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Student Name: Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar

Student id: 2314434

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Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation

Declaration Form.

I, Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar, declare that this dissertation has been composed by myself, that the work contained herein is entirely my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification, in whole or in part, except as specified.

Signature: ………Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar.........

Date: ……14/10/2024.........................

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Abstract

Prof. Amare Desta

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter preface

The first chapter provides a preview and justification to support the credibility of this research on the topic of social media, especially highlighting the role of micro-influencers on the purchasing behaviour of Gen Z consumers regarding Zara. The increased importance of social networks in the fashion retail business is also analysed. The chapter also specifies the research goal, which is related to the effect of social networks on consumer behaviour. This section further presents the research problem, objectives, scope and importance of the study conducting one on the aspects of the current marketing strategies of the fashion industry.

1.2 Background

In the past ten years, social media has grown very quickly, changing how people connect, talk, and make choices. Social media platforms were first made for fun and connecting with others, but now they've grown into powerful tools that affect many parts of daily life, including how people behave as consumers (McHaney, 2023). Especially in the fashion business, social media has caused big changes because trends can start, spread, and end in just a few days. Instagram has become one of the most important places for fashion fans to hang out because it's where trends start and brands can interact directly with customers.

The rise of micro-influencers people who have large, active followings despite not having as many followers as celebrities is one of the most important trends in this area (Gerlich, 2023). These influencers usually focus on specific niche markets. Their followers trust what they say, which makes them very important in shaping consumer tastes and driving buying choices. Zara is a star in fast fashion, and they use social media to connect with Gen Z customers and stay on top of fashion trends. The main focus of this study is on Zara's strategies in the UK fashion market, and how social media, especially micro-influencers, affects the buying habits of Gen Z customers.

1.3 Context of the research

The MBA Dissertation looks at how social media, customers behaviour, and the fast fashion industry are all changing together. It focuses on Gen Z consumers and Zara's marketing strategies. Gen Z is made up of people born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s (Prits, 2023). They grew up with social media being an important part of their daily lives. Digital platforms are important to this generation because they use them to communicate, have fun, and make smart buying choices. Because of this, outmoded shopping methods have been

recouped by one that are more participatory and established influencers, exceptionally in the fashion industry.

Zara is known for being capable to fast create and sell latest fashion trends (Li *et al.,* 2024). To stay at the leading of the fast fashion market, the company has used social media to create brand recognition and brand awareness by enhancing the social media marketing strategy. Testa *et al* (2021), states that, Micro-influencers, who can have a big impact on small groups of people, especially Gen Z, are part of the brand's plan. This study is important because it's becoming more and more important to know how these social media influencers affect how people behave and think about a business.

1.4 Research scope

The scope of this MBA Dissertation through its particular topic, examines the role of social media on members of Gen Z and particularly focuses on fashion concerning Zara (zara.com, 2024). There is no denying that social media has steered the course towards consumer engagement with fashion brands. Platforms including Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have taken Gen Z consumers not just looking for but consuming trends into fashion brands like never before. Because they are susceptible to trends opinions and recommendations from influencers or peers within such platforms, this generation remains a great target for brands like Zara.

This research showcases, the influence of social media, particularly that of micro-influencers, on the buying behaviour, brand loyalty and consumer relationships of Generation Z. Mobilizing the frame of reference to focus on Zara, one of the world's top global fast fashion brands, this research illustrates how globality is persuasive for this generation through influencer marketing strategies (Sun *et al*. 2022). The speed at which Zara develops its products and its business pragmatism fits well with the quick and dynamic nature of social media making it a perfect case to analyse. The research investigates a primary quantitative study using 50 respondents to gauge their views on social media marketing strategies. Research with a focus on other age groups or other clothing brands is not carried out, thus, only Gen Z and Zara are in the scope. This analytical investigation, therefore, seeks to further the existing knowledge as to the practice of social media strategies in fashion industries for Gen Z respondents and provide marketers and researchers practical implications.

1.5 Research problem

The fast growth of social media has completely changed how people behave, especially Gen Zs who are very active on digital platforms. Fashion moves quickly, and styles can change in an instant (Benichou and Maindron, 2024). To stay relevant, brands like Zara have to keep

changing how they sell themselves. One big problem is figuring out how much social media, and especially micro-influencers, affect Gen Z's choices about what to buy (Benichou and Maindron, 2024). Traditional marketing tries to reach as many people as possible. However, with the rise of micro-influencers, a more personalised and real form of marketing has emerged that connects with niche groups.

According to the opinion of Gunawan and Iskandar (2020), influencer marketing is getting more and more expensive, not enough studies have been done on how exactly these influencers change people's behaviour, especially when it comes to fast fashion. It can be hard for Zara, a brand that is known for quickly catching on to new trends, to use social media to affect Gen Z customers. This MBA Dissertation with its research questions and objectives asks how Zara can improve its influencer marketing strategies so that they not only get customers more involved but also turn that involvement into real sales. The goal of this MBA Dissertation is to looking into these problems of Zara and other similar brands useful information they can use to make sense of the complicated digital world and make the most of social media's power.

1.6 Research aim

"The goal of the study is to find out how social media affects customers specially Gen Z customers in the fashion business. For a more realistic idea of the same thing, the Zara case study will be looked at.

1.7 Research objectives

- To understand the impact of social media in today's world
- To comprehend the role of micro-influencers on social media when it comes to impacting consumer buying behaviour
- To explore the extent of social media in the case of Gen Z consumers in the case of Zara
- To recommend strategies that can be utilized by Zara to take maximum advantage of influencer media marketing"

1.8 Research questions

RQ1. How does social media influence consumer behaviour in today's digital landscape?

RQ2. What role do micro-influencers on social media play in shaping consumer buying decisions?

RQ3. How does micro-influencers affect consumer perceptions and preferences towards the brand?

RQ4. What strategies can Zara implement to effectively leverage influencer marketing for maximizing consumer engagement and sales?

1.9 Research Rationale

I have chosen this topic for my MBA Dissertation that, social media is becoming more and more important in shaping customer behaviour, especially among digital natives in Gen Z. Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with social media, so their unique consumption habits are heavily affected by interactions and content found online, especially from micro-influencers (Jose *et al.,* 2024). As per the opinion suggested by Haenlein *et al.* (2020), unlike traditional celebrities, micro-influencers have stronger relationships with the people who follow them, which makes them seem more real and approachable. I believe, because of this, they have a lot of power over what people buy, especially in the fast fashion business, where styles change quickly and customer loyalty isn't always solid.

As a leader in fast fashion, Zara has to keep changing its marketing tactics to fit the needs and habits of this group of people (Gasamáns Gesto, 2023). Zara needs to know exactly how social media affects Gen Z's shopping habits to stay ahead of the competition. It's common for brands to use influencer marketing, but not much is known about how micro-influencers affect Gen Z's fashion choices, especially in the UK market. This study is very important because it aims to fill in this gap and give Zara ideas on how it can use social media strategically to connect with and appeal to this important group of consumers.

1.10 Significance of the Research

This research is important because it looks into how social media, especially the actions of small influencers, affects Gen Z shoppers in the fashion business. Gen Z is becoming a big group of buyers, so brands like Zara, which makes a lot of money off of fast fashion, need to understand how they act (Pääkkönen, 2023). This study gives researchers a better idea of how social media affects Gen Z's decisions about what to buy, which helps researchers figure out how well influencer marketing works by showcasing the primary data and responses collected from people regarding Zara, social media and buying aspects. Apparat from that the literature review portion with its secondary data on buying behaviours, Zara, influencers and social

media marketing is focuses on the enhancing thought of how social media marketing is affecting the buying choices or buying behaviours of consumers in the context of Zara.

The study adds to both academic literature and real-world marketing tactics by focusing on Zara, a well-known brand around the world. It helps to figure out the main reasons why Gen Z interacts with fashion brands on social media, giving companies that want to improve their digital marketing useful suggestions. Brands can use the information they get to better align their influencer partnerships, content creation, and general online presence with what Gen Z wants and expects (Guzman, 2024).

This study also adds to the knowledge of how customer behaviour is changing in the digital age by showing how social media is becoming more significant in determining fashion trends and people's choices. The results could be useful for marketers, people who work in the fashion business, and academics who are interested in how social media affects consumer behaviour.

1.11 Structure of the report

The study is organised in a way that makes it easy to look into how social media affects Gen Z fashion consumers, with a focus on Zara. It starts with an Introduction that explains what the study is about and how important social media is in influencing Gen Z's buying decisions, especially the role of micro-influencers. The next part is the Literature Review, which is an in-depth look at all the previous research that has been done on social media marketing, the effects of influencers, and how people behave in the fast fashion industry. This part helps to find gaps in what is known now and places the study in the larger academic conversation.

In the section called "Research Methodology," the study talks about how the data was gathered and analysed, with a focus on using secondary data sources like market reports and social media analytics. The results, which look at how social media affects Gen Z's buying decisions, especially when it comes to Zara, are shown in the Findings and Analysis section. The next part, Discussion, explains these results in terms of other theories, talks about what they mean for Zara, and talks about any problems that came up during the study. Finally, the Conclusion and Recommendations summarise the most important findings and give Zara strategic tips on how to improve its influencer marketing.

1.12 Summary

Chapter 1 serves as an essential chapter by breaking down the effects of social media on emerging Generation Z consumers in the context of the fashion sector with the client-being-Zara focus. It starts with the background section of the study, which aims to examine the effect that social media networks have on consumers and how this effect is most prevalent among the young generations. There is an explanation of the reasons for considering Gen Z and Zara

which emphasizes the need to understand the impact of social media marketing and influencer culture on this generation of 'digital natives'. The research aims and objectives have been provided and are to a large extent based on exploring the function of micro-influencers, assessing the degree to which social media sways purchasing behaviour and proposing options for Zara so that the company can fully utilize social media marketing. The scope of the research is determined bringing into focus the participation of Zara company with Gen Z consumers in the social networks. Moreover, the significance of the research was given where the intention was to benefit fashion marketers and fashion industry researchers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter preface

The literature review chapter focuses on considering certain theoretical approaches and performs the analysis of existing works that are useful in the drastic understanding of social media and its relevance to Gen Z consumer behaviour within the fashion sector and Zara in particular. It examines social media influence on the marketing of Zara fashion retailers, usage of micro-influencers to alter consumer purchase decisions, and specific features of Gen Z and their purchase motivations. This chapter also looks into already existing literature regarding the application of online marketing strategies by various fashion brands like Zara. In relation to these aspects, the chapter lays out appropriate terms to extend the existing research as well as contextualize the present investigation.

2.2 Background of the fashion industry

In recent years, fashion companies faced challenges due to technological shifts in the competitive landscape and economic headwinds. In 2024, the fashion sector will be uncertain due to persistent inflation, consumer changing habits, and subdued economic growth (Tai, 2024). However, it is also found that the luxury segment will generate a high share of economic profit by 3-5% (McKinsey & Company, 2024). The apparel market represents background, identity, and mood; however, it is impacted by global trends like popular culture, economics, and sustainability. Retailers and manufacturers predict that the clothing industry will gain an advantage of 1.7 trillion dollars globally (Smith, 2024a).

The fashion market is well known for its highly innovative and creative styles. They provide unique twists in their clothing. This is the main reason why the fashion industry is growing continuously and recruiting the most talented employees, leading to high-quality work. According to Statista, the global revenue generation of the clothing market increased by 11.17% which is 0.2 trillion USD between 2024-2028 (Smith, 2024b). The largest apparel markets globally are China, the USA, UK, Germany and Japan. Fashion is one of the significant industries as it holds a huge part of the global economy. The fashion industry is one of the value-creating sectors for the global economy.

