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**An Investigation on Consumer Perception Towards Social
Media Marketing in the Fashion Industry.**

By

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Msc in Management.

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Abstract:

This research paper had a primary aim of investigating the relationship that consumers, in the fashion industry, had with marketing strategies that are present on social media. With social media and fashion being heavily influenced by status, it was interesting to see what the relationship between the two was like. It was insightful to look into four main areas where social media marketing is dominant in the fashion industry. These included direct adverts, influencer marketing, e-commerce live streams, and sustainable fashion.

A quantitative approach was taken to gather the information needed to carry out such an investigation. The use of a descriptive frequency analysis on SPSS software was used to display the findings and help analyse the results. This led to some surprising results, as well as highlighting opportunities for further study into the area of research. Although there were some unexpected findings in area, the research did have a lot of alignment to previous research conducted in a lot of areas.

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Chapter 1

Introduction.

1.1 General Introduction.

The introduction to this paper will give the reader a brief understanding of the area of research, and the aims and objectives of the research project. The paper is focused on the world of fashion and how social media in recent years has become a dominant tool to for engaging the consumers of the fashion industry. The paper aims to investigate the accuracy of the efforts made by marketers through social media, while also analysing how consumers feel about said marketing strategies through the social platforms.

Peter, *et al.*, (2013) described social media platforms as "*dynamic, interconnected, egalitarian, and interactive organisms.*" This immediately underlines just how important of a tool this can be for marketers in any industry as these "interactive organisms" are the way in which businesses can interact with their consumer base directly and consistently. With interactions forming between business and consumer, as well as between consumers themselves, it allows for a lot of influence when it comes to buying behaviours due to interactions with each other about products. (Li, *et al.*, 2021) With the fashion industry already having cycles of different trends, this paper hopes to identify if consumers are now further influenced by social media marketing and their perception on the matter.

In an FRPT paper, there was an insightful statement to how fashion is being revolutionised again by brands efforts through social media. The use of luxury brands was taken for the example, saying they have struck a fine balance between being everywhere and yet being unavailable at the same time. (FRPT, 2021) This briefly introduces the effects social media marketing is having on the industry, as the likes of luxury brands are being seen constantly on the social platforms but are unavailable due to limited supply, or high price points. This focuses on how social media is driving up the demand for products such as these, while keeping the supply of said products low. On the other hand, the paper also alludes to the fact that there is a fine balance in doing this, as items can be over saturated losing their appeal to the market and come out of trend quickly. This paper will aim to find how consumers engage with posts from influencers and whether they influence their buying decisions.

The paper will investigate a total of four key areas that brands use as marketing strategies when attempting to engage with their audience through social media. Firstly, there will be research done on targeted advertisements on social media. This is where through collected data, brands can send consumers specified adverts that will match their preferences. Here we will find out whether consumers notice said advertisements and if they do how accurate are they. The paper will then progress into focusing on influencer marketing. The paper will hope to find out how engaged the Irish market is with influencers and their overall perception towards them. Live streaming e-commerce will be the next stage of research. This is where clothes are modelled on a live stream and are bought during the show. This research will discover if Ireland has jumped on this new way of selling fashion through social media or whether it is yet to make itself known. The final section will analyse if social media has caused for a rise in consumers buying more sustainably. With environmental issues being at large in today's world, it is important to see whether social media is doing its job on promoting sustainable fashion and what the consumer perception on such clothing is.

1.2 Motivation and Rationale.

This motivation behind the research conducted in this paper is due to the researcher's long interest to the fashion industry. This partnered with the fact the researcher is very active on social media, and uses it as a way to find and purchase clothing, the two areas sparked a desire to further investigate the area of social media marketing in the industry.

The rationale behind conducting such research was to find how a wider range of individuals perceive the topic at hand. For the aims of the paper, it is important to understand that the research is not just aimed at individuals with a large interest in the industry. Instead, the researcher was motivated to include anyone who is active on social media to take part so the findings would show how accurate social media marketing efforts are on society as well as if it is widely noticed.

A second rationale for this paper was to try gain any information that may indicate what the future of the fashion industry will be like on social media. It is with hope to find any insights that may require further investigation in the future.

Chapter 2

Literary Review.

2.1 The Evolution of the Fashion Industry:

As this dissertation is based on how we consume fashion, it is important to grasp a firm understanding of what fashion means to the individuals that follow the industry at a deeper level and why they really immerse themselves in the industry. With gaining this understanding, the impact that social media has had on the industry will begin to become more evident. Fashion has always been a means of self-expression, allowing people to be identified in their own unique style, or to associate themselves in a particular social group by the way they present themselves. Cronin, 2004, highlighted this when discussing how individuals can buy certain brands in order to gain some type of status or social acceptance. This knowledge identifies the complexity of the industry and how people read, follow, and consume it in different ways.

One of the most distinguishable differentials that determines how one dresses is due to how wealthy that person may be. Even when you look back at old drawings of ancient Egyptian clothing, the Pharaohs would wear very detailed garments in comparison to everyone else which highlighted the different statuses in their society. This example is merely used to show just how long clothing has been more than just products to keep us warm, but instead used to show where we belong in society. This underlines Veblen's term of conspicuous consumption where it is stated that goods are purchased not for needs, but to display status. (Aaronson, 2013) However, fashion has now become an industry since the Egyptian times, and the world has continuously been harmonized with an increase in positive wealth distribution amongst its population. This has meant that even the poor can experience some of the luxuries that the upper class enjoy, creating cycles in fashion. The upper class would start a new fashion cycle to show their higher status in society, while the lower classes would eventually follow the trend. (Atik, 2013) This highlights the root of the enormous and ever-changing industry of fashion that we now live in today.

With the creation of these cycles in fashion, the industry has been subject to new innovative styles to capture the different cultures in society. In addition, clothing that were typically worn by certain classes or cultures are now incorporated into fashion cycles as trendy items

to be worn by everyone. This is because of the increase in marketing knowledge and the growing knowledge of capturing what is deemed unique to wear, which will then subsequently be followed by a greater population. An example of such a trend that was cycled into a fashion piece was the pair of denim jeans. Jeans were originally an item of clothing worn by working class Italians until Vogue ran an advertisement of women in tight fitting jeans, which in turn made denim jeans a fashionable piece of clothing. (Bellezza, 2020) This shows a continuous development as to how people consumed fashion, going from having clothes just to depict their wealth, to the means of traditional advertisement creating clothing from different classes in society and making them trendy and desirable. Even to this day, the trend of jeans is continuously being recycled with different cuts of denim becoming the thing to wear every few years and replacing its predecessor. These fashion cycles are all done through the efforts of marketers advertising previous trends to give them a new lease of life by recycling them in an effort to make them feel new.

This paper will aim to research how social media has affected the industry and if the days of traditional advertising and marketing are ones of the past. There will be an effort to see just how great of an effect of the changes that social media have made, and in what areas of the industry have these social platforms have bettered or worsened under its efforts. Four generations will be the focus of the paper, these will be: 1. Gen X (1965-1976), 2. Gen Y (1977-1995), 3. Gen Z (1996-2010), and 4. Gen Alpha (2011-2015). The reason on choosing these four generations is that they are arguably going to be the most active on social media and responsive to the survey and have the potential to have contradicting social media activities when it comes to shopping through the platforms. The next section of this literary review will delve into the different methods marketers have used in traditional advertising and in the new age of social media marketing in the world of fashion.

2.2 Traditional Marketing

This section will review how marketing strategies have changed in the fashion industry over time, helping to display the evolution of targeting an organizations consumer market. A consumer's point of view will also be taken into consideration while said strategies have been discussed. For an organization to cement itself in the fashion industry, the ability to continuously increase its brand awareness is crucial. It is the root to success for obvious reasons, as if a consumer does not know that your brand exists it will only be able to generate

value if the consumer luckily discovers it by chance. Shimp, 2010, highlighted how a brand can only gain value if it is known to the targeted audience. Tarik, 2018, also highlighted the same idea of the marketing function of any business is to improve consumer engagement and getting them to absorb information in order to increase company value. They done this by also highlighting the role of technology evolving how companies market their good and services, as more traditional means of advertising have shifted from papers to televisions. But now it is the age of social media marketing. Traditionally, fashion had to be advertised through the use of magazines, television commercials or billboards.

