

# **Investigating the impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior in the fast fashion industry of Ireland – a case study of ZARA**

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**Abstract**

Digital marketing is a leading frontier in international business studies because the digital transformation of businesses demands digital solutions for their marketing needs. This research study aims to investigate the impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour for a specific fast fashion brand – Zara in Ireland. The position of Zara in the fast fashion industry of Ireland was affected due to the rise of emerging and proactive brands. This investigated how brand loyalty and consumer behaviour can be managed effectively through digital marketing. Using an online questionnaire survey, this study conducted a quantitative data collection method to understand the factors impacting consumer behaviour toward buying fast fashion products in Ireland. Through descriptive statistical techniques, the researcher analyzed and found that Zara has an ineffective digital marketing strategy and a less effective digital identity in the industry as compared to competitors. However, it was found that customers trust Zara for its high-quality product. Therefore, it was recommended that Zara can leapfrog in the market if it rebrands its image for green digital marketing and invests in the right direction of digital marketing.

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# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

### 1.1.1 Background of Fashion and Digital Marketing

Fashion is all about glamour. From getting ready as models to catwalks, being photographed, advertising and marketing digitally. It is hard to keep oneself away from the world of fashion in this era since media plays a vital role to propagate all sorts of information to its customers (Ozuem and Azemi, 2017). Fashion is an umbrella term that not only covers the glamorous world of it rather, it is also a cultural phenomenon which affects the global manufacturing and retail industries. Therefore, it is not only about photography, styling, and art direction but advertising and digital marketing as well; and all of the mentioned genres jointly make up the industry of fashion. Digital presence is the need of the day for all retail industries and so is the fashion industry. The digital existence of any industry is appraised and appreciated by the users (Purwar, 2019).

Digital marketing has secured one of the highest seats in the world of marketing. Hence, it plays a pivotal role in the fashion industry as well. Fashion is a global business that works at different levels to reach not only the designers but also a layman who buys a clothing piece as a basic necessity. In today's busy world, digital marketing has made it immensely easy that people to reach their desired item with a click (Teona et al., 2020). Not only this, but it also made people acquainted with all sorts of information from quality, rates and expectations from a product. This became possible because of the increasing use of the internet, its connectivity with businesses; its digital presence, and consumers' reliance on the products that are marketed digitally worldwide. We can say that digital marketing is a direct form of marketing that has connected businesses with customers electronically through technologies like email, social media platforms, websites, online forums etc. The principal objective of any business or advertising agency is to spread information regarding a certain product and persuade and encourage people to buy it; hence consumer engagement with the brand generates sales (Mogaji et al., 2020).

Fashion trends are never everlasting. They tend to change with a change in the psychology of consumers. Therefore, fashion products survive a very short product life cycle. This is where digital marketing comes to the rescue since it plays the role of an excellent medium of awareness, attention and interest between the consumer and the brand (Hidayati et al., 2014).

### 1.1.2 Digital Marketing and Fashion Brands

Digital marketing tools have made it easy for consumers to access information about anything. The available information brings changes in consumers' behaviour or perspective of what and how to buy something, or whether something is worth their money or not. This behaviour change is observed due to the quick and easy access to the internet, and then to fashion brands through their digital existence. A consumer's buying behaviour changes with internal and external stimuli accordingly (Carvalho and Carvalho, 2020). An extensive amount of data is found virtually to help the consumer evaluate a product and help them to purchase the best option available in the market. Various virtual platforms like, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter etc. are no longer only social media platforms rather they are the leading platforms for the digital marketing of any brand (Shah and Murthi, 2021).

Digital marketing is not only close to the fashion industry in terms of making the product available to the consumers but it also makes the payments, trade, and feedback easy for both parties, as well. Digital platforms are used in different ways, for example through videos, pictures, audio, displays and graphs, to make digital marketing take place. They leave a deep impression on the consumers (de Lira and Magalhães, 2018). Another aspect of digital marketing is that it helps to develop good long-distance terms between the consumer and the designer by providing 24/7 customer service, usually. Digital marketing has also reduced labour, printing, transport, and delivery costs compared to the traditional mode of running businesses.

Improving long-distance terms between the designer and consumer is one of the key aspects of digital marketing. ZARA, one of the leading brands in the world, has always worked on the approach of 'what they want and when they want' as their marketing strategy. ZARA is said to be a fast fashion brand; which means fast in marketing fashion out in the market for sale. It has used social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest etc to keep itself digitally present. Its social media strategy moves around the visual depiction of its products. It has used different social media tools to reach its target audience which is another great feature of digital marketing, hence it is one of those international brands that is known to everyone all over the globe. Apart from this, ZARA consistently uses their social media platforms to stay connected to its consumers to maintain a healthy relationship with them (Půstová, 2021).

H&M, another fast fashion brand, took help from digital media for its effective marketing, thus sales and retail. Likewise, ZARA and H&M also stay connected to their customers via social media platforms like Facebook, etc (Mrad et al., 2019). It has more than 650 videos on its YouTube channel. These videos not only provide it with a digital existence but also makes it stay connected to its consumers and develop a good bond with them. Instagram serves as an excellent platform for customer and fan engagement. There are several accounts linked with the very brand because they market a lot of stuff for people from different age groups (Zhang et al., 2021). For example, they have H&M for men, H&M for kids, H&M home and H&M denim; and they have different social media platforms working for each of these sections, which again makes the customers comfortable shopping from them (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst, 2010).

## 1.2 Problems Statement

Fashion is a cultural phenomenon that is subject to change and improvement. Middle and Upper-class desire to have outfits showcased at fashion shows (Cooke et al., 2022). The celebrating success of the brands in the UK owes a lot to the fashion shows that showcase the outfits by different designers and people are attracted to them. The main medium of people's attraction is the role played by media. Digital marketing tools and platforms are the major sources for the customers to reach these brands, and for brands to reach potential customers. Digital marketing uses tactics to reach exactly the target audience or class hence making the marketing promises. The success rate of the fast fashion industry has increased with the invention of digital marketing strategies, thus sales in the fashion industry have sky-rocketed. However, the UK-based consumers of fast fashion have concerns regarding its sustainability of it, as studied in recent research (Zhang et al., 2021). How social media marketing sequentially contributes to building brand loyalty is investigated in this paradigm (Salem and Salem, 2021). Specifically, the impacts of social media marketing on fast fashion are found in research (Půstová, 2021), but the literature in the domain of digital marketing specifically does not target the fast-fashion industry of Ireland. Besides, this research study focuses on the case of ZARA for what are the implications of digital marketing for this specific brand in Ireland.

## 1.3 Aim of the Research

This study aims to investigate the impacts of digital marketing on the fast fashion brand, Zara, for how it impacts consumer buying behaviour and loyalty.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Research

1. To investigate the impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour in the fast-fashion industry of Ireland for a specific fashion brand – ZARA.
2. To explore how digital marketing impacts the brand loyalty of ZARA in Ireland
3. To find how digital marketing can help grow ZARA in Ireland.

## 1.5 Research Justification

During the covid-19 fast fashion industry and digital marketing, growth has seen an exponential surge. The use of digital marketing has gained a central position in the marketing industry because it has a larger reach (Nurnafia, 2021). This research study analyzes how the fast fashion industry of Ireland uses digital marketing to uplift its online sales. The justification for conducting this research is that it analyses the impact of digital marketing on the fast fashion industry of Ireland. Understanding the impact of digital marketing on the sales of fast fashion brand Zara will equip the fast fashion industry to better employ digital marketing tools to quadruple the growth of the company. The findings of this research study will help decision-makers to better utilize the power of digital marketing. Therefore, it is justified to conduct this research study.

## 1.6 Research Purpose

The purpose of every research is very important to mention because the purpose of the research steers the overall research project. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand the impacts of digital marketing on the fast fashion industry of Ireland. The fast fashion industry of Ireland has been growing substantially because of the application of digital marketing techniques that use social media channels to disseminate necessary information about fashion brands (Emmen Quirós, 2019). This research study aims to decode the success of the fast fashion industry through the utilization of state-of-the-art digital marketing techniques. After this task, it will be possible to see how consumer buying behaviour and brand reality are influenced by the digital marketing techniques of Zara in Ireland.

## 1.7 Research Scope

Defining the scope of a research project is vital to de limit the focus of the research study. In this context, this research study besides upon the scope. The scope of this research is limited to the involvement of the fast fashion brand Zara. The geographic location of the brand will be Ireland.

The investigation will target digital marketing and its impact on the fast fashion brand Zara. This evaluation of the impacts of digital marketing on Zara will include financial aspects of the company about the implementation of digital marketing tactics to boost sales. Considering the population of this research that is involved in the scope is mainly the managers and common man who see the ads daily. Because digital marketing makes the consumer's buying behaviour and builds, their trust in the brand, a large population of consumers will be approached to confirm how digital marketing techniques of Zara influence their buying behaviour and brand reality.

### 1.8 Research Limitation

This research study has two significant limitations. The first limitation is related to data collection and sample size. The second limitation is the development of a comprehensive strategy for Zara to combat its competitors. According to the formula of Kothari (2004), the required sample was 384, but the researcher was only able to collect 347 responses. So, this shortage of samples is the first limitation of the study. This can impact the findings. Apart from that, this study tried to suggest a digital marketing strategy to fill the gaps and remodel the business. But these suggestions are not enough for Zara to compete against the emerging brands. This lack of comprehensive strategy is a limitation but it can be a future research area as well. Because a new study can be conducted on this topic to develop a green marketing strategy for Zara in Ireland.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Literature Review

#### 2.1.1 Digital Marketing

Marketing could be restless, changing, and dynamic commercial activity. The role of promoting itself has changed dramatically thanks to various crises - material and energy shortages, inflation, economic recessions, high unemployment, dying industries, dying companies, terrorism and war, and effects thanks to rapid technological changes in certain industries (Desai, 2019). Such changes, including the internet, have forced today's marketing executives to become more market-driven in their strategic decisions, requiring a formalized means of acquiring accurate and timely information about customers, products and therefore the marketplace and therefore the overall environment. Internet marketing involves the usage of the net to promote and sell goods or services. Internet marketing utilizes the ability of electronic commerce to sell and market products. Electronic commerce refers to any market on the net (Darma and Noviana, 2020). Electronic commerce supports the selling, buying, and trading of products or services over the net. Internet marketing forms a subset of electronic commerce. With the outburst of internet growth, internet marketing has started becoming very talked-about. It's said that Internet marketing first began at the beginning of 1990 with just text-based websites which offered product information. With the growth in the internet, it is not just selling products alone, but additionally the present, information about products, advertising space, software programs, auctions, stock trading and matchmaking. Some companies have revolutionized the way; the internet may be used for marketing, like Google.com, Yahoo.com, Amazon.com, Alibaba.com and Youtube.com (Melović et al., 2020).

### 2.2 Types of Digital Marketing:

#### 2.2.1 Content Marketing

Content marketing is a marketing strategy used to attract, engage, and retain an audience by creating and sharing relevant articles, videos, podcasts, and other media. This approach establishes expertise, promotes brand awareness, and keeps your business top of mind when it's time to buy what you sell (Le, 2013).



### *2.2.1.1 Advantages*

- It's free in the sense that it's approximately drawing in clients to you and your brand rather than paying to share your message to an unreciprocated audience.
- Content is fantastically flexible and can assist you to construct your brand as you teach, engage, and motivate your buyers; it's what powers all the other sorts of advanced marketing, driving search engine optimization, social media, e-mail and many more (Nadaraja and Yazdanifard, 2013).

### *2.2.1.2 Disadvantages:*

- To be viable, you would like to come up with reliable, high-quality content that meets the requirements of your clients whereas moreover about the brand and accomplishing your business goals

## **2.2.2 Social Media Marketing:**

Social media like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter will be the platform of choice for promotion, aside from the massive number of users, promotions may be done at a price that's not too much or perhaps free which in fact can increase the company's brand. Online Advertising Paid promotion media through the web network. This method can reach consumers more quickly and broadly, the results are more satisfying but are somewhat expensive when put next to using social media (Hanlon, 2019).

### *2.2.2.1 Advantages*

- The effort you put in can be increased as individuals like, comment on and share your content with their friends and connections.
- Facebook advertisements, in specific, have ended up exceptionally advanced and you'll be able to target customer segments along with your substance to induce your message seen by the right individuals

### *2.2.2.2 Disadvantages:*

- People who are behind these social media channels are always making changes, adjusting their calculations, or finding better approaches to create money, and it's difficult to remain on top of all these changes and to keep your marketing working effectively.

- It may sound simple to do a bit of posting on social, but you would like an appropriate methodology and a lot more time than you think to do it appropriately and reliably

### 2.2.3 Email Marketing:

Marketing is often done via a piece email by sending promotions that are being held by the company to the customer's email address that's recorded within the company database.

#### 2.2.3.1 Advantages:

- Having an e-mail list implies you'll be able to remain in touch along with your followers freely of any changing algorithms.
- Staying in regular contact together with your e-mail list will assist you to construct connections and will keep you 'top of mind' when they're prepared to purchase.

#### 2.2.3.2 Disadvantages:

- A lot of emails are left unopened, it's really necessary to have solid subject headings to seize people's attention away from their cluttered inboxes.
- You ought to discover a way to keep including value so that they adhere to you and don't unsubscribe.

### 2.2.4 Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is one of the types of digital marketing that reaches out to a celebrity or a social media influencer to promote the product or service of the company. These days social media influencer is one of the most famous people around the world. For example, BTS is a famous Korean brand that demonstrates K-pop. Different online brands approach BTS and collaborate with them to promote their products and services. The UN also approached them to talk about climate change. Influencer marketing has a huge impact on the audience because the followers of these influencers do believe their words. So, influencer marketing is one of the most successful digital marketing techniques at this moment (Bala and Verma, 2018, Purwar, 2019).

### 2.2.5 Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is another type of digital marketing. In affiliate marketing brands design a strategy to outsource the marketing task to different people. For example, an online brand allows

people to access their products and sell on the behalf of the company. On a successful sale, the company shares a certain amount of profit with the person affiliated with the sale. Affiliated marketing can be done through web-based blogs social media videos and any other virtual platform. Most of the time social media influences request brands to allow them to sell the products on the behalf of the company for a certain amount of profit share. Affiliate marketing is also one of the most successful digital marketing niches (de Lira and Magalhães, 2018).

### 2.2.6 Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing is one of the types of digital marketing that is based on search engines. The product pages for the money pages of a website against certain keywords are ranked top on a certain search engine. This top ranking of product pages helps the company to maximize its reach and availability. Top ranking in the search engine means accessibility to the most desired audience. It happens when the company pays a certain amount of money to a search engine to rank money pages or product pages of the company at the top. However, search engines also label these pages for trademark ads. Nevertheless, search engine marketing is a widely used technique these days because competing against digital giants is not easy through search engine optimization techniques because they are lengthy and laborious (Ozuem and Azemi, 2017).

### 2.2.7 Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is not a newborn idea of marketing rather it is a centuries-old technique of sending a concept viral among the masses. These days highly effective content goes viral. Open times viral content is an accident. However, highly skilled digital marketing managers are capable of sending content viral. Viral content has an outlandish reach so it is the highest type of marketing. Viral marketing has no preset formula but it functions on relevancy, familiarity and time frame of the content. If all these pillars con joins at the right time to the right audience, the content goes viral (Stonedahl et al., 2010).

### 2.2.8 Video Marketing:

The survey proves that by watching videos, consumers are going to be more interested and easier to understand the promotions held by the corporate. Through video, the corporate can directly explain the products and businesses being run. Adding customer testimonials within the kind of video ads will attract more buyers (Mulier et al., 2021).

### 2.3 Hyper-Targeted Marketing

In the domain of digital marketing hyper-targeted marketing is the backbone. Unlike traditional marketing where the irrelevant audience was also exposed to the content digital marketing targets highly relevant and potential clients. Accessing a highly relevant audience is based on plus data. Accumulation of relevant data is like the accumulation of gold. But the question is how relevant data or information about potential customers is collected online. The answer to this question is scary. Digital marketers utilize artificial intelligence techniques and tools to access a certain level of personal information about the customers in the target geography against particular criteria (Darmody and Zwick, 2020). This personal information about potential customers is stored and analyzed through AI-powered software that generates meaningful insights. These insights are used to design a marketing campaign that is highly effective and capable of extravagant return on investment. However, despite the effectiveness of hyper-targeted marketing, ethical concerns are hovering over this digital marketing technique. According to different ethical approaches accessing personal information without consent does not justify the profits yielded. It is considered illegal and unethical because the information about the potential customers is taken without their consent. This potential customer would not provide this information if they are ethically asking to provide certain information. Hyper-targeted marketing is the most controversial cleavage of digital marketing (Gordiyevskaya, 2020).