Brand	Brand value US$	%
Nike	30.4 billion	-12,5%
Gucci	15.6 billion	-11,5%
Louis Vuitton	14.8 billion	-9.8%
Adidas	14.3 billion	-13%
Chanel	13,2 billion	-3.4%
Zara	13,1 billion	-9.8%
Uniqlo	13,0 billion	+1,5%
H&M	12,3 billion	-10.8%
Cartier	12,0 billion	-19.5%
Hermes	11,6 billion	-2.1%

Figure 2.1: Leading apparel brands globally with their brand value

(Source: Fashion United, 2022)

The table shows the leading clothing brands globally with their brand value. Nike, the sportswear giant, gained the most valuable brand in 2021. It has led considerably over Gucci keeping its brand value at 30.4 USD (Fashion United, 2022). The total value of global fashion brands has decreased by 8% due to the global Covid-19 crisis. As a result, online retailing increased focusing on shoes, accessories, and clothing via digital channels. E-commerce fashion provides customers with an accessible and convenient way to browse online and buy fashion products from various designers, retailers, and brands (Statista, 2024). It has helped customers to get personalised shopping experiences with a single tap. In addition to this, it has some exclusive features such as customer reviews, style recommendations, and virtual try-ons. This enables retailers and brands to increase their reach beyond offline or physical stores, collaborating with customers across various demographics and geographics.

2.3 Overview of social media

Social media can be defined as means of interactions among individuals in which they exchange ideas and information, share, and create virtual networks and communities. As stated by Nguyen *et al.,* (2022) social media is used for interacting with family, friends, and communities and staying in touch. For this reason, businesses undertake social applications to promote and market their products and track buyer concerns. Social media is a business-to-consumer website like social components including comment fields for its users. There are different tools companies use for measuring, tracking, and evaluating the company's attention from social applications such as customer insights and brand perception. Globally, social application has an enormous fraction. Smartphones and mobile applications make social media accessible easily. Some popular instances of social media applications are LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook (Tuten, 2023).

Social media allows individuals to create personal profiles and directly interact with other people on online platforms. By using social media, interactions can be kept private or connected with individuals outside social circles. Through social networks, video sharing, photo sharing, and instant messaging can be done (Bessarab *et al.,* 2021). Big brands consider social platforms for promoting brands, marketing products, and connecting with customers. It allows customers to share their personal experiences so that a company can be aware of how they actually feel. Companies can instantly respond to negative and positive feedback, address consumer challenges, and rebuild or maintain customer confidence. Organisations undertake to crowdsource to gather information and knowledge from customers, the general public, and employees for developing future products and further improvements. Fashion businesses use social media to increase customer engagement, establish brand awareness, increase sales, and drive website traffic. According to Sharma *et al.,* (2020), fashion brands consider fashion trends using social networks thus establishing consumer relationships and creating effective marketing campaigns. This helps fashion companies increase sales drastically.

2.4 Micro-influencers and their role in promoting fashion

Micro-influencers refer to individuals who have small yet loyal followers. They are constantly changing according to marketing needs. They are real individuals having loyal followers and they trust advice whenever they want to buy anything. According to Gerlich (2023), micro-influencers are people with less than 10,000 followers. They are highly active on their social media; however, they don't have a high number of fans as compared to celebs. They push goods they are interested in or know of. Micro-influencer marketing can be defined as a new approach and it is getting popular on social networks.

It is an excellent strategy companies can adopt to get long-term success in their business. On the contrary, Pedro (2023) stated that people following micro-influencers trust them, and fashion brands pay less to promote their products than celebs. As the majority of people are active on social media, they use it to their advantage. They act as experts in social networks and share their personal opinions to influence their followers. In past decades, it has been found that Instagram has introduced micro-influencers mostly in the fashion segment. These influencers update their fashion styles continuously and influence customers to do the same. This signifies that micro-influencers promote fast fashion which causes environmental degradation.

With smaller audiences, micro-influencers appreciate the fashion industry. Fashion brands can opt for micro-influencers to identify and penetrate online platforms where niche customers interact, and boost consumer base and overall sales. Micro-influencers have more regular and real contact with their followers and fans as the majority of them are neighbours or friends. They can be interested in similar things. To be precise, micro-influencers can reach millions of thousands of people without spending high costs on influencer marketing (Öğüt and Ekinci Furtana, 2024). They can help the fashion business to reach a bigger audience at an affordable cost point. As they have a specific target market, they exude a sense of reliability and authenticity which resonates well with the fashion industry. With the help of a close-knit community and genuine interactions, more retailers are attracted to them. And this, of course, helps the fashion market considering intimate engagement and authentic endorsement.

Brands like Asos, Fashion Nova, and Revolve have collaborated with micro-influencers and gained positive results (Sinha and Fung, 2021). They held up for special promotions or product launches helping fashion brands get more limelight and increase sales. Micro-influencers help fashion brands consider creative ways to compete with big players. They help to differentiate their brands and products. Potential consumers trust micro-influencers business recommendations and posts. Influencers share and create messages effectively to help fashion brands get market recognition. As a result, prospective customers can quickly differentiate what micro-influencers suggest opting for the fashion company with the most interesting content and delivery.

2.5 Gen-Z consumer behaviour

Gen Z is a new generation who are digital natives (Francis and Hoefel, 2018). This signifies that they have adequate knowledge about social networks, and mobile systems and are exposed to technological advancements. In the present times, Gen Z has become a necessary part. They are becoming powerful in terms of disposable income and purchasing power. As digitalisation

hits, generational shifts are found that are vital in setting behaviour. Gen Z grew up where social media and smart technology were widespread and easily accessible. This has shaped their perspectives, behaviours, and experiences.

As the young generation has been exposed constantly to technology, Gen Z has become highly tech-savvy. Besides, they have great interactions via social media, fluent in digital communication and information access. As opined by Tan *et al.,* (2023) For progressive attitudes towards social challenges like environmental sustainability, inclusion, and diversity, Gen Z is well known. Companies need to understand Gen Z at its best so that they can tailor messaging, content, and advertising properly aligning them with the values and preferences of the demographic. It is vital as Gen Z has already entered the workforce and thus, making a big portion of the consumer market. In contradiction, Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet (2021) depicted that as compared to earlier generations, Gen Z customers are more conscious of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, prioritising them as important factors in brand loyalty and purchasing decisions. They are aware of environmental issues such as resource depletion, climate change, and pollution as it is widely amplified through social media activism and media coverage. Due to this fact, many Gen Z expect companies to be committed to environmental stewardship. They want organisations to adopt sustainable practices by reducing carbon footprints, prioritise ethical production and sourcing methods and minimise waste.

2.6 Impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour

Influencer marketing is presently the most influential technique in shaping customer behaviour and driving buying intentions. Content creators and influencers, by their ability to create and affect trends, play a vital role in motivating the purchasing choices of audiences, and contributing to the sales and growth of brands. Influencers are becoming important and recognised by brands and marketers as these individuals can turn collaboration based on product launches into significant results (Haenlein *et al.,* 2020). Fashion brands are undertaking influencer marketing as an effective strategy finding it to be a necessary element of marketing approaches. They are integrating various marketing techniques seamlessly like video content, livestream shopping, and SEO marketing. Influencer marketing is presently gaining peak effectiveness. Companies across different scales are hiring influencers to impact target audiences. As opined by Campbell and Farrell (2020), companies implementing influencer marketing are witnessing substantial positive results for their business.

Millennial and Gen Z customers trust their favourite content creators and bloggers before buying anything. Therefore, fashion brands should collaborate with ethical and authentic

influencers so that they can enhance the brand's credibility, transparency, and trust (Wellman *et al.,* 2020). Content shared through influencer marketing is more relatable and authentic as compared to branded advertising. Moreover, with influencers promoting any user-generated content, customer's trust increased gradually. Followers trust the recommendations and reviews of their unbiased peers. This reliability and trust fostered due to influencers are necessary in motivating customer preferences and behaviour. As the market is getting competitive quickly, brands are seeking trust and attention constantly. Fashion companies need to value authenticity while taking marketing strategies. This can cultivate honesty and transparency influencing their target consumers. Rather than focusing on gimmicky sales targets, companies must aim to create long-lasting consumer relationships considering trust and mutual respect. In doing this, influencers help the most.

Influencer marketing involves collaboration with influencers who work as industry experts or social media personalities to share content that highlights a service, product, or brand (Influnance, 2024). It is an effective and popular way to engage and reach a loyal and large audience. As customers depend on social networks, this marketing helps in sharing entertainment and information. With powerful marketing campaigns, consumer behaviour can be impacted, especially when it is necessary to provide effective value to consumers. As opined by Purwandari *et al.,* (2022), influencers establish brand loyalty by sharing their personal recommendations and experiences. This, in turn, is trusted by millions of fans or followed. As influencers are assumed as domain experts, their perceptions are highly valued. As influencers engage in product promotions, their fans tend to believe in it as it results in higher brand sales. To create useful influencer marketing campaigns, companies should opt right platforms and influencers, and interact and collaborate with them, thus tracking and measuring their performance and outcomes. They can also use platforms and tools that can aid them in streamlining as well as automating processes.

2.7 Effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool within fashion

Social media platforms are modern platforms for communication between customers and brands. Fashion brands use social media for marketing and promotions. As online revolutions hit the business market, it has been impacting human lives and businesses enormously. The fashion industry has thus incorporated "social media strategies" to increase customer loyalty and engagement (Hardani and Suryono, 2024). As users spend a lot of time surfing social networks, it is easy to attract new consumers using social media. Regular posts, content, and quality linked with the fashion sector are significant factors that make any visitor a loyal buyer.

By this, customer engagement can be increased by exclusive deals and offers, they can be engaged to various exclusive designer collections.

Through "social media marketing", fashion brands can get advantages in various ways such as higher engagement, reaching a wider audience, improved customer loyalty, and retention, increased website traffic, and brand awareness. At present, social media has become a powerful tool for sharing content and communication between individuals (Ohara, 2023). Consumers communicate effectively using social networks. For example, before purchasing any fashion items consumers check online feedback to know their personal experience. Regular fashion-related content such as podcasts, videos, and posts can result in higher engagement with the company's target audience. Exciting and innovative content tailored to the target audience can lead to higher engagement resulting in more sales and higher conversions. Customers are using social media as entertainment and fashion brands adopted it for constant engagement. Due to this fact, fashion brands adopted social media as a market research tool as it provides them with a deeper understanding of the current market situation and gain insights into customers and their requirements.

Social networks as a tool are useful for creating and facilitating business allowing brands to display products in an accessible format and communicate directly with potential customers. Moreover, social media helps fashion companies get influencers' support through paid promotions or organically. Influencer marketing is more strategic as it increases visibility, revenue, and website traffic. Fashion brands now collaborate with reputed influencers on various social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to drive the company's official website traffic. Fashion brands should ensure that they match the customer's needs and wants using effective "social media marketing" as it can have a positive effect on brand awareness. With the help of engaging content, potential customers can be aware of the company's offerings ensuring that present customers stay loyal and engage regularly.

2.8 Reach of Social Media Among Gen Z Consumers in the Case of Zara

Extensive usage of online platforms especially among Generation Z consumers has served as a key ingredient for brands seeking to develop marketing strategies, especially in fashion. Since Zara is the top runner in the fast fashion market, the company has been able to target this age segment due to effective advertising through social media. As 'digital natives', the younger generation, particularly Gen Z, seeks out social platforms for ideas, information, and shopping brands (Li, 2021). It is a fact that Zara is one of many retailers that have responded positively to such challenges by establishing an appealing virtual space that captures the young generation's beliefs and inclinations (Popović *et al*. 2021).

Figure 2.2: Brand value of the company

(Source: Tugba Sabanoglu, 2023)

Zara uses tactics such as visual storytelling to captivate an audience, predominantly on channels like Instagram and TikTok. Using the image and video-forward nature of Instagram to its advantage, Zara exhibits its collection through high-quality images and motion visuals. It reveals what is trending and current as well as gives them a representation of the aspirational lifestyle they so desire (Popović *et al*. 2021). For example, consider how Zara has managed to do this by filling their Instagram with bold, lifestyle-driven styling images to create a brand that is more human and less exclusive. This approach has resulted in strong organic engagement, thousands of likes on their posts and comments that bond the citizens that follow them (Bjerre, 2022).

Similarly, Zara leverages user-generated content (UGC) to help each out with enhancing the brand's authenticity. This fosters a feeling of community and validation in Zara shoppers by having them show their ensembles with Zara items (Šević *et al*. 2021). This strategy will also be quite successful with Gen Z, as they lean into authenticity and are heavily encouraged by peer opinion when it comes to making their buying decisions. For instance, one major example is Zara making use of hashtags such as #ZaraStyle and others where users would show off their styles with the help of these hashtags while they wear Zara.