When talking about traditionally using fashion magazines to target the audience, the use of attractive and dominant pictures trigger consumers to want to purchase the advertised good even if the quality is inferior to what is supplied by competitors. (Chang, 2018) This underlines how fashion marketers could use these magazines to build brand awareness through attractive magazine pictures, building a more attractive brand image than what they are providing. It could therefore be argued that the more traditional means of advertising fashion could exploit consumers due to lack of knowledge about the clothing advertised. An additional criticism the fashion industry faced under traditional means of advertising is that the images displayed in magazines or television commercials portrayed a false narrative of a world of fantasy. (Thompson, 1997) This further proves how these traditional marketing techniques came short in engaging a realistic relationship with their target customers, creating a gap between the brand image and its ability to create value from its potential consumers. With these points being said, the likes of print magazines has now become accessible online in order to reach a wider audience as the same content can be accessed for a cheaper rate and with greater ease. (Chandra, 2014) This further increase of accessibility of fashion related content and access to more information on what is being advertised would have had a positive effect on both the consumer and the industry. The industry would have gained from a greater audience and data collected, while the consumer would gain from having access to more information.

2.3 Social Media Marketing:

Electronic Word of Mouth & Targeted Advertisements:

In the age of social media where Facebook receive 1.79 billion daily users, while Instagram receive 1 billion monthly users (Baker, 2020), industries have capitalized on such traffic with the fashion industry being a major one. Within these numbers include official pages of fashion brands, as well as the consumers they are targeting. Freer, 2021, mentioned in their Business of Apps article that brands can increase their awareness on social media at a greater rate as they can post stories and traditional feed posts with links to buy the advertised item. The interaction with brand pages through interaction by giving likes and comments has been a huge success in the fashion industry, as Anne Freer, 2018, highlighted when stating that fashion has the largest amount of eCommerce interaction on social media platforms. This indicates just how well marketing through social media has worked in the industry. It could be argued with the increase of interaction between brands and customers, it has decreased some of the problems faced with traditional marketing techniques. Through social media, brands are able to deliver an advertisement that does not seem to be just a fantasy, allowing them to positively improve their brand image. Additionally, through social media customers themselves start to become marketers for the brands they buy from. Customers tend to put up stories reviewing new purchases and posting 'fit pics' of clothing which they have bought. These consumers then give their opinions and have conversations with their friends online, boosting brand awareness through electronic word of mouth. (Moe, 2011)

Not only has the consumer gained the benefits of increased information and choice from social media, but organizations themselves are also gaining positively. Social media not only allows for brands to see first-hand what their target audience want, but also gain from being able to monitor their competitors strategies. Up and coming brands can see what has worked well for competitors as well as what is working for big name brands who have a large social media following and take inspiration from their marketing techniques. (Hood, 2021) Ways in which fashion brands can do this is by using relevant hashtags (McCain, 2019) that are used by brands which are targeting a similar audience. This will make it easier for customers to find new brands that offer clothes that match their aesthetic, while also giving companies with less following a similar reach to what the industry leaders have.

With this electronic word of mouth and the ability to express satisfaction with the click of a like button it has also led to consumers being subject to targeted advertisements. Claxton,

2021, Highlighted how every click of a key on your laptop has not become a point where data is collected about the user. This data is then used by companies who use this information to target specific adverts which relate to the likes the user has given. This paper shows a clear insight into how accessible a consumer's information is to a company, and how easy it is for said company to use such information to influence their customers purchasing habits. Claxton however also gives note to how these targeted advertisements are argued to aid the consumers by giving them personalised adverts of items they actually want. The thought is that it is better for the consumer to see products that are accurate to their tastes instead of products at random.

Influencer Marketing:

The use of influential persons to promote brand awareness and to motivate a company's target market is a core marketing strategy in the fashion industry. Traditionally, it was brand ambassadors who helped portray the lifestyle of the type of individual that would be a customer to the brand that was being marketed. These people would usually have been working for the brand under a long-term contract. (Baker, 2021) When we look back to the mid 1990's and early 2000's, the likes of Tiger Woods with Nike and Beckham with Adidas really stand out as successful use of brand ambassadors when captivating an audience with a brand. During these long-term contracts, an ambassador can create a community by constantly exposing their audience to the company that hired them, allowing for a long-term connection between followers and company. (Fraculj, 2021) This constant exposure to a company through an ambassador with a large following can give followers the feeling of being like their role model if they associate themselves with the brand as well. However, while brand ambassadors are still a useful tool for marketers today, the use of influencers have become a dominant source of advertising in the fashion industry. The use of influencers through social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok capture a \$10 billion market, and it would be difficult to find a firm in the fashion industry that does not make use of such a valuable resource. (Haenlein, 2020) This proves the findings from Augure, 2015, as it was stated in their paper that 75% of marketers are now using influencers as to promote goods and services sold by an organization. The amount of value that this marketing technique brings in highlights just how crucial they are to the industry today, but also just how exposed social media users always are to such enticing strategies within the industry.

The world of social media accommodates all areas of fashion as well as brands who differ in reach of consumers. Even new fashion brands or brands still expanding, the use of influencers to help advertise their clothing is still highly accessible. Micro-influencers are a great resource for said organizations to work with as they usually have a smaller following of roughly between 1,000-10,000 followers and are usually known for having high rates of engagement due to their smaller follower base. (Bernazzani, 2019) This increase in engagement with their followers can increase the likelihood of sales as consumers are now taking advice from someone who lives a similar lifestyle, navigating away from the fantasy world of fashion that celebrities may have promoted as discussed earlier. This is proven as micro-influencers are engaging with their following with 22.2 times the amount of conversation than a celebrity or large influencer would have with their audience. In addition to this a finding of 82% of people in a study said they would take advice from a micro-influencer. (Felicio, 2021) This percentage partnered with the daily and monthly Facebook and Instagram users previously discussed, it shows how the fashion industry has evolved into, and is increasingly becoming a bigger industry, creating more fashionists as it grows. This proves the positive effects of using such an influencer in the industry as consumers will take advice on what a peer deems fashionable and will allow for companies to be given a chance by their target market, as well as allowing the consumer to have more information and choice of what they may want to wear.

Not only does the influencer communicate and engage with their followers about brands, but they also have a more subtle effect on pushing followers to buy what they are being paid to promote. The more followers an influencer has, the more likely followers will believe what they are promoting is what they want, acting as peripheral towards a brand. (Metzger and Flanagin, 2013) This acts as a form of peer pressure as if followers of big accounts see influential peers wearing something, they feel they need to wear it to so that they appear as popular. Sundar, 2008, called this the 'bandwagon heuristic', describing how people will jump on the same trends as a popular account, regardless of if they really like the item or not. This underlines how such use of influencers can potentially exploit a company's target market into handing over their money for items of clothing they do not want by making them feel less popular if they do not. This could be the case especially for the younger generations who use social media and engage in shopping through the platforms. Kaushal, 2011, highlighted how this potentially could happen as teenagers are going through physical changes and are constantly looking for new clothes to complement said changes.

Live Streaming E-commerce.

A live stream shopping approach has now also taken off as a marketing strategy through social media. This could be argued to have been influenced by traditional marketing through television shows such as QVC. This marketing effort has created a new fun and interactive approach to shopping through social media. According to research conducted, the global live streaming market is expected to reach \$60 billion by 2026. (Guoxin Li, 2020) These online streams in the fashion industry act almost like a live catwalk show, having the clothing modelled live while giving the consumer the feeling of being a part of an event while they shop. This strategy has been driven by the Chinese market made up of primarily Gen Z and Millennials (Gen Y) and has been as effective to where 37% of Chinas online shoppers made live stream purchases in 2019. (Greenwald, 2020) This proves just how effective it has been in China, but has the Irish market caught on to this fun and interactive way of shopping on social media is yet to be analysed.

However, Verve Donegal are a fashion outlet who have been quick to spot the trend and jumping at opportunity to further capture their audience across the country. It can even be seen through their Facebook page that the live streaming ecommerce efforts have been substantially there most liked post with getting double and sometimes triple the number of reactions. (Verve Donegal, 2020) This shows exciting times for the fashion industry as marketers are constantly finding even more clever ways to use social media marketing as a way to recapture their audience.

