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14 Fast Fashion: Exploring the Impact of Impulse Buying among Scottish Generation-Z Consumers

Abstract: The fast-fashion business model is used by fashion retailers to inexpensively sustain consumer demand. This chapter discusses fast fashion and explores how consumers reflect on their post-consumption of frequent impulse consumption, in order to understand how to break this cycle and advance sustainable fashion practice.

Keywords: fast fashion, impulse buying, sustainability, fashion

Introduction

Despite growing discourse regarding the impact that the fast fashion industry has on the environment (Environmental Audit Committee, 2021), and allegations of exploiting garment-workers, the popularity of fast fashion consumption has not diminished (Zhang, Zhang & Zhou, 2021). This is particularly relevant in the UK, where the fast fashion industry is valued at £60 billion (Radonic, 2022) and UK consumers purchase more clothing than in any other country in Europe (Zhang, Zhang & Zhou, 2021). While the fast fashion business model is adopted by fashion retailers to inexpensively sustain consumer demand (Bick et al., 2018), demand is also stimulated by marketing tactics, often within a limited time period to encourage impulse consumption (Bick et al., 2018; Keegan et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2017; Niinimäki et al., 2020). Impulse buying is an unforeseen buying decision that eradicates consumers' rational thinking, replacing it with the immediate need to buy and feel self-satisfaction (Lim et al., 2017; Rook, 1987). Research has found that fashion induces higher levels of impulse buying than other product categories (Floh & Madlberger, 2013; Joung, 2014) and this can be a consequence of consumers experiencing style boredom and their need to follow fashion trends (Watson & Yan, 2013). Often fast fashion is discarded after limited wear (Zhang, Zhang & Zhou, 2021); yet, with clothing worth £140 million ending up in UK landfills annually (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019), it is clear that the fast fashion model reliant on frequent impulse consumption contributes significantly to the climate crisis and over consumption (Bick, Halsey & Ekenga, 2018; McNeill & Moore, 2015; Zhang, Zhang & Zhou, 2021).

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This chapter explores how consumers reflect on their post-consumption of frequent impulse consumption, in order to understand how to break this cycle and advance sustainable fashion practice. Previous research has found that consumers feel locked in and addicted to frequent fashion consumption (Kidd et al., 2020); however, little is known about how consumers experience post-purchase impulsive fashion consumption, and whether they experience post-consumption regret and disappointment from their behaviour (Chen, Chen & Lin, 2020), and how this informs subsequent behaviours. As young females are the main target for fast fashion marketers, and subsequently the main consumers (Cook & Yurchisin, 2017; McNeil & Moore, 2015), the chapter focuses on Generation Z women who are also considered to be the most materialistic generation (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). We adopt a novel approach of a Scottish context, whereas most previous studies on fast fashion impulse consumption have emerged from Asian markets (Akbar et al., 2020; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2021; Chauhan, Banerjee & Dagar, 2021; Lee & Lee, 2019; Son & Lee, 2021; Togawa et al., 2019). The chapter is structured as follows: the next section presents the conceptual framework that was informed from reviewing the literature, followed by the methodology and the themes that emerged from analysis, before concluding with insights into the implications for encouraging sustainable fashion practice.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework Development

Generation Z, born between 1996 and 2005 (Hall et al., 2017), are digital natives, having adopted digital technology skills in their early years, and they engage on social media platforms for entertainment, socialisation, learning, playing and consumption (Adgate, 2021). Fast fashion retailers recognise the importance of engaging with Generation Z on social media and use this platform for marketing campaigns and employing social media influencers to promote new trends by encouraging frequent impulse consumption of "throwaway fashion", which Yalkin & Elliott (2006, cited in Joung, 2014) define as discarding clothing after singular use to continually appear trendy. Hur & Cassidy (2019) found that young consumers compare themselves with their peers and often feel inferior if they do not follow fashion trends or if they re-wear an outfit, and this encourages impulse buying. This is a social norm among young consumers, which encourages impulse consumption, and it is thought to have stemmed from the social media culture of wearing a different outfit in every picture (Denisova, 2021). Research has also identified that online shopping has therapeutic effects, concluding that female consumers may impulse buy fashion to overcome low self-esteem (Denisova, 2021; Iyer et al., 2020; Lee & Lee, 2019; Son & Lee, 2019; Nash, 2018). It is suggested that this therapeutic shopping experience is extended owing to delivery waiting times, instead of in-store where the buying process is instant (Son & Lee, 2019). Although re-