Zara is a believer in the influencer partnership approach (Huang, 2024). In doing so, Zara taps into niche markets and varied fashion styles by partnering with micro-influencers, who connect well to Gen Z audiences. Micro-influencers usually have great engagement rates (higher than many top celebs) because their followers see them as more down-to-earth and trustworthy. For example, anytime Zara releases new collections they typically work with influencers to help promote the products while providing their followers with styling tips and techniques to incorporate posts of Zara pieces into their wardrobe (Svensson and Gottfridsson, 2024) It helps to give your brand more presence and makes any new launches to be taken more seriously which would create a feeling of excitement as well.

Zara's involvement also goes beyond normal marketing. Respond to customers' inquiries and demands in social media which establishes loyalty and connection to the brand. Responding to consumer issues and applauding their involvement, Zara creates an environment of community where customers feel appreciated and respected. This personal brand approach is key when marketing to Gen Z, who is more likely to engage with brands in conversations than simply buy there. Thus, Zara represents the profound influence of social media in marketing today, as it has used (or decided not to use) these platforms to essentially choose whether to engage Gen Z consumers or not (Taletović *et al*. 2022). Using visual storytelling, user-generated content, micro-influencers and two-way communication Zara can drive the engagement of this target audience compelling it to be considered as a must-attend brand in fashion. This is a testament to Zara´s ability to adapt to the new rules of social media and a clear-cut example for brands targeting Gen Z customers on how they too can leverage this generation´s and their preferences.

2.9 Methods to Maximize Influencer Marketing

It has emerged as one of the effective strategies that brands use to target specialized markets and this is true for areas like fashion, beauty, and lifestyle industries. To utilize the potential of influencer marketing, brands should seek to apply strategies that will reach the consumers as well as foster some other aspects such as trust (Kong *et al*. 2021). One way is by choosing influencers who share some common values with the company and have a target audience for the firm's products. Even those influencers who possess relatively smaller followers may have more engagement with the target audience. Shrivastava *et al*. (2021) also argued that engagement levels among followers of integrated marketing campaigns are usually high among micro-influencers because they connect better with the target audience compared to mega-influencers. Several fashion SMEs also benefitted by shifting their marketing attempts through using micro-influencers. These smaller voices though trusted by fewer people are useful in advertising the brand's image.

Another strategy of focusing on influencers is increasing the efficiency of branding is to moving from one-time contacts to a long-term relation with influencers. Developing long-term partnerships with influencers will on the other hand help organizations achieve better marketing outcomes by ensuring consistent marketing messages across various platforms causing consumers to prefer their brands over others (Djafarova and Bowes, 2021). In an ideal world, followers would allow influencers to share short engagements with various brands but would prefer longer partnerships which allow the influencer to be attached to the brand. A case on the Swedish watch brand, Daniel Wellington, depicted that recurrent interaction with beauty influencers over time helped position the brand in the fashion industry with increased sales and awareness. According to Cao *et al*. (2021), consistency and arguments that are repeated by trusted and influential people can be instrumental in swaying consumers. Another very efficient method for brands is to use content generated by the users together with campaigns from social media influencers. User-generated content (UGC) is content made by ordinary people that involves the use of the product of the brand and is usually posted on social media (Carr, 2022). This strategy helps increase the level of engagement as well as motivates the audience to take more active actions and join the story that the brand is trying to tell. For example, many consumers would sometimes see competitions where the Adidas brand encourages their followers to post pictures with certain hashtags and then the pictures are posted on the company's page. Negative UGC however increases trust in the brand as UGC serves to be an effective testimonial for brand products (Carr, 2022).

Also, brands have the ability to take their influencer marketing to the next level if they make sure that campaigns are based on data. It is necessary to evaluate the influencer campaign performance through the followers' engagement, click-throughs and other important performance indicators, such as ROI (Sciarrino *et al*. 2020). There are tools like Google Analytics and other influencer marketing platforms that can help them understand what category of influences and which types of content yielded the greatest results. Hence, future campaigns can be more precise, and the marketing resources can be more effectively outsourced. For capture, L'Oreal and Zara for instance employed perfect data analytics and optimized their influencer campaigns, resulting in a growth of conversions. In this way, influencer marketing can be improved by means of strategies such as choosing appropriate influencers, establishing long-term relations, encouraging consumers to create content, and using different types of analytics (Mallipeddi *et al*. 2022). Companies that implement these strategies would be able to develop more credible, interesting and successful campaigns of influencers and thus improve consumers' attachment to the brand and grow sales.

2.10 Theoretical frameworks

2.10.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

This theory is one of the well-known theories of consumer behaviour. Maslow stated that human needs should be organised in a hierarchical manner. It depicts that consumer behaviour responds to fulfil basic needs necessary for survival such as food, and water, and learns to prioritise spending considering their needs. needs that come from live experiences such as guilt or fear.

Figure 2.3: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

(Source: Dar and Sakthivel, 2022)

The bottom level represents physiological needs and the ascending sections define secondary desires or learned needs. This allows customers to feel as if they reached self-fulfilment. This model signifies that customers first make buying to fulfil their basic needs and thereby move further towards learned needs. For example, a hungry consumer would fulfil their basic needs which is food before going to learned needs which is wearing fashionable clothes. Maslow felt that individuals are motivated to fulfil their needs in terms of priority and thus, move further to higher levels once basic needs are met. This signifies that fashion brands need to fulfil all levels of consumer needs. Therefore, fashion brands should have significant in-store options available to improve overall customer experience and communicate to them to lead products that can satisfy their innate needs. Without providing customers with their needs, fashion brands cannot get successful outcomes and additional purchases. Once customers feel comfortable, they move on to fulfil the desires that bring joy making them feel self-actualised.

2.10.2 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory can be defined as a sociological and communications framework that focuses on long-term exposure to media shaping how customers conduct themselves and perceive the world. It defines that people develop their beliefs, values, and attitudes via repeated exposure to "media messages". The theory states that individuals are influenced by messages they find on social networks. Contemporary researchers suggested that information gained from social networks highlights the present trends of fast exchange of information. According to Tsoy *et al.,* (2021), the cultivation theory defines that time spent on media affects individuals' perception compared to those who spend less time. As a result, people faced increased anxiety and stress leading to wrong self-health estimation and overreaction. Nowadays, social media is used for reading news among youth. The theory also states that media exposure can result in ecological threats. Social media is used by major businesses to portray their business better. Additionally, "social media metrics" highlight the real-time results of promoted campaigns like response rate, engagement, concern, and reach. With the help of useful social media tools, content can be customised and targeted to specific audiences to gain better outcomes. Companies opt for social media to cultivate better sales.

2.10.3 Network effects theory

Schüler and Petrik (2023) commented that "Network Effect Theory" depicts that social media use boosts the network value for their users. This specific theory focuses on the idea that as more individuals join a network, it becomes more valuable. It depicts that as more people consider a product, its value increases gradually. In the case of digital platforms, the network effects are applied. As the Internet is now used more widely, people rely more on conducting work, deepening personal connections, and other functions. It is prominent on social or online platforms which motivates users to add more users to the networks. Social media like Instagram and Facebook are some key instances of network effects. As more people start browsing one network, they suggest it to others to be a part of it. Business owners are aware of referral power. They know that spreading the good word about an organisation will encourage contacts to buy a product. This will help in increasing sales. Fashion brands rely on registrations, memberships, or signups to expand their business in front of their customers. By considering the influence of "network effects", digital networks can help companies to become industry leaders.

2.10.4 Sociological Model

The "Sociological Model of Consumer Behaviour" suggests that an individual will purchase products considering what is typical or appropriate. In short, it suggests that purchases are mainly influenced by an individual's place within various societal groups such as workgroups,

friends, and families. For example, an individual working in a leading company will make purchases that uphold his reputation such as formal business wear. This model is useful for companies that want to create products relevant to appropriate groups. To use this model, fashion brands have to know what type of experience needs to be provided to a particular societal group. Before selling, brands have to know how to appeal to buyers. To delight consumers, their performance needs to be improved to make them realise that it is best suited for them. This will help the fashion brand retain its consumers in the long run.

2.10.5 "Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model of Consumer Behaviour"

This theory incorporates several elements that influence consumer purchase intentions such as personality, culture, lifestyle and values. The EKB model demonstrates the interlinkage between various stages of customer decision-making.
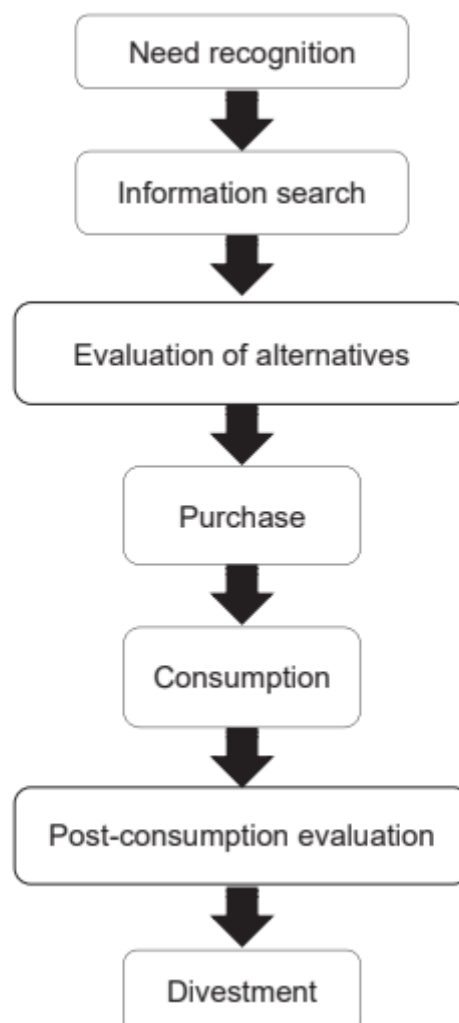

Figure 2.4: "Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model of Consumer Behaviour"

(Source: Were, 2023)

These are the following stages that attempt to define belief-attitude-intention. In the first stage, customers view various advertisements online and recognise their desire, interest, or need to purchase what they checked. In the second stage, customers start thinking about how it will be related to their past needs or experiences and whether it can satisfy any present needs. While exploring the alternatives, customers will reach various options competitors showcase to understand what fits them the best (Kaur *et al.,* 2023). As customers realise what suits them the best, they make purchases that provide value. After buying and consuming it, they can share their experience, either negative or positive. In post-consumption evaluation, customers review whether their attitudes, preferences, and options are useful or not. The last stage is all about post-choice and overall consumption assessment.

2.11 Literature gap

The following study focuses on discussing how social media influences the consumer behaviour of Generation Z individuals within the fashion industry, considering Zara. While browsing the Internet and searching the literature, it was found that the relevance of social media exists thoroughly, however, it failed to provide enough information about Zara. While refining the literature, it can be said that limited information is found on how social media helped Zara in handling the young generation. Therefore, it proved to be the literature gap. The concerned study discusses how social media impacts young generations, especially in the fashion sector undertaking Zara to demonstrate the idea more realistically. Additionally, the previous secondary data doesn't discuss how social media impacts young generations specifically, it highlights the importance of social media for demographics.

2.12 Conceptual framework

Gen Z customers

> **Online research**
> **Read online reviews**
> **Compare price points and** products prior to purchasing
> **Value speed, customization** and convenience

Social media

> **Brand building**
> **Audience engagement**
> **Increase website traffic**
> **Generates revenues**
> **Boost brand awareness**
> **Build partnerships with** influencers

Fashion industry

> **Improved brand reputation**
> **High sales**
> **High profitability**

Figure 2.5: Conceptual framework

(Source: Created by the researcher)

2.13 Summary

The literature review chapter attempted to assess the effect of social media on Generation Z contextually in the fashion sector with a specific case study Zara Company. It analysed the impact of Gen Z's high use of social media on purchase decisions and brand use, especially Instagram and TikTok as the changing tools of consumer behaviour. This chapter has introduced the theory which has been used throughout the study. The review further addressed the use of influencer marketing, particularly, micro-influencers, in engendering engagement and trust within lower age groups. It also examined strategies such as macros, long-term relationships, brand equity driven by user-generated content, and data-maximizing strategies to improve brand equity through influencer marketing.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter preface

The methodology chapter provides information on the research objectives which will bring out the design and methods that were used in determining the effect of social media on Gen Z consumers concerning fashion; Zara in particular. The reason for taking this method is that it helps in the measurements of trends and comes out with generalizable conclusions which are effective. Moreover, ethical issues and the data analysis approaches that will be used in the study will also be addressed in order to provide a strong rationale for the conduct of this research.