### 2.4 Marketing Analytics and Campaign Control

The effectiveness of digital marketing rests in the belly of marketing analytics. Unlike traditional marketing where the marketer has no control over the campaign digital marketing fully permits the digital marketing manager to navigate through the functionality of the campaign. With the help of data analytics tools, digital marketers are capable of visualizing the impact of their campaigns in real-time. These AI-powered data analytics dashboards allow digital marketers to see how their digital marketing campaign is working. Live engagement impressions and sales are monitored. These wonders of marketing analytics are the backbone of digital marketing which enables this technology to revolutionize every industry to the highest level (Rackley, 2015).

## 2.5 Consumer Buying Behavior:

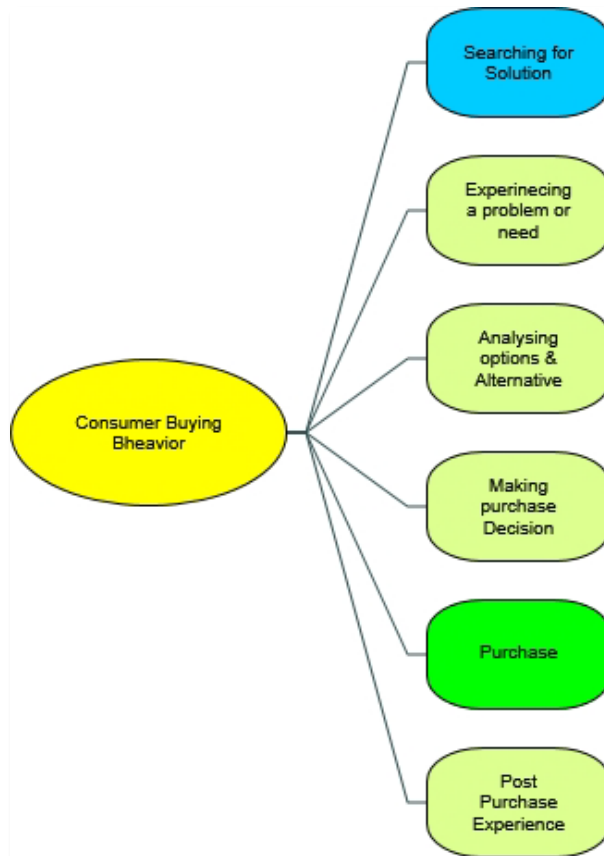


Figure 1 Customer Purchasing Behavior (Designed by author Using NVivo 12) Mind Maps tool

Consumer buying behaviour is vital for the success of businesses in the digital world these days because, unlike the physical world, the process of reviews and customer feedback is fast and impacts the rating of the business immediately. Businesses cannot dissatisfy customers in the digital world as compared to the physical business landscape. Customer buying behaviour is influenced by many steps that are portrayed in the mind map which begin with experiencing a need or a problem (Saleem and Abideen, 2011). Then the customers start looking for solutions. When they find reliable solutions for their needs or problems, they begin searching for better alternatives that ensure efficiency and low-cost average. Once the ideal alternative is selected, the customer slides into the lower hierarchy of the customer purchase funnel. The next step the customer experiences is deciding to buy a product or service of his or her need. This stage is vital for every business because delaying at this stage can reverse the process of the entire funnel. So, smart businesses play tricky to catalyze the process of making a purchase decision. After the real-time

purchase, the customer enters the new but relative important stage of experiencing (Qazzafi, 2020). Here he experiences the post-sale behaviour of the business and the effectiveness of the product or service purchased. If the product or service and the business qualify to please the quality of customer experience at this stage, they surely increase the chances of retaining the customer for future sales. Unfortunately, if the customer faces any bad experience at this stage, he revolts from the funnel and never look back to the business again. The feedback for bad customer experience explodes faster than the good customer experience. Business online reviews and recommendations impact the business's credibility in the digital world. Therefore, digital marketers and business owners in the online world strive to sustain an impressive portfolio that meddles with organic testimonials of reliable clients (Karbasivar and Yarahmadi, 2011).

## 2.6 Digital Marketing Affects Consumer Behavior:

### 2.6.1 Fast-fashion brands: development of brand loyalty through digital marketing

Fast fashion is the term that is used to describe clothing designs that move quickly from the catwalk to stores to require advantage of trends. The collections are often supported by styles presented at Fashion Week runway shows or worn by celebrities. Fast fashion allows mainstream consumers to get a new style or the subsequent big thing at a reasonable price (Buzzo and Abreu, 2019). Fast fashion became common due to cheaper, speedier manufacturing and shipping methods, a rise in consumers' appetite for up-to-the-minute styles, and also the increase in consumer purchasing power, especially among young people to indulge these instant-gratification desires. Thanks to all this, fast fashion is challenging the established clothing labels' tradition of introducing new collections and contours on an orderly, seasonal basis (Mrad et al., 2020). It is not uncommon for fast-fashion retailers to introduce new products multiple times in one week to remain on-trend. Consumers would lay aside to shop for new clothes at certain times of the year. The style-conscious would get a preview of the styles to come back via fashion shows that displayed new collections and clothing lines several months before their appearance in stores. But that began to alter within the late 1990s, as shopping became a style of entertainment and discretionary spending on clothing increased. Enter fast fashion—cheap, trendy knock-off garments, mass-produced at low cost, that allowed consumers to feel like they were wearing the identical styles that "walked the runway" or were sported by the entertainer (Joy et al., 2012).

Major players within the fast-fashion market include Zara, H&M Group, UNIQLO, GAP, forever 21, Topshop, Esprit, Primark, Fashion Nova, and style. Many companies are both retailers and makers, though they often outsource the particular production of clothing ("The Disadvantages of Fast Fashion"). In addition, traditional mass-market shops like Macy's, J. C. Penney, and Kohl's within the U.S. have all taken a page from the fast-fashion book. For his or her in-house and proprietary brands, they've shortened design and production times to higher compete within the market.

### 2.7 Pre covid 19 consumer buying behavior on Zara

Before the outbreak of covid 19, fast fashion brands in the UK and around the world were experiencing fluctuating trends. New brands were emerging and the old giants of the industry were facing a massive backlash. Indeed, the fast fashion industry was growing collectively because potential startups in the fast fashion industry were gaining a central position in the industry. The two giants of the fast fashion industry are H&M and Zara. Zara was ranked the number one brand in the fast fashion industry however H&M was ranked second only to Zara (Stein, 2019). But the emergence of new brands like fashion NOVA and ASOS have affected the market trends aggressively. Using digital marketing trends Fashion NOVA made a monopoly on Instagram-based sales. The digital marketing activities of fashion Innova resonated with Instagram trends. This strategy helped it to gain about 20 million followers on Instagram. This brand became the new trend setter before covid-19. Because generation z is highly influenced by Instagram trends the market share of these emerging brands got hold over the existing sales. This change of brand influence on potential customers narrows down the scope for fast fashion giants like Zara (Stein, 2019). Moreover, H&M closed its stores across the US market. Plus, these giants reduced their prices dramatically to sell out the inventory. Competing with new brands seemed challenging for fast fashion giants. This backlash for Zara and H&M before the covid-19 pushed them to restructure their digital marketing strategies.

The escalation of global warming and climate change issues has proved to be detrimental news for fast fashion brands. Fast fashion brands promote wear and throw culture. This high influx of clothing waste impacts the environment massively. The clothing rags deplete landfills and become the mainstream source of carbon emission (Niinimäki et al., 2020). Factories operating to

create fast fashion brands on high density contribute madly to greenhouse gases. The greenhouse gas emission from the fast fashion industry is very high because these brands keep up with new trends and ensure required supplies to customers. Every week they introduce new trends which means the production of new clothes (Bick et al., 2018). Such a dynamic production of clothing contributes a lot to greenhouse gases. All of these claims unanimously prove that the first fashion industry is the enemy of the environment. The sustainable models of production are fake for this industry. Moreover, the proponents of circular economy highly criticize such type of production of clothes which directly contributes to environmental pollution (Garg, 2020). This criticism has created a backlash for Zara globally. Although the followers of fast fashion trends wear these clothes, they criticize the business trends of this industry. Before the covid-19, Zara and H&M were not enjoying a very lucrative business environment rather they were experiencing social criticism and reduced sales.

## 2.8 Zara during the COVID-19 outbreak and consumer buying behaviour

The accidental outbreak of the pandemic changed the landscape of international and domestic business worldwide. The outbreak of the virus stopped the continuity of the businesses in real-time. Mobility of goods and services in physical circumstances was closed because the spreading of the virus proved to be deadly. People exposed to the virus experienced throbbing headaches, suffocation, shortening of breath, high fever, loss of energy and reduced levels of immunity (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). This reduced immunity made the human body vulnerable to lethal diseases. People were sick when exposed to this virus. High fever and cough choked many to death. Hundreds of thousands of people died because of this virus. It is one of the most destructive pandemics because it spread worldwide. To outwrestle this lethal monster, global strategic partners joined hands to adopt SOPs which included social distancing and quarantine for infected people (Liu et al., 2020). People were isolated to reduce the uncontrollable spread of the virus because it could enter the body of the victim from all pores. Social distancing limited the outbreak of the virus, but at the same time, it cut short the business cycle. Shops and companies went bankrupt because of heavy investments in that context and zero return on investment. Businesses experienced heavy losses (Craven et al., 2020). However, WHO, World Bank and UN imitated many schemes worldwide to provide relief to the governments but the effectiveness of these policies could not cover the scope of the losses to the businesses.



Meanwhile, the digital business landscape shot up to a record high scale because the global purchasing pattern shifted online. People experienced the ease of online shopping during this period. People were locked inside and digital shopping was the sole mode to get access to essential supplies. Amazon, Ali Express, and Shopify made record high sales amidst these odd business circumstances because business patterns changed (Fabeil et al., 2020). They were leading the digital business market so they mastered the art of selling products online. Users also found this experience useful because they could do everything sitting next to their television. It proved to be the easiest method of purchasing. Since this dark pandemic outbreak, consumer buying behaviour changed entirely. People are more inclined towards online shopping because it offers them a huge variety and ease of selecting and paying opportunities. Brands that have trusted relations with customers are leading the market because in the digital arena trust is the primary KPI. Without trust consumers do not market purchase because the customer is unable to psychically touch the product, so the purchasing decision is mainly made on trust (Fitriasari, 2020).

Understanding customers' behaviour sorts play an imperative part in making a difference for businesses accomplishing and keeping up high levels of client satisfaction. One of the issues with quick mold in common and Zara in specific is, that shopping is regularly occasion-based. When customers cannot physically visit the stores, impulse-based shopping is essentially reduced. Too, with fewer get-togethers happening, and with individuals having fewer interactions, occasion-driven shopping has experienced a decrease. Another issue is that Zara's items are profoundly regular, and due to this there may be a few inactive requests when things have gotten to be typical. The COVID-19 widespread changed client behavior, moving it towards a more prominent reliance on online shopping and electronic modes of instalment strategies during a lockdown. As stores start to revive, the coming period is likely to rethink how buyers shop and how retailers got to get ready for this change. Customers have gotten to be habituated to online shopping during this period.

## 2.9 Literature Gap

Finding the gap in literature review is a fundamental step in research studies because this allows the researcher to fill the gap and mark his contribution to existing discourse on the research topic. Therefore, in this research study, we have also found a gap in the literature. It was found in the literature that before covid-19 Zara was experiencing a backlash in the fast fashion industry

because of emerging brands in the market (Purwar, 2019). The outreach of these emerging brands pushed Zara to reduce its prices and inventory because the younger generation connected with these brands. The reason behind this transition was the effective use of digital marketing technology. However, after COVID-19, the dynamics of the international business changed completely. Zara also transitioned from the physical market to the digital market. Thus, Zara spends a lot of money to increase its real-time engagement and communication with its potential customers (Shabir and AlBishri, 2021). In this way, it is unclear what would be the extent that the efforts of Zara remained effective. Existing literature does not specify how effectively the digital strategies of Zara impact its customers in terms of increased sales and revenue. Moreover, there is also scarce literature informing about the brand loyalty of Zara in a post-pandemic context. The existing literature does not mention how well Zara performed to gain the trust and loyalty of the customers as compared to emerging startups in the fast fashion industry. To fill this gap this research study has designed a comprehensive plan to conduct a quantitative survey to answer the effectiveness of Zara in executing its digital marketing strategies. This study also fills the gap regarding brand reality development in the context of the post-pandemic business landscape in the presence of Instagram-based fast fashion brands.

## 2.10 Conclusion of Literature Review

In the conclusion of the literacy review, it is stated that digital marketing is the new game player in international business because without digital marketing the survival of businesses has become a fallacy. The importance of digital marketing has gained immense importance after covid-19 because businesses transform from a physical to an online world. Reaching the required audience is impossible without the use of digital marketing technology. There are many types of digital marketing with distinct advantages and disadvantages. The types of digital marketing are used widely for their purposes. However, more dynamic digital marketing strategies incorporate all of the digital marketing channels to device a successful and effective digital marketing campaign. In the context of the fast passion industry, the businesses that used extensive digital marketing technology outperformed the competitors. Emerging brands utilizing the power of digital marketing crossed the popularity and sales of fast fashion industry giants. Moreover, the fast fashion industry is infamous for polluting the environment and exacerbating global warming. However, the literature is limited on post-pandemic performance of fast fashion brands and Ireland because it is not yet discovered how digital marketing has helped fast fashion industry giants to

regrow their lost legacy. Fast fashion industry giants incorporated rigorous digital marketing strategies to enhance their effective reach and brand image as compared to emerging startups. But the findings for this practice are yet to arrive. Therefore, this research study fills the gap in the literature by providing the effectiveness of Zara's digital marketing efforts to increase the effectiveness of their digital marketing campaigns and build brand loyalty among potential customers.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 Research Methodology

Research methodology is the backbone of a research project because it designs a complete procedure for conducting the research study. The research methodology is designed according to the requirements of the research studies. It is not a static formula that can be applied to every research study but it is a dynamic technique to customize a strategy for conducting a particular research project (Patten, 2017). Although many researchers have provided tools and techniques for conducting a research study in a particular field there is no straightforward method to apply a research methodology to understand a research problem. It is necessary to use effective tools and techniques from multiple authors to design a custom research strategy for achieving research objectives (Mcdowell, 2013). In this chapter, we will provide a comprehensive theoretical framework to conduct this research study. It will involve the philosophical part in its first section however data collection and analytical parts in the next segment. Moreover, in this chapter, we will talk about ethical considerations binding this perfectly tailored research methodology.

### 3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a belief about how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analyzed and used. The term epistemology (what is known to be true), as opposed to doxology (what is believed to be true), encompasses the various philosophies of the research approach. The purpose of science, then, is the process of transforming things believed into things known: Doxa to episteme. Two major research philosophies have been identified in the Western tradition of science, namely positivist (sometimes called scientific) and interpretivism (also known as ant positivist) (Blumberg et al., 2014).

Positivism is a philosophy that believes that knowledge and truth can be verified through calculations science and pure logic. The promoters of positivism show solidarity with the increasing disenchantment of the modern world because they believe that there is no hidden knowledge that cannot be understood or justified through objective reality (Clark, 1998). Everything that exists has an objective reality which can be proved through comprehensive scientific and logical tools of analysis. They agree with the fact that mysterious and spiritual reality exists which cannot be justified through numbers and calculations. Therefore, positive is mentioned that knowledge and truth can be proved with calculations and scientific procedures.

Interpretivism is a research philosophy that deals with understanding the social world more objectively and flexibly. The followers of interpretivism believe that this world is highly versatile and made up of organizational and social values. The knowledge and truth behind the construction of these values and social systems cannot be understood rationally and logically. They make the statement because they believe that rational and scientific approaches have limitations. They cannot deal with the abstract reality of the world because science expands its scope to the concrete world (Irshaidat, 2022). Abstract moral and spiritual constructions of societies jump out of the scope of science and logic. Therefore, the staunch proponents of interpretivism claim that knowledge and truth can only be verified and understood through subjective interpretation and flexible analysis of world realities

Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint (Levin, 1988), i.e., without interfering with the phenomena being studied. They contend that phenomena should be isolated and that observations should be repeatable. This often involves the manipulation of reality with variations in only a single independent variable to identify regularities in and to form relationships between, some of the constituent elements of the social world. The researcher adopted positivism for this research study because the study is based on quantitative data.

### 3.3 Research Approach

The research approach is the strategy of the researcher to verify stand based on the theory or developed a theory based on data. According to these two types of points of view, there are two research approaches namely inductive and deductive. In the inductive research approach, the researcher starts observations about a phenomenon and tries to develop a theory using the data. On the other hand, the deductive approach is the opposite of the inductive approach because in this approach the researcher develops a hypothesis and then gradually starts collecting information to approve or disapprove of the hypothesis he has made about a certain phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009). For this research study, we aim to select a deductive approach because we have developed a certain hypothesis to be tested about the research objectives so for that, we will gather relevant data to test the hypothesis. The reason we have not selected an inductive research approach is that we are not planning to develop a new theory instead, we target to observe the different phenomena in fashion brands after the mainstream engagement of digital marketing strategies.