search has identified that young women are more prone to frequent impulse consumption (Cook & Yurchisin, 2017; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; McNeil & Moore, 2015), they also are more likely to feel shame and guilt post-purchase (Iyer et al., 2020). This may be due to growing sustainability discourse, and while Hur & Cassidy (2019) found that younger consumers were more likely to shop ethically, their participants were fashion professionals, lecturers and students with greater knowledge of the unethical aspects to fast fashion, which other consumers may not be aware of. Therefore, exploring how young people reflect on their fast fashion consumption, and how they experience the emotive aspects related to fast-fashion consumption, will allow insight into understanding how to empower their decision-making to avoid the guilt of impulsive buying.

Marketing tactics

As noted above, fast fashion retailers employ marketing tactics to suggest product scarcity and imbue a sense of urgency to stimulate frequent impulsive consumption, and this can create a loss of self-control for consumers (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2021; Akbar et al., 2020). Marketing tactics include "buy one get one free", discount codes (Khan & Zubair, 2019), free shipping and limited time only sales (Sundström et al., 2019). During the global COVID-19 lockdown, online fast-fashion retailers relied on marketing to encourage sales, as the social occasions that normally led to consumption reduced and prices fell as low as eight pence (UK Sterling) (Blackhall, 2020). Brydges, Retamal & Hanlon (2020) conducted research into consumer fashion shopping habits during COVID-19 in the UK and found that while online fashion consumption decreased by 50 per cent from the year before, fast fashion sales are predicted to rise again because of heavy discounting, with the potential to fuel frequent impulsive consumption. The pandemic offered a unique opportunity to illuminate upon extreme circumstances that were emotionally challenging and may provide insight into the role of emotion in frequent impulsive consumption. Therefore, a closer examination of how the extremity and uncertainty experienced during lockdown encouraged impulsive frequent fast fashion consumption will enhance our understanding of how to empower consumers to rationalise marketing tactics to avoid post-purchase regret.

Post-Purchase Cognitive Dissonance

According to Chen, Chen & Lin (2020), consumers may experience post-purchase regret when they impulsively buy online. This psychological phenomenon of post-purchase cognitive dissonance is experienced when consumers consider whether they truly needed the product or if they feel regret and disappointment in their own decision-making. Cognitive dissonance theory was originally developed by Leon Fes-

tinger in 1957 to measure consumer behaviour, and it was found to be provoked by the difference in a person's beliefs and information that contradicts their belief (Festinger, 1957). According to Festinger (1957), consumers may attempt to reduce their feelings of dissonance by changing their behaviours to match their beliefs, or to be selective in being exposed to information that contradicts their behaviours. Akbar et al. (2020) positively related cognitive dissonance theory to online impulse buying and sales incentives because consumers often have high expectations for the product at point of purchase. However, this can change to feelings of disappointment and regret once the item arrives and is different to their expectations (Akbar et al., 2020). Chen, Chen & Lin (2020) found that the more impulsive consumption is, the greater the feelings of post-purchase disappointment and regret. However, Togawa et al. (2019) encountered different results, as they found that their participants reflected on their impulse buying experiences with positive emotions and this, therefore, was the cause of their repetitive impulsive behaviour. Spiteri Cornish (2020) conflicts this theory as they found that although consumers felt happiness when first impulse buying, over time these emotions turned negative. Thus, consumers may suffer negative feelings long after making the purchase, incongruent with the continuation to make frequent impulsive consumption. In addition, some consumers may use emotion-focused coping mechanisms, such as denial, to lessen their feelings of regret, making it difficult for shoppers to break their cycle of impulse buying.