3.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a set of principles and beliefs that guide the conduct of the study. This is a vital part of the methodology. As opined by Maguire (2022), research philosophy illuminates "unconscious beliefs", explores values, and lastly, guides practice by investigating narrow, realistic challenges within a particular field. In this research, the researcher has followed an interpretivism philosophy because the subject matter of this study is the young generation's use of social media in fashion. This philosophy postulates that reality is socially constructed by individuals based on their unique experiences and interpretations of the world (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). Interpretivism can help to develop an in-depth understanding of different social worlds' influence on consumer behaviour. SAlharahsheh and Pius (2020) argued that interpretivism helps a researcher to understand and generate meaning from the perspectives of others. Social media as a research context is complicated and constantly evolving as it involves both personal experience and peripheral body events. Other philosophies such as realism were not suitable for this research as they are tightly associated with either scientific positivism or statistical positivism. Realism was found to be too narrow for the aims of this research study. Pragmatism is based on mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative). It incorporates the sense-making nature of interpretivism with the application focus of constructivism. Thus, the usage of the selected philosophy helped in achieving the research objectives.

3.3 Research approach

Research approaches provide specific plans for the researcher to consider suitable methods for the research objectives. Additionally, it aids in documenting what they are expecting to gain from the study. Two forms of approach are inductive and deductive. The study has taken deductive reasoning as the research approach as it is suitable under interpretivism. The

generalisation of specific models and theories through validation with huge amounts of numerical data is linked with interpretivism. This means that reality is identified objectively with statistical data. As per the words of Park *et al.,* (2020), deductive reasoning involves quantitative research for numerical interpretation followed by generalisation and validation. In inductive reasoning, knowledge is obtained by using qualitative data. It helps in developing a new model or theory as "new knowledge". The researcher found it to be irrelevant and thus, ignored it.

3.4 Research design

Research design offers a systematic and structured approach to conducting research. It helps in organising thoughts, selecting research methods, and developing an effective plan for collecting and analysing data. Research design contributes to the reliability, validity, and success of the study (Mellinger and Hanson, 2020). Considering good research provides trustworthy, fair, and significant results. It decreases the chance of mistakes and decreases inaccuracy. It shows that the research is going in the right direction. The researcher gets help to build a concrete plan for using resources and time efficiently. The descriptive design focuses on defining a case or situation. It can be defined as a theory-driven method involving collecting, analysing, and showcasing data. This design offers valuable insights into mechanisms and reasons behind the research subject, thereby understanding the significance of the study. For this reason, the researcher has undertaken a descriptive design detailing the importance of social media for Gen-Z customers in the fashion sector. It will gather crucial information, analyse and lastly, present them. Other designs are experimental, correlational, explanatory, diagnostic, and correlational which the researcher finds to be inaccurate and so, not used.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling means collecting data from a part of the population more cost-effectively and affordably. The sample size of the proposed survey is 50. It considers Gen-Z customers randomly with shopping habits. The study selects random sampling as random and Fid selection can be done resulting in unbiased analysis. Some other benefits are the accurate portrayal of a big sample and efficiency during execution. Random sampling gives a chance to all members to get selected without any personal bias (Mweshi and Sakyi, 2020). Thus, the researcher picks out random sampling to make it quick and simple while selecting the sample size. Another reason for selecting this sampling is that it makes a generalisation about a "population" that helps in accurate representation. Other sampling methods are restricted as it doesn't match the demand of the researcher.

3.6 Research Strategy

It is important to illustrate the research strategy before conducting research. It provides effective directions to the researchers considering their efforts and thoughts. It helps in producing detailed reporting and quality outcomes. By following a specific "research strategy", the researcher can focus on the study and enhance the overall quality. To be precise, frustration can be reduced along with resources and time. In the research, it can be said that the research strategy can be said to be an integral part as it defines the rationale conducted by the researcher to fulfill research objectives. As primary data are taken into consideration, followed by "quantitative research methodology" collecting numeric data for interpretation, the researcher chooses survey as the research strategy It can be said that "research strategy" helps the researcher investigate the roots of the problem statement. For data collection, a survey helps in choosing respondents, gathering information, and using various instrumentation methods. A survey is useful for gaining abundant data regarding the perception of UK Gen-Z customers, fashion purchasing attitudes, and how social media impacts them. A survey helps the researcher in analysing data statistically to gain meaningful conclusions. A survey proves to be the most useful method for information extraction.
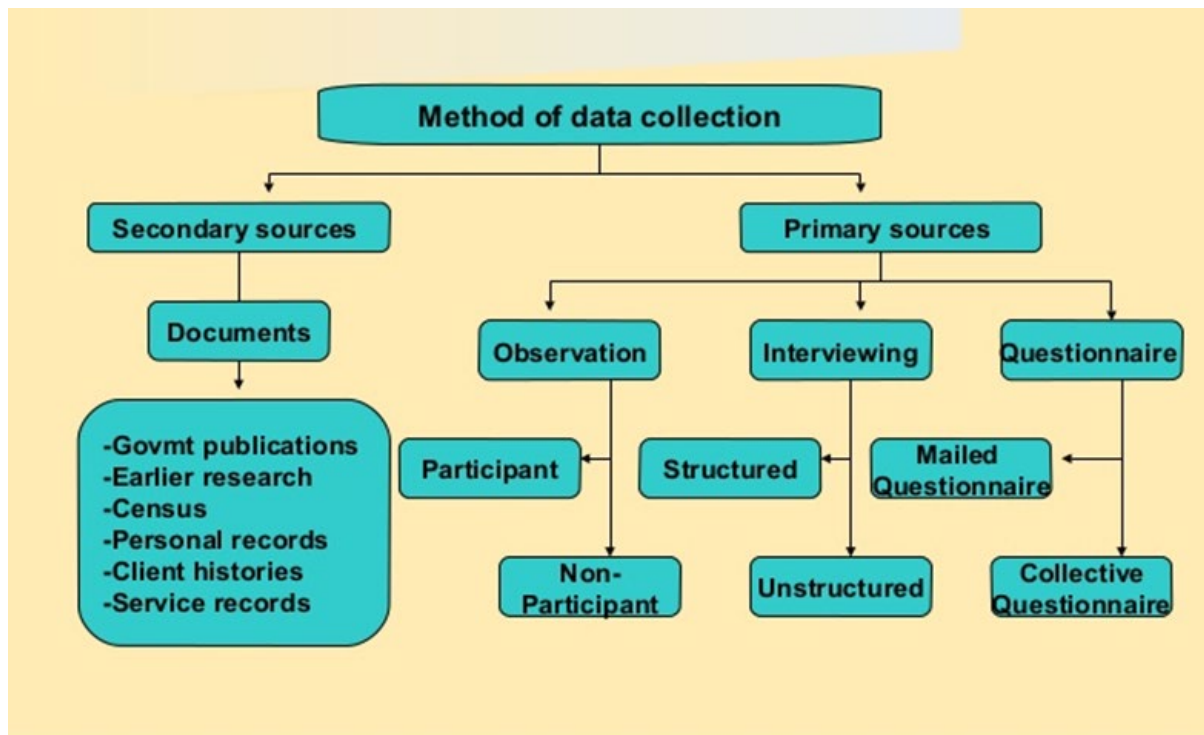
3.7 Data collection and analysis

Figure 3.1: Data Collection

(Source: Phillips and Ritala, 2019)

Various "data collection methods" are available for a researcher, such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, and visual and textual analysis. As the topic aimed to understand the role of social media among Gen-Z customers, primary data fits well. It seemed relevant in the respective study as it will investigate raw data to find suitable information crucial for the study. In this regard, primary data helps in getting the opinions and thoughts of Gen-Z customers about the effectiveness of social media from its respondents. For this proposed research, a survey is used for data collection, using Google Forms where respondents can answer freely about their opinions. The process will be done in person to get data directly from first-hand sources. One of the cardinal reasons for using a survey is that it provides a straightforward answer that represents an entire population.

It would help to collect the concurrent information about the research topic, improving credibility in a better way. However, primary data is time-consuming and expensive (Taherdoost, 2021). Along with it, primary data pose some limitations such as restricted access, errors, distortions, or contradictions. In "secondary data collection", market reports, scholarly journals, articles, and magazines can be used as they can provide an extensive and big data set for further analysis. Hence, secondary research has been ignored here by the researcher. As a survey is chosen, quantitative analysis is done allowing huge amounts of data from all participants chosen. It allows the researcher to hear all participants individually in a detailed context. Besides, quantitative research involves accuracy and objectivity. Quantitative analysis collects "valid" and "reliable" data rather than any subjective judgments. Due to this fact, personal facts can be ignored and in-depth understanding can be provided. *[Referred to appendix 1]*

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations mean any dilemma linked with moral principles that a researcher can face during research. To restrict legal challenges, the researcher should maintain research ethics throughout the study. Core principles of "academic research" must be opted to meet the criteria of research ethics without any bias. The researcher should ensure that all data collected through the primary survey process are valid and reliable. Informed consent is important before starting the survey process to inform them about the process and ask their willingness to participate (Xu *et al.,* 2020). It ensures that the study is non-exploitative, well-considered and fair. The researcher should maintain the anonymity of all the respondents while asking personal

questions. They must ensure that their confidential information is never disclosed. The researcher should follow regulatory compliance to avoid any potential risks.

3.9 Research limitations

As only primary (survey) research has been performed, secondary data is neglected. Collecting data from participants can be a time-consuming process and need a lot of time for data collection. Apart from that, primary data can be substantially expensive, and tough to get accurate information. Thus, it can be said that secondary research must have provided more in-depth information from the existing grey literature. Collecting information from credible sources is comparatively more reliable than first-hand primary data. An interview could have brought better outcomes as it considers open-ended questions to gain elaborative answers from participants. Besides, qualitative research provides in-depth, rich insights that help in exploring context better. It could have helped the study conclude effectively.

3.10 Timeline

Activities undertaken	*Week 1*	*Week 2*	*Week 3*	*Week 4*	*Week 5*	*Week 6*
Selecting a suitable topic						
Making the proposal						
Illustrating the aims, objectives, and constructively the research questions						

Task						
Assessing and opting for primary sources			███			
Gathering survey data			███	███		
Data analysis and discussion					███	
Concluding the study and suggesting recommendations					███	
Identifying research gap						███
Final Submission						███

<div align="center">**Table 3.1: Timeline**</div>

3.11 Summary

The methodology chapter presented the research design used to examine the impact of social media on Gen Z consumers in relation to Zara. A predominantly quantitative approach was

adopted and data were gathered via a survey completed by 50 participants. These surveys contained closed questions aimed at gaining insights into respondents' engagement with social media, Zara's marketing, and purchasing behaviour. The rationale has been presented for the selection of each research method. Ethical consideration has been presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Chapter preface

This chapter includes the results of the survey which has been carried out to determine the impact of social media on Gen-Z consumers with special reference to Zara. The information gathered offers an understanding of how micro-influencers and other types of social media content affect consumers' buying behaviour. Such areas are the importance of reviews and feedback, the values of quality and prices when it comes to the purchasing of fashion clothes and the position of Zara in social networks. The results include data obtained through the survey and will be elaborated to explain these dynamics.

4.2 Findings

Question 1

1. In which age group do you belong?
50 responses
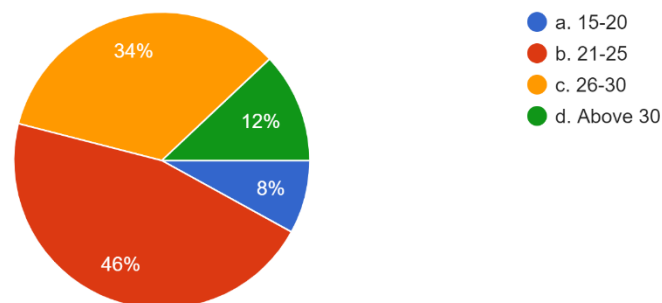
Figure 4.1: Age

The age distribution of respondents, as illustrated by the pie chart, shows that the majority fall within the 21-25 age group, representing 46%. This is followed by the 26-30 group at 34%, indicating that a significant portion of respondents are young adults. The 15-20 age group makes up 8%, while 12% are above 30. This distribution highlights that most respondents are in their early to mid-20s, providing a strong focus on Gen-Z and younger millennials. *[Referred to appendix 2]*

Question 2

2. How often do you come across social media to find customer feedback?
50 responses

a. Very often
b. Often
c. Seldom
d. Not at all.