Sustainable Fashion:

Another effect social media has had on consumers in respect to how they view the industry in the rise in concern of the damage being done to the environment. The evidence is frightening as Hopkins pointed out a finding that if the trends seen in fashion in 2017 continue, by 2050 fashion alone will take excess of a quarter of the worlds annual carbon budget. (Hopkins, 2018) Just like electronic word of mouth spread information about brands has meant a further reach of information to consumers, so is the case for such worrying stats. This information however will potentially discourage consumer spending in the industry as buyers may be more conscious about their carbon footprint, especially when it comes to fashion. This research paper will aim to further investigate how this has affected consumers outlook on

buying clothes, and to see if social media has actually helped the cause as opposed to worsening it.

Emily Johnson, 2020, wrote an article on how sustainable fashion is on course to be the future of the fashion industry and how this is due to the help of social media. It was said in the article that reselling social platforms such as Etsy and Depop have exploded in popularity, especially amongst gen Z consumers. This highlights the part of the research, if social media has in fact helped consumers be more comfortable in purchasing sustainable clothes as it has shifted focus away from fast fashion, but instead into buying second hand. YouTube has been a platform which has helped such promotion with pages such as Emily's, Jacob Starr, (Starr, 2021) and Jacob Keller (AlwaysFreshApparel, 2021) all having content on their pages promoting vintage clothing which they bought and are wearing. The two Jacobs in fact have used their platforms to start reselling items they find so people not near a thrift store can buy clothes in a sustainable manner. Bates, 2020, also strengthened this idea by describing four ways in which content creators can promote being more sustainable when consuming fashion through their social media's. These being 1) Using their platforms to educate, 2) Buying vintage, 3) Clothes swaps, 4) Buying slow fashion. Again, all four of these efforts have been seen across YouTube as the community of fashion creators on the platform has grown, with content of the creators meeting up and swapping found items on their pages. This again shows how social media has really built a community in the industry which has not been seen before. While seeing these efforts through videos it could be argued that it motivates viewers to do the same, not only to help environmental issues, but also to save themselves money while revamping their wardrobe.

2.4 Literary Review Summary.

As we can see from this literary review, there are commonalities between traditional and new social media marketing efforts. The use of influential figures has been a method of advertising products to a targeted market before social media. However, it is seen with the help of data collection using the right influential figure has become easier and more effective as the marketer can see the link between company and audience. The data collected through likes and cookies means there is less risk and more often than not more reward. The lives streaming e-commerce has been on the rise but again, was something already seen traditionally on television programmes like QVC. Again however, with social media it has

become more effective as it is in the hand of the consumer, eliminating the need for them to sit down and find the correct channel. The next section will discuss the research methodology of this paper, investigating to what effect these new social media efforts of marketing has had on the consumers in the fashion industry.

Chapter 3

Research Question.

As the title of the paper suggests, the aim of the research conducted is to analyse the effects social media has had on the fashion industry, and more importantly what effects it has had on the consumer. The research will cover four specific areas, those being: 1) Targeted advertisements, 2) influencer marketing, 3) Live streaming e-commerce, and 4) Sustainable fashion. There will also be a couple of open answered questions to give the participant a chance to give there positive and negative thoughts on the topic if they want to share them.

The results of the survey will be aimed to analyse the overall engagement from Irish consumers on social media in the fashion industry. The overall consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction incurred from fashion being marketed on social media will also be revised. The research will ask a small number of demographic questions to identify who and where consumes fashion the most through the digital platforms. For example, what the percentage of males to females who engage with fashion influencers on social media. However, the respondent does not have to specify their gender if they do not feel comfortable in doing so, while also having the option in giving an alternative gender to male or female. The findings will also be analysed as a whole, giving an overall conclusion to the results.

From the research that will done, there will firstly be a conclusion made to how engaging targeted advertisements are to fashion consumers. The results will highlight the reach targeted clothing adverts have on social media. From this we will then be able to see the accuracy of these advertisements, proving or disproving if their effectiveness to engage the consumer. This section of the research will then be concluded by pinpointing to what percentage consumers find such advertising effective.

The same points will be reviewed and analysed in the influencer and live streaming e-commerce areas of the research. Under the question about the influencers, it will be seen whether the Irish fashion market engages heavily with this type of promotion. The effectiveness of micro-influencers and larger influencers in how they engage said their audiences will be drawn from the research. We will be able to see if one type of influencer is more effective than the other or do they both have an even playing field. The reliability of their promotions will also be considered. The effectiveness of live streaming e-commerce fashion events will be brought to attention. We will see if Ireland have caught on to this new

trend of marketing on social media or is this method of engaging buyers still predominantly in China.

The final section of the research question will see if social media has had a positive effect in pushing consumers to buy in a more sustainable fashion. We will see the reasons why people buy second-hand clothing, and if social media played a role in getting them to do so.

From secondary research conducted in this field of academia, the following hypothesis have been formed. The research carried out in this paper will aim to prove these hypotheses:

H1: Through targeted advertisements on social media, consumers have an easier time of finding clothing that suits their style and that they would like to buy.

H2: Consumers tend to engage more with micro-influencers over larger influencers and trust what they are buying from their advertisements.

H3: Live streaming e-commerce is a rising fun and effective way of purchasing clothing through social media.

H4: Social media has promoted the idea of trying to shop sustainably in the fashion industry.

Chapter 4

Methodology.

4.1 Introduction.

Oxford Dictionary defines methodology “*a system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity.*” (Stevenson, 2011) With regard to research methods, the methodology is the procedures and efforts taken by an individual to investigate a particular area of research. The methodology of a dissertation covers what data you need to find in order to formulate conclusions to the research question at hand. It also highlights what way you will obtain said data, while also considering how you will analyse it.

To figure out what data you need to consider to fulfil your research question, it is common to first form some hypothesis from reviewing literature around the area of consideration. From here you then decide what objectives need to be determined in order to prove if these hypotheses are accurate. The research instrument and research sample will then be chosen. Here you will decide what way you will gather the data, either quantitative or qualitative methods, and who it is that will be providing the information needed.

4.2 Research Aims and Objectives.

A research aim is the general purpose of the research paper at hand. (Thomas, 2010) As previously stated, the aim of the research at hand is to analyse the effects that social media has had on fashion industry consumers. The research will aim to gather these findings through questioning four different areas of social media marketing that are prominent in the fashion industry. The research will hopefully identify if social media marketing efforts has caused a more positive engagement of consumers or if it has left consumers overwhelmed and dissatisfied with the constant push of fashion content on their social media feeds?

The research objectives on the other hand focus on all the key areas under investigation in the paper. (Thomas, 2010) The first objective of the conducted research in this paper will be to identify the social media platforms that the audience is using. Reaching a conclusion for this objective will show what platforms are most used, and how much time is spent on said social media platforms a day. We will also be able to isolate these findings into the different demographics that will also be a part of the research question. Isolating each objective into specific demographics will be applicable.

After analysing the first objective, the next aim will be to see how effective targeted adverts are on social media in the fashion industry. From these findings, a conclusion can be formed to how present said advertisements are, and how accurate they are for the Irish fashionista. This section of the research questions will depict whether these targeted advertisements on the consumer feed are noticed, are appreciated, or are thought of as inaccurate.

The next objective will be to analyse the findings surrounding influencer marketing. At this section of the research question, it will be highlighted whether influencers have a good rapport with the Irish fashion market. It will be seen whether if micro-influencer or larger influencers have a better persuasion over Irish consumers, and whether the Irish consumers appreciate such efforts.

Gathering information on the effectiveness of e-commerce live streaming in the fashion industry in Ireland will also be an objective of the research. With this way of shopping fashion through social media becoming a fun and popular trend in China, it will be exciting to find out whether the Irish market has jumped on said trend. And if so, how the Irish consumers feel towards such a method of social media shopping.

The final objective is to focus on how social media has influenced sustainable fashion to the Irish market. This will highlight whether sustainable fashion is on the rise in Ireland and whether social media has caused such influence. From the research questions it will also be noticed what exact reasons consumers are following this trend of fashion, for example if its price, environmentally conscious etc.

