunteering”. “68% of South African youth consumers are willing to support and pay more for brands that are committed to social and environmental change” (Kgosiemang, 2016). This results in brands having to be more organic with their CSI initiatives and ensuring their authentic care and assistance.

2.2.2.3 *Seek trends and experiences*

Generation Z appreciates and engages more with brands that are creative with their campaign communication and execution (Rammopo, 2016). They take notice when a brand offers a full experience. This does not guarantee loyalty but will add a better perception. Experiential marketing is a great tool to connect and engage with Generation Z (Rammopo, 2016). In terms of products, businesses marketing to the youth needs to understand what they really want. According to a study by a retail marketing firm, San Diego-based Interactions, Generation Z seek products that provide “an experience and instant gratification” (Supermarket News, 2016).

2.2.2.4 *A new language*

Every generation has their own way of communicating and Generation Z are no different. Instead of words and formal written English, they prefer symbols and images that replace words (Rammopo, 2016). Everyday Generation Z are bombarded by media and the use of images and symbols to quickly communicate your message saves them time and energy. According to Sparks and Honey analysts, “Generation Z are not precise communicators and leave a lot of

room for interpretation” (cited in Peterson, 2014). The trick is grabbing them in that first 6-8 seconds (Patel, 2017). For this generation, “relatability is the new authenticity”, making it imperative for marketers to engage with them on a level they appreciate and can relate to (Patel, 2017).

2.2.2.5 *Industrious*

Born into a world of turbulence and instability due to events such as the financial crash, unstable South African economy, 9/11 and natural disasters, this generation is likely to possess a different mind-set compared to Generation-Y. From these occurrences and unique social settings, a generation has emerged that is “self-aware, independent, intuitively innovative, goal orientated and realistic” (Merriman, 2015). They see entrepreneurship as the way to avoid financial issues and gain economic freedom. A study conducted by Millennial Branding, a consulting firm, found that “72% of students have intentions of starting a business and 61% would prefer having their own business than working for someone else once they graduate from college (cited in Peterson, 2014). Brands need to use this entrepreneurial spirit of Gen-Z and empower business ideas and innovation amongst them.

2.2.2.6 *How to interact*

Social media is the fastest, cheapest and most convenient way of engaging with and reaching the young consumer. To impress these consumers, content is king (Brockelsby, 2017). In order to create impressive content, businesses need to know their audience and their behaviour in the digital landscape. There needs to be integrated marketing communication across all channels and on a frequent basis that attempts to delight and engage consumers in a way that displays authenticity through stories and images (Brockelsby, 2017). These consumers want to feel a part of a bigger picture, and it is important for marketers to tap into their entrepreneurial spirit and give them the freedom to be innovative and collaborate with brands (Forbes Coaches Council, 2017). Further engagement with these consumers can be in the form of experiential activations that allow a perfect mix of elements to elevate big brands (Hutchings, 2014). Through live experience’s, groups from various backgrounds and LSM groups who are like minded can connect and be part of an experience that transcends digital interactions (Hutchings, 2014). Generation Z loves experiences, as they allow them to share memorable experiences via pictures and videos on social media. For value retailers, such as Mr Price, this could be extremely beneficial. Nothing beats a consumer who genuinely wants to interact and

live through a brand by sharing and tagging the brand as the supplier and provider of their happiness and current fulfilment. Experiential marketing allows brands to become a central part in the conversations that Generation-Z have and for Mr Price, a way to fundamentally exercise and reinforce its central ‘value,’ value proposition.

2.2.2.7 Brand Loyalty

Generation-Z are adaptable individuals who embrace change and take charge of their future. They do what is in their own best interest and the world around them. Their loyalty to a retailer is questionable. For them, the actual product is just as important as the brand that produces them. It is important for marketers to not only focus on the product, but to use advertising tools effectively to promote their brand and to have an authentic connection with the youth that resonates in their hearts and minds (Merriman, 2015). A study conducted by EY across all generations (Baby Boomers, Gen-X-Y-Z) indicated a decline in loyalty programs, which dropped from 40% for Generation-Y to 30% for Generation-Z (Merriman, 2015). Consequently, creating loyalty to retailers becomes a challenge to their brick and mortar (Merriman, 2015). Retailers are working on the development of their online stores, which is a growing interest amongst the youth, who are no longer satisfied with in-store delivery and expect orders to be delivered to them (Merriman, 2015). Statistics by Hubspot revealed that free shipping is the second highest factor influencing purchasing decisions, after product quality (Hum, 2014). This puts pressure on retailers to be innovative in their processes and online delivery offerings in order to create an exceptional customer experience.

Generation-Z are very different from their predecessors, and it is important for marketers to understand their characteristics, what they really want and what they care about. In a media fragmented society, brands need to stand out. In doing so, differentiation is key. Brands need to have an element of being straight forward, edgy and a little bit cheeky.

2.3 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The consumer is at the heart of any marketing strategy. Businesses have realized that to create a winning product or service, they will need to go directly to the source and that is the ‘consumer’. Consumer behaviour can be described as behaviour displayed in the process of “searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that are expected to provide a certain level of satisfaction” (Schiffman et al., 2010). Through this process, marketers need to focus on satisfying consumer needs by having an in-depth

understanding of the internal and external factors that affect their purchasing behaviour and position their product or service accordingly. Understanding consumer behaviour is vital for developing or improving marketing campaigns and strategies to target their audience effectively. Consumer behaviour and marketing are undeniably linked.

At present, responding to consumers' growing interests, needs and wants regarding products and services can be challenging for marketers to pinpoint. It will be beneficial for marketers to identify specific internal and external influences by going through the consumer behaviour process (Schiffman et al., 2010). The consumer behaviour process is a theoretical model that provides a framework for marketers to leverage information but the general information provided is not concrete in predicting certain consumer behaviours (Schiffman et al., 2010).

However, it would be advantageous for marketers to adapt this model to suit their products or services. The information obtained will serve to provide insight into designing their merchandise and marketing campaigns according to the internal and external factors most prevalent in influencing consumption (Cant & Heerden, 2013).

2.3.1 Internal and External Influences on Consumer Behaviour

A consumer's consumption behaviour can be affected by a number of influences. Hoyer and Macinnis (2009) suggest that the most important of these influences are categorized as follows:

Internal influences: These are also known as personal influences and include perceptions, attitudes, motivation, lifestyle, learning and roles (Bennett, 2009). These internal influences affect an individual's purchase determinations (Dawson & Kim, 2009).

External influences: These are also known as social influences and include cultures, social norms, sub cultures, family roles, household structures and groups that affect an individual's purchasing decisions (Bennett, 2009).

Understandably, every condition/influence is different, as they vary from one consumer to another. Understanding consumer behaviour is necessary to understand the characteristics of certain groups in terms of demographics and behavioural variables to have an idea of the consumers' want and needs. Assessing external influences plays a pivotal role in understanding the motivations behind consumer purchases. Understanding these factors is essential in influencing a consumers' purchasing decision.

2.4 INTERNAL INFLUENCES ON FASHION CONSUMPTION PURCHASES

Personal factors are important to understand, as many people aspire to be more than they are and have a desire to be seen in a specific way by others, which can directly influence how they make their purchases. Tangible attributes are also important, as the look and feel of merchandise indicates a certain degree of quality, status and value. Equally as important is the brand, as consumers associate a brand with characteristics of their own and will not purchase from brands that do not resonate with who they believe themselves to be. Therefore, personal and psychological influences are important to assess, as they provide a clear identification of factors that drive behaviour. For the purpose of this dissertation, internal influences such as quality, self-concept and brand image congruency will be examined more closely.

2.4.1 Self-concept and Brand Image

The self-concept and brand-image congruity has been a topic of interest amongst researchers for many years. Although, some may find it controversial, others feel that the congruity can influence product preference and purchase decisions (Ilaw, 2014). The following research will unpack the term self-concept and brand image and the congruity between the two as an influential factor in the consumers choice of product consumption.

2.4.1.1 Self-concept

The term “self-concept” is a broad topic that encompasses consumers’ perceptions and attitudes towards themselves in relation to the outside world. A buyers’ self-concept is important for marketers to comprehend, because consumers tend to buy brands and products that help communicate positive qualities about themselves (Atkinson, 2014). Self-concept is referred to as the collection of perceptions and attitudes that an individual has of him or herself as an object (Goldsmith, Moore & Beaudoin, 1999). The perception they have about themselves in terms of the ideal, actual and public have a direct influence on what they buy. (Toth, 2014) reinforces this by stating that “consumers can be defined in terms of the products they purchase or use, and in terms of what those products mean for them”. Building brand personality is relevant amongst the youth, as people tend to buy brands that reflect who they are and who they want to be.

When consumers believe that a product reflects an aspect of themselves, they tend to form an emotional connection with that product or brand, thus developing a strong brand connection,

which is pivotal in retaining long-term customer relationships (Atkinson, 2014). For marketers to fully understand a consumer's self-concept, they need to understand the underlying components of the concept. Researchers identified four components that make up the self-concept structure (Jamal & Goode, 2011; Achouri & Bouslama, 2010; Sirgy, 1997 cited in Toth, 2014). These concepts are:

- actual self-concept: the true perception you have of yourself,
- ideal self-concept: the person you strive to be,
- public self-concept: how you think other people portray you,
- ideal social self-concept: how an individual would like to be perceived by others.

The above-mentioned components in relation to marketing are of exceptional importance. Identifying the perceptions that the youth have of themselves puts marketers in a better position to adequately market to them and appeal to their self-interests, which is particularly important amongst Generation Z (Merriman, 2015). In appealing to the consumers' 'actual self', marketers need to have a clear idea of where their target market is right here, right now. In doing so, they need to use factual information such as age, gender, income and occupation in order to adapt their product to fit into their current situation (Atkinson, 2014). Understanding the consumers' 'ideal self' involves tapping into the consumers' psyche to identify their desires, needs and wants that will help them become the person they are striving to be and how the products/brands they desire will be able to fulfil their needs (Atkinson, 2014). Lastly, the public self focuses on how the individual would like to be seen by others or how they think others perceive them. For example, if the consumer wants to be perceived by others as sophisticated and attractive they may purchase clothing brands such as Zara, Mango and Witchery to help them achieve that image in the public eye. Consumers do not always understand their 'actual' self, so they use the public as a benchmark to determine what acceptable fashion is and to gain acceptance by their peers by wearing fashionable clothing by well established brands.

It is important to create a narrative for the consumers to buy into, by selling them a lifestyle and brand that resonates with who they are and how they want to be perceived by their reference groups within the market. As much as the youth want to stand out and be different, they also want to be able to fit within social norms and be accepted by society. Onkvisit and Shaw (1977) ascertained that people develop their self-concepts through interactions with the external

environment, especially through their peers, who are immediate points of reference (Beaudoin, Lachance, Robitaille, 2003). Levy (1959) holds that consumers are also motivated to purchase products after seeing others purchase similar products (Levy cited in Ilaw, 2014).

Interestingly, a person's self-concept can have a direct impact on their perception of communication tools such as advertising, brands and sales persons, in terms of how they respond to, or interact with these mediums (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987 cited in Beaudoin et al., 2003). According to Levy (1959), consumer behaviour relating to purchasing a product is not only due to its functionality but also from a wide spectrum of images, symbols and messages encountered (Levy cited in Ilaw, 2014).

Malhotra, Onkvisit, Shaw and Sirgy hold that repeat purchases occur when a product is compatible with, or improves consumers' actual or ideal self-image (Malhotra, Onkvisit, Shaw and Sirgy cited in Beaudoin, Lachance, Robitaille, 2003). Self-concept is especially important in relation to clothing, because clothing can be used as a form of communication to reveal their ideal self or actual self, thereby, allowing marketers to use their brands in conjunction with their consumer's self-concept to form a personal connection with the brand or product by determining how the buyer feels as a person, who the buyer strives to be or how the buyer would like to be seen by the world.

2.4.1.2 Brands

What is a brand?

The term 'brand' is a concept that has evolved over time like many others. Dating far back to the days of branding cattle as a means of distinction across farms, to our current era where everything from our clothes, food and even water is branded (Keller, 2013). The earliest definition of a brand was developed in the 1960s by the American Marketing Association (AMA), which defined a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them, which is intended to identify the goods or service of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Keller, 2013). This definition has been widely criticised for its restrictive nature, as the concept has a broader meaning and does not only serve as a distinction from its company and its competitors (de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998 cited in Ruane, 2014). The argument centred on the definition being too product focussed with emphasis on the tangible features of the brand, neglecting the importance of intangible

cues and consumer perceptions (Arnold, 1992; Crainer, 1995; de Chernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998 cited in Ruane, 2014). Today, a brand is more than just a name, sign, symbol or means of distinction, it is about the intangible qualities it radiates that attaches a special meaning that resides in the mind of the customer. In addressing these limitations of the AMA definition of a brand, Ruane (2014) adds that a brand can be described as a “cluster of values that enables a promise to be made about a unique and welcomed experience, and facilitates the creation of relationships with its consumers”. A consumer’s need for a fashion clothing brand goes beyond its functionality, they want a brand that is relevant and identifiable with who they are, thus enabling the development of a self-brand connection.

Fashion clothing brands

This research focused on fashion clothing brands. Fashion brands offers a completely different outlook compared to other functional brands. The choice of fashion brands is often influenced by the similarity of the brand in relation to the consumers’ self-image. This is supported by Azuma and Fernie (2003), who claim that “fashion brands have been referred to as a cyclical reflection of social, cultural, and environmental characteristics, unique to a certain time and geographical setting, that play a key role in contemplating a person’s self-concept (Azuma and Fernie cited in Ruane, 2014). Clothing is an important part of a consumers’ identity. It is no longer just used for its functional benefits of protection and warmth but rather as a symbolic consumption area for consumers” (Goldsmith, Moore, and Beaudoin, 1999). The need for clothing has risen to a level where regardless of a person’s financial status, they will spend more on clothing (Goldsmith, et al., 1999). This statement alone communicates something important about these consumers. A study conducted by Piacentini and Mailer (2009) found that the youth consumers’ choices of clothing is closely related to their self-concept, and are used both as a way of self-expression and judgements of people and situations they encounter (Piacentini and Mailer, 2009 cited in Nandini and Jeevananda, 2012). This study found that clothing enhances the wearer’s self-concept by making them feel confident and capable (Piacentini and Mailer, 2009 cited in Nandini et al., 2012). The study by Piacentini and Mailer (2009) concludes that clothing is a vital social tool amongst teenagers (Piacentini and Mailer, 2009 cited in Nandini et al., 2012). In the same way, Solomon (1988) holds that the type of clothing that the consumer chooses will fit into a “consumption constellation” used by the consumer to “define, communicate and perform social roles” (Solomon, 1988 cited in

Goldsmith et al., 1999). The studies mentioned indicate that fashion clothing brands play a vital role in the development and exhibition of a person's self-image.

Brand Image

Brand image is an important component to be considered when executing a successful marketing campaign. The term 'brand image' was coined in the 20th century due to its impact on building brand equity, which soon became a topic of interest amongst numerous scholars (Zhang, 2015). Understanding the impact of brand image allowed marketers to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and its role in developing effective marketing strategies (Zhang, 2015).

The literature on brand image and self-concept congruity is extensive, but also restricted, not only in terms of connecting the self-concept and brand image theories, but also in forming a consensus on the definition of this notion (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990, cited in Yaro, 2016). The extensive "misuse and overuse" of this definition has diminished the worth and richness of the term (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990, cited in Yaro, 2016). Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) conducted a study that examined brand image with the purpose of finding a "centralized collection of definitions and conceptions of brand image" (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990 cited in Yaro, 2016). This study was necessary due to the numerous interpretations of brand image by various scholars.

The term brand image has been hypothesised differently by academic practitioners, especially in relation to the brand image congruency. Keller (2013) describes this notion from the perspective of brand associations and the consumer's ability to recall a brand due to stimuli, thereby enabling them to form perceptions about a brand (Keller, 2013 cited in Yaro, 2016). These associations can be positive or negative. Park and Lee (2005) assert that consumers' assessments of brands are more positive when the brand is congruent with their own self-image. To get a positive brand image residing in the mind of the consumer, marketers will need to connect a strong and unique brand association that resonates with their target audience through marketing campaigns (Zhang, 2015). The ability to achieve this requires strong brand knowledge to be built and understood before the customer can positively respond to a campaign, thereby enabling companies to spend less on brand extensions and achieve more sales (Zhang, 2015). Khashif (2015) supports Keller's notion, as his research indicates that once consumers have formed strong associations with the brand in their mind, they are better

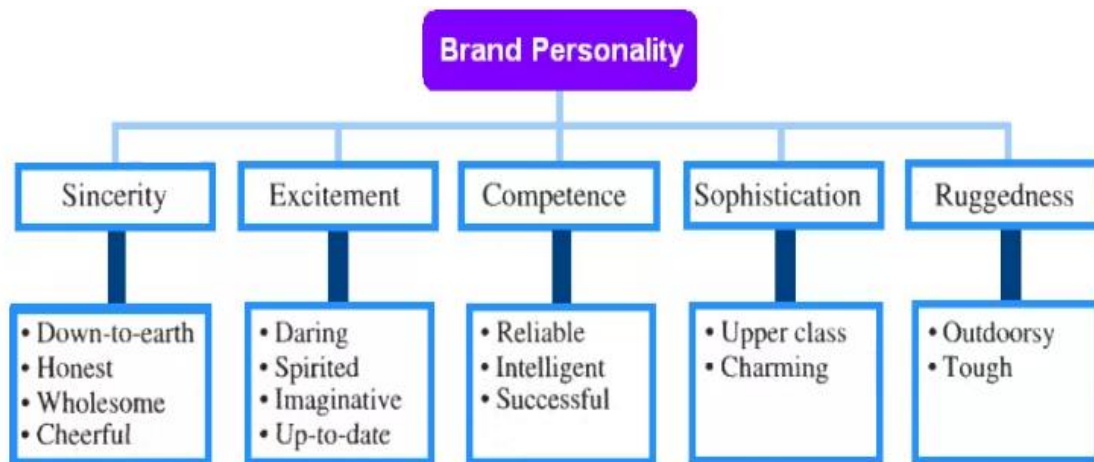
able to infer meaning to the brand, which produces better brand recall and if these associations are positive, they can lead to brand loyal customers, which impacts positively on the long-term profitability of a business (Khashif, 2015 cited in Yaro, 2016). On the other hand, Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) define brand image from a different standpoint, stating that it is more of a “logical and emotive perception in which consumers relate to a brand’ (Dobni and Zinkhan, 1990 cited in Yaro, 2016). Cho et al., (2015) holds that the above-mentioned definitions all demonstrate the notion of brand image, which can be articulated as 1) representation of a brand that resonates with the consumers’ self-image, 2) meanings associated with the brand, and 3) the total impression of a brand (Yaro, 2016). In summary, brand image is the overall impression that a consumer has about a brand from various sources, such as intrinsic and extrinsic attributes that enable them to form strong, favourable and unique associations that are automatically formed due to knowledge and awareness of a brand created through marketing campaigns (Keller, 2013).

Keller (2013) argues that brand personality is a component/ sub category of brand image, because as brands do take on human- like personalities in order to form a connection with their target audience. This is supported by Aaker (1997), who states that brand personality creates a “foundation for consumers’ perceptions of a brand, which has a resulting effect on the brand image” (Aaker, 1997 cited in Yaro, 2016). The next section presents a discussion of aspects of brand personality in relation to brand image and the dependent relationship between the two.