### 3.4 Research Strategy

Research strategy is the mode of acquiring the data for the type of research the researcher is conducting. There are some research strategies in practice but the most suitable research strategies in business research are service interviews case studies and action research. However grounded theories, ethnography, and experimental research are more likely to be found in natural sciences (Patten and Newhart, 2017). The research strategy for this research project is preferred to be a quantitative survey because the main aim of this research study is to investigate the implications of digital marketing on the fast fashion industry of Ireland. The centre of this research is the customer so targeting customers of the fast fashion brands are the central goal of this research. And the most suitable research strategy to reach out to the customer is a quantitative survey because it allows the researcher to access a huge number of customers. On the other hand, other research strategies like the potential to give access to the researcher to a huge audience because they are simply time taking and costly. The effectiveness of a quantitative survey is impressive because it is easy to conduct and has greater reach as compared to quantitative interviews (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, in this research study, the researcher has selected a quantitative survey as the base strategy for this research.

### 3.5 Research Choice of Method

The choice of research method is the most important step in a research process because it decides what sort of data and how the data will be collected for the research project. Fundamentally the research method is linked with research questions because the purpose of the research method is to provide the required data to answer the research objectives. Whatever kind of data the research objectives demand, the research method has to provide the same type of data for analysis (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). For this research study, the researcher has decided to include a quantitative research method because the objectives of this research study are concerned with consumer behaviour and how brand loyalty is developed and manipulated in an international business context. To get the answers from the target audience quantitative data is significantly important. The reason to choose the quantitative method was that a huge population could be included in the research method and the results could be more reliable because the findings are based on objective reality.

### 3.7 Techniques and Procedures

Techniques and procedures to collect data for a research study are integral to describe because after the description of techniques and procedures to gather information to justify research phenomena the researcher qualifies to conduct full-scale research (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). The details about data collection and analysis are given below.

#### 3.7.1 Data Collection

Data collection is a significant milestone in the research process because from this step onwards the substance to justify research objectives begins to integrate with the theory. There are two types of data which are primary data and secondary data. Details about each type of data are given below (Blumberg et al., 2014).

##### *3.7.1.1 Primary Data Collection Procedure*

Primary data is the soul of research studies because it is the purest form of data that a researcher collects to answer the research questions. As the name suggests primary data is the information the researcher collects by him or herself. It is first-hand and original data. Many techniques and procedures are adopted in the research studies to acquire primary data for research studies (Bell et al., 2022).

### 3.8 Techniques for Primary Data Collection

#### 3.8.1 Online Questionnaire Survey

From the list of techniques and procedures to acquire primary data the researcher decided to use an online questionnaire survey to gather information about the research objectives of the study. There are a few reasons to select online questions for your survey together with information about the research objectives. Primarily the researcher knew that an online questionnaire survey is the most convenient and easiest way to collect information (Blumberg et al., 2014). Secondly, the researcher knew that an online questionnaire survey has the broadest reach to the customers out there in Ireland because information communication technology can be utilized to disseminate the information about the questionnaire to the target audience. Thirdly in this fast forward living, it is challenging for the researcher to stop a customer of a fast fashion brand on the roadside and ask for filling out the questionnaire; however, it is convenient for the researcher and the target audience to receive the questionnaire in their gadgets and fill out essential questions at their ease.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section fills the ethical and introductory concerns related to the research study. It is promised that the anonymity of the participant will be ensured at any cost. Only the relevant input of the participant will be used to produce answers to the research questions asked in this study. The identification of the participants has nothing to do with the research objectives, so this personal information will not be given in the research study. Therefore, a proper set of guidelines are mentioned in the initial stage of the questionnaire that addresses these concerns comprehensively. The second part of the questionnaire collects demographic data of the participants. It is to understand the background and contextual information about the sample participant. This information is related to the objectives in a way that this information will help navigate what sort of people stay loyal to the brands. Understanding this information is critical to answering the third objective. The third section of the questionnaire talks about the actual questions stemming from the research questions. Keeping in mind the demand of the research questions, survey questions are formulated in a way that they can become the source of the answer to the questions. Survey questions are sufficient to satisfy the demand for research questions. All the questions concerning brand loyalty and the impacts of digital marketing are asked in this section.

*Table 1: Graphical Representation of the Segments of the Questionnaire*

<b>Serial</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Section 1	Introduction and Ethical Considerations	To ensure ethical concerns
Section 2	Demographic Details	To understand the motivations behind loyalty and the effectiveness of digital marketing
Section 3	Impacts of Digital Marketing & Brand Loyalty	To answer all objectives

### *3.8.1.1 Types of Questions in Questionnaire*

#### *3.8.1.1.1 Double Barreled Questions*

The double barrel question is composed of two ideas in one sentence structure. This type of question is considered a mistake in research studies because double barrel questions confused the participant about whether she should answer the first question for the second. Interviews avoid



double barrel questions because of their confusing nature. As a result, in this research, we have not used any double-barrel questions.

#### 3.8.1.1.2 Closed-end Questions

Close-end questions are the questions in research studies which can only be answered with one phrase or word. Close-end questions are the favorite questions of quantitative researchers because they allow them together the data which is easy to measure and scale. Close-ended questions enable the researchers to get short responses from the participant about their research questions. These questions are convenient to code and analyses during analysis. Thus, we have used close questions in our research study because our research study required quantitative data. So, these questions prove to be the most convenient and effective source of receiving quantifiable responses from the participants of the study.

#### 3.8.1.1.3 Open-end Questions

Open-ended questions are questions which need long answers to satisfy the demand of the query. There are many situations where comprehensive responses are required to understand a particular phenomenon. So open-ended questions are the most effective tools for gathering comprehensive responses to such complex phenomena. It makes it easier for the researchers to track valuable insights in the responses of the participants to understand and verify a social phenomenon. However open-ended questions are particularly used in qualitative research studies. Because qualitative data analysis techniques are capable of coding and analyzing comprehensive responses, unlike quantitative data analysis techniques. As our study is based on quantitative data, we did not include open-ended questions in our survey because it would become difficult to analyze comprehensive answers using the quantitative data analysis technique.

#### 3.8.1.2 Research Questionnaire Questions Relation to the Objectives

Table 2. Research Questionnaire Justification

Serial	Question	Related Objective
1	How often do you use a mobile phone in a day?	Objective 1&2
It develops the context for the actual questions		
2	Do you see online ads when you use a mobile phone?	Objective 1&2

Informs about the frequency of ads. Develops the context		
3	Do you see ads relevant to your likes and dislikes?	Objective 1&2
Informs about the effectiveness of digital marketing		
4	Do the ads follow your search queries?	Objective 1&2
Informs about the efficiency of digital marketing		
5	I consider visiting the brands I see on social media	Objective 1&2
Informs about building trust through digital marketing & presence		
6	Do these ads annoy you? If yes, how much?	Objective 1
Informs about the negative impacts of digital marketing		
7	How often do you shop from Zara?	Objective 2
Informs about the effectiveness of branding for developing trust and loyalty		
8	I visit the brands I see on social media	Objective 1&2
Finds the correlation between the effectiveness of digital marketing and sales		
9	From where did you get to know about Zara discounts?	Objective 3
Finds correlation between digital marketing and sales		
10	What makes you trust a clothing brand?	Objective 3
Informs about the trust and loyalty-building criteria		
11	Brands on social media can be trusted	Objective 3
Informs about the trust and loyalty building criteria: rephrased to confirm the drivers		
12	Brands engaging with customers on social media are reliable	Objective 3

Finds the correlation between digital marketing and reliability of the brands		
13	What can make Zara an even better clothing brand?	Objective 3
Explores the suggestions to improve the digital presence of Zara		
14	What do you feel once you get emails from Zara?	Objective 1, 2 & 3
Gets feedback about the current digital marketing strategies for building a new one		
15	How much do you trust Zara for clothing wear?	Objective 2
Gets feedback about the current digital marketing strategies		
16	Did covid -19 impact your buying behaviour on clothing platforms - like online instead of stores	Objective 1&2
Confirms that the digital marketing surge has impacted the buying behaviour for Zara		

### 3.8.4 Pilot Study (Pre-testing)

In this study, the researcher tests the data collection tool on a controlled group of participants. Then gathers the feedback from the participants to confirm the content and form of the tool used. It allows the researcher to eradicate all redundancies and design a flawless tool to collect the data.

In this study, the researcher conducted a pilot study and tested the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire was designed in a way that it collects to-the-point data. Majorly, closed-end questions were added to the tool because the output of closed-end questions is easy to code and analyze. During the pilot study, the response rate of the participant was moderate but the problem was related to the wording of the questionnaire. Some of the questions were not written in plain language, so they created ambiguity for some of the participants. Rephrasing technical words into layman terminology helped the researcher to gain the relevant information from the required audience.

### 3.9 Population of the Research

The decision about the population of the research is not voluntary it is binding to the research objectives. Research objectives are the agents to highlight what type of population should be

included in the research process (Etikan and Bala, 2017). Considering the research population of this research study the researcher has decided to include all the customers of fast fashion brands in Ireland and especially the customers of Zara. The main reason to pick customers of fast fashion brands in Ireland and especially Zara is that the researcher wanted to investigate the implications of digital marketing on transforming their behaviour toward drastic purchases and how they were loyal and are loyal to the business. According to this justification, it is decided that the research population for this research study is the customer base for fast fashion brands. In the same vein, the next point is that the population for this research study is 34 million because 55% of the overall population of Ireland buys online clothing from different stores. But then the researcher put the limit of the population to the customers of Zara and it was found that Zara has 4 million female customers in Ireland. Reduced 34 million population to only 4 million population overall.

### 3.9.1 Sample Size

Determining the sample size is one of the most challenging but essential tasks in research methodology because the relevant sample size enables the researcher to collect a justifiable sample size for answering the research questions. Many sample size determination techniques are applied in multiple disciplines but the highly cited formula to determine the sample size from the known population is given below. This formula is taken from Kothari (2004). When the population size is known, add the number into the sample and perform the next process. This formula will generate a number for the sample size that will justify the validity and reliability of the research study (Kothari, 2004).

$$n = \frac{N(Z^{\alpha/2})^2}{(Z^{\alpha/2})^2 + 4Ne^2}$$

$n = \text{sample size}$

$N = \text{known population size} = 40,0000$

$e^2 = \text{margin of error} = 0.05$

$(Z^{\alpha/2})^2 = \text{confidence on sampling} = 95\% = 1.96$

$$n = \frac{400,0000(1.96)^2}{(1.96)^2 + 4(400,0000)(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{15366400}{3.85 + 40,000}$$

$$n = 384.2$$

*Table 3. Details of the survey participants*

<b>Participant Type</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
Total Questionnaires Send	420
Total Responses Collected	347
Regular Customers of Zara	80
College Students	118
Random Zara Shoppers	122
Zara Employees	20

#### *3.9.1.1 Justification for choosing these respondents:*

The researcher has selected the customers of Zara, college students and employees of Zara. The reason behind selecting these samples is divided into three sections. We selected the customers of Zara because we wanted to investigate their perception of Zara about the impacts of digital marketing. Similarly, we inquired the students about the same questions and concerns related to brand image and loyalty. Their responses were taken to confirm that digital marketing affects their behaviour and trust in Zara. Lastly, we added the employees of Zara to our study. They have inquired the same questions because their opinion also matters. They were in the position to say more about the impacts of digital marketing on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty because they observe the customer influx and attitude on a real-time basis.

### **3.10 Technique Adopted for Sampling**

Sampling is the most important factor in the data collection process because an appropriate technique for sampling can only justice to the authenticity of results and findings (Christensen et al., 2011). Relevant sampling techniques were used to conduct the research survey because it is the only way to grasp the required number of samples which can stand for the authenticity of the findings. There are mainly two types of sampling techniques which are probability and non-

probability techniques. In this research study, the researcher has used the probability sampling technique because it is a more genuine and suitable sampling technique for quantitative research studies (Etikan and Bala, 2017).

### 3.10.1 Probability Sampling Technique

The probability sampling technique is the method where all the samples of the study have equal opportunity to be a part of the research study. The probability sampling technique avoids all biases and prejudices prone to manipulate the findings of the research study. The researcher made up his mind to adopt the probability sampling technique because it is free from any contamination that can lead to bias. In the probability sampling technique, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique because it is the most reliable and credible sampling procedure. It qualifies every sample of the population to be a part of the research study (Kothari, 2004). However other sampling techniques in the probability sampling method have some limitations. For example, in the systematic sampling technique, the researcher must take care of the hidden aspects of the systematic approach because otherwise, the findings can show skewness. Similarly, cluster sampling can have a bias when segmenting the samples into different groups (Taherdoost, 2016). However simple random sampling technique is free from any contaminant of that sort.

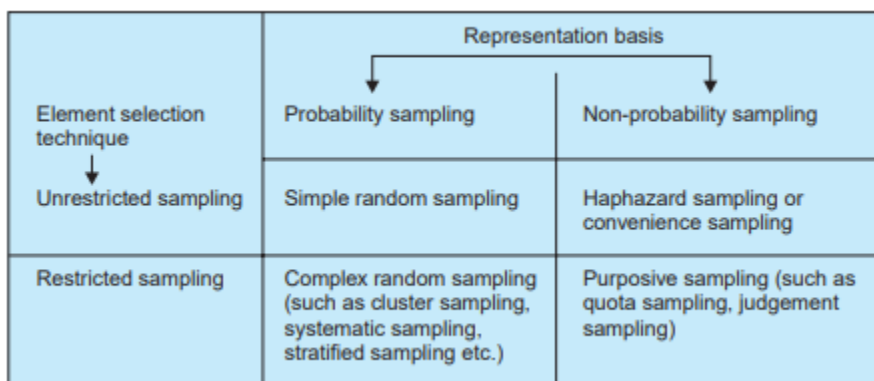


Figure 2 Diagram of sampling techniques

Source: Kothari (2004)

Therefore, in this research study, the researcher used the probability sampling technique plus the preferred unrestricted sampling technique from the element side. The reason behind this selection is that the researcher has a larger set population so finding the required sample on a random basis

is possible. This possibility provides the favor of being system bias-free. The chances of sampling error reduce because there are fewer chances of bias. The reliability and validity of the samples would increase (Kothari, 2004, Thompson, 2012).

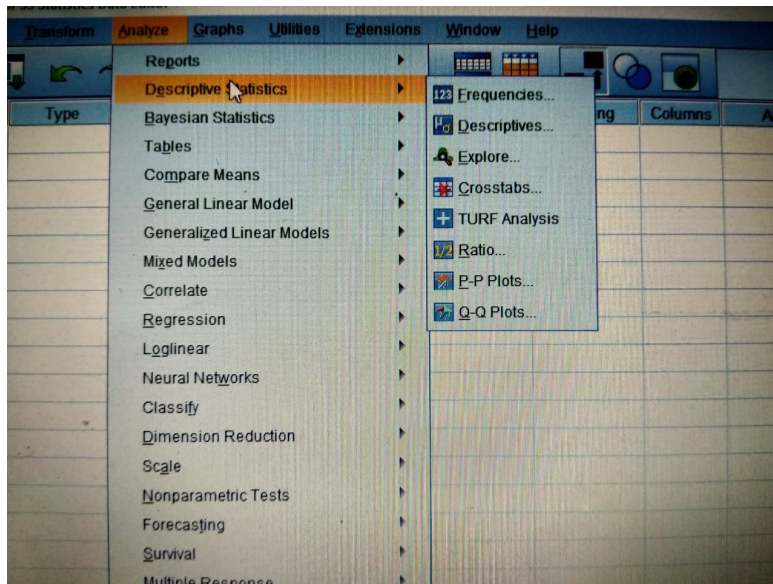
### 3.11 Secondary Data Collection Procedure

Secondary data is the type of data that is published online and offline. It simply means that the data that is already available on any platform is called secondary data because the source of the data is not primary it is secondary. Existing data on any other platform makes the data secondary. Examples of secondary data can be research articles journals books blogs magazines emails pictures and all the print media (Saunders et al., 2009). Now the question is either secondary data is used in this research study or not. Show the researcher ardently states that secondary data is used in abundance because the literature review introduction and results and findings all are based on secondary data. The information to write down materials and methods was also borrowed from published books and research papers so it is confessed that secondary data is the backbone of this research study (McKnight and McKnight, 2011).

## 3.12 Data Analysis

### 3.12.1 Descriptive Statistics

Once the data is collected the next step is to analyse the data. Data analysis is the most valuable stage for a researcher because at this stage the researcher is about to reveal the significant findings of the study. There are many data analysis techniques in academic research literature because there are many research domains and methods to collect multiple data sets. However, each research study customizes its research design for analysis (Sarka, 2021). Particularly the researcher in this study adopted descriptive statistics as the data analysis technique because this research study is based on qualitative data. And the simplest and easiest technique to analyze data is descriptive statistics (Bell et al., 2022). The researcher describes the frequencies and the percentage of the phenomena input into the software to analyze the raw data. Then these findings are very convenient to analyze and represent parallel to the published literature in contemporary research studies. This procedure further helps the researcher to get a hold of the findings in a convenient way because the use of SPSS software makes it even simpler to interpret the data in graphical and statistical representations.