44%
14%
38%

Figure 4.2: Customer feedback

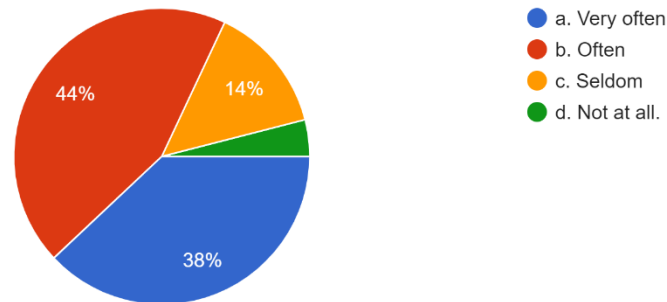The pie chart above shows how often the respondents come across social media for customer feedback. As many as 44% of the respondents state that they encounter social media for customer feedback "often," meaning that this is highly utilized for evaluating customers' opinions and experiences. This has raised the possibility that social media is now the most popular source of feedback, given the very central role it has been seen to play in affecting consumer perception and decision-making. Besides, the 'very often' usage of social networks for this purpose is also significant and is stated by 38% of the respondents. Moreover, a small segment of respondents chosen 'seldom' and 'not at all', which might indicate that social media is consistently incorporated when it comes to customer feedback. These results signify the fact that the use of social media in the feedback process is not sporadic or a minor one but it is a frequently used tool for a large number of users.

Question 3

3. Do social interactions influence your purchasing patterns?
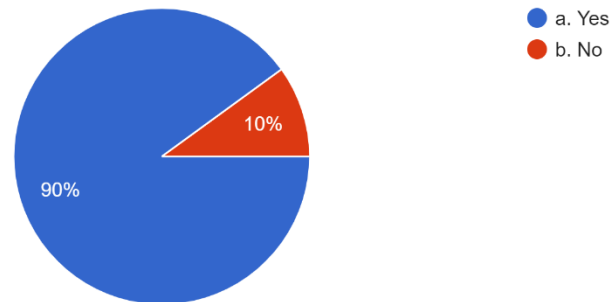50 responses

● a. Yes
● b. No

90%

10%

Figure 4.3: Social interactions

The pie chart indicates 90% agreed that social interaction affects their buying behaviour while 10% disagreed. Such an overwhelming majority brings into focus the important part played by the social factor in consumer behaviour. A high percentage of "Yes" implies that the majority of the people understand how interpersonal communications for instance recommendations from friends, relatives or even peer groups can influence their purchases. Such influence might have been due to social proof theory, which posited that people are likely to purchase products based on other people's experiences. On the other hand, the 10% of respondents who state that social interactions have a bearing no influence on their purchase decision present another view that is worth considering. This small group may give other aspects like one's preferences or opinions of other professionals a higher value than that of social norms. The findings also point to a high level of understanding of the effects of social communications and business organizations must adopt word of mouth and other social proof tactics in their marketing as a way of conforming to how consumers are likely to behave.

Question 4

4. On what factors, does social media influence customer's purchasing patterns?
50 responses

- ● a. User-generated content
- ● b. Ratings
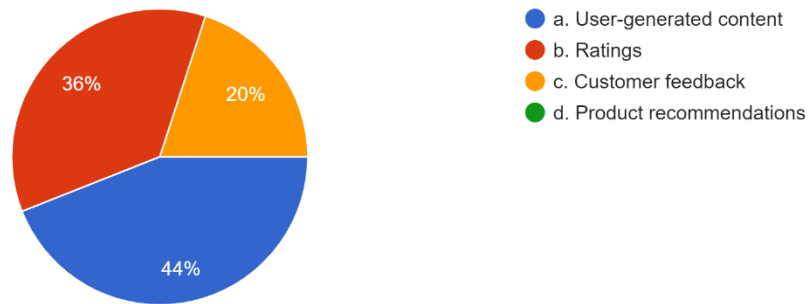- ● c. Customer feedback
- ● d. Product recommendations

Figure 4.4: Influence

The pie chart reveals that social media significantly influences customer purchasing patterns through various factors. The most impactful factor is user-generated content, accounting for 44%, indicating that customers are highly influenced by content created by peers or influencers, such as reviews, posts, and experiences shared on platforms. Ratings also play a crucial role, with 36% of customers relying on the overall product ratings when making purchasing decisions, showcasing the importance of aggregate feedback in shaping perceptions. Customer feedback contributes 20%, suggesting that specific opinions or detailed reviews about a product can sway decisions, although to a lesser extent than broader content or ratings. Interestingly, product recommendations make up 0%, suggesting that customers in this context may not rely heavily on direct recommendations from brands or influencers, potentially preferring organic content and peer insights over overt promotions or suggestions from marketers. This feedback may include deep insights into the performance of products and satisfaction of customers, though it appears to be less core than ratings and user-generated content. Liking the product recommendations which got few responses, stands as the least according to the chart. This supports the conclusion that recommendations could play a certain role, yet they do not occupy the central positions as ratings and actual user reviews do. The above chart reveals that both ratings and user-generated content influence the purchasing behaviour of consumers through social media.

Question 5

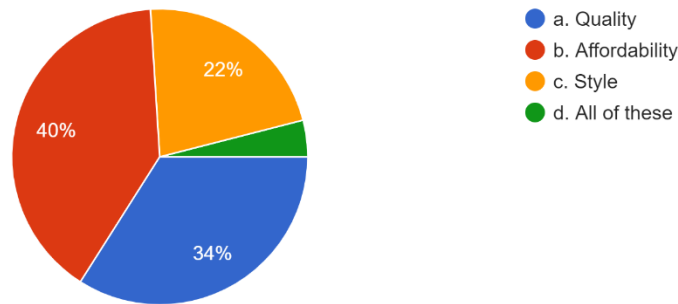5. Based on what factors, do you purchase fashion products?
50 responses

Figure 4.5: Influencing factors

The pie chart illustrates that when purchasing fashion products, the majority of respondents prioritize affordability, with 40% citing it as the most important factor. This suggests that price plays a significant role in consumer decision-making, particularly for younger consumers or budget-conscious shoppers. Quality comes in close behind at 34%, indicating that while affordability is key, consumers also value durable, well-made products. Style influences 22% of respondents, showing that while fashion trends and aesthetics matter, they are less of a priority compared to price and product longevity. A few respondents indicated that they consider all these factors equally, suggesting that some consumers take a more balanced approach. Thus, the data highlights a strong emphasis on cost-effectiveness combined with quality, with style being a secondary consideration, reflecting a practical mindset in fashion purchasing behavior among the respondents.

Question 6

6. Do you follow micro-influencers before making any purchasing decisions?
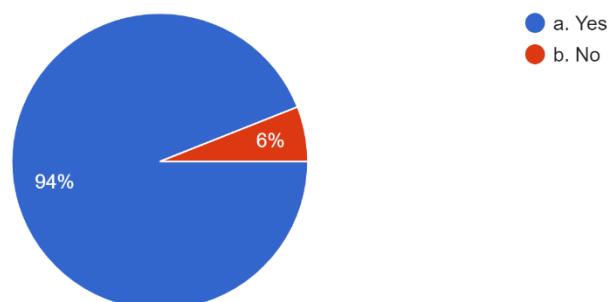50 responses

Figure 4.6: Micro-influencers

Thus, the greater part of the respondents (94%) answered "Yes," meaning that they indeed follow micro-influencers when making purchases. As little as 6% of the respondents chose "No. " Such statistics hint at the significant impact micro-influencers have on the consumer. As the name suggests these influencers are usually seen as having a smaller audience of loyal followers, which makes their recommendations authentic and powerful. The 94% affirmative response indicates that more and more consumers are turning to word-of-mouth recommendations as opposed to conventional promotional techniques especially in the given targeted subgroups. The small percentage of "No" points to the fact that a small part of the audience may be unfamiliar with micro-influencers or is not affected by them at all. This may imply that as much as their anonymity makes them prefer word-of-mouth recommendations similar to peers, there are still those few who would prefer to consider a product on their own or consider other forms of information such as messages from a brand, a recommendation from an expert, or even general advertising techniques. This chart shows the increasing role of micro-influencers in today's marketing, and especially for the company that looking for reliability in the market.

Question 7

7. How do micro-influencers impact your buying behaviour?
50 responses

- a. Showcasing latest trends
- b. Smart choices
- c. Product reviews
- d. Authentic endorsements

40% 18% 40%

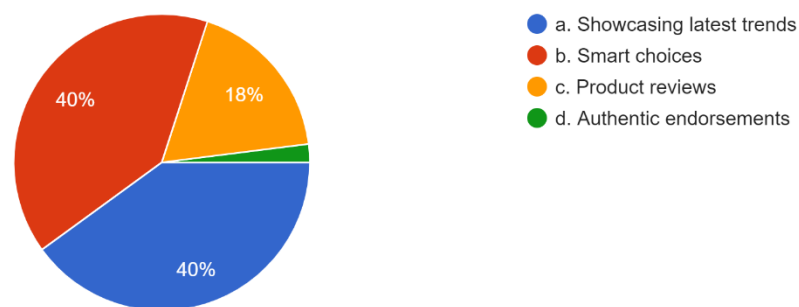**Figure 4.7: Impact**

The pie chart shows that micro-influencers have the greatest impact on buying behaviour by showcasing the latest trends and offering smart choices, each influencing 40% of respondents. This suggests that consumers turn to micro-influencers for trend updates and practical shopping tips. Product reviews account for 18%, indicating that while reviews are valued, they are less

impactful than trendsetting and purchase recommendations. Authentic endorsements from micro-influencers have minimal influence, as only a few respondents consider them a key factor. This indicates that practical content and trend guidance hold more sway than personal endorsements in shaping purchasing decisions. Thus, the impact of micro-influencers that showcase new fashion trends and new styles on customers' awareness and preferences is a bit less than the effects of product reviews and smart choices. Products with authentic recommendations provoke the least response and therefore though authenticity is valued, it seems to have a lesser importance as compared to detailed reviews or selective recommendations. The chart depicts that product reviews and right choices made by micro influence heavily influence buying behaviour and trend showcasing is fourth and plays an extremely small role after the customers.

Question 8

8. To what extent do you pay attention to reviews and feedback micro-influencers provide?
50 responses

- a. To a great extent
- b. Seldom
- c. Never

32%

66%
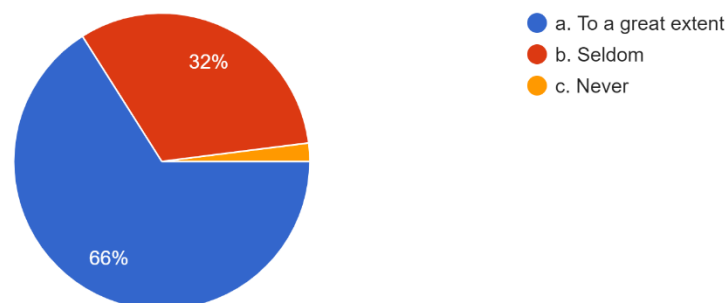
Figure 4.8: Attention to reviews

From the pie chart, it can be seen that respondents have a clear inclination to pay a great amount of importance to the reviews and feedback from micro-influencers. A striking 66% of those surveyed said they listen to these insights to a great extent, meaning micro-influencers play a significant role in how consumers think and act. This means that the reviews and the feedback the designated consumers provide are deemed credible, realistic, and believable since micro-influencers are seen as more genuine and approachable than conventional celebrity endorsers. On the other hand, only 32% of the respondents "seldom" rely on micro-influencer reviews which is a fairly small part of the audience who could be more sceptical or less likely to be swayed by social media influencers' suggestions. More specifically, a few numbers of the respondents selected that they 'never' attend to micro-influencer reviews, which underlines the

upsurge of the micro-influencers within the consumption arena. Such statistics highlight the importance of micro-influencers in the currently digitalised marketplace, especially for the fashion business; where consumer's purchasing decisions are influenced by price factors and reviews and recommendations. Companies for that reason should embrace this trend, especially fashion industries, and work with micro-influencers as most customers consider their opinions hence improving the visibility and credibility of the product.