While cognitive dissonance has been identified in previous fashion research, this has focused on why consumers do not buy sustainable fashion rather than how they reflect on impulsive fast fashion consumption (Cairns, Ritch & Bereziat, 2021). Emerging from a similar concept of consumers claiming to care about the environmental and the social impact of fast fashion, oftentimes this concern is not reflected in behaviours (McNeill & Moore, 2015). Previous research has not identified a way in which to disrupt fast fashion consumption; rather, the barriers prohibiting fast-fashion consumption appear to justify the continuation to buy fast fashion as postulated at the beginning of this chapter. Therefore, understanding how consumers reflect on impulsive fast fashion could provide an impetus for encouraging consumers to apply sustainable principles to their fashion practice, if similar emotions from fast fashion can be experienced. Figure 14.1 below presents the conceptual framework that underpins this research.

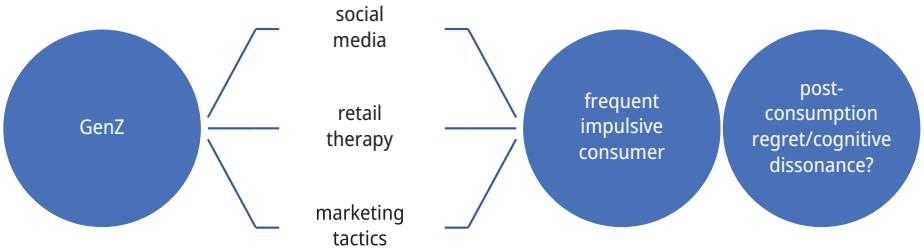

Figure 14.1: Conceptual framework.

Methodology

This research is interpretivist in approach, as social phenomena are uniquely experienced and emerge from idiographic social constructions (Cairns et al., 2021; Berger & Luckman, 1966). As the research investigates the role of emotion and personal constructs of self that are reflected through fashion practice, a qualitative research strategy was considered as enabling a lens into complex understandings and connections (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Adopting purposive sampling, as guided by extant literature, ten in-depth interviews offered a platform to explore post fast-fashion consumption reflections. The interviews began with a grand tour question where the participants were asked to recall their recent experiences of purchasing online fast fashion and how they felt during each stage of the buying process. This was followed by semi–structured predetermined questions that were informed by the literature, which allowed flexibility when new ideas emerged during the interviews (Ragab & Arisha, 2018). The interviews lasted approximately an hour each and once transcribed provided 130 A4 pages of data. Thematic analysis was applied to the data, allowing themes and patterns to be identified across the different transcripts, creating a logical approach to analysing the data and the opportunity to analyse similar experiences to create a foundation for flexible and interesting interpretations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The themes identified are presented next.

Findings

Before presenting the themes, Table 14.1 below provides an overview of the participants who informed the data. It is important to note that not all participants considered themselves as impulsive buyers, yet all reported buying fast fashion at least twice a month which is consistently frequent for a commodity context that is inessential rather than utilitarian. In understanding the impact of the Scottish context, the participants all lived in Glasgow, and have access to many mainstream fast fashion

retailers in the city centre; however, the focus is online fashion consumption which is not affected by geographical location. Data were collected during the pandemic in early 2021 and the participants reflected on their behaviours during the lockdown, as will become apparent within the quotes below.

Table 14.1: Participant profiles.

Participant	Nationality	Gender	Age	How frequently participant buys fast fashion	Do they consider themselves impulse buyers?
Participant A	Scottish	Female	23	1–2 times per month	No
Participant B	Scottish	Female	22	1–2 times per month	No
Participant C	Scottish	Female	21	2–3 times per month	Yes
Participant D	Scottish	Female	21	2–3 times per month	No
Participant E	Scottish	Female	23	1–2 times per month	Yes
Participant F	Scottish	Female	24	1–2 times per month	Yes
Participant G	Scottish	Female	22	2–3 times per month	Yes
Participant H	Scottish	Female	19	1–2 times per month	No
Participant I	Scottish	Female	24	1–2 times per year	No
Participant J	Scottish	Female	23	1–2 times per month	Yes