*Figure 3 Screenshot of SPSS Descriptive Analysis (Added by author)*

### 3.12.2 SPSS (Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences)

SPSS is statistical software for data analysis. It is owned by IBM. This software is famous for its user-friendly interface and quick useability. It has two views: The data view and the Variable view. SPSS can intake huge datasets and analyze them in a matter of seconds because its algorithm is trained with high-density quantitative data analysis techniques. A broad range of researchers uses this analytical tool to evaluate quantitative data for a variety of tests (Kremelberg, 2010). For example, ANOVA, T-test and Chi-square test are all conducted in this software. Correlation and other complex relations among variables are found in this toolkit. It is one of the most powerful analytical toolkits to help researchers and investigators to reach the desired outcome from large data sets (Verma, 2012). Moreover, a big data analytical framework is also possible in this software if the researcher can understand the syntax and data structures for analyzing a query. All of these attributes and qualities of this software meddle it one of the best quantitative data analysis software in research and investigation studies (Okagbue et al., 2021).



## Chapter 4

### 4.0 Research Analysis and Interpretation

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the data analysis process and presents the results of the study conducted. The main reason for this study is to discover how digital marketing impacts the behaviour of the customer in the fast fashion industry of Ireland. This chapter is based on the analysis of the primary data. A questionnaire survey was conducted on four different types of respondents. And their responses are analyzed using SPSS – descriptive statistics. This chapter critiques the findings and summarizes the key takeaways from the study. The researcher will further clarify the demographic of the respondents, the examination of the variables at hand, and any relationship between the variables mentioned. Besides, the respondents gave a wide range of important information which is displayed below from the data assembled. The method of analysis is a kind of comparative analysis because the researcher will compare existing literature with the findings of this research. The reason behind this critical analytical framework is to verify how similar and dissimilar the results of this strategy are.

#### 4.2 Key findings of the study

- ✚ A simple majority of the survey respondents confirmed that digital marketing ads annoy them. It means that the digital marketing impact of Zara is negative.
- ✚ The highest number of participants stated that they visit Zara rarely while the lowest number of participants said that they never visit Zara.
- ✚ The highest number of participants confirmed that they know about the discount offers through social media ads; however, family and friends were also significant informants in this regard. It relates to the idea of how power the reach of digital marketing as it informs the majority of the customers.
- ✚ The highest number of participants clearly stated that they trust the brand due to its high quality. However, the lowest number of the participants said that they trust the brand due to its social media presence.
- ✚ The highest number of the participants in the survey confirmed that the brands which engage on social are considered more reliable.

- ✚ A clear majority of the respondents confirmed that they like Zara for improved quality, not social media interactions.
- ✚ The highest number of the respondents expressed that they get annoyed when they get emails to form Zara.
- ✚ A considerable majority of the participants expressed that they highly trust Zara for its products and services. It confirms that Zara has loyal customers who trust the brand but it is not related to its media presence but its original quality.
- ✚ The highest number of the participants confirmed that covid-19 changed their buying behavior. This finding relates to impacts of COVID-19 and exclusive impacts of digital marketing or channelizing of business.

## Demographics of participants

### 1. Table showing the Demographics of participants

#### Age of participants

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
18-25	127	36.6	36.6	38.3
25-35	185	53.3	53.3	91.6
35 above	25	7.2	7.2	98.8
Under 18	4	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Age of Participants.

Below is the Graph showing the age of participants

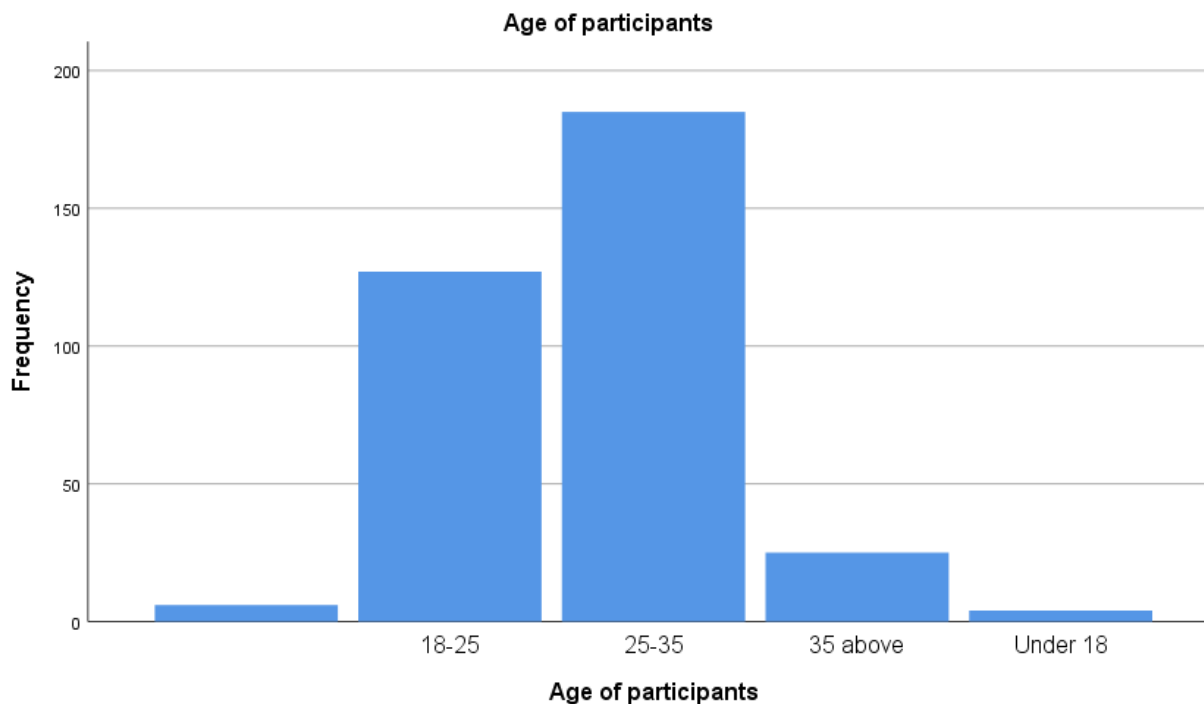


Figure 4: Age of Participants

### Interpretation

During the survey, the researcher selected 3 categories of participants for this research process based on age. The first group was composed of 18 to 25 and the second group was composed of 25 to 35 years old participants. The second last group was 35 and above. There were participants from the category of under 18. The highest number of participants participated from the category of 25 to 35 years. However, the lowest category of participants belongs to those under 18.

## 2. Table showing the Gender of participants.

### Gender

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8	2.3	2.3	2.3
female	176	50.7	50.7	53.0
male	133	38.3	38.3	91.4

prefer not to say	30	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Gender of Participants

Below is the Graph showing the Gender of participants

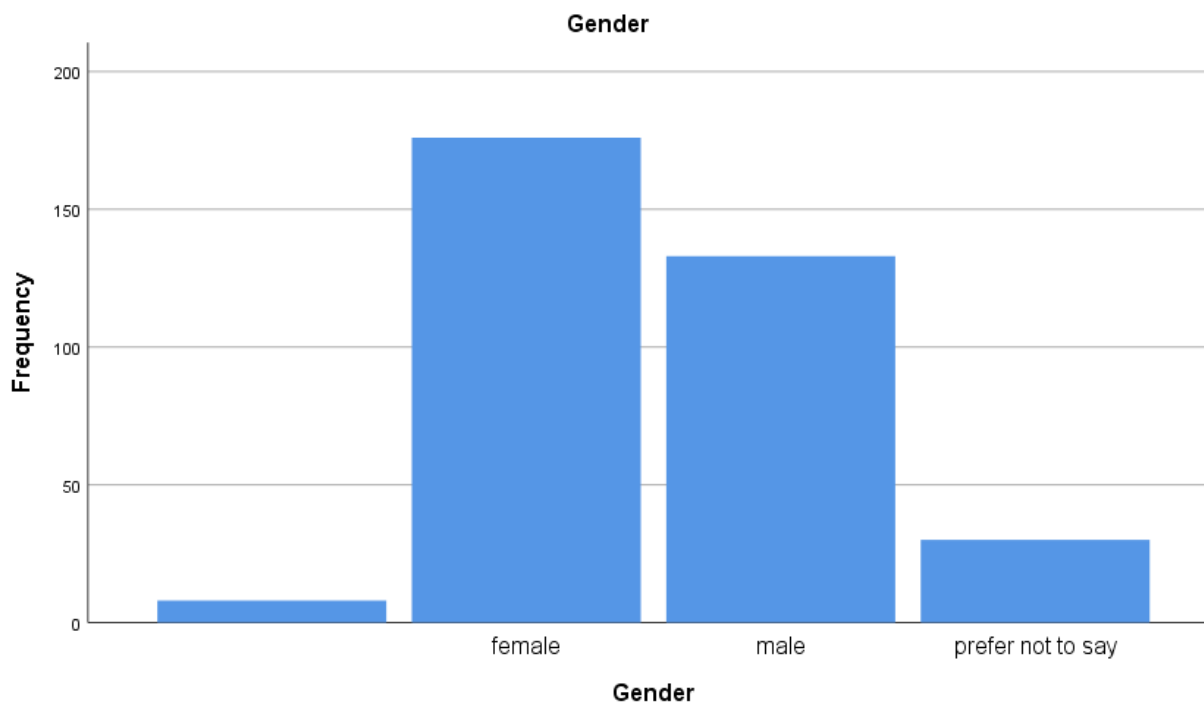


Figure 5: Gender of Participants

### Interpretation

The gender analysis of the survey produced interesting results. The survey was conducted on the customers of the fast fashion industry particularly related to Zara. The majority of the participants were female while male participants were less than females. Additionally, some participants did not mention their gender identity. To analyze critically the female gender in this survey indicates an interesting fact. The highest number of females can be due to two reasons. The first reason is that majority of the customers of fast fashion brands were female. The second reason can be biasness. Because the researcher was female, so she only excessed female candidates easily for her research project. However, for both reasons, there is no absolute consensus to justify or refute the claims.

### 3. Table showing how often do customers use mobile phone in a day

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
1 hour	42	12.1	12.1	13.3
2 hours	88	25.4	25.4	38.6
4 hours	138	39.8	39.8	78.4
more than 5 hours	75	21.6	21.6	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. How often do you use your mobile phone in a day

Below is the Graph showing how often do customers use mobile phone in a day

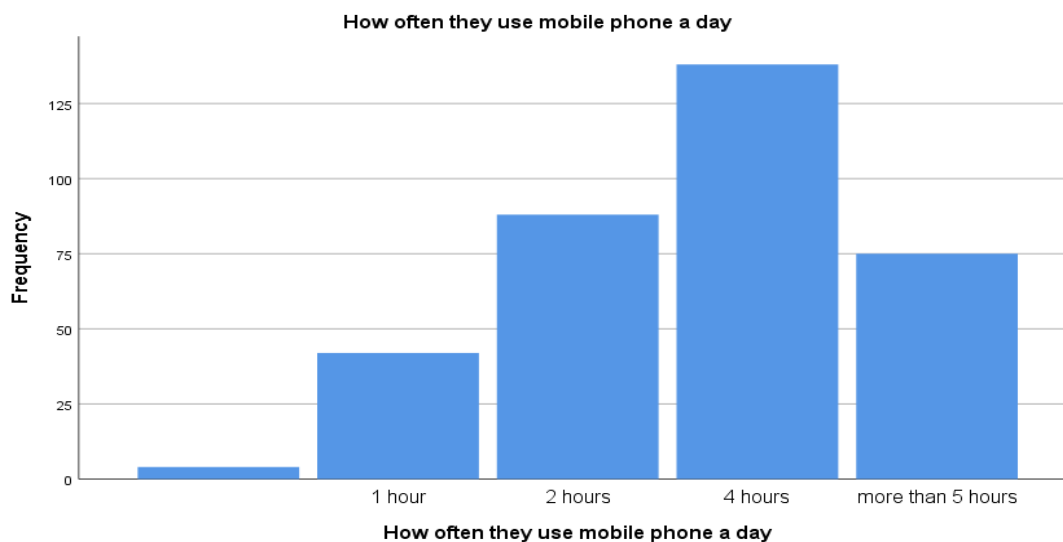


Figure 6: How often do they use a mobile phone during a day

#### Interpretation

Was asked the participants to disclose how long they stay online using their phones. Given four options, the majority of the participants disclosed that they use mobile phones at least four hours a day. However, the second major group stated that they use mobile phones for 2 hours a day. A

very small amount of people concluded that they use mobile phones for 1 hour. So, it can be analyzed that the average use of a mobile phone is 4 hours.

4. Table showing if the customers see ads about Zara on mobile phones.

#### Do they see ads

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	.9	.9	.9
Maybe	72	20.7	20.7	21.6
No	14	4.0	4.0	25.6
Yes	258	74.4	74.4	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. Do you see ads on mobile phone

Graph showing if the customers see ads about Zara on mobile phones.

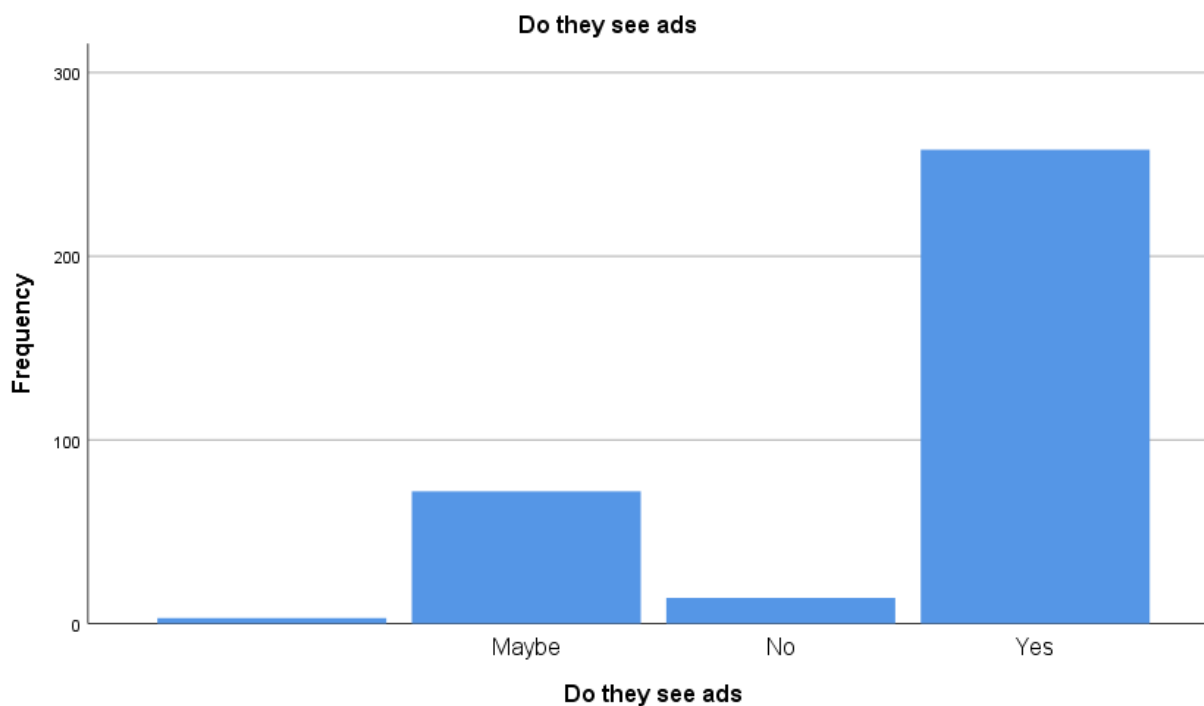


Figure 7: Do they see ads using mobile phone

### Interpretation

Digital marketing ads are one of the most fundamental sources of marketing these days. In this context, the participants were asked to disclose do they see digital marketing ads while using their mobile phones or not. 74% of the participants said yes, they do see digital marketing ads. However, only 4% of the participants said they don't see any ads. Meanwhile, 20% of the participants said maybe they see ads or not. These analytics indicate one fact that a huge population of online users are exposed to digital marketing ads. And there is no surprise that online users see digital marketing ads. But the surprising fact is that 4% of the people say they don't see ads which are suspicious. So, it can be predicted that they have used some kind of ads blocker.

### 5. Table showing if the customers see ads relevant to their likes and Dislikes

#### Do they see ads relevant to their likes and dislikes

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
Maybe	58	16.7	16.7	17.9
No	24	6.9	6.9	24.8
Yes	261	75.2	75.2	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Do you see ads relevant to your likes and dislikes

Graph showing if the customers see ads relevant to their likes and Dislikes

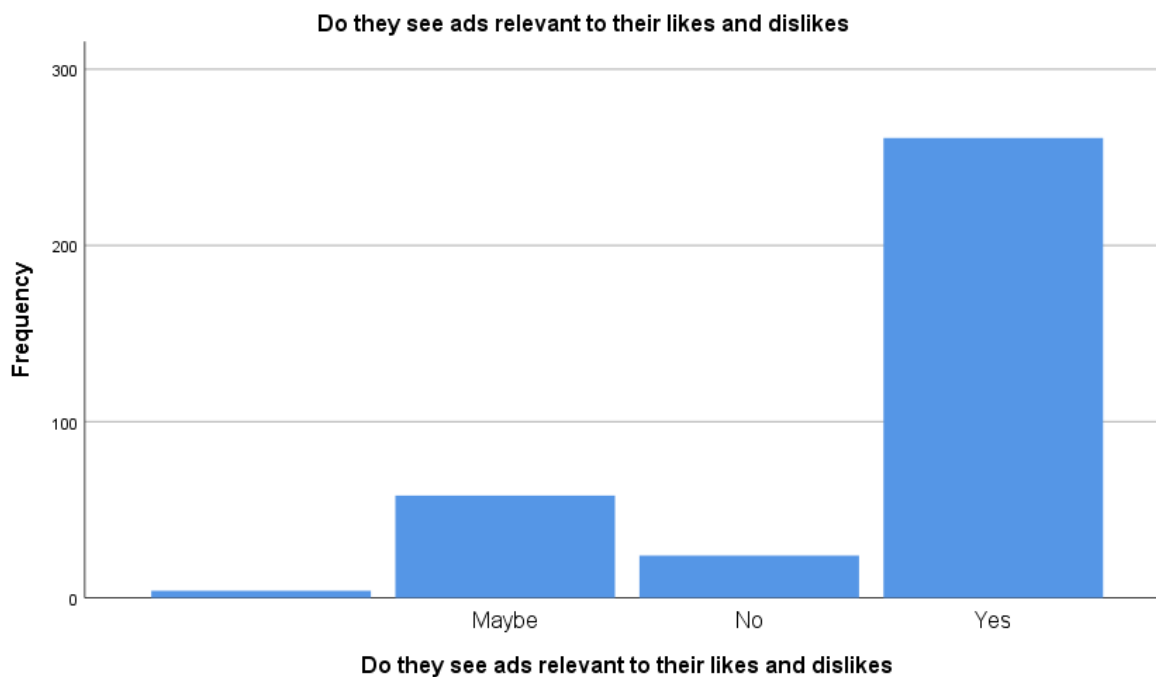


Figure 8: Do they see ads relevant to their likes and dislikes

### Interpretation

In the same vein, when the participants of the study were asked to share their opinion about digital marketing ads. They were asked whether they see ads relevant to their likes or dislikes online. 75% of the participants should agree with the effectiveness of the ads. They confessed that they see ads relevant to their likes and dislikes. 6% of the participants said they don't see ads relevant to their likes and dislikes. However, 16.7% of the participants retained their opinion to themselves and referred to saying maybe they see ads relevant to their likes and dislikes.

### 6. Table showing if the customers see ads relevant to search queries

#### Ads\_follow\_search\_queries

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
Maybe	28	8.1	8.1	9.2
No	53	15.3	15.3	24.5



Yes	262	75.5	75.5	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 9. Do ads follow your search queries

Graph showing if the customers see ads relevant to search queries

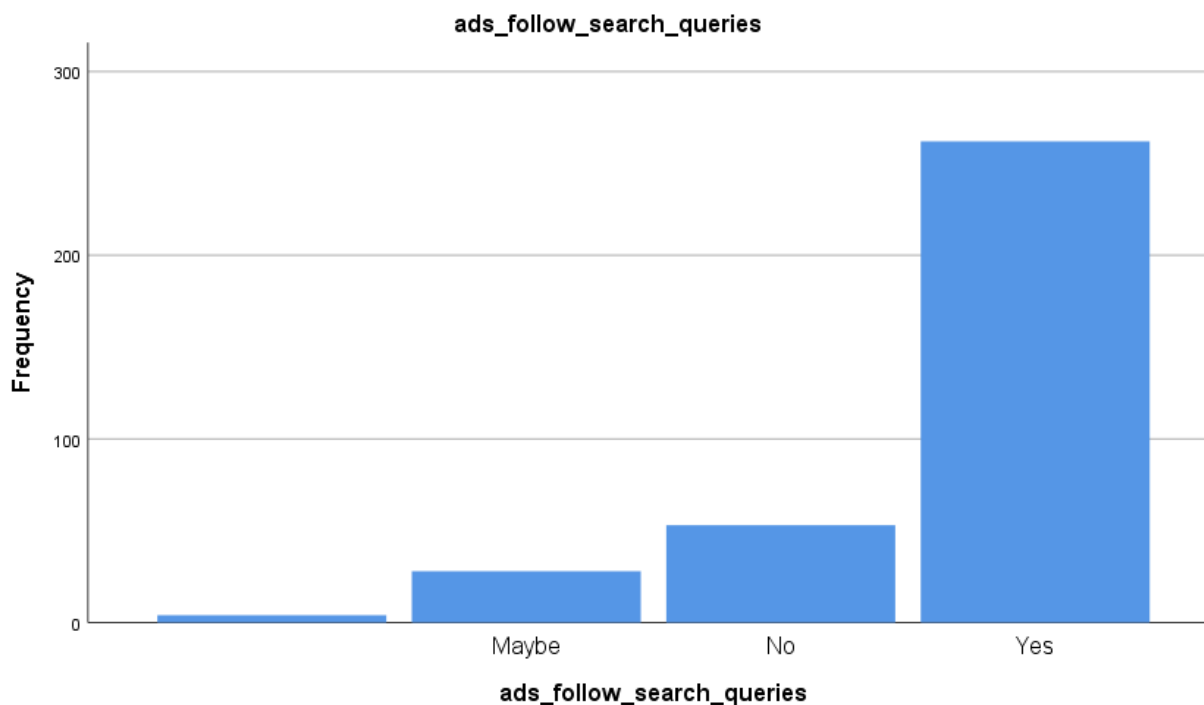


Figure 9. Ads\_follow\_search\_queries

### Interpretation

Digital marketing ads are powered by artificial intelligence algorithms which track online users and their activity. That's how machine learning algorithms learn and disseminate information to the relevant audience. In this context, the customers of the fast fashion industry in Ireland were asked a question: do the online ads follow their search queries? 75% of the participants said yes digital marketing ads follow their search queries; however, 15% of the participants disagreed with the fact that digital marketing ads trace search queries. Meanwhile, 8.1% of the participants did not disclose their opinion about the question. So, these statistics indicate that digital marketing ads do follow search queries.

7. Table showing if the customers visit the brands they see on social media

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	.9	.9	.9
maybe	78	22.5	22.5	23.3
No	92	26.5	26.5	49.9
yes	174	50.1	50.1	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 10. Do you visit the brands see on social media

Graph showing if the customers visit the brands they see on social media

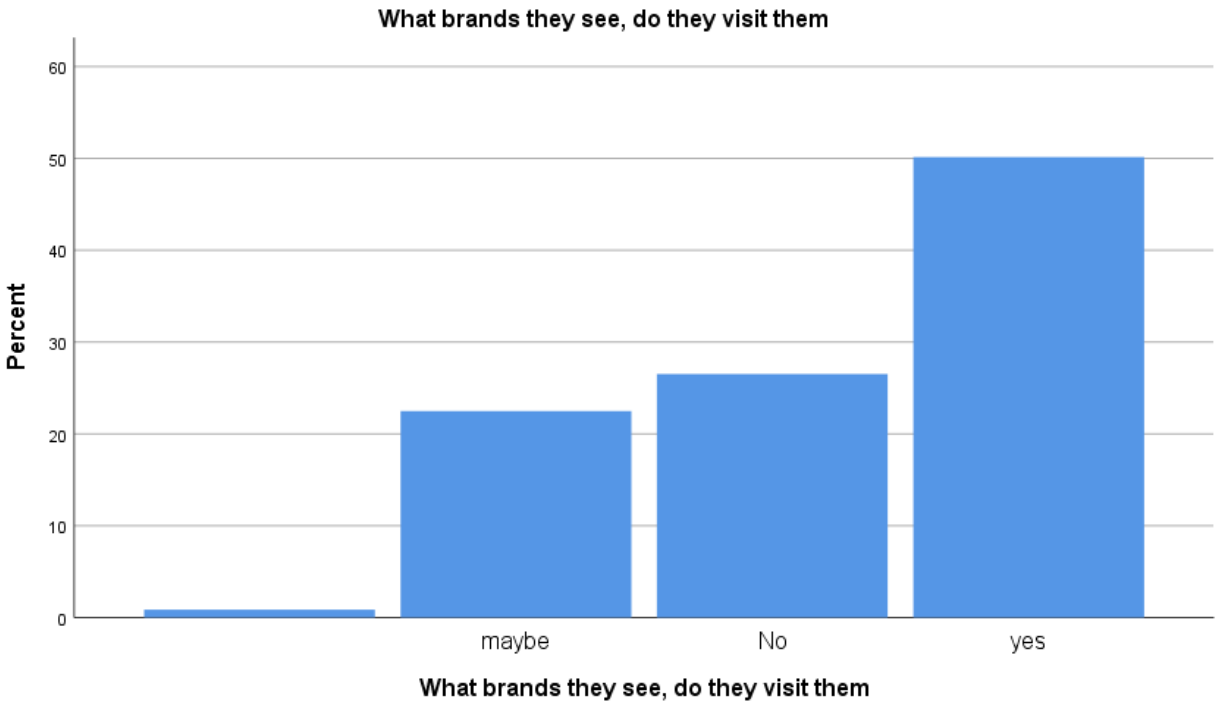


Figure 10. Do you visit the brands you see on social media

### Interpretation

Digital marketing ads are designed to attract new customers and retain old customers. In this way, customers of fast fashion brands were asked “do they visit the brand they see online”. 50% of the participants agreed to the fact that they visit the brands they see online. However, 26% of the participants disagreed to visit the brands they see online. 22% of the participants remained neutral and preferred to say maybe they visit or not. These percentages reflect one thing digital marketing has a greater influence on attracting new customers online because 50% of the participants claim that they visit the brands which they see online. It means that the digital identity of the brand is one of the requirements these days because people stay online more than in their daily casual life.

#### 9. Table showing if the customers feel annoyed by the ads.

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
	2	49	14.1	14.2	15.6
	3	122	35.2	35.3	50.9
	4	104	30.0	30.1	80.9
	5	66	19.0	19.1	100.0
	Total	346	99.7	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.3		
Total		347	100.0		

*Table 11. How many ads annoy you?*

Graph showing if the customers feel annoyed by the ads.

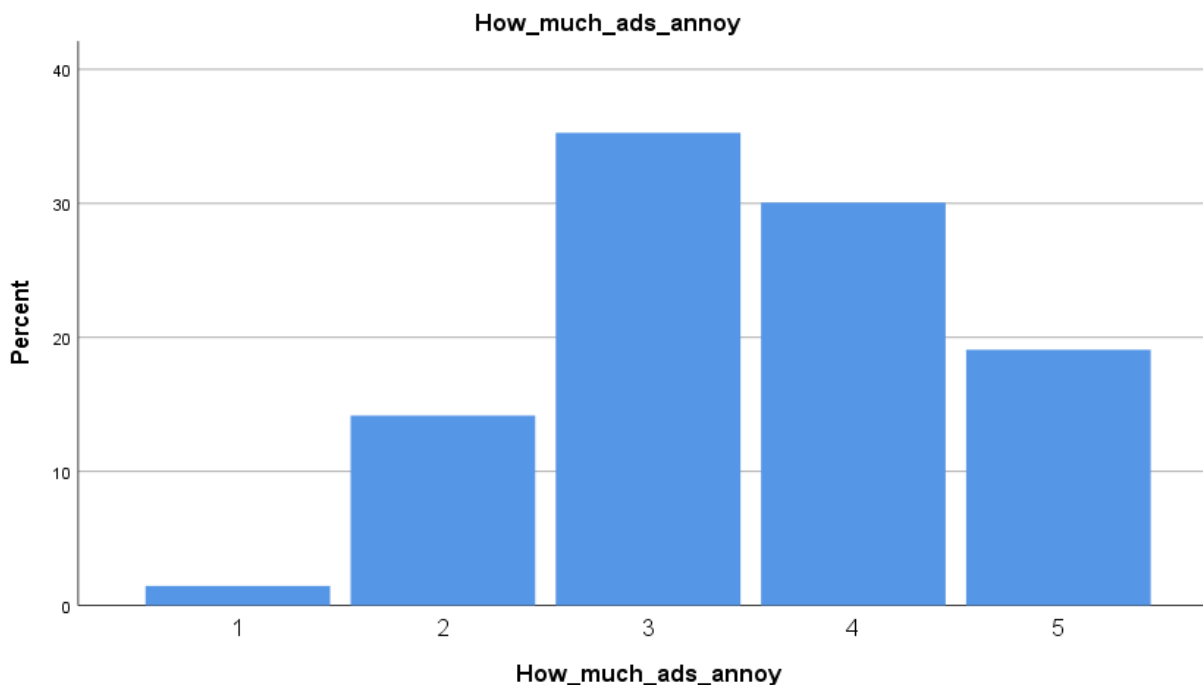


Figure 11. How many ads annoy you?

### Interpretation

Watching videos and reading blogs online is a routine habit of internet users. But during this time, digital marketers strike ads to the users online. The participants of the fast fashion brands were asked to rate how annoying are these them. The Likert scale was used to measure the density of the feeling. 35% of the participant rated 3 on a scale of 1 to 5. 30% of the participants voted for 4. While 19% of the participants voted for 5. So, it can be deduced from the statistics that online ads are often annoying to internet users.

### 9. Table showing how often the customers visit Zara for shopping.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	1.2	1.2	1.2
Never	51	14.7	14.7	15.9
Often	126	36.3	36.3	52.2

Rarely	166	47.8	47.8	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 12. How often visit Zara for shopping

Graph showing how often the customers visit Zara for shopping.



Figure 12. How often visit Zara for shopping

### Interpretation

The participants of this research survey were composed of fast fashion customers. They were asked how often they visit Zara for fast fashion shopping. 47% of the participant said they visit Zara rarely. However, 36% of participants stated they visit Zara often. Meanwhile, 14% of the participant said they had never visited Zara. These statistics show that fast fashion customers have a mild orientation towards Zara for fast fashion clothing. 47% is a great some for the participants confessing that they rarely visit Zara. However, 47% also imply that they are customers of Zara. It is not like 47% of the participants never visit Zara. So, it can be deduced that 80% of the participants were customers of Zara for fast fashion clothing.

### 10. Table showing how the Customers got to know about the discounts.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	9	2.6	2.6	2.6
Billboards	17	4.9	4.9	7.5
Emails	3	.9	.9	8.4
Family & Friends	126	36.3	36.3	44.7
Social Media ads	168	48.4	48.4	93.1
TV	24	6.9	6.9	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 13. Who informed them about the discounts on Zara

### Graph showing how the Customers got to know about the discounts.

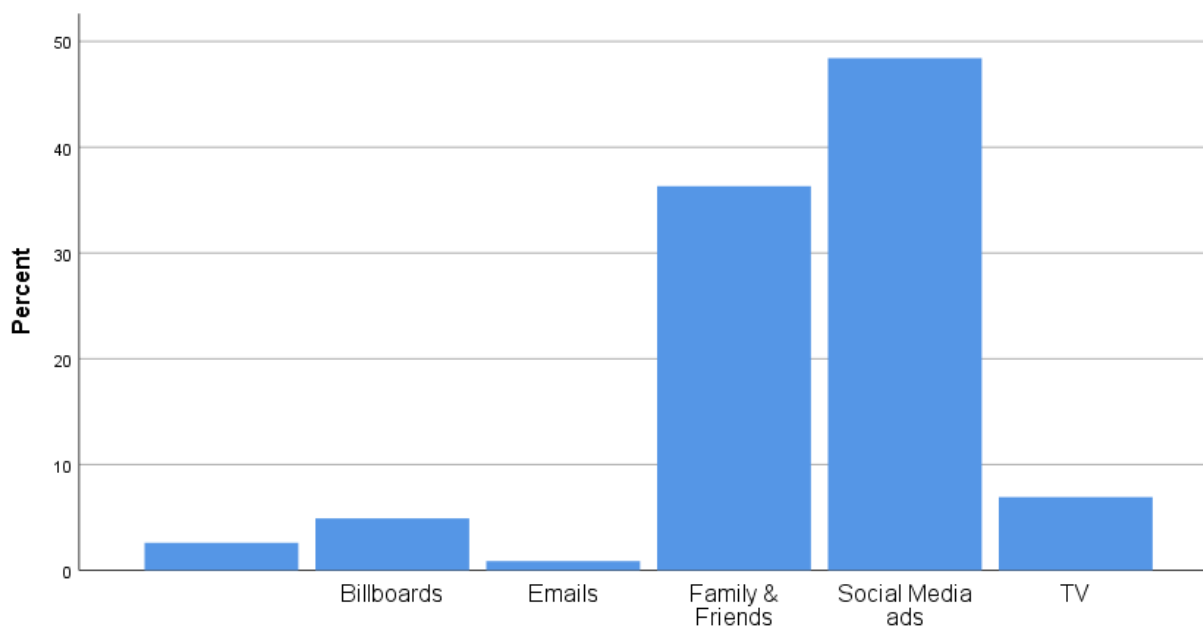


Figure 13. Who informed them about the discounts on Zara

### Interpretation

Another question was posed in the questionnaire survey and it was related to the discount offers. It asked the participants who tell them about the discount offers on their favourite fast fashion brands. 48% of the participants share that they hear about that count on social media platforms.