Question 9

9. Do you feel that social media has a great role in shaping the consumer mind?
50 responses
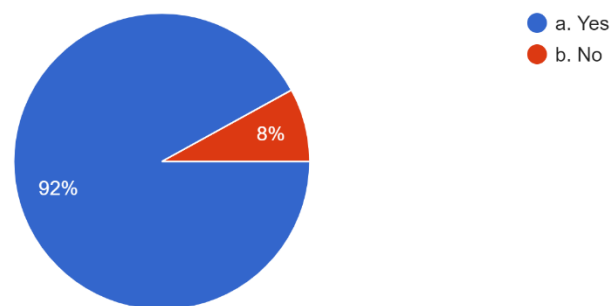
Figure 4.9: Role to play in controlling consumer behaviour

From the pie chart, it can be evident that of the 50 respondents, 92% responded 'Yes' meaning that social media has a very big role to play in controlling consumer behaviour. A mere 8% answered 'No' which indicates that few respondents see social media's effect as negative or small at all. This data emphasizes that social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok act as key decision-makers for consumers. Consumers are often introduced to product recommendations, opinions, and trends through sponsored advertisements, videos, and blogs on social media platforms. Interactive qualities that are typical for social media enable consumers to individually process all the information and make decisions based on feedback from friends and like-minded individuals. The high level of agreement evident in respondents' responses confirms just how much social media has permeated contemporary marketing efforts. These are some of the platforms that companies and brands need to employ in reaching out to their target audience for building relationships and shaping their perception of brands in social media platforms.

Question 10

10. How far do you agree that Zara's presence in social media influences your purchasing attitude?
50 responses

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree
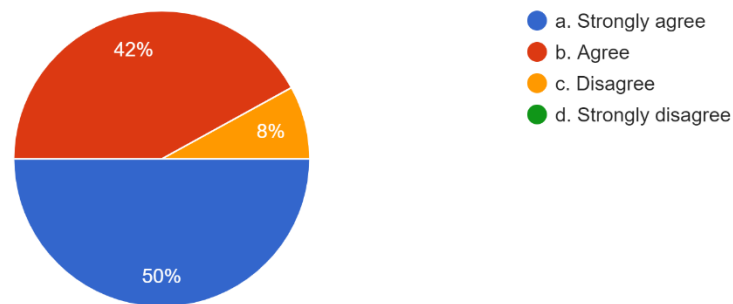
Figure 4.10: Level of influence

The pie chart reveals the level of influence that the social media presence of Zara has on the purchasing attitude of respondents. Even more specifically, 50% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that Zara's active participation on social media affects their purchase decisions. This means that there is a strong and positive attitude towards the online presence of Zara, which implies that their strategies on social media influence the customers' purchasing decisions. Another 42% of respondents "agree" with the statement, which also indicates that Zara's social media presence is also of notable significance, although not quite as significant as those who "strongly agree." It can be seen that there are various levels of impact or intensity of social media among the different consumers. While there are a few respondents who "disagree," there are no respondents who categorically "strongly disagree" and the two responses depict a very minimal scepticism or rejection of the notion that Zara's social media presence dictates buying behaviour. The above data points to the impact of Zara's social media marketing in influencing the consumer attitude toward the product. The consolidated response indicates that consumers' purchasing attitudes are being influenced by Zara's active use of social media, which is consistent with the company's strategic marketing direction.

Question 11

11. How likely are you to try a new product based on a micro-influencer's recommendation?
50 responses

- a. Very likely
- b. Somewhat likely
- c. Unlikely
- d. Very unlikely

46%
8%
46%
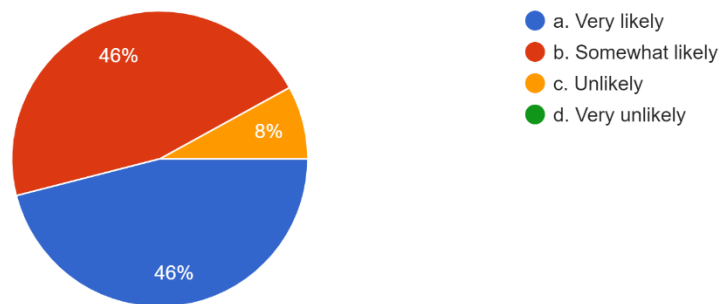
Figure 4.11: Likely to try new product

The pie chart indicates that 46% of respondents are very likely and an equal 46% are somewhat likely to try a new product based on a micro-influencer's recommendation. This highlights the strong influence micro-influencers have on consumer behaviour, with the majority open to their suggestions when exploring new products. Only 8% of respondents are unlikely to be swayed by these recommendations, and none are very unlikely. This suggests that micro-influencers are effective in driving product trials, making them valuable partners for brands looking to reach and engage potential customers.

Question 12

12. Do you find Zara's social media content engaging enough to influence your purchase decisions?
50 responses

- a. Yes, very engaging
- b. Somewhat engaging
- c. Not engaging at all
- d. I don't follow Zara on social media

26%
16%
56%

Figure 4.12: Engagement

The pie chart reveals that 56% of respondents find Zara's social media content very engaging, showing that a significant portion of consumers are strongly influenced by the brand's online

presence when making purchase decisions. An additional 26% consider the content somewhat engaging, indicating moderate influence. However, 16% of respondents feel Zara's social media content is not engaging at all, suggesting that while Zara resonates with most, there is a segment of the audience that remains indifferent to their content. A few respondents mentioned that they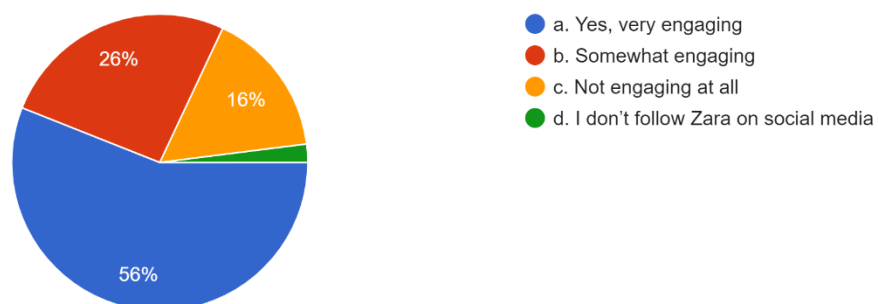 don't follow Zara on social media, which may indicate either a lack of interest in the brand or reliance on other sources for fashion inspiration. Thus, Zara's social media has a notable impact on consumer engagement.

Question 13

13. How often do you compare prices and styles on social media before making a purchase decision?
50 responses
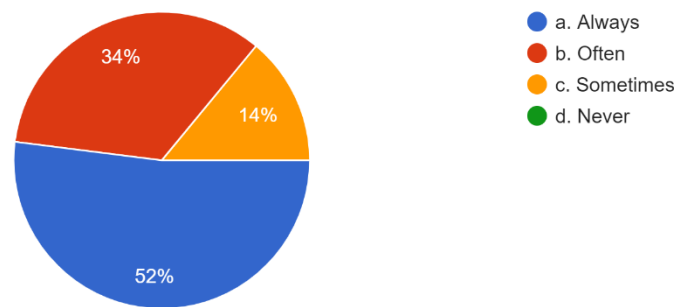
Figure 4.13: Compare

The pie chart shows that a significant 52% of respondents always compare prices and styles on social media before making a purchase decision, indicating that social platforms play a vital role in their shopping behavior. Another 34% do so often, emphasizing that most consumers regularly use social media to assess value and trends before committing to a purchase. 14% of respondents compare prices and styles sometimes, while none reported never doing so. This suggests that social media is a highly influential tool for price and style comparisons, reinforcing its importance as a decision-making resource in the fashion industry. Brands must ensure competitive pricing and trend-driven content to capture this audience's attention.

Question 14

14. Do you believe that Zara's marketing strategy on social media aligns with current fashion trends?

50 responses
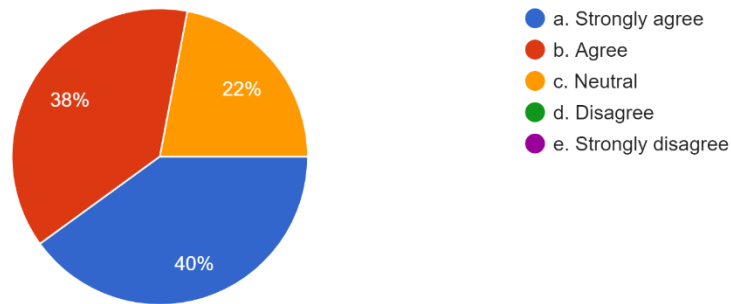
Figure 4.14: Marketing strategy

The pie chart indicates that 40% of respondents strongly agree and 38% agree that Zara's marketing strategy on social media aligns well with current fashion trends. This strong consensus supports the positive perspective of the implication of Zara to adapt promptly to the fashioning consumer trends in the rapidly growing fashion business. Moreover, 22% of persons show the 'no preference' answer which indicates that some people still have doubts regarding the affiliation of the brand with trends. Moreover, none of the respondents could afford to disagree or strongly disagree with the above statement which means that there are no negative views on the social media strategy of the brand. Consequently, it is evidenced in this data that Zara has rightly zoned itself where it can shun its anti-image and give an image of a leader fam in the fashion arena.

Question 15

15. Do you think Zara should collaborate more with micro-influencers to reach Gen-Z consumers effectively?

50 responses
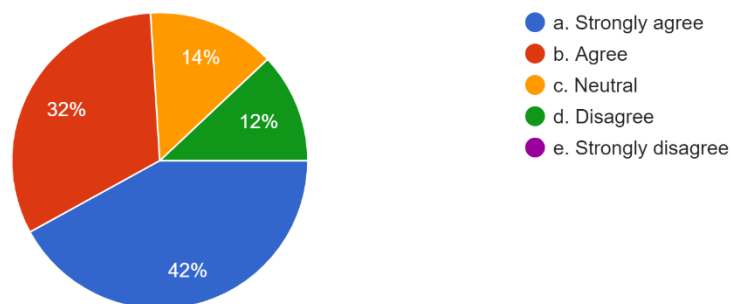
Figure 4.15: Collaboration

The pie chart shows that 42% of the respondents strongly believe and 32% believe that Zara should leverage the strategy of partnering with micro-influencers in targeting Gen-Z consumers. This denotes a massive degree of confidence in what micro-influencers can do for Zara to improve its reach and appeal in this important market. Another 12% were neutral on the issue and there seems to be some ambiguity regarding the indispensability of such partnerships. Finally, 12% do not support that statement, suggesting that there is a very small portion of the population that may not think it is worth expanding influencer collaborations. More importantly, none of the participants selected strongly disagree as they think that collaborations with micro-influencers will be useful for Zara's marketing communication strategy. This data shows that marketers need to cultivate genuinely organic relationships in the fashion sector, especially with young consumers.

4.3 Summary

The findings chapter provides a clear outline of how social media through micro-influencers influences consumer behaviour with reference to Gen Z consumers and Zara. This shows that social media is one of the most important tools for engaging with consumers and affecting their choices and buying behaviour. The study highlights the special focus that should be paid to micro-influencers whose opinion seems to be genuine and credible to the viewers. Consumers of the Gen Z generation become a significant audience for Zara, their focus being given to things such as the quality and price of products. The study reveals that authenticity should be considered as a severe issue in influencer marketing; it shows that deepening work with the influencers compatible with the brand values must be relevant to Zara.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Chapter preface

The discussion chapter provides an analysis of the survey results with a focus on the literature review in relation to the use of social media and micro-influencers among Gen Z consumers and Zara. It further examines the extent to which the findings support or differ from the existing theories to give insights into the position of social media in the purchase decision process. Moreover, the chapter will discuss the role of micro-influencers in influencing consumer trust and how these findings can act as key business strategies to improve Zara's influencer marketing in its future campaigns.