Initial analysis identified interesting findings. Firstly, as the data were collected during the pandemic, the lack of social occasions and activities led to "lockdown boredom", where fashion consumption offered excitement and a hedonic "dopamine rush". Secondly, receiving marketing offers instigated a sense of urgency, and selective amnesia of what garments were already owned, and this may be reflective of the need to experience the "new" and the hedonistic excitement that purchasing fashion offers. When they were reminded of "the clothes still sitting in my wardrobe with the tags on" there were expressions of regret, but some of the participants were caught in an addictive cycle of seeking hedonism through the process of fashion consumption. The data also found that along with excitement, buying new fashion and following fast fashion trends was important for their self-esteem as this illustrated conformity and belonging, emotions that were challenged during the pandemic. Themes were developed around pre and post-purchase emotions, and how cognitive dissonance was viewed as either impacting on the environment or garment-workers in the supply chain. It was interesting that this was considered separately; it aligns with Wells et al. (2011) who found that concern for one ethical issue does not necessarily transfer to another and therefore more than one issue should be addressed. The themes discussed in this chapter are presented in Table 14.2 below.

Table 14.2: Data themes.

Analytic theme	Sub theme
Pre-purchase emotions and influences	Boredom COVID-19 lockdown Sales incentives Pressure to wear new clothing
Post-purchase emotions	Excitement Post-purchase regret
Evidence of cognitive dissonance	Changing behaviours based on sustainably knowledge Selectively acknowledging information to avoid behavioural change

Pre-Purchase Emotions and Influences

When asking the participants what influenced their fashion consumption, boredom was a common response, as illustrated below:

> I usually shop online out of boredom. Sometimes, if I feel sad, I'll buy myself new clothes to cheer myself up, like retail therapy. (Participant H)

> Most of the time I buy clothes out of boredom, it makes me feel like I've achieved something that day. That's why I only buy from fast fashion retailers like Shein. It's cheap enough that I can shop more often for the dopamine rush. (Participant F)

Both quotes articulate that boredom leads to engaging with fast fashion online, to improve their emotional state as "retail therapy" and to provide a sense of achievement, as previously identified by Iyer et al. (2020) and Lee & Lee (2019). Similarly, Sundstrom et al. (2019) found that fashion consumption offered an opportunity to escape the boredom of everyday life. However, this was heightened during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and other participants described feeling "miserable" and "depressed" because of the pandemic and therefore used online shopping as a coping mechanism to distract them from the monotony of lockdown. It should be acknowledged that this behaviour was made possible by the low pricing of fast fashion retailers, such as Shien, who also promote new garments weekly to stimulate frequent impulsive consumption (Ritch, 2023). Although Participant H was adamant that she was not an impulse buyer, when asked how she often bought fashion online, she responded with:

> Over lockdown, I was impulse buying almost weekly. There [are] many clothes in my wardrobe that I've never worn, even though that was two years ago now. (Participant H)

Participant H was receiving furlough pay, with limited opportunity to spend it due to suspended social activities, therefore she bought fashion to "cheer myself up", al-

though she is reflecting on this and indicating regret. This appears that fashion provides linkage to a sense of existentialism, the promise of excitement and being part of an outside world that indicates an aspiration life and buying new garments is akin to preparing to be part of external social activities. As fashion retailers and physical stores closed (Brydges et al., 2020), fast fashion retailers offered incentives to stimulate online consumption and the participants reported responding to these offers:

> I recently bought a new dress for a night out because it was on sale. I was going to wear an outfit I already had in my wardrobe, but I got a notification from the website to say they had 20% off everything and so I decided to buy a new dress instead. (Participant E)