Consumer and Brand Personality

There has been much deliberation around whether brands can portray personality and how those applied personalities can resonate on a human level. Brand personality can be articulated as a “set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (Aaker, 1997, cited in Zhang, 2015). As mentioned above, positive brand associations are necessary in developing successful brands. Brand personality is an important component in understanding the psychosocial dimension of consumer behaviour in their purchasing decisions and associations with certain brands. Studies conducted by Jin and Sung (2011) reveal that a wealth of empirical evidence strongly indicates that consumers tend to associate human-like personality characteristics with non-human entities (Jin and Sung, 2011 cited in Baines, 2014). For this reason, Aaker (1997) developed a conceptual framework known as the personality scale, to reflect five prominent human characteristics associated with a brand. The dimensions consist of sincerity, excitement,

competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Schiffman, et al., 2010). Figure 2.1 illustrates these five dimensions of psychosocial meaning in more detail.



Source: (Aaker, 1997) ‘Dimensions of Brand Personality’, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Aug 1997,:34, 3, 347.

Figure 2.1: Brand Personality Framework.

The notion that consumers search for brands with a personality that is in line with their self-concept is not a new phenomenon, as discovered by McCracken (McCracken, 1986, cited in Aaker, 1997). Belk (1988) holds that consumers use brands as a means of self-expression to portray a certain aspect of themselves, whether it be their desired self (who they want to be), the ideal self (who they strive to be), or their ‘ought’ self (who they think they should be) (Belk, 1988 cited in Baines, 2014). Brands that resonate with their consumers’ self-concept help portray a personality that they want to relate to others, thereby using brands as means of expression.

When a product is related to an aspect or dimension of a consumer’s self-concept, they tend to form an emotional brand connection with that particular product or brand (Atkinson, 2014). The relationship between self-concept and brand image has been noted by numerous studies to form a self-brand connection. While there are many studies that test this theory, not much has been done to investigate Generation-Z consumers. Understanding their perception of fashion and brand image will produce key insights for retailers in the Durban region.

2.4.2 Quality Perception

Quality is an important attribute to consider in the development of a product. Fast fashion retailers need to consider the level of quality when establishing prices for their garments. The

term 'quality' is a multifaceted and complex concept, because consumers' perception of quality varies across all generations, where one could be extremely satisfied and the other unsatisfied with the same item of clothing (Baines, 2014). Opposing views on quality gave rise to the term 'perceived quality', which can be described as "customers' perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service compared to alternatives and with respect to its intended purpose" (Keller, 2013).

Achieving a satisfactory level of perceived quality has become a difficult task amongst retailers with the many macro-environmental changes to consider, all of which have an impact on consumer behaviour. Fortunately, general dimensions have been established to offer a better understanding of how consumers form their opinions about quality. These dimensions include the following (Keller, 2013):

- Performance: The level of functional performance at which the primary product features operate.
- Features: The appeal of secondary attributes in relation to primary attributes.
- Conformance quality: Delivery of reliable products that meet requirements and have no defects.
- Reliability: Meeting expectations in terms of product performance and consistency of product delivery after every purchase.
- Durability: The economic lifespan of the product.
- Serviceability: The convenience of servicing a product or post purchase service quality.
- Style and design: The look and feel of quality.

Quality is often used as a differentiating factor of products amongst retailers. It is vital for retailers to look at quality holistically with the above dimensions in mind to achieve a more favourable perception from their target audience. Statistics reveal that consumers' preference for quality is higher amongst high-end retailers, outweighing price and service (Raidoo, Butler, Richards, Naidoo, Maharaj & Serakwane, 2011). Reputable brands are often trusted for the quality of the items they produce and customers are less price sensitive and expect a high level of service. On the other hand, amongst mid-end retailers, consumers have a higher preference for price (48%) and quality (34%), outweighing service (18%) (Raidoo, Butler, Richards, Naidoo, Maharaj & Serakwane, 2011). These consumers seek value in their purchases, looking for the right quality at the appropriate price.

Price and quality are important considerations when making buying decisions in tough economic periods, such as a recession (Raidoo, et al., 2011). A poor economic climate often alters consumer behaviour when making purchases of goods and services, especially clothing. Therefore, it is important for retailers to be mindful of the fact that consumers do not stop purchasing during a recession, but become more strategic in their purchases and often limit the use of their discretionary spending.

Thus, a retailer's ability to deliver in terms of value becomes an important differentiating factor. In marketing, "value refers to what we get for what we pay" (Baines, 2014). The Mr Price group retailer prides itself on being a value retailer and their understanding of value is providing the customer with the wanted item at the right price and quality. Their value proposition gave them an added advantage when the recession hit South Africa in 2008. This clothing retailer grew by 10.8% to R4.3 billion as they provided value in offering their customers what they wanted at the right price and quality (Mr Pricegrouplimited, 2009). Cant and Heerden (2013) express that value stems from the customers' holistic experience from the utility of the product, benefits received through execution of the product, place, promotion and the sacrifice the customer had to make. In other words, value forms part of the customer experience and therefore, marketers need to know how to create and sustain value to achieve a competitive advantage. The 2008 recession is a clear demonstration that in dire economic times consumers do not stop buying, they stop over buying. This is an important distinction, and retailers have recognized this trend and have become more focused on their value strategies. Price and quality are important determinants in bringing out the best value. A study conducted by Ting and Foong (2014), revealed that customers' perceptions regarding the quality of the product led to a positive influence on the customers' purchasing decisions with regard to apparel outlets. Undoubtedly, people tend to make purchases when they believe in the value of what they are getting and this a strong motivator in their decision to purchase.

Previous literature suggests that quality is a complex concept. There are numerous assumptions about how quality is measured. The most common assumption made is that an increase in prices reflects a quality product of higher value (Baines, 2014). This notion is supported by 'snob' consumers who believe that higher prices usually mean higher quality (Baines, 2014). Previous literature revealed that there is a weak congruency between price and perceived quality and that it does not exist (Baines, 2014). This statement is supported by the meta-analysis conducted by Volckner and Hofmann (2007), who investigated the price-perceived quality

relationship published between 1989 and 2006 and concluded that the effect that price is seen to have on perceived quality has weakened (Baines, 2014). According to Olson (1977), consumers use price as an indicator of quality when price is the only cue available for evaluation (Olson, 1977 cited in Baines, 2014). On the other hand, when price is used in combination with intrinsic cues, the appeal/evidence is less convincing (Zeithaml, 1988 cited in Baines, 2014).

There is a trend where consumers are becoming more interested in quality products and do not mind paying more for an item that lasts longer. In particular, Generation Z consumers are environmentally conscious and understand the impact that fast fashion has on the environment and may opt for brands that are more sustainable and offer better quality. According to Doupnik (2017), the best way to engage Generation Z is to offer a quality product that appeals to them. Brin (2014) acknowledges that there has been a shift in how young consumers perceive product quality. Gutfreund noted that these consumers have become more selective and look at value differently in terms of “how an item is made, how long it will last, and whether they need it” (Gutfreund cited in Brin, 2014). In support of this, Jaffray (2016) stipulates that other than price and quality, the brand name, social responsibility of the brand/retailer and environmentally friendly products are important differentiating factors (Jaffray, 2016 cited in Marketing Charts Staff, 2016).

Undoubtedly, quality perception is an important component to consider when marketing to this generation. It is important for businesses to adjust their processes by investing in sustainable measures, focusing on their brand and ensuring that it is engaging enough to appeal to Generation-Z from a price, quality and value perspective.

2.5 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON FASHION CONSUMPTION PURCHASES

In today’s society, social factors have a strong influence on youth consumption behaviour. The rapid development of technology has allowed individuals to interact on a global scale, making the influences of friends, family, celebrities, opinion leaders and the media more prominent. The following section examines the influence of family, friends, opinion leaders and the media in more detail.

2.5.1 Reference Groups

The role of reference groups in driving consumption is an important influencing factor of consumer behaviour. Consumers generally find the need to get a second opinion when shopping for clothing to validate their choices in terms of what is socially acceptable. In particular, the youth often feel affiliated or connected with their reference group and seek to imitate or use them as a guide to appeal to their ideal self-image. This is supported by Kurtz and Boone's (2012) definition of a reference group- "as either individuals or organizations that offer guidance in their decision to purchase and whose opinions are valued" (Kurtz and Boone, 2012 cited in Manley, 2013). Hawkins, Best and Coney (1989) explained that there are many of us that belong to a number of groups and wish to belong to several more (Hawkins, Best and Coney, 1989 cited in Turcinkova and Moisisdis, 2011). It is vital that marketers understand the influence of reference groups, as they offer valued insight into the effect that these groups have on driving the consumption patterns of their target market (Manley, 2013). The aforementioned study makes reference to primary and aspirational reference groups.

2.5.1.1 Types of reference groups

Family

One of the most influential factors influencing buying behaviour is family. Through their roles and authority, family have the ability to shape the attitudes and behaviours of their members and form habits that are likely to stay with them long-term. This is likely to have a long-term influence on their shopping patterns, brand choices, fashion clothing preferences, spending patterns and so forth.

In particular, parents play a pivotal role in influencing their children's decisions from a young age. According to Gunter and Furnham (1998), parents' perceptions towards price and quality are often duplicated by their children, which in turn influences their consumption patterns as they get older (Gunter and Furnham, 1998 cited in Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). This statement is supported by the journal article written by Eze, Chin & Lee (2012), who articulate that family often place pressure on shaping their children's identities, usually through communication and observational learning, which together have a strong influence on children as they enter young adulthood. The roles that family members perform are important in understanding how their decision-making takes place at a household level. Below are the roles that family members perform (Mandley, 2013):

- Ignitor: Creates a need for the product with supporting information on why that particular product is needed.
- Influencer: Reinforces the decision to purchase with suggestions and wishes.
- The decision makers: The family member with the authority to make the final decision on whether to purchase the item or not.
- The purchaser: This individual is given the task of buying the item that the decision maker has decided upon.
- The user: The family member that utilizes the item.

Today, the youth have a lot of influence over their parents' consumption behaviour and often play the "influencer" role in their household (Geuens, Mast & de Pelsmacker, 2002). Mandley (2013) adds that "family exerts the most influence on an individual". However, Moore, Wilkie & Lutz (2002) hold that this influence reduces as they get older (Moore, Wilkie, & Lutz, 2002 cited in Eze et al., 2012). This statement is supported by Gunter and Furnham (1998), who state that the effect that parents have on their children is usually higher when they are younger and dependent on them financially, but with age and maturity in their teen years, their peers become their main influencers (Gunter and Furnham, 1998 cited in Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). Underhill (1999) stipulates that teenagers engage in a "pre-shop" with their friends to search for the things they might need and want and often return with their parents to indulge those purchases (Underhill, 1999 cited in Britsman and Sjolander, 2011).

Friends

Manley (2013) asserts that consumers often enter different life stages that alter the way they make decisions as they transition from high school to university. This involves placing the opinions of their peers above those of their parents. The need for independence and to distance themselves from their parents becomes stronger (Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). According to Makgosa & Mohube (2007), peer influence is statically strongest among university students (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007 cited in Akpan & Nkan, 2013). Individuals occupying the same social space often develop certain attitudes and behaviours through observation and communication with their peers. Their desire to comply with certain group norms in order to gain acceptance and appraisal often influences their choice of clothing purchases (Akpan & Nkan, 2013I). These consumers use their reference group of "peers" as a benchmark by referring to their opinions, attitudes, insight and actions towards a product or service (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007, cited in Eze, et al., 2012).

It is important to note that consumers rely on reference groups to boost their confidence in their purchasing decisions, as they feel vulnerable and seek acceptance to fit in, thus, relying on others to enhance their consumption choices of clothing brands (Eze, et al., 2012). Interestingly, a study by Akpan & Nkan (2013) concluded that female university students are less influenced by information acquired from their peers and more influenced by the norms of their peers. This is supported by Ying (2010), who expresses that teenagers are often influenced by styles and consumption moods of their peers as well as materialistic values and social motivations (Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). Clothing amongst the youth is used as an art of expression that communicates personality and allows one to fit in with a group they wish to emulate or be a part of. It is not only about the product or brand information that they can get from their peers, but more about the representation of what it means to be a part of that particular group.

Lawrence (2003) affirms that the need to be accepted amongst their peers has given rise to a brand conscious generation (Lawrence, 2003 cited in Fernandez, 2009). This supports Eze, et al.'s (2012) conclusion that friends are a dominant reference category and a prominent informational source. However, it is important to remember that the influence of friends may only last for a certain period of time, as the youth engage in a struggle between their desire to be accepted by their friends and the need to rebel against conformity and express their individuality (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003, cited in Britsman and Sjolander, 2011).

Opinion Leaders

Opinion leaders can be closely associated with innovators. In the product lifecycle innovators are usually the first to purchase a product as it enters the market, thus setting a trend for others to follow. These individuals usually share product knowledge with no intention to gain anything, thereby helping the consumer make more informed decisions. Informal sources such as family, friends, celebrities and online referrals make up opinion leaders (Schiffman et al., 2010). Fashion leaders in particular are known to be key in spreading fashion trends and allowing fashion followers to adopt or reject the fashion they put out there (Rahman, Saleem, Akhtar, Ali & Khan, 2014). Fashion leaders are usually trusted amongst their followers and have a great influence over them. This is often due to their “expertise, knowledge and personality” regarding certain trends, such as fashion (Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). Fashion leaders are very much involved in shopping and keeping their wardrobe up-to-date with the latest trends, thus making them more socially confident, risk takers and less price conscious in

comparison to fashion followers (Belleau, Nowlin, Summers and Xu, 2001, cited in Rahman et al., 2014). According to Britsman and Sjolander (2011), opinion leaders have the ability to influence 5-10 people within their environment.

A study conducted by Eze, et al. (2012) on the role of reference groups in purchasing designer apparel, found that celebrities seem to have a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions in comparison to friends, family and siblings. The youth consumers are aspirational and tend to be influenced by things or people that enhance their self-concept. If a consumer holds a celebrity in high esteem, they may find value in making an expensive purchase, as that item of clothing resonates with the fashion level to which they aspire.

Most fashion retailers have recognized this trend and have used it strategically in their marketing programmes. Fast fashion retailer H&M has used celebrities such as Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell, and Kylie Minogue in advertising their brands (Baines, 2014). This has proved to be a good strategy for them in creating brand awareness and positive word-of-mouth, especially as "fame is becoming an attractive quality to most consumers" (Baines, 2014). Celebrity endorsers of products often provide credibility to the consumers' wanted item and uplift their self-image. The effect that Elizabeth Taylor had on the launch of white diamond in 1989 was enormous, ranking high in global sales, reaching 1 billion, thus making it the bestselling celebrity perfume of all time (Baines, 2014).

The media

The advertising landscape has changed rapidly. Brand engagement and building brand love amongst consumers has become vital for a company's long term success. Social media and certain reference groups are important factors in achieving this. Ordinary bloggers have become fashion icons and are looked upon as the new celebrities. These bloggers often represent a sense of 'realness' and have fashionability and style that their followers can imitate. Blogs represent a two-way form of communication, making it an interactive platform, where consumers can get inspiration, fashion advice or information on a garment quickly. This form of communication is very direct. According to Solomon (2002), 80 % of buying decisions are a result of some form of direct communication (Solomon, 2002 cited in Brits & Sjolander, 2011). Solomon (2002) also claims that targeting the right fashion leader on social media can spread trends to an entire segment (Solomon, 2002 cited in Brits & Sjolander, 2011). Fashion retail companies that make strategic use of celebrities, attractive models and bloggers in their

advertising that are relevant to their target audience's self-concept, are often effective in their appeal. For example, if the consumer finds the blogger inspiring and can resonate with their fashion appeal and style, this is likely to create an "assimilation effect", where the consumer might feel motivated to look and act like the blogger, which influences their consumption decisions (Britsman & Sjolander, 2011).

Due to the rapid growth of technology, information is widely available, especially on social networks. The consumer is not only dependent on their opinion leader at home or university but on a global scale. The world-wide web allows consumers and businesses from all over the world to give opinions, ratings and comments about products, services, fashion trends, brands and so forth. These consumers usually measure their findings by what they see around them with regard to their peers, family members, and celebrities, as well as the good and bad reviews of many others. Therefore, a segment's reference groups play an influential role in the decision-making of the consumers in that segment.

2.6 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is fundamental for human existence. It is a means through which we engage in social interaction, thereby sharing our thoughts, feelings, needs, wants, ideas and experiences. Marketing communication is a relatively new term, replacing 'promotions', which is the fourth element of the marketing mix. Previously, promotions involved making consumers aware of their product offering in an attempt to persuade them to buy, whilst building a reputation with their brand and organization (Baines, 2014). Today, communication is viewed broadly and intimately, with the idea of creating shared meaning between the target audience and the organization. New forms of media have made it possible to create two-way communication between the sender and the receiver, placing more importance on the meaning of the message, how it could be interpreted and the engagement initiated (Baines, 2014). Marketing communication can be best described as an "involved management process of engaging with various audiences and stakeholders, and understanding their communications environment in order to develop and convey messages of significant value to encourage attitudinal and behavioural responses from their audiences (Fill, 2013, cited in Baines, 2014). This definition places importance on aspects such as engagement, audiences and responses.

Marketers have recognized the importance of building relationships with their audience through effective communication, engagement and understanding their consumers' needs, the

motivation behind their purchases, and their attitudes and actions towards certain brands and how these affect their purchasing decisions. More importantly, customer experience has become pivotal in building a cohesive brand experience, and quick response, feedback and action is essential, as it affects consumer behaviour.

In today's, difficult economic times, it is becoming more necessary for marketers to communicate with and understand their target audience. The question is, should they do so in isolation or from an integrated perspective? Integrated marketing communications (IMC) has gained momentum in recent years, creating impactful and meaningful messages that have been successful in eliciting a desired response from their audiences. The addition of social media has played a role in strengthening the IMC approach by encouraging two-way communication and building strong relationships with new and existing consumers.

2.7 AIDA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Marketers need to understand the AIDA Model to effectively and efficiently target their consumers in a way that allows them to retain that message and react to it. The AIDA Model stands for: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (Suggett, 2017). The sender needs to grab the attention of consumers with their message in order to get them thinking about it. This then sparks an interest in the mind of the consumer. The message needs to be persuasive enough to ignite a desire for that particular product or service being offered. If the first three actions are successful, then the consumer is likely to take action to purchase the product (Baines, 2014). As much as it is important to have a strong message, the channels through which the message is delivered is extremely important if you want to create awareness of your product or services and build customers' relationships and brand equity. However, marketers experience what is referred to as a "lagged effect", where consumers do not always react immediately to the communication (Schiffman et al., 2010). A large number of businesses are adopting a multi-channel approach when advertising their products and services as this increases the possibility of the message being received.

2.8 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (IMC)

In the 21st century, the changing role of the media landscape has impacted many businesses and consumers' purchasing behaviour. The marketing communications strategies that exist now, cannot be compared to marketing communications strategies then. Previously, organizations were satisfied with using fairly mundane and predictable communication tools

and media to achieve specific business objectives. For instance, advertising had the responsibility of creating awareness of products amongst mass audiences, sales promotions were used to drive demand, PR upheld the image of the company and personal selling was a means of getting orders. Although the purpose of these elements may be similar, the execution has changed. This is due to the competitive activity and trends that have invaded the market place and have prompted certain organizations to change the nature of their communications with their audience and to adopt the integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach. IMC focuses on customer segments and their needs and wants and then customizes a message that is channelled through integrated communication elements to satisfy those needs (du Plessis et al., 2010).

IMC and social media are often used hand in hand to get the best response from their target audience. Not all, but certain components of IMC can be used in conjunction with social media to drive brand awareness and deliver the brand message most effectively, despite the barrier of media fragmentation. Social media has most certainly gained momentum in recent years and is dominating the communications sphere and has become a crucial component of marketing campaigns or strategies.

Media fragmentation is an ongoing problem, as numerous retailers and businesses continuously fight for consumers' attention. Thus, many companies have adopted an integrated approach to reach their target audience. These messages are designed to create interaction between the brand and the consumer by provoking their audience into responding "physically, cognitively or emotionally" (Baines, 2014). Previously, messages were designed through commercial media to develop their target audience's attitudes and feelings towards their brand (Baines, 2014). Today, social media blurs the lines between the sender and the receiver and encourages two-way communication. It is therefore imperative that businesses execute well thought out integrated social media strategies that are engaging, and creative and do not lead to negative publicity that can hinder the brand. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of social media and its counterparts.

