

# **Impact of Instagram in Consumer Buying Decision in the Fashion Industry in the UK**

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## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the existing theories regarding this topic in the literature. The theoretical framework and conceptual framework are also presented in this chapter. The chapter is essential, since it allows an understanding of the present volume of study on this topic. The literature shares with the reader the outcomes of other studies that are related closely to the study that is being done currently (Denney and Tewksbury 2013). It also helps identify the gaps in the literature, thus showing what needs to be done in this current study for satisfying the objectives in the literature.

### **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model states that several external factors can act as stimuli that can influence the internal state of an individual, referring to the organism, resulting in a particular behavioural response (Kim, Lee and Jung, 2020). The theory has been widely used to understand the purchasing behaviour of customers. The consciousness of the buyer relies on the marketing and environmental stimuli while buying decisions are successfully performed with the help of the characteristics of the customers and the decision process. In the past decades, the SOR model has been commonly used by researchers to understand the factors influencing the behaviour of an individual. Hence, it is effective to address the human behaviour-related aspects (Peng and Kim, 2014). The SOR model is generally applied to evaluate the association between stimulus and response and to evaluate how the organisms mediate the associations. Furthermore, the model is an effective one to understand customer decisions as it develops cognitive appraisal of individuals (Vidyanata, 2022). Considering this model, the main focus of this study is the advertising value. In the context of Instagram advertising, the external ad stimuli suggest the advertised product and communicate the characteristics, factors, concepts and ideas of a product. Therefore, understanding the factors that impact the worth of an advertisement from the perspective of the consumers is of great significance to social media marketers. Furthermore, the degree of involvement with an external stimulus is influenced by the authenticity and relevance of the notion to the customers. Hence, this theory posits that the involvement of Instagram users is the organism state that will be impacted by the perceived advertisement value (Baber and Baber, 2023). After triggering the stimulus, the customers investigate the advertising messages and decide whether it is worthy or not based on cognitive and affective motives and emphasize the messages to gather more information. As a result of this, the decision-making process is influenced.

On the other hand, it has been found that customer attitudes are shaped through experience and learning and these attitudes can impact the purchasing behaviour of the consumers. In this case, the consumer buying decision process framework proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016) can be evaluated which begins with the decision-making processes wherein the customers make the decision to purchase the goods or services in the market (Qazzafi, 2019). The very first stage of the framework includes problem recognition, which suggests the need for the organisation to understand the requirements of the customers and satisfy them. In the second stage of the decision-making process, the customers search for information through different sources such as personal sources, public sources and so on. The third stage facilitates the evaluation of the alternatives in the market. The customers may make decisions based on the ranking of the products from best to worst based on the information available. In the fourth stage, the purchase is being made by the customers (Qazzafi, 2019). However, the surrounding environment can influence this stage of purchase decision. Lastly, the customer will be either satisfied or dissatisfied with the service or the experience. In this stage, the customers expect post-purchase services. However, if the product or service does not meet the needs of the customers, they will remain dissatisfied. This theory is significant to understand the behaviour of Instagram users while making a purchasing decision. Similarly, the study by Alfian and Nilowardono (2019) used this theory to explore the impact of social media marketing on the purchasing decisions of tourists. At the same time, Helinsha (2021) carried out an investigation to find out the impact of social media advertising on the buying decisions of consumers. The study used Kotler's customer purchasing decision process framework to conduct the research.

### **2.3. Impact of Visual Content on Instagram in Shaping the Purchasing Intentions of Gen Z consumers**

The concepts associated with social media and user-generated content are associated with Web 2.0. The foundation of social media platforms is in the use of blogs, the rising access to Internet, and the creation of social media networks. These are a collection of online applications built based on the Web 2.0, allowing the creation and exchange of user generated content. Social media can take many forms, including text, video, image, audio, and other social media formats (Brandão, Pinho and Rodrigues 2019). Instagram is primarily a social media platform focusing on visual content (Bakhshi, Shamma and Gilbert 2014). According to Kim, Chung and Fiore (2023), Instagram provides a number of formats of advertisements that businesses can apply for sharing information regarding their products and motivate the audiences with attractive

visual content. Instagram Stories also provide the possibilities of highly interactive functions, like the users being allowed to participate in quizzes or polls, with real time results. These interactive features cause the ad experience on social media to be engaging and also contribute to the increasing popularity of the Instagram Stories among the businesses (Kim, Chung and Fiore 2023). Consumers seek the use of social networks like Instagram, serving as platforms through which the consumers can be inspired, displaying their own styles, and interacting with the new trends in fashion. Thus, platforms like Instagram are important for the fashion companies to be able to publicise the products (Brandão, Pinho and Rodrigues 2019).