4.3 Proposed Research Methodology.

After researching different frameworks for methodology guidance, Saunders Onion was the best fit for this research paper. The research onion describes different options to take at different stages to help develop your research design and application. (15writers, 2020) With the in-depth research on the framework, the chosen framework felt the most natural to use and provided a clearer path to alternatives.

This research framework is made up of 6 layers that will aid for a more organised methodology. The first layer consists of the philosophy. Here is where the overall stance as to why the research is being conducted. The philosophy of the is understood under the terms of ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the understanding of the existing reality, while

epistemology is then where you can research such reality. This will then form if the research philosophy will fall under positions of positivism or interpretivism.

The next layer is defining how the research will be approached. The approach can be deductive where you form hypothesis from reviewing literature and then test these hypotheses. The alternative approach is an inductive approach where observations are made to form a new theory.

The strategy that will be used will be essence of the next layer of the onion. Here it will be decided what way of obtaining the information for the research. In the case of this study, the strategy taken will be a survey.

The next step is to choose the methods of choice that will be in the study. For example, qualitative or quantitative. You can choose a mono-method, mixed method, and multi-method. These choices underline the number of methods used.

The final two stages then will be the time horizon used. This is to show the time frame of the research. The final layer is about how you collected and analysed that data received.

4.4 Research Philosophy.

As briefly touched on above, this section of the research paper is to decide on the philosophy that will be taken. This will then capture the overall stance of the paper. Firstly, it is evident in this research that there are both ontology and epistemology research methods that form together to make the philosophy of the paper. In regard to ontology, this paper has a one true reality. This reality is that fashion is consumed by people through social media. However, the epistemology research method comes in as this paper further investigates how this form of fashion consumption is perceived by the consumer. This is where the paper will be observed by the conductor of the paper and measure the different ways fashion is consumed through social media, and how accurate and positive the consumer thinks these methods are. From this a philosophy of positivism is formed.

A research paper with a philosophy of positivism “is in accordance with the empiricist view that knowledge stems from human experience. It has an atomistic, ontological view of the world as comprising discrete, observable elements and events that interact in an observable, determined and regular manner” (Collins, 2010) This highlights a reason for this chosen philosophy for this paper as it is analysing the human experience of how fashion is consumed through social media. A second justifiable reason for using said philosophy is that the

researcher of the paper is independent from the research and is leaving it purely to objection. This therefore means that there is minimal contact between researcher and participant. (Wilson, 2010) Limited reaction is easily maintained during this research paper as the only period of contact between researcher and participant is the invite to participate.

Other philosophies have been researched and considered while forming this paper. However, after a fair consideration they were rejected. Interpretivism was analysed and studied to figure out if it would fit the philosophy of the paper. Seeing as this research paper did not use interviews and other observational methods of research the conclusion was that this philosophy was not an ideal fit.

Realism was another alternative philosophy that was studied before making a final decision for the philosophy of the paper. Critical realism did not fit as this paper is believed not to be deceptive. Direct realism also did not match for its own reason. Direct realism has a see what you get type of attitude. Seeing as this paper may have conflicting results, it was concluded that this too was not the philosophy to go with.

Finally, pragmatism was not selected to be the philosophy of this paper. This approach will believe that there are always multiple realities and that no single point of view can capture the concluding answer. While this could be an optional under this papers literary area, the concluding feeling was that this philosophy would be better used in further researcher after this research has been conducted.

4.5 Research Approach.

A research approach is a vital section in the research paper. The approach bridges the theory to what the paper is aiming to investigate. The approach one takes when conducting research allows a direction and a plan to be formed. The approach will bridge the gap from hypotheses and/or broad assumptions based on secondary research or by making observations and allow for new data to be found and analysed against said hypotheses or assumptions. The research approach will also help formulate what strategy will be used to find the data.

There are approaches that are used in a research paper. These are an inductive approach and a deductive approach. An inductive approach is where observations are formed by the research

makes and uses them to create a new theory. In contrast, the deductive approach is where gradual hypotheses are formed through research literary, and then testing if these hypotheses that they formed hold true. (15writers, 2021)

For the bases of this paper, the chosen research approach is a deductive approach. Through analysing academic papers and leading websites around the topic of both fashion and social media, the ability to form certain hypotheses on the subject. This was a leading reason to the choice of this approach as a hypothesis was able to be formed naturally whilst reading. On the contrary, a strong force as to why an inductive approach was not used was due to difficulty in being able to observe an audience's consumption of fashion through social media. It would have been nearly impossible to see how the topic at hand affects them.

It was also found that using a deductive approach would allow the researcher to formulate a strategy where a larger population could participate and be analysed. With hypotheses formed it made for a simpler time in creating more accurate questions. This approach felt more direct and to the point, while also giving the audience a choice of their own opinion on the subject, not just the observation of the researcher. A final reason as to why an inductive approach did not fit was due to a global pandemic. Even if going out and making observations was an accurate way to research the topic at hand, it was not plausible due to lockdowns.

4.6 Research Strategy.

The research strategy is the 'how' in regard to finding the data for your research question overall. There are many strategies to take including a survey, case studies, and interviews. For the purpose of this research paper a survey was the choice of strategy. Due to the deductive approach and the formulation of hypotheses, it felt most natural to use a survey for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was understood that the testing of the made hypothesis was possible through questions on a survey. As well as this the survey had the most potential to reach the largest population.

The survey was made up of twenty-five quantitative questions and two qualitative questions. The two qualitative questions were in place to gather information that may result in further investigations on the topic. A mixed-method approach is when there is a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research. (Yu, 2021) Therefore a mixed method was used in this study, even though it was majority of the survey fell under quantitative research.

4.7 Data Collection

Qualitative data explores the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ that humans experience. (Marshall, 1996) For example, if the survey had open ended questions where the participant can say why something affected them. Quantitative research on the other hand is concerned with gathering factual information. For example, data collected in the demographic section of a survey would be factual, giving the researcher factual percentages of who is partaking in the survey.

Through the survey collecting quantitative data was used to gain overall percentages of what social media platforms people were using. It also shows how what platforms did they consume fashion on, and different questions that would highlight the accuracy and the perception that different social media marketing efforts have had on consumers in the industry. It was important to include a couple of open-ended question to discover the how social media has affected the consumer overall. This will allow for any concluding remarks that may require further investigation in the future.

There were five different areas covered that were subject to quantitative data collection. There were demographic questions so there could be an investigation to see if different genders or age groups favour consuming fashion in different ways through social media. There were also general social media questions used to see what platforms are used and the overall time spent on social media. Then the survey ventured into the different ways fashion is consumed through social media. From reviewing literature, it was found that there were four main areas. Specified targeted adverts, influencer marketing, e-commerce live streams, and sustainable fashion. Each of the four areas had questions that would draw information on how accurate and effective said areas were. These areas also included if these methods are perceived well by consumers.

4.8 Population.

When formulating the research survey for this paper, there was very little in place to isolate a population. The survey asked on gender, however, any gender was welcome to participate. Gen X (1965-1976), Gen Y (1977-1995), Gen Z (1996-2010), and Gen Alpha (2011-present)

were included. These were the chosen generations as it was the most likely to be present across social media platforms as well the easiest for the researcher to reach. With using social media as a way of consuming fashion relatively new to platforms, it was thought that these generations would also be the ones most likely to use the e-commerce features through the various platforms.

The sample size of the population was made up of 177 participants who responded to the survey. This population size was accumulated over the five-day duration the survey was live. All generations besides Gen Alpha (2011- present) took part.

4.9 Analysing Data.

The data of this research was collected through Google Docs. (Google Docs, 2021) The reason that this platform was chosen was due to it being a free platform which allows unlimited responses. Google Docs also provides a simple layout for both creator and participant. For the researcher, Google Docs provides a simple breakdown of the results of each question meaning you can analyse the data as it comes in. This data analysis however is not very complex and was only used as a way of keep a general idea on how the survey is being answered.

The data collected from the survey was also saved on an Excel spreadsheet. Said spreadsheet was stored on the computer hard drive, a USB, and sent to the researchers own email. This was to ensure that data was prevented from being deleted or lost. The Excel spreadsheet was then used to gain a more in-depth view on the data received from the participants. This was used for its ability to isolate different demographics so a comparison could be made on the results. The use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software will be used to show our findings and analysis in chapter 5.

4.10 Ethical Issues.

An ethics form was provided before a participant could begin their response to the survey. The first part of the form discussed briefly what the survey would entail. From here the four different areas of social media consumption that were going to be investigated were given.

The concluding hope for this research paper was then given. This was given to the responder before they took part so that they had full awareness of why the data was being collected and so that they could decide if they wanted their information on the topic to be analysed.

An ethical code of conduct then was given. This involved a series of bullet points for the participant to read and decide if they agreed to everything being said. This included things such as the name and the college of the researcher. It then went into telling the participants their rights to refuse or ask for their survey not to be used at any point if they changed their minds. It was also stated that data collected would remain confidential. These points were made available to the participant to ensure that using their information was ethically sound.

4.11 Limitations to Research.

When trying to conduct a research paper there are more often than not limitations to the research method. The first limitation that this paper met was the time frame. This capped the amount of time where more responses could have been obtained to make for a more accurate conclusion. While 177 is a good number, an increase in the time available could have allowed for 250 plus respondents.

With this paper being created during the global pandemic of COVID-19, there were limitations to what research strategies were available to use. The use of a survey was the most viable strategy and was going to be used regardless, however interviews would have been an insightful way of gathering information from specific sources. For example, it would have been intriguing to interview individuals that work in the industry to see how they felt about the topic. For example, going to clothing stores to interview managers, or getting in touch with workers in the e-commerce side of fashion could have given the research a wider stance. However, with Covid restrictions it limits the amount of ability of human interaction. Therefore, with the limited time available this strategy also became restricted.

This snowballs into the final limitation this paper encountered. With interviews being unavailable to the researcher it also made for a lack of in-depth qualitative data to be gathered. With interviews, the research could have further investigated the 'how' and the

‘why’ surrounding the subject. This would have been intuitive information to have been gathered as it would have come from workers in the industry.

Chapter 5

Findings and Analysis.

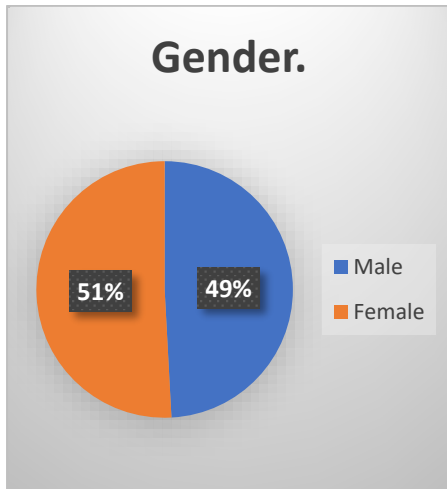
This section of the research paper will analyse the data that was retrieved from the questionnaire on social medias influence on the fashion industry, which was completed by the 177 random participants. The data follows the process that was mentioned in methodology, which can be found in chapter 4 of the paper. By using the guidance of the research questions formed in chapter 3 and analysing them against the data collected from the survey, it will allow for a conclusion to be conducted of the hypotheses in chapter 3. The findings of the survey will be analysed under descriptive frequency statistics to find the accuracy and perception of 1) targeted advertisements, 2) influencer marketing, 3) live streaming e-commerce, and 4) sustainable fashion. This will allow the research to find out what percentage of individuals, both male and female, who find these methods accurate and what percentage of people are happy with said efforts. A comparison between the two genders will also be analysed to see if certain efforts have caught on more to a specific gender. The researcher used the statistical programme Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27, to display the findings of the data. A descriptive frequency analysis will be conducted on all findings.

5.1 Demographic Findings.

Gender.

The part last part of the survey was a series of three questions to give the researcher some idea on the different demographics. This gave the researcher some knowledge as to who the sample population were, while keeping their identities anonymous. A question regarding gender was asked. As stated above, this was to see if there were any major differences as to how each gender consumed fashion through social media platforms. As seen in the pie chart below (*Figure 5.1*), there was almost an even split of both male and female respondents, with only 2% in the difference. There were 90 females who took part in the questionnaire, taking up 51% of the responses. The other 49% responses were from the 87 males who participated.

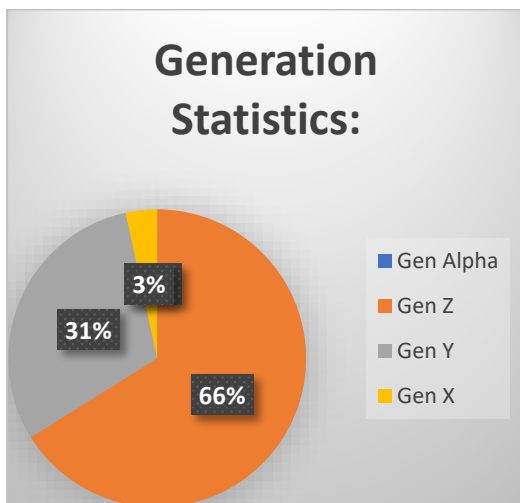
These findings being so close in percentage allowed for a fair comparison between the two genders.



(Figure 5.1)

Generation Statistics.

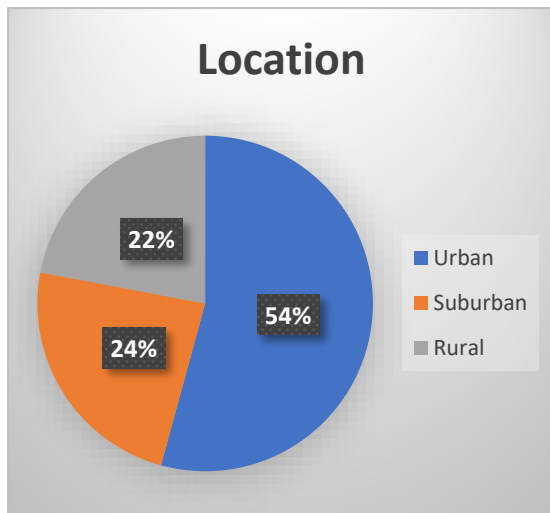
The next demographic question asked the respondents what generation they are from. The four options were as stated in the methodology, 1) Gen Alpha (2011-present), 2) Gen Z (1996-2010), 3) Gen Y (1977-1995), 4) Gen X (1965-1976). As seen in the figure (Figure 5.2) below there were no respondents from Gen Alpha, while Gen Z took the majority with 117 (66%). Gen Y accounted for 31% of the responses, making up 54 individuals. Leaving 6 individuals from Gen X, who made up 3% of the remaining responses.



(Figure 5.2)

Location.

The final question on the demographic section was to find out where the respondents were from. These findings gave the researcher a brief idea as to where the sample population was from. The three options were, 1) urban, 2) suburban, and 3) rural. As in *Figure 5.3*, just over half the respondents were from an urban area at 54%. While suburban respondents was at 24%, leaving the remaining 22% of the sample from a rural area.



(Figure 5.3)

5.2 Descriptive Statistics.

Hypothesis 1: *Through targeted advertisements on social media, consumers have an easier time of finding clothing that suits their style and that they would like to buy.*

A descriptive frequency analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the survey. Three questions were asked regarding targeted advertisements. The results of the first question highlighted the accuracy that targets had on consumers in the fashion industry. *Table 1.1a* showed that all the male respondents noticed that they were exposed to targeted fashion related advertisements. While *Table 1.1b* shows that there were slightly less females exposed to targeted advertisements, at 95.6% noticing. However, there is only a small margin in the difference highlighting that targeted advertisements are a very present means of marketing fashion on social platforms.

Exposure to Targeted Advertisements (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Answer	Yes	87	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Table 1.1a)

Exposure to Targeted Advertisements (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	86	95.6	95.6	95.6
	No	4	4.4	4.4	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 1.1b)

The next question on targeted advertisements was to pinpoint how accurate these advertisements were to each consumer. The respondent had four options to choose from: 1) yes, the ads I have seen are clothing I would buy, 2) no, the ads I have seen do not resemble the clothing I would usually buy, 3) sometimes they have, but not consistently, and 4) I have not really noticed. Here it was found that under 50% of both genders found the advertisements targeted at them to be either inaccurate or inconsistent with their accuracy. *Table 1.2a*, shows the male results to how accurate the adverts were, while *table 1.2b* shows the findings for the female respondents.

Accuracy of Targeted Advertisements. (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	33	37.9	37.9	37.9
	2	3	3.4	3.4	41.4
	3	51	58.6	58.6	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 1.2a)

Accuracy of Targeted Advertisements. (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	48	53.3	53.3	53.3
	2	1	1.1	1.1	54.4
	3	39	43.3	43.3	97.8
	4	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 1.2b)

We can see from these results that even though both male and female participants have high exposure rates, there is less to be said about the accuracy of what they are being exposed to. With only 37.9% of males seeing clothing advertised that matches what they are looking for, it shows that said adverts are not very effective for males. For females 53.3% find the adverts are accurate. However, with both genders being greatly exposed to this form of advertisements, the accuracy is falling short by a large percentage.

The question that will form a conclusion to hypothesis 1 will be one that highlights whether the consumer has found these advertisements to make their purchasing of clothing easier. The findings to this question mirrored the findings of the previous question. Again nearly 50% of both genders found that these advertisements have not helped them when it comes to buying what they want. This was to be expected with low accuracy rating from the advertisements in question. *Table 1.3a* will highlight the male results, and *table 1.3b* will show the results from the female participants.

Helpfulness Gained from Targeted Advertisements (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	42	48.3	48.3	48.3
	No	41	47.1	47.1	95.4
	N/A	4	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 1.3a)

Helpfulness Gained from Targeted Advertisements (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	46	51.1	51.1	51.1
	No	36	40.0	40.0	91.1
	N/A	8	8.9	8.9	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 1.3b)

From all the finding above, we can conclude that the hypothesis formed from researching the topic does not hold in the fashion industry in Ireland. Over half of both the male and female respondents found that even with high exposure rates to targeted advertisements, they in fact do not find it easier to find clothing they would wear and want to buy on social media.

Hypothesis 2: *Consumers tend to engage more with micro-influencers over larger influencers and trust what they are buying from their advertisements.*

For this hypothesis, the same descriptive frequency analysis was used for the findings of questions regarding influencers. The first question asked whether the participants followed fashion influencers, both micro-influencers and larger influencers. They had four options to choose from: 1) yes, with both types of influencers, 2) yes, but only with micro-influencers (smaller following) who I share a similar lifestyle with, 3) yes, but only the larger influencers, and 4) none at all. In *table 2.1a* below, you can see that 46% of male respondents do not follow fashion influencers at all, while the males who do favoured towards a mixture of the two or just micro-influencers. Only 1 male respondent followed just large influencers.

For the female participants, influencer engagement was higher with only 21.1% of the respondents not following any fashion influencer. With the remaining respondents a similar pattern showed to the males. The majority of respondents followed both types of influencers at 40%, followed by 37.8% of the respondents following just micro-influencers. See *table 2.1b* below. Like the male findings, only 1 female participant followed just larger influencers.

Influencer Engagement (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	26	29.9	29.9	29.9
	2	20	23.0	23.0	52.9
	3	1	1.1	1.1	54.0
	4	40	46.0	46.0	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.1a)

Influencer Engagement (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	34	37.8	37.8	37.8
	2	36	40.0	40.0	77.8
	3	1	1.1	1.1	78.9
	4	19	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.1b)

From the findings above, a conclusion to the first part of hypothesis 2 is formed. It is evident that both genders do engage more with micro-influencers than larger ones, therefore proving that part of the hypothesis correct. It is evident that if the participants do engage with larger influencers, they have a mix of both types. While only two respondents only follow just larger ones.

The next question under this hypothesis aimed to find from the individuals who do follow influencers, how many have bought from their advertising. This will show us how effective influencer marketing is. From the *table 2.2a* below, it is clear that even though over half of the male participants followed some sort of fashion influencer, their purchasing decisions have not been as to the same effect. Only 25.3% of the respondents actually went and purchased clothing due to influencer marketing tactics.

On the other hand, *table 2.2b* shows that influencer marketing has a far greater influence on the female audience. Findings show that 64.4% of the female participants purchased clothing due to influencer marketing, highlighting that it has greater persuasion techniques on the female consumers of the fashion industry.

Purchase of Clothing due to Influencers (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	22	25.3	25.3	25.3
	No	48	55.2	55.2	80.5
	N/A	17	19.5	19.5	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.2a)

Purchase of Clothing due to Influencers (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	58	64.4	64.4	64.4
	No	27	30.0	30.0	94.4
	N/A	5	5.6	5.6	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.2b)

The final question to conclude hypothesis 2, focused on the consumers who purchased clothing due to influencers advertisements on social media. The findings from said question will identify the final part of the hypothesis by showing an indication to whether they found the items they bought to be to standard. The four options for the respondents could choose from were, 1) yes, I was happy, and it was what I expected, 2) no, I was not happy with the clothing, 3) I have experienced both feelings, and 4) not applicable.

From the findings below (*Table 2.3a, Table 2.3b*) we see that only 16.1% of the males who purchased clothing due to influencer advertising were happy with what they bought. In comparison to the 40% of female participants being completely happy with said purchases. The remaining 13.8% of the males who purchased clothing had experienced both good and bad feelings towards their purchase. The females who also experienced both good and bad purchases made up for 25.6% of the responses, leaving the remaining 2.2% of females who purchased clothing completely unhappy with their purchases.

Feelings Towards Purchases from Influencers (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	14	16.1	16.1	16.1
	3	12	13.8	13.8	29.9
	4	61	70.1	70.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.3a)

Feelings Towards Purchases from Influencers (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	36	40.0	40.0	40.0
	2	2	2.2	2.2	42.2
	3	23	25.6	25.6	67.8
	4	29	32.2	32.2	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 2.3b)

From the findings on this section, it can be concluded that both genders tend to follow micro-influencers more. It can also be seen from the people who do purchase clothing advertised by influencers are happy with what they receive for the most part. Only 2 females out of the

responses found that 80 people who said they purchased clothing from influencers were completely unhappy. This therefore proves that hypothesis 2 is correct.

Hypothesis 3: *Live streaming e-commerce is a rising fun and effective way of purchasing clothing through social media.*

The third hypothesis will focus on the growing trend seen in China of live streaming e-commerce events. The question asked to this research population was whether fashion consumers have attended a live streaming e-commerce fashion event. The findings showed that only a small percentage of participants had attended. From *table 3.1a* and *table 3.1b* below, it is seen that only 4.6% of male, and 2.2% of female respondents had been to one. This proved that the first part of said hypothesis is not true as there is little indication that this type of event is on the rise.

Live stream E-commerce fashion event attendance (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	4	4.6	4.6	4.6
	No	83	95.4	95.4	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.1a)

Live stream E-commerce fashion event attendance (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
	2	88	97.8	97.8	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.1b)

The next question highlighted the effectiveness of such an event on consumer purchasing. This question will highlight the effectiveness of these events regarding purchases made. For the males it was found that 3 out of the 4 people who attended made a purchase from the live stream. In addition, both the females who attended a live stream event made a purchase, giving a 100% success rate for the female participants. These findings prove the hypothesis correct in terms of effectiveness of such a live stream e-commerce event in fashion. (See both *table 3.2a*, and *table 3.2b* for findings)

Purchases from an Event (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	3.4	3.4	3.4
	No	10	11.5	11.5	14.9
	N/A	74	85.1	85.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.2a)

Purchases from an Event (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	2	2.2	2.2	2.2
	2	7	7.8	7.8	10.0
	3	81	90.0	90.0	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.2b)

The final question under hypothesis 3 was to find out the consumer perception for this means of consuming fashion through social media. It was found that this question was not answered accurately with more response stating they enjoyed the event than people who responded saying they attended one. However, for both genders there was one response each stating that they did not enjoy the event. *(Table 3.3a, Table 3.3b)* Therefore, the research will assume that the remaining attendees of each gender in fact did enjoy the live stream event that they attend. Therefore, the findings indicate that the events are a fun means of fashion consumption, proving the final part of the hypothesis correct. To conclude from the findings, hypothesis 3 is accurate in terms of such events being an effective and fun way of consuming fashion. However, there is little to say that it is on the rise in the industry in Ireland.

Event Enjoyment (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	9	10.3	10.3	10.3
	No	1	1.1	1.1	11.5
	N/A	77	88.5	88.5	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.3a)

Event Enjoyment (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	4.4	4.4	4.4
	2	1	1.1	1.1	5.6
	3	85	94.4	94.4	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 3.3b)

Hypothesis 4: *Social media has promoted the idea of trying to shop sustainably in the fashion industry.*

The final hypothesis to conclude is to figure out how big of an effect social media has had on consumers purchasing of second-hand/sustainable clothing. Firstly, the participants were asked whether or not they had ever bought second-hand clothing online. From the finding on *table 4.1a*, we see that 55.2% of males have bought second-hand clothes online. From the findings on *table 4.1b*, it shows that 51.1% of the female participants also bought second-hand clothing online.

Second-Hand Clothing Purchases Online (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	55.2	55.2	55.2
	No	39	44.8	44.8	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.1a)

Second-Hand Clothing Purchases Online (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	46	51.1	51.1	51.1
	No	44	48.9	48.9	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.1b)

Now that it was seen that over half of both genders have bought second-hand clothing online, the next question was designed to show social-medias effects on said purchases. It was seen in *table 4.2a*, that only 26 out of the 48 purchases by males were advertised through social media. The findings for the females shown on *table 4.2b*, showed similar results with only 24 purchases of the 46 were bought through social media. This highlights that social media have an effective presence when promoting the purchasing of sustainable clothing online.

Purchases Advertised Through Social Media (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	26	29.9	29.9	29.9
	No	61	70.1	70.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.2a)

Purchases Advertised Through Social Media (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	24	26.7	26.7	26.7
	No	66	73.3	73.3	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.2b)

The final question asked the surveys population whether social media has influenced consumers in the fashion industry to try make more sustainable purchases. *Table 4.3a* showed that over half of the male respondents found that social media did not influence their decision to purchase sustainable clothing, while 64.4% of females were influenced by social media to make said purchases. (*Table 4.3b*) From this information it can be concluded that social media overall has an effect on promoting sustainable purchasing in the fashion industry. Therefore, proving hypothesis 4 correct. However, there is still room for improvement, especially for males.

Social Media Influence on Sustainable Purchasing (Male)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	38	43.7	43.7	43.7
	No	49	56.3	56.3	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.3a)

Social Media Influence on Sustainable Purchasing (Female)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	58	64.4	64.4	64.4
	2	32	35.6	35.6	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	

(Table 4.3b)

5.3 Summary of Findings

After gathering all the findings from the research survey and using SPSS to analyse the data using descriptive frequency analysis, a conclusion to each of the four hypothesis were formed. It was seen that the findings of this research failed to match the hypothesis which was formed in chapter 4 of this paper. It highlighted how targeted advertisements are heavily used but fall short in terms of accuracy. Especially for males.

Hypothesis 2 was found to be true when analysed against the findings of this paper. It was seen from the data that was collected from the papers population that consumers engage more with micro-influencers over larger ones. With this, it was noted that for the most part consumers were left happy with their purchases from the influencer marketing strategy, with only two respondents left completely unhappy.

After analysing the data gathered for hypothesis 3, it was seen that the live streaming e-commerce events in fashion did prove to be fun and effective. However, the only way the hypothesis did not show its honesty was that it stated that these events were on the rise. With only 6 out of 177 individuals attending such an event, it is yet to be seen how many people in Ireland even know of such events.

Social medias contribution to promoting the consumption of sustainable clothing was the final area at question. The hypothesis stated that social media is promoting the idea of sustainability in the fashion industry. It was seen that this statement was true as over half of

the population who bought second-hand clothes online found said clothing through social media. Noted there is room for improvement, however it seems that there is an effort being made.

Chapter 6

Discussion.

This chapter of the paper will have a more in-depth consultation about the findings and analysis seen in chapter 5 and discussing them in more detail with comparisons to the literary review research made in chapter 2. This chapter will allow the researcher to express any unexpected results they found in the findings of their research that were a surprise to see after reviewing external literature. This chapter will also accommodate the researchers' thoughts on the hypotheses that held true and link them with chapter 2 for greater clarity for the reader.

6.1: Discussion of Hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1 questioned the accuracy and perception that targeted advertisements through social media have on the fashion industry. As stated by Claxton, 2021, these advertisements were personalised exactly to the preference of the consumer. This was done through collected the data from each like, comment, or saved post and then using this information gathered to feed similar products directly to the consumer. From the research of this paper, it was no surprise that each response stated that they have been exposed to targeted advertisements on social media as all the participants were active on social media. Due to their activity on social platforms, it was expected that these types of advertisements would be directed at them.

When it came to accuracy of the advertisements, this paper's finding on the spoken area of social media marketing came to an unexpected conclusion. Only just over half of the female responses indicated that these advertisements portrayed clothing which were accurate to their style and taste. The female responses also showed that just over half of the audience found the advertisements helpful in terms of finding new clothing they would possibly wear. The male audience had even lower positive response to these advertisements with only 39% finding them to be accurate. This was a thought provoking finding as the researcher would have assumed that Claxton's' statements on how these advertisements were designed to help the consumers and filter out meaningless advertisements would hold true.

It would be interesting to further investigate the reasons as to why these advertisements are not successful due to the fact they are collected from the data of the consumer in question. A recommended way to gather more information around the topic would be to include more open-ended questions in a survey or interview to collect qualitative data. From this, the participant of the research would be able to give their own views on why these advertisements are not working for them, highlighting data that may be misinterpreted. This would give the researcher a more concrete view as

to why these results scored so low and allow for a conclusion as to how to improve the accuracy of targeted advertisements in the industry.

Hypothesis 2:

The second are in question as seen in Chapter 3 of this paper conducted research to find out what type of influencer consumers in the fashion industry were more likely to follow and engage with. It was also asked if consumers bought from influencer marketing strategies, and if so were they pleased with the clothing received.

As stated in the literary review in Chapter 2, 75% of marketers use influencer marketing as a tool to capture value from their consumers. (Augure, 2015) This statement left the researcher of this paper confident that influencer marketing would have a strong impact on the population at question. The findings were extremely accurate for the female population regarding Augures figures, with 78.9% of the participants actively engaging with fashion influencers. The findings for the male participants of this question in the paper saw that 54% of the responses indicated that they engaged with social media influencers in the fashion industry. This drop in engagement was no surprise as it fashion is traditionally thought to be followed more by females, but with the male engagement being over 50% shows that this gap is narrowing.

When it came to purchases it was found that 82% of the people would happily take fashion advice off micro-influencers. (Felicio, 2021) Again the findings in the research conducted in this paper had a good portrayal of an external piece of research seen in the literary review. From the sample of the population who bought from influencers, only 2 responses highlighted clear unhappiness from the clothing bought influencers recommendations. The research of this paper and the research made by Felicio proves the accuracy and value influencer marketing strategies have on the industry.

To further expand the investigation on this topic, more qualitative research may be a strong possible avenue. For the males further questioning on why some do not follow fashion influencers and what would motivate them to start. There could also be more information gathered as to why some products did not live up to expectation.

Hypothesis 3:

As stated in the research question in Chapter 3, fashion related e-commerce live streams on social media were to be examined. From external research around this area of social media marketing in the fashion industry, it was abundantly clear that this style of promoting and selling clothing to consumers was rapidly on the rise with the market aiming to reach \$60 billion value by 2026. (Guoxin Li, 2020)

The findings from this section of the paper were the most unexpected. With only 6 out of 177 of the responses said that they had ever attended such an event. It provoked the thought as to why, seeing as Guoxin Li's findings portrayed the idea of this way of shopping to be the next big breakthrough in the industry.

What did back Li's point was the success rate in terms of sales from this papers respondents who attended such an event. Only one individual out of the six bought something from such an event. This highlights just how lucrative these events can be with such a high success rate regarding the attendees to sales ratio. This ratio also struck accordance with Greenwald's, 2020, when stating 37% of China's online sales came from these live streams. This further strengthened the value of this method of social media shopping.

This section has given a lot of opportunity to widen the scope of research on this area of social media shopping in the fashion industry. It would be recommended to gather more data to find out whether individuals have even heard of these events given the poor responses regarding the percentage of attendance to the events. From here it the researcher would be able to continue investigating with more open-ended questions. These could include questions like, *if these events were marketed to you better would you attend them?* and *if you have heard of such events and have never attended one, why is that the case?*

Hypothesis 4:

The final area of discussion is the influence social media is having of the sustainable fashion market. In Emily Johnson's article, as seen in Chapter 2, it was said that social media is making sustainable fashion the next big trend in the industry. With people becoming more environmentally conscious and seeking a unique look, the sustainable fashion market accommodates for both these desires. Even now with big name brands, like Aimé Leon Dore, posting on Instagram to say that they are now going to sell a selection of handpicked vintage clothing that matches their ethos. This really underlines just how forward moving this industry is on social media.

Findings from both genders did find that over half of each of the population samples did in fact buy second-hand clothes online. This shows there is a demand for such clothing in the industry, which is only expected to grow now that we consider the news coming out of Aimé Leon Dore as discussed. However, what was surprising to the researcher was that 30% or under from both genders bought these second-hand clothing through social media marketing techniques.

It would be interesting to further investigate where the inspiration to buy second-hand clothing comes from for the participants of this study. If it is in fact that they just know of online vintage stores, it would be a good question to find out how they came about finding said stores.

6.2 Discussion summary:

After discussing all areas of the papers findings and comparing them to what the initial research that formulated this paper it is evident that there were so surprises as well as some expected results. It could be argued that the influencer marketing was the most accurate throughout the paper, while the e-commerce lives streams had the most contrast from the literary review to this papers' concluding results. However, what is true for each section of the paper is that there is the opportunity for further research in the future. It shows there is an exciting future ahead of the industry on social media as strategies are being reinvented and strengthened constantly.

Chapter 7

Conclusion.

This paper gave insight to some interesting findings regarding the area of consumer perception to the marketing techniques used on social media in the fashion industry. This dissertation research paper successfully investigated, what the researcher believed to be, four key areas on social media where fashion is advertised and sold. The paper further concluded and strengthened points that were found through external research around the area, while there were also some unexpected findings from the research strategy that was carried out in this paper.

Targeted advertisements, as expected, held a strong presence on the participants of this study's social media platforms. While each of the respondents were found to be exposed to said advertising it was concluded that this marketing strategy was inaccurate and often displayed clothing which were to the distaste of the consumer. Highlighting the strategy to be quite unsuccessful in influencing buyer behaviour.

Influencer marketing held up to its well-regarded status in the industry, especially when directed at the female audience. With the majority of the population questioned in this study being followers of fashion industry influencers, it proved to be a dominant marketing technique. Micro-influencers were seen to be the most attractive to the customer, and consumer satisfaction from clothing bought through them was high for the majority.

Live streaming e-commerce events on social media were thought to be taking over social media regarding the fashion industry due to high attendance and purchasing rates, especially in China. It was surprising to see that this event has made little footprints in the industry in the Irish market. What was seen in this study, was the few that did attend such an event did make purchases and did enjoy their time.

The final area of the paper found that sustainable fashion was on the rise in the industry, with the help of social media. This finding through external research was backed up by the findings of this paper. It was found that 43% of males, and 64% of females were influenced by social media to purchase clothing that was more environmentally friendly. Even though sustainable sales through social media were quite low, this paper did indicate that social media is promoting this area.

While social media and the fashion industry are simultaneously growing at a fast rate, there is plenty of room for further research. It would be an interesting study to investigate workers in the industry, both working with fashion through social media as well as in traditional retail stores. A series of interviews regarding future plans, what they find exciting and what could be potentially worrying would be an interesting area to progress in to.

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Appendix 1:

Ethics form:

This survey aims to research the effects social media has had on consumers in the fashion industry. It will focus on three four keys areas, with through academic research, seem to be the most areas in the industry and are subject to marketing strategies used through social media. These include 1. Targeted advertisements, i.e, sponsored posts and stories that are tailored to the consumer from data collection, 2. The use of influencers, 3. Live streaming e-commerce, i.e, live videos through social media that advertise and sell products to its' consumers, 4. Sustainable fashion.

The research hopes to find out how these four areas impact the consumer, and what that effect does that impact have on how the consumer consumes and thinks about the fashion industry.

In agreeing to participate in this research I understand the following:

- This research is being conducted by Ryan Hines, a masters student at the School of Business, National College of Ireland.
- The method proposed for this research project has been approved in principle by the Departmental Ethics Committee, which means that the Committee does not have concerns about the procedure itself as detailed by the student. It is, however, the above-named student's responsibility to adhere to ethical guidelines in their dealings with participants and the collection and handling of data.
- If I have any concerns about participation, I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any stage.
- I have been informed as to the general nature of the study and agree voluntarily to participate.
- There are no known expected discomforts or risks associated with participation.
- All data from the study will be treated confidentially. The data from all participants will be compiled, analysed, and submitted in a report to the School of Business. No participant's data will be identified by name at any stage of the data analysis or in the final report.
- At the conclusion of my participation, any questions or concerns I have will be fully addressed.
- I may withdraw from this study at any time, and may withdraw my data at any point during my participation. I understand that once my participation has ended, that I cannot withdraw my data as it will be fully anonymised.

Please tick both boxes if you agree with the section above.

Please tick this box if you have read, and agree with all of the above information.

Please tick this box to indicate that you are providing informed consent to participate in this study.

Appendix 2:

Survey:

Q1. Do you use social media?

- Yes
- No

Q2. What social media(s) do you use? (Select Multiple if necessary)

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube

Q3. How long would you say you are on social media daily?

- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 3 hours
- Other

Q4. Have you or do you shop through social media?

- Yes, I have and do.
- Yes, I have once.
- No, I have never.
- No, but I probably will at some point.

Q5. Have you been exposed to targeted ads on social media? (i.e, ads that have been specifically tailored to you from your data, coming up as sponsored posts or stories in your feed)

- Yes
- No

Q6 Do you feel that targeted ads have been effective in you seeing clothing you would like to buy? (including items that come up in your explore feed)

- Yes, the ads I have seen are clothing I would buy.
- No, the ads I have seen do not resemble the clothing I would usually buy.
- Sometimes they have, but not consistently.
- I have not really noticed.

Q7. Do you find you have had a better/easier time finding and buying clothing because of these ads?

- Yes

- No
- N/a

Q8. How many fashion influencers do you approximately follow?

- 0
- Less than 10
- More than 10
- More than 20
- Other

Q9. Would you engage/take advice with these influencers? (Micro-influencers and larger influencers)

- Yes, with both types of influencers.
- Yes, but only with micro-influencers (smaller following) who I share a similar lifestyle with.
- Yes, but only the larger influencers.
- None at all.

Q10. If you do engage with fashion influencers, have you ever purchased clothing because of one of their posts advertising clothing?

- Yes
- No
- N/a

Q11. If you have purchased due to an influencers post, were you happy with the clothing you have bought, and did it live up to the expectation placed on it?

- Yes, I was happy, and it was what I expected.
- No, I was not happy with the clothing.
- I have experienced both feelings.
- Not applicable.

Q12. Have you ever attended a live stream E-commerce fashion event? (i.e, a live online event where products are advertised and sold)

- Yes
- No

Q13. If so, did you purchase any clothing from the event?

- Yes
- No
- Never attend

Q14. Did you enjoy this type of shopping experience?

- Yes
- No

Q15. Have you ever bought second-hand clothes online?

- Yes
- No

Q16. Were these clothes advertised through social media?

- Yes
- No

Q17. Has social media influenced you to buy more sustainable clothing?

- Yes
- No

Q18. What Gender are you?

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

Q19. What generation are you from?

- Gen Alpha (2011-present)
- Gen Z (1996-2010)
- Gen Y (1977-1995)
- Gen X (1965-1976)

Q20. Where do you live?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural