

Abstract

This paper investigates what types of Instagram marketing tools are the most effective in relation to Generation Z's impulse purchasing behaviour within fashion industry in the context of the United Kingdom. The research applies Stimulus-Organism-Response model to the context of Instagram. The findings of this qualitative study based on eight extensive focus groups conclude that there are significant gender differences in relation to impulse purchasing behaviour on Instagram. Instagram is vastly influential in encouraging impulse purchases amongst females, however, this was not the case for male participants. A revised Stimulus-Organism-Response model is proposed to Instagram, concluding that advertisements, opinion leaders and user-generated content act as stimuli (S) in evoking positive emotions (O), which subsequently trigger impulse purchases (R) in Generation Z females.

Keywords: Impulse purchase, Instagram, Generation Z, S-O-R Model

1. Introduction

Generation Z, often considered 'digital natives', is the first generation to have grown up surrounded by digital communication (Smith, 2017; Adeola et al., 2020; Reinikainen et al., 2020). They are the newest generation born between 1995 and early 2010s (Priporas et al., 2019). These audience consumes content more than any other age groups, spending nearly 11 hours reading, liking and sharing material across all their devices daily (Adobe, 2018). They are highly likely to be exposed to digital advertising on social media (SM) and checking Instagram at least five times a day (Chen, 2018; Emmanuel, 2019; Vitelar, 2019). This target audience prefers to communicate with images, as opposed to the generation prior who communicate with text and looks for innovative content (Prakashyadav & Rai, 2017; Priporas et al., 2017). They are considered to be the most materialistic (Flurry & Swimberghe, 2016), desire instant results (Passport, 2018), and appreciate the communication of brands on social media (Vitelar, 2019) particularly through micro-celebrities as they find them more authentic (Wolf, 2020). These characteristics make it potentially attractive to study this generation's impulse buying behaviour. Generation Z is the largest generation, constituting approximately 32% of the global population (Miller & Lu, 2018) and is expected to have a significant impact on consumer sales on a global basis, thus it is important to conduct research on this potentially powerful generation cohort (Wolf, 2020). Research on different generational cohorts allows to explore changes in consumers' views over time (Dimock, 2019).

According to generation cohort theory (GCT) populations can be divided into generational segments on the basis of their ages. Previous research based on GCT found clear differences in consumer behaviour of different generations, for example, Baby Boomers and Generation Z (Gilal et al., 2020). GCT suggests that every generation that share similar political and social events at early stages of their lives will develop same set of values and beliefs. Limited research has been conducted on impulse purchasing in relation to social media, which can uncover some fruitful findings to understand this particular age group.

The fashion market is highly competitive, with the rise of online retailers presenting significant challenges for brands. Understanding consumer behaviour pertaining to impulse purchasing is necessary for brands to be successful (Dover, 2019). Impulse buying is an important part of consumer behaviour studies and cannot be underestimated. Research shows, that just in the UK, a typical person spends almost £200 a month on impulse products with estimated lifetime spend on fashion constituting approximately £18,393 (Hall, 2018).

One of the first independent purchases that generation Z engage into are related to clothing items. Young people use fashion purchases to express themselves. Fashion purchases do not often require extensive problem solving thus some items are bought impulsively. Speed is important for any activities which Generation Z undertakes. Research shows that 41% of Generation Z consumers are impulse buyers, followed by Millennials at 34%, and Generation X at 32%. They desire newest items at a greater speed. Thus brands have to develop marketing strategies to satisfy the needs of this target audience. They are less loyal to brands and fast consumers of fashion. As Generation Z has grown along the internet, the engagement in social media platforms is a norm for them to seek for inspiration (Brewis, 2020). This consumer has an increasingly persuasive power on their peer and family members when making purchases (Coray, 2019).

Academic research on the influence of stimuli on Instagram is scarce, despite its growing significance on consumer behaviour (Kim & Kim, 2019). Previous studies have applied the S-O-R model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) to successfully explain impulse purchasing on other SM platforms (Chen et al., 2019; Leong et al., 2018). In psychology, the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model explains that various environmental factors can be stimulus (S) that influences a person's emotional state (O) which then evokes person's response (R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Therefore, this model suggests three steps in human reactions to stimuli, which are stimulus, organism and response. Later this theory has been developed for work in retail strategy and consumer behaviour. SM is important in

influencing impulse purchasing (Al-Zyoud, 2018; Chen, 2018). Some argue SM plays key part in the search and rational evaluation of information stages during a purchase decision, which does not occur during impulse purchases (Aprilla & Setiadi, 2017; Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018).

This paper aims to advance the use of the S-O-R framework to Instagram and impulse purchasing behaviour, with a particular focus on exploring the stimuli that encourages impulse fashion purchases amongst Generation Z consumers. Planned behaviour theories, such as the theory of reasoned action and elaboration likelihood model, are not appropriate when studying impulse buying, as the response to the stimulus is spontaneous, unreflective, dominated by emotions, and immediate (Verhagen & van Dolen, 2011). The S-O-R model is most appropriate when investigating impulse purchasing as it is considered reactive (Parboteeah et al., 2016; Zheng, Men, Yang & Gong, 2019; Leong, Jaafar & Ainin, 2018). This study offers valuable insights to aid fashion brands in developing marketing strategies to stimulate Generation Z's impulse behaviour.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Role of Instagram on Impulse Purchases

Instagram is particularly important for fashion brands, given the essential role of the visual element in promoting fashion products (Casaló et al., 2017; Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018; Venus Jin et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2016; Khan, 2018). It affects the buying process due to enjoyment while using the app, which is affiliated with impulsive buying as it makes consumers skip the evaluation phase of decision making (Aprilia & Setiadi, 2017). Instagram usage acts as a stimulus for impulse purchases (Xiang et al., 2016).

Research investigating the influence of Instagram on impulse purchasing behaviour have found various stimuli to trigger such purchases: promotional advertisements (Handayani et al., 2018; Iyer et al., 2020; Triwidsari et al., 2017), photographs or videos displayed on a

brands' Instagram account (Handayani et al., 2018), and recommendations from friends and opinion leaders (Xiang et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2020). The Instagram shopping service, which expanded in 2018 to allow retailers to tag product images to sell directly to followers, has also become a significant stimulator in impulse purchases (Khanom, 2018; Handayani et al., 2018). Although there exists very little literature on Instagram's role in impulse purchase decision within the fashion industry, scholars applying this behaviour to other SM platforms have correspondingly found respondents to act on stimuli, being the product images, triggering impulsive fashion purchases (Kim & Johnson, 2016, Lidholm et al., 2017; Sundström et al., 2019).

2.2. Brand-generated Instagram Content

Brand-generated content (BGC) is a significant and influential form of marketing communication on Instagram and positively impacts consumer purchasing (Kumar et al., 2016; Poulis et al., 2019). BGC is defined as brand-initiated marketing communication shared directly through its SM pages, with its effect on profitability found to be greater for more experienced, tech-savvy, and SM-prone customers (Kumar et al., 2016). Brand content published on fashion brands' Instagram accounts significantly influences consumers' activity, generating new needs among them which leads to purchasing the brands' products (Stachowiak-Krzyżan, 2019).

Conversely, typical marketing messages are struggling with consumer avoidance and negligence and as Generation Z consumers have had lifelong exposure to marketing, they know how to easily pick out brands' blatant advertising and disregard them (Evans et al., 2019; Chen, 2018; Fromm & Read, 2018). Generation Z consumers are more aware and informed than previous youth generations and consequently do not trust brands messages (Kelton, 2019).

Another influential form of communication is opinion leaders (Bruhn et al., 2012). In the fashion industry, Instagram is the most used platform by opinion leaders (Casaló et al., 2018; Arora et al., 2019; Boerman, 2020). Micro-celebrities, Instagram users who have accumulated relatively large followings online (Mavroudis & Milne, 2016), and traditional celebrities are actively utilised by fashion brands. Although the concept of opinion leaders on Instagram has been frequently explored within a variety of contexts (Casaló, et al., 2018; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Jin et al., 2018; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), previous research has been largely in agreement of their influence on purchasing. Contrastingly, a more recent study found that participants were rarely influenced by the opinions of these individuals when making purchase decisions (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Chen, 2018; Dover, 2019). This may be attributed to various studies which have found that sponsorship disclosure messages, for example, the use of hashtag “sponsored”, allow users to recognise the post as advertising, and that an opinion leader may receive compensatory rewards, thus creating a negative attitude towards the product (Evans et al., 2017; Kim & Kim, 2020).

Inconsistency in results may indicate a shift in consumer attitudes surrounding SM opinion leaders and their credibility. This could be attributed to recent scandals such as certain opinion leaders purchasing followers to win over brands, giving dangerous advice to followers, and being paid to criticise other brands (Doolan, 2019). Furthermore, opinion leaders’ remunerations for sponsored posts has risen exponentially since 2015 (Guttman, 2020), perhaps explaining why there is a growing sentiment of scepticism towards opinion leaders (Khanom, 2018) and suggesting brands may need to engage consumers in other ways.

2.3. User-generated Instagram Content

Whilst literature denotes that BGC can be influential in increasing purchase intention, User-generated content (UGC) is perceived more positively, resulting in a higher purchase intention (Mayrhofer et al., 2019). Defined by Kurian and John (2017, p. 559), UGC is “content posted by users on social networking sites”, and is ubiquitous on Instagram with

67% of Generation Z consumers posting photographs or videos at least once a week (King, 2019). This has led to consumer behaviour changing as consumers are continually influencing others, through sharing images of their purchases and offering recommendations (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). The most influential factor on consumer behaviour was recommendations and photographs displaying purchases from other consumers (Mayrhofer et al., 2019; Xiang et al., 2016). UGC was more trustworthy than BGC content, specifically brand posts and sponsored content, thus it was utilised more for fashion advice (Nash, 2019; Dover, 2019).

The main source of influence on Instagram for purchasing fashion items exists from UGC from friends and family (Chen 2018; Dover, 2019; Nash, 2019). Young consumers were more likely to pay attention to marketing information from their friends than anywhere else, due to trust concerns, which often motivated them to purchase (Chen, 2018). The growing mistrust of BGC means consumers are increasingly turning to one another to inform their consumption choices (Kantar, 2019).

2.4. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm was first proposed by Mehrabian & Russell (1974), as displayed in Figure 1, who suggested environmental stimuli (S) directly affect organisms (O) (i.e. consumers), therefore influencing consumers' behavioural responses (R). A stimulus is a trigger that arouses consumers and can be external, for example marketing stimuli and situational stimuli, or internal, for example consumer characteristics (Chan et al., 2017). Organism refers to consumers' internal evaluations, including emotional responses such as pleasure, arousal, and impulsiveness, and behavioural response (R) signifies consumers' reactions to stimuli and organisms (Chan et al., 2017).