2.9 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a relatively new addition to an organization's integrated marketing communications strategy. This recent phenomenon has made it possible for companies to reach their audiences on a global scale, enabling communication to take place on a common platform.

“Social Media is the collective of online communication channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration” (Rouse, 2016). It is best described as new forms of online media that offer the benefit of blurring the line between media and audience (Mirza, 2008). The impact of this form of digital technology has created an open community offering a convenient platform to penetrate their desired market and to cater to their needs and wants more efficiently.

The characteristics of social media involve “openness, conversation, community and connectedness” (Mirza, 2008).

Openness: Open communication on social media inspires trust between the audience and the organization through timely feedback, on-going participation and making the access and use of content convenient with no complicated barriers (Mirza, 2008).

Conversation: Social media has revolutionized the way the brand interacts with their audience, placing more focus on two-way communication, than on traditional media that engage their audience by means of broadcasting (content transmitted or distributed to an audience) (Mirza, 2008). It is important to know and understand the content your audience is craving to ensure that what you put out there will engage and stimulate conversation amongst your target group, thus building resonance with the brand or organization (Cyr, 2016).

Community: Social media brings people together on a common platform, creating a community in which successful communication takes place (Mirza, 2008). Effective community management is often needed to cater to the audience’s needs consistently (Cyr, 2016). These communities encourage collaboration and social sharing, which plays a pivotal role in growing online communities and building and strengthening relationships (Cyr, 2016).

Connectedness: Social media connects audiences world-wide. In terms of marketing, it is audience focused and therefore requires an understanding of their needs, behaviour and motives on social media, especially in relation to consumption habits (Cyr, 2016). Companies have begun to see how connections on social media flourish and take advantage of links that direct audiences to their product and brand pages (Mirza, 2008).

Communication and engagement: This is a contemporary characteristic that depicts the way in which social media blurs the lines between sender and receiver, where contributions and

feedback are encouraged from interested consumers who wish to share their opinions (Mayfield, 2008 cited in Ramnarain, 2011). This is an important characteristic, as this is where businesses can realize where they doing well and where they are going wrong.

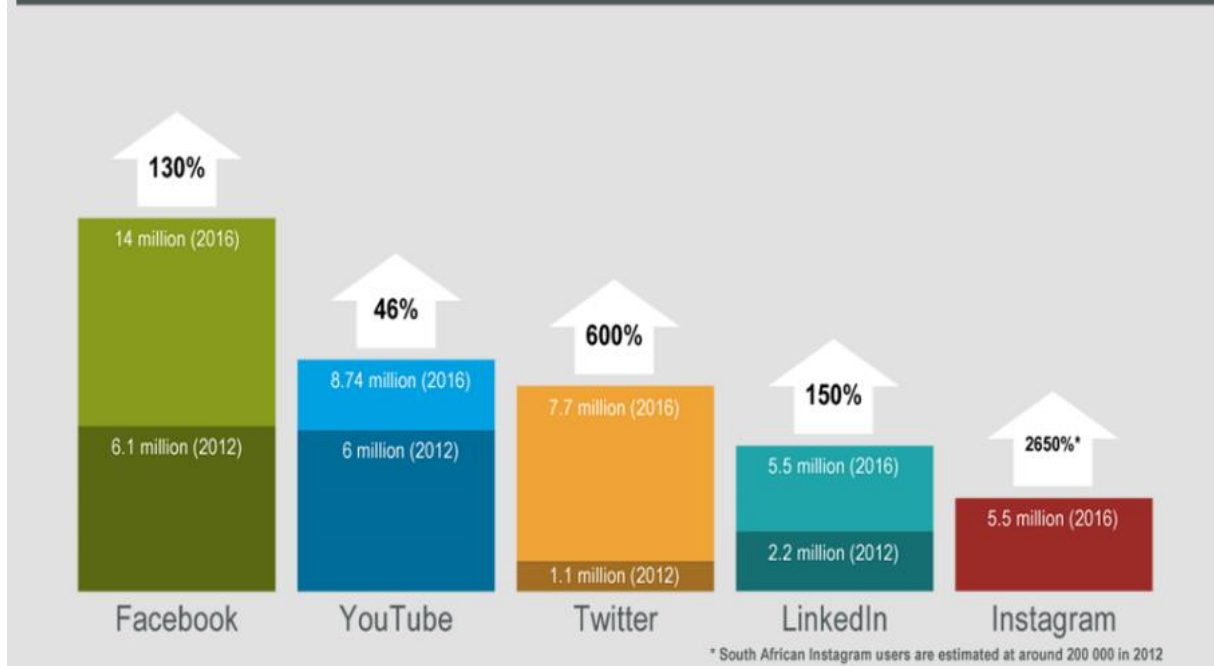
2.9.1 Social Media in South Africa

Social media has become a prominent means of communication in South Africa and companies should do their best to capitalize on these networks. Previously, the internet usage in South Africa was low due to the digital divide that our country was experiencing (Patricios, 2009, cited in Zondi, 2014). This means that only the middle to upper class had internet access and mobile devices that enabled them to connect easily with others.

Today, social media has played a pivotal role in accelerating the growth of mobile devices. Almost 80% of time spent on social media browsing is done on mobile phones (Sterling, 2016). Undoubtedly, mobile devices have become popular in terms of how we communicate and search for information. The number of South Africans accessing the internet grew from 24.9 million in January 2015 to 26.8 million in January 2016, indicating a growth of 1.9 million in a year (Shezi, 2017). Interestingly, the highest growth stemmed from the number of active social media users, which increased by 25%, closely followed by a 20% increase of active mobile social users (Shezi, 2017). A large majority of South Africans, 55% to be exact, use their smartphone to visit social networks (Shezi, 2017). This clearly indicates that it is the most convenient device that people turn to for communication and searching for information, be it product reviews or just in general.

Social media platforms are definitely a winner amongst brands that wish to connect with their audience on a wider scale and get their brand messages out as rapidly as possible. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram are some of the popular social networks. An analysis conducted by Blue Magnet (2016) depicted that amongst South Africa's top brands, 80% believe that Facebook is effective, compared to 46% believing in Twitter, 29% LinkedIn, and 20% YouTube. However, Druce (2013) holds that although Facebook is a popular social media site with a high usage rate in South Africa, other networks are gaining momentum in popularity amongst the youth, which could result in Facebook losing its share to other social networking sites (Druce, 2013 cited in Zondi, 2014). Figure 2.2 indicates the growth of social media from 2012 to 2016.

Social Media Growth in South Africa : 2012 - 2016



Source: Blue Magnet (2016)

Figure 2.2: Social Media Growth in South Africa: 2012 – 2016

Figure 2.2 clearly indicates the momentum at which recent social media platforms have been growing. It is important for marketers to be wary of the latest developments and understand how the youth are communicating on the social networking sites. For instance, Snapchat and Instagram are more prevalent amongst Generation Z. Research conducted by IT-Online (2017) confirms that two-thirds of the Generation Z shoppers use Instagram on a regular basis and are twice as likely to use Snapchat in comparison to Generation Y. YouTube, has received the most attention from Generation Z, as 84% regularly use this platform due to the striking impact of visual content (images/videos) that are able to relay messages and get to the point in a faster and more creative way (IT-Online, 2017). Nevertheless, Facebook is still a top contender and a valuable platform for businesses to use. The next section is a discussion of these social media networking sites in more detail.

2.10 SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

In this digital age, social media networks are vital for the success of small and large businesses. Having an amazing product means nothing if people do not know about it. According to Maina (2016), the most popular social media sites include: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google +, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram and Tumblr. Each of these sites has a uniqueness that appeals

to all ages, especially the youth, which is becoming the fastest growing segment with the most spending power and influence over their parents.

2.10.1 Facebook

Facebook was established in February, 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg (Weinberger, 2017). In no time, this brilliant concept became one of the most powerful and influential companies worldwide. Its popularity has made its worth around \$500 billion, with more than 2 billion users engaging on this platform every month (Weinberger, 2017). In South Africa, the growth of Facebook users has been tremendous. Blue Magnet statistics (2016) indicate that Facebook has had the highest growth from 6.1 million in 2012 to 14 million in 2017. According to Meyer (2003), “people worldwide regard social media platforms as authentic parts of their daily lives” (Meyer, 2003 cited in Ramnarain, 2011). It is in a company’s best interests to connect on such platforms to encourage long term affiliation and trust with real people, with real interest in their products (Ramnarain, 2011).

Undoubtedly, Facebook out performs all other social networks in terms of referral traffic, engagement, conversion rates and so forth (DeMers, 2015). Facebook accumulated 1.59 billion users since its launch in 2004, making it an exceptional medium of connecting with people from all over the world (Maina, 2016). The purpose of Facebook is to “give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Gresham, 2015). According to DeMers (2015), brands should invest in Facebook (FB) for the following reasons:

- Popularity. In comparison to other network sites, FB has a powerful influence amongst its users (DeMers, 2015).
- Referral traffic. FB dominates other social networks. In 2014, all social media sites drove 31.24 % of all referral traffic on the web, whilst FB alone drove nearly 25% (DeMers, 2015).
- 40 million active small business pages are on FB. Businesses that have a social media presence on at least three social network sites often appear to be more credible (DeMers, 2015).
- 1/7 individuals are on FB. Missing out on such a huge segment of the market, could be a risk to companies.

- Highest conversion rates. In terms of social media e-commerce traffic, FB is the leader with an average conversion rate of 1.85% driving high conversions and sales (DeMers, 2015).
- FB dominates social sales. An average of 85% of orders come from Facebook. Photography, sports and recreation, pet supplies, drop shipping and jewellery and watches are some of the popular merchandise (DeMers, 2015).
- Consumers prefer to connect with brands on FB. A report by Edison Research indicated that 76% of consumers preferred to connect with a brand on Facebook, compared to 10% on Twitter and only 4% on Instagram (DeMers, 2015).

Facebook is a vital component in delivering deep brand engagements and building successful relationships with consumers. Despite the recent social media developments, marketers should not neglect their Facebook strategies, as it is still a relevant communication platform across all age groups.

2.10.2 Twitter

Twitter was founded in March, 2006 (Maina, 2016). This social media platform is an efficient form of communication in terms of actively engaging consumers and stimulating conversation. Twitter is beneficial for businesses in the following ways (Jackson, 2017):

- Information and content sharing.
- Encouraging engagement with promotional activities.
- Networking with consumers.
- Developing a favourable brand image and developing a strong online presence.
- Monitoring and protecting the reputation of the brand through quick response measures and healthy conflict resolutions.

In South Africa, the number of users on twitter is growing at a fast pace. In 2012, twitter had 1.1 million users and that increased to 7.7 million in 2016 (Blue Magnet, 2016). According to Chahal (2016), Twitter was ranked second, if purchasing directly from social media sites were possible, followed by Instagram (3rd), Pinterest (4th), Snapchat (5th) and Facebook was ranked as the first choice. Twitter is likely to be Facebook's closest rival. The exponential growth of twitter requires marketers to pay special attention to this platform and to utilize it to promote sales and create traffic to online stores.

2.10.3 Instagram

Instagram is one of the most recent social media networking sites. This platform has an attractive visual appeal, where a picture can really be worth thousands of words. Fashion retailers are moving towards this platform for marketing purposes, and rightfully so, as Instagram has doubled its user base in South Africa in the last year (Snyman, 2016). Statistics indicate that within two months of the launch in 2010, Instagram acquired one million users (Desreumaux, 2014). In 2012, South African Instagram users were estimated to be around 200 000 and in 2016 this figure reached 5.5 million (Blue Magnet, 2016). In the rest of the world, Instagram has 150 million users, 16 billion photos shared, 1.2 billion likes every day and 55 million photos per day (Desreumaux, 2014). The Instagram boom has most certainly caught the attention of many South African businesses, as 24% of leading brands announced that they intend to use Instagram in the coming year (Snyman, 2016). According to Snyman (2016), Mr Price and Mercedes-Benz have acquired the most success with individual images locally.

Amongst the many uses of Instagram, it is most favourably used as a form of self-expression to the world (Pawlos, 2016). Individuals enjoy sharing their skills, interests, personal experiences, travels and fashion ideas on this networking site. People and businesses alike use this platform to inspire and be inspired. Fashion is most prevalent on Instagram- with designers turning to Instagram to promote their brands. For example, Marc Jacobs showcased his new collection on Instagram where he put fans in the campaign, all 10 000 who entered were found on Instagram (Pawlos, 2016). This was a great way to target the youth and add a fresh and more high-spirited appeal to the brand.

According to Clay (2017), Instagram users are more likely to make a purchase after viewing the content on Instagram. Fashion retailers are more likely to benefit from this platform, as “fashion fans check Instagram news feeds fifteen times a day, post content three times more than the average user and have two hundred more followers than the average user (Clay, 2017). This platform promotes engagement and builds repertoire with brands and consumers. Instagram provides a foundation where personal contact is met on a humanitarian and emotional level where opinions are valued (Pawlos, 2016). Apart from engagement and exposure of brands, Instagram is being used as a convenient shopping channel amongst the majority of women who appreciate shopping convenience. According to Lovelle (2017), “any time you can cater to your audience and make mobile-online shopping an easy experience,

results in a win”. With Instagram becoming a part of the new media revolution and an influencer of consumer choice, especially concerning fashion, companies cannot afford not to capitalize on this medium and integrate it into their communication strategies.

2.10.4 Pinterest

Pinterest can be closely associated to the features of Instagram for its visually appealing concept. Pinterest is a source of inspiration for numerous businesses and individuals. According to statistics conducted by Vision Critical (2013), “Pinterest is the network most likely to drive spontaneous purchasing” (Vision Critical, 2013 cited in Samuel, Sevitt, Lam & Lou, 2013). The customer segment making use of Pinterest is mainly women at 83%, with a large majority aged between 18 and 54 years of age (Samuel, et al., 2013). Small businesses should use this medium if their target audience comprises mainly women. Pesin (2016) holds that the fashion consumer is visual and Pinterest allows them to put together many of their ideas on a single board that could be shared with others of similar interests, thereby exposing business ideas, merchandise and brands. According to marketing strategist Macala Wright, “Pinterest is growing up and positioning itself as a major player in search, social and e-commerce” (Pesin, 2016).

Pinterest is an influential source in fashion, as confirmed by the facts below

- Fashion is the third most popular category on Pinterest and accounts for 45% of the activity, and of the 30 billion pins on Pinterest, 4.5 billion are fashion related (Pesin, 2016).
- An average of 15.8 minutes is spent on site compared to an average of 15 seconds that 55% of the global population spends on other sites.
- The average order value \$199, which outweighs Facebook at \$92.27 and Twitter at \$58.02.
- 10% of Pinterest users are more likely to purchase than users from e-commerce and social media sites.
- Undoubtedly, Pinterest is important for fashion brands and visually motivates and inspires consumers to purchase. Since its launch in March 2010 up until 2015, Pinterest acquired one million users (Maina, 2016).

2.10.5 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is known particularly for its professional networking abilities. This site allows individuals to connect with other professionals and depict business content and statistics (Maina, 2016). LinkedIn was founded in 2002 and launched in 2003 (Maina, 2016). The website can be accessed in 24 languages and has 400 million registered users (Maina, 2016). In South Africa, the growth of LinkedIn has risen from 2.2 million in 2012 to 5.5 million in 2016 (Blue Magnet, 2016). LinkedIn is seen to have the highest quality content feed in comparison to other social networks in South Africa, with the highest number of joiners aged between 25 and 34 (Blue magnet, 2016).

Although LinkedIn is very much business driven, companies should still apply themselves on this platform as a means of promoting their company culture and other events of the business. This could also entice the working-class Generations Y and Z consumers to strive to be a part of that culture.

2.10.6 YouTube

YouTube is widely known for its video content sharing capabilities and is the largest and most popular video-based social media platform (Maina, 2016). This social media video platform was established in February 2005 and was bought by Google in November 2006 for \$ 1.65 billion (Maina, 2016). In 2017, it was reportedly the second most active social media platform with 47% of all active social media users, while Facebook accounted for 48% of users (Blue Magnet, 2016). The growth of YouTube in South Africa has been successful, with 6 million in 2012 and 8.74 million in 2016 (Blue Magnet, 2016). The opportunity that online video sharing represents to brands is enormous. Marketers can get their message across to a wide segment of consumers in a matter of minutes. Especially as 3 billion videos are viewed per day with around 800 million unique visitors monthly (Indvik, 2011). Professionally produced online product videos can be used to enrich the customers' experience by giving them a realistic view of the products, thus eliminating any doubts and indecision (Dusto, 2012). Interestingly, 52% of customers have said that watching product videos online increases their confidence in deciding whether to buy online (Dusto, 2012). A breakthrough innovation regarding shopping for products directly from a video has been a great benefit to the fashion industry, where one click of the product you spot takes you directly to the page of the required item (Poq, 2012). Boohoo.com is one of the retailers that have taken advantage of this by featuring Little Nikki

in a shoppable video, where consumers are able to purchase their autumn collection worn by Little Nikki and her team of dancers (Poq, 2012). YouTube has been quick to react to this trend by improving on their technology to integrate videos and online shopping (Poq, 2012).

South African marketers that are quick to react to such trends and make creative use of YouTube are more likely to sustain a competitive advantage over other retailers in the local and global markets.

2.10.7 Google +

Google + has grown exponentially since its launch in December 2011, registering 418 million active users by December 2015 (Maina, 2016). Although Google + experienced a slow start, it has now redeemed its position as the second largest social networking site in the world (Desert, 2014). The purpose of Google + is to create rich, attractive content, unique experiences and to be more connected (Milbrath, 2013). Brands are beginning to gravitate towards this network in improving their online activities as they realise the effect that it could have on their Return on investment (ROI). Google + assists retailers to connect with their audiences and encourages engagement with bold, bright and relevant content that helps boost brand awareness and click throughs that will ultimately lead to more sales (Desert, 2014).

According to Milbrath (2013), brands should be on Google + for the following reasons:

- Better discovery: Improves online searches through Search engine optimisation (SEO) benefits across search, mobile and YouTube. The Google search page is “prime real estate” to introduce a brand (Milbrath, 2013).
- Deeper engagement: Google hangouts are one of their impressive features used to increase engagement (Desert, 2014).
- Marketing performance across the web.
- Measurable impact: Companies can measure the success of their marketing campaigns and understand how their posts were shared across platforms using Google analytics, insights and ripples and the impact of these activities on the bottom line (Milbrath, 2013).

Google + is a thoughtfully designed website with a fresh look compared to Facebook, yet the majority of the users reside on Facebook (Desert, 2014). Nevertheless, Google + has a promising future and with the right strategy, marketers can get the best out of this network by

executing inspiring content combined with innovative technology that can greatly improve online activity and create brand awareness (Desert, 2014).

H&M and Top Shop are some of the retailers that have made creative use of this platform. These two retailers collaborated with Google + in 2013 for the London Fashion week, exposing 4 million customers to their collection, which under normal circumstances would only be seen by about 300 (Desert, 2014). Google hangouts allowed for engagement, making it an interactive event that helped collect data to determine customers' buying decisions for the next season (Desert, 2014). Brand engagement is important for a business, because through this process the customer can really experience a brand. Google + should be integrated into fashion retailers' marketing strategies.

Social media is a fundamental tool for marketers in this day and age. In order for marketers to gain valuable insights into their consumers' behaviour, whether it be factors influencing shopping online or in brick stores, they need to go to the place where these consumers are interacting, and communicating and are virtually reachable. Here, they will be able to gauge what their consumer is looking for in terms of trends, how they communicate, and what is important to them, so that they are in the best position to execute products and content that is meaningful and relevant to their target audience.