5.2 Discussion

The following areas have emerged from the survey findings which relate to the impact of micro-influencers and social media on generating purchasing intentions of Gen Z for fashion industry-related products while also being consistent with or different from the theoretical frameworks reviewed in the literature review section.

Influence of Micro-Influencers in Fashion Marketing

In the survey, respondents highlighted the importance of micro-influencers to the buying decisions of Gen Z consumers. More than half of the respondents said they prefer micro-influencers, which supported Pedro (2023) who claimed that micro-influencers are considered more genuine and realistic than celebrity influencers. The survey supported the findings of Öğüt and Ekinci Furtana (2024) that micro-influencers have a more close-knit relationship with the target groups and hence, consumers trust them and engage more.

The survey also showed that the respondents frequently buy fashion items from Zara promoted by micro-influencers, particularly if the latter's sense is similar to that of the respondent. This is in line with Sinha and Fung (2021) who have highlighted the importance of micro-influencers in the promotion of fashion products and their impact on sales by creating appealing promotions for the targeted audience. Nevertheless, the survey also revealed some signs of overselling and over-commodification that Gen Z finds important, a factor not much written about in previous literature, though mentioned by Öğüt and Ekinci Furtana (2024). This implies that even though micro-influencers work, they have to deal with the danger of crossing the line between advertisement and influencing their followers, thus losing their influence.

The Role of Social Media in Fashion Consumer Behaviour

Based on the findings of the survey, social media is seen as a decisive factor affecting consumer behaviour in the fashion context associated with the case of Zara. Specifically, Gen Z

participants considered Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube as the most influential, which corresponds to the findings in the literature regarding crucial platforms for fashion marketing (Silveira *et al*. 2023). The respondents stated that they often encounter fresh fashion trends and brands on these sites, and thus, support the statement made by Santos *et al*. (2022) that social media have significantly changed the consumer-brand relationship in the context of purchases. The survey also identified a similar topic as a core classification concern with Haenlein *et al*. (2020), which stated that influencer marketing on social media is most effective in terms of consumer preferences and behaviour. Again, the majority of the respondents agreed with the notion that they follow fashion trends they see on social media, thereby giving credit to the literature that asserted that social media is a potent marketing factor in the fashion business. Nevertheless, the survey also proffered an intriguing variation to the existing body of knowledge. Contrary to Hamzah *et al*. (2021) who affirmed that influencer marketing yields positive results across the globe, some respondents signified that most of the reels, shows, and trends in fashion on the social media platforms as unprofane. This implies that Generation Z consumers are becoming sceptical of the trends exhibited by the fast fashion sector on issues concerning sustainability and the ability of those trends to endure in the future; an area that has not received considerable empirical attention in the existing literature.

Gen Z's Consumer Behaviour and Social Media

Thus, the results of the survey correlate with the data identified by Djafarova and Bowes (2021) concerning Generation Z's consumer behaviour. The participants stated that they consider the uniqueness and personal branding in their fashion purchasing decisions, which aligns with the presented literature about Gen Z as the generation focused on identity and individualism. Further, the analysis of the survey showed that Gen Z consumers are more concerned with the social and environmental repercussions of their purchases from Zara, which can be linked with the overall emergence of sustainable fashion.

However, the survey results contradict the literature and evidence that Gen Z is increasingly embracing sustainable and ethical fashion. Some respondents also stated that while they increasingly try to purchase sustainable clothing, it is impossible not to give in to fast fashion's low price and availability. This suggests an inconsistency between Gen Z's perceived and actual purchasing behaviour; an area that could invite more discussion in extant literature. However, this research shows that there is scope for fashion brands to improve and investigate more about how the sustainability of products can be made affordable enough to meet the needs of Gen Z consumers.

Social Media as a Marketing Tool in Fashion

The survey supported and highlighted the role of social media as an imperative marketing tool in the fashion industry, which was also equipped by Hardani and Suryono (2024) when explaining the efficiency of social media influencing consumer loyalty and engagement levels. The respondents agreed with the notion that they spend more time with brands that are on social media and have posted offers or promotion codes. This result corroborates the literature indicating that social media is one of the most effective marketing strategies for consumer engagement and sales in fashion businesses. The usage of social media advertisements assists Zara in attracting Gen Z consumers (Sudirjo *et al*. 2023).

However, a gap was noted between the survey results and the literature on the impact of social media marketing in the long run. Although Tsoy *et al*. (2021) offer a review of social media marketing with an emphasis on the extent and interaction, a few of the survey respondents were critical of constant postings of fashion-related posts on social media platforms. They also mentioned how the large number of ads and sponsored posts may cause decision fatigue and a sense of feeling overwhelmed which decreases the effectiveness of social media marketing. This finding indicates that although social media is influential, fashion brands should apply tactics in their management, lest they inundate audiences.

Theoretical Implications

As for the literature review, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs was partially confirmed by the survey results. Maslow has proposed a categorization of needs that arranges them in a hierarchical manner whereby the basic needs precede the higher needs including the need for self-actualization (Duygun and Şen, 2020). In the context of fashion, this would imply that consumers focus on the utility of items first before they think of luxury or current trends. The survey results partially supported this theory, with the respondents saying that though they appreciate the importance of functionality, they also often purchase fashionable products even if they are not necessarily needed. This implies that when it comes to Fashion purchasing, the Maslow theory offers a partial view as to the basic motivations of consumers and does not appreciate the whole spectrum of consumers' motives which is especially true for Gen Z consumers who significantly value the expression of their individuality rather than the functionality of the product.

The survey also gave strong support for the Cultivation Theory which postulates those habits of media use change attitudes and behaviour patterns of people for the long term. According to Tsoy *et al*. (2021), social media has a significant impact on consumers' behaviour, and many of the respondents stated that they directly follow fashion trends featured on Instagram and TikTok. The survey also supported the notion the long-time usage of media may make an

individual anxious and stressed with some participants noting that the constant pressure from being aware of the most current trends on fashion social media platforms may be stressful.

The Network Effects Theory, which postulates that the value of a network rises with each additional member, was also evident from the survey data. Several of the participants reported self-reported high levels of impulsiveness and tendencies to follow the latest fashion trends and make purchases when they see others doing the same. This goes further in supporting the stand of Schüler and Petrik (2023) who stated that social media is powerful in grouping people and changing their behaviours. However, as suggested by the survey results, there might be a limitation in using this theory in the fashion marketing communication domain. Although network externalities can spur demand initially, some of the respondents stated that they become compelled to use predetermined brands which they do not really like, which in turn makes them dissatisfied with the product.

The results presented in the survey have simple and concise answers to the research questions and objectives. The research question regarding the influence of micro-influencers in promoting fashion brands was responded to in detail by the data obtained through a survey. It was identified that micro-influencers indeed have an influential impact on Gen Z. The study also identified specific areas which are crucial for the effectiveness of micro-influencers, such as being genuine and approachable and having a genuine relationship with the audience (Shen, 2021).

The survey results also answered the research question, which focused on the role of social media on consumers' behaviour. Based on the responses, there is evidence of the use of such social media platforms as Instagram and TikTok in making choices regarding clothing, thus supporting the objective of evaluating the suitability of social media in modern fashion marketing (Vavrová, 2024). However, the survey also documented several drawbacks observed in social media marketing, such as overpopulation and decision-weariness, which might hinder the success of this strategy in the long term.

Thus, the survey answered the research question that was concerned with Gen Z's consumer behaviour by shedding light on factors that affect their buying behaviour in the case of Zara. The results also showed that despite expressing concern for sustainability and ethical practices within the fashion industry, Gen Z is easily influenced by factors such as price and convenience, which points to the factual contradiction between the principles and actions of this generation. The advertisement of Zara in social media effectively influences Gen Z consumers in increasing their purchasing level as well as improving the retention rate of

customers. This finding is also in line with the research objective of identifying external factors shaping Gen Z's fashion.

Consequently, the results of the survey corroborate some of the insights from the literature on micro-influencers and social media in fashion, as well as shed light on certain aspects that require future investigation. It was also possible to affirm that micro-influencers are a valuable tool for engaging consumers and encouraging sales, although pointing to the problem of over-commercialization at the same time (Irshad *et al.* 2020). The survey also reemphasized the influence of social media on Gen Z's fashion purchases but highlighted some issues that came with the abundance of fashion content. Moreover, although the literature highlighted the fact that Gen Z was concerned about environmental issues, the survey revealed that price and convenience remained the key influencers in a purchasing decision. These findings offer helpful responses to the research questions & objectives; they also reveal directions for further study such as the discrepancy between Gen Z's representations and consumer choices.

5.3 Acknowledgement of limitations

However, there are some factors that need to be taken into consideration while paying attention to the results of the survey and the interpretation of such data. The respondents' sample size and the demographic coverage may not be inclusive enough to capture all segments of Zara's consumers, especially Gen Z. Although attention was paid to how participants were selected, the sample may not be geographically and culturally very diverse which can affect the generalisability of the results across markets. Secondly, since the survey is based on a questionnaire, it can suffer from self-reporting bias. These limitations could have occurred from participants giving response bias answers, or could have overestimated/underestimated their tendencies, especially as regards using social media and influencer marketing. This could impact the credibility of the results, especially in determining the extent to which micro-influencers influence consumer buying behaviour. On the same note, the dynamic social media market and the ever-changing trends in influencer marketing are some of the limitations attained. These results are illustrative of the state of this landscape in the present day and are likely not going to remain static as new platforms continue to be developed and as users' preferences change. This reduces the validity of the data over time because the role of influencers in consumer behaviour, a discipline of digital marketing, might significantly change in the future due to a shift in trends.

5.4 Summary

The discussion chapter compared survey results with those derived from the literature review to analyse how social media influencers affect Gen-Z consumer purchasing behaviour in the

fashion industry. The survey supported the role of micro-influencers and social media platforms in consumer decision-making that support theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Cultivation Theory. However, there are also disparities observed in terms of network effects on the performance of the products. Therefore the findings responded to the research questions in order to establish how influencers shape engagement and brand loyalty in the fashion brands for a marketing perspective. This has a close correlation with the efficiencies of influencer marketing for consumer engagement as well as the sales increment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The results of this research have shown the importance of social media influencers, especially micro-influencers, as key influencers affecting Generation Z consumers' buying behaviour in the fashion sector. Social media tools including Instagram, Tik Tok and YouTube have emerged as key informational tools which Gen-Z uses for decision making including recommendations on products and style. The usage of these platforms for advertisement can assist Zara in attracting a large segment of Gen Z consumers and increasing the number of sales. The study echoes the ever-increasing relevance of influencers in influencing consumer behaviours, adopting, popularizing, and selling products, and cultivating brand-faithful followers through raw and realistic content.

It would also be important to note that the findings show the significance of micro-influencers in interacting with Gen-Z consumers. Thus, micro-influencers such as those with a moderate number of followers but highly involved customers considered more credible compared to macro-influencers or celebrities. The outcomes of the research correlate with theoretical predictions that 'micro-influencers' are more likely to build more intimate relationships with their followers because they personally engage with their followers more frequently. This perceived authenticity leads Gen-Z consumers to be more inclined to follow their advice on everything from fashion trends to brands and also products. Therefore, micro-influencers influence consumption significantly, proving to be an effective weapon in the arsenal of fashion brands targeting this segment.

Furthermore, the study explains how social media platforms are the main settings for developing this influencer-consumer bond. Since Gen-Z is already spending more of their time plugged into the internet, especially visually minded platforms like Instagram and TikTok, Zara can turn social media into a place of brand narratives, identity, and connection. From the perspective of content creators, influencers apply this niche to reconstruct a narrative around fashion brands that would resonate with Gen-Z demographics' value systems and preferences. Consequently, the survey reveals that Gen Z consumers prefer to make a purchase based on content aligned with their identity and environmental, social, or governance concerns, including sustainable, inclusive, and ethical products. This is a significant conclusion for fashion brands like Zara since it highlights the need to ensure that influencer partnerships are with artists whose posts represent admirable values to the Gen-Z generation.