Participant E was one of a few participants who was unapologetic about her impulsive buying habits and explained that she has multiple fast fashion retailer applications which triggered push notifications that alerted her of new sales promotions. These discount notifications made her feel "instant excitement" at the thought of buying new clothing and she acted quickly due to fears it will go out of stock, as previously postulated by Cook & Yurchisin (2017) and Sundström et al. (2019). This indicates a "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) of being noticed wearing the latest trends. Although Participant E's consumption was only encouraged by the discount in this instance, for many participants a social occasion triggered the need for a new outfit, as part of the "excitement" and "anticipation" of social activities, and due to social pressure to be seen in new outfits. This pressure stemmed from a variety of reasons, such as social media culture, validation from peers and everchanging fashion trends, as noted below:

> I see other people wearing new clothes to every event they go to and so I think I need to do that too. (Participant F)

> There's pressure to not wear the same thing twice and as much as I try to wear something more than once, I'm conscious if I've worn an outfit recently, I need to buy something else. (Participant G)

Both participants acknowledged that they often purchase fast fashion to impress others by appearing "stylish" or "trendy", and this reflects social media culture of influencers who regularly post photographs of themselves in new fashions. Therefore, it appears that self-relevance is represented in wearing new fashion, improving self-esteem, as found by Niinimäki et al. (2020) and Son and Lee (2019). For example, Participant E reflects on how she felt when someone noticed that she was "outfit repeating":

> One night, when I was out, [someone] said "you were wearing that same outfit the last time I met you" which was months before. I was mortified." (Participant E)

While Participant E was comfortable re-wearing outfits prior to this incident, this comment impacted upon her confidence, and she felt pressurised to buy new clothing for every social occasion. She mentioned that her commentator was a friend of a new boyfriend, heightening her need to be perceived as stylish and fashionable. The par-

ticipants reported that wearing new fashion made them feel "confident", with Participant B explaining why she likes wearing new clothes:

> It releases a bit of serotonin, you feel good about yourself, especially something really trendy and you think it's cool because everyone's wearing it, even when it's not actually your style. (Participant B)

The participants illustrate that being seen in new fashion impacts on their self-confidence and self-esteem by offering validation in an external world, as expressed by the quotes at the beginning of this section. Collectively, these emotions were manipulated by marketing to trigger hedonic emotions as a stimulus for consumption of inexpensive fashion, by situating FOMO against the depiction of aspirational lifestyles that offer a sense of belonging. Thus, the participants exhibit a compulsion to consume, as explained by Participant J:

> The last fast fashion item I bought was definitely an impulse buy. It was a leather jacket that I knew I didn't need because I had just recently thrown out my old one that I never wore, but I got it anyway because it was on sale. I think I'm saving money and it feels urgent like I need to buy it now. Even if I don't like it, I'll tell myself I do because it feels like a good bargain. (Participant J)

Participant J acknowledges that her consumption was entirely due to the discounted price and that she felt compelled to buy the discounted jacket "even if I don't like it". Similar to Participant B, the item may not be reflective of their personal style, but it speaks to an accepted social style that indicates belonging in this social world. Reacting in this way to marketing indicates that discounts provoke a loss of self-control, triggering impulsive behaviour (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2021; Akbar et al., 2020). Also, this impulsiveness demonstrates cognitive dissonance: Participant J knew purchasing the jacket was unnecessary, but she bought it because of the urgency created by the sales incentive, as was found by Cook & Yurchisin (2017). Yet, what Participant J and Participant H have also expressed is that during their post-consumption reflections their behaviours are incongruent to their beliefs.

Post-Purchase Emotions

For some participants, positive post-purchase emotions were extended to eagerly waiting for the fashion to arrive to try the outfit on. Participant H described this waiting period as "thrilling" because when she received her delivery it "feels like a present from me to me". On the other hand, it is clear that for some the happy emotions felt post-purchase eventually become irrelevant once the high of impulse buying wears off.

> *I felt satisfied that I got them in the sale, but once they arrived, I very quickly got over it.* (Participant D)

> *The excitement lasted while I waited for the delivery the next day and when I tried it on. However, as soon as I took it off, I forgot about it until my night out.* (Participant E)

Both participants express feeling rewarded after they purchased their fast fashion items, as both shopping experiences were influenced by sales incentives. It can, therefore, be argued that fast fashion provides a means for gratification; because their post-purchase pleasure was short lived, impulse buying behaviour becomes a habit to maintain hedonistic gratification, as found by Togawa et al. (2019). However, other participants expressed buyer's remorse after purchasing fast fashion, and sometimes this was in relation to how much was spent:

> I always feel good after buying clothes, but if I've spent a lot, I feel guilty about it. I'll usually think I could have spent that on a holiday or something. (Participant H)

Recalling that Participant H was buying fashion weekly during the lockdown, her impulsive spending could be significant. Participant H evaluates her consumption post-purchase and thinking about what she would really value, clothes in her wardrobe (unworn, with the labels still on) or an experience such as a holiday. Participant F also expresses remorse, but rather than focus on how impulsive consumption has impacted upon her personal circumstances, she has allowed her knowledge of exploitation in the supply chain to become part of her reflective evaluation:

> I feel regret after every fast fashion purchase. I've wasted my money on clothes that I know I don't need. Someone has suffered making these clothes just to be shoved at the bottom of a drawer after being worn once, it feels so wasteful [but] I quickly forget about it all when I see something I like." (Participant F)

Participant F illustrates selective amnesia towards her knowledge of garment-workers exploitation in fashion production, so focused on the positive emotions that buying fashion can offer. Despite regretting "every fast-fashion purchase" that "go[es] out of fashion" very quickly and wearing a garment once before forgetting about it, she felt compelled to splurge all of her income on online shopping as soon as it enters her bank account. She describes her shopping habits as an "addiction to the dopamine rush" that she experiences every time she buys items online and due to the pressure she feels from social media to update her wardrobe. Participant F described her life as a "constant loop of being skint" because of the burden of her impulse buying habits, despite being aware of the unethical practices of the fast fashion industry. Therefore, Participant F embodies the theory that at point of purchase, the emotive value of impulsive consumption outweighs the financial cost (Bayley & Nancarrow, 1998, cited in Cook et al., 2017). This supports the idea that consumers focus on the happy emotions felt during the impulse buying experience and may use coping mechanisms, such as denial or selective amnesia, to lessen their feelings of guilt; therefore, this cognitive dissonance (Chen et al., 2020) allows the cycle of impulse buying to continue (Spiteri Cornish, 2020).

Evidence of Cognitive Dissonance

The participants deviated between accepting responsibility for their contribution to unsustainability (Participants A, B, D, H & I) and prioritising their consumer needs (Participants C, E, F, G, J). In terms of displaying cognitive dissonance, half made an effort to change their behaviours to align with their beliefs, whereas others were selective in allowing exposure to information that might induce guilt in their behaviours (Festinger, 1957). Those changing their habits to incorporate sustainability concerns did so due to their knowledge of the environmental impact from fast fashion production and consumption, such as: landfill; water wastage; wasteful synthetic materials; and large carbon emissions. The first group prided themselves in trying to reduce their consumption:

> I don't buy clothes often. I've tried to be more sustainable and wear the clothes I own. If I do want new clothing, I'll try and buy from ethical brands [or] second-hand from Depop. (Participant A)

> I stopped buying fast-fashion because it's so unethical, it was giving me anxiety. I buy from Etsy now, from small businesses, but not often [as] I'm conscious of the carbon footprint from deliveries. So, if I see something I like, I'll wait and see if I need to buy more first so that they come in the one parcel. (Participant I)

All participants in the first group gave similar answers, stating they have reduced their fast fashion consumption in favour of more sustainable brands. This aligns with Hur & Cassidy (2019) who suggested that there has been an increase in preference towards sustainable fashion brands amongst young female consumers. While Participant H has made behavioural change, she was still debating whether her own actions contributed to environmental degradation:

> I have recently reduced how often I shop because I feel guilty knowing that fast fashion is so bad for the environment, but everyone does it. Sometimes I think if I didn't do it, would that even have a big impact if I stopped?" (Participant H)

Participant H was unique in her approach of changing behaviour, and applying a rationale to minimise the reduced fast fashion she purchased to avoid feeling guilt/dissonance. Conversely, the second group also knew that "fast-fashion is bad", so were selective in what information they focused on:

> I know fast fashion is bad, but I got a good bargain, so I don't think about it. (Participant G)

> If I [thought] about how negative fast fashion is for the planet, I would never buy anything, and I really like buying new clothes. (Participant C)

> When I'm buying clothes, I get caught up in getting something new. I know that it's bad, but I choose not to think about it, I suppose I'm quite selfish that way. (Participant E)

These participants manage their dissonance through prioritising the emotions experienced in fast fashion impulsive consumption, selectively choosing to ignore any sustainability related impact. When asked about how fast fashion has led to increased pressure of landfill space, some expressed this made them "angry" and "disgusted"; however, these thoughts were separate to their acts of consumption where the focus was on marketing tactics and discounts sparking the impulse to buy:

> I would like to change my shopping habits, but I know that I won't. (Participant J)

When considering Participant J's quote above, advancing the sustainable fashion agenda appears overly complex. Interestingly, despite fast-fashion retailers employing influencers to encourage frequent impulse consumption, our research illustrated that a fast fashion influencer had altered dissonance from being selective in acknowledging information to actively changing behaviour due to ethical concerns:

> I knew brands did not treat their workers well, but it wasn't until I saw the PrettyLittleThing scandal online: they hired Molly-Mae and she said everyone can be as successful as her because we all have the same 24 hours in the day. She got the job because she was on Love Island, it's obnoxious [of her] to say that when she's on a multi-million-pound salary while her staff are making £3 an hour. (Participant H)

It was interesting to see almost all participants mentioned Molly-Mae by name and had awareness of the "scandal" that emerged from this statement. They had observed online criticism for her not recognising her platform of privilege (Ritch, 2023) and the social media discourse surrounding this comment included the low salaries of the garment-workers making PrettyLittleThing clothing compared to how much she was paid as creative director. Had this discourse not been debated online, they would have remained unaware of the contradictions of privilege. Ironically, they only knew about the social impact of fast fashion from reading her scandal online, making her an influencer for social good; however, despite every participant stating they felt outraged after learning about this scandal, many admitted they will continue to buy from the fast fashion brand:

> *I feel bad, but I probably will still shop from there, because it's cheap and if I don't shop there, I don't know where I would.* (Participant C)

Participant C further demonstrates cognitive dissonance, as despite knowing the inequality of the fast-fashion model she postulates that she will continue to prioritise her consumer orientated desires (Stringer, Payne & Mortimer, 2021). However, there is also evidence of social media influence and the challenge of social norms. If social media can influence assumptions around how socially acceptable it is to buy new fashion, and induce shame for wearing fashion more than once, it can shape new practice that focuses on social welfare and environmental conservation as well as challenge social norms to make sustainability fashionable.

Concluding Remarks

The research aimed to explore the role of emotions in frequent impulsive fast fashion consumption in order to identify how consumers can experience similar positive emotions through sustainable fashion practice. The research indicates that consumption is a consequence of marketing tactics and social media influence, which satisfies emotive traits of confidence, self-esteem, hedonism and belonging. Conversely, social media influence had also introduced some participants to the inequalities of fashion production, promotion and consumption, and this had begun to have an impact on their practice. Raising awareness through social media may counterbalance marketing tactics and nudge consumers towards sustainable fashion practice.

The research adds novel value as it reflects upon consumer experience during the pandemic. The monotony and boredom experienced due to the suspension of social activities led to some of the participants feeling regretful after overconsuming fast fashion during the 2020 lockdown for COVID-19. Some of this clothing has never been worn, and yet they felt compelled to buy more. This illustrates the physiological emotiveness of fashion-consumption, which has to be accounted for within sustainable fashion practice.

This study did not aim to research generalised findings, but instead focus upon the personal experiences of each participant. Future research would benefit from conducting further interviews involving different demographics, such as gender and age, which would allow a richer insight into consumer experiences and emotions of fast fashion consumption. This could be followed by a quantitative study which could move towards generalised understanding of the role emotions play in fashion consumption.

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