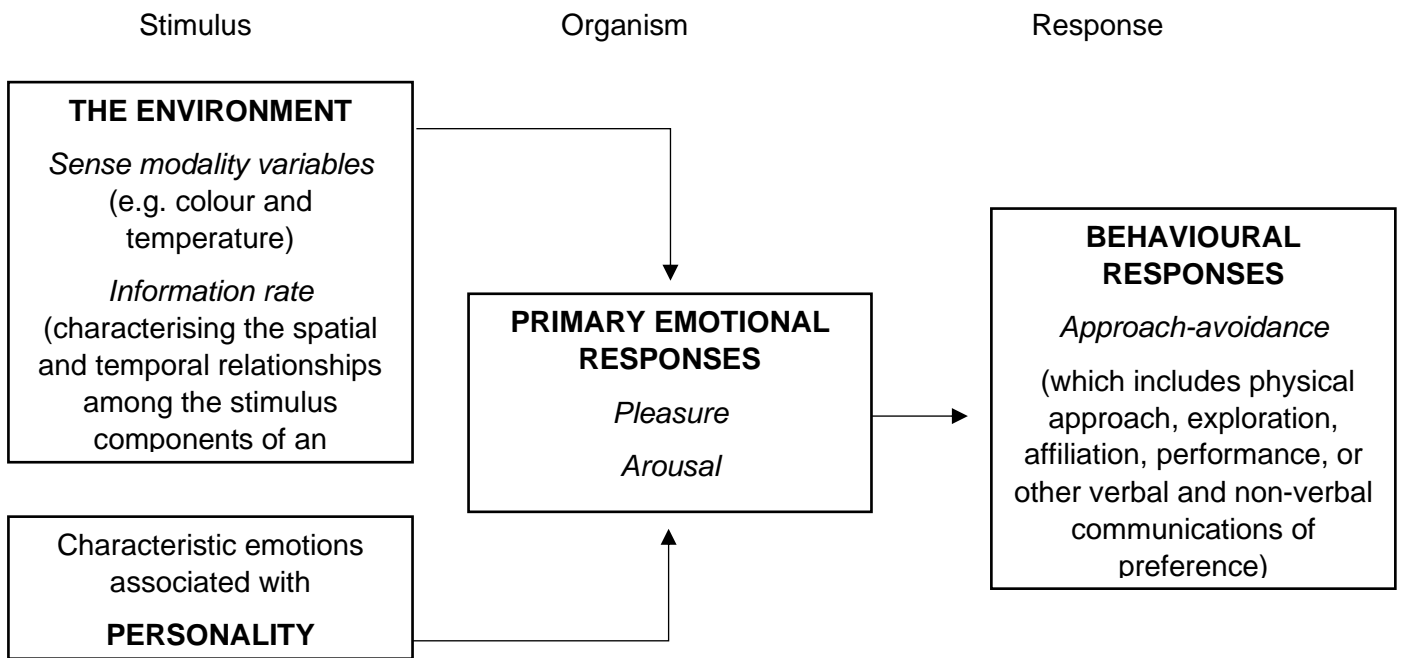


Figure 1. Stimulus-Organism-Response Paradigm. (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974, p.12).

Previous research emphasized the importance of applying the S-O-T model to the consumer behaviour research as this framework helps to understand the environmental stimulus which effects consumer behaviour (Jacoby, 2002). Given the importance of the stimulus as a motivation in the impulse buying process (Xiang, Zheng, Lee & Zhao, 2016), the S-O-R model is frequently used in impulse buying literature, both in online (Leong et al., 2018; Zheng, Men, Yang & Gong, 2019) and offline contexts (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015; Barros et al., 2019). Thus, it is a logical framework to investigate in this study. For example, Leong et al. (2018) successfully applied the S-O-R model to explain the positive effect of Facebook marketing stimuli on the urge to buy impulsively. Zheng et al. (2019) also investigated the urge to buy impulsively as the behavioural response, however, applied the model in the context of mobile commerce, concluding that visual appeal and portability had an effect on impulse purchase behaviour. Alternatively, Barros et al. (2019) studied impulse purchasing in an offline context, and found that store environment factors, such as layout and music, had a positive effect on consumer impulse purchase behaviour.

There is a general acceptance amongst the literature that Instagram is a propitious tool in influencing consumers' impulse purchases (Handayani et al., 2018; Triwidisari et al., 2017;

Zhu et al., 2020). It has been found to be the platform that affects impulse buying the most in the fashion industry, when compared to Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). Research applying the S-O-R model in the context of Instagram is scarce (Casaló et al., 2020; Handayani et al., 2018). However, a recent study by Casaló et al. (2020) successfully extended the use of the S-O-R framework to Instagram, incorporating brand publications as the stimulus, creativity and positive emotions as the organism and affective commitment and interaction intentions as the response. Our work aims to extend the use of the S-O-R framework to Instagram and impulse purchasing. Scholars applying the S-O-R framework in impulse buying research have found brand-generated content (BGC) (Chan et al., 2017; Iyer et al., 2020) and user-generated content (UGC) (Kim & Johnson, 2016) to be key triggers of impulse purchasing. Consequently, these are considered as possible stimuli in the context of Instagram. Emotional response is positively related to impulse purchasing as sensory stimuli (for example, images and text in the context of Instagram) reduced self-control mechanisms (Adelaar et al., 2003; Lo et al., 2016). Thus, an emotional response, impulsiveness (O), that is activated by UGC and BGC (S) may encourage a behavioural response (R).

In the context of impulse buying, the response variables consist of the urge to buy impulsively, and impulse purchase decision (Chan et al., 2017). Various studies have measured the urge to buy impulsively (Chung et al., 2017; Xiang et al., 2016), however this poses a challenge when researching impulse purchases as impulsive urges do not always result in actual purchases (Badgaiyan & Verma, 2015). Thus, this study will measure actual impulse purchases as the behavioural response (R).

This section explored key influences on consumer behaviour and impulse buying within Instagram, relating to Generation Z fashion consumers. Despite the existing literature on factors influencing impulse purchase decision on Instagram, it is clear that there are various gaps. Previous studies have predominantly researched impulse purchasing

with female fashion consumers (Chen, Lu, Gupta & Pan, 2019; Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018), thus presenting a gap in the literature as it is crucial that marketers understand how to target both male and female consumers. Furthermore, previous research concentrated on specific marketing stimuli, such as opinion leaders (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017), BGC (Poulis et al., (2019) and UGC (Kim & Johnson, 2016), and a complete picture of the effects that marketing stimuli have on impulse buying is lacking. Thus, this study further aims to determine the most effective stimuli. Lastly, there is very little research on impulse purchasing integrating both Instagram and the fashion industry (Zafar et al., 2019) and this study will incorporate both.

3. Methodology

Qualitative research was conducted to gain a contextualised understanding of Generation Z's behaviours, beliefs and motivations in the United Kingdom (Hennink et al., 2020). Much of the aforementioned literature on consumer behaviour utilises qualitative research methods (Chen, 2018; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Nash, 2019), justified as they acknowledge areas that may not have been initially considered to be explored, allowing for new insights into the subject (Nash, 2019). It develops richer understanding that cannot be gathered through quantitative methods (Malhotra, 2014).

In total, eight face-to-face focus groups were conducted (with 41 participants collectively), defined as interviews "conducted by a trained moderator among a small group of respondents in an unstructured and natural manner" (Malhotra, 2014, p. 176). This technique was most appropriate as it allows participants to build upon responses of other group members, often leading to the production of more elaborated accounts than are generated in individual interviews (Silverman, 2004). The focus groups were semi-structured to ensure questions could emerge leading to a naturalistic and interactive research process.

Non-probability purposive sampling was the preferred technique for this study. This included Generation Z consumers over 18, frequent Instagram users (Johnson, 2020; King, 2019). Both students and young professionals were included. In qualitative research such as focus groups, the sample is used to make generalisations to theory, rather than about a population, thus it is typically based on small samples (Malhotra, 2014). Hennink et al. (2020) further states that the purpose is to achieve depth of information, rather than statistical representativeness, consequently this research does not seek to be representative of all Generation Z consumers in the UK. Each focus group comprised of four to six participants which is in line with Krueger and Casey (2014)'s ideal sample size recommendation; this allows everyone the opportunity to share insights, whilst being large enough to provide diversity of perceptions. After eight focus groups, no additional data was emerging and they had reached data saturation. Mixed gender groups can improve the quality of discussions and its outcomes, thus four mixed, two female and two male focus groups were conducted.

Focus Group A	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Gender	F	F	F	F	M	M
Focus Group B	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11	
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	
Focus Group C	Participant 12	Participant 13	Participant 14	Participant 15	Participant 16	
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	
Focus Group D	Participant 17	Participant 18	Participant 19	Participant 20	Participant 21	
Gender	F	F	F	M	M	
Focus Group E	Participant 22	Participant 23	Participant 24	Participant 25	Participant 26	Participant 27
Gender	M	M	M	M	M	M
Focus Group F	Participant 28	Participant 29	Participant 30	Participant 31	Participant 32	Participant 33
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F
Group G	Participant 34	Participant 35	Participant 36	Participant 37		
Gender	F	F	F	M		
Group H	38	39	40	41		
Gender	M	F	F	F		

Table 1. Participants' profiles.

Whilst in focus groups it can be difficult to manage group dynamics as extroverts can be overrepresented in the feedback (Hennink et al., 2020), the moderator (a researcher) ensured to include everyone in the discussion and encouraged quiet participants to provide full participation (Silverman, 2016). Furthermore, discussions can be influenced by participants' social desirability biases; they may adjust their own contributions to match those of others, which can affect the validity of the focus groups (Mortel, 2008). To

overcome such bias, the moderator endeavoured to create an open and permissive atmosphere by emphasising that they wanted to hear a range of different experiences and feelings (Morgan & Krueger, 1993).

The focus groups questions consisted of a predetermined structure, however allowed for flexibility and adaptability to the group's needs (Herman, 2017). The set of questions was used to ensure consistency across the focus groups and prestructuring reduced the amount of data that required analysing. The focus groups began with simple preliminary questions about fashion in general to build rapport and put the participants at ease, and then comprised of five sections. The first pursued participants' SM and Instagram usage, then sought their thoughts on Instagram marketing and its influence on their purchasing behaviour. Later sections moved onto discussions about specific marketing tools' influence on participants' impulse purchasing habits such as UGC, BGC, and opinion leaders. Finally, participants were asked to discuss the most influential trigger in impulse purchasing on Instagram for them. All questions were derived from the literature, and correspond to a research objective. Holding the focus groups in normal and familiar settings allowed for a relaxed atmosphere which helped participants forget they were being questioned (Ochieng et al., 2018). Each focus group lasted approximately forty to fifty minutes and has taken place a location which is familiar to the respondents to make them feel more comfortable.

Ethical approval was granted prior to research being undertaken. To ensure participants appreciated fully what they were partaking in, they were presented with a debrief sheet and an informed consent form to sign prior to participating, informing that they were free to withdraw at any time. Each focus group was recorded upon obtaining informed consent, and transcribed fully. Participants were assured that they would be anonymised and data would be deleted after the project had been awarded, and received the transcript upon request. All focus group participants were informed that their identities would be anonymous throughout the whole process. The focus group transcripts used a code for each participant, which was also used in the findings and discussion section.