Furthermore, the research revealed fascinating dynamics with regard to network effects and how they affect consumers. Essentially, based on previous research, social networks and peer pressure were crucial influential factors in purchasing decisions; however, this one revealed that, although Gen-Z values influencer opinions, the exact impact of peers close to them could be less powerful. This implies that the information that the influencer posts has more value compared to the recommendations of friends and relatives at times in the case of dressing code. This shift emphasizes influencers as the intermediaries between brands like Zara and consumers since their role of connecting marketing with the consumer becomes increasingly apparent. The study also gave a response in regard to the drawbacks of influencer marketing, such as the increase in the level of fiction and the problem of saturation. Consumers may develop a negative perception towards influencer-sponsored content messages as they may feel the influencer is becoming too commercialized and is no longer part of their everyday lives. This raises the question of how brands and influencers can uphold authenticity and trust while also participating in sponsored collaborations. Therefore, brands that are able to effectively find this middle ground by selecting the right influencers and creating real partnerships with those influencers are far more likely to target and capture the loyalty of Gen-Z consumers.

5.2 Linking with Objectives

Linking with Objective 1

Conclusively, this research effectively raises awareness of the importance of social media within modern society. Since Instagram and TikTok are now core to brand engagements, this paper demonstrates how social media constructs customers' perceptions and discoveries as well as influences their buying behaviours. It affirms that social media is more than just a marketing strategy, it is, in fact, territory that needs to be embraced.

Linking with Objective 2

The micro-influencers analysis shows that they possess tremendous influence over the purchasing behaviour of consumers, especially Gen-Z consumers. The research shows the type of content which micro-influencers post and how it connects with their followers more closely due to the perceived authenticity. This makes them more suited to generate unique and relatable content which is well embraced by Gen-Z since they are more likely to believe in word-of-mouth from these influencers as compared to conventional advertising. This is important for brands like Zara to work with micro-influencers to increase credibility and engagement among the targeted customer base.

Linking with Objective 3

Thus, by centring around Zara, the study explores the significance of the role that social media plays in shaping Gen-Z consumers. This demonstrates that this target demographic is very active on the internet and depends on social media for fashion influencers, and conformity. The study shows that Gen-Z's purchasing behaviour is affected by Zara's social media presence, where there are indications that the users are often influenced by the posts of micro-influencers.

Linking with Objective 4

In view of this, the research has offered pertinent guidelines on how Zara can reap maximum benefits from influencer marketing. Engaging with micro-level influencers and focusing on those whose values would match those of the brand increases the element of authenticity. Also, it is crucial for Zara to come up with catchy, meaningful content that would align with Gen-Z's choice, regarding sustainable and diverse values. The incorporation of these strategies into Zara's marketing strategy will make this valuable consumer group of the firm more relevant and improve its performance in the cutthroat fashion industry.

5.3 Recommendations

Leverage Micro-Influencers for Authentic Engagement

According to the findings, the strategic implementation of micro-influencers can help Zara post genuine and believable content marketing. While celebrities generally have larger audiences, micro-influencers have a niche customer base exhibiting a higher level of engagement (Gunawan and Iskandar, 2020). However, through partnerships with real influencers whose posts align with Zara's ethos and visual appearance, the brand can gain more authenticity and attract consumer attention. Campaigns with micro-influencers can demonstrate how ordinary customers use products from Zara in their everyday lives, which makes the brand more relatable and attractive to the target audience of Gen Z consumers.

Emphasize Sustainability and Ethical Practices

The analysis reveals that Gen-Z consumers are more sensitive to the issues related to sustainable consumption and ethical measures. Thus, there is a need for clear reporting about the sustainability efforts that Zara has been implementing. Marketing initiatives promoting collections that are environmentally conscious and ethical sourcing can easily be marketed to this audience (Mandarić *et al*. 2022). Promoting the back stories of sustainability through social media might help to engage more of the consumers who are conscious about the environment. The given approach corresponds together with the values of Gen-Z and makes Zara stand out in the competition.

Create Engaging and Interactive Content

For Zara to be relevant among the Gen-Z consumer base, the company has to incorporate social media with innovative and dynamic content. According to the study, this group has a tendency towards visually stimulating and engaging experiences. Introducing features such as polls, quizzes and changing stories can create value for the consumer and also increase their pleasure while shopping (Testa *et al*. 2021). Also, for further improvement of community engagement and loyalty, other user-generated content campaigns, such as those, which invite customers to share their own Zara outfits are more than beneficial.

Invest in Data-Driven Marketing Strategies

Analysing the behaviour of consumers on social media websites may be helpful for Zara to find out certain preferences and trends. This way, Zara will be able to adjust the content which is posted more successfully towards the audience it has. This flexibility means that campaigns can be fine-tuned in real-time, guaranteeing that Zara stays relevant to the changing preferences of Gen-Z consumers. Analytics can also aid in selecting the most suitable micro-influencers for partnership with the enterprise.

Enhance Omnichannel Marketing Integration

It remains necessary for Zara to ensure that its social media marketing is closely aligned and cohesive with its other marketing communications efforts to prevent disjointed experiences for consumers. As stated by Riaz *et al*. (2021), the use of incentives to convince consumers to change from being mere website visitors to customers can guarantee sales and better customer relationships. This transition can be encouraged through social media promotions such as coupons that give the customer limited access to new products. Therefore, if Zara integrates the online and offline experiences, it will be easy to target the attention of Gen-Z consumers and consolidate its market position.

5.4 Limitations

However, many limitations associated with the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing behaviour of Gen-Z consumers about Zara are as follows. It is important to note that due to the use of survey data, there is likely to be a bias especially if the participants give answers that are not true in the real sense. This method of subject selection is known as self-selection bias, which might reduce the generalizability of the results obtained since the participants themselves choose to join the study. Also, the study mainly centres on social media platforms that are most prevalent among Gen-Z like Instagram and TikTok which may exclude other upcoming platforms. Since dealing with dynamic concepts like trends and influencers, their effectiveness may be shaky and can change from time to time, making the results gained out of date. However, the study fails to consider factors like the prevailing economic conditions

or even the campaigns by other brands that can affect the consumers' choices. However, as is the case with most quantitative studies, there may be a weakness in the depth that has been accorded to the study of each consumer. Some of these limitations may include the fact that the influences and the consumers are always changing in their behaviour and the fashion industry continues to grow as a result more research is needed.

5.5 Future scope

The possibilities for furthering the research about social media influencers and their influence over consumers specifically Gen-Z in the fashion industry are endless. With developments in social media platforms still unfolding, it is crucial to extend the search for influencers into novel platforms that are yet to gain widespread adoption, including virtual reality and the metaverse. There could have been some valuable lessons for brands like Zara on issues such as how these platforms actually influence consumer perceptions and their subsequent buying behaviour. Furthermore, research could extend to how influencer marketing impacts brand image and consumer trust as the Gen-Z Population becomes as viable consumers in the economy as well as strategic in their performance. Promotion factors like sustainability and ethical practices that are particular to Gen-Z's engagement could also improve understanding in this domain. Also, the inclusion of more diverse demographic parameters might provide an understanding of how sub-groups within the Gen-Z cohort engage influencers. Moreover, there was a possibility of monitoring the changes in consumers' behaviour across different time horizons, which can be valuable information for the brands. Such continuous research will be indispensable for improving collaborations with influencers and creating pertinent marketing tactics in the rapidly evolving sphere of fashion.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

1. In which age group do you belong?

a.   15-20

b.   21-25

c.   26-30

d.   Above 30

2. How often do you come across social media to find customer feedback?

a.   Very often

b.   Often

c.   Seldom

d.   Not at all.

3. Do social interactions influence your purchasing patterns?

a.   Yes

b.   No

4. On what factors, does social media influence customer's purchasing patterns?

a.   User-generated content

b.   Ratings

c.   Customer feedback

d.   Product recommendations

5. Based on what factors, do you purchase fashion products?

a.   Quality

b.   Affordability

c.   Style

d.   All of these

6. Do you follow micro-influencers before making any purchasing decisions?

a.   Yes

b.   No

7. How do micro-influencers impact your buying behaviour?

a.   Showcasing latest trends

b.   Smart choices

c.   Product reviews

d.   Authentic endorsements

8. To what extent do you pay attention to reviews and feedback micro-influencers provide?

a.   To a great extent

b.   Seldom

c.   Never

9. Do you feel that social media has a great role in shaping the consumer mind?

a.   Yes

b.   No

10. How far do you agree that Zara's presence in social media influences your purchasing attitude?

a.   Strongly agree

b.   Agree

c.   Disagree

d.   Strongly disagree

11. How likely are you to try a new product based on a micro-influencer's recommendation?

   a. Very likely
   b. Somewhat likely
   c. Unlikely
   d. Very unlikely

12. Do you find Zara's social media content engaging enough to influence your purchase decisions?

   a. Yes, very engaging

   b. Somewhat engaging

   c. Not engaging at all

   d. I don't follow Zara on social media

13. How often do you compare prices and styles on social media before making a purchase decision?

   a. Always
   b. Often
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never

14. Do you believe that Zara's marketing strategy on social media aligns with current fashion trends?

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neutral
   d. Disagree

e. Strongly disagree

15. Do you think Zara should collaborate more with micro-influencers to reach Gen-Z consumers effectively?

   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. Neutral
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

Appendix 2: Survey link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1W0uIDTXnUEXtq8j1Lz-pOELrCVoK3FJhXmi-GQQaVF0/edit#responses

Appendix 3: Participation Consent Form

Participant Identification Number:	**2314434**

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM
(for researcher to fill)

Project Title: Understanding the extent of social media on gen-z consumers within fashion industry: a focus on Zara , UK

Name of Researcher: Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar	Name of Supervisor: Prof. Amare Desta

Email of Researcher: 2314434@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Aim of Research: "The goal of the study is to find out how social media affects customers specially Gen Z customers in the fashion business. For a more realistic idea of the same thing, the Zara case study will be looked at.

(for participant to fill)		YES	NO
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated _____ for the above study.	✓	
2	I understand there are no material benefits for participating.	✓	
2	I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	✓	
3	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	✓	
4	I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.	✓	
5	I consent for my name and title to be used within this study.	✓	
	Where applicable, I understand that my details will not be anonymous.		✓
6	I agree to be recorded (audio and/or audio-visual video).		✓
7	I agree to take part in the above study.	✓	

Researcher's Name (Print)	Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar	Signature		Date	14/10/2024
Participant's Name (Print)		Signature		Date	

You may decline to participate in this study. You may end your participation in this study at any time. All data generated from this or any interview will remain confidential. For more information, please view the university's [Research and Data Management Policy](#).

When completed please email a copy to the below address to be kept on the file of the researcher and retain a copy for yourself.

Subject Title: [Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar**] – Participant Consent Form**
Email: 2314434@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

| | Participant Identification Number: | **2314434** |

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Project Title: Understanding the extent of social media on gen-z consumers within fashion industry: a focus on Zara , UK

Name of Researcher: Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar	Name of Supervisor: Prof. Amare Desta

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is <u>Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar</u> and I am an undergraduate student in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, United Kingdom (London campus). Currently, I am conducting research entitled <u>Understanding the extent of social media on gen-z consumers within fashion industry: a focus on Zara , UK</u>.

The purpose of this research is to:
The study's objective is to ascertain how social media influences consumers in the fashion industry, particularly Gen Z consumers. The Zara case study will be examined to provide a more practical understanding of the same concept. The extending purpose of my MBA dissertation is, I have decided to focus on the growing influence of social media on consumer behavior, particularly among Gen Z digital natives. Since Gen Z is the first generation to have grown up with social media, interactions and material from online source particularly micro-influencer have a significant impact on their distinct consuming patterns. The need for consumers' perception and buying behaviours through the collection of primary data another conducting purpose of this study.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project by [indicate what activity you want them to do].

Please complete the accompanying consent form. I will [take notes/record audio/record visual-audio] during the interview with your permission.

Please note that the [questionnaire/interview/activity] should not take more than [give timing guidance] to complete but, there is no time constraint. Your participation in the [questionnaire/interview/activity] will be voluntary. You will not receive any remuneration or reward from the researcher. As a participant, you may decide to stop the [questionnaire/interview/activity] at any point of time without any explanation and/or reason.

All data generated from this or any interview will remain confidential. For more information, please view the university's Research and Data Management Policy.

I thank you in advance for your time and participation. If any questions do arise, feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Name of Researcher: Snehal Dineshbhai Parmar	Signature of Researcher:
Email of Researcher: 2314434@student.uwtsd.ac.uk	