According to Jones and Lee (2022), the visual nature of Instagram satisfies the needs of fashion marketing due to the strong visual messages that are required in fashion. Using Instagram, fashion brands are connected with the positive attributes of the brands, and the consumers develop their awareness regarding the company, thus increasing the brand loyalty required for the customers as well. Sharing videos, images, Instagram stories, and the links of the products displayed on Instagram can help the brands gain exposure, create conversations, and generate the required excitement. Thus, visual responses and experiences with interactive content can help create a positive brand experience for the users. Posts that display humour and tell stories with the brand page which evoke emotional sensations through visual content on Instagram can contribute to positive connections of the brands with the audience (Jones and Lee 2022). Wardhani and Alif (2019) found that the motivational message associated with the individual can cause emotional appeals and corresponding responses to be developed. The marketers, therefore, need to create advertisements that have an emotional appeal built through colour or graphic creation, celebrity endorsement, or effective messaging. Thus, visual content on Instagram could be effective in influencing the purchasing intentions of the consumers. In fact, the execution of the advertisements is not always associated with the message of advertising, other than the affective reaction when the advertisement is seen (Wardhani and Alif 2019). This makes visual creativity necessary in advertising on social media platforms.

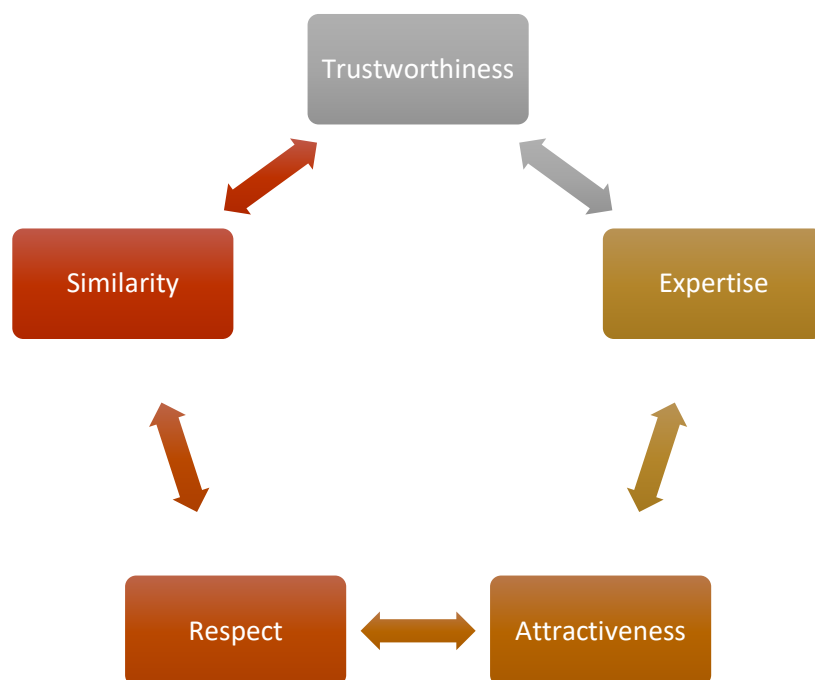
According to Kusumasondjaja (2020), visual aesthetics is the pictorial attractiveness which communicates a unique and clear image or pleasing appearance of an image or an object. Visual aesthetics creates a balance between the different components of design, including form, colour, shape, shade, tone, and texture, and the concepts, including contrast, balance, proportion, composition, and harmony. Consumers see the aesthetics of the online interfaces, including the social media platforms in two different ways, including expressive and classical aesthetics. Expressive aesthetics represents the originality and creativity of the design of the

interfaces. When the visual image is colourful, complex, and has an asymmetric order, it is considered to be expressive aesthetics. Classical aesthetics represents orderliness, symmetry, and clarity of the design of the visual object. This means that the symmetric, regular, organised, and clearly arranged objects are considered to have classical visual aesthetics (Kusumasondjaja 2020). According to Kim, Choi and Lee (2015), the impact of expressive aesthetics in visual content is stronger compared to classical aesthetic imagery when the consumers have hedonic motivation driving their intentions. The content on Instagram conveying the emotional aspects of the luxury brands through expressive aesthetics are more likely to be relevant than when just the technical specifications are listed. Thus, Alcaraz et al. (2022) state that visual placement of the products in an advertisement is a critical component for gaining the attention of the target market. Thus, it is important to identify the way in which the consumers perceive the graphic patterns in the advertisements. The visual representations of the objects may affect the ability of the consumers to mentally stimulate the use of the products, and this mental stimulation can influence the evaluations of the advertisements and the content. Consumers value the aesthetics of the content over the functionalities of the products if a particular level of functionality is achieved. Visual aesthetics helps create a halo effect, improving the quality of the products and the symbolic meaning (Kwak, Ramamurthy and Nazareth 2019). The visual aesthetics and the semantic information combined could help with positive assessment from the viewpoint of the consumers (Bhattacharya, Sukthankar and Shah 2010). A digital advertisement that emphasises congruity creates a sense of relevance and relatability to the ad content (Argyris et al. 2020). Thus, visual content on Instagram is likely to be more effective in shaping the purchasing intentions of the Gen Z consumers.

#### **2.4. Influence of Social Media Influencers on shaping the purchasing intentions of Gen Z consumers**

Social media influencers have become important figures allowing the opinions and behaviours of the Gen Z consumers to be affected. They have a significant effect on the purchasing intentions, decision making, and brand image of the consumers. Influencer marketing has also been a tool used significantly in social media advertising. This involves the businesses collaborating with individuals, usually content creators who have niche audiences, so that their services, products, or campaigns can be promoted. The influencers, who have a significant loyal base of followers on platforms like Instagram, can offer value through engagement with a devoted set of followers (Erwin, Saununu and Rukmana 2023). Shetu (2024) claims that there are substantial correlations observed between the micro-celebrity posts, user-generated content,

intentions to search, and online purchasing behaviours of the Gen Z consumers. This shows that the user generated content can motivate the consumers to search for the corresponding products. Gen Z consumers also use social media platforms to follow traditional as well as micro-celebrities through online platforms. Social media profiles which appeal to the followers should have interactive language and attractive images. Thus, social media platforms can drive current trends, and thus can affect the online shopping intentions of the consumers. This could be attributed to the commercialised environment in which the Gen Z consumers have been brought up. Social media users trust that the stimuli provided by the social media platforms can provide them with the required information to judge their purchasing actions (Shetu 2024). Sharipudin et al. (2023) applied the TEARS model and the social influence theory for comprehending the predictors of the purchasing intentions of the consumers. The TEARS model is shown in the figure below. This study showed that there are two main components that can influence the effectiveness of the social media influencers, including credibility (expertise and trustworthiness) and attractiveness (respect, attractiveness, and similarity). These attributes can allow the influencers to convince their followers to purchase the products that they recommend or introduce (Sharipudin et al. 2023).



*Figure 1: TEARS model for social media influencers*

(Source: Created by author; adapted from Sharipudin et al. 2023)

Sun et al. (2022) also claim that family members, opinion leaders, and peers are important for the purchasing intentions of the consumers to be affected. The role of social media influencers

in these purchasing intentions has not been adequately explored in academia. Also, different social media influencers may affect the consumer behaviours in different ways. Thus, it is important to investigate the purchasing intentions of Gen Z with respect to the usage of social media platforms. Celebrity endorsement through social media sites could also affect the purchasing intentions of the consumers (Sun et al. 2022). Firmanza and Artanti (2022), though, claim that celebrity endorsement and social media marketing has an insignificant effect on the online purchasing intentions of consumers. The study claims that companies need to develop promotional strategies with performance upgrades to the products and services so that the online purchasing intentions can be increased. Again, Singh et al. (2021) claim that celebrity endorsement through social media can have a significant positive impact on the marketing for motivating the purchasing intentions of the consumers. A significant indirect effect is also observed of the endorsement by celebrities on the purchasing intentions of the consumers, when digital marketing platforms are considered to be the mediating variable. Chiu and Ho (2023) found that physical attractiveness of the influencers, irrespective of the type of influencer, can affect the purchasing intentions of the Gen Z consumers. The expertise of the traditional celebrity endorsers and the micro-celebrity influencers also can significantly impact the purchasing intentions of the consumers. But, the expertise of the virtual influencers does not have a direct effect on the purchasing intentions of Gen Z consumers (Chiu and Ho 2023). The trustworthiness of all the three kinds of influencers is found to significantly affect the purchasing intentions as well (Chiu and Ho 2023). This shows that the attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness of the influencers could be responsible for affecting the purchasing intentions of the consumers.

## **2.5. Significance of User-generated Content on Instagram shaping the Purchasing Intentions of Gen Z consumers**

User generated content (UGC) promotes the ordinary users of Instagram to active creators of digital content. UGC allows the consumers to be active producers of content, thus creating a more participatory and democratic culture in marketing (Simatzkin-Ohana and Frosh 2022). UGC includes different forms of content in media that are available publicly and are created by the end-users of the social media. In this manner, the consumers can share experiences connected with the brand with the other like-minded individuals in real time, using rich content on media like videos and photography (Koivisto and Mattila 2020). The consumer perceptions of brand generated content (BGC) and consumer generated advertising (CGA) both have a positive impact on the purchasing intentions of the consumers, according to Irelli and



Chaerudin (2020). Irelli and Chaerudin (2020) claim that the consumers require BGC since content created by the brand possesses important factors which can cause them to have the purchasing intentions, including risk reduction, relevance, expertise, usefulness, positive valence, and credibility. The consumers also require CGA so that the information obtained regarding the products through the BGC can be supported through actual consumer support, since CGA can contribute to originality and homophily. As per Muda and Hamzah (2021), perceived source credibility of the content can have an indirect effect on the purchase intentions of the consumers towards the UGC. Also, perceived source credibility is expected to mediate the effect of the perceived homophily of the source on the attitudes shown by the consumers. Homophily, according to Onofrei, Filieri and Kennedy (2022), is an important factor in word of mouth marketing. Source homophily refers to the shared interests of the consumers and the brands, reflecting the similarity among the people regarding the intrinsic mindsets of the consumers, like their beliefs, values, viewpoints, opinions, and preferences. Homophily can be important for improving the motivation of the consumers so that their purchasing intentions can be improved, also engaging with the content on social media platforms. Muda and Hamzah (2021) say that since the consumers in the current world have started to depend on UGC more than on company generated content on social media when purchase decisions are to be made, companies need to modify their budget allocations for marketing, so that they do not just sponsor the celebrities and public figures, but also have coproductive engagements along with independent creators of content, who are ordinary users of social media. The prosumers and micro-influencers, therefore, can help the companies to improve their marketing through the high credibility of these influencers (Muda and Hamzah 2021).

Filieri, Acikgoz and Du (2023) claim that the trustworthiness and expertise of the source, that is, of the users creating content can predict the quality of the content across all the different types of products. Homophily of the source can predict the quality of the content for hedonic experiences and the popularity of the sources for the utilitarian products. The homophily of the source and the quality of the content can have a direct impact on the behavioural intentions of the consumers across the different types of products. The expertise of the source can affect the purchasing intentions of the consumers for utilitarian products, according to Filieri, Acikgoz and Du (2023). This shows that the levels of expertise and trustworthiness of the users on Instagram can affect the purchasing intentions shown by the consumers. Mayrhofer et al. (2020), though, claim that UGC does not trigger persuasion knowledge as strongly as the brand posts and disclosed advertisements do. This caused a lower negative affective response shown

by the users towards the UGC, then causing improved purchasing intentions. This shows that UGC could be favourably perceived by the consumers, and can be effective in affecting their purchase decisions, in comparison to the traditional posts by the brands or the disclosed advertisements. Nusairat et al. (2021) also support that the purchasing intentions of the consumers are affected positively by UGC. UGC can also have a significant influence on the brand image, and the brand image can mediate its influence on the purchasing intentions of the consumers. The UGC, therefore, is a powerful tool for marketing in influencing the brand image and motivating the purchasing intentions of the consumers. Similarly, Gajenderan, Priya and Nawaz (2020) also revealed that the content on social media networking sites has a significant role to play for the consumers to review the purchases that they make online. The comments and reviews online are a reliable source that can affect the self-assurance and faith regarding the different products, causing the procurement of the product. The study showed that the consumers look for information during pre-purchase through online platforms.

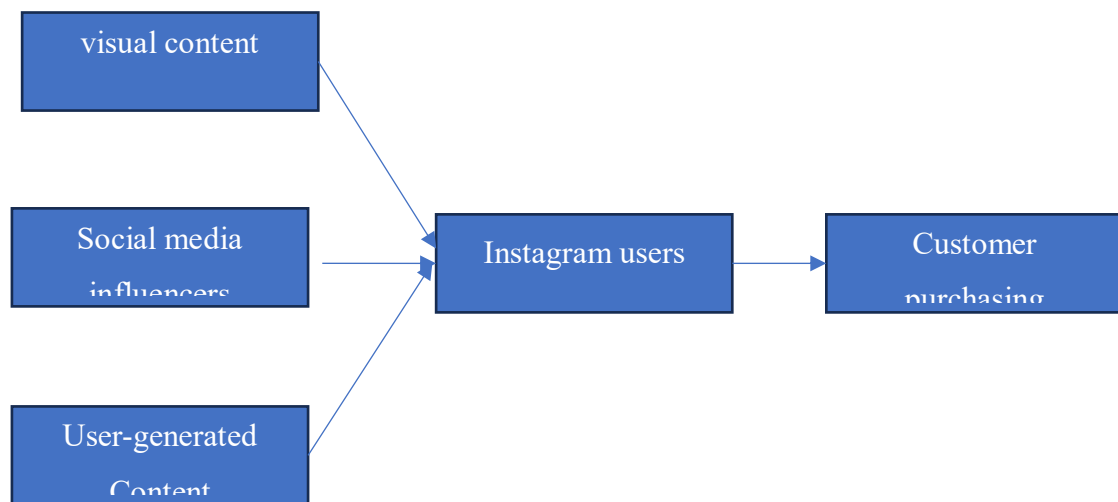
From the literature, it was found that the consumers trust the content generated by the users, which provide them with support for the information that they receive from brand generated content. Consumers, therefore, seek homophily, trustworthiness, and expertise from the content creators on social media to increase their purchasing intentions.

## **2.6. Literature Gap**

The literature review reviewed a large pool of data regarding the research topic. The articles are relevant to the research subject. A number of studies have been conducted in this research area. The literature review suggests noteworthy knowledge regarding the impact of visual content on the purchasing intentions of consumers (Kim, Chung and Fiore, 2023; Brandao, Pinho and Rodrigues, 2019; Bakshi, Shamma and Gilbert, 2014). The previous studies also explored the influence of social media influencers on the purchasing intentions of consumers. For example, Erwin, Saununu and Rukmana (2023) found that influencers create value by engaging their followers on Instagram. Several other studies also found a significant impact of social media influencers on the purchasing decisions of consumers. However, the studies lack information specific to Gen Z consumers in the United Kingdom. There is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the impact of social media influencers on the purchasing intention of UK consumers. Again, the literature review emphasises the significance of user-generated content in influencing the purchasing intentions of consumers (Simatzkin-Ohana and Frosh, 2022; Koivisto and Mattila, 2020). The studies found a positive impact of the strategy on purchasing intentions. However, there is a lack of in-depth information about how GenZ consumers are

impacted. Hence, it is important to carry out the investigation further. It is important to further investigate this research area with an empirical design. Hence, this research fills the existing gap in the literature. This research contributes to the comprehensive understanding of the impact on Instagram on the Genz customers' purchasing intention with empirical evidence.

## 2.7. Conceptual Framework



(Source: Created by the author)

## 2.8. Summary

In the end, it can be summarized that the literature review discovered several positive insights into the evidence and findings related to the impact of social media marketing, especially Instagram. A large pool of data was explored in this section to investigate the research subject in detail. The literature was also helpful in shaping an understanding of how Instagram marketing influences the purchasing intentions of customers. However, there is still a gap in the existing knowledge. This section develops a conceptual framework which provides a visually-aided diagram of the findings. The next section will discuss how the study was conducted to fill the gap.

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