36% of the participants stated that they hear about discounts from family and friends. However, the rest of the participants indicated billboards emails and TV channels. The size of the participants indicating these channels was very small. These statistics employee that social media is a highly immersive and trendy platform to promote digital marketing content. Moreover, word of mouth is also one of the most favorable marketing channels. On the other hand, the most interesting fact is that traditional media channels are now outdated because they cannot outnumber social media popularity collectively.

#### 11. Table showing what makes customers trust the brand.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
Post sales behaviour	28	8.1	8.1	8.6
Product Quality	287	82.7	82.7	91.4
Real-time Communication	28	8.1	8.1	99.4
Social media presence	2	.6	.6	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 14. What makes them trust a brand

Graph showing what makes customers trust the brand.

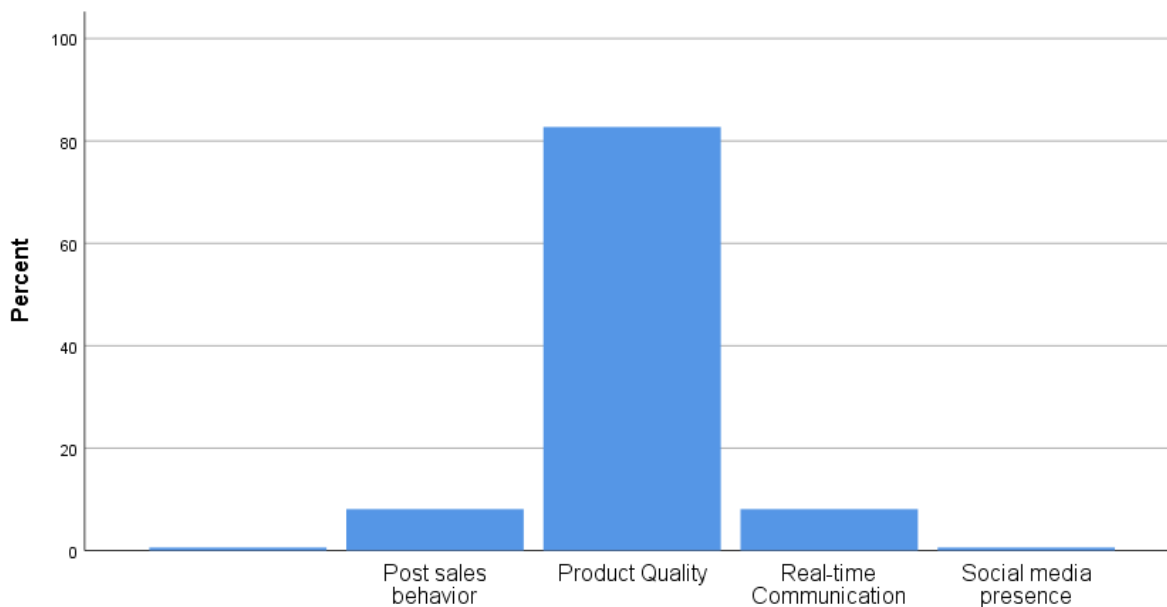


Figure 14. What makes them trust a brand

### Interpretation

In the survey, it was asked from the participants what makes the brand trustable. This question was related to the trust relationship between brands and customers. In the context of the fast fashion industry of Ireland, the responses of the participants are as follow. 82% of the participants stated that they trust a brand that delivers a quality product. 8% of the participants referred to post-sales behaviour. 8% of the participants tilted toward the real-time communication quality of brands. Only 6% of the participants stated that they trust a brand if it has a social media presence. These findings are very intriguing because one thing has not changed or even exacerbated and that is product quality. Customers do not compromise on product quality if the product is purchased online or from physical shops. However, the other side of the picture is that online presence alone cannot gain the trust of the customers if it does not deliver quality.



## 12. Table showing if customers trust the brand on social media

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	.6	.6	.6
Agree	113	32.6	32.6	33.1
Disagree	20	5.8	5.8	38.9
Neutral	187	53.9	53.9	92.8
Strongly agree	20	5.8	5.8	98.6
Strongly disagree	5	1.4	1.4	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

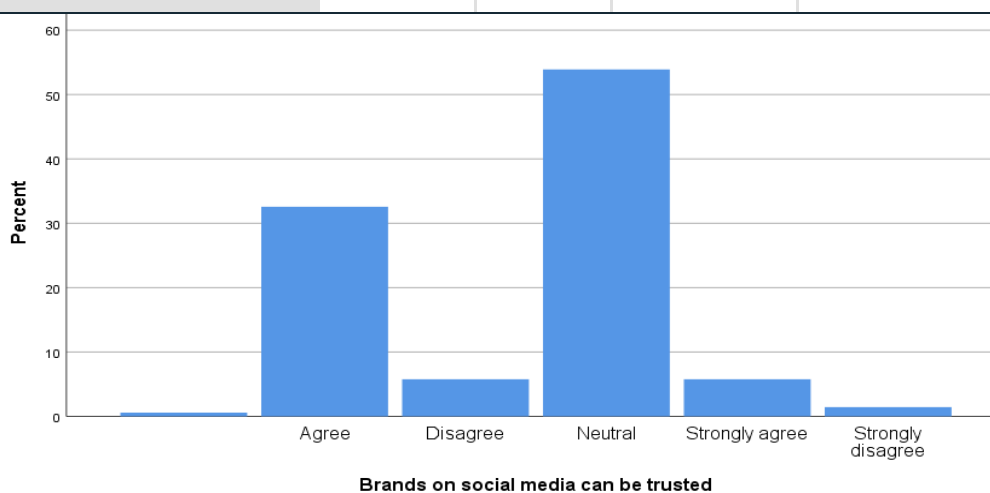


Figure 15. Brands on social media can be trusted

### Interpretation.

The next question in the survey was related to the general presence of social media availability of brands. Internet users frequently see brands on social media. In this way, they were asked that do they trust the brands they see on social media generally. 53% of the participants stayed neutral. 32% of the participants agreed that they do trust the brands they see on social media. 5% of the participants disagreed and 5% of the participants strongly agreed that they do and do not trust the brands on social media. So, these statistics indicate that a higher majority of the participants trust the brands they see on social media. There is a reason behind this fact. People spend most of their time on social media. It has become a virtual reality. It is a new digital landscape. What people see online attaches to their lives. So, the brands present online seem to be familiar and trustworthy.

13. Table showing if the brands are engaging with customers on social media are reliable.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
Agree	184	53.0	53.0	54.8
Disagree	19	5.5	5.5	60.2
Neutral	72	20.7	20.7	81.0
Strongly agree	30	8.6	8.6	89.6
Strongly disagree	36	10.4	10.4	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 16. Brands engaging with customers on social media are reliable

Graph showing if the brands are engaging with customers on social media are reliable.

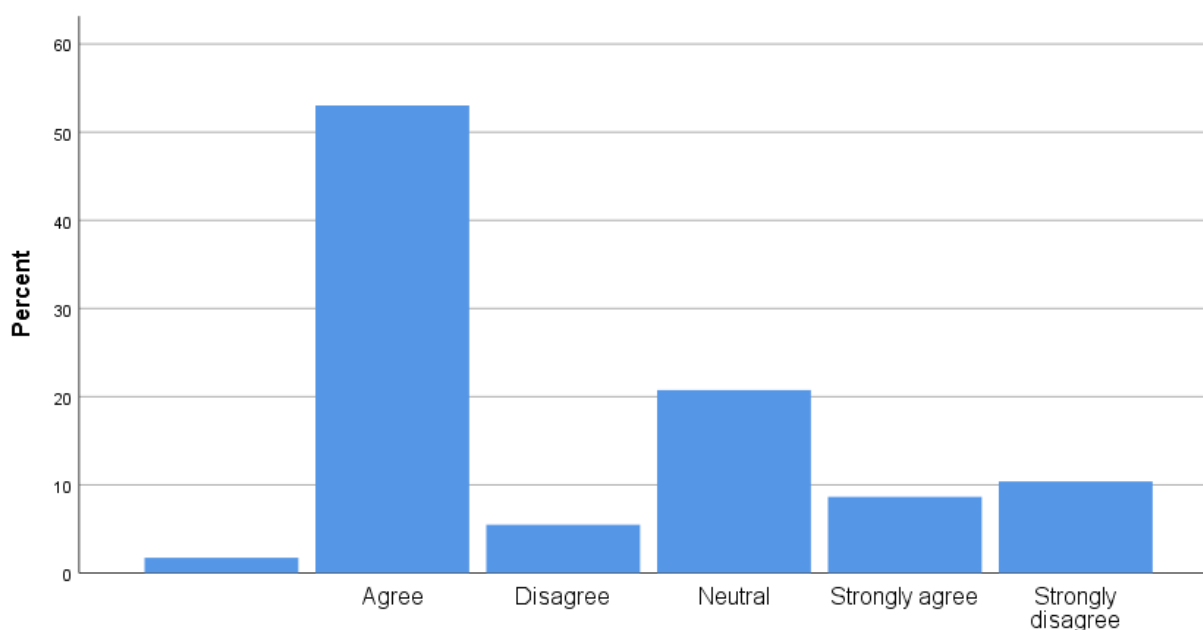


Figure 16. Brands engaging with customers on social media are reliable.

Interpretation.

In this survey, the participants were asked about the reliability of the brands engaging with customers online. The question probed customers about the fact that the brands which communicate or engage with their true audience build a reliable relationship with their audience.

53% of the participants agreed that it is the case. 20% of the participants remained neutral which also indicates agreement because if they disagreed, they would clearly say that but at the same time, it cannot be assumed completely that they agree with the fact. 10% of the participant strongly disagreed with this assumption that brands engaging with customers on social media are viewed as reliable. However, 8% of the participants strongly agreed with this idea. These statistics show that brand engagement is a frontier that is vital for reliability in the fast fashion industry of Ireland because a majority of the customers online prefer engaging with their favorite brand.

14. Table showing how Zara is a better brand.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	7	2.0	2.0	2.0
Home delivery	22	6.3	6.3	8.4
Improved Quality	150	43.2	43.2	51.6
More shops	30	8.6	8.6	60.2
Reduced prices	138	39.8	39.8	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 17. How Zara is a better brand

Graph showing how Zara is a better brand.

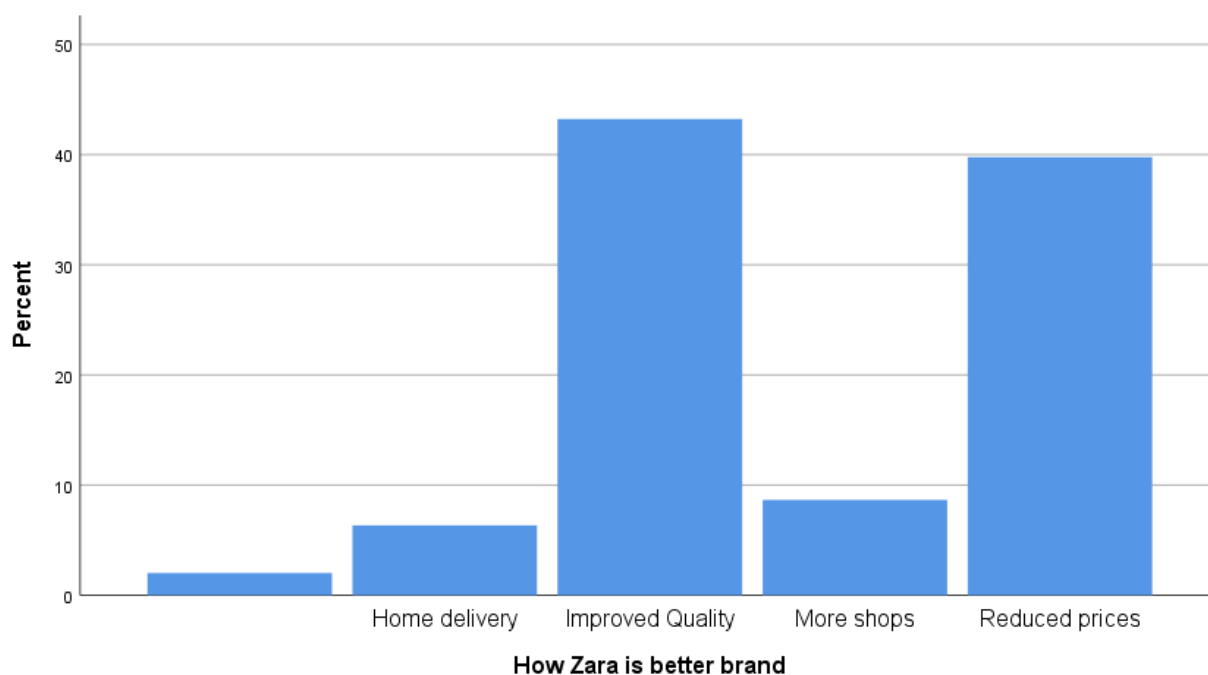


Figure 17. How Zara is a better brand

### Interpretation.

During the survey, the participants were asked about how Zara is a better brand as compared to other fast fashion brands. 43% of the participants stated that Zara is a better brand as compared to other fast fashion brands in Ireland because of its improved quality. 39% of the participants favor reduced prices as the success factor for Zara. 6% of the participants indicated home delivery while 8% of the participants referred to more shops. From this demonstration of facts and figures, it is assumed that Zara has a greater quality in the fast fashion industry of Ireland because a large proportion of its client base prefers it for improved quality rather than reduce prices.

### 15. Table showing how customers feel when they get mails from Zara

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	8	2.3	2.3	2.3
Annoyed	114	32.9	32.9	35.2
Happy	109	31.4	31.4	66.6
Overwhelmed	26	7.5	7.5	74.1

Prefer not to say	90	25.9	25.9	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 7. How do they feel when they get emails from Zara

Graph showing how customers feel when they get mails from Zara

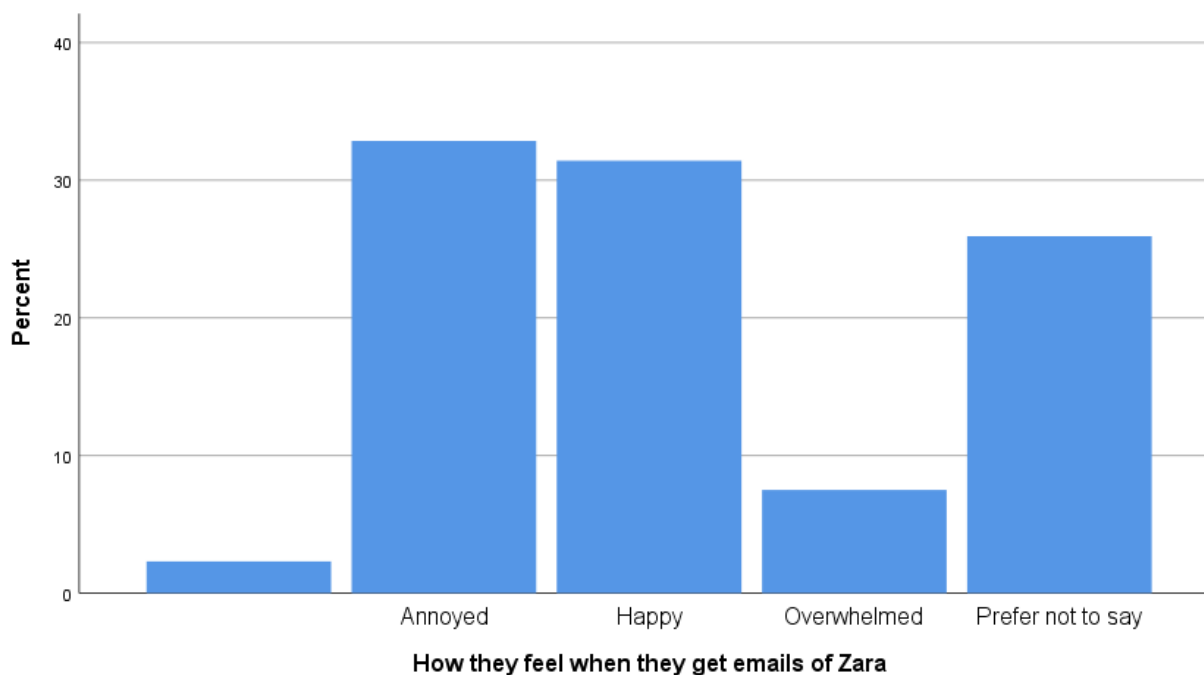


Figure 18. How do they feel when they get emails from Zara.

### Interpretation.

During the survey, an intriguing question was posed. The participants were asked to share their experiences with receiving emails from Zara. 32% of the participants stated that they feel annoyed when they get emails from Zara. 31% of the participants claimed that they feel happy when they receive emails from Zara. 25% of the participants preferred not to say anything about their feelings. 7% of the participants stated that they feel overwhelmed with the emails from Zara. From this display of percentages, it can be deduced that 50% of the participants feel happy with the emails and 50% of the participants feel annoyed because there is a 1% difference between both the classes. These results indicate that Zara should improve its emailing strategy so that it can gain the support of 50% of its customers to feel happy about its emails. It will benefit Zara in the long run because it will retain more customers online. Ignoring the annoyance of the customers in a digital world

can lead to frustrating outcomes. Therefore, revitalizing the e-mailing strategy of Zara will prove beneficial for the company in long run.

#### 16. Table showing much do consumer trust Zara for clothing

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	.9	.9	.9
	2	1	.3	.3	1.2
	3	140	40.3	40.6	41.7
	4	161	46.4	46.7	88.4
	5	40	11.5	11.6	100.0
	Total	345	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.6		
Total		347	100.0		

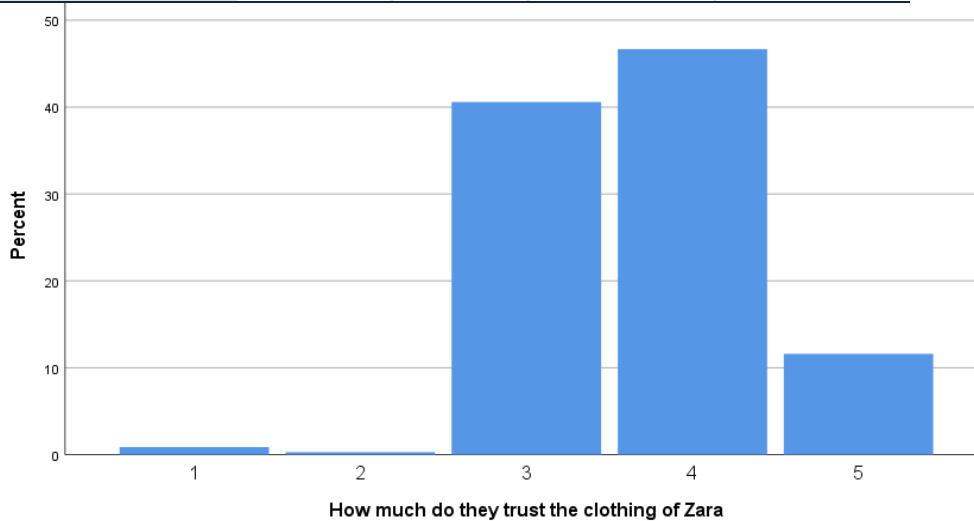


Figure 19. How much do they trust the clothing of Zara

#### Interpretation

In the online questionnaire survey, the participants were asked about how much they trusted their clothing of Zara. The responses were labelled on the Likert scale. A 1 to 5 grading pattern was planted. 41% of the participants graded the trust factor of Zara on 3. 46% of the participant graded it at 4, and 11% of the participants stated 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. 2% of the participants indicated 2 while 9% of the participants stated about 1. These facts and figures share a handsome image of Zara in the fast fashion industry of Ireland because the highest majority of the participants graded

the trust factor of Zara in the clothing market at 4. People do trust Zara in Ireland, particularly for fast fashion clothing.

17. Table showing if the pandemic affects the buying behavior of clothing brands.

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Maybe	64	18.4	18.4	19.9
No	51	14.7	14.7	34.6
Yes	227	65.4	65.4	100.0
Total	347	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Did the pandemic affect the buying behaviour of clothing brands

Graph showing if the pandemic affects the buying behavior of clothing brands.

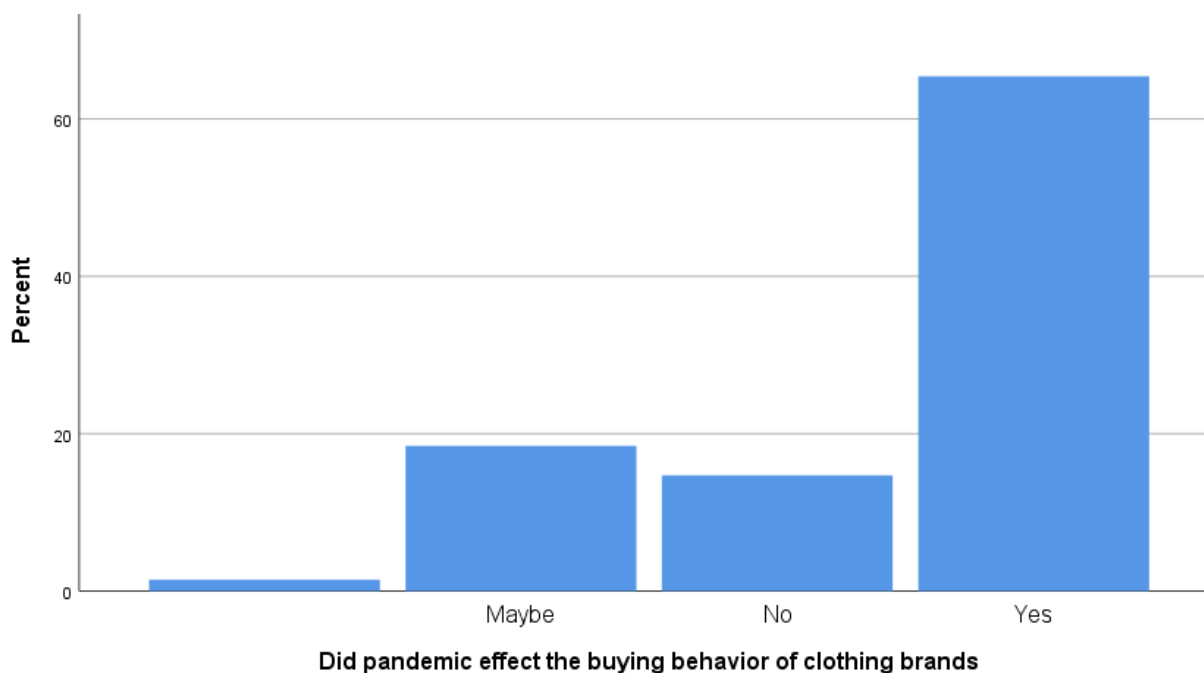


Figure 20. Did the pandemic affect the buying behaviour of clothing brands

### Interpretation

During the survey, it was asked the participants whether the pandemic has changed the buying behaviour of customers purchasing clothes or not. 65% of the participants confessed that the

pandemic has changed their buying behaviour regarding fast fashion clothes. 18% of the participants remained neutral because they said maybe their purchasing behaviour has changed or not. 14% of the participants stated that the covid-19 has not changed their buying behaviour regarding fast fashion clothes. However, these statistics do not show whether this buying behaviour has changed due to the pandemic or digital marketing strategies.

### 4.3 Critical Analysis

The findings of the study are reliable because they show conformity with the findings of many authors. Tran (2020) conducted a similar study to measure the impacts of digital marketing in the fast fashion industry. His highest number of participants were aged between 25-30. Nakalinda (2018), Murphy (2021) and Půstová (2021) showed the same findings because their participants aged around 25. These findings imply that online surveys for social media and impacts on consumer buying behavior are more suitable for internet users around 25 years. However, there is a complete dissimilarity among the findings of this study related to gender and other similar studies. Because in this study, the majority of the participants are female. But studies by Půstová (2021) and Nakalinda (2018) have the majority of male participants. So, there is a contrast between the finding. Meanwhile, the findings of Tran (2020) have slightly more females than the other two counterparts. This study is somehow showing similar findings to this current study. It can be assumed from these gender-based findings that the gender of the researcher impacts the findings because it becomes easier for the researcher to get access to information from the same gender easily.

According to the findings of this study, the visibility of mobile phone ads to internet users is very intelligent because the majority of the participants expressed that their search queries are followed by these digital marketing ads. Plus, they added that the relevancy of these ads is appreciable. Similar findings can be traced in the works of Murphy (2021) because his participants also say that the Instagram posts are all ads. Although his study follows a qualitative research methodology, his findings conform with the findings of this study. His participants see the Instagram news feed as Instagram ads feed. However, Humne (2020) concludes the advertisements of Zara in the fast fashion industry are not seen frequently by the participants. This finding is very critical for Zara because it can be the reason that Zara is lagging in competition with ASOS. Although the fast



fashion industry runs over millennials and ads, the reach of Zara's digital marketing campaign is limited and ineffective. Humne (2020) and Tran (2020) even consider the ads strategy of Zara negative because the internet users don't attract to them. Similarly, this study confirms that users get annoyed when they receive emails and see ads frequently.

The correlation between brand loyalty and social media presence is an important finding of the study because it contrasts with the findings of the study and some other studies already published. Nakalinda (2018) and Murphy (2021) stated that the online presence of the brand matters a lot because it familiarizes the brand with the target audience. The same was found in this study that online presence matters a lot. Stein (2019) also stressed that Fashion Nova and ASOS took the lead from H&M and Zara due to their gigantic Instagram activity. However, there is a clear contrast between one of the findings of this study and it is related to trust and brand loyalty. The highest number of participants trusted the brands that deliver high-quality products, not high-resolution ads. The quality of the products is the central element to trust a brand and it is logical to expect quality from the brand to rely on. Showing Instagram models and delivering poor quality does not make sense. Therefore, this study highlights this paradox (Stein, 2019, Nakalinda, 2018, Murphy, 2021). From this critical evaluation of findings, we can deduce that brand loyalty and trust are gained through the high quality of the product but retaining the quality and increasing the engagement is only possible through extensive digital marketing activity through reliable social media presence.

The reliability and familiarity of brands in a digital landscape are related to the digital outlook of the brand. This research study found that customers think that the brands which are available online can be reliable because it is what the trend is. All the famous brands have social media accounts and they engage with their customers. This study confirmed that engaging with audience enhances the brand trust and loyalty with potential clients. Murphy (2021) and Nakalinda (2018) also ratified this finding in their studies because they highlighted that young fast fashion customers follow Instagram trends and models to make their new purchases. And for that, they religiously follow the social media influencers for which brands and trends they follow. Therefore, it can be implied from the discussion that digital presence and engagement with a customer after incorporating influencer marketing trends can make a distinct difference in sales because the potential audience of the brand follows what they see online. It can also lead to the reliability of the brand because

this personal engagement with a brand can develop a sense of reliability among customers. The study of Guerreiro and Pacheco (2021) proved this assumption that brand engagement has an influential impact on brand reliability and trust.

The findings of the study related to the impacts of a pandemic on changing consumer buying behavior are interesting because the participants stated clearly that their habits have changed. This change can be perceived in a wider context because it can be related to online sales or new fashion trends. However, the opinion of Stein (2019) regarding the popularity of emerging brands can reflect some of the implications in this scenario because the shift of Zara from physical to online sales as the mainstream channel of revenue generation can be impressive. The participants also reflected that their buying behavior has changed which can be implied by the effectiveness of digital marketing technologies. The justification for this claim can be found in the study of (Redjeki and Affandi, 2021). Their study explicitly states that the closure of the businesses during the pandemic did not change buying much more than the emergence of smart digital marketing strategies because their effectiveness increased to the optimal level during this time. Therefore, the findings of the study related to the consumer buying behavior change for online shopping in the stores of Zara has not changed because the participants did not receive encouraging emails and ads that can convert them to buy products from Zara. However, the quality of Zara compelled them to make purchases. The impacts of digital marketing in the fast fashion industry of Ireland are mesmerizing because Murphy (2021), Nakalinda (2018), Humne (2020), Tran (2020) and Půstová (2021) found that digital marketing strategies of brands cater for millennials for emerging fast fashion brands. As Zara has no overwhelming digital marketing strategy to outpace ASOS and Fashion NOVA, this cannot be true for Zara to attract customers through its digital presence.

## Chapter 5

### 5.0 Discussion

#### 5.1 Impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior

Consumer behavior is the product of many internal and external forces. Formulating consumer behavior is a long-term strategy. It is not like creating a product or service. Rather consumer behavior is a bilateral exchange of value. Businesses make consumer behavior through extensive research and value-sharing campaigns (Zhao et al., 2021). Understanding the demands of customers and providing effective solutions for these demands in the best possible way is one of the unique strategies to develop consumer behavior. Manipulating consumer behavior requires disruptive and highly innovative initiative because playing with human psychology where financial stakes are high is a challenging task (Mehta et al., 2020). Impacting consumer buying behavior is a lengthy process. It needs more than showing ads to the customers. It requires high engagement and high-quality delivery for a reasonable price. Many researchers found that delivering high-quality products for reasonable prices and offering decent post-sales services formulate customer buying behavior more than any other strategy (Bhamra et al., 2011). During covid-19 online businesses heavily invested in digital marketing technology to interact with the customers in real-time and deliver the required quality at reasonable prices. However, recent research studies investigated that influencer marketing in the fast fashion industry has proved to be one of the leading factors formulating consumer buying behavior (Akter and Sultana, 2020). Therefore, the impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior which included trending strategies have proven to be very effective. This research study found that the digital marketing strategies of Zara did not perform well as compared to computing brands during covid-19 so the results of this lagging marketing strategy for Zara or not impressive.

Digital marketing gained a tremendous hike in the wake of covid-19 because the business is work closed and reaching the customers was difficult for physical businesses. Digital marketing became the Omni channel strategy to reach clients. As digital marketing is a dynamic approach to influencing clients or potential customers through multiple channels the effectiveness of digital marketing is extremely high (Ratnasingam et al., 2021). Measuring the impacts of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior is an abstract task but as compared to traditional marketing campaigns it can be vividly observed. In the context of a pandemic, the impact of digital

marketing on consumer buying behavior has been started and recent research studies. It is found that frequent digital marketing strategies during covid-19 have changed the perception of people purchasing services and products (Tien et al., 2020). Many studies have found that people prefer to buy products online as compared to physical shopping which is opposite to pre covid-19 business landscape. This can be seen in the exponential growth of digital businesses like Amazon and Alibaba (Alfonso et al., 2021). However, this is not the case for Zara in the fast fashion industry because the digital marketing strategy of Zara is comparatively less effective than its emerging young competitors. Therefore, the impacts of covid-19 on consumer buying behavior for Zara and H&M are not as effective as compared to emerging brands like ASOS and Fashion Nova.

## 5.2 Digital marketing impacts the brand loyalty of ZARA in Ireland

Brand loyalty is one of the factors that help businesses maintain their stronghold in highly comparative international markets. Because brand loyalty keeps the customer base attached to the businesses in thick and thin times. Without brand loyalty, a brand cannot exist in fast pace business paradigms. As fast as the industry is a highly volatile and trendy business industry it needs a high level of brand loyalty. The survival of the business depends upon the loyalty of its customers (Bilgin, 2018, Salem and Salem, 2021, Huang, 2017). In this context, the research study found out that Zara has a handsome brand loyalty because customers of different ages do trust Zara. They believe that Zara delivers quality products. Zara has already established a name for its good quality. The client base for Zara is attracted to its services and high-quality products. The brand loyalty of emerging brands is due to their digital presence and high engagement on trendy social media platforms. Comparing these two scenarios it becomes challenging for a researcher to conclude what salt of brand loyalty is more profitable for a business invest the fashion industry. Because brand loyalty can be established through high product quality and services. On the other hand, brand loyalty can be developed through engagement and up-to-date digital marketing strategies. Budding research studies are indicating the effectiveness of multimodal digital marketing strategies to engage and developing grand reality (Huang, 2017, Alhaddad, 2015). However, this research study shows that product quality and services are central to the loyalty of customers.

## 5.3 Recommendations

It is recommended to Zara that it should optimize its digital identity because of two reasons. The first reason is that its competitors have a better brand presence than Zara. So, it is essential to

outsmart the creativity and brand presence of its competitors. The second reason is that Zara needs to optimize its digital identity because the reliability of brands can be influenced these days by digital identity. Young customers of the fast fashion industry get influenced when their favorite brands interact with them and show them the influencers they are attracted to.

It is recommended to Zara that it should bring innovation in its marketing campaign because fast fashion brands are infamous for depleting the environment. Adding narratives to be eco-friendly will benefit the brand to reduce social criticism of Zara because global warming and environmental pollution are often attached to the fast fashion industry. Mixing eco-friendly narratives will help Zara represent its image better than its competitors in the already infamous industry. Green narratives are not the primary solution for marketing. Moreover, Zara has to re-organize its product development procedures because, in the long run, this business model is not environment-friendly.