2.11 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the main factors that influence the consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands, namely: self-concept and brand image congruity; perceived quality; reference groups and social media. These factors are divided and adapted to the internal and external factors that influence consumer behaviour. The distinctive characteristics of Generation-Z are described in relation to the impact these traits have on building a brand. The factors assessed in the literature review showed a positive influence on the consumption of fashion clothing brands. The following chapter describes the research methodology underpinning the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Good research is vital for the discovery of great ideas and solutions to problems. This is research that is structured with guiding principles and ethics that ensure that the data is valid and reliable. The previous chapter briefly explained consumer behaviour and Generation Z characteristics and elaborated on the factors that play an important role in influencing consumption behaviour with regard to fashion brands. These factors include quality, self-concept, and reference groups and social media browsing, which has become a fundamental tool for communication, engagement and motivating purchases. Methodology forms the basis upon which the data was collected, captured, processed, analysed and presented in a way that achieved the research objectives. The emphasis in this chapter is on central concepts related to the research design and methodology that was utilized in this study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design serves as a blueprint for empirical research aimed at answering specific research questions through a data collection processes, instrument development processes and sampling processes (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Research studies can be conducted for three purposes: to be exploratory, descriptive or to test hypotheses (Sekran & Bougie, 2009). This research project was exploratory and descriptive. According to Dane (2011), the purpose of exploratory research is to verify if a phenomenon exists. However, there is substantial information provided by various dissertations that indicate that the phenomenon does exist in various geographical areas of South Africa. Nevertheless, there is not much known about the specific factors underpinning the study and their influence on Generation-Z consumers, specifically in the Durban region.

Extensive preliminary research was conducted to gain familiarity with Durban's Generation-Z consumers and the extent to which the factors mentioned throughout the study influence their decisions to purchase fashion brands. This information will be used to understand relationships between factors and their positive influence on the purchase of fashion brands and how this insight can be beneficial for the strategic development of marketing campaigns. So, while a

number of facts are known, more information is needed to develop a feasible theoretical framework (Sekran & Bougie, 2009).

The second type of study that was used was descriptive, which was “undertaken to ascertain and describe characteristics of the variables of interest” (Sekran & Bougie, 2009). A descriptive study was necessary for this project, as it offers the investigator a profile that can be used to describe relevant aspects of the Generation-Z consumer and their relationships with fashion brands. From this specific study, the investigator was able to deduce how demographic factors such as age, education, income, spending patterns and so forth influence Generation Z’s consumption of fashion brands. The primary advantage of using both these studies was that the exploratory study helped to discover new ideas and gain new insight into the phenomenon and the descriptive study provided a clear picture of the phenomenon that was being studied.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

The research methodology section is important because it sets the direction of the study in terms of how the questionnaire should be designed, and how the data needs to be collected to be analysed accurately to achieve the objectives of the study. According to Murphy (1995), methodology is useful in making sense of the object under investigation (Murphy, 1995 cited in Mandhlazi, 2012). There are two research approaches from which to choose, namely, qualitative and quantitative approaches.

This study utilised the quantitative approach, which can be described as a data collection technique or data analysis method that is used to produce numerical data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). The quantitative data was collected by means of a questionnaire that provided objective and unbiased results. Qualitative research on the other hand, is a form of data analysis that generates non-numeric data and focuses more on discovering new ideas and creating an understanding of the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009). According to Murray (2003), qualitative research has a more interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter and quantitative research seeks to make predictions and provide explanations that can be generalized to other persons or places. As this study attempted to determine the cause and effect between the independent and dependent variable to describe, explain and predict behaviour, the quantitative approach proved to be the a more suitable design (Cooper & Schindler, 2006).

This methodology works well with a questionnaire design tool to allow a greater understanding of the phenomenon through facts and explanations.

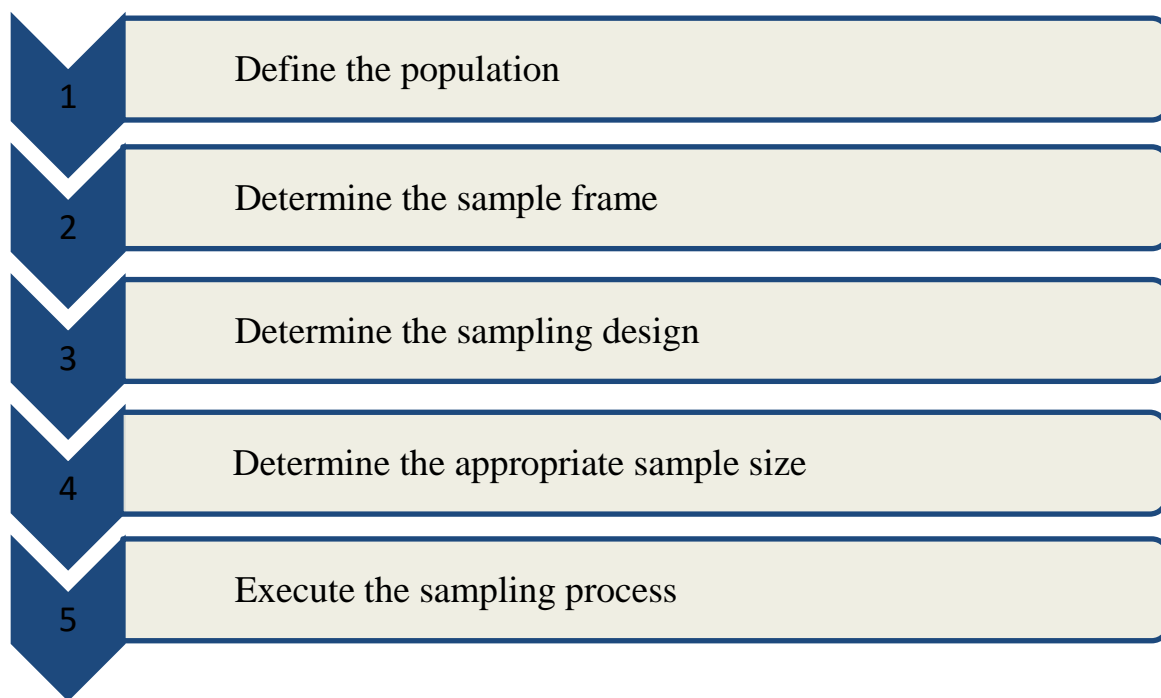
3.4 THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

In quantitative research, the identified problem is specific and measurable (Mandhlazi, 2012). The quality of research is enhanced, as the findings are supported by statistics and factual information (Tichapondwa, 2013). Burns (2000) supports this notion and explains that this research approach can be considered truthful as there is a clear distinction between facts and judgement, and the data that is gathered is deemed accurate and reliable (Burns, 2000 cited in Naicker, 2012). The researcher has full control of the population to be selected and to avoid biasing the participants, no preparation is required for the data collection (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Evidently, this approach is less time consuming when under time constraints (Tichapondwa, 2013). Computerized analysis allows for sophisticated evaluations (Burns, 2000, cited in Naicker, 2012).

On the other hand, there are a number of limitations attached to the quantitative approach. For one, the data analysis process could produce predictable data, which can result in insignificant findings due to the limited opportunity to probe respondents (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). This could also be attributed to peoples' distinctive ability to comprehend experiences, infer their own meanings and act accordingly (Naicker, 2012). Judging from these key limitations, it becomes vital for the researcher to choose an approach that will obtain the best results in meeting their objectives.

3.5 THE SAMPLING DESIGN PROCEDURE

Sampling is an important process that entails selecting appropriate or relevant elements of a population that can be a representation of the study. There are 5 major steps used in the process of selecting a sample. Figure 3.1 represents the steps that are followed in designing the sampling design procedure.



Source: Developed by Dr. Shaun Ruggunan and Nadeem Cassim based on Sekeran (2010).

Figure 3.1: Steps used in developing a sampling design procedure.

Each step in the sampling procedure shown in Figure 3.1 is discussed in the section that follows.

3.5.1 Target Population

The target population can be described as a representation of all people or objects that reflect traits that the researcher wants to study (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The population for this study comprises female university students between the ages of 18 and 21 in the UKZN's School of Management, Information Technology and Governance.

3.5.2 Study Site

A study site is the actual place where the research is conducted. This study occurred at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, which can be found in the city of Durban in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, of South Africa.

3.5.3 Sampling Design

Sampling can be described as the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Mugo, 2002). There are two types of sampling methods: probability and non-

probability sampling. Probability sampling is where each member of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, basically any technique that ensures a random sample (Dane, 2011). On the other hand, non-probability sampling refers to the selection of candidates that are in the best position and provide the most relevant and applicable information (Welman and Kruger, 2005). The disadvantage of non-probability sampling is the inability of the sample to be representative of the population (Churchill et al., 2010). Due to time constraints and the need for quick and convenient data collection, non-probability sampling was used for this study, where the personal judgement of the researcher was used to select the sample of female university students.

3.5.4 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used for this study, as this research required a specific group of individuals to provide important information to achieve the study's objectives (Maxwell, 1999, cited in Teddlie & Yu, 2007). In particular, the sample's elements had to fit the criteria of being female and aged between 18 and 21. This technique was selected because it is easy to administer and works well under time constraints.

3.5.5 Sample and Sample Size

According to Webster (1985), a sample is a set of respondents selected from a larger population for the purpose of a survey (Webster, 1985 cited in Mugo, 2002). The sample size of sixty is appropriate for this study due to time constraints. This sample size was large enough to meet the research objectives and adequate in representing the population of interest.

Table 3.1: Target population, sample units, sample elements and actual sample size of the study

KwaZulu-Natal Generation-Z	
Target Population	KwaZulu-Natal Generation-Z
Sample Units	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Sampling Elements	Generation-Z Students
Actual Sample Size	60 respondents surveyed

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Data collection is the manner in which data was collected from the target sample. The research study utilised self-administered questionnaires with closed-ended questions to obtain the required data. The researcher chose to personally administer sixty questionnaires over a period of two days within the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance. The researcher selected the students from whom data was collected and recorded the responses.

3.6.1 Self-administered Questionnaires

Self-administered questionnaires are cost effective as they can be distributed to a large number of individuals at a low cost, within a short timeframe, which increases the likelihood of a greater response rate, giving a broader and more accurate consensus of the study (Sekran & Bougie, 2009). Questionnaires allow data to be obtained easily and it can easily be coded, thereby providing valid and reliable results as every respondent is asked the same questions (Sekran & Bougie, 2009). From an ethics perspective, there is little involvement of the researcher, which allows the respondents the freedom to be as open and honest as possible, thereby reducing the element of cheating. However, should the researcher require in-depth information through probing and the clarifying of any ambiguities regarding the phenomenon under study, self-administered questionnaires will not be the best measuring instrument to utilise.

This self-administered questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter as the first page of the questionnaire that explained the intent of the study. As stated by Brennan, Canning & McDowell (2011), a covering letter with a hand-written signature is likely to improve the response rate. In the current study, the verbal explanation by ‘the researcher was sufficient in accomplishing a positive response rate from the female university students, many of whom felt the questionnaire to be relatable and interesting.

The content of the questionnaire was developed after reviewing literature and empirical studies regarding factors (self-concept and brand image congruency, quality, reference groups and social media) influencing the consumption of fashion clothing brands. Hence, the information obtained together with the objectives of the study served as a guiding framework for the questionnaire development.

Furthermore, the questionnaire's design was structured with closed-ended questions in accordance with the objectives, making it easy to code and classify. The questionnaire consisted of six sections, as explained below:

Section A: The intent of this section was to capture the demographic profiles of the Generation Z respondents. This comprised the participant's age, economic status and level of education. The aim was to capture an accurate profile of the sample and allow the researcher to draw inferential statistics.

Section B: The aim of this section was to determine who had the most influence on their consumption behaviour and the level at which these reference groups influence Generation Z's consumption of fashion clothing brands.

Section C: This section intended to measure what quality means to the respondent.

Section D: The intent of this section was to understand the importance to the participant behind the purchases of fashion clothing brands, to determine the relationships between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands.

Section E: This section captured the respondent's social media usage patterns and the influence that social media browsing has on their consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands.

Section F: The aim of this section was to measure the dependent variable, consumption behaviour, by determining the frequency at which they shop and the amount of money they spend on clothing within a three months period. Also, to ascertain where they rank quality in comparison to other factors mentioned in this section.

All questions from sections A to F were closed-ended questions but the manner in which they were presented differed. The rating scales used were predominantly ordinal scales, which measure rank-ordered data (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This was often used in Sections B, C, D, E and F, in the form of a 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Example:

- Rate (from 1= no influence to 5= large influence) the extent with which each of the following factors influences your consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands.

	No Influence				Large Influence
	1	2	3	4	5

- Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Sections E and F, were slightly different, as variables were ranked according to the participants' preference, with one being the most important and 5/7 being the least important. Example:

- Ranking should include all 5 numbers 1-2-3-4-5, with no two items having the same number

Reasons for returning to a company's page or brand page	Ranking of Importance
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And lastly, nominal scales, also known as categorical scales used to measure categorical data (Bhattacharjee, 2012), were often used in Sections A, B, E and F. This consisted of closed-ended questions where respondents had to choose from a set of predetermined options (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Example:

- Age (years):

<18 years	18-21 years	>21 years

3.6.2 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

Reliability and validity are important in a quantitative study to ensure that the measures the researcher develops through research tools and the scales are relatively good and consistent.

Reliability is closely related to the findings of the study (Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). According to Bhattacharjee (2012), reliability refers to the extent to which a measure of a construct is consistent and dependable. In other words, if someone were to retest your data using the same instrument and obtained the same results, the research would be considered reliable (Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). To ensure the reliability of the data, an experienced statistician and researcher were consulted and they confirmed the face validity of the questionnaire.

Validity refers to the degree to which the measure is representative of the main variables it was supposed to measure (Bhattacharjee, 2012). In other words, validity is the extent to which the chosen instrument truly reflects the reality of the variables that were being measured (Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). Apart from an established statistician and researcher, pilot testing was essential in ensuring the validity of the questionnaire.

3.6.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a necessary component in the research methodology as it helps the researcher uncover overlooked errors that may not be easily detectable initially. The current study was conducted on a small scale of 60 respondents' due to time and budget constraints. Ten students aged between 18 and 21 were asked to fill out the questionnaire to the best of their ability and give the necessary feedback once completed. The shortfalls that were detected were that the questionnaire was too long, some questions asked the same things in different ways and some questions required further explanation. Despite these shortfalls, the respondents found the questionnaire interesting. An experienced statistician played a pivotal role in ensuring the accuracy of the questionnaire. This feedback was encouraging and gave the researcher the opportunity to rectify mistakes and rework the questionnaire to make it less tedious and more effective in meeting the objectives of the study.

3.6.4 Data Preparation and Analysis

Data preparation is vital for ensuring the accuracy of the results. The process begins by editing, coding, inputting the data and then conducting an analysis. Once the researcher has completed the data collection, the data obtained from the questionnaire needs to be edited. The researcher scans through the questionnaires to ensure that all questions have been answered, and those that have not will be left blank when coding the data. To ensure that the analysis is performed

correctly, the data needs to be edited, coded, categorized and keyed in, so that SPSS can capture the results efficiently.

3.6.5 Editing

Editing involves the physical inspection of the data collection tool to detect any blatant errors and inaccuracies in the data (Churchill, Brown & Suter, 2010). This is an important step to ensure consistency across all respondents (Cooper & Schindler, 2006, cited in Ramnarain, 2012). In this study, the researcher edited the data by checking each questionnaire to see if all the questions had been answered and completed correctly before the coding process began. As all the questionnaires were self-administrated, the researcher had less control over the process, making the editing process a vital component.

3.6.6 Coding

Coding is a technical procedure that converts raw data into symbols (Churchill, et al., 2010). The coding of the data was performed manually on an excel spreadsheet, which is essential for data analysis. The questions were recorded horizontally and the number of participants was listed vertically from 1 to 60. The responses for each question were assigned numerical codes. For the dichotomous questions, code 1 was assigned to “Yes” and code 2 was assigned to “No”. The Likert scale and rank order questions were coded as follows:

Strongly Disagree	= 1
Disagree	= 2
Neutral	= 3
Agree	= 4
Strongly Agree	= 5

The rank order coding was performed according to what the respondent deemed was important to them with 1 being most important and 5/7 being the least important. These rating score codes were assigned to the excel sheet in the exact order captured.

Reasons for returning to a company's page or brand page	Ranking of Importance
16.1 Excellent product search options	= 1
16.2 Interactive nature of the social platform	= 5
16.3 Availability of consumer recommendations and ratings	= 4
16.4 To keep up with the latest trends	= 2
16.5 To find discounts/promotions	= 3

Once the editing and coding was complete, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

3.6.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis refers to the procedures utilised to obtain data that best describes the relationships of interest. According to Bhattacharjee (2012), the purpose of these procedures is to answer the research questions and meet the objectives of the study. For this study, descriptive and inferential analyses were used to infer meaning from the quantitative data collected, regarding the factors influencing female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands amongst Generation-Z consumers in Durban. Descriptive analysis refers to the process of statistically describing the phenomenon of interest as well as determining the associations between these constructs (Bhattacharjee, 2002). On the other hand, inferential analysis refers to the statistical procedures used to enable the researcher to draw conclusions from a sample about associations between variables (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The methodology guiding the investigation was quantitative research, therefore descriptive and inferential analyses were deemed suitable to enable the researcher to describe and compare constructs statistically and determine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables (Gill and Johnson, 2010).

Various quantitative statistical techniques using the SPSS software were applied in order to process the data. The data was construed through frequency tables or graphs, means and standard deviations, as well as the Chi-square goodness-of-fit-test, the binomial test, Pearson's correlation and one sample t-test. These techniques are briefly explained below:

- Chi-square goodness-of-fit-test: A univariate test, used on a categorical variable to test whether any of the response options follow a certain specified pattern or are selected significantly more or less often than the others (Wegner, 2012).
- Binomial test: Tests whether a significant portion of the respondents select one of two possible responses. This can be extended when data with more than 2 response options is split into two distinct groups (Wegner, 2012).
- Pearson's correlation: Correlations measure how variables or rank orders are related. "Pearson's correlation co-efficient is a measure of linear association between two interval or ratio-level variables" (Boslaugh, 2012).
- One sample t-test: "This technique is used when the researcher wants to determine whether the mean score of some scalar value is significantly different from another scalar value" (Acton, Miller, Maltby & Fullerton, 2009).

3.6.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical consideration is the cornerstone of research and without it the quality of research is questionable. This aspect needs to be approached promptly and with integrity and honesty and approved before the data collection process, so that time and effort will not be wasted. Martin, Loubser and Van Wyk (1996) hold that ethics is the foundation upon which the researcher complies with a set moral standards that are followed when conducting research in situations that could possibly be harmful to an individual or group (Martin, Loubser and Van Wyk, 1996 cited in Mandhlazi, 2012).

For this study, the researcher took the following steps to ensure that the research being conducted upheld accepted ethical standards:

- The researcher obtained a gatekeeper's letter from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Westville campus registrar's office (Appendix 2).
- Ethical clearance was granted for the study by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal research office before the data collection process began (Appendix 1).
- Each respondent was enlightened as to the purpose of the survey.
- The questionnaire did not contain any questions that could cause discomfort or that were detrimental to the self-interests of the respondents.

- The researcher assured the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants by not revealing their identity in the dissertation. This was assured in the introductory letter of the questionnaire.
- A consent form was attached to the questionnaire that clearly depicted their right to participate and the right to withdraw from the study should they need to, before their responses were recorded.
- The researcher thanked every respondent who participated in the survey.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter described the methodology employed in the study. The nature of the study prompted the researcher to apply a quantitative approach, the strengths and limitations of which were clearly expressed. Exploratory and descriptive research designs were used to verify if the phenomenon exists in Durban and to give an accurate picture of the consumption behaviour and influences of Generation-Z females. The sampling design procedure was represented graphically. A random sample of sixty female university students was selected through the researcher's judgement. The sampling design and technique undertaken in the study were non-probability sampling with a purposive technique. The data collection and measurement tool, in the form of a questionnaire, were elucidated. The researcher conducted the data collection process to reduce errors and omissions by the participants. The questionnaire was pilot tested and reviewed by a reputable statistician and that contributed to the reliability and validity of the study. A brief account of the data preparation was presented. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to describe the variables of interest. In terms of ethics, the researcher carefully followed the standard procedures to ensure conformance to all ethical standards. The subsequent chapter provides a detailed discussion and presentation of the results from the data that was collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter set out the research methodology that guided the empirical part of the study. This chapter summarizes the empirical findings of the survey that was conducted based on the analysis of the data that was gathered from the respondents through the questionnaires. The data is tabulated, expressed graphically and analysed statistically in this chapter.

4.2 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

This study took the following demographic variables into consideration: age, economic status and education levels. Generation Z students between the ages of 18 and 21 were chosen. A large majority of the respondents had an “average - 76.7%” economic status and 80 % of the respondents had “matric” as their highest level of education completed. These results help contribute to Durban’s consumer profile in understanding their consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands.

4.2.1 Indication of economic status

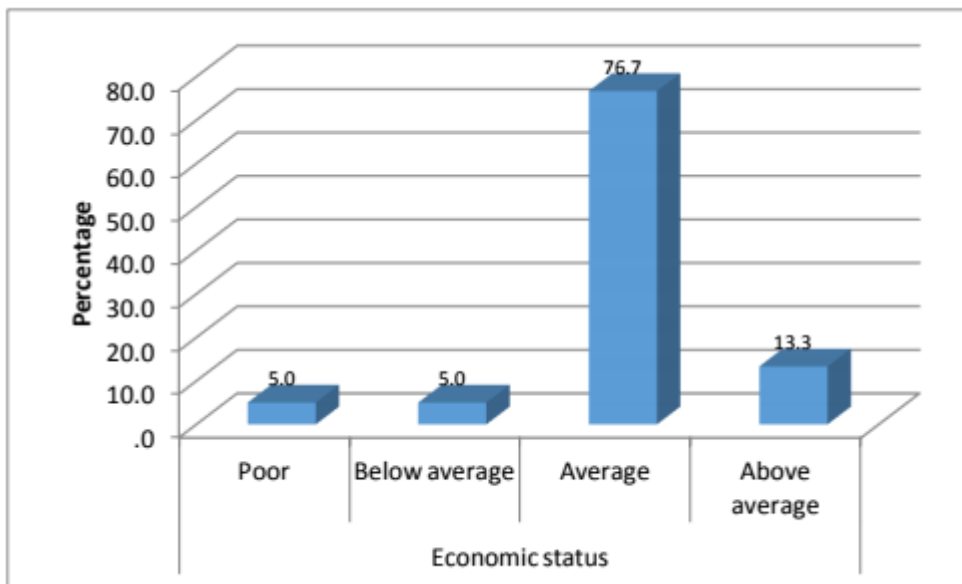


Figure 4.1: Economic Status

The data was coded and assigned a numeric code for each value. Figure 4.1 illustrates that the majority of the respondents had an economic status of “average - 76.7%” and “above average

- 13.3%”, while the minority described their status as “poor - 5.0%” and “below average - 5.0%”.

As this study was conducted at the University of KZN- Westville campus and aimed at the Generation Z profile, the majority of the respondents had only completed their matric - 80%. However, 10 % had completed a certificate, 1.7 % had a diploma, 5 % had graduated and 3.3% were post graduates.

4.3 SECTION B: REFERENCE GROUPS

This research study sought to discover the relationship between reference groups and the consumption of fashion clothing brands. In this section three questions were outlined.

4.3.1 Reference groups most often used to shop for clothing

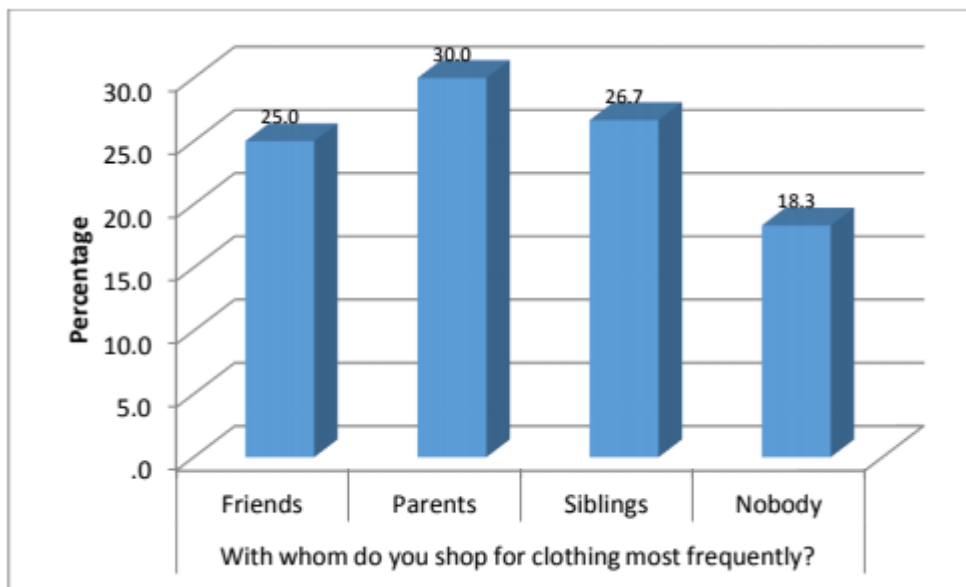


Figure 4.2: The people with whom the respondents go shopping most frequently

The chi-square goodness-of-fit test was used to test if any response options were selected significantly more often than others. Figure 4.2 indicates that these respondents shop with “parents” most often (30%). This result applies exclusively to this sample and cannot be projected onto the population. One can conclude that, in the general population, all reference groups mentioned are ‘shopped with’ equally.

4.3.2 Influencers of purchasing decisions of fashion clothing brands

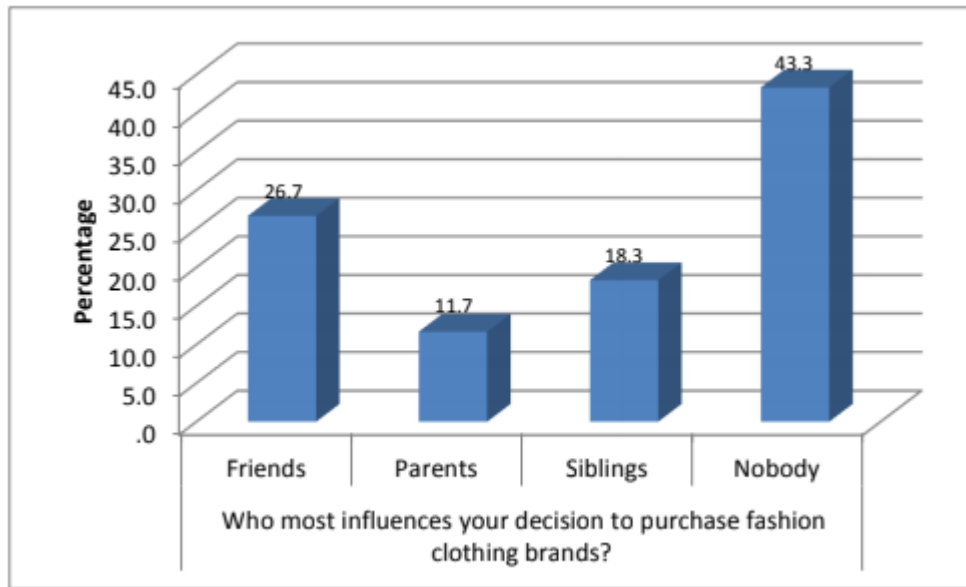


Figure 4.3: The persons who most influence the respondents' decision to purchase fashion clothing brands.

The chi-square goodness-of-fit-test was used to determine which of the reference groups mentioned were most influential in motivating the purchase of fashion clothing brands. Figure 4.3 illustrates that a significant number of the sample indicated that 'nobody' - 43.3 % influences their decision to purchase fashion clothing brands, $\chi^2(3) = 13.467$, $p = .004$; while significantly few indicated that friends (26.7%) and siblings (18.3%) play a role in influencing their decision to purchase fashion clothing brands.

4.3.3 Rate (from 1 = no influence to 5 = large influence) the extent to which each of the following factors influences your consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands.

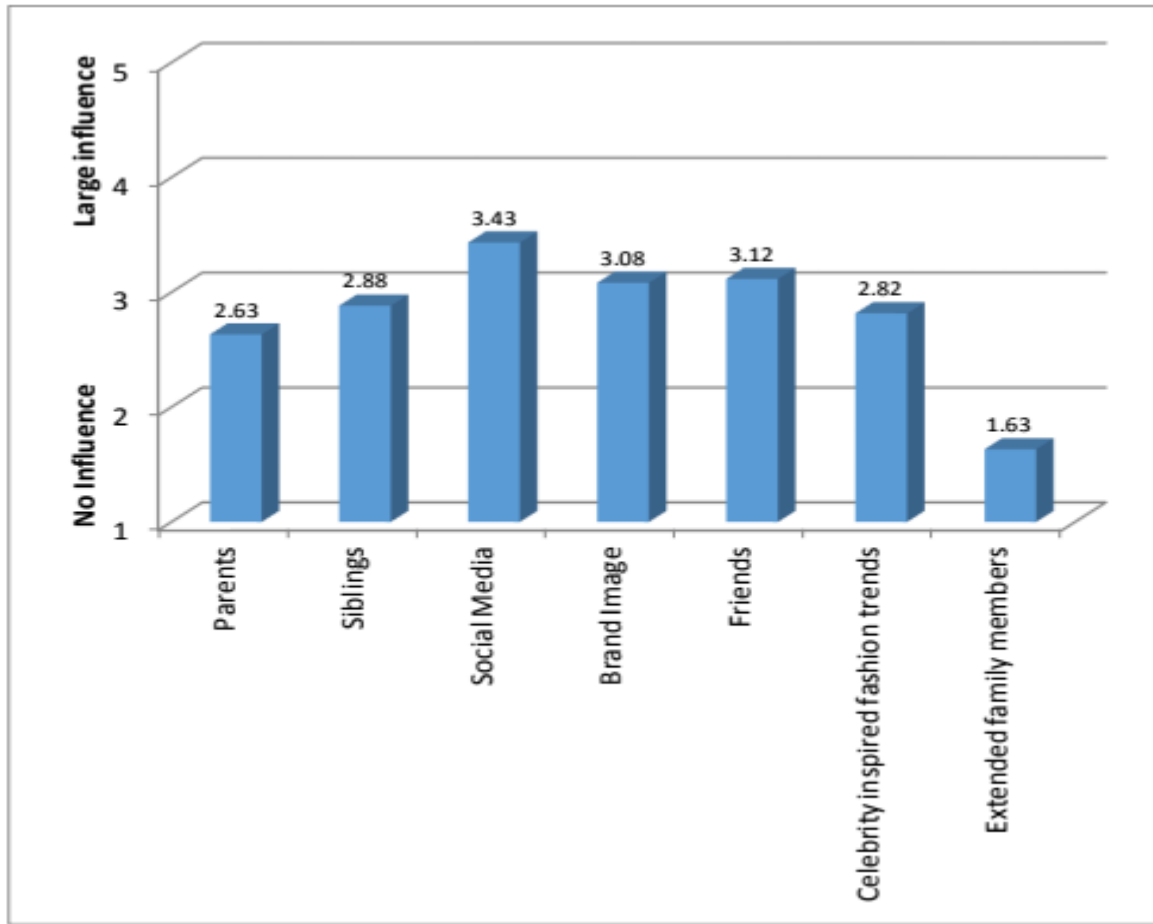


Figure 4.4: Factors influencing Gen-Z’s consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands

The one sample t-test was used to test if the average influence from a list of given factors are significant. Results of the analysis indicate that there is significant influence from social media ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.294$) on the consumption behaviour with regard to fashion clothing brands, $t(59) = 2.595$, $p = .012$, while there is a significant lack of influence of extended family members in this regard ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 1.008$), $t(59) = -10.503$, $p < .0005$.

In addressing the objective, to investigate the relationship between the influence of reference groups and females’ consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst Gen-Z in Durban, the results indicate that there are positive correlations between social media, celebrity-inspired trends and ‘non-people’ reference groups and consumption. Pearson’s correlation was used to test linear relationships between the influence of reference groups and how often, on average, “these respondents purchase fashion clothing brands over a 3-month period” (Question 17).

Table 4.1: Analysis of the linear relationships between reference groups and consumption (frequency of purchase and spending patterns), of fashion clothing brands.

		Social media	Friends	Celebrity-inspired fashion trends	Influencer reference groups
17. How often, on average over a 3 month period, do you purchase fashion clothing brands	Pearson's Correlation	.272	.175	.271	.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	.182	.036	.026
	N	60	60	60	60

The results as depicted in Table 4.1 indicate that positive correlations exist between consumption (frequency of purchase) and the influence of: social media ($r = .272$, $p = .036$); celebrity-inspired fashion trends ($r = .271$, $p = .036$) and 'influencer' reference groups (social media, brand image and celebrities) as a whole ($r = .287$, $p = .026$).

Analysis was further conducted on the relationship between the aforementioned factors and the "amount spent on fashion clothing brands within the last three months. Spearman's correlation was used to test the linear relationship. The results concluded that celebrity-inspired fashion trends ($\rho = .287$, $p = .026$) is the only factor that depicts a positive relationship with the spending behaviour amongst the Generation Z respondents.

4.4 SECTION C: PERCEIVED QUALITY

It has evidently been proven that quality is an important consideration when purchasing fashion clothing brands. The one sample t-test was used to analyse the respondents' level of agreement and disagreement with the statements in Section C. Pearson's correlation was then used to measure the importance of perceived quality in relation to consumption behaviour. The figure below illustrates how respondents feel about quality.

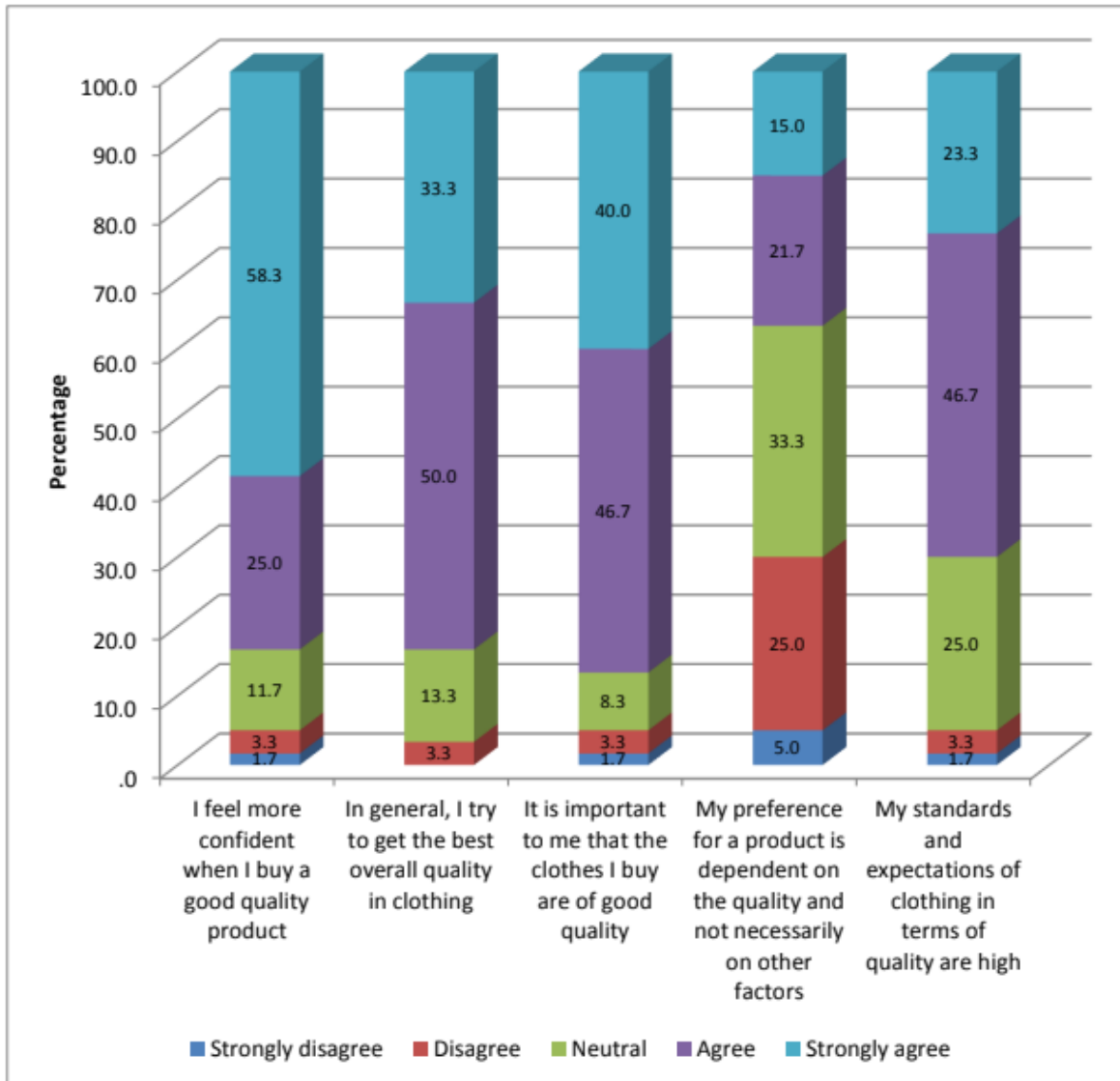


Figure 4.5: Respondents' Perceptions of Perceived Quality

The analysis indicates that, with 25 % responding ‘agree’ and 58.3 % responding ‘strongly agree’, there is significant agreement that confidence is uplifted when purchasing a quality product, $t(59) = 11.176$, $p < .0005$. In support of this, there was also significant agreement that they generally try to buy the best overall quality of clothes ($t(59) = 11.4.9$, $p < .0005$); that good quality of clothes are important to them ($t(59) = 10.813$, $p < .0005$); and that their standards and expectations of the quality of clothing is high ($t(59) = 7.693$, $p < .0005$).

Lastly, there is neither a significant agreement nor significant disagreement that their “preference for a product is dependent on quality and not necessarily on other factors”.

Pearson's correlation was used to evaluate the relationship between perceived quality and the frequency of purchase of fashion clothing brands. To get a single measure for 'quality', scores from the individual items in question 7 were averaged. This measure was tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. As the value of alpha for this measure was found to be .842, it is deemed a reliable measure. There was a positive correlation between the importance of quality and the frequency of purchasing fashion clothing brands ($r = .264$, $p = .041$).

Analysis indicated a positive correlation between the importance of quality and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands ($\rho = .505$, $p < .0005$).

4.5 SECTION D: SELF-CONCEPT

In this section respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements relating to what they regard as important when purchasing fashion clothing brands. Figure 4.6 below depicts the average level of agreement and disagreement amongst the participants. A one-sample t-test was applied to test for significant agreement or disagreement.

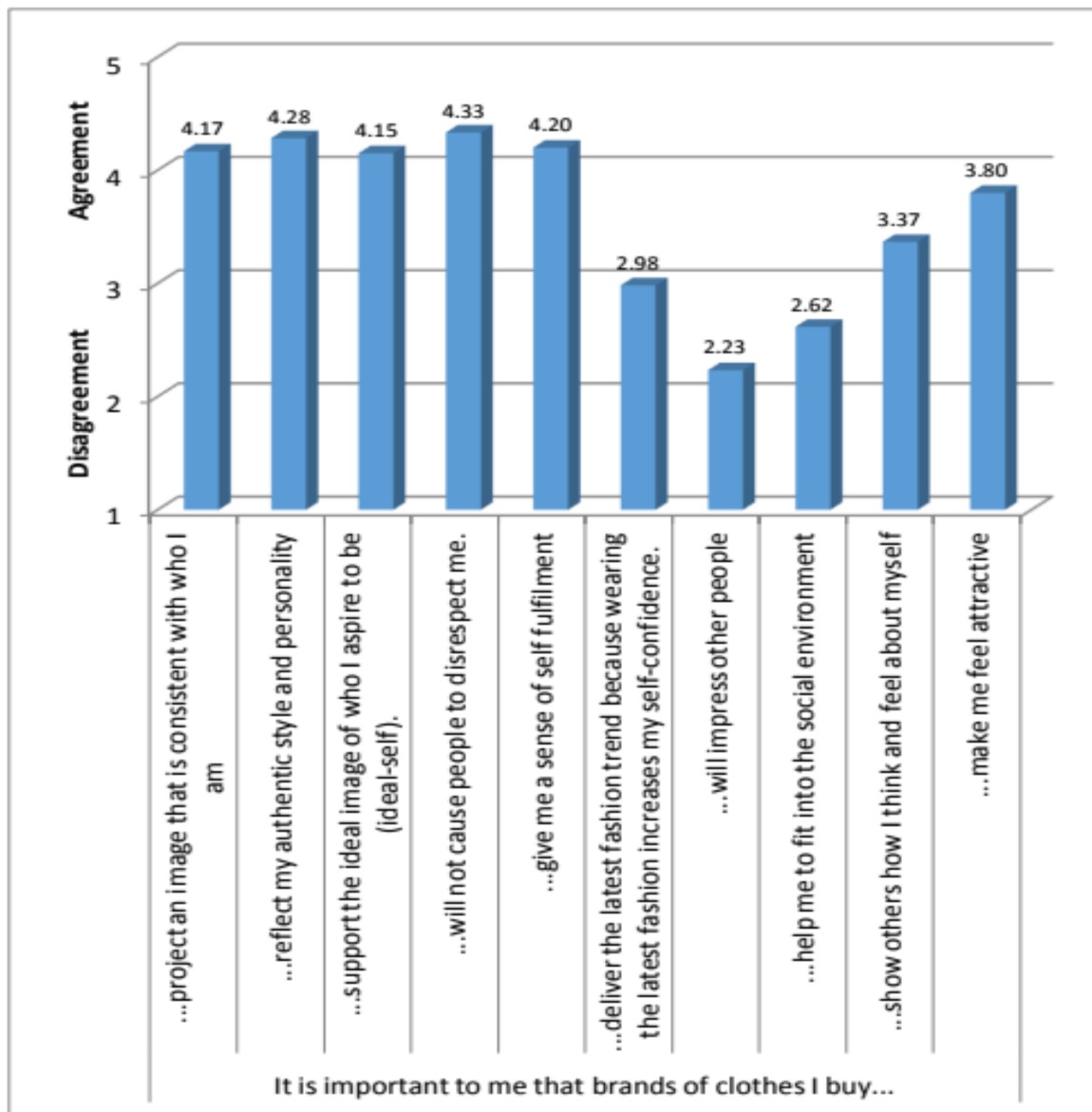


Figure 4.6: The level of agreement and disagreement amongst participants in the study

The analysis indicates that there is significant agreement with the first five statements (8.1 to 8.5). Statement 8.4, “will not cause people to disrespect me”, had the highest level of agreement amongst the respondents ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .795$) in terms of what they deem as important when purchasing fashion clothing brands. Brands that “reflect their authentic style and personality ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .825$), “give them a sense of self-fulfilment” ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .935$), “project an image that is consistent with who they are” ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .717$) and “supports the ideal image of who they aspire to be” ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .755$), are considered significantly important when buying fashion clothing brands. Statement 8.9, “show others how I think and feel about myself” ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.134$) and statement 8.10, “make me feel attractive” ($M = 3.80$, SD

= 1.005), reflect an above average score in relation to the importance of these factors in determining the brands of clothing they buy.

On the other hand, there was a significant lack of agreement on the importance they place on purchasing fashion clothing brands “to impress other people” (Mean = 2.23, SD = 1.095). An average number of respondents disagreed that it is important to them that the clothing brands they buy “help them fit into the social environment” (M = 2.62, SD = 1.290).

Analysis was also performed to determine the relationship between the congruity of ‘brand image and self-concept’ and female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands. The items in question 8 were split into two groups: Internal factors (actual and ideal self-concept) and external factors (public self-concept).

The ‘internal self-concepts’ included items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9. The average of the responses to these items yielded a reliable measure for this construct (Cronbach’s alpha = .720). External self-concepts’ consisted of items 7 and 8 (alpha = .783). Pearson’s correlation was used to determine the relationship between self-concept and brand image congruity and frequency of purchase. Results indicate that there is a very small correlation between frequency of purchase and both internal factors ($r = .195$, $p = .135$) and external factors ($r = .135$, $p = .280$). Similarly, Spearman’s correlation was applied to determine the relationship between ‘self-concept and brand image’ congruity and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands for internal factors ($\rho = .183$, $p = .161$) and external factors ($\rho = .198$, $p = .129$). From the results depicted, it can be concluded that the small correlations found with consumptions are not significant.

4.6 SECTION E: SOCIAL MEDIA

The following section looks at Generation Z social media browsing and consumption behaviour.

4.6.1 Active search for brand pages on social media

This question “do you actively search for brand pages on social media’ sought to discover if Generation Z actively browse social media platforms in search of brand pages. A total of 33 (55%) indicated that they do actively search for brand pages on social media, while the remainder (45%) indicated that they do not use social media to search for brand pages. Analysis revealed that these numbers are not statistically different, which implies that the population is split evenly into those who do and those who do not use social media for this purpose.

4.6.2 Devices used to connect to social media most often

The purpose of understanding the devices used to connect to social media most often is to identify what type of technological devices the sample population makes use of during the search for fashion clothing brands on social media platforms. The chi square goodness-of-fit test was used to test if any device(s) is/are used significantly more than others. Analysis indicates that a significant 54 (90%) use smartphones to connect to social media, $\chi^2(3) = 135.333$, $p = <.0005$.

4.6.3 Time spent on social media on an average day

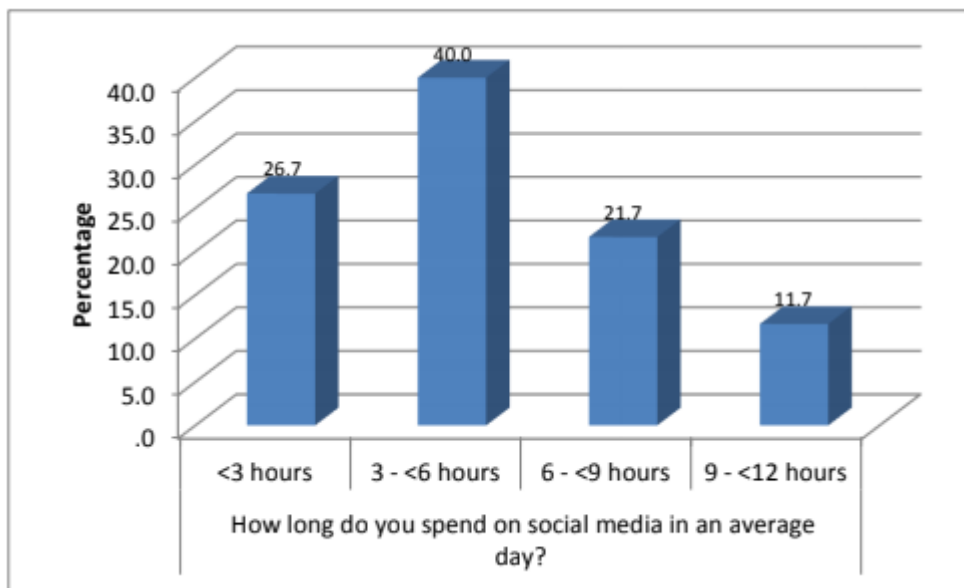


Figure 4.7: Amount of time spent on social media on an average day

A significantly large proportion (40 – 66.7%) of the respondents indicated that they spend less than 6 hours, on social media during an average day, $\chi^2(3) = 10.000$, $p = .019$. Only 21.7% spend between 6 and 9 hours and 11.7% spend between 9 and 12 hours on social media. This result gives a clear indication of the amount of time spent on social media during an average day.

4.6.4 Frequent use of social media platforms

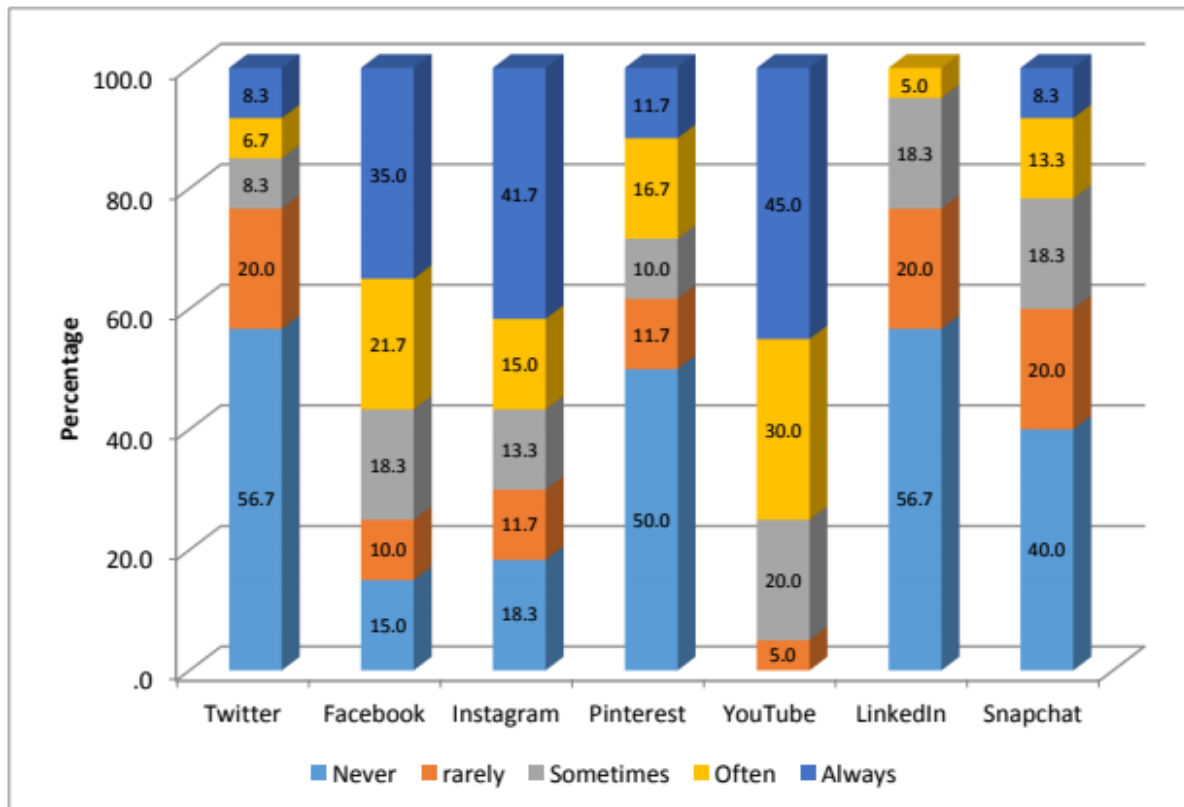


Figure 4.8: Indication of how often respondents’ use the various social media platforms.

Figure 4.8 provides a picture of the most often used platforms and the least used platforms. YouTube was the most popular, as 45% of the sample population indicated that they “always” use YouTube, whilst 30% of the respondents indicated that they “often” use YouTube, $p < .0005$. A significant 41.7% of the respondents indicated that they “always” use Instagram, $p = .001$, closely followed by 35% and 21.7% of the respondents who indicated that they “always” and “often” use Facebook, $p = .031$.

In contrast, the social media platforms that were least used were Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Snapchat. A significant 56.7% of the sample population reported that they “never” use Twitter and LinkedIn, $p < .0005$. This was closely followed by 50% of the respondents who “never” use Pinterest, $p < .0005$. And lastly, 40% of the population reported that they “never” use Snapchat, $p = .002$.

In relation to the consumption of fashion clothing brands, the objective was specifically to discover the relationship between the level of browsing and consumption by linking the frequency of purchase with how often the participant uses specific social media platforms.

Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to measure the linear association. The results reported significantly positive correlations between frequency of browsing Facebook ($r = .298$, $p = .021$), and Instagram ($r = .521$, $p < .0005$) with consumption.

In addition, there seem to be significant correlations between money spent on fashion clothing brands and frequency of browsing social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat ($\rho = .416$, $p = .001$).

4.6.5 The influence of social media browsing on purchases of fashion clothing brand online.

A significant 67 % indicated that browsing social media platforms has led to them purchasing fashion clothing brands online, $p = .013$. When the respondents who answered “yes” were asked how often in a 6-month period, they purchased from social media platforms, a significant 62.5 % indicated “once” ($p < .0005$). Only 32.5 % purchased between 2 and 4 times and 5 % purchased between 5 and 8 times.

4.6.6 The influence of social media platforms on the purchase of fashion clothing brands in-store and online.

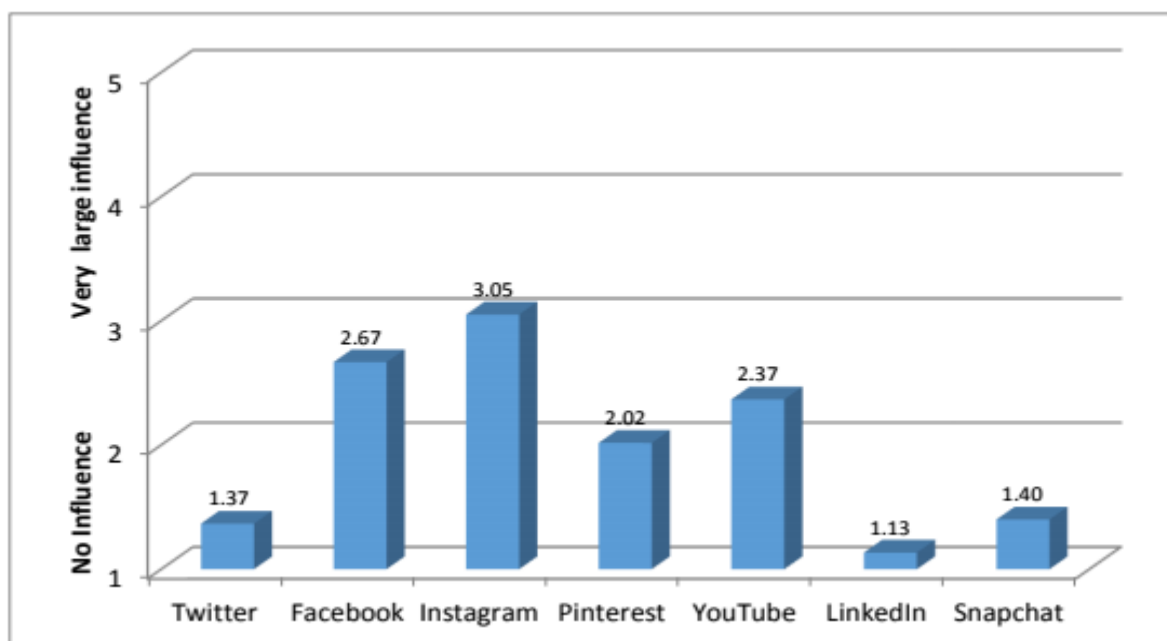


Figure 4.9: The level of influence of social media platforms on the purchase of fashion clothing brands in-store and online.

The one sample t-test was used to determine if the average influence is significantly small or significantly large. The figure above indicates a small to negligible influence from each of the social media platforms on the respondents' purchases of fashion clothing brands in-store and online. Analysis confirmed that there was no significantly large influence from LinkedIn ($M = 1.13$, $SD = .468$), $t(59) = -30.883$, $p < .0005$; Twitter ($M = 1.37$, $SD = .802$), $t(59) = -15.779$, $p < .0005$; Snapchat ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(59) = -15.362$, $p < .0005$; Pinterest ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.384$), $t(59) = -5.504$, $p < .0005$) and YouTube ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.449$), $t(59) = -3.385$, $p = .001$. Although the influence was higher on Instagram ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.466$), $t(59) = .264$, $p = .0793$ and Facebook ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.361$), $t(59) = -1.897$, $p = .063$, the results were not significant, indicating that these influences were only moderate.

In meeting the objective, the study sought to discover if there is a relationship between the perceived influence of social media platforms and the consumption of fashion clothing brands. The results indicate positive correlations between the influence of Facebook ($r = .293$, $p = .023$), Instagram ($r = .542$, $p < .0005$) and Snapchat ($r = .282$, $p = .029$) and the frequency of the purchase of fashion clothing brands.

There is also a significant positive correlation between the influence of Instagram ($\rho = .387$, $p = .002$) and the money spent on fashion clothing brands in the last three months.

4.6.7 Factors influencing social media browsing and consumption of fashion clothing brands

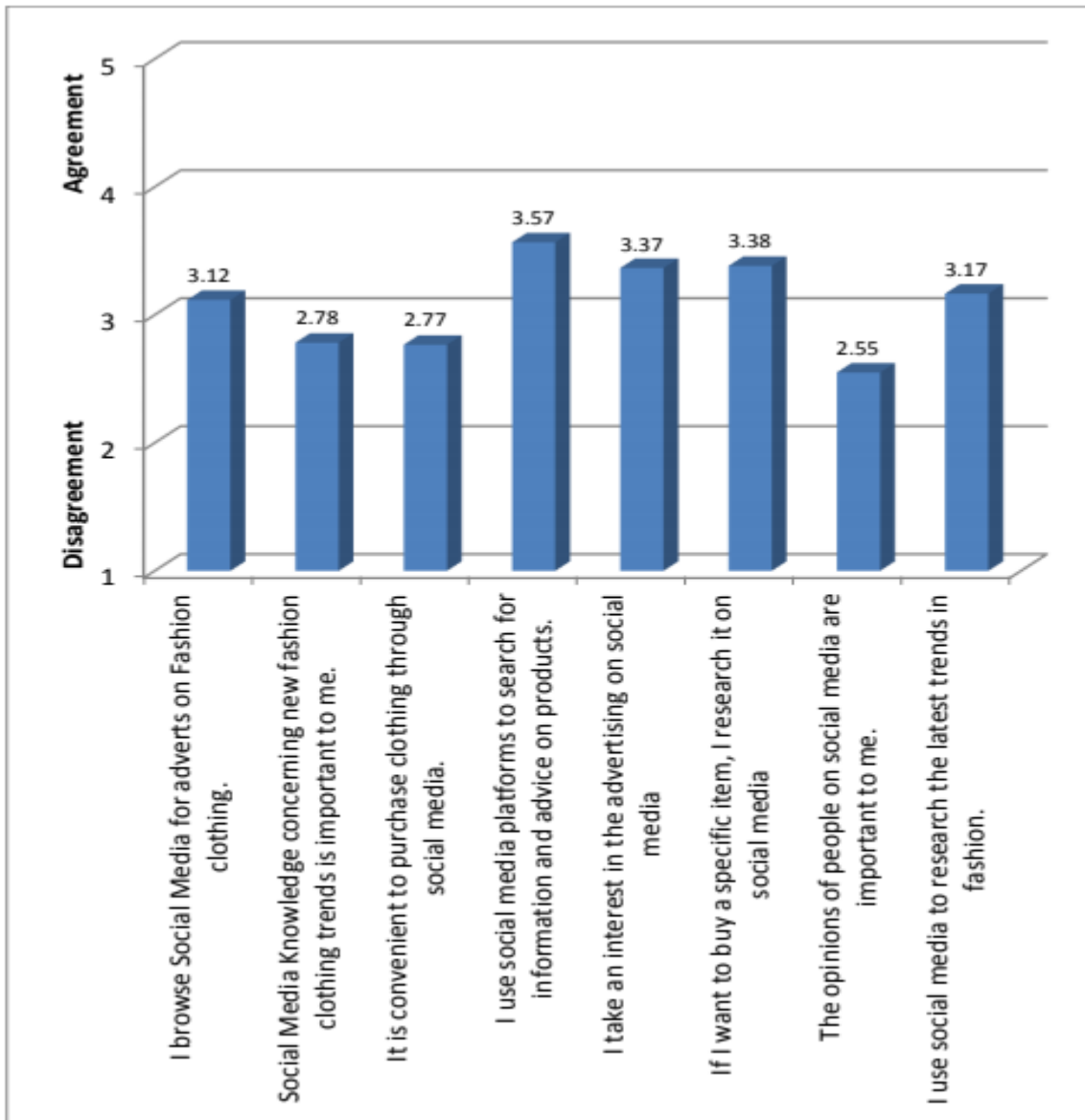


Figure 4.10: Factors influencing social media browsing and consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst Generation Z.