Thematic analysis is a method for segmenting, categorising, summarising and reconstructing data in a way that captures the important concepts within the data set (Given, 2008). The essential purpose of this approach was to search for themes or patterns that occurred across the focus groups. Once the researchers had immersed themselves in the data, data coding occurred in two stages. Coding aims to fracture the data and "rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and between categories (Maxwell, 2012, p.237). Firstly, the researchers listed emerging ideas and

identified keywords frequently used by participants as indicators or important themes, then focused coding occurred where the researchers eliminated, combined or subdivided the coding categories (Nyumba et al., 2018). For the purposes of inter-coder reliability measurement to assess the rigor for the coding segments, another researcher has reviewed the recordings for the emerged themes. With thematic analysis, time can be invested in making sure the analysis is rigorous, rather than keeping to strict rules as with other analysis methods.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section analyses the findings from the primary research, combining it with notions from the literature reviewed. The analysis determined notable themes and arranged it into the three research objectives such as: The influence of Instagram on impulse purchase decision; the influence of Instagram marketing strategies; and Extending the S-O-R Model to Instagram. The extracted themes and objectives are shown in Figure 2.

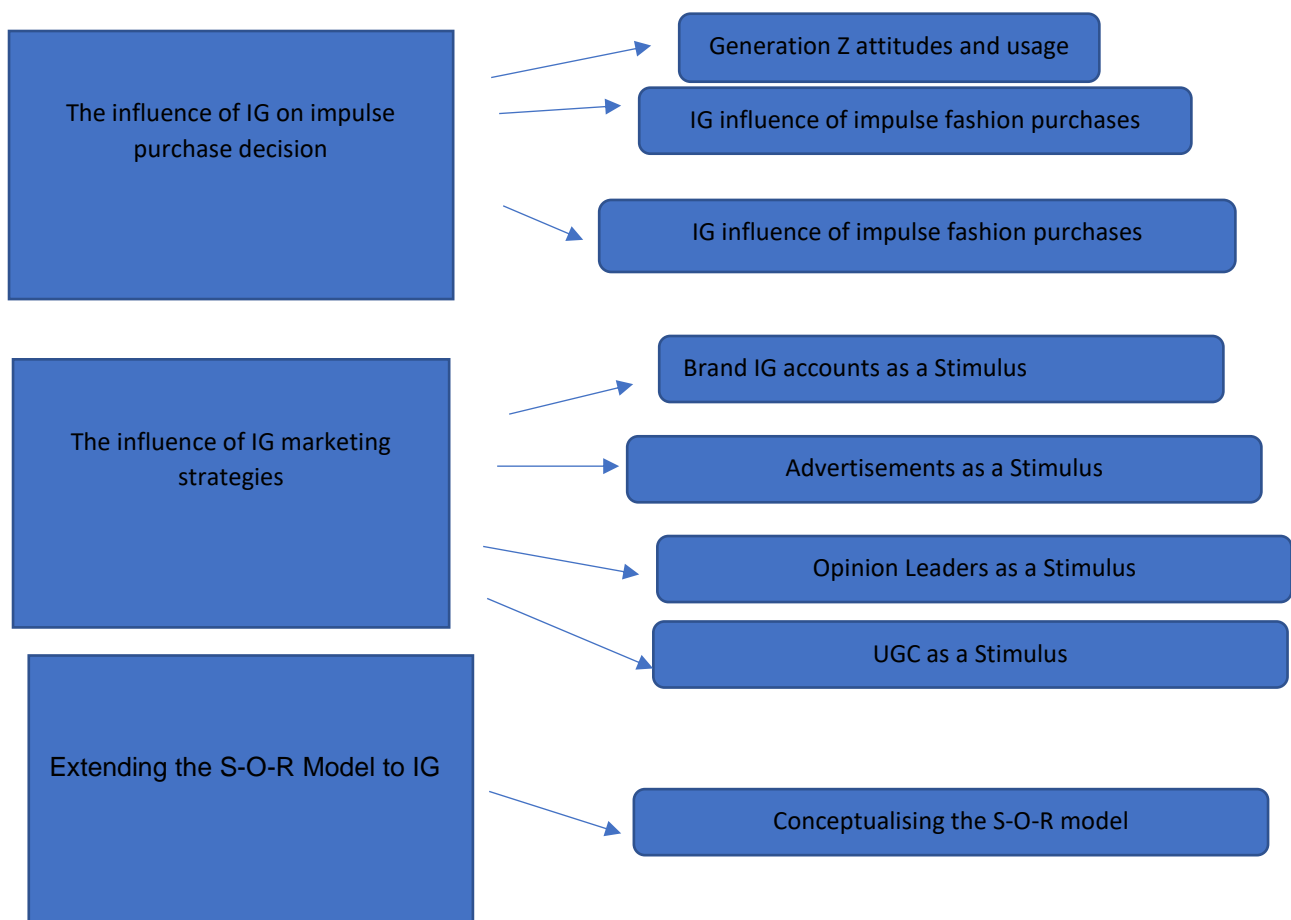


Figure 2 Summary of objectives and corresponding themes.

4.1. The Influence of Instagram on Impulse Purchase Decision

All female participants identified Instagram as their most used SM, predominantly due to the visual element, whereas all male participants identified Twitter as their most used platform. Previous research also discovered that females were more active on Instagram than males (King, 2019; Sheldon & Bryant, 2015). Several of the male participants stated that they use Instagram mostly for general and sports related news, whereas females said that they use Instagram for insights into celebrities' lives and to inspire their fashion choices. Participant 12 (Focus group C) discussed the most important role Instagram plays to her:

“Following celebrities, influencers, seeing what they’re doing with their lives and what clothes they’re wearing.”

This suggests each gender turns to this platform to satisfy different needs, thus brands should approach them separately. Although the results somewhat argue that Instagram is used for entertainment purposes, the main usage was for social and informational purposes (Jacobson et al., 2020).

A major theme identified throughout the focus groups was Instagram's ability to heavily influence Generation Z females' purchasing behaviour. Overwhelmingly, all excluding one of the female participants affirmed purchasing more fashion items on impulse as users of Instagram. Participants largely attributed this to exposure to a wider range of items, as prior to Instagram they would have to scroll through the entirety of a brand's website, and the ease of keeping up-to-date with the latest styles on Instagram, which directly influences their impulse purchasing. Participant 15 discussed how Instagram has transformed the way she purchases fashion:

“Before Instagram, you weren't really in touch with everything that's up-to-date in fashion... it would just be on shop floors. Whereas if you see it on Instagram, and you're not meant to be shopping, impulsively you're going to buy it.”

This implies that there has been a significant shift in the way consumers are influenced when purchasing fashion products, as fashion trends are now moulded by SM (Kim & Johnson, 2016; Lidholm et al., 2017; Sundström et al., 2019).

Majority of male respondents had never purchased a fashion item on impulse after seeing it on Instagram, with many noting that they normally purchase fashion items out of necessity over desire. Participants also stated that they do not feel the need to purchase items immediately. One of the respondents (5 from focus group A) said, "*I never go on Instagram because I want to browse fashion items*". Thus, the purpose of his usage is not to shop, nor for fashion inspiration, so he is unlikely to be influenced impulsively. Perhaps this explains why there was a strong relationship between Instagram and female participants' impulse fashion purchases as the majority affirmed that Instagram plays an important role in inspiring their fashion choices.

4.2. SOR Model: Brand Instagram Accounts as a Stimulus

Participants appeared to be averse to BGC, using vocabulary such as "annoying", "unappealing" and "irrelevant" to describe their feelings towards fashion brands' Instagram accounts. They stated that they avoid following fashion brands who advertise excessively by posting identical content to their websites and product-heavy images. The link between BGC and impulse fashion purchase decision was not acknowledged throughout the focus groups, as many of the participants stated that they had never purchased an item on impulse after seeing it on a brand's Instagram account.

When probed further, it was evident that some participants felt that opinion leaders act as trend-setters, reiterating the notion that fashion trends are now moulded by others on Instagram, and not brands. This suggests participants were unlikely to be influenced by online celebrities, unless they had seen it elsewhere prior.

SOR Model: Advertisements as a Stimulus

A prevalent subject throughout all focus groups was targeted advertisements, which are directed at those who are most likely to be interested in the product, expressed by all participants as prolific on Instagram. The majority were favourable or indifferent towards these advertisements, providing they were not repetitive, and were relevant to them and their interests. Participant 10 (from focus group B): *"[Instagram] shows you what you want to see a lot of the time."*

There was a significant association between BGC in the form of advertisements and impulse fashion purchases for female participants. Participant 29 (Focus group F) discussed a recent purchase she had made as a result of seeing a brands' advertisement:

"I always search for suits online and then I saw a suit on my Instagram, it was a Topshop advert so I went and bought it."

This interpretation confirms Handayani et al. (2018)'s argument that although consumers were indifferent to promotional advertisements on their Instagram feeds, they can increase frequency of impulse purchase, supported by Iyer et al. (2020) who also states advertising campaigns are effective in influencing impulse purchases. Again, male participants portrayed themselves as less impulsive, with participant 21 (focus group D) describing a recent purchase he had made: *"I went off the advertisement and searched the website, and then I bought it like two weeks after I saw the ads. I wouldn't just see it and buy it straight away."*

This was synonymous with many of the male participants in that this does not stimulate their impulse purchases. Although advertisements certainly influence participants' purchasing decisions, they often take time to consider their purchases.

SOR Model: Opinion Leaders as a Stimulus

A major theme identified throughout all focus groups was the prevalence of opinion leaders on Instagram. Female participants predominantly followed micro-celebrities to gain inspiration for outfits. Participant 12 (focus group C) broadened the discussion with her motivations for following opinion leaders: *“If I like their last few outfits I’ll follow them, even if I don’t know who they are...because I want my Instagram to be, like fashion, and to look at outfits.”*

Male participants also followed several opinion leaders, however this was largely traditional celebrities, such as athletes and musicians. This was due to an interest in their lives, not their attire. Participant 11 (focus group C) drew attention to the rationale behind following only traditional celebrities:

“Footballers have better connections to brands when they’re promoting sports things. I feel like an influencer will just promote anything for money.”

The notion that micro-celebrities were not entirely authentic was ubiquitous across all focus groups. Participants displayed scepticism and cynicism towards micro-celebrities as they are remunerated for advertising products. All participants stated that sponsorship disclosure messages make an advertisement seem less trustworthy, as opinion leaders claim to like products, solely because they are receiving remuneration. 21% of participants also noted that they often unfollow opinion leaders who advertise products too frequently, echoing the view by Djafarova & Trofimenko (2019) that too many advertising posts per month turns users away. Participant 4 (focus group A) discussed their uncertainty in more detail:

“Maybe a few years ago [product reviews] were all legitimate but now you know they’re doing it for the money rather than actually liking [the product].”

This comment was typical throughout all focus groups, and the decline in trust throughout recent years mentioned by focus groups A, B, E and F, was attributed to recent scandals involving digital influencers dishonesty.

Focus groups A and F also discussed products that they had seen advertised by opinion leaders, who later re-sold them online, having only worn the products for a sponsored advertisement. Consequently, these misconducts have considerably altered participants' attitudes towards opinion leaders and the sincerity of their posts. For an advertisement to be credible, brands should ensure that an opinion leader's image matches closely with the product that they are promoting, as participants stated that they can identify when a fashion item does not match the opinion leader's style.

SOR Model: UGC as a Stimulus

No one identified content generated by friends on Instagram as their main source of influence for purchasing fashion items, largely due to participants possessing different styles and not wanting to dress alike. This opposes the literature (Chen 2018; Dover, 2019; Nash, 2019; Xiang et al., 2016) which states that friends are young consumers' main influence, indicating that traditional sources of influence are not as dominant within SM as previously thought. However, previous research focused on multiple generations, whilst the current study demonstrates that other stimuli may be more influential in triggering impulse purchases in Generation Z consumers. As the only generation to have grown up surrounded by digital transformation, they are more open to change, unlike previous generations who may be less inclined to stray from traditional influences, hence the inconsistency in results.

All participants agreed that other users were more trustworthy than brands and opinion leaders, as they have no ulterior motive, supporting Nash (2019)'s study, and many of the female participants revealed that they had on occasion purchased an identical or similar product after seeing a friends' post, if it really appealed to them.

This notion differed for male participants, as not one stated that they would purchase an item after seeing a friends' post, though acknowledged that their female friends have. This was

largely due to pressures from society where males felt it was not the norm to ask their friends where they bought products.

4.3. SOR Model: Positive emotions as an Organism

Generation Z is particularly influenced by the content conveyed by social media users and value authentic approach of UGC (Wolf, 2020). This content creates positive emotions such as pleasure and arousal in users. Within Instagram photos encourage users to share the information which brings positive feeling in the followers (Casalo et al., 2020). Participant 15 (Focus Group C) says:

“It’s pictures, it’s imagery, and like you see it and you want it.”

There are gender differences related to the influence of Instagram on impulse purchase of fashion garments. Thus, the visual content on this platform evokes certain emotions in male users which not necessarily lead to the immediate purchase or trust towards the content received from the influencers. Male participant (22, Focus Group E) notes:

“It makes me second guess whether the product is actually legit’, and whether influencers actually believe what they are posting.”

4.4. SOR Model: Impulse Purchase as a Result

Most female respondents would make the purchase decision based on the information gathered from Instagram. Respondent 29 (Focus Group F) shares:

“I always search for suits online and then I saw on my Instagram a suit, it was a Topshop advert so I went and bought it.”

Previous research referred to commitment as a response (Casalo et al., 2020). Viewers are stimulated by the content on Instagram. They feel inspired by the influencers’ portrayal of the product which triggers an impulse buying decision. It is instant as Instagram provides instant access to the products and Generation Z consumers are more inclined to make quick decisions (Passport, 2018).

4.5. Conceptualising the S-O-R model

The stimulus was found to be a highly important motivation in the impulse buying process, therefore the S-O-R model can be successfully applied to impulse purchase behaviour on Instagram. Based upon the existing model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and the focus group discussions, a new S-O-R model is introduced, shown in figure 3, applicable to Instagram. BGC on a brands' Instagram page was excluded as a stimulus, as it primarily provokes negative emotions consequently not leading participants to impulsively purchase. However, other stimuli, such as brand advertisements, opinion leaders, and UGC, were accepted as encouraging female participants' impulse purchases, reinforcing previous research applying the S-O-R framework to impulse buying (Chan et al., 2017; Iyer et al., 2020; Kim & Johnson, 2016). Upon seeing advertisements (S), positive emotions such as pleasure and arousal are evoked (O), and this results in impulse purchases (R). Similarly, BGC from opinion leaders (S), specifically micro-celebrities, trigger female participants to feel positive emotions (O), resulting in impulse purchases (R). In addition, although its influence is lower than BGC, UGC was also recognised as a stimulus in triggering impulse purchases amongst Generation Z females. Given that male participants displayed less impulsive traits to females, stimuli on Instagram does not trigger their impulse purchases, therefore the model is only valid for female Generation Z consumers. This may be attributed to various explanations, such as male participants browsing Instagram less, thus they are less exposed to stimuli. This compares with previous literature investigating offline purchasing, which found males to purchase less impulsively as they spend less time in store (Atulkar & Kesari, 2018).

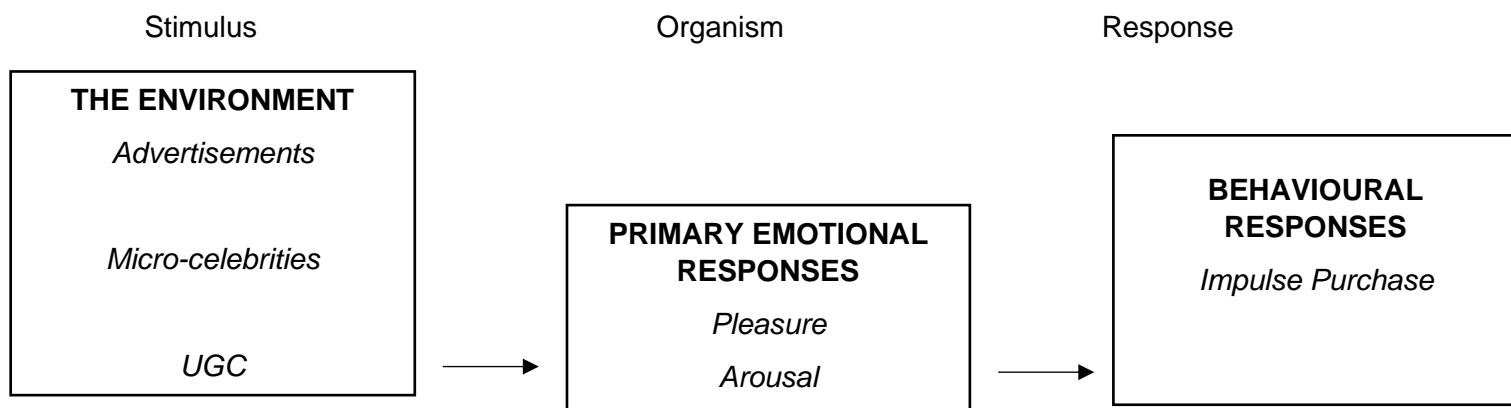


Figure 3. Revised S-O-R model, adapted from Mehrabian and Russell (1974).

5. Conclusion

Instagram was found to be social media that most affects impulse purchasing within the fashion industry, mainly due to the importance of the visual aspect in promoting fashion (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). This platform has the ability to profoundly influence female participants' impulse purchases. A shift in consumer behaviour within the fashion industry was emphasised, as participants stated that Instagram is the platform for fashion inspiration and current trends. Generation Z is accepting that SM is an important part of marketing these days, perhaps because they are grown up in a highly commercialised society (Chen, 2018).

Previous research indicates that Generation Z like subtle marketing messages and this was replicated in the findings of this research as participants preferred fashion brands who post creative content, as opposed to those who excessively advertise their products. The results suggest that fashion trends are now shaped by the users in Instagram. Thus, BGC on a brands' Instagram account was not deemed a suitable stimulator in encouraging Generation Z's impulse purchases. However, the findings suggest that marketers should utilise Instagram as a creative platform, rather than a traditional selling platform, to increase consumer engagement.

According to the literature review, BGC in the form of advertisements is considered effective in triggering impulse purchases. This was supported by the current results which found advertisements to be positively perceived by the respondents. Opinion leaders were deemed untrustworthy by respondents, who were conscious of negative press from the media surrounding them. However, a significant finding revealed that micro-celebrities are still the primary influence on Generation Z females' impulse fashion purchases as they set the trends. This contradicted the literature which found opinion leaders to rarely influence Instagram users' purchase decisions nowadays. However, as the current study explored solely fashion products, it suggests that opinion leaders are still influential in this industry due to a wide use of Instagram by fashion conscious consumers for inspiration and purchase decisions. UGC was found to influence Generation Z females' impulse purchases, as Fernandes and Panda (2019) stated they are more susceptible to social influence from their friends than males.

The research concludes that gender is an important demographic factor for determining the influence of Instagram marketing strategies on impulse purchase behaviour. The results reveal that the marketing stimuli investigated in this study are more likely to increase impulse purchases amongst Generation Z females than males, therefore these techniques cannot be applied to both genders. The literature noted that those who do not display impulsive traits are less likely to engage in spontaneous behaviours. This was reiterated by the findings as male participants did not display impulsive traits and were not prone to having impulsive urges and therefore, were much less likely than females to participate in impulse purchasing. The results revealed that female participants use Instagram mainly for fashion inspiration, thus this perhaps explains the disparity in gender findings.

S-O-R model has been proposed applicable for female consumers taking into account the findings from previous research and the primary research result of this study. Opinion leaders, advertisements and UGC act as stimuli in encouraging impulse purchases. Brand advertisements (S), micro-celebrities (S) and UGC (S) on Instagram induce positive

emotions in Generation Z females such as pleasure and arousal (O) resulting in their impulse purchases (R).

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research offers implications for both scholars and marketers. This study can provide new insights for scholars into understanding the factors behind consumer decision making prior to making an impulse purchase. It specifically applies the existing S-O-R model to Instagram and impulse purchasing within the fashion industry. The findings have also produced significant insights into gender differences regarding the usage of Instagram, responding to the calls of Aprilia and Setiadi (2017).

Not all marketing stimuli are equally effective, so more expenditure should be invested in stimuli that is likely to have stronger impulse buying effects (Iyer et al., 2020). Therefore, the findings can assist marketers in selecting the most effective tools on Instagram in increasing frequency of impulse purchases amongst Generation Z. Utilising digital influencers, promotional advertisements, and encouraging UGC amongst Instagram users may trigger positive emotions within consumers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Casalo et al., 2020). Growing scepticism surrounding the authenticity of opinion leaders means marketers should be more meticulous about which opinion leaders they choose to promote their brand. The findings reveal that as Generation Z females are so invested in the lives of those they follow, they can recognise when a micro-celebrity is promoting a product that does not match their style (Fernandes & Panda, 2019). Given that UGC from other users was a trustworthy and authentic stimulator in encouraging impulse purchases, marketers should aim to encourage Instagram users to post images wearing products (Wolf, 2020). Finally, marketers should consider the significant gender differences relating to impulse purchasing when targeting Generation Z and explore different communication strategies where possible to attract both males and females.

5.2. Areas for Future Research

To extend the applicability of the findings to the wider population, quantitative research could be carried out in future with a larger sample size. Future research can be conducted to extend further the theoretical understanding and applicability of S-O-R framework, for example exploring the influencing factors and behavioural responses of consumers on certain promotional activities presented by influencers in different social media platforms. Despite not appearing to influence male participants' impulse purchases, Instagram was identified as a contributor to their rational decision making. Further research could be undertaken to explore factors that can act as stimuli to encourage their purchases. Research could aim to find where males seek fashion inspiration, as female participants utilised Instagram for this reason. This may provide a clearer insight into how other SM platforms may influence males' impulse purchases. The emerging SM TikTok was mentioned several times as a frequently used app by participants, and disclosed as a trigger for previous impulse purchases in a participant. Future research with similar research objectives and adaptation of S-O-R model could provide valuable results and more profound theoretical underpinning.

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