It is recommended that Zara should plan strategically to develop consumer behavior and retain the already developed customer base. Customers are happy with the product quality because Zara is known for good quality at reasonable prices. However, the changing business landscape needs more than qualified to control the fast fashion industry. So, planning strategically for developing consumer behavior is vital for Zara at this time.

#### 5.4 Future Research Areas

This research study suggests a very valuable research area for developing a new study. This research ended with exploring the impacts of digital marketing on the fast-fashion brand Ireland – Zara. It was found that the digital marketing or digital presence of Zara was not competitive against emerging brands. Thus, the new researcher can conduct a study that develops a complete digital marketing or business strategy to outwrestle competitors in the digital world of fast fashion. The practical development of the business strategy for Zara would help the company combat vertical competition in the market.

## Chapter 6

### 6.0 Conclusion

There are many benefits of this study for Zara in the fast fashion industry. This study helps Zara to scrutinize its existing digital marketing strategy. It identifies the gaps and flowers of its digital identity as compared to its competitors. It also helps Zara to understand its strong points in comparison to the emerging fast fashion brands. Moreover, this research study makes Zara aware of the fact that updating digital identity enables businesses to have the upper hand in the fast fashion industry of Ireland. All of these factors can be used to streamline the digital marketing strategy for effective branding engagement and sales generation. Combining all of these elements will help Zara investigate its existing digital marketing strategy and business model to develop a disruptive strategy to outsmart its competitors.

Adding elements of a green marketing strategy will be best suited for Zara at the current time because the narratives are building that fast fashion giants like Zara are negatively impacting the environment (Zhang et al., 2021). So, adding green narratives in its marketing campaigns will help Zara reduce the effects of criticism on its digital identity.

Before covid-19 the status of Zara was not bullish because the emerging brands were successfully competing against Zara and other fast fashion monsters. Zara was facing extreme competition and backlash from environmental activists (Wang, 2018). However, after covid-19 Zara is still experiencing backlash because of vertical competition. Emerging brands are giving tough competition to Zara because they have a strong digital identity. But one thing is the same in a pre-covid or post-covid-19 situation. The reliability and trust of customers in Zara are the same because customers in the fast fashion industry trust Zara for high-quality products and reasonable prices (Cameron et al., 2021). This is the main source of success for Zara in the fast fashion industry. If Zara ensures that it will improve its digital marketing or Digital identity then it will be inevitable for emerging brands to fight against Zara in the fast fashion industry.

The consumer behavior for Zara is moderate in the current scenario because Zara has a strong brand image. Zara is the go-to shopping brand for fast fashion enthusiasts. People rely on the product quality of Zara. Consumer behavior is already established for Zara that it delivers quality at reasonable prices (Neumann et al., 2020). However, quality is not a hard task to achieve rather

consumer behavior is shifting towards new trends. Almost emerging brands have formulated consumer behavior towards social media influencers. Young customers a fast fashion brands religiously follow this influencer. So new brands are performing consumer behavior from quality to digital marketing tactics. However, it will take time to completely change marketing and business dynamics. Plus, Zara is also evolving to meet customer expectations in the industry

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## Appendix

### Survey Questionnaire

#### Investigating the impacts of digital marketing in the fast-fashion industry of Ireland: the case study of ZARA

The purpose of this study is to investigate the implications of digital marketing in the fast-fashion industry of Ireland for a specific fashion brand – ZARA. The questionnaire collects no identifying information from any respondent. All of the responses to the questionnaire will be recorded anonymously. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. The survey should take only 10-15 minutes to complete. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you are indicating your consent to participate in the study. Your participation is appreciated.

How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 25-35
- 35 above

What is your gender?

- male
- female
- prefer not to say

How often do you use a mobile phone in a day?

- 1 hour
- 2 hours
- 4 hours
- more than 5 hours

Do you see online ads when you use a mobile phone?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you see ads relevant to your likes and dislikes?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do the ads follow your search queries?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

I consider visiting the brands I see on social media

- yes
- No
- maybe

Do these ads annoy you? If yes, how much?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

How often do you shop from Zara?

- Rarely
- Often
- Never

I visit the brands I see on social media

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

From where did you get to know about Zara discounts?

- Social Media ads
- Family & Friends
- Billboards
- TV
- Emails

What makes you trust a clothing brand?

- Real-time Communication
- Product Quality
- Post sales behaviour
- Social media presence

Brands on social media can be trusted

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Brands engaging with customers on social media are reliable

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral

- Agree
- Strongly agree

I trust the brands more which I see on social media

-  1
-  2
-  3
-  4
-  5

What can make Zara an even better clothing brand?

- More shops
- Improved Quality
- Reduced prices
- Home delivery


What do you feel once you get emails from Zara?

- Happy
- Annoyed
- Overwhelmed
- Prefer not to say

Who told you about the discount offers on Zara?

- Family & Friends
- Phone
- Email
- Social Media ads

How much do you trust Zara for clothing wear?

-  1
-  2
-  3

4

5

Did covid -19 impact your buying behavior on clothing platforms - like online instead of stores

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

## Screenshot of SPSS Data View & Variable View

Anaga.sav [DataSet1] - IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor

File Edit View Data Transform Analyze Graphs Utilities Extensions Window Help

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	Age	String	8	0	Age of participa...	{1, 18-25}...	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
2	Gender	String	17	0	Gender	{1, male}...	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
3	Often_use_...	String	17	0	How often they ...	{1, 1 hour}...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
4	See_online_...	String	5	0	Do they see ads	{1, Yes}...	None	5	Left	Nominal	Input
5	See_ads_re...	String	5	0	Do they see ad...	{1, Yes}...	None	5	Left	Nominal	Input
6	ads_follow_...	String	5	0	ads_follow_sea...	{1, Yes}...	None	5	Left	Nominal	Input
7	consider_vis...	String	5	0	What brands th...	{1, Yes}...	None	5	Left	Nominal	Input
8	How_much_...	Numeric	2	0	How_much_ad...	None	None	12	Right	Nominal	Input
9	How_often_...	String	6	0	How often visit ...	{1, Often}...	None	6	Left	Nominal	Input
10	visit_brands...	String	17	0	Visit brands se...	{1, Agree}...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
11	How_know_...	String	20	0	Who tell them ...	{1, Family &...	None	20	Left	Nominal	Input
12	Makes_you_...	String	23	0	What makes th...	{1, Product ...	None	23	Left	Nominal	Input
13	Brands_on_...	String	17	0	Brands on soci...	{1, Agree}...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
14	Brands_eng...	String	17	0	Brands engagin...	{1, Agree}...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
15	trust_brand...	Numeric	2	0	People trust br...	None	None	12	Right	Nominal	Input
16	What_make...	String	16	0	How Zara is bet...	{1, Reduced...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
17	feel_get_em...	String	17	0	How they feel w...	{1, Happy}...	None	17	Left	Nominal	Input
18	Who_tell_a...	String	20	0	Who tell about ...	{1, Family &...	None	20	Left	Nominal	Input
19	How_much_...	Numeric	2	0	How much do t...	None	None	12	Right	Nominal	Input
20	Covid_19_i...	String	5	0	Did pandemic e...	{1, Yes}...	None	26	Left	Nominal	Input
21											
22											
23											
24											
25											

Data View Variable View

Figure 21. Variable View of SPSS



19: How\_often\_shoppi...\_Often

	Age	Gender	Often_use_mobile_phon e_a_day	See onlin e_ad	See ads relev	ads ollov _sea	cons der_y isit.in	How_much_ads _annoy	How_f ften_s hoppin	visit_brands_see_on_so cial_media	How_know_about_Zara_disc ounts	Makes_you_trust_a_clothin g_brand
1	25-35	female	more than 5 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	3	Often	Agree	Family & Friends	Product Quality
2	25-35	male	2 hours	Maybe	Maybe	No	No	2	Often	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
3	35 above	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Maybe	yes	4	Rarely	Agree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
4	18-25	female	2 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	maybe	3	Rarely	Neutral	Social Media ads	Post sales behavior
5	25-35	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	No	maybe	5	Never	Agree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
6	25-35	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3	Rarely	Disagree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
7	25-35	male	more than 5 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	maybe	4	Rarely	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
8	25-35	female	2 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	4	Rarely	Strongly agree	Family & Friends	Product Quality
9	35 above	male	more than 5 hours	Yes	Yes	Maybe	maybe	3	Often	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
10	25-35	male	more than 5 hours	Yes	No	No	No	4	Rarely	Neutral		Product Quality
11	25-35	male	2 hours	No	No	Yes	yes	4	Never	Neutral	Social Media ads	Product Quality
12	25-35	male	more than 5 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	5	Often	Strongly disagree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
13	25-35	male	2 hours	Yes	Maybe	Yes	yes	4	Often	Agree	Family & Friends	Product Quality
14	25-35	male	more than 5 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	2	Never	Agree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
15	18-25	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	maybe	3	Rarely	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
16	18-25	female	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	maybe	3	Rarely	Neutral	Social Media ads	Real-time Communication
17	18-25	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	3	Rarely	Agree	Billboards	Product Quality
18	18-25	female	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	4	Rarely	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
19	25-35	female	4 hours	Yes	Maybe	Yes	yes	3	Often	Neutral	Family & Friends	Product Quality
20	25-35	male	4 hours	Yes	Maybe	Yes	yes	3	Rarely	Agree	Social Media ads	Product Quality
21	25-35	male	4 hours	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes	3	Rarely	Agree	Social Media ads	Product Quality

Figure 22. Data View

19: How\_often\_shoppi...\_Often

	Brands_on_social_medi a_can_be_trusted	Brands_engaging_custo mers_on_social_media are_reliable	trust_brands_m ore_see_on_so cial_media	What_make_Zara_bette r_clothing_brand	feel_get_emails_from_Z ara	Who_tell_about_discount_off ers_on_Zara	How_much_trus t_Zara_clothing _wear	Covid_19_impact_buying_b f_clothing_platform
1	Neutral	Neutral	4	Reduced prices	Happy	Phone	4	Yes
2	Disagree	Neutral	2	Home delivery	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	3	No
3	Neutral	Agree	4	More shops	Happy	Family & Friends	4	Yes
4	Neutral	Agree	2	Home delivery	Happy	Social Media ads	4	Maybe
5	Neutral	Neutral	3	Reduced prices	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	3	Yes
6	Neutral	Agree	2	Reduced prices	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	3	Yes
7	Neutral	Neutral	2	More shops	Prefer not to say	Family & Friends	3	Yes
8	Strongly agree	Agree	3	Reduced prices	Annoyed	Social Media ads	4	Yes
9	Neutral	Neutral	3	Improved Quality	Prefer not to say	Family & Friends	4	Yes
10	Neutral	Agree	3	Reduced prices	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	3	No
11	Neutral	Agree	1	Improved Quality	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	2	Yes
12	Neutral	Agree	3	Reduced prices	Annoyed	Email	4	Yes
13	Neutral	Agree	3	Reduced prices	Prefer not to say	Social Media ads	4	Yes
14	Agree	Agree	4	More shops	Annoyed	Social Media ads	3	Yes
15	Neutral	Neutral	2	Reduced prices	Prefer not to say	Phone	3	Yes
16	Neutral	Neutral	5	Reduced prices	Happy	Email	3	Maybe
17	Neutral	Strongly disagree	3	More shops	Happy	Family & Friends	3	Yes
18	Agree	Agree	4	Improved Quality	Annoyed	Family & Friends	3	Yes
19	Neutral	Neutral	3	Reduced prices	Annoyed	Family & Friends	3	Maybe
20	Agree	Agree	4	More shops	Prefer not to say	Email	4	Yes
21	Neutral	Agree	3	Reduced prices	Annoyed	Email	4	Yes

Figure 23. Data View of SPSS

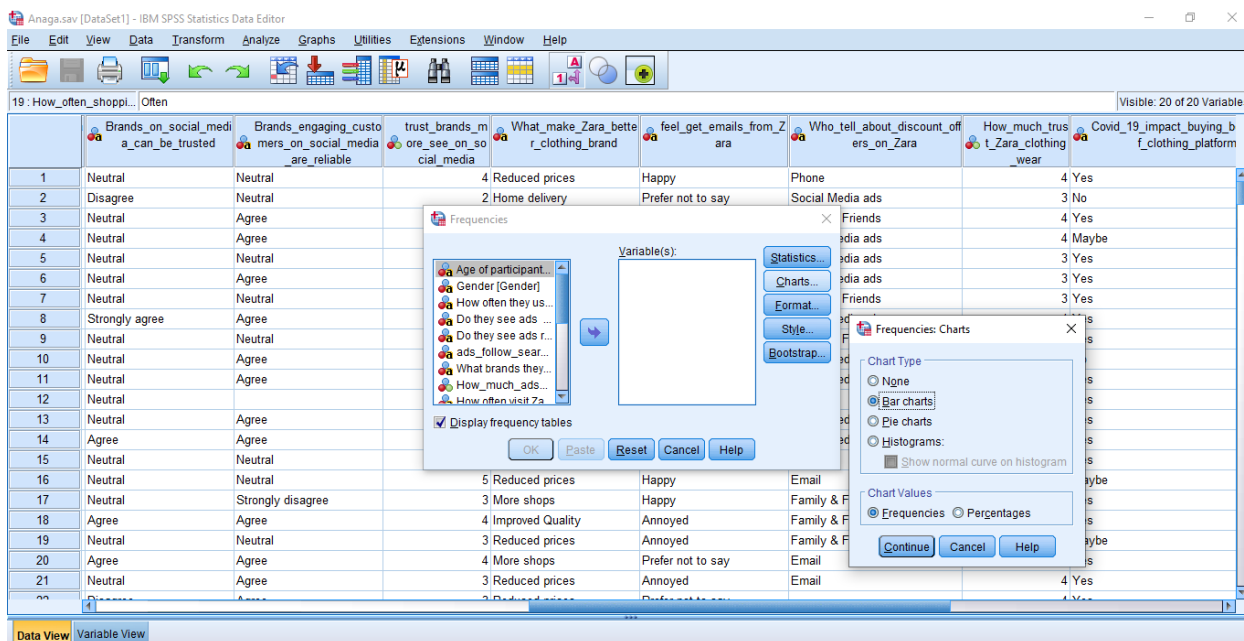


Figure 24. Doing Descriptive Statistics in SPSS

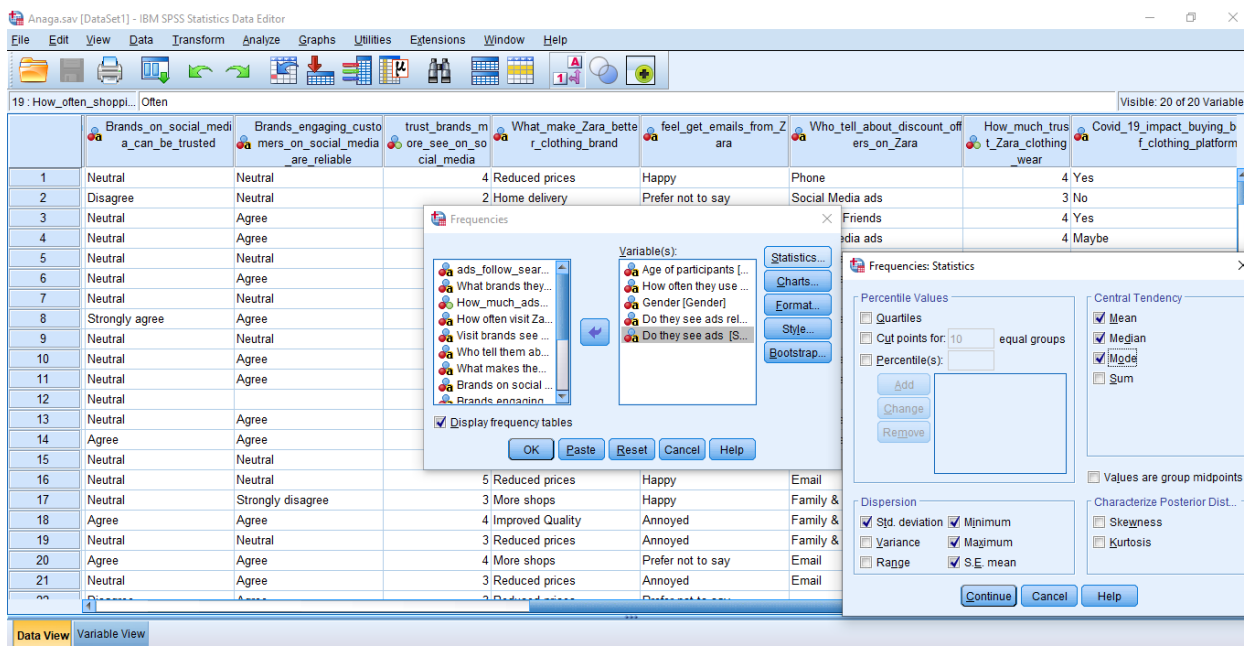


Figure 25. Selecting Statistical Variables for Analysis