As reflected in figure 4.10, most of the respondents use social media as a search tool for advertisements on products, latest trends, product information and when searching for specific items. A significant 30 respondents (50%) of the sample ‘agreed’ that “if they wanted to buy a specific item, they research it on social media”, $t(59) = 2.762, p = .008$. This result was further supported by a significant 45% of the respondents’ who indicated that they “use social media platforms to search for information and advice on products”, $t(59) = 4.127, p < .0005$. The aforementioned results explain why a significant 38% of the sample “take an interest in the

advertising on social media”, $t(59) = 2.818, p = .007$, as it helps in relaying product information and highlighting products that could be what the buyer is searching for.

On the other hand, there was significant disagreement with the statement that “the opinions of people on social media are important to them”, $t(59) = -3.275, p = .002$. This indicates that it is not an important factor influencing their purchases.

The largest agreement was that social media is used as a tool to search for information and advice on products, especially when searching for specific items of interest, which can be attributed to the reason that these respondents take a keen interest in advertising on social media. In contrast, the opinions of people on social media are not important to this group of respondents, thereby depicting a lack of influence on the purchase and search of clothing brands on social media platforms. With this knowledge, it can be concluded that the opinion of another individual is not highly influential when compared to the actual and much credited information offered by fashion retailers.

Pearson’s correlation was used to evaluate the relationship between importance of social media browsing for product information and the frequency of purchasing fashion clothing brands. In order to get a single reliable measure for factors influencing social media browsing, responses from the items in question 15 were averaged. The measure was tested for reliability using Cronbach’s $\alpha = .832$, and named SMB (Social Media Browsing). The results indicate that there were positive correlations between SMB and the frequency of purchasing fashion clothing brands ($r = .338, p = .008$). Also, positive correlations existed between SMB and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands ($\rho = .384, p = .002$).

The results indicated on page 72 and 73 reveal that Instagram is positively correlated with the frequency of purchase and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands, ($\rho = .387, p = .002$). Therefore, Instagram can be used as a beneficial tool for advertising products, relaying information regarding latest trends and campaigns, as well as promoting brand image.

4.7 SECTION F: CONSUMPTION

The following section looks at the consumption patterns of generation-Z shopping.

4.7.1 Purchase frequency of fashion clothing brands over a 3-month period

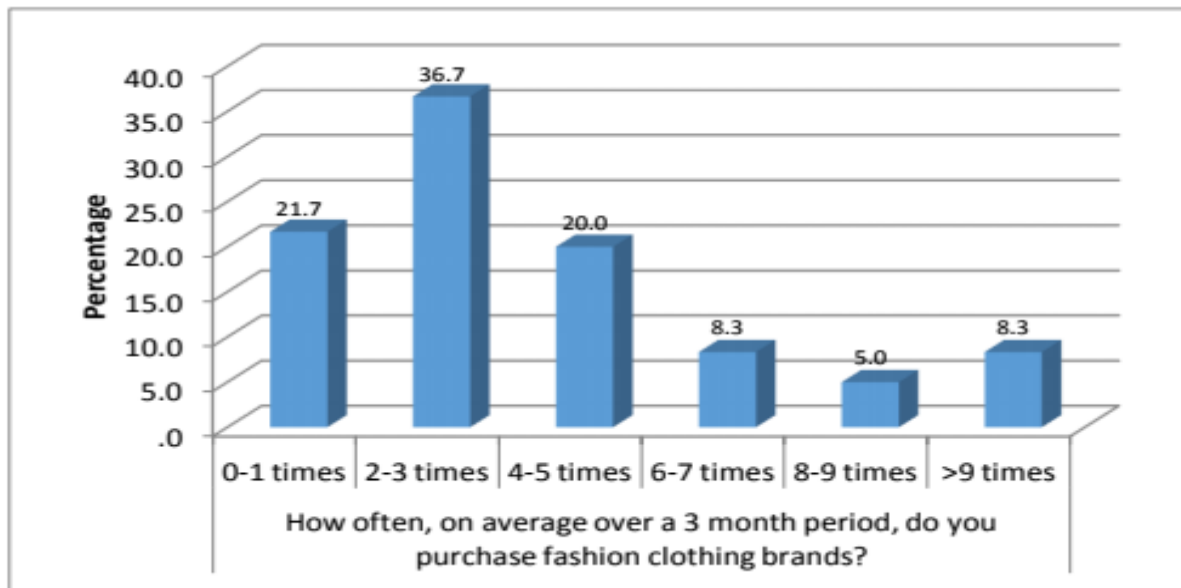


Figure 4.11: Frequency of the purchase of fashion clothing brands within a 3-month period

Figure 4.11, reveals that a significant 78.4% of the respondents purchase fashion clothing brands fewer than 5 times over a 3-month period, $\chi^2(5) = 25.600$, $p < .0005$. The minority of the respondents, which was less than 21.6%, indicated that they purchase fashion clothing brands between: 6-7 (8.3%), 8-9 (3%) and > 9 (5%) times over a three-month period.

The amount spent on fashion clothing brands in the last 3 months



Figure 4.12: The amount spent on fashion clothing brands within a 3-month period

A significantly large proportion (21.7-53.4%) of the respondents indicated that they spent between R500 and R800 on fashion clothing brands in the last 3 months, $\chi^2(5) = 14.600$, $p = .012$. The rest of the respondents spent between R801 and R1000 (16.7%), R1001-R1500 (13.3%), R1501-R2000 (10%) and >R2000 (6.7%) on fashion clothing brands within a three-month period.

4.7.2 Factors influencing the decision to purchase fashion clothing brands, ranked in order of importance.

The following table displayed a list of eight factors that serve as motivators in influencing the decision to purchase fashion clothing brands.

Table 4.2: Factors motivating the purchase of fashion clothing brands

Motivation for purchasing fashion clothing brands	N	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Rank
19.1 Style and Design	60	3.82	5	2.046	3
19.2 Quality	60	2.88	1	1.767	1
19.3 Fashionable and Trendy	60	4.53	6	1.827	5
19.4 Affordability	59	3.03	3	1.629	2
19.5 Durability	60	4.78	6	1.833	6
19.6 Brand	60	5.07	7	1.876	7
19.7 Value for Money	60	3.92	2 & 6	1.968	4

The results in table 4.7.3 reveal that “quality” is the most important factor in influencing consumption, closely followed by “affordability” and “style and design”. This result is substantiated in the report on the importance of quality to the respondents, which indicated a positive correlation between the importance of quality and the consumption of fashion clothing brands. Interestingly, in this context, “brand” is shown as the least motivating factor in influencing the respondents’ decision to purchase. This result is validated by the previous report on self-concept and brand image, which indicated no significant correlation with consumption (See Section D). “Value for money”, “fashionable and trendy” and “durability” were ranked in the middle between the least and most important factors.

The study sought to discover the reasons for the participants being likely to return to a company’s brand page on social media platforms to gain extra insight into their consumption patterns. The results indicate that the number one reason for returning to a company’s brand

page is “to find discounts/promotions”, closely followed by “excellent product search options” and the “availability of consumer recommendations and ratings”. The least popular reason was “to keep up with the latest trends”, which was followed by the “interactive nature of the social platform”.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the survey results and provided an interpretation and statistical analysis of the data that was collected. The demographics of the respondents, the factors that influence their purchase of fashion clothing brands and their consumption behaviour were examined, using various statistical techniques to address the objectives of the study. The results were specifically related to reference groups, which consisted of membership and influencer groups, of which celebrity-inspired trends and social media were the most influential. Quality was ranked number one and considered a vital component in the respondents’ decision-making. The congruity between self-concept and brand image had small correlations with consumption that was not significant. Lastly, the importance of social media browsing for product information, advertisements and trends have positive correlations with consumption in terms of frequency of purchase and spending, especially on Facebook and Instagram.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided a statistical representation of the findings. This chapter presents a discussion of the results in relation to the objectives, with reference to the literature discussed in chapter two. Next, recommendations are made and a conclusion of the results will be reached.

5.1.1 Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the relationship between reference groups and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
2. To evaluate the relationship between perceived quality and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
3. To determine the relationship between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands in Durban.
4. To determine the relationship between social media browsing and female Gen-Z consumption of fashion clothing brands in Durban.

5.2 EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

5.2.1 To investigate the relationship between reference groups and female consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst Gen-Z in Durban.

The world today, is very connected. People with whom we spend the most time tend to have an influence on our attitudes, behaviour and the choices we make. It has become important for marketers of fashion retail brands to understand how these reference groups shape the consumption behaviour of Generation Z and the dynamics of their relationships.

This study referred to internal and external reference groups such as family, siblings, friends, extended family members, social media, brand image and celebrity-inspired trends. Firstly, the study sought to discover the 'persons the respondents go shopping with most frequently'. The results achieved were of a similar frequency, which meant that it was not significant, making

it difficult to presume that one person was shopped with more often than another. Although the result was not significant, respondents indicated that they often shopped with ‘parents’, closely followed by ‘siblings’ and ‘friends’. According to the literature in chapter two, family is the most influential, in terms of buying behaviour. Eze, Chin & Lee (2012) affirm this by stating that “family often place pressure on shaping their children’s identities, usually through communication and observational learning, which together have a strong influence on children as they enter young adulthood”.

However, Manley (2013) asserts that consumers go through “different life stages that alter their attitude and behaviour as they transition from high school to university”. During this transition, the youth strive to obtain independence, find their own identities and distance themselves from their parents (Britsman & Sjolander, 2011). In accordance with the above statement, the analysis indicates that the respondents aged between 18 and 21 are influenced by “nobody” when shopping for fashion clothing brands. This result indicates their need for independence and their decisiveness in choosing their own fashion clothing brands.

Although the following result was not significant, “friends” were second when it came to influencing the respondents’ decision to purchase fashion clothing brands. Makgosa & Mohube (2007) state that ‘peer’ influence is statistically significant amongst university students (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007 cited in Akpan & Nkan, 2013). This is supported by Eze, et al., (2012), who noted that “consumers rely on reference groups to boost their confidence in their purchasing decisions, as they feel vulnerable and seek acceptance to fit in, thus relying on others to enhance their consumption choices of fashion clothing brands”. Lindstrom and Seybold (2003) acknowledge that the influence of friends is only likely to last for a period, as the youth face the struggle of trying to fit in and be accepted by their peers or rebel against conformity and express their individuality (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003 cited in Britsman and Sjolander, 2011). This transition was evident in the study, as these respondents showed independent shopping behaviour.

The study also sought to discover the extent to which parents, siblings, friends, social media, brand image, celebrity-inspired fashion trends and extended family members influence Generation Z’s consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands. The analysis indicated that ‘social media’ had the most significant influence, with ‘brand image’ and ‘friends’ following closely behind in terms of frequency of purchase. Interestingly, celebrity-inspired fashion trends was the only factor that positively correlated with the spending behaviour amongst the

Generation Z respondents. According to Solomon (2002), “targeting the right fashion leader on social media can spread trends to an entire segment (Solomon, 2002 cited in Brits & Sjolander, 2011), resulting in great product exposure and meaningful profits for the business.

On the other hand, the least influential were extended family members and parents. Again, demonstrating an independent personality emerging. These results indicate that consumers are not only dependent on their internal opinion leaders, but by external opinion leaders on a global scale that resonate with their style, personality and lifestyles. In meeting the objective of the study, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between reference groups and consumption in terms of the frequency of purchases and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands.

5.2.2 To evaluate the relationship between perceived quality and female consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst Gen-Z in Durban.

Achieving a satisfactory level of perceived quality has become a difficult task amongst fashion retailers, due to the many macro-environmental and economic changes to consider, all of which affect consumer behaviour (Keller, 2013). Quality may mean more to some consumers than others. The current study sought to discover Generation Z’s opinions on quality and how important it is to them.

The analysis indicated that a high percentage of respondents agreed that it is “important to them that the clothes they buy are of good quality”. The majority of them indicated that they “generally seek the best overall quality when it comes to fashion clothing brands”, as buying a “quality product uplifts their confidence”. This is supported by Doupnik (2017), who stipulated that the best way to engage Generation Z is to offer a quality product that appeals to them. This is important, as a high percentage stipulated that their “standards and expectations of clothing in terms of quality are high”. Gutfreund noted that customers have become more “selective and look at the value they obtain from a product differently, from how it is made, its durability and whether it is needed” (Gutfreund cited in Brin, 2014). This generation has become more environmentally conscious and thinks twice about supporting brands that do not support their interests and uphold their values. It is important for consumers to feel that they are investing in items that appeal to their conscience, display a standard of quality that will justify the price range and that are in line with what they are searching for.

The study concluded that there were positive correlations between the importance of quality and the frequency of purchase and the amount spent on fashion clothing brands.

5.2.3 To determine the relationship between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands in Durban.

In previous literature, self-concept and brand-image congruity have proven to be an important motivating factor in consumption behaviour (Atkinson, 2014; Beaudoin, Lachance & Robitaille, 2003; Goldsmith, Moore & Beaudoin, 1999; Ilaw, 2014; Toth, 2014). In the current study, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with regard to the ten statements they consider to be important to them when buying fashion clothing brands. These statements appeal to their actual, ideal and public self-concepts.

The analysis indicated that respondents significantly agreed that it is important to them that the clothes they buy “will not cause people to disrespect them”. This is an important statement, as it reinforces the notion that “consumers believe that a product reflects an aspect of themselves” (Atkinson, 2014). A significant portion of the respondents felt that it is important to them that the clothes they purchase “reflect their authentic style and personality”. Graeff (1996) holds that consumers’ evaluations of a brand are more positive when the brand is congruent with their own self-image (Graeff, 1996 cited in Park and Lee, 2005). This is evident from the majority of the respondents indicating that it is important to them that the brands of clothing they purchase “project an image that is consistent with who they are” as well as “support the ideal image of who they aspire to be”. Atkinson (2014) holds that when a product is related to an aspect or dimension of a consumer’s self-concept, they tend to form an ‘emotional connection’ with the brand. This is supported by Onkvisit, Shaw and Sirgy, who claim that “repeat purchases occur when a product is compatible with, or improves the consumers’ actual or ideal self-image” (Onkvisit, Shaw and Sirgy cited in Beaudoin, Lachance, Robitaille, 2003).

Although the results were not as significant as those above, consumers felt it was important for the clothes they purchase to “show others how they think and feel about themselves”. This confirms the statement in the study conducted by Piacentini & Mailer (2009) that “the youth consumers’ choices of clothing are used as a way of self-expression and judgements of people and situations they encounter” (Piacentini & Mailer, 2009 cited in Nandini & Jeevananda, 2012). The need to “feel attractive” was also an important factor as this “enhances the wearers’

self-concept by making them feel confident and capable” (Piacentini & Mailer, 2009, cited in Nandini & Jeevananda, 2012). These results indicate that to a certain extent the findings in previous literature correspond with the results conducted on female Generation-Z consumers in Durban. This gives fashion retailers an indication to delve deeper into this segments’ self-concepts in relation to their lifestyles, attitudes, personality and behaviour to create a self-brand connection that can build a lasting relationship with the brand.

It is worth noting that the respondents displayed a significant lack of agreement on purchasing fashion clothing brands “to impress other people” and to “help them fit into their social environment”. This demonstrates Generation Z’s characteristic of ‘self-awareness’ rather than the ‘self-centeredness’ of Generation Y (Merriman, 2015), where they look at the world at large, and would prefer using clothing and purchasing from brands that make a difference in the world, rather than just to impress others. Also, as much as some of these individuals want to fit in and be accepted, there are others that use their peers and those around them as immediate points of reference, not only to identify what is acceptable, but to try to stand out through communicating certain aspects of themselves and becoming fashion leaders rather than followers. It is often within this social environment that these consumers develop their self-concepts as they make consumption decisions by first deciding if they want to use their clothing to express who they actually are or how they would like to be seen by the world.

The study sought to determine the relationship between brand image and self-concept congruity and female consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands. Once the correlation had been performed, the result was an unreliable measure, thereby concluding that there is no significant correlation between consumption in terms of frequency of purchase and money spent. This could be attributed to the fact that the study was conducted on a small scale to gain insight into, and information on, the topic at hand.

5.2.4 To determine the relationship between social media browsing and female consumption of fashion clothing brands amongst Gen-Z in Durban.

Social media has become prevalent in recent years due to its ability to generate discussions, promote brand value and recognition, make product information accessible, improve customer relationships and experiences, and so forth. The evolution of the generations and the progression of social media has made it imperative for marketers to understand the dynamics

of the youth consumers' social media browsing habits, their frequency of usage, the influence it has on their purchases and the devices they use to actively engage on social media.

5.2.4.1 Social Media Usage Patterns

As stated in the existing literature, Generation Z are known as the 'digital natives', born into a technology-driven society. It is therefore vital for marketers to have knowledge of the devices they use most often to engage on social media platforms. The analysis indicates that a significant 54 (90%) use smartphones to connect to social media. This supports the South African statistics, which indicate the increasing use of smartphones amongst the youth (Shezi, 2016). This creates numerous opportunities for fashion retailers to design user-friendly apps that offer convenience, specialised offers, engagement through competitions and product offerings, resulting in a seamless customer experience throughout online and brick and mortar stores.

The time spent on social media is equally important in helping marketers comprehend the amount of time consumers are willing to spend browsing on these platforms. From this, marketers will have a clear idea of how to plan their content and which content to prioritise on which social media platforms. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents spend between 3 and 6 hours on social media during an average day. The results indicate that Instagram, YouTube and Facebook are platforms that are used most often and are, to a certain degree, influential. For marketers to get the most out of their consumers' time, they need to be strategic in the execution of their content on the appropriate social media networking sites.

E-commerce is leading the way and becoming a vital asset to most businesses. Social media plays an important role in encouraging online visits, and increasing sales, engagement and brand affiliation. The results indicate that a significant portion of the respondents indicated 'yes' when asked if browsing social media platforms ever led to them purchasing fashion clothing brands online. Those that responded 'yes' were asked to specify "how often in a 6-month period, they have purchased through social media platforms", and a significant 62% indicated 'once', while 32.5% indicated 2 to 4 times.

Although these results indicate that the respondents actively engage on social media, the conversion to purchase is still relatively low. However, the exponential growth of online shopping is promising. Therefore, creating integrated marketing communications utilising the

omni-channel processes has become pivotal in ensuring a pleasant and consistent customer experience, which could lead to loyal customers, an increase in sales and more traffic to online and brick and mortar stores. Interestingly, online promotions and discounts were regarded as the number one reason for returning to a company's brand page. Therefore, creating value offerings that are in line with the brand, convenient payment and delivery methods and excellent product search options are vital in ensuring a return on investment.

5.2.4.2 Social Media Usage Patterns and Level of Influence

The results indicate that YouTube is the platform most often used, where the majority of the respondents indicated that they often and "always" use YouTube. These results correlate with Blue Magnet's statistics (2016), which indicated that the use of YouTube in South Africa grew by 2.74 million from 2012 to 2016 and was reported as the second most active social media platform with 47% active users. This result is positive for South African fashion retailers in terms of designing their marketing content and campaigns. There is great opportunity in video-sharing content, which is why marketers need to create strong engagement that appeals to the viewers' self-concept, in terms of who they are and who they aspire to be and the values by which they live. The literature review revealed that Generation-Z are entrepreneurial, and techno savvy, seek new trends and experiences and are socially aware.

Creating interactive and engaging content with the brand in mind will promote engagement and build a rapport with the brand and the youth. In conducting the field work for the study, it was evident that most of these respondents spend the larger part of their day at the university, often sitting in computer rooms, with easy access to platforms such as YouTube, possibly looking for inspiration, entertainment and stimulation. During this time, 47% of active users, which has probably increased by now, could be sharing video content of products and meaningful messages. The opportunity that online video-sharing represents to brands is enormous.

Dusto (2012) indicated that 52% of customers have stated that watching product videos online increases their confidence in deciding whether to buy online, as it enriches their experience by giving them a realistic view of the products, thus eliminating any doubts and indecision. Retailers such as Mr Price wanting to grow their market share should take advantage of these opportunities and push their innovative and edgy spirit further by investing in tools that allow for shoppable videos, engaging content and meaningful messages that make a difference and

inspire the youth of Africa. This will allow them to sustain a competitive advantage over other retailers in the local and global market.

The results also indicated that Instagram and Facebook are popular platforms amongst the youth, where 41.7% (Instagram) and 35% (Facebook) of the youth indicated that they “always” use these platforms. These results are not surprising, as Instagram has doubled its user base in South Africa in the last year (Snyman, 2016). In comparison to the other social media networking sites, Instagram is relatively new and growing exponentially with each passing year, from 200 000 in 2012 to 5.5 million users in 2016 (Blue Magnet, 2016). According to Pawlos (2016), Instagram is most favourably used as a form of self-expression to the world. This is evident from most of the respondents agreeing that it is important to them that they buy brands of clothing that “reflect their authentic style and personality”. Although Instagram is growing at a rapid rate, Facebook still outperforms all other social networks in terms of referral traffic, engagement, conversion rates and so forth (DeMers, 2015).

The results indicate that positive correlations exist between the influence of Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat and the frequency of purchasing fashion clothing brands. Clay (2017) affirms this by stating that Instagram users are more likely to make a purchase after viewing the content on Instagram. This corresponds with the results of this study, which indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between the influence of Instagram and the money spent on fashion clothing brands in the last three months. Also, Facebook dominates social sales and has an average conversion rate of 1.85% driving the highest conversions and sales (DeMers, 2015). In other words, the type of content shared on Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat needs to be inspiring, engaging and strategically placed and well thought out, as these social media platforms are most influential in terms of encouraging online visits and stimulating purchases.

5.2.4.3 Social Media Browsing Behaviour

Knowing the browsing habits of Generation Z on social media platforms is imperative for understanding how to market to this group of consumers. The results of this study allow marketers’ insight into their consumption behaviour. The results depict that the majority of the respondents use social media “to search for information and advice on products”, “to seek a specific item”, “take an interest in the advertising on social media and browse for adverts on fashion clothing” and lastly, “to research the latest trends in fashion”. The results indicate that

social media is clearly used as a search tool for advertising concerning fashion and the latest trends, as well as to gain knowledge regarding information and advice on products to validate their purchases. These results support the study by Piacentini and Mailer (2009), who concluded that clothing is a vital social tool amongst teenagers (Piacentini and Mailer, 2009 cited in Nandini et al., 2012). It is evident that a lot of time is invested in research and browsing social media platforms for the above-mentioned reasons before making a purchase, so that they can fit into their social environment in some meaningful way or form. Solomon (1988) argues that the type of clothing that the consumer chooses will fit into a “consumption constellation” used by the consumer to define, communicate and perform social roles (Solomon, 1988 cited Goldsmith et al., 1999).

The majority of the participants significantly disagreed that “it is convenient to purchase clothing through social media platforms”. This identifies an opportunity for marketers to explore their options regarding their check out points, mobile accessibility and convenience in terms of purchases. According to Lovelle (2017), “any time you can cater to your audience and make mobile-online shopping an easy experience results in a win”. Social networking sites such as Instagram are experiencing an exponential growth, where fashion is considered most prevalent. This is evident from Clay’s (2017), statement that Instagram users are more likely to make a purchase after viewing the content on Instagram. Therefore, the content executed needs to be trendy, fresh and authentic with the ability to delight and engage the customer. Clay (2017) affirms the importance of this by stating that “fashion fans check Instagram news feeds fifteen times a day, post content three times more than the average user and have two hundred followers or more than the average influencer”, making this an influential site for fashion content.

The study went further in uncovering the reasons as to why these respondents are likely to return to a company or brand page. The results indicated that the number one reason for returning is “to find discounts/promotions”, which was closely followed by “excellent product search option” and the “availability of consumer recommendations and ratings”. Consumers have become smart shoppers and are looking for the best deals. In relation to this, “quality” was deemed as the most influential factor for purchasing fashion clothing brands, closely followed by “affordability” and “style and design”. Therefore, companies that shout out value in terms of affordable price, sustainable initiatives and quality, will go a long way towards building lasting relationships with their target audience.

In terms of consumption, the majority of the respondents indicated that they purchase fashion clothing brands between 2 and 3 times on average, over a 3-month period and spent between R501 and R800 in the last 3 months. Although frequency and amount spent is average, the opportunities presented by this market are enormous. Generation Z is growing... and will soon be entering the work force, with earning potential. Regardless, they have the most influence over their parents' spending behaviour, therefore being able to cater to their needs and wants at an early stage will build deep brand connections lasting in long-term relationships. Therefore, to encourage more purchases, convenience is essential for both the parents and Generation Z. This can be achieved by evaluating payment options, delivery methods, and fewer clicks and by offering reliable and efficient customer service. More than that, fashion retailers should not compromise on quality, as it is the leading factor for purchasing fashion clothing brands, closely followed by affordability. In a tough economic climate, the consumer looks for value in everything.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

The following are some implications for marketers pertinent to this study:

- Celebrity-inspired trends offer opportunities for marketers to appeal to their audience's ideal-self by using comparative frames of reference to inspire purchases. To do this, marketers need to be aware of the celebrities with whom the youth resonate. For example, Mr Price posted various styles of Kendall Jenner wearing a moon bag on Instagram. This post received the second highest organic likes (9747) on their Instagram to date. Kaia Gerber, Gigi Hadid, Kim Kardashian, Bella Hadid, Margaret Zhang, Tanya Kleinsmith, Kendall Jenner, Kylie Jenner, Whitney Port, Lauren Conrad, as well as famous South African bloggers such as Thithi Nteta, Aisha Baker, Bonang Matheba and Tamlyn Jacobus are some of the most influential fashion leaders to whom social media managers should pay attention. If consumers can make the connection between the celebrities they aspire to and fashion brands they resonate with, this could create meaningful connections with the brand. To achieve this, fashion retailers need to ensure that they are in stock of on-trend, fashionable items.
- Quality is an important consideration when buying fashion clothing brands. The results indicate that 'quality' was ranked as the number one motivation when deciding to purchase fashion clothing brands, with 'affordability' ranked second. Consequently,

affordability and quality go hand in hand. If fashion retailers wish to target the youth effectively, they need to produce products of value, which entails providing the desired item at the right quality and appropriate price. Differentiation by quality and value is a sure way to win the trust and loyalty of the youth and become the go-to-brand in any economic climate. Putting the customer first and meeting their needs should be at the heart of any business and is the best way to ensure long-term profitability and customer acquisition.

- Smartphones are the most often used device by the South African youth to access social media platforms. Therefore, creating a pleasant experience through quick browsing access, limited click through, engaging content, search optimization and easy access to information and feedback has never been more essential. The study's findings indicate that the second most popular reason for returning to a company's brand page is "excellent search options". The results also indicate that most of the respondents spend no longer than 6 hours on these social media platforms on an average day, and retailers should do their best to get the most out of their customers, not only in terms of sales revenues, traffic online and profits but by obtaining quick information through mobile devices on products most browsed, searched or loved. This feedback will allow quick reactions to trade and social media content and serve as reliable information when making strategic decisions on such products in the future.
- The youth spend on fashion clothing brands is less than R800, with a purchase frequency of less than 5 times within a 3-month period. Firstly, this indicates that these non-working individuals spend a considerable amount of their allowances on fashion clothing brands. Secondly, the results indicate that the number one reason for returning to a company's brand page is to 'find discounts and promotions'. This provides an opportunity for fashion retailers to ensure that they are always screaming out "value" in their product offerings in a way that will surprise and delight their consumers, resulting in repeated visits to their site.
- Social media platforms are highly influential; they are the foundation for creating a profile for fashion brands worldwide. The results indicate that YouTube is the most often used social networking site compared to other platforms. Retailers should become more innovative in their execution of video content online, in a way that shows strong and innovative brand appeal. This could be achieved through collaborating with local

artists showcasing the product whilst performing, thereby allowing the consumer to click onto products worn by the artists or featured in the video. Creating campaign videos that are attention grabbing, engaging and impactful is an effective way to lure customers to a retailer's brand page/site.

- Instagram has a more influential appeal in inspiring purchases of fashion clothing. The results indicate that Instagram has an influence on the amount spent on fashion clothing brands, making it a preferred site to post the latest fashion trends, launch new product offerings and inspiring content that resonates with the youth. It is vital for social media managers to put thought into what they post and ensure that it is impactful in a way that is inspiring to the youth and appealing to their desires and lifestyles.
- Facebook also had positive correlations between frequency of browsing and consumption, but the influence or usage was not as impactful as YouTube and Instagram. Facebook is still a dominant force and should be used as a platform for competitions, active engagement, fashion launches, relaying product information and open communication. The study indicates the impact of these social media platforms and the literature contributes to the best way to utilise these platforms. It is recommended, that marketers focus on creating integrated marketing communication strategies, incorporating traditional media to create credibility, and dilute media fragmentation, thus creating an impactful message that is loud and clear for the consumer.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This section addresses the limitations of the study due to time and budget constraints, which can be improved upon in future research.

- The sample comprised 60 respondents from a tertiary institution. Generation Z not only consists of university students but also younger individuals in primary and high schools. A larger sample size of 250 or more should be used to ensure that the results can be generalized to the population at large and to gain a better perspective of the youth's consumption behaviour and the factors that influence their decision to purchase.

- The research focussed purely on Generation Z individuals. For future research, a comparison between Generations Z and Y should be performed in terms of their characteristics and the factors that influence their consumption behaviour. This will assist marketers to gain a better understanding of the youth market and how to market to them effectively.
- The study was geographically limited in scope due to time and budget constraints. For future research, the same study could be conducted across universities of KwaZulu Natal or on a larger scale across universities situated in South Africa's largest cities, such as Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, where fashion is most prevalent. This will allow a better representation of the population.
- Sustainability is becoming a pressing issue across the globe. Generation Z have a genuine interest in leaving the world better than they found it, and sustainability should be included as a factor in terms of the influence it has on the youth consumers' decision to purchase, as the focus should be on eco-friendly clothing.
- The sampling method used for the study was non-probability sampling, which affects the generalizability of the study as the results cannot be generalized to the population. This should be taken into consideration for future research that requires in-depth knowledge of factors to solve a specific problem.
- For future research, the study could focus on a fashion retailer or brand in South Africa where the results obtained can be used for the strategic purpose of developing brand image and social media strategies.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In these last years, the retail atmosphere has been unstable and full of trials and tribulations due to macro environmental factors affecting performance and strategies. The growth of a new generation with diverse needs has added a challenge for retail businesses, causing them to rethink their communication and merchandising strategies in appealing to the youth. This study sought to highlight contributing factors that influence the consumption behaviour of female Generation Z individuals. Aspirational reference groups such as celebrity-inspired trends seem to get a positive response from the youth, thereby influencing their spending behaviour. YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are amongst the most popular and influential social

platforms that should be utilised strategically when conversing with Generation Z consumers during their browsing activities. Quality was highlighted twice in the study as an important consideration and a motivating factor when making decisions to purchase fashion clothing brands. Although there were no strong correlations between self-concept and consumption, it is evident that consumers purchase items of clothing from brands that reflect their lifestyles, personalities, attitudes and style. Fashion retailers should market their products with an element of personality with which the youth can connect and identify. Lastly, the increasing use of smartphones presents notable opportunities for businesses in building and retaining relationships and increasing market share, especially as a considerable portion of their allowances is spent on fashion clothing brands. Although this study offers valuable insight into fashion retailers, more in-depth analysis should be conducted utilising a larger sample across geographic locations, also taking sustainability into consideration, which is growing in importance with each passing year.

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Annexure 1: Questionnaire

NB: Fashion clothing brands are your Fast Fashion Brands such as MRP, Zara, H&M, Legit, the FIX, and so forth.

Instructions: Please tick the appropriate block

Section A: Demographic details

1. Age (years):

<18 years	18-21 years	>21 years

2. Indicate your economic status

Poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Affluent

3. Indicate your highest level of education achieved

Matric	Certificate	Diploma	Graduate	Postgraduate

Section B: Reference Groups

4. With whom do you shop for clothing most frequently? (Select **ONE** option only)

Friends	Parents	Siblings	Nobody	Extended Family

5. Who **MOST** influences your decision to purchase fashion clothing brands? (Select **ONE** option only)

Friends	Parents	Siblings	Nobody	Extended Family
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6. Rate (from 1= no influence to 5= large influence) the extent with which each of the following factors influences your consumption behaviour of fashion clothing brands.

	No Influence 1	2	3	4	Large Influence 5
6.1 Parents					
6.2 Siblings					
6.3 Social Media					
6.4 Brand Image					
6.5 Friends					
6.6 Celebrity inspired fashion trends					
6.7 Extended family members					

Section C: Perceived Quality

7. Indicate extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7.1 I feel more confident when I buy a good quality product					
7.2 In general, I try to get the best overall quality in clothing					
7.3 It is important to me that the clothes I buy are off good quality					
7.4 My preference for a product is dependent on the quality and not necessarily on other factors					
7.5. My standards and expectations of clothing in terms quality are high					

Section D: Self-Concept and Brand Image

8. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

<u>IT IS IMPORTANT TO ME THAT THE BRANDS OF CLOTHES I BUY...</u>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8.1 ...project an image that is consistent with who I am					
8.2 ...reflect my authentic style and personality					
8.3 ...support the ideal image of who I aspire to be (ideal-self).					
8.4... will not cause people to disrespect me.					
8.5 ...give me a sense of self fulfilment					
8.6...deliver the latest fashion trend because wearing the latest fashion increases my self-confidence.					
8.7 ...will impress other people					
8.8...help me to fit into the social environment					
8.9...show others how I think and feel about myself					
8.10...make me feel attractive					

Section E: Social Media

9. Do you actively search for brand pages on social media?

Yes	No

10. Which **ONE** of the following devices do you use **MOST OFTEN** to connect to social media?

Laptop	Desk top	IPad	Smart phone

11. How long do you spend on social media on an average day?

Less than 3 hours	3 - <6 hours	6 - <9 hours	9 - <12 hours	12 + hours

12. Indicate how often you use the following Social Media platforms:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
12.1 Twitter					
12.2 Facebook					
12.3 Instagram					
12.4 Pinterest					
12.5 YouTube					
12.6 LinkedIn					
12.7 Snapchat					

13. Has browsing Social Media platforms ever lead to you purchasing fashion clothing brands online?

Yes	No

13a **If you answered YES to q13**, how many times have you purchased fashion clothing from social media platforms in the past 6 months?

Once	2-4 times	5-8 times	Over 8 times

14. Indicate the level of influence that each of the Social Media platforms below have had on your purchases of fashion clothing brands in-store and online:

	No Influence	Small Influence	Moderate Influence	Large Influence	A very large Influence
14.1 Twitter					
14.2 Facebook					
14.3 Instagram					
14.4 Pinterest					
14.5 YouTube					
14.6 LinkedIn					

14.7 Snapchat					
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15. Indicate your level of agreement with each statement below:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
15.1 I browse Social Media for adverts on Fashion clothing.					
15.2 Social Media Knowledge concerning new fashion clothing trends is important to me.					
15.3 It is convenient to purchase clothing through social media.					
15.4 I use social media platforms to search for information and advice on products.					
15.5 I take an interest in the advertising on social media					
15.6 If I want to buy a specific item, I research it on social media					
15.7 The opinions of people on social media are important to me.					
15.8 I use social media to research the latest trends in fashion.					

16. What would motivate you to return to a company's brand page on social media platforms?

Number/rank each factor in order of importance - **1** being *most important* and **5** being *least important*.

Ranking should include all 5 numbers 1-2-3-4-5, with no two items having the same number

Reasons for returning to a company's page or brand page	Ranking of Importance
16.1 Excellent product search options	
16.2 Interactive nature of the social platform	
16.3 Availability of consumer recommendations and ratings	
16.4 To keep up with the latest trends	
16.5 To find discounts/promotions	

Section F: Consumption

17. How often, on average over a 3 month period, do you purchase fashion clothing brands?

0-1 times	2-3 times	4-5 times	6-7 times	8-9 times	>9 times

18. How much have you spent on fashion clothing brands in the last 3 months?

R0 - R500	R501 - R800	R801-R1000	R1001-R1500	R1501-R2000	>R2000

19. Below are factors that could influence your decision to purchase fashion clothing brands.

Number/rank each factor in order of importance - **1** being *most important* and **7** being *least important*.

Ranking should include all 7 numbers 1-2-3-4-5-6-7, with no two items having the same number

Motivation for purchasing Fashion Clothing Brands	Ranking of Importance
19.1 Style and Design	
19.2 Quality	
19.3 Fashionable and Trendy	
19.4 Affordability	
19.5 Durability	
19.6 Brand	
19.7 Value for Money	

Thank you so much for your time

Annexure 2: Ethical Clearance



01 November 2017

Ms Rivani Naidu (209519437)
School of Management, IT & Governance
Westville Campus

Dear Ms Naidu,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1820/017M

Project title: Factors influencing female consumption of Fashion Clothing Brands amongst Generation-Z consumers in Durban

Approval Notification – Expedited Approval

In response to your application received on 28 September 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Mr Marc Salence
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Isabel Martins
Cc School Administrator: Ms Angela Pearce

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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Annexure 3: Gatekeepers Approval Letter



1 September 2017

Ms Rivani Naidu (SN 209519437)
School of management, IT and Governance
College of Law and Management Studies
Westville Campus
UKZN
Email: rivaninaidu26@gmail.com marcsalence@gmail.com

Dear Ms Naidu

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Factors influencing Female Consumptions of Fashion Clothing Brands amongst Generation-Z Consumers in Durban".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by handing out questionnaires to female university students on the Westville campus.

Please ensure that the following appears on your notice/questionnaire:

- Ethical clearance number;
- Research title and details of the research, the researcher and the supervisor;
- Consent form is attached to the notice/questionnaire and to be signed by user before he/she fills in questionnaire;
- gatekeepers approval by the Registrar.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book. Identity numbers and email addresses of individuals are not a matter of public record and are protected according to Section 14 of the South African Constitution, as well as the Protection of Public Information Act. For the release of such information over to yourself for research purposes, the University of KwaZulu-Natal will need express consent from the relevant data subjects. Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

Yours sincerely

MR S S MOKOENA
REGISTRAR

Office of the Registrar

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville