HYPER-IMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION OF FAST FASHION

A Grounded theory Approach

A Master's Thesis

by

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Department of Management

İhsan Doğramaci Bilkent University

Ankara

December 2023

To My Family

HYPER-IMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION OF FAST FASHION

A Grounded theory Approach

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

NABIYA BANO

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HYPER-IMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION OF FAST FASHION: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH
By Nabiya Bano

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

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ABSTRACT

HYPER-IMPULSIVE CONSUMPTION OF FAST FASHION: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

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December 2023

With the rise of fast fashion and consumerist culture, the pandemic has intensified impulse buying tendencies among consumers globally. While Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) has been a focal point of research across many disciplines, the intersection of impulsive buying and hyperconsumerism has not been studied extensively, especially in the context of the pandemic. Moreover, the pervasive nature of fast fashion created a culture that encourages consumers to make frequent and impulsive purchases and indulge in hedonistic practices to counteract the negative impact of the pandemic, perpetuating the cycle of 'hyper-impulsive consumerism'. As pandemic-induced uncertainty has activated the vulnerable psyche of consumers, it becomes imperative to examine the situational and complex psychological roots of hyper-impulsive consumerism in order to combat the vicious circle of negative consequences on consumers, the environment, and society in general. This thesis aims to diagnose the main drivers and potential consequences, leveraging upon certain theories of cognitive psychology, environmental studies, and marketing. Embracing a grounded theory approach to develop the framework based on consumers' lived experiences, the research design would employ a qualitative methodology consisting of semi-structured interviews to gain a holistic understanding of antecedents and triggers, and potential implications of this phenomenon including consumer and environmental ill-being.

Keywords: Impulsive Buying, Hyperconsumerism, Fast Fashion, Hedonic consumption, Environmental ill-being

ÖZET

HIZLI MODANIN AŞIRI-ANLIK/DÜRTÜSEL TÜKETIMI: TEMELLENDIRILMIŞ TEORI YAKLAŞIMI"

Bano, Nabiya

Yüksek Lisans, İşletme Bölümü

Tez Danışman: Doç. Dr. Ahmet Ekici

Aralık 2023

Hızlı modanın ve tüketim kültürünün yükselişiyle birlikte pandemi, dünya çapında tüketiciler arasındaki anlık/dürtüsel satın alma eğilimlerini artırdı. Anlık/Dürtüsel Satın Alma Davranışı (Impulsive Buying Behavior), pek çok disiplinde araştırılmış olsa da, dürtüsel satın alma ile aşırı tüketimin kesişimi şeklinde bir olgu, özellikle pandemi bağlamında kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmemiştir. Dahası, hızlı modanın doğası, tüketicileri sık sık ve dürtüsel satın almalar yapmaya ve bu şekilde pandeminin olumsuz etkilerini ortadan kaldırmaya yönelik hazcı bir takım uygulamalara teşvik eden bir kültür ortamı da yaratarak 'aşırı dürtüsel tüketim' döngüsünü körüklemiştir. Bu bağlamda, pandemi kaynaklı belirsizlik, bireylerin savunmasızlığını harekete geçirdiğinden, tüketicilerin hiper (aşırı)-dürtüsel tüketimlerinin durumsal ve karmaşık psikolojik kökenlerini incelemek zorunlu hale gelmiştir. Bu tez, bilişsel psikoloji (cognitive psychology), çevre çalışmaları ve pazarlama teorilerinden yararlanarak, aşırı-dürtüsel tüketim davranışının ana etkenlerini ve potansiyel sonuçları teşhis etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tüketicilerin bireysel deneyimlerine dayalı bir çerçeve geliştirmek için temelli bir teori (grounded theory) yaklaşımını benimseyen bu araştırmada, konunun öncüllerini, tetikleyicilerini ve sonuçlarını bütünsel bir anlayışla gün yüzüne çıkarmak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden (semi-structured interviews) oluşan niteliksel bir metodoloji kullanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dürtüsel Satın Alma, Hipertüketimcilik, Hızlı Moda, Hedonik tüketim, Çevresel rahatsızlık

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

The fashion industry annually manufactures 150 billion clothes, of which 87% (equivalent to 40 million tons) are ultimately disposed of in landfills or incinerated, hence causing air pollution. In addition to the problem of accumulating a large quantity of low-quality garments in your bedroom, fast fashion has significant environmental consequences. These garments can undergo decomposition over the course of several decades or perhaps centuries before fully disintegrating into the soil. Currently, the typical individual purchases 60 percent more clothing items compared to 15 years ago, however, retains them for just half the duration. An average clothing is typically worn only 10 times before being discarded.

Figure 1: How Fast Fashion is Destroying the Environment

The clothing sector has been revolutionized by fast fashion, which is defined by the rapid manufacturing and turnover of inexpensive products that follow current trends. This transition has substantial environmental ramifications, leading to extensive waste, depletion of resources, and pollution, refer to figure 1 for instance. Moreover, fast fashion exerts an impact on consumer behavior by fostering a culture of waste disposal and encouraging impulsive purchases. The industry's influence extends beyond causing harm to the environment, embracing ethical considerations related to labor abuses and the well-being of consumers.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The aftermath of COVID-19 has brought many significant changes in consumer behavior, this thesis aims to thoroughly examine the complex buying habits that drive the expansion of the fast fashion industry. This investigation also seeks to decipher the intricate incentives behind consumer decisions in this

industry, with a specific emphasis on scrutinizing impulse buying tendencies. The study aims to elucidate the origins of the fast-fashion model, examining how it coincides with and reinforces these buying behaviors. Through this approach, it aims to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing discussion on ethical fashion and sustainable consumerism.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research holds great importance as it has the ability to offer a thorough comprehension of the influence of the fast fashion sector on buying habits and the environment. The study provides essential insights into the sustainability issues and ethical dilemmas faced by the sector by examining consumer motives, specifically with respect to impulsive purchases and the constant desire for newness. The discoveries could shape more conscientious consumption patterns, steer industry players towards ethical production, and sway lawmakers in formulating effective legislation. This research is also crucial in influencing the future of sustainability for fashion consumption.

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

- Impulsive Buying: Impulsive buying behavior is the tendency of making unplanned purchase decisions occasionally
- Hyperconsumerism: Hyperconsumerism is the emphasis on extreme consumption without the value of utility
- Fast Fashion: Fast fashion is an affordable, trends-based system of clothing emphasizing speed of production and consumption over quality.

- Hedonic consumption: Hedonic consumption is the pleasure of the process of consumption.
- Compulsive Buying: Compulsive buying is a chronic condition with an uncontrollable urge to buy in order to relieve negative emotions
- Environmental ill-being: Environmental ill-being refers to the ecological destruction accruing to human activities in the fast fashion sector

Also, “hyperconsumption”, “hyperconsumption behavior”, “overconsumption”, “hyperconsumerism” are used synonymously in this thesis. Similarly, “impulsive buying” and “impulse buying” are used synonymously in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hyper-Consumerism: A Global Perspective

The idea of consumerism is pervasive across all cultures and generations, mainly revolving around the pursuit of ‘feeling good’. The modern global culture posits that the pursuit of material possessions should be our primary goal in life and that buying things leads to intrinsic happiness. Buying that new house, new car, new shoes, and new clothes collectively signify the individual's endeavor to attain pleasure. Given our hyper-consumerist societies, the renowned maxim of Descartes, "I think, therefore I am," appears to have undergone a transformation into "I consume, therefore I am," rendering a contemporary iteration of the Cartesian existence theory (Jyrkinen 2016; Angelova et al. 2021; Xiaohong 2020; Purcell 2005).

The point of reference to an object-centered dialectic, namely the object-relations theory of consumerism, is evident in Baudrillard's (1968) analysis of consumer culture in his work "The System of Objects." In this text, Baudrillard highlights the phenomenon wherein individuals consume the concept or representation of an object, rather than the object itself. The motivation for individuals to engage in object-seeking behavior stems from the anticipation of

acquiring an object that facilitates personal transformation. Baudrillard argues that objects, once acquired, eventually perpetually fail to fulfill our profound psychological desires that initially drive our pursuit of them. Consumer capitalism is predicated upon a continual stimulation of a psychological lack, which remains unsatisfied.

The idea of misplaced meanings proposed by McCracken (1988) exhibits notable similarities with Baudrillard's theory of lack, wherein McCracken posits a profound psychological impetus underlying the act of consumption. According to his theoretical framework, a persistent element of psycho-social existence involves the discrepancy between the actual and desired states. Within consumer cultures, the endeavor to acquire coveted possessions serves as a significant means of bridging the gap between the ideal and the real. Campbell (1987) addresses this issue by incorporating a novel perspective. Having fantasies and imaginations play a significant role as individuals utilize this mirage realm to shape and construct their conception of an ideal, which is subsequently envisaged in consumer goods. The thesis posits that in addition to the rationalist, bourgeois, and technical morality that characterizes Weber's theory of capitalist growth, there exists a romantic, pleasure-seeking hedonistic spirit that drives contemporary consumption. Daydreaming, fantasizing, and self-delusion play an instrumental role in the societal phenomenon of consumerism, as consumers are driven to desire items based on their perception of the novelty, empowerment, or enlightenment that these objects may provide. Therefore, individuals do not possess a genuine inclination towards the purchase of material possessions in and of themselves, but rather towards the acquisition of "dreams and the pleasurable dramas which they have already enjoyed in the imagination" (Campbell, 1987).

There has also been a dilemma about how much of consumption is moderate and balanced consumption which is reflected in the interpretations of hyper-consumption in the literature.

2.1.1 Interpretations of Hyper-Consumerism

In contrast to past times when consumption served as a means of sustenance, in a hyper-consumerist society, the paramount significance is in the act of consumption itself. The pursuit of unreachable personal happiness is now centered on unrestricted and unrestrained consumption, devoid of any limitations or inhibitions.

Within the current body of scholarly literature, a notable absence of consensus can be observed about the precise delineation of the concept of hyper-consumption. According to Charles (2005-2006), it is imperative to regard hyper-consumption as an expression of an alternative commercial rationale. The composition of this entity consists of two distinct phenomena. One aspect to consider is that the acquisition and utilization of material commodities have become more prominent in contemporary society. In contrast, it may be observed that consumption is more characterized by emotional and hedonic aspects, thereby surpassing the symbolic social conflicts elucidated by Bourdieu. This implies that individuals engage in consuming primarily driven by the hedonic dimension, wherein they get pleasure, amusement, and joyful experience, as opposed to using consumption as a strategy to display social status or engage in competitive behavior with others. According to Charles (2009), the perceived worth of consuming lies primarily in its private and entertainment-oriented aspects, surpassing its symbolic and status-related

significance. According to Dürrschmidt and Taylor (2007), hyper-consumption can be characterized as the manifestation of intensified levels of individual and communal preoccupation. Lipovetsky and Serroy (2011) define hyper-consumption as a phenomenon characterized by individualized, unpredictable, and emotionally-driven consumption patterns. They argue that in today's expansive retail landscape, consumption is not merely a social status symbol, but rather a fundamental aspect of existence. In this universe, one's very existence is intertwined with the act of consuming. Therefore, firstly, hyper-consumption exhibits hedonic, emotional, and psychosomatic characteristics; secondly, it serves as a form of therapy for individuals who engage in consumption as a means to address a sense of emptiness in their lives; and thirdly the delineation of the socio-cultural dimension of consumption has become blurred, as it is no longer solely determined by social status or cultural class. According to Sirgy (2001), the concept of hyper-consumption pertains to the idea of consuming things and services for reasons beyond their functional utility. In other words, consumption is no longer a means to achieve other objectives but rather becomes the ultimate objective in and of itself. In a similar vein, Cyr (2020) argues that hyper-consumption is frequently characterized as the excessive and non-utilitarian consumption of things and commodities. In contrast, Dolan (2002) argues that hyper-consumption is characterized by a lack of awareness of the ecological implications of consumption, as consumers become disconnected from the knowledge of the natural resources utilized in the production of commodities. According to Freund and Martin (2008), hyper-consumption can be observed at two interconnected levels. Firstly, there is an acceleration in the pace of consumption, and secondly, there is an increase in the intensity of consumption.

One prominent ideology gaining paramount significance in the global arena is Sustainability which has been severely impacted by extreme levels of global consumption. Hyper-consumerism poses a huge threat to sustainability in a multitude of ways.

2.1.2 Hyper-Consumerism: A Threat to Sustainability

The global ecosystem is being negatively impacted by various factors such as climate change, deterioration of non-renewable energy sources, significant growth in population, and unsustainable patterns of consumption (Kumar and Yadav, 2021). The rise of the global population and the adoption of materialistic lifestyles have resulted in an escalation of global appetite for products and services, thereby fostering a state of hyper-consumption that appears to have no limits (Dhandra, 2019). As a result of escalating levels of demand, corporations augment their production capacities, ultimately leading to adverse environmental consequences. Corporate businesses are motivated by financial gain as they want to ensnare individuals in a state of "consumption romanticism." According to Strizhakova and Coulter (2013), corporations that prioritize the achievement of their global objectives contribute to the detriment of global material culture, sustainable resources, and the ecological system, despite their simultaneous support for economic development.

There has been a significant increase in scholarly discourse from a sustainability-focused standpoint. Previous studies have investigated various dimensions of consumption, including Collaborative consumption (Lindblom et al., 2018), Sustainable consumer choices (Hüttel et al., 2018), Pro-environmental consumption (Aguilar-Salinas et al., 2017; Sudbury Riley et al., 2014; Caniëls et al.,

2021; Alzubaidi et al., 2021), Responsible consumption (Lim, 2017) and Ethical consumer behavior (Tomșa et al., 2021).

The critique of the prevalence of consumption mostly focuses on its significant adverse outcomes (Lai and Ho, 2020). This form of consumption lacks a meaningful purpose, as it fails to satisfy genuine human needs. According to Migliore (2014), there is a cautionary note regarding market economies, which are primarily motivated by the pursuit of consumption and possession. This perspective suggests that such economies may potentially lead to an impending environmental crisis. The author identifies the practical logic of "I consume, therefore I am" within the context of the text "Not giving but consuming". The consumer psyche is driven by the aspiration to maximize the accumulation of material possessions in the world. In certain nations, there exists a pattern of excessive and unregulated utilization of the Earth's finite resources, juxtaposed with the unfortunate reality that a significant portion of the global population struggles to even meet their most basic needs.

Surprisingly, a significant disparity exists in the tangible expressions of such consumption as an unsustainable behavior. While certain scholars argue that given the pace of globalization, hyper-consumption is an unavoidable requirement and advocate against stigmatizing it (Lipovetsky, 2011, p. 35), other scholars do acknowledge the downsides of it. Along the latter perspective, this thesis investigates hyper-consumption as an unsustainable practice, giving rise to many consumer practices that create a vicious cycle of unprecedented production and consumption, specifically when it detrimentally affects the environment's capacity to fulfill the basic needs of the next generation. Material culture is one such phenomenon that escalates with the normalization of hyper-consumption in our societies.

Figure 2: Cult of Materialism

'STILL NOT HAPPY'

2.1.3. Material Culture: A culmination of Hyper-consumption

Material culture is a socio-economic phenomenon that predominantly affects the younger generation. The abstract realm of emotions and psycho-emotional experiences constitutes a fundamental aspect of human existence. Business organizations disseminate it to consumers in order to achieve financial benefits by targeting the consumers and leading them on a constant pursuit of things aka 'hedonic treadmill'. Material culture refers to the inclination and, at times, the dependency on materialistic possessions that are valued for their aesthetic appeal, social status implications, high cost, trendiness, and novelty. The perspective presented is characterized by a lack of positivity and an emphasis on negative aspects, refer to figure 2. Non-materialistic consumption can be considered a component of material culture norms, as it is intertwined with the acquisition of stylish and popular products. For instance, the act of engaging in leisure travel has long been regarded as a fashionable and prestigious pursuit within affluent communities. Individuals from Western countries as well as those residing in

emerging nations, such as China, are increasingly allocating significant financial resources towards the pursuit of travel, contributing to the emergence of a trend that may be characterized as a trendy cultural phenomenon. Similarly, worldly culture, as commonly understood, refers to an inclination toward worldly demands and necessities, often at the expense of spiritual concerns. It encompasses a set of beliefs, inclinations, and lifestyle choices that are primarily driven by materialistic interests (Richins and Dawson, 1992).

The impact of material culture on the environment necessitates an understanding of the factors that influence individuals' adoption of materialistic values and consumerist behaviors. Subsequently, ecologists have the capacity to undertake proactive measures aimed at mitigating the impact of material culture. Waste management alone cannot be considered a comprehensive solution. The governance mechanisms of all governments demonstrate a strong inclination towards economic and trade development, leading them to adopt liberal economic and corporate policies. In this scenario, corporate entities establish business models of this nature with the intention of generating substantial profits. Retailers strategically develop visually appealing shopping malls, employing substantial financial resources to sell their items in an enticing manner. Additionally, they take advantage of tax holidays and employ sophisticated packaging techniques to captivate shoppers on a subconscious level. It has been observed by businesses that affluent consumers represent the most desirable demographic for marketing endeavors. The preferences, lifestyles, and tastes of the upper class permeate society and subsequently establish the norm for all consumers. Consumers who are not financially affluent have the opportunity to get a new item that symbolizes their affiliation with the tradition of riches. According to Miller (1990), Consumers may get immediate satisfaction by

acquiring a costly item with the intention of enhancing their social standing. When digital media often broadcasts commercials, teenagers, children, and young individuals are enticed by them. A substantial allocation of financial resources is dedicated to advertising and packaging, both of which pose significant threats to the environment. The global mass media was shaped by both technical and social factors, facilitating the widespread adoption of consumerist lifestyles. Consequently, these media outlets evolved into highly effective platforms for disseminating the culture-ideology of materialism on a global scale (Sklair, 2012).

According to Bredemeier and Toby (1960), the presence of material culture is associated with a multitude of social issues. Conversely, alternate scholarly perspectives suggest that material values have an impact on an individual's impression of happiness and self-esteem, since it is an indication of modernity. A hypermodern society can be defined as a liberal society that is distinguished by its emphasis on rapid and accelerated forms of mobility. The concept of a life characterized by an atmosphere of immoderation, aggravation, and constant pursuit is articulated (Charles 2009, p. 392) which is predominantly influenced by an excessive manifestation of modernity. The existing literature has examined the adverse consequences associated with hyper-consumption (Aubert, 2006; Karraker, 2013; İşcan, 2020), however there is an absence of a framework for assessing the structural aspects of hyper-consumption behavior. One potential rationale for this occurrence is that the phenomenon of hyper-consumption has a multifaceted and intricate nature integrating other behaviors, making it challenging to make sense of it due to its diverse array of social and economic manifestations that impact various stakeholders, either directly or indirectly. Freund and Martin (2008) conducted a review of two instances of hyper-consumption observed in everyday life, namely

transportation and eating habits, commonly referred to as "fast cars/fast foods". The authors cautioned that excessive consumption of automobiles and food not only has a substantial ecological impact but also reinforces and normalizes a particular lifestyle. The study conducted by Ceccato and Gomez (2018) examined the consequences of hyper-consumption on fashion trends and brands. Hyper-consumption, in the context of Fast fashion, is the focal point of this thesis given the atrocious implications of fast fashion in terms of social, environmental, and ethical landscapes.

2.2 Cheap Thrills- Fast Fashion Consumption

"Fast-fashion brands may not design their clothing to last (and they don't), but as artifacts of a particularly consumptive era, they might become a part of the fossil record"

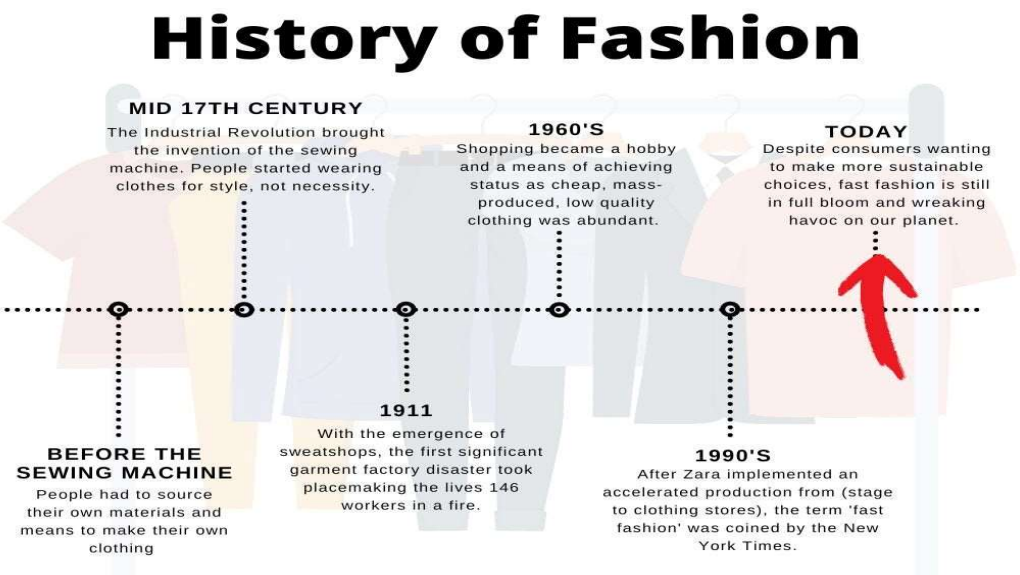
- Dana Thomas, 2019, New York Times *"How fast fashion is destroying the planet"*

According to Fletcher (2008), fast fashion is a "combination of high-speed production-tracking sales with electronic tills, and just-in-time manufacturing that now makes it possible to turn a design sketch or a sample into a finished product in as little as three weeks" (p. 161). The fast fashion industry, similar to the fast-food sector, is characterized by its emphasis on rapidity, large-scale production, and extensive consumerism. In the domains of both food and fashion, the term "fast" encompasses more than just speed; it serves as an economic mechanism employed to increase product output and maximize financial gain (Fletcher, 2010).

The term "fast" in this context also pertains to the speed at which these products are disposed of, as they are specifically engineered to have a lifespan of only 10 washes (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang, & Chang, 2012). Taking this into consideration, designers prioritize the current fashion trends when creating these things, allocating less attention to the fabric's quality or production conditions. Consequently, this approach enables fast fashion products to maintain significantly low-price points. The phenomenon of rapid turnover in consumer goods results in a diminished sense of guilt among customers about both their initial purchase and subsequent disposal of such products (Joy et al., 2012).

Figure 3: Fast Fashion factory outlet in 1950s

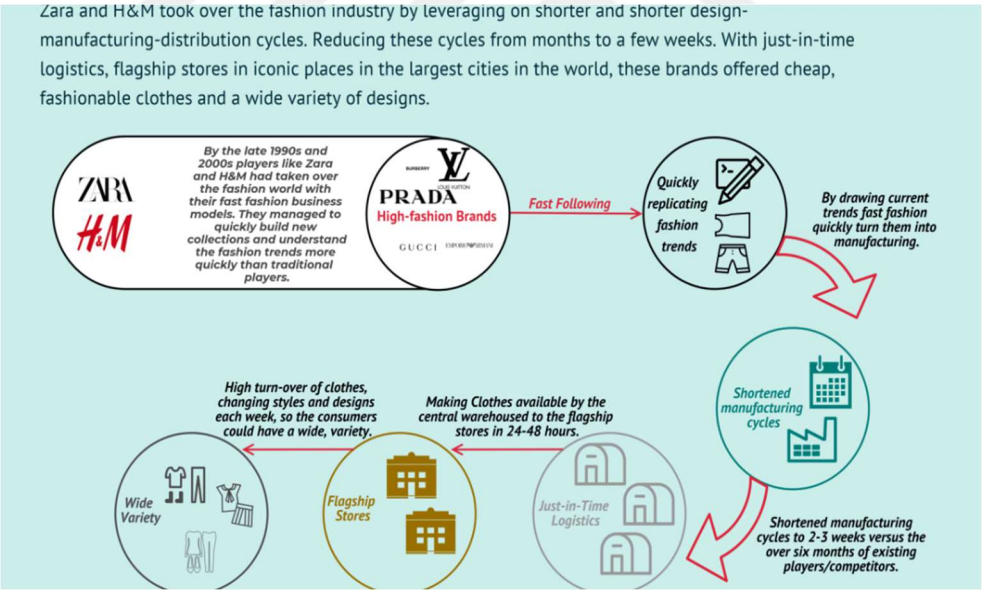
Figure 4: History of Fast Fashion



According to a study conducted by Morgan and Birtwistle (2009), a majority of the young adult female participants, above 50%, engaged in the regular purchase of fashion clothes on a biweekly basis, while over 75% made such purchases every month. According to Watson and Yan (2013), individuals derive pleasure from the thrill associated with shopping and tend to engage in frequent and substantial purchasing activities. On similar lines, studies have indicated that those who engage in fast fashion consumption are frequently characterized as "pleasure-seeking hedonists" who prioritize their immediate gratification over considerations of sustainability or the welfare of the environment (Crane, 2010). Due to the affordability of fast fashion items, a significant number of young consumers possess the expectation of acquiring identical products at a reduced cost (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009), figure 3 and 4 exemplify the historical roots of fast fashion.

Figure 5: How fast fashion is formed

Figure 6: Life Cycle of Fast Fashion



Consumers who engage in the consumption of fast fashion tend to prioritize staying up-to-date with current fashion trends at affordable rates, rather than considering the ecological consequences associated with their clothing choices (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). The average fast fashion customer tends to exhibit a limited degree of environmental consciousness. Fast fashion consumers may also encounter obstacles when attempting to engage in pro-environmental consumption, refer to figures 5 and 6 exemplifying the life cycle of fast fashion. The average consumer may lack sufficient awareness of the appropriate shopping venues for environmentally friendly products and may not see a sense of urgency in conducting the necessary research. Alternatively, in cases where environmental concerns are present, the buyer may perceive the act of purchasing sustainable products as cumbersome (Cowan & Kinley, 2014).

2.2.2 Environmental Impact of Fast Fashion

"What if we started by slowing down and not consuming so much stuff, just because it's there and cheap and available. It's amazing how that process makes sense financially, it makes sense ethically, it makes sense environmentally."

– Andrew Morgan, filmmaker, and director of The True Cost.

The societal consumption of fast fashion has given an exponential rise to significant environmental consequences. There is a clear association between the rise in textile and garment waste and the phenomenon of fast fashion (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). The fast fashion industry operates on a business model

characterized by the production and sale of low-cost, low-quality clothing items, with an emphasis on rapid manufacturing and consumption. The fast fashion industry's economic strategy, which prioritizes the production and consumption of enormous quantities of apparel, results in the significant disposal of garments (Joy et al., 2012). The term "disposal" encompasses several actions, including discarding, donating to a thrift store, or engaging in resale activities (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2005). Consumers of fast fashion exhibit minimal remorse regarding the disposal of these products, primarily due to the affordability at which they acquired them and the comparable affordability associated with purchasing new clothing. A significant proportion of fast fashion buyers opt to dispose of their garments due to aesthetic fatigue rather than the garments being worn out or reaching the end of their functional lifespan (Fletcher, 2008). This instance serves as an exemplary illustration of the principle of perceived obsolescence.

Figure 7: Environmental Effects of Fast Fashion

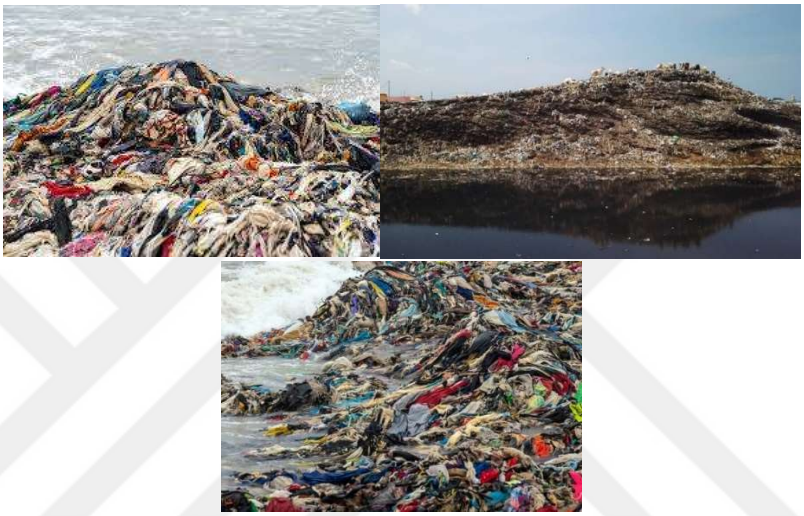
Fast fashion items are characterized by their brief lifespan and limited attention to quality. The rate at which consumers are disposing of apparel has increased due to the accessibility of inexpensive, fashionable clothing offered by fast-fashion merchants (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). Significant amounts of energy are expended in the production of these garments; however, their durability is somewhat limited, leading to a situation where the most cost-effective choice is typically to purchase new items rather than fixing worn clothing (Wanders, 2009). This fast fashion business model has "existed partially because disposal costs are externalized and consumers are unaffected" (Cooper, 2005). Externalized costs refer to the phenomenon wherein the financial burden of some activities or products is not directly borne by individual customers, but rather manifested in the form of environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources resulting from the demands imposed by the supply chain (Fletcher, 2010, p. 261).

According to Shedroff (2009), the comprehensive evaluation of an item's cost encompasses not just its financial implications but also its social and environmental ramifications, refer to Figure 7. According to Morgan and Birtwistle (2009), the recyclability of fast fashion apparel items is hindered by their predominantly synthetic composition. One potential method of disposal involves transporting items to a thrift store. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that thrift businesses are currently seeing an influx of donations, resulting in an accumulation of surplus apparel that may not be marketable. The prevalence of excessive consumption has resulted in a significant portion of clothing donated to thrift stores being subsequently sent to African nations for disposal (Claudio, 2007) refer to Figure 8. It is also crucial to understand the theoretical explanations of such

unsustainable design from both consumer and societal perspectives. Certain theories might shed light as to how consumers remain in this vicious circle of constant pursuit of fast fashion. Let's get to how such a behavior pattern originates.

"Fast fashion is not free. Someone, somewhere is paying the price." – Lucy Siegle, British journalist and writer

Figure 8: Fast Fashion clothing waste

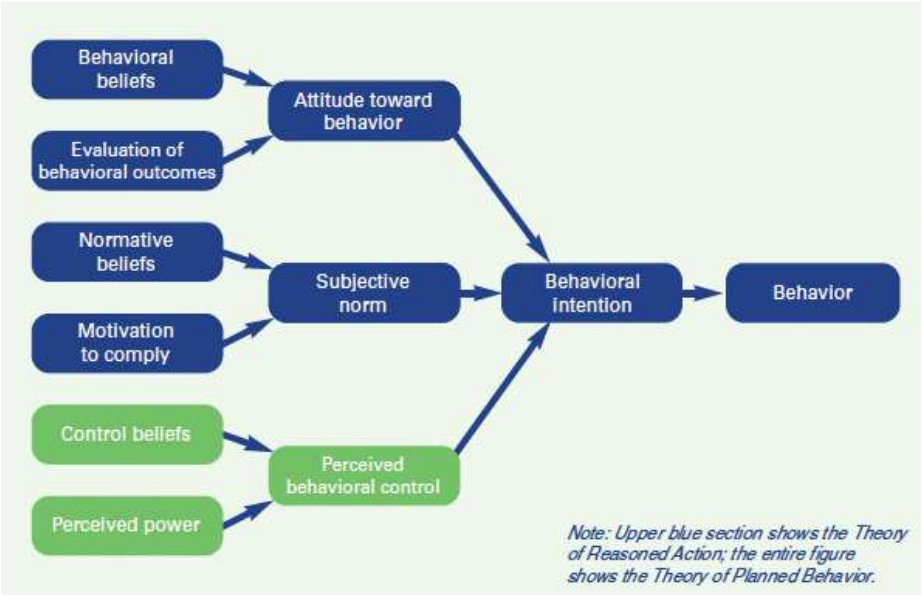


2.2.3. Theory of Buying Behavior (Planned Behavior and Reasoned Action)

The application of the 'Theory of Planned Behavior' has been observed in numerous research investigating environmental behavior, including those explicitly focused on the textile and apparel sector. Fishbein and Ajzen (1947) conducted a study that revealed significant associations between attitudes and behaviors. As an illustration, the adoption of a sustainable mindset is likely to be associated with the purchase of environmentally friendly products (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The Theory of Reasoned Action was developed as a means to explain the psychological mechanisms that underlie the observed associations between attitudes and behaviors (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 168).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) underwent a development that involved the incorporation of perceived behavioral control while the Theory of Reasoned Action employs attitudes and subjective norms as factors that influence an individual's behavioral purpose. Thereby, the Theory of Reasoned Action remains applicable to behaviors driven solely by desire, while the Theory of Planned Behavior (refer to Figure 9) is a further development that is specifically relevant to behaviors that are not entirely under volitional control. This includes purchasing behaviors, where economic factors exert influence on decision-making processes. The Theory of Planned Behavior has four key components that contribute to the determination of the final behavior: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and intention. The research necessitates an intersectoral model of TPB and TRA in the context of fast fashion (refer to Figure 9 below). This thesis will present an adaptation of TPB and TRA in the fast fashion model. But before that, let's explore the IBB literature, which is one of the main facets too.

Figure 9: Theory of Planned Behavior and Reasoned Action



2.3 Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB)

Motivation can be utilized as a mechanism for delineating an individual's conduct, encapsulating the fundamental justification for their actions. Motivation is a psychological phenomenon that drives individuals towards the attainment of a particular goal. When a consumer encounters a perceived need, it triggers a state of tension, prompting the consumer to actively pursue resolution by satisfying the particular need. If an individual's degree of motivation to achieve a specific target is sufficiently great, they will possess a strong drive that forces and propels individuals toward its attainment. As per the findings of Solomon (2006). Based on a theoretical framework put forward by Sigmund Freud, it is posited that consumers demonstrate a limited level of consciousness when it comes to their true motivations, hence resulting in their inability to consistently express these rationales. Freudian theory posits that the decision-making process of consumers is subject to the effect of unconscious motives that stem by virtue of their previous experiences. The theory suggests that buyers may choose products based on their symbolic meaning, enabling them to satisfy an impulse that could not be socially approved but may still be symbolically expressed through an acceptable item. Solomon et al. (1999) assert that Abraham Maslow provides an alternative perspective on the notion of motivation by introducing a hierarchical pyramid. In this model, humans are motivated by a series of categorized wants that are grouped in a hierarchical fashion (Kotelr et al, 2005). The attitude of consumers towards a product or subject plays a significant role in shaping their decision-making process, ultimately resulting in either a favorable or unfavorable approach. Advertising plays a significant role in shaping consumer product beliefs. Consumer attitudes towards a product can be shaped by either

objective information or subjective perceptions of consumers with respect to marketing efforts. At times, these convictions may not correspond with objective truth; however, they continue to function as a deterrent for the buyer in making a purchase of a specific product. Kotler et al. (2005) argue that consumers' impulsive purchase behavior is influenced by various psychological characteristics, such as perception, motivation, beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyle.

2.3.1 Definition of Impulsive Buying

The phenomenon of impulse buying has been widely recognized and regarded as a prevalent and unique aspect of the consumer lifestyle. Consequently, it has garnered growing interest from academics and theorists in the field of consumer behavior (Youn & Faber, 2000, p.179). Although prior studies have shed light on the adverse implications of impulse purchase behavior, researchers have characterized impulsive buying behavior as irrational behavior stemming from a deficiency in behavioral control. This definition has been supported by various studies (Ainslie, 1975; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Levy, 1976; Solnick, Kannenberg, Eckerman, & Waller, 1980). However, despite its negative connotations, impulse purchases continue to contribute significantly to sales in a variety of product offerings (Bellenger et al., 1978; Han, Morgan, Kotsiopulos, & Kang-Park, 1991; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Kollat & Willet, 1967; Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982; Rook & Fisher, 1995). As per the study conducted by Bellenger et al. (1978), it was observed that impulse purchases accounted for a range of 27% to 62% of all purchases made in supermarkets and departmental stores. The statistic must be exponentially higher given the modern hyper-consumeristic societies embarking on a scale of mass production and consumption.

According to Rook and Hoch (1985), it is widely acknowledged that a significant portion of individuals have encountered instances of impulse buying. Additional research findings provide evidence in support of this claim, indicating that nearly 90% of participants have engaged in occasional impulse grocery purchases (Welles, 1986). Furthermore, self-classified impulse purchases account for approximately 30% to 50% of all consumer transactions, as reported by various studies (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Bellenger et al., 1978; Kollat & Willett, 1967; Han et al., 1991).

The early research on impulsive purchasing behavior primarily focused on addressing the challenges associated with defining impulse buying and differentiating it from non-impulse buying. These studies also aimed to categorize the various sub-types of impulse buying into distinct groups, rather than examining impulse buying as an inherent feature of consumer purchase behavior. Thereby, this methodology has resulted in the formulation of a theoretical framework that neglects the behavioral incentives underlying impulsive purchasing over a wide range of products, instead concentrating on a limited selection of relatively low-cost items. Nevertheless, this particular methodology failed to offer enough justifications for the high frequency of consumer impulsive buying habits.

Researchers have examined impulsive buying as a characteristic of individuals, rather than solely a reaction to affordable product options, due to its widespread occurrence even with higher-priced items (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Rook, 1987). In recent studies, there is a growing consensus among researchers regarding the presence of a hedonic or emotive element in impulse purchases. (Puri, 1996; Piron, 1991; Wenn et al, 1998; Rook & Fisher, 1995). They also indicate that impulse buying behavior is more intricate than previously understood. It is now

recognized that this activity arises from the aspiration to fulfill many underlying demands that are associated with different forms of buying behavior (Hausman, 2000).

Consequently, scholars redirected their focus toward the phenomenon of impulsive buying and embarked on exploring the underlying behavioral motivations behind it. (Hausman, 2000; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Piron, 1991; Rook & Fisher, 1995; Rook, 1987; Rook & Gardner, 1993; Weun, Jones, & Betty, 1998). Moreover, though connected, there is also a vast difference in the literatures of Hyperconsumerism and IBB, and for the sake of this research a simplified version of difference in the literatures of both is presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences in the literature on Hyperconsumerism and IBB

DIFFERENCES IN THE RESEARCH OF IBB AND HYPERCONSUMERISM

	IMPULSIVE BUYING BEHAVIOUR	HYPERCONSUMERISM
PERSPECTIVE	Microcosmic perspective: specific type of consumption behavior (Verplanken, B., & Herabadi, A. G., 2001)	Macrocosmic perspective:wider range of consumption patterns (Shove, E., 2003)
UNDERLYING FACTORS	often associated with individual-level factors such as personality traits and emotional states (Holt, D. B. 2002)	closely linked to societal-level factors such as cultural norms and advertising practices (Solomon, M. R., 2017)
CONSEQUENCES	lead to financial problems and feelings of regret (Jackson, T., 2005)	broader social and environmental consequences such as resource depletion and waste generation (Oskamp, S., 2000)
TIME HORIZON	focused on short-term gratification (O'Guinn, T. C., & Faber, R. J., 1989)	involve longer-term patterns of consumption (Schor, J. B., 1999)
MOTIVATIONS	driven by emotions such as excitement or anxiety (Rook, D. W., 1987)	driven by a desire for status or a need to conform to social norms. (Veblen, T., 1994)
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS	driven by a lack of self-control (Baumeister R. F., & Heatherton, T. F., 1996)	driven by a need for social validation. (Belk, R. W., & Pollay, R. W., 1985)

2.3.2 Normative assessment for impulse buying behavior

Previous studies have demonstrated that engaging in planned purchase behavior leads to more precise decision-making, but impulsive conduct is associated with judgment errors (Halpern, 1989; Johnson-Laird, 1988). This impulsive behavior increases the likelihood of experiencing unfavorable consequences (Weinberg & Gottwald, 1982; Rook, 1987; Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). The negative evaluation of impulse buying behavior can be attributed to psychological research on impulsiveness, which defines impulsive behavior as a manifestation of immaturity leading to a deficiency in behavioral regulation (Solnick et al., 1980; Levy, 1976). Additionally, it is viewed as a risky, irrational, and extravagant behavior (Levy, 1976; Solnick et al., 1980; Ainslie, 1975).

Nevertheless, some studies on the conception of impulse buying behavior suggest that individuals who engage in impulsive purchases do not perceive their actions as morally incorrect. In fact, they often express positive views of their impulsive activities. In the study conducted by Rook and Fisher (1995) on impulsive buying behavior, a minority of participants (20%) indicated negative emotions associated with their impulsive purchases, while a majority of participants (41%) expressed positive emotions towards their impulsive buying experiences. One plausible explanation for this occurrence is that consumers make purchases based on a multitude of non-economic factors, including but not limited to enjoyment, imagination, and emotional or social gratification. According to Hausman (2000), certain individuals perceive shopping as a form of retail therapy, serving as a means to alleviate the pressures associated with a day of work or to simply enjoy a leisurely

outing. This perspective aligns with the concept of hedonic modification in relation to impulsive purchasing.

Numerous studies have been conducted to enhance comprehension of impulse buying behavior, which is seen as a subset of consumer behavior (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Kollat & Willet, 1967). In order to delineate the concept of impulsive buying, scholars find it advantageous to employ the notions of planned and unplanned purchases. Unplanned purchasing is described as “a buying action undertaken without a problem having been previously recognized or a buying intention formed prior to entering the store” (Engel & Blackwell 1982, p. 483). Contrarily, planned purchasing can be defined as the deliberate act of acknowledging a certain issue and subsequently forming a desire to make a purchase. Impulse purchases can be characterized as instances of unplanned buying or considered as a more sophisticated manifestation of unplanned buying (Kollat & Willet, 1967; Stern, 1962).

The locus of decision-making pertaining to the item holds considerable importance in the context of this particular purchase. When a purchase is made within a store, it is typically categorized as an impulse buy. Consequently, this phenomenon is also referred to as unplanned buying (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). When consumers are prompted to compare their pre-shopping purchase plans or intentions with the actual results of their purchases, the disparities between them often indicate instances of impulse buying (Kollat and Willet, 1967). The concept of customers' instantaneous propensity to make a purchase is then added, further refining the definition, which is reworded as follows: "Impulse buying is characterized by the occurrence of a sudden, frequently intense, and enduring desire within a consumer to acquire a product or service without delay." According to Rook (1987), the desire to make a purchase is characterized by a hedonically intricate nature and has the

potential to elicit emotional discord. Put another way, the terms linked to impulse buying are sudden decisions, unexpected behavior, and erratic conduct combined with an emotional component as opposed to rational ones.

A further study carried out a thorough analysis of the existing definitions and, after determining that they were inadequate in explaining the notion, proposed that impulse buying requires the presence of a stimulus that initiates the purchase, an immediate decision, and an unforeseen timing of the transaction (Piron, 1991). Over time, numerous investigations and research endeavors have been undertaken, yielding diverse interpretations and characterizations of impulse buying. While certain individuals retained the aforementioned criteria, others choose to broaden and enhance the conceptualization of the term. Conceptualizations given by Rook (1987) and Piron (1991) have influenced the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the elements that lead to impulsive buying behavior in retail environments. Specifically, situational factors like the availability of money and differences in individual traits have been found to be important predictors of customers' propensity for impulsive purchases. This ultimately affects their decision-making process, as well as their behavior in stores and impulsive buys (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998).

Several recent research have examined the variables that influence impulsive purchasing behavior. Scholars have proposed that both internal feelings and external events in the environment can operate as stimuli to elicit impulsive consumer purchasing behavior. According to existing research, situational factors hold both practical and theoretical importance due to their influence on decision-making processes, particularly at the point of purchase (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986). The

occurrence of this phenomenon is frequently ascribed to the application of decision-making processes characterized as "low involvement" (Hoyer, 1984).

The examination of contextual factors can be described as an inquiry into the relationship between consumer characteristics and the characteristics of retail or point-of-purchase environments. Characteristics of a shopper encompass various factors such as attitude (Reid & Brown, 1996), ethnicity (Crispel, 1997), and involvement (Smith & Carsky, 1996). On the other hand, retailing features can be defined by outlet size (Owen, 1995), store personality (Abrams, 1996; Burns, 1992), and retail format (Fernie, 1996; Fernie & Fernie, 1997). Having a grasp of certain internal and external factors around this topic is crucial to gain further insights.

2.3.2.1 Internal Factors

The variable of affect or mood has been determined as a factor that exerts a significant influence on impulse purchasing (Rook, 1987; Gardner & Rook, 1988; Rook & Gardner, 1993). In the study, Rook and Gardner (1993) discovered that a significant majority of the participants in their survey, specifically 85%, expressed a preference for a happy mood when engaging in impulse buying, as opposed to a negative mood. According to the respondents, when experiencing a pleasant mood, they reported feeling unrestricted, having an inclination to indulge themselves, and experiencing elevated levels of energy. According to Weinberg and Gotwald's (1982) study, those who engage in impulsive buying tend to experience heightened emotions of enjoyment, enthusiasm, and joy. Similarly, Donovan and Rossiter (1982) discovered a positive correlation between the experience of pleasure and the likelihood of overspending.

Several research conducted on consumer behavior has demonstrated that impulse buying is driven by the satisfaction of hedonic wants (Rook, 1987; Thompson, Locander, & Pollo, 1990; Piron, 1991). The purchasing behavior of these consumers is shown to be associated with their desire to satisfy hedonic needs, including but not limited to enjoyment, surprise, and novelty (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman, 1980).

Moreover, the social connection that is inherent in the shopping experience may help fulfill emotional needs. For example, empirical evidence suggests that individuals often express feelings of upliftment or increased energy following a shopping encounter (Cobb & Hoyer, 1986; Rook, 1987). These findings lend support to the contemporary notion that impulsive purchase behavior might be attributed to a dispositional inclination driven by hedonic desires. The hedonic value associated with shopping encompasses the potential for both enjoyment and emotional satisfaction that can be derived from the shopping act itself (Babin, Darden, & Griffin, 1994).

Previous research has posited that engaging in shopping activities without a defined purpose may hold greater importance than the mere act of acquiring things, and might potentially offer a very enjoyable experience (Sherry, 1990; Maclinnis & Price, 1987). The objective of the shopping experience is to fulfill hedonic urges, resulting in the selection of things without prior planning, indicating an occurrence of impulsive buying.

2.3.2.2 External factors

The impact of specific situations and retail settings on in-store responses and subsequent store selection decisions can be linked to dynamic and adjustable traits that govern preferences, expectations, and behavior (Hausman, 2000). The study conducted by Darden et al. (1983) showed that consumers' perceptions of a store's physical attractiveness exhibited a stronger link with store selection compared to factors such as goods quality, general price level, and selection. This finding provides evidence for the proposition that consumers' selection of a retail establishment is impacted by the physical setting of the business, with visual merchandising serving as a crucial factor in this process. This perspective aligns with Bowers' (1973) assertion that individuals engage with, evade, and construct circumstances in accordance with their personal preferences. According to Anglin, Stoltman, and Morgan (1999), consumers tend to avoid or abandon retail environments that are characterized by stress or obstacles. The anticipation or occurrence of pleasant emotions typically results in approach behaviors, whereas avoidance behaviors are linked to the anticipation or occurrence of negative experiences (Troye, 1985; Mehrabian & Russel, 1974; Dovnovan & Rissiter, 1982; Saegert & Winkel, 1990).

2.4 Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB)

The idea of compulsive buying has been a focus of interest to psychologists, academics in the fields of behavior research, and marketing scholars alike. Compulsive buying behavior can be characterized as an addictive inclination or compulsive trait that consistently emerges from impulsive and repetitive motives for

purchasing, which may not be resistible, relieving or satisfying but definitely is disruptive to regular functioning. Simultaneously, the compulsive buying behavior exhibited by consumers is recognized as a deliberate or purposeful conduct influenced by several psychological and social factors. In collectivist cultures, social settings and the social factors—such as an individual's social values and conformity to group standards—act as catalysts for fulfilling certain social obligations. The prevalence of a common social structure and the widespread adoption of a culture centered around excessive consumption present an imperative and advantageous circumstance for conducting a comprehensive and systematic examination of compulsive buying behavior. This particular behavior and its associated processes have not yet been thoroughly investigated in the current body of scholarly literature, despite having many amalgamatory conceptions that are of prominence to many fields of research.

The consumer behavior literature has consistently recognized that consumers' purchasing behavior often deviates from the principles of economic theory. According to Etzioni (1986), it is frequently seen that consumers' buying decisions are influenced by desires, moods, or emotions, which is commonly perceived as a natural and default condition. According to Tauber (1972), the fundamental reason for these persons engaging in shopping is the utility derived from the act of purchasing itself, as opposed to the expected utility derived from consuming the items. People are driven by many psychological needs, including the pursuit of enjoyment, the expression of personal identity, the enhancement of self-esteem, and the alleviation of bad emotions, among others, rather than solely seeking specific essential commodities. The purchasing habits characterized as impulsive and compulsive have been well-recognized in academic literature (Stern, 1962; Rook and

Gardner, 1993; Rook, 1987; Rook and Fisher, 1995; 1996; Beatty and Ferrell, 1998; Wood, 1998; Dittmar and Drury, 2000; Dittmar, Beattie, and Friese, 1995).

The factors that influence or initiate compulsive buying behavior (CBB) can be categorized into two overarching classifications: Internal and external. External influences encompass many stimuli which can be classified as environmental, social, or situational, which are designed to entice customers into engaging in excessive purchasing behaviors. Internal effects encompass the psychological variables that impact a customer, such as motives and personality qualities. Previous research on compulsive buying behavior (CBB) has examined the influence of internal factors through the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods. These studies have explored the impact of individual factors or a combination of factors on CBB, such as compulsivity (Faber and O'Guinn, 1992), low self-esteem (Mendelson and Mello, 1986; Black, 1996), arousal seeking (Edwards, 1992; 1994a), impulsivity (Rook, 1987, Black, 2007), fantasizing (Jacobs, 1986), depression (Schmitz, 2005), and materialism (Dittmar, 2005b; Dittmar, Long and Bond, 2007; Xu, 2008) have been examined.

A comprehensive review of the literature also revealed that numerous studies have extensively examined consumer's compulsive buying behavior (CBB) from various perspectives. These perspectives include personality traits (O'Guinn and Faberi, 1988; 1989), the role of CBB as a predictor of attitudes and perceptions (Magee, 1994), psychological factors that contribute to CBB (Kwak, Zinkhan, and Roushanzamr, 2004), interpersonal influences on CBB (Roberts, Manolis, and Tanner, 2003; Robert, Manolis, Jeff, and Jr, 2008), cognitive processes involved in compulsive buying (Kyrios, Frost, and Steketee, 2004), and the chronic consumer state associated with CBB (Vel and Hamouda, 2009). However, the findings of these

studies were inconclusive as they were primarily explored from a theoretical perspective without sufficient quantification.

Humans often exhibit impulsive behavior, characterized by unexpected urges, which can lead to abrupt shifts in their purchasing patterns. Urges are a common and innate aspect of human behavior, characterized by powerful motivational forces that significantly shape individuals' actions in unique ways. Conversely, reactions pertain to impulsive responses under immediate circumstances. The crucial attribute of impulses is their abrupt, vigorous, and transient nature, which ceases once the response to a threat or stressor has been detected (Anton, 1999).

In contrast to an impulsion, compulsion can be characterized as generally consistent and enduring influences that automatically guide an individual's behavior and responses. Impulsive or compulsive reactions are dependent upon individual desires and have a tendency to intensify in the absence of any response. The research indicates that individuals often have a tendency to avoid reactions that are prompted by their urges. However, because of the potent nature of impulses, individuals are propelled towards futile and potentially uncomfortable outcomes.

2.5 Concept of Urges (Conscious and Unconscious)

The concept of primary urges of humans pertains to fundamental physiological urges, while secondary urges are those that are influenced or cultivated by our social surroundings and societal pressures. An example of a secondary urge is the act of acquiring items that are considered desirable or regarded as symbols of social status within a given culture (Hausman, 2000). Social media also plays a

substantial impact in influencing individuals' shopping motivations and perceptions of materialism (Wang & Wallendorf, 2006). In line with this, it may be inferred that the remaining impulses are either self-generated or intentionally cultivated by persons. For example, a prevalent manifestation of these impulses is the cultivation of dependency on particular substances or consumables, such as tobacco, caffeine, or alcoholic beverages. These desires are also evident in our behaviors, specifically in impulsive and compulsive purchasing.

The phenomenon of unconscious desires originates from the conscious behavioral patterns we exhibit. Specifically, when our frequent habits are effectively ingrained in our brains, they can subsequently govern our actions and behaviors without our conscious volition. To a certain degree, it could be observed in occurrences of socially maladaptive actions. Likewise, conditions or psychiatric diseases, like obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), is frequently characterized by intense desires to engage in specific behavior patterns. Nevertheless, the impacts of desires exhibit variability among individuals. Certain people, despite experiencing low levels of urges, may lack the capacity to resist and instead succumb to actions that fulfill those urges. Conversely, others possess the capability to resist even the most intense urges and exert control over their behaviors. Individuals who exhibit inadequate control are more likely to engage in uncontrollable behavior patterns, such as obsessive buying activity.

Irrespective of their strength, certain drives exist that are deemed positive and socially sanctioned, while others are considered negative and socially disapproved. However, the evolutionary history that has shaped our unconscious actions remains

operative, occasionally posing challenges to the cohesion of society. The regulation of urges is occasionally facilitated by an inherent internal mechanism for urge control, which operates as the default system within our cerebral structures. This system on the one hand motivates individuals to engage in activities in order to fulfill their desires, and on the other hand, prompts them to cease their actions after their desires have been fulfilled. The urge system may experience problems, leading to a potential malfunction of the stopping signals, thus compromising its efficacy. During this phase, conscious will can exert influence and serve as a regulatory mechanism. Human beings are dependent on the conscious control system due to the intricate nature of our mental processes, which surpasses the level of complexity required for regulating and controlling our activities.

A limited number of psychologists and decision researchers argue in favor of the notion that unconscious effects play a central role in driving consumer choices. Dijksterhuis, van Baaren, Smith, and Wigboldus (2005) discovered that “many choices are made unconsciously and are strongly affected by the environment” Therefore, it is evident that unconscious influences frequently exert a substantial impact on consumer choice and possess the potential to influence the processes involved in consumer decision making (Bargh, 2002) and habitual responses are commonly regarded as non-conscious (Kahneman, 2003; Bargh, 1997).

According to Wright and Kriewall (1980) as well as Bettman and Sujan (1987), it has been argued that the relative prominence of choice criteria is contingent upon various factors, including the consumer's psychological condition. In contrast, Bargh (2002) posited in relation to the 'automaticity theory' that the act of

habitual purchasing may be attributed to unconscious psychological mechanisms, wherein consumption objectives can be triggered and executed without conscious knowledge.

Consciousness affords us the unique capacity to employ rationality in the rejection of a concept or choice that lacks coherence with our accumulated experiences. According to Bettman and Sujan (1987), in order to engage in action, emotions and impulses must be granted rational permission. Hence, those in positions of authority possess an understanding of the diverse factors that shape their cognitive processes and actions. Neuroscientific research is now investigating the correlation between irrational and rational behavior by incorporating the element of time into the purchasing and decision-making process.

From a product standpoint, scholarly research has indicated that conscious thinking was the prevailing mode for certain items, whereas, for others, unconscious thinking took precedence. Hence, it may lack significance to categorize decisions, judgments, and actions as predominantly non-conscious instead of conscious. In a broader sense, disregarding the debate surrounding the prominence of conscious or unconscious factors in decision-making and their ability to effectively elucidate consumer behavior, further studies are expected to explore the interplay and mechanisms between these factors.

Compulsive buying habits can be understood through the lens of the "time-inconsistent preferences" paradigm, wherein these behaviors are perceived as deliberate actions stemming from either a lack of self-control or intense impulses and

desires. The key features of compulsive purchase behavior, which are motivated by strong wants, are commonly identified as transformation, reward-seeking, and low self-control. Dispossession, when prompted by alterations in perception (such as envisioning an object's possession), can enhance the desire and the motivation to make a purchase (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991). Additionally, compulsive buying behavior can arise from the modification of desire reference points, which is triggered by negative events and a tendency to compare oneself with others (Suls, Martin, and Wheeler, 2002).

Therefore, impairments in controlling impulses have the potential to result in adverse consequences, including compulsive disorder and eventually addiction. Whereas, compulsive buyers are those individuals who have a persistent and habitual inclination to engage in excessive purchasing behavior, sometimes driven by powerful urges. Their lifestyles are characterized by extensive and frequent shopping sprees (Black, 1996). Faber and O'Guinn (1989) proposed key criteria for assessing the severity or possible abnormality of compulsive buying, which involves evaluating if an individual's purchasing activity disrupts their typical daily functioning.

In a similar vein, Nataraajan and Goff (1991) also expressed agreement with this perspective, viewing such purchasing behavior as problematic and suggestive of deviance that can negatively impact various aspects of an individual's life, including familial and social relationships, financial well-being, and employment, thereby impeding everyday life. Valence, D'Astos, and Fortier (1988) provided a description of compulsive purchasing behavior (CBB) as an uncontrollable urge to make

purchases, which is caused by a psychological strain problem stemming from internal reasons. This activity is characterized by a sense of relief and frustration akin to that experienced in addiction. Nataraajan and Goff (1991) characterized CBB (compulsive buying behavior) as a propensity towards addiction or compulsion, which perpetuates itself persistently through the urge to engage in repetitive purchasing behaviors. These motives for buying may or may not be irresistible, satisfying, or relieving, but they undeniably disrupt normal functioning. This is a supposedly rare behavior but the manifestations are not clear. This thesis also proposes how such behavior possibly culminates, taking the instance of the COVID-19 pandemic that fueled our vulnerable states and has also assisted to exemplify how buying patterns have changed over time.

2.6 Covid-19 Influence on consumer behavior

The worldwide COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on societies and economies globally, affecting numerous areas of society in diverse manners. The current situation, which is without precedent, has numerous implications for customers' daily lives and has significantly altered the actions of enterprises and the behavior of consumers (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Pantano et al., 2020).

Recent studies have demonstrated that the perception of limited availability of products can have a substantial impact on customer decision-making (Hamilton et al., 2019; Laato et al., 2020; Pantano et al., 2020). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, customers have exhibited stockpiling behaviors that markedly differ from their typical shopping patterns. The reduced availability of physical stores, coupled with heightened consumer health concerns, has resulted in

an instant surge in demand for alternate distribution methods. The sudden implementation of social distance restrictions is significantly affecting customers' preferred buying channels. During the past decade, internet food purchasing has had consistent but restricted growth (Harris et al., 2017). However, it has seen a substantial surge throughout the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Pantano et al., 2020). In addition, older and technologically inexperienced consumers, particularly those belonging to the Baby Boomer generation, have begun to explore and appreciate the convenience of online purchasing, embracing the security provided by technology.

The commodity theory claims that scarcity may explain stockpiling behavior (Brock 1968), which arises as an individual's response to stress, fear, and a panic-inducing environment. People started to purchase or order more than their average consumption and stocked them in cases of an emergency (Micalizzi et al. 2021). According to the prospect theory, risk aversion motivates this behavior if food sources are perceived to be scarce by the consumer, even though the possibility of this happening is very low (Tversky and Kahneman 1992). As a result, this behavior cannot be considered entirely irrational because it reflects human nature. However, stockpiling has serious adverse effects on the economy and society. As a social behavior, it negatively affects supply chains by disrupting them and creating shortages (Micalizzi et al. 2021).

Apart from disruptions in the supply chain, panic buying also affects social life by creating a chaotic environment and a scarcity of goods for others. This condition applies mainly to the elderly, disabled, and working-class people since they cannot shop at their convenience and are much more affected by the chaos caused by panic buying. When a product becomes scarce, its value also starts to increase.

Another adverse effect of stockpiling is that it creates a competitive environment that leads to price increases (Chen et al. 2020). Empty shelves, intermittent restocking problems, and the chaos from panic buying led people to shop online. Most retailers were not ready to respond to the increased demand in online markets, which resulted in delayed deliveries that lasted for 3–4 days. Late deliveries in online markets, empty shelves in local stores, and increasing prices led people to spend more money during this period. Consumers who could not find the product they were looking for had to go farther away to see what they were seeking (Chen et al. 2020). One of the recent studies in this field also examined the changing purchasing behaviors in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, COVID-19 has had an indelible impact on our buying behaviors both externally and internally, thereby it was crucial to include this element and analyze the depth of its penetration in our buying behaviors.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have demonstrated heightened vulnerability to impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors. The convergence of social isolation, increasing online presence, and emotional discomfort creates an environment where participants were more susceptible to marketing tactics and the persuasiveness of social media, leading to a greater vulnerability to Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB). The enforcement of lockdowns and adherence to social distancing measures has led to a substantial surge in online participation (Andruetto et al, 2021; Bhatti et al, 2020; Postnord, 2022) specifically in the domain of shopping. Consumers are devoting more and more of their time to online platforms, where they are continually coming across marketing and advertising. The pandemic has led to significant emotional and psychological challenges. A considerable proportion of customers turn to shop as a

method of seeking emotional comfort or escapism, making them more susceptible to engaging in impulsive purchases. The intensified utilization of social media during the pandemic has amplified the influence of trends and peer behavior on consumers, heightening their need for new fashion products. This thesis crystalises our understanding of these intricate behaviors by proposing a pervasive model.

CHAPTER- 3: METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative research approach due to the inherent characteristics of the topic as qualitative research plays a crucial role in comprehending the significance attributed by participants to various events, settings, and acts in which they are engaged. Additionally, it aids in the interpretation of the narratives they provide concerning their experiences and lives. According to Patton (1990: 13), qualitative methods provide the evaluator with the opportunity to thoroughly examine specific concerns with depth and detail since it is imperative to identify the nature, antecedents, and repercussions of consumer buying behavior of fast fashion in a specific context of post-COVID-19. The selection of qualitative research was also considered more appropriate for the objectives of this study, based on the advantages associated with qualitative methodologies (Maxwell, 1996). Qualitative researchers typically focus on a limited number of participants or settings, allowing them to maintain the distinctiveness of each of these contexts. This provides the ability to understand how events, behaviors, and meanings are influenced by the diverse environments in which they take place.

Furthermore, qualitative research offers the benefit of incorporating unexpected phenomena and impacts into the theoretical framework. Due to their flexibility, the researchers are able to construct innovative grounded theories regarding the influence of these events. The process requires employing a 'continuous comparative analysis' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which entails systematically scrutinizing and contrasting the theory and the evidence in an iterative manner. The technique involves iteratively adapting the theory in response to the data and refining the incoming data according to the theory. The grounded theory approach, as formulated by Strauss and Corbin (1994), views the process of generating theory during social research as a set of interconnected elements within the investigation. Furthermore, qualitative research is more appropriate for understanding the procedural elements of events and actions, rather than emphasizing their resulting impacts.

3.1 Grounded Theory

The use of grounded theory in consumer behavior research is still in its early stages and has been employed in many areas, such as alcohol consumption (Pettigew, 2002) and advertising (Hirschman & Thompson, 1997; Andronikidis & Lambriandou, 2010) etc. Consumer behavior experts are increasingly suggesting the inclusion of the grounded theory technique in a greater number of marketing studies (Goulding, 2000, 2005; Rindell, 2009). The application of grounded theory in this research environment is rooted in its ability to comprehend and illuminate a nascent phenomenon. Using this method will lead to the development of concepts that accurately express the intricacies of consumer behavior within the given area.

Consequently, these concepts will hold substantial significance for both research and practical applications.

There are multiple significant justifications for employing grounded theory in the present research. Grounded theory does not impose preconceived notions or inflexible formalizations on the data during the process of investigation, study, theory development, and analysis. In contrast, this approach facilitates the organic development of theory based on the available facts. The primary purpose of this thesis is to gain insight into the various experiences and behaviors of individuals while adopting an unbiased approach to understanding how people perceive and interact with the world (Glaser, 1978).

Furthermore, the research methodology employed in this study is an inductive-deductive approach, which is particularly suitable for conducting exploratory research on behavior within the given research setting (Andorfer & Liebe, 2012). Also, grounded theory delves deeply into the experiences of the respondents, uncovering genuine and authentic motivators and perspectives. Hence, in the context of a socioeconomic and ethical scenario, the most effective approach to uncovering the truth regarding human emotions is to facilitate its emergence, as advocated by Glaser (1998). Consequently, grounded theory emerges as most suitable methodological approach for comprehending the intricate emotional nuances experienced by consumers when engaging in the purchase of Fast fashion products.

3.1.1 Research Objectives

The main research objectives are:

- Aiming to understand the subjective experiences, motivations, and perceptions of consumers regarding their buying behavior in the context of fast fashion
- Identifying and examining the underlying factors/drivers (psychological, social, and situational) and their role in driving impulsive buying behavior
- Exploring the positive outcomes or negative consequences: can involve investigating the financial implications, environmental ill-being, and overall well-being of individuals who engage in hyper-impulsive buying behavior

To achieve these objectives, three research questions as guided by the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) are:

- How does impulsive buying behavior exist and prevail among consumers of fast fashion? *and*
- What are the driving forces of this phenomenon? *and*
- What are the consequences for consumers and society?

3.2 Data Collection

During the initial stages of the research, I proceeded to study more about the impulsiveness and repetitiveness in the buying of fast fashion clothes, and why this shopping activity seems so irrational and robotic. Is there something to do with the consumer, the marketer, or the social environment we live in? what propels us into this buying behavior? How does this affect us and the environment? All these questions were in my mind in their simplest form and I wanted to research more into this by getting to know more about impulsive buying behavior (individual perspective) and hyperconsumerism (societal perspective).

3.2.1 Sampling Method

3.2.1.1 Purposive Sampling (Pilot Study): The study commenced by employing a purposive sampling methodology for the pilot study, wherein semi-structured interviews were performed with a total of five participants. These individuals were selected based on certain criteria, namely international students who engage in fast fashion shopping. This pilot study aimed to gather preliminary insights and observations. I discovered a significant presence of fast fashion within the context of social environments, such as individuals and university culture, which influences their participation in consumer behavior.

3.2.1.2 Transition to Theoretical Sampling: This type of sampling as conceptualized by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.45), is “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, to develop his theory as it emerges” The objective of this approach is to

develop theory in an iterative manner as it emerges from the data. Following the first analysis and open coding process, the collection of data is guided by theoretical sampling rather than predetermined sample selection. This approach aligns with the principles of classic grounded theory. The emerging theory governs the process of sampling and guides the researcher, aligning with emerging theoretical criteria. In similar lines to this, the insights from the pilot study led to a transition to theoretical sampling:

Refining and Expanding Concepts: A preliminary investigation uncovered various recurrent themes and patterns associated with fast fashion and impulsive shopping. These factors incorporate the impact of many variables, including cultural backgrounds, social media, and personal identity. Grounded theory prioritizes the creation of theories by gathering and analyzing data. The next logical step was to engage in theoretical sampling, which involves selecting individuals based on the concepts that arise from the data. The preliminary results about the impact of social factors on the buying behavior of university students in the fast fashion industry served as the precursor for selecting the sample for this research. I initiated a search for participants who could refine and develop these emerging concepts. The adoption of theoretical sampling facilitated a more comprehensive investigation of the particular concepts found in the pilot study. For instance, one of the preliminary interviews indicated that social media celebrities and influencers had a substantial impact on students' fashion preferences, thereby I concentrated on contacting participants who could be actively involved with these influencers. This methodology aids in enhancing comprehension of the correlation between social media and consumer purchasing patterns. Furthermore, despite incorporating diverse perspectives, the use of theoretical sampling allowed me to focus on particular sub-

groups that seemed more pertinent according to the initial findings. This includes students belonging to diverse cultural backgrounds who showcased unique purchasing behaviors or are impacted by specific social variables. The progressive procedure of data collection and analysis in grounded theory involves simultaneous data collection and analysis. The insights obtained from the pilot study probably resulted in initial hypotheses or theories on purchasing behavior. The utilization of theoretical sampling facilitated the examination and enhancement of these hypotheses through focused data gathering, resulting in a more solid and well-founded theory.

Identifying Discrepancies and Inconsistencies: The pilot study also uncovered gaps and contradictions in comprehending impulsive purchasing patterns. The utilization of theoretical sampling facilitated the exploration of these domains in greater depth by deliberately picking people who possessed the ability to contribute valuable insights into the less comprehended facets of the phenomena. The objective of the grounded framework is to construct a comprehensive theory that is firmly based on empirical data and the pilot study's observations about fast fashion and social effects served as a catalyst, guiding the selection of participants for further investigation in areas that showed the most potential or needed further exploration. This process guaranteed that the developing theory was thorough, subtle, and accurately represented the intricacies of purchase behavior within the fast fashion setting. This strategy not only enhanced the comprehension of the topic but also guaranteed that the research was firmly based on empirical data, resulting in the formulation of a well-backed theory.

3.2.1.3 Selection Criteria

After gaining insights from the pilot study, the impact of social environment and technology seemed to have a very substantial role in influencing impulse buying tendencies. Also, noticing a pattern of participants mentioning that shopping has increased substantially post-covid made me more intrigued and I narrowed my research to study the impact of post-covid and environmental triggers. I also wanted to make sure that this is not the case with just a particular nationality i.e., Indians or Pakistanis. I aimed to get participants from different nationalities to gain insights. There was another strict criterion which was their frequency of buying, it was chosen to be more than 5 times a month which implies that participants might be shopping more than once every week to eliminate the possibility of other reasons like occasional outing led to an impulse purchase. Therefore, the criteria and selection of international students in the university setting was a strategic choice for many reasons:

High engagement with trends: University students generally belong to an age bracket that exhibits a strong interest in current fashion trends. They frequently pursue cost-effective and fashionable clothing choices, rendering them ideal customers of fast fashion. The purchase habits of this specific group can offer valuable insights into the overarching trends and reasons that propel the fast fashion business.

Diversity of Perspectives: The study benefits from the inclusion of students from different nationalities, allowing for a wide array of cultural experiences and perspectives to be considered. The inclusion of a wide range of cultural viewpoints is essential, as buying patterns might differ dramatically across various cultures. To

perform a thorough analysis of purchasing behavior in a foreign market, it is crucial to comprehend these nuanced differences.

Impulsive purchasing inclinations: These are likely to be more widespread among university students who reside far from their homes and are assuming responsibility for their finances for the first time. Behavior is influenced by multiple reasons, including peer influence, marketing strategies targeting younger groups, and the emotional effects of new life experiences.

Environmental and Ethical Awareness: Modern university students commonly demonstrate an increased level of awareness and concern for environmental and ethical issues. Examining this point is crucial for our findings, especially because the fast fashion industry can offer valuable insights into how environmental and ethical concerns influence consumer purchasing decisions.

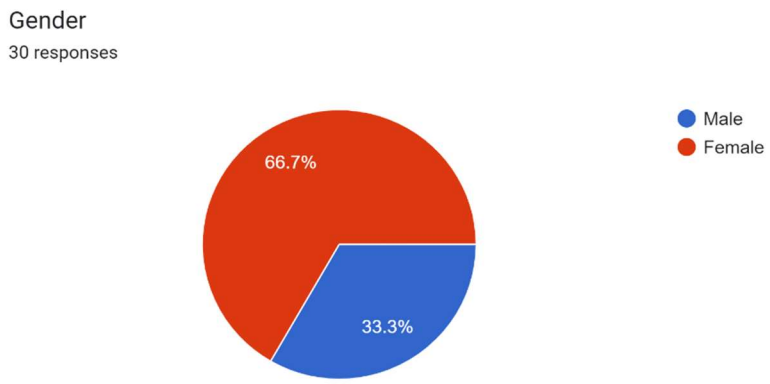
Indicators of Future Market Patterns: University students serve as a representation of the forthcoming cohort of consumers. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of consumers' purchasing behavior can provide valuable foresight into upcoming market trends and changes, particularly within the rapidly evolving fashion business.

Expanded Participant Profile: Table 2 below shows the list of participants in the main study (30 participants, gender distribution, nationalities), and Figure 10 showcases the distribution of gender:

Table 2: list of participants

Participant Number	Age	Gender	Country of Origin
P1	31	Female	Kazakhstan
P5	26	Female	India
P9	27	Male	Morocco
P12	24	Female	Kenya
P14	25	Male	Germany
P17	26	Female	Serbia
P3	28	Female	Jordan
P7	23	Male	Bangladesh
P13	27	Male	Nepal
P2	25	Female	Palestine
P4	23	Female	Yemen
P16	22	Female	Iraq
P21	22	Male	Pakistan
P24	27	Male	Lebanon
P15	21	Female	Pakistan
P26	27	Female	Russia
P22	19	Female	Taiwan
P8	30	Female	Iran
P11	23	Female	Pakistan
P19	23	Female	Albania
P23	27	Female	USA
P20	20	Male	Azerbaijan
P25	19	Female	Bulgaria
P30	25	Male	Tajikistan
P10	23	Female	Pakistan
P28	24	Female	Saudi Arabia
P6	29	Female	Indonesia
P27	21	Male	Afganistan
P29	25	Male	Uzbekistan
P18	29	Female	Türkiye

Figure 10: Distribution of gender



Justifying the sample: It was essential to ensure that the chosen participants possessed a strong interest in fashion and often made purchases, as well as having a tendency to engage in impulse shopping. A survey called "Shopping Habits" was conducted to evaluate participants' impulsive buying tendencies. The survey included the impulsive trait scale (Rook and Fisher, 1995) and the hedonic consumption scale (Hausman and Hausman, 2000). All participants scored around 4 on the scale out of 5, indicating a very high inclination towards impulsive buying. In this research, the criteria were established with a threshold of around 3.5 as per the study by Hausman and Hausman (2000). Any value beyond this threshold was considered impulsive without further analysis. Preliminary research was performed (Refer to Figures 11, 12, and 13) using R programming software to examine the relationship of impulse buying tendencies between age and gender, to gain additional insights.

Figure 11: Distribution of Impulsive Buying Index

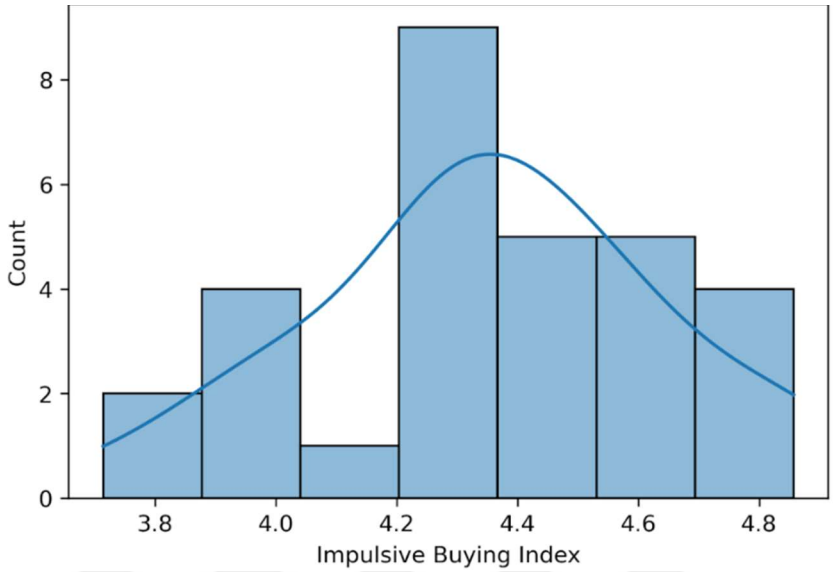


Figure 12: Distribution of Impulsive Buying Index by gender

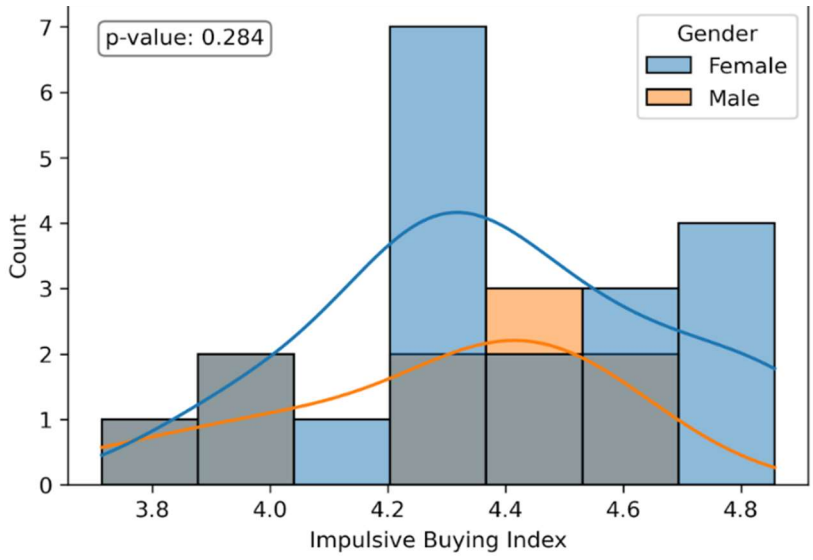
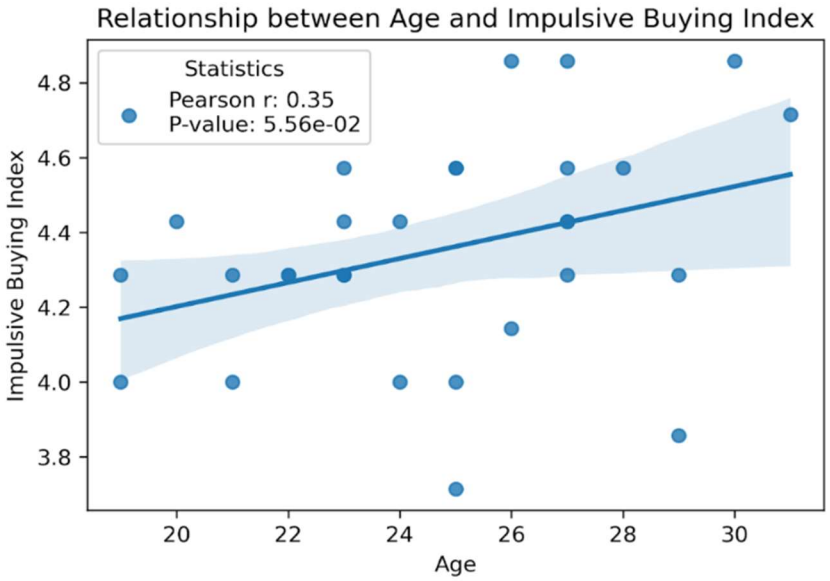


Figure 13: Distribution of Impulsive Buying Index by age



3.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews:

For a researcher employing classic grounded theory, interviews serve as an opportunity to uncover data. Although the interview has certain advantages, such as the potential to yield a substantial amount of data, this outcome relies on effective access and analysis. The primary rationale for utilizing in-depth interviews in the present research is to gain a deeper understanding of the psycho-sociological elements that influence buying behavior, as indicated by McCracken (1988). This technique provides the interviewer with additional means to explore the participant's subjective experiences. Consequently, no other approach provides access to such comprehensive and detailed information, allowing the interviewer to have a firsthand perspective of the participant's viewpoint (McCracken, 1988). According to Belk

(2013), given the topic of research is crucial for the participant, conducting a comprehensive interview has the capacity to acquire substantial knowledge. Moreover, the interview is a versatile instrument that grants the researcher the ability to pursue or abandon a line of inquiry, to explore one or multiple aspects of the investigation, revisit previous statements for further investigation, and ultimately, if necessary, broaden and modify the interview narrative based on additional influences and inputs (Hair et al., 2006).

The research was conducted by in-depth preliminary interviews to initially explore the buying habits, actions, and motivations of participants regarding fast fashion. The purpose of this method is to elicit subconscious perspectives, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies without being explicit, and allow the participants to freely express themselves. The primary objective was to prevent any bias towards the outcome by refraining from introducing the issue in question at the outset. The participant is notified that the research they have been requested to take part in aims to gather their experiences and motivations behind buying fashion clothing and their anonymity would be maintained throughout the process.

The was a set of semi-structured questions that predominantly relied on the respondents' conversation rather than predetermined questions. Firstly, some facts about their buying behavior were told along with the statistics, to present the normalcy of the behavior. This attempt was made to mitigate the issue of social desirability bias by adopting this technique (Nancarrow et al., 2005).

The first question was regarding their buying frequency and if it was a minimum of five times a month, the interview proceeded, if not, the interview was not conducted. The second question was in an open-ended format where participants

could think and describe their subjective experiences. “Could you share a specific instance of buying clothes from fast fashion impulsively and just walk me across how you saw the clothing item and decided to buy it?”

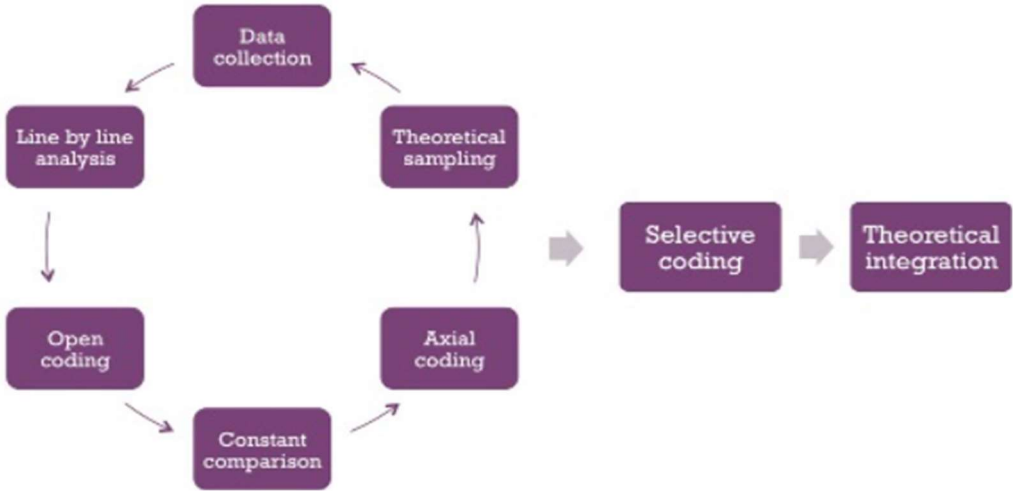
Then questions transitioned from buying behavior around the COVID-19 timeframe to the driving forces of such purchases. While conducting additional interviews, the received material was analyzed, categorized, and documented in memos. As a result, patterns and connections started to emerge, which then influenced the succeeding interviews. The data was obtained from a sample of international students enrolled at the university. The sample consisted of 30 participants, with 20 identifying as female and 10 as male. The saturation point was reached at a sample size of 30 people, so interviews were not conducted further. Meanwhile, the analysis by virtue of constant comparison was already being conducted. This analysis led to the identification of specific themes.

3.3 Data Analysis

Through the implementation of an extensive grounded theory approach, we acquired a more profound comprehension of the participants' motivations, influences, behaviors and actions. According to Wong (2008), it is crucial to prioritize inductive reasoning, theorizing, and thinking in order to produce an intuitive, dynamic, and novel qualitative data analysis. An essential stage in data analysis is to categorize and classify the data. This approach enables the recognition of significant patterns, the examination of the data, and the development of evidence-based conclusions (Creswell, 2015; Wong, 2008; Birks & Mills, 2015).

A total of 30 participants were interviewed for the purpose of this research. The investigations centered around their experiences, drivers, and subsequent effects when participating in quick fashion consumption. The choice of the post-COVID context was intentionally made in response to the observed fluctuations in consumer buying patterns, as reported by the participants in the preliminary study. The coding process was performed in accordance with the directions illustrated in figure 14. The application of this technique led to the identification of patterns within this vast dataset (Gioia et al., 2013).

Figure 14: The data analysis procedure



The coding method was undertaken to assess the narratives of participants' purchasing experiences in order to gain a more profound comprehension of their distinct motives, behaviors, obstacles, and coping strategies. Following the data collection, a meticulous examination was conducted on each line to generate open codes. This procedure is commonly referred to as open coding. Following that, as additional people were questioned, a systematic procedure of comparing and

contrasting was carried out. This marked the initial stage of the analysis in developing the theory, and the procedure used consistent comparison as a key step.

3.3.1 Open Coding

This stage enhanced our understanding of the issue and enabled us to actively participate in the stories offered by these folks. The initial codes were subsequently generated manually using Microsoft Word to identify words and phrases that are relevant to our study inquiries.

Conducting data analysis by dividing it into several components to reveal significant phrases and words that represent the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors of the consumer. It is likely that terms like "escapism," "urge to buy," and "seeking gratification" will emerge from the data. — laying the foundation for the subsequent phases of the investigation.

3.3.2 Axial Coding

Participants frequently cite purchasing fashion goods as a means of improving their mood or alleviating stress, this was cited as 'retail therapy'. This theme implies that shopping can have a therapeutic effect since it can be used as a way to cope with and regulate emotions. 'Social display' is the term used to describe the act of sharing new purchases on social media sites. This highlights the significance of social prominence and the influence of social media in strengthening purchasing patterns. 'Limited edition chase' is the term used to describe the phenomenon where buyers feel a sense of urgency to purchase things that are only

available in limited quantities. The purchase is driven by a strong sense of urgency and exclusivity. 'FOMO' refers to the act of purchasing products out of the fear of missing out on a trend. It is a form of social anxiety that is intensified by social media, when one feels that others are experiencing fulfilling and enjoyable moments while they are not present. Objects acquired to represent one's social standing are categorized as 'status symbolism'. This suggests that the acquisition serves not only as a source of personal gratification but also as a means of projecting a specific image to others. The identification process for participants who purchased things based on their opinion of good value for money is labeled as 'value perception'. This represents the cognitive evaluation of the cost-benefit analysis that customers participate in. Once the axial coding was completed the focus shifted towards identifying themes. Identifying patterns within the codes allowed for the creation of categories that encompassed the range of experiences, motivations, drivers, and consequences. For example, codes pertaining to “Fast-decision pattern”, “Habitual” and “Mood elevation” were grouped together under the overarching theme of “Buying nature” representing the inherent nature of this particular behavior in the post-covid context and highlighting what distinctively defines the elements when participants were engaged in their buying activities.

3.3.3 Constant Comparison

The concept of constant comparison entails the systematic process of comparing episodes with one another until a discernible category emerges. The participants’ experiences were connected via common elements leading to specific themes. Subsequently, the identified category is further compared with other

emerging categories and incidents. This approach allowed me to assess if the data continues to align with the developing categories. Additionally, if the data did align, this approach permits the data to reinforce and enhance the categories, elucidating their dimensions as well as characteristics (Glaser & Holton, 2004). The process of constant comparison enabled the identification of recurring patterns, which subsequently hint at the development of a nascent theory and guided toward refining their study approach to gather further data, so achieving code saturation (Glaser & Holton, 2004). During the coding process, certain patterns such as 'Hedonic Temptation' and 'Planned Impulse Purchases' were identified by open coding. This process involved recognizing important terms such as "visual allure" and "brand fascination." Subsequent axial coding established the linkage between these notions and more comprehensive patterns. As an example, the term 'Visual Appeal' is connected to 'Impulse Pursuit,' indicating that appealing displays might influence impulsive decision-making. Likewise, 'Brand Hype' is associated with 'Trends-driven' behavior, illustrating the impact of brand popularity on participants' decisions. The idea of 'Seasonal Overhaul' and 'Habitual' buying is linked to the desire for trend conformity, whilst 'Drop Culture Influence' and 'Instant Gratification' emphasize the sense of urgency generated by time-limited deals. The concepts of 'Attraction to Novelty' and 'Part of Identity' illustrate how consumers utilize fashion as a means of self-expression and affirmation of their identity. These concepts highlight the significant role of 'Trends-driven' behavior, which showcases the interaction between buyer psychology and market dynamics. All of these were grouped under one sub-category of "Characteristics"

By engaging in continuous comparison, the underlying pattern of behavior became apparent. This involved identifying connections and interrelationships with

other categories. When a certain category was discovered to be linked with the majority of other categories, it was designated as a core category, which was Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior, since there were elements of both impulsive buying and hyperconsumerism. The primary category under consideration is the emergent grounded theory, which took into account the potential variations observed within the data. (Glaser, 1998). Moreover, via the continuous comparison of episodes of shopping behavior with other incidents, incidents with categories, and categories with other categories, the presence of bias is diminished, resulting in a self-correcting process. As the concepts became more integrated and gained a higher level of abstraction, they were grouped into broader categories as the research progressed. This process of generalization served to fulfill two important theoretical criteria: parsimony and breadth. According to Glaser (1994, p.190), the importance of parsimony in variables and the formulation and scope of a theory's applicability to various scenarios cannot be overstated in the development of emergent grounded theory.

3.3.4 Selective coding

Upon closer analysis, it was observed that there was a correlation between 'social media influence' and 'advertising tactics' and 'external triggers', whereas 'mood elevation' and 'a desire for social validation' was associated with 'internal stimuli'. The presence of these links implies an intricate interplay between external marketing efforts and internal psychological states. Each line of the gathered data was then thoroughly examined to detect and categorize themes. Phrases denoting psychological impulses ("urge to buy"), emotional states ("joy from acquisition"),

and social pressures ("influencer recommendations") are labeled. Then subsequently were put into sub-categories namely “Nature” “Characteristics” and “Mechanisms”, and the driving forces, are categorized under five components “Technological influences”, “Marketing Practices” Cultural and societal influences” “external triggers” “internal stimuli”. Similarly, the implications were grouped as “short-term effects” and “long-term consequences”

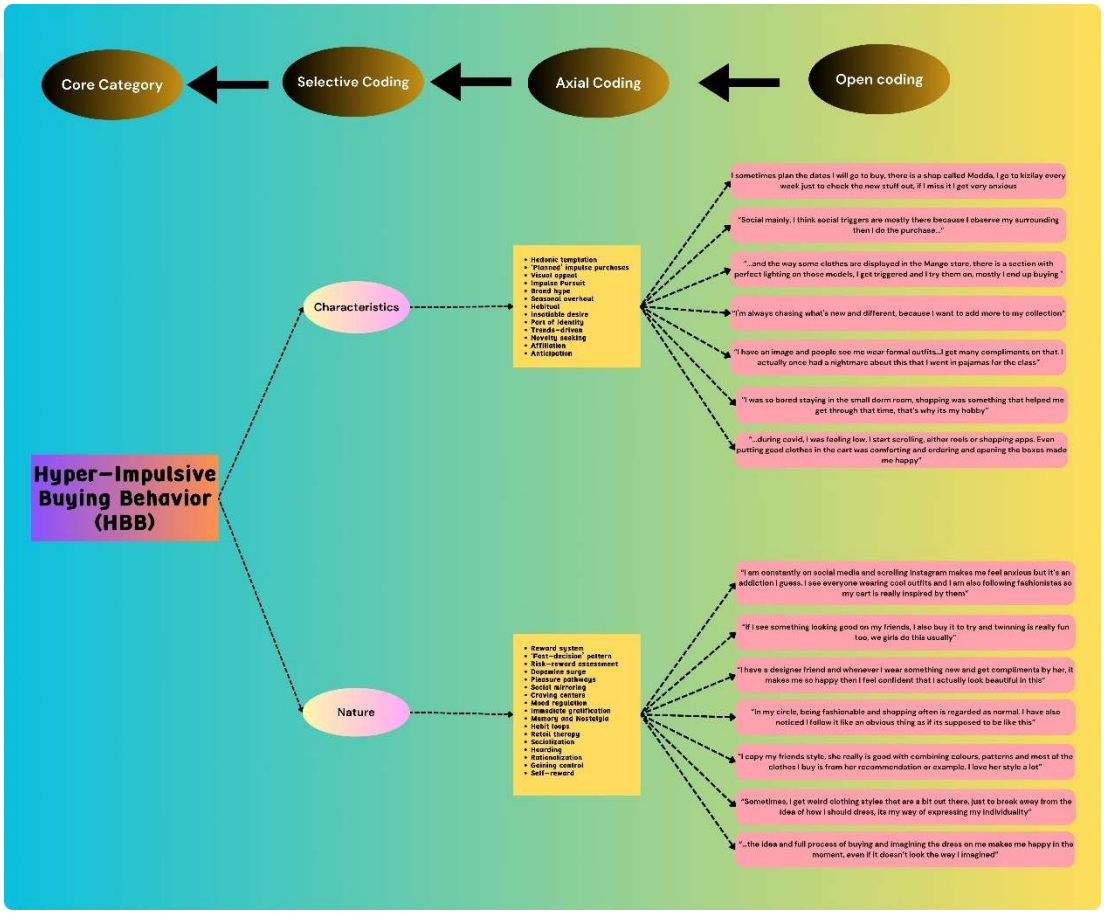
3.3.5 Core Category

The core category refers to a hidden pattern that is present in the data and becomes apparent through continuous coding, comparison, analysis, and theoretical sampling. It is the main focus of the study and via the analysis procedure, a new theory was formed. Grounded theory aims to comprehend the perspective of the actors involved in the action in order to gain insight into the situation. It aims to identify their primary worry and the methods they use to address this concern. The primary factor of interest is worry, which serves as a key indicator of individuals' behavior in that particular domain (Glaser, 1998). The core category can encompass any type of theoretical code. The objective of it is to integrate and fully immerse theory. The identification of the participants' primary concern is crucial, since without it, the researcher may have a wealth of descriptive information but no specific area to direct their attention towards. Upon discovery, this issue consistently gives rise to a comprehensive and meaningful theory (Glaser, 1998). The subsequent part provides a comprehensive analysis of the research design employed in this study, following the explanation of the key components of grounded theory. In our research, our core category emerged to be “Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior”

3.3.6 Theoretical Integration

The theory of hyper-impulsive buying behavior emerged as part of this coding process. The briefing of the procedure is demonstrated in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Data Analysis- Coding process



CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH MODEL & FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the findings of this thesis, which were obtained through the process of analyzing and coding the data. My main aim in conducting this research was to understand the reasons as to why individuals indulge in excessive buying of fast fashion, I was myself a fashion fanatic until I realized it's an unsustainable way of living. Inspired by this and having researched the detrimental impact of fast fashion, both socially and environmentally, I decided to pursue this research. I aimed to gather insights to understand this pattern. I found out that the existing topics in the literature are insufficient to fully grasp the nuances of this behavior. After conducting the grounded theory, the model of Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior emerged that explains and helps to understand this complex phenomenon.

Thereby, this chapter consolidates the data codes and patterns associated with the emerged theory of consumer purchasing behavior in the fast fashion industry called Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB). It aims to address the inquiry of how hyper-impulsive buying behaviour manifests among fast fashion consumers post covid-19 period. By interconnecting the emerging codes, a comprehensive theoretical framework is developed to elucidate the nature of this behavior, the underlying driving forces, and individual and societal implications.

The interconnection of these categories is demonstrated, indicating their direct correlation with the development of HBB, which sets it apart from other buying behaviors. The data comprehensively showcases each category, establishing its existence through the grounded theory coding procedure, which encompasses open coding and theoretical integration. The primary objective is to comprehend the buying patterns, psychological motivations, driving forces, and socio-cultural environment of consumers engaged in fast fashion.

The research data facilitated the construction of a core category of 'Antecedents and Triggers', with sub-categories of cultural and societal influences, marketing practices, technological influences, external triggers, and internal stimuli giving birth to a core phenomenon of ‘Hyper-impulsive Buying Behavior' comprising nature, characteristics, and mechanisms. These subcategories are the foundational elements upon which this theory is constructed. The short-term positive and negative effects and long-term consequences comprising environmental ill-being and financial and societal implications were also discovered within the data and are documented under the core category of 'Effects and Consequences'. This emergent theory has been presented in the form of an eminent buying behavior model.

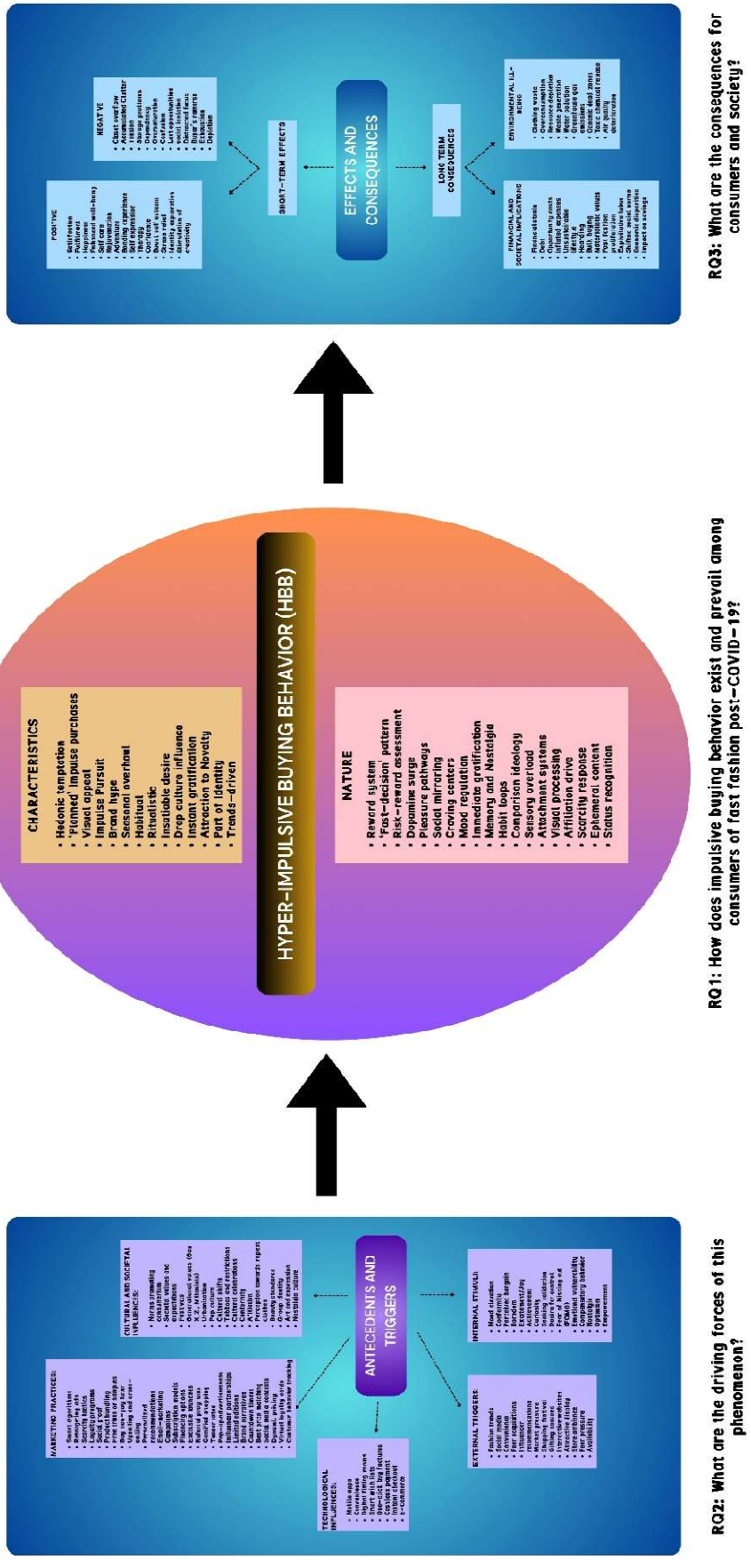
Research Objectives:

The main research objectives were:

- Aiming to understand the subjective experiences, motivations, and perceptions of consumers regarding their buying behavior in the context of fast fashion
- Identifying and examining the underlying factors/drivers (psychological, social, and situational) and their role in driving impulsive buying behavior
- Exploring the positive outcomes or negative consequences: can involve investigating the financial implications, environmental ill-being, and overall well-being of individuals who engage in hyper-impulsive buying behavior

The understanding of this consumer buying behavior necessitated drafting a model that helps us achieve the research objectives accurately. The three research questions were addressed and answered by our model of Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)

Figure 16: The research framework



4. Concept of Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior

"As philosopher Alan Watts used
to refer to as "the backward law"—the idea that the more you pursue feeling better
all the time, the less satisfied you become, as pursuing something only reinforces
the fact that you lack it in the first place"

Throughout the ever-evolving narrative of human progress, the quest to balance the hedonic treadmill of consumption seems to be the only constant. The impulsive patterns of consumption have paved the way for us to engage in critical reflection regarding our consumption habits, along with analyzing the underlying motivations and mechanisms driving such behavior. Especially in modern consumerist societies where abundance is glorified and having more is synonymous with power, status, and identity. Fast fashion is a dominant phenomenon that is sustained by the prevalence of hyperconsumerism, where the human penchant for relentless consumption is insatiable. Fast fashion capitalizes on this ideology and cultivates the seeds of new desires amplifying the idea 'urgency of now and allure of the new' This hyperconsumerism ideology escalates into unsustainable practices when prospective consumers are exposed to a multitude of market offerings through mass media and aggressive marketing efforts, leading to the normalization and internalization of the ideologies of perpetual acquisition, consumption, and disposal of products. This perspective gets ingrained into our psyche and integrated with our behaviors to the extent that our buying behavior is rendered robotic, impulsive, and irrational, and predominantly operating on the emotional whim targeted by the interaction of marketers, culture and social media.

The phenomenon of Hyper-impulsive buying behavior (HIBB) is introduced which captures all the nuances of this behavior within one model. It is defined as:

> *"Hyper-impulsive buying behavior, driven by hyperconsumerism, refers to the hedonic temptation and impulse pursuit of items with the innate desire for instant emotional rewards and an insatiable appetite for novelty, triggered by social norms, culture, market forces, and technological influences"*

This phenomenon is facilitated by the interaction of external market pressures with the internal emotional responses of consumers in the form of accelerated purchase decisions without rational thought. HBB is excessively escalated by the influence of social media and is rooted deeply in modern consumerist cultures, predominantly within the realm of fast fashion.

This definition is a composite of the main characteristics of HBB that have been identified in the data and it is an attempt to capture the essence of the emerged theory, by inculcating all the pervasive data represented by majority of participants.

4.1 Core Category: Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)

By analyzing participant data, we have discovered an intricate relationship between psychological, social, and sensory aspects. The study participants, who are mostly involved in the consumption of fast fashion, demonstrate high levels of impulsive and excessive buying behavior, which has been impacted and maybe heightened in the period following the pandemic. The characteristic features, nature and mechanisms constituting this theory are described in detail.

4.1.1 Sub-Category- Characteristics

The phenomenon of Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB) in the fast fashion industry is supported by a multifaceted set of elements, as evidenced by our research findings. The hedonic motivation is a significant factor that drives these purchases. Participants undergo a notable emotional surge while making a purchase, frequently characterizing it as a sensation of joy and happiness, which was an unusual pattern among the majority of participants. Our research findings indicate that Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB) among participants is impacted by a combination of psychological pleasure and strategic anticipation in the setting of post-COVID shopping behavior. After the pandemic, participants expressed an increased feeling of intense happiness linked to the act of purchasing, emphasizing that HBB is strongly based on hedonistic principles. Excerpts from some participants:

> *"...I enjoy the process of buying more than the products, its because I usually shop whenever I want to distract myself and somehow, I become happy and forget my issues"*

> *"Sometimes I feel very, very, very happy when I am shopping for new clothes. So now I reward myself by buying such stuff, especially shirts, not a good meal, but good pieces of cloth… and getting them at cheaper prices"*

The recent change in consumer habits caused by COVID-19 has led to an amplified pleasure-seeking behavior, indicating a deep emotional attachment to the act of buying. The allure of pleasure associated with shopping is strongly connected to the repetitive and habitual nature of their purchasing patterns, suggesting that the action is impulsive but routine. Participants were quoted saying:

"Locked inside for quarantine when I got covid, the thing that kept me sane was shopping for new clothes and stuff, and now I realize that it became a source of excitement and happiness that distracted me from a serious period of time, so whenever I want to get happy, I go for shopping"

"Yeah, I think right after I get my salary on the first, I would, I don't know, it's like a habit, I go online and I get satisfaction after spending money if it's on clothing or something like that"

'Planned' Impulse Purchases: The study posits an intriguing concept termed "Planned Impulse Purchases," elucidating a novel and significant facet of anticipatory behavior in the context of impulsive purchasing post the COVID-19 pandemic. Contravening the traditional notion of impulse buying as an unplanned phenomenon, this research unveils a paradoxical behavior pattern. It highlights that a substantial number of participants have consciously strategized their impulsive purchasing propensities in alignment with specific events, sales, or promotions. This behavior epitomizes a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to impulsive buying, intertwining impulsiveness—traditionally perceived as irrational—with a discernible level of forethought and preparation. This paradigm shift in consumer behavior may be attributed to the increased online engagement during periods of lockdown and restrictions, suggesting a reconfiguration of impulsive buying dynamics in the digital age.

The concept of "Planned Impulse Purchases" represents a paradigmatic shift in consumer behavior, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic since this phenomenon intersects the traditionally dichotomous realms of impulse buying and strategic purchasing. Conventionally, impulse purchases are characterized by a lack of premeditation, arising spontaneously and often driven by emotional

responses. However, this new research indicates a significant evolution in this behavior.

Under the lens of "Planned Impulse Purchases," particiants exhibit a unique amalgamation of impulsivity and foresight. Consumers, rather than succumbing to whimsical desires at the moment, are now engaging in a premeditated anticipation of circumstances that may catalyze their impulse buying tendencies. This behavior is marked by a conscious waiting for, and alignment with, specific triggers such as sales events, discount periods, or limited-time offers.

This shift can be partially attributed to the heightened digital connectivity and the inundation of online marketing stimuli consumers faced during lockdown periods. The increased time spent in digital spaces has not only altered the way consumers interact with the marketplace but has also reshaped their purchasing strategies. Consumers are now more aware of and responsive to online marketing cues, which they integrate into their purchasing plans. Furthermore, this trend signifies a more calculated approach to budgeting in impulse buying. Individuals are not merely succumbing to impulsive desires but are incorporating them into their financial planning. This indicates a more sophisticated consumer behavior pattern, where impulse purchases are no longer purely spontaneous but are a part of a larger, more considered consumption strategy.

In essence, "Planned Impulse Purchases" reflect a complex interplay between emotion and rationality in consumer behavior, challenging traditional marketing theories. This new dimension underscores the need for a reevaluation of marketing strategies, particularly in targeting impulse buyers in the digital era. It suggests a consumer base that, while still susceptible to impulsive tendencies, approaches these

tendencies with a greater level of strategic thinking and planning. Excerpts from some participants:

> *"I sometimes plan the dates I will go to buy, there is a shop called Modda, I go to kizilay every week just to check the new stuff out, if I miss it I get very anxious"*
>
> *"I know when I would buy, I have put it in my mind, so I know okay this is my shopping time and I will check out stuff online"*
>
> *"I shopped a lot during lockdown so I guess I got used to it then"*

The findings also indicate that the most prominent feature of HBB is that it is intricately connected to wider cultural and societal patterns. Participants are influenced not only by their close social circles but also by the broader societal conventions that associate fashion with personal achievement and social standing.

> *"Social mainly, I think social triggers are mostly there because I observe my surrounding then I do the purchase..."*
>
> *"I see girls around me wearing the latest fashion all the time, I keep thinking like do they shop everyday or what? After a while I also find myself scrolling some websites or take the next bus to kentpark with my friends"*

The desire for novelty and the motivation to stay updated with ever-evolving fashion trends was another pervasive factor reflecting a more profound yearning for acknowledgment and inclusion. Participants also asserted that the act of obtaining new fashion items, particularly via the medium of online shopping is equally gratifying as the items themselves since the emergence of new products and promotional activities had a substantial impact on participants. This element emphasizes the experience quality of buying in the digital era, where the act of exploring and choosing things provides a feeling of fulfillment and pleasure, a

phenomenon that has been magnified in the shopping environment since the COVID-19 pandemic.

> *"especially after the Covid, like once it had become a habit for me to buy those clothes and I knew good websites already and I had got used to many like online shopping platforms..."*

> *"I really hopped on that train of you know buying new things what's on trend...so I think my online shopping and fast fashion shopping really increased after coming to Turkey which is during and after covid"*

The aesthetic attractiveness of fashion items, those showcased in online markets as well as stores, enhanced the effect, rendering the items highly appealing. The participants identified visual attractiveness, as a significant catalyst for impulsive purchasing. This finding asserts that both online shopping, which experienced significant growth throughout the pandemic, and in-store consolidates into a hybrid model and plays a crucial role in driving the inclination to make a purchase.

> *" I guess I can describe it as an addiction and it (shopping) has increased as I explained before. In COVID, since we were staying at house, and I got bored seeing the walls of my room so I used to check out online shopping websites for hours"*

> *"...and the way some clothes are displayed in the Mango store, there is a section with perfect lighting on those models, I get triggered and I try them on, mostly I end up buying "*

HBB is characterized by its appeal of novelty and exclusivity. The heightened expectation and enthusiasm surrounding exclusive product releases, commonly known as 'drop culture,' motivate consumers to take prompt action, frequently influenced by the fear of missing out.

"During quarantine and online classes we didn't need to look good, but now its completely different, also seasons change so quickly here and everyone around me seems ready for it, so I also have this urge to get rid of old stuff and get new ones"

"I'm always chasing what's new and different, because I want to add more to my collection"

The incessant need for the most current fashions goes beyond the possession of new items but also serves as a manifestation of one's self-expression and identity. For many participants, the regular reorganization of their clothing collection becomes a customary routine. Furthermore, the significant impact of brand hype and a desire for immediate satisfaction add to the fact that these purchases were not only deliberate but also profoundly fulfilling in the present moment.

"I have an image and people see me wear formal outfits…I get many compliments on that. I actually once had a nightmare about this that I went in pajamas for the class"

Furthermore, an insatiable desire for the most recent fashion products retains participants in a constant state of wanting. The incessant cycle of longing and attainment has been especially noticeable in the post-COVID era, as individuals strive to revitalize and modernize their clothing collections following prolonged periods of lockdowns and limitations. The present trends in impulsive buying behavior in the fast fashion business can be understood by examining the interplay of psychological pleasure, strategic anticipation, visual appeal, and brand hype. The most surprising element was how participants frequently mentioned their surroundings or peers to justify their purchases or iterate their shopping experiences, which makes the cultural aspect of HBB so prominent.

4.1.2 Sub-Category- Nature

Participants characterized HIBB as functioning on an intricate system of rewards, driven by the expectation of enjoyment and favorable reinforcement. This process is significantly impacted by 'fast-decision' patterns, which are immediate responses to the swift evolution of fashion trends requiring prompt purchase decisions to stay current. Participants expressed that the rapid assessment of potential risks and benefits in the purchase choices seemed to make them feel stimulated, hence strengthening the habit. This behavior has become more pronounced in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as consumers exhibit a greater sense of urgency in their purchasing choices. The intensified perception of urgency, along with assessments of potential gains and losses, in which obtaining a highly desired object just before it becomes unavailable, poses a thrilling challenge.

> *"The moment I see 3 units left, 2 units left, or 1 unit left, I instantly get one, I tell myself you can always return it Ami, don't worry"*

> *"I just realized how quickly I decide what to buy, maybe because I don't overthink when I am buying online"*

The instant gratification obtained from giving in to these desires, combined with the sentimental attachment to specific fashions or labels, adds to the formation of difficult-to-override behavioral patterns. This idea exerts upon a substantial influence on social mirroring in HBB. Participants said that they observed and imitated the buying habits of their peers, which heightened their need for new trendy items. This inclination compelled individuals to seek out novel experiences and possessions to regulate their moods and conform to social norms.

"If I see something looking good on my friends, I also buy it to try and twinning is really fun too, we girls do this usually"

"...we have this thing, it's funny its like a race going on to see who has the newest and coolest things"

The identification of sensory inputs as primary triggers for HBB was made. Participants said that their purchases are frequently triggered by sensory overload caused by vivid displays, appealing advertisements, and the tactile feel of new clothing. They are driven by their sensory experiences and their desire to associate with particular social groups or achieve a certain status. As a result, they choose products that provide these advantages. Product scarcity frequently intensifies the reaction, as transient knowledge in marketing generates a sense of urgency to act promptly. Within the rapidly changing world of fast fashion, which is defined by short-lived trends and the continuous introduction of new styles, participants expressed a tendency to buy more. The pursuit of social admiration, attained through the adoption of current fashion trends, sustains a recurring pattern of constant consumption and display. According to participants, each purchase goes beyond its basic worth as a transaction and instead serves as a chance to express individuality and establish social status.

"I have a designer friend and whenever I wear something new and get compliments by her, it makes me so happy then I feel confident that I actually look beautiful in this"

Throughout this cycle, sociocultural influences intricately intertwine with psychological drives. Participants saw that social mirroring enhances the influence of

HIBB by highlighting the benefits of engaging in fast fashion consumption through the actions of peers and influencers. Consumers' desire for social connection and acknowledgment of their position becomes vital, as their fashion choices are more linked to their social identity and self-worth. The constant flow of short-lived content on social media platforms, highlighting the temporary nature of trends, cultivates an enduring feeling of scarcity and immediacy. Participants also emphasized the powerful sensory experiences associated with HIBB. The prominence of sensory overload, whether in physical retail venues or online markets, is intentionally created to fascinate and overwhelm. The visual attractiveness of items, the tactile sensation of fabrics, and the meticulously constructed aesthetics of shopping locations trigger the consumers, leading to accelerated purchasing decisions.

> *"I started somehow thinking about the future, upcoming, for example, journeys or trips I may have and I started purchasing items for my fantasy-like imaginary travels and trips, And I ordered so many stuff, and even my friends, they somehow started making fun of me and said okay so Amy and her imaginary trips"*

Participants commonly recognized their shopping for fast fashion as a means of retail therapy, wherein the act of purchasing offers emotional comfort or gratification. The therapeutic element is intricately connected with socialization, as individuals' purchasing behaviors are greatly impacted by social interactions and societal standards. The research suggests that customers are not merely buying products; they are participating in a social endeavor that enhances their relationships with others, either through shared shopping experiences or the collective chase of trends. This component has been notably intensified in the period following COVID-19, as individuals strive to restore social connections that were destroyed by the pandemic.

"Post-covid I became so happy that finally I will go out and do shopping with my friends, I was really wanting this because we love shopping"

The findings also emphasize a proclivity for hoarding among participants, wherein participants amass stuff frequently in excess of their requirements or capabilities. This activity is frequently justified as a means of planning for future necessities or as taking advantage of chances that should not be overlooked. The act of rationalization conceals the impulsive character of the purchases, offering a facade of reasoning to otherwise emotionally motivated choices.

"its weird, if I really like a dress on me, I buy two or three of them in different colors"

"I once bought 42 pieces of clothes I remember, but it wasn't that expensive, I was shocked"

"I often lie to myself about why I need another dress or pair of shoes. It always looks like a good idea at the time. I tell myself things like, "You never know when you'll need it" or "It's a great deal, you shouldn't miss it." In my heart, I know it's not a real need"

Certain participants utilize shopping as a method to assert dominance over their surroundings or regulate their emotional condition. Purchasing serves as a means of asserting one's autonomy, frequently accompanied by the notion of self-indulgence. Purchasing a new item was commonly regarded as a reward or a personal milestone, perpetuating a pattern where the act of purchase serves as a means of self-affirmation and satisfaction.

"Going shopping helps me feel in charge, especially when things around me are crazy, buying something new is like a small win for me because it shows that I can

do things on my own. It makes me feel strong… like I'm treating myself for all the hard work and problems I have to deal with every day"

The need for new and exciting experiences to perceive unique yet fit-in appeared as a strong motivator among participants. They have an ongoing pursuit for novel and distinctive products, motivated by a need to differentiate themselves or be the early adopters of emerging trends. This endeavor frequently crosses with the desire for social connection, when individuals seek to be part of a trend or a community by acquiring specific fashion goods. This behavior was not solely related to clothing, but rather it is profoundly ingrained in the participant's sense of self and life story, where fashion choices serve as symbols of personal narratives and ambitions.

"Fashion is more than just clothes to me, it's a way to express. Like every piece I pick out and every outfit I put together tells something about me. It's about matching them in new ways that show off my mood and style"

4.2 Core Category: Antecedents and Triggers

This core category consolidates the driving forces that propel fast fashion consumers to indulge in frequent impulsive buying post-Covid-19. Based on participants' responses, five sub-categories namely cultural and societal influences, marketing practices, technological influences, external triggers, and internal stimuli were discovered including elements that sustain this cycle of relentless consumption.

4.2.1 Sub-category: Marketing Practices

Our research findings provide major insights into the marketing methods that influence the purchasing habits of fast fashion customers. These findings are specifically related within the broader framework of 'Antecedents and Triggers of Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior.'

Smart algorithms and targeting advertisements have become increasingly significant in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated by our participants. This transition is characterized by changes in consumer engagement with digital platforms. The majority of participants attributed their increased buying habits to the implementation of smart algorithms and targeted advertising on social media. These techniques, which have advanced and become more widespread during and following the epidemic, monitoring client behaviors and preferences, customizing the buying experience for each individual consumer. The implementation of personalized marketing strategies has demonstrated significant efficacy within the fast fashion industry, capitalizing on the extensive reach of social media platforms to exhibit products that correspond to the ever-changing interests of consumers. This method has greatly increased the probability of impulse buying, as participants experience a feeling of exclusivity and customized attention.

Scarcity techniques have been adopted by brands in response to the temporal aspect of fast fashion, particularly has become more prominent in the post-COVID fashion world. Participants often cited time-limited promotions and notifications on limited availability as factors that induced a sense of urgency, which corresponded with their inclination towards impulsive purchasing. This sense of urgency is intensified in a world after the pandemic, when consumers are increasingly aware of

online shopping options and time-sensitive offers, prompting them to make hasty buying choices.

> "*I swear I feel like all online websites I browse have a sixth sense about my preferences, everything seems tailor-made for me, and I buy so much. Before covid I was not much of an online buyer"*

> *"I am shocked how the internet somehow knows what I want. Even when I don't feel like buying anything, seeing the countdown on a limited-stock item just gets me. Many times, I couldn't stop myself from making an instant purchase; FOMO is just too much"*

> *"I received an email with suggestions of jeans which I was looking for. I was shocked because it was as if they read my mind"*

The function of loyalty programs and social proof has also significantly influenced customer behavior in the post-COVID era. According to participants, these programs promote continued interaction with businesses, providing incentives that cultivate a feeling of loyalty and subsequently boost spontaneous purchasing. Furthermore, the influence for social proof which includes reviews and testimonials, as well as product bundling was highlighted. These methods have grown increasingly important in a buying environment that prioritizes digital platforms, taking advantage of consumers' dependence on the opinions of others and their demand for positioning a better value when alluring potential buyers.

> *"Even though I buy from all brands I don't even remember some brand names, but lately I have been purchasing a lot of clothes from H & M, they have these discounts of reaching a certain number of buys that get me one free item. It's a really good deal and I feel like if I am not buying every week, I am losing money"*

> *"I am confused whenever I have too many items in my cart so I check the photo reviews and seeing the dress look good on someone makes me buy it instantly"*

"If an item has many reviews and over four stars, there is no chance I am not buying it"

The participants have noticed an upsurge in the availability of convenient return policies and trial offers in the post-COVID period. These rules incentivize consumers to engage in the trial and exploration of novel products, frequently resulting in further acquisitions. Furthermore, the utilization of upselling and cross-selling strategies has become increasingly prominent, encouraging consumers to make supplementary purchases through the presentation of related products or upgrades. This strategy has proven to be especially successful in the marketplace where consumers are progressively seeking ease as well as value within their online buying encounters.

"This is funny but my fashion designer is Trendyol. There are suggestions of combination like if I am buying a shirt, I always check that and end up getting pants and even trousers because it looks great together"

"... so yes I am very convinced of experimenting because I know I can easily return if its not good enough, but I usually end up keeping it even if it is not so good"

Many participants also highlighted the growing popularity of subscription plans and financing alternatives in the fast fashion industry. These plans offer a consistent stream of items, streamlining the purchasing process and setting a regular schedule for buying. The presence of several financing options was recognized explicitly for effectively lowering the initial financial obstacle, allowing consumers to engage in impulse purchasing without immediate financial consequences. Additionally, the combination of exclusive fashion launches and recommendations

from friends was found to be a key catalyst for their purchases. Participants characterized these tactics as generating a feeling of excitement and exclusivity, which heightened their inclination to obtain distinctive or scarce items. In a post-pandemic context, consumers are more drawn to this strategy due to its convenience and flexibility.

> *"Even though its not that expensive, since I can pay in installments I buy more than usual. Considering how little I was spending; it was a big amount."*
>
> *"We have a WhatsApp group in which we check new trends and pieces, I purchase more because most of my friends buy and share their photos there. We also earn buying points for sharing photo reviews"*

The research also revealed that influencer collaborations play a crucial role in driving consumers. Participants often cited being swayed by prominent influencers or driven by the aspiration to possess special and limited-edition items. This phenomenon has become especially noticeable in the period following the pandemic, as the practice of reaching out to digital influencers has expanded, capitalizing on the impact of popular culture and the appeal of exclusivity. The post-COVID-19 scenario has witnessed a significant trend towards gamified purchase experiences and innovative pricing tactics. Participants highlighted the transformative effect of including gamification components, such as countdown timers, price matching, social media contests, and dynamic brand narratives, on the shopping experience. These tactics transform the process into an enjoyable activity rather than a strictly transactional or rational decision-making process, catering to consumers' craving for adventure and thrill.

"I usually hunt the cheaper options seeing my favorite influencers wear some jacket or coats, I easily find it online by the feature of image search. I want to own unique items but they should be in my budget"

"On Tofisa, every day they put some clothes for less than one dollar, it has become a routine to check that out and buy every other day"

Ultimately, post COVID-19 has seen a transformation in marketing strategies in the fashion industry, as evidenced by the firsthand accounts of participants. The utilization of advanced digital marketing approaches, scarcity tactics, loyalty programs, financing options, influencer branding, gamified shopping, and the skillful implementation of social proof and upselling strategies have all contributed to the development of HBB. These findings emphasize the complex interaction between advanced marketing methods and buyer habits.

4.2.2 Sub-category: Cultural and Societal Influences

Our research findings demonstrate that Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior is partially derived from hyperconsumerism prevalent in our societies, thereby cultural and societal influences play the most significant role in driving impulsive buying behavior among fast fashion consumers.

The prevailing societal norms that endorse consumerism have a significant impact on stimulating impulsive purchasing behavior. Participants recognized that in a society where buying is frequently associated with achievement and contentment, obtaining new clothing surpasses mere essentiality. It serves as a method to achieve social validation and personal gratification. Participants iterated that following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a noticeable increase in the emphasis placed on material things and physical appearance. This has created a favorable atmosphere for

the rapid expansion of the fast fashion sector. In light of the emergence of social media, it seems crucial to adapt. As a result, they felt compelled to frequently update their wardrobes in order to conform to these norms.

> *"These days, it's literally expected that you look your best and stay current with fashion. During covid it was much easy, I didn't have to worry about this but now I see most girls in my class don't repeat clothes…buying the newest styles feels like a need"*

> *"In my circle, being fashionable and shopping often is regarded as normal. I have also noticed I follow it like an obvious thing as if its supposed to be like this"*

The diverse cultural origins and past experiences of our participants highlighted the impact of cultural norms and values on their shopping behavior. In the post-pandemic period, the rise and widespread use of social media have made it imperative for consumers to regularly refresh their clothes in order to adhere to these ever-changing cultural norms. Especially during social events and festivals, which are particularly relevant to university students were found to strongly influence the urges to buy more. Participants saw the underlying expectation to dress suitably for different social occasions and meetings in the university environment. The necessity to adhere to societal norms within the social context, combined with the aspiration to actively engage in events, results in an elevated consumption of fashionable products.

> *"...every season, it seems like I'm always shopping for new clothes. The weather is very unpredictable here and everyone around me seems so ready for the changing weather, I feel like I can't miss out"*

> *"I can't repeat my clothes, it seems so unethical when you are an elite university student. I see students wearing all the latest fashion items so I try to look for options too. It seems a necessity"*

"As a millennial, I have the desire to stand-out fashion wise. I want to be unique, but also fitting in…"

Urbanization, marked by a rapid and dynamic lifestyle and constant exposure to emerging trends, has a substantial impact on buying habits. Participants from indigenous cultures observed that relocating to more fashion progressive nations, such as Turkey, entailed a substantial cultural shift for them. In urban environments, where one's look frequently carries social and occupational consequences, it becomes imperative to stay updated with the latest fashion trends. The impact of popular culture was also identified as a significant influence by the participants. Society establishes trends and cultivates fashion idols through media outlets, celebrities, and influencers. This influence is especially significant in the post-COVID-19 age, as there has been a substantial increase in digital media consumption. Emulating these trends frequently resulted in impulsive purchasing, as participants endeavor to replicate the styles shown on screen and in print media.

"*In Iran, I didn't pay much attention of how I look but here its completely different, people are rich in this university, everyone looks so good, I need to be presentable at all times…I feel less confident to participate in class because of how people would see me"*

"*I felt an urgent need to change my wardrobe after coming to turkey, I cant wear the clothes I have because its completely off-culture, I had to discard many of my Pakistani clothes… yes I had to throw some of them because no one wears those here "*

The research findings suggest that participants were also greatly impacted by global cultural changes, including the growing emphasis on individual self-expression through clothing. As societies progress towards greater acceptance of

varied fashion trends, individuals have a heightened want to explore and try out new styles. The participants' willingness to be open has resulted in an increased frequency of purchases, as they enthusiastically adopt various fashion trends to convey their changing identities. The influence of societal taboos and restrictions on participants' purchasing behavior was also highlighted. Occasionally, these societal limitations have prompted the rise of alternative fashion trends. Participants expressed engaging in impulsive buying of products deliberately challenging conventional standards as a means of protest or self-expression, emphasizing a response to societal prohibitions.

> *"I buy some type of clothes to express how I feel, something that I couldn't do when I wasn't living by my terms, coming from a very conservative background in Pakistan, coming here and wearing modern clothes liberates me"*

> *"Sometimes, I get weird clothing styles that are a bit out there, just to break away from the idea of how I should dress, its my way of expressing my individuality"*

The participants highlighted the substantial influence of global beauty standards, which are widely promoted by the media as well as pop culture, on their choices when buying products. These standards establish a conceptualized representation of attractiveness and style, influencing individuals' self-perception and their perception of others. The research findings indicate that participants frequently make purchases of new products in order to comply to prevailing values, resulting in a rise in impulsive buying as a means of adhering to societal expectations. The research also highlights a propensity for affiliation among participants, where clothing is utilized to strengthen collective identity. This inclination is particularly evident in the period following the COVID-19 pandemic, as individuals strive to adhere to the visual aesthetics of their social circle, hence intensifying their buying of 'visually appealing' clothes. Additionally, the phenomenon of nostalgia culture,

characterized by the resurgence of previous fashion trends and styles, was commonly cited as a driving force for the purchases made by participants. The fast fashion industry capitalizes on this nostalgia by resurrecting classic fashions and vintage designs, which leads to impulsive purchasing among consumers. They are frequently motivated by the want to replicate and revisit cherished memories, whether associated with their native culture or cherished personal experiences.

> "*The beauty concept is so relative and unrealistic in some cultures yet we all try to reach up to that. It is weird how things get normalized in society and everyone follows it"*
> *"We buy similar styles in my group; it is kind of our way to show we are part of this cool girl tribe"*
> *"...bought many bell-bottoms which were not in fashion back home, but in Turkey it is quite popular. Getting more of these remind me of home. I am buying more sometimes to gift to my friends and cousins"*

Consequently, post-COVID-19 pandemic there is a heightened impact of cultural and socioeconomic factors on the consumption of fast fashion. The fast fashion sector has been influenced by various factors such as societal standards, cultural shifts, generational values, urbanization, the impact of pop culture, the global trend towards self-expression through fashion, the denial of societal norms, the influence of beauty standards, the desire for collective identity, and the appeal of nostalgia. These factors have together shaped the hyper-impulsive buying behaviors of consumers in this industry.

4.2.3 Sub-category: Technology influences

The research findings demonstrate the substantial impact of technological improvements on participants' purchasing habits in the fast fashion industry. The accelerated usage of social media was one of the key indicators explaining the hyper-impulsive buying among the participants, including other aspects discussed below.

The significant role of mobile applications in enabling participants to make impulse purchases was also emphasized by participants. These applications provide unparalleled ease, enabling users to make purchases from any location at any given moment. The vast majority of participants, who are enthusiastic users of these platforms, stressed that the convenience of access efficiently eliminates traditional obstacles to purchasing, such as time limitations and geographical distance, resulting in a higher frequency of purchases. Participants also emphasized the influence of digital fitting rooms on their online buying experiences. These technical improvements have played a crucial role in diminishing the ambiguity frequently linked to online shopping. Digital fitting rooms have facilitated the broader acceptance of online buying, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era characterized by a significant increase in online purchases. This is achieved by allowing buyers to visually evaluate how clothing items would appear on them, eliminating the necessity for actual try-ons.

> *"I am addicted to opening shopping apps. as soon as I unlock my phone, I open Trendyol, it might seem crazy because everyone opens their messages or Instagram"*

> *"..is 3D fitting room on shopping apps, I had no hesitation about purchasing those dress because I could visualize its perfect fit. Now, I buy too much because just a few taps and I've purchased something new. It's that easy"*

The incorporation of customized and intelligent wish lists was recognized as a crucial element impacting the hyper-impulse buying behavior. Participants observed that these wish lists efficiently monitor their preferences and promptly notify them about sales or restocked items. This feature exploits the sense of anticipation and excitement that comes with obtaining desired things, often resulting in increased purchases upon receiving notifications.

> *"..usually don't go out to get clothes it's so convenient to order online, I mostly scroll and fill my wish lists from recommended items during midnight"*

> *"...one amazing thing is that the app notifies me that a dress I liked was back in stock I bought it instantly. I cant miss it and overthink about it later"*

Participants also highlighted the optimization of the purchase process, specifically through the implementation of single-click buy and rapid checkout functionalities. These features strongly attract consumers who have impulsive inclinations by minimizing the time and mental effort usually needed for making purchasing decisions. The presence of these qualities, particularly in the context after the COVID-19 pandemic, makes purchasing easier by reducing the chance for reconsideration or contemplation.

> *"I place orders in less than a minute so there is hardly any time to second-guess my choices. Like before I even realize it's too late. Now it is automatic, I don't think much"*

The increasing use of electronic payment methods, like credit cards and e-wallets, has greatly facilitated impulse buying among young consumers. Participants emphasized that the lack of tangible currency exchange reduces the psychological effect of spending, hence promoting more frequent purchases without any guilt.

Moreover, the influence of e-commerce platforms on the widespread occurrence of buying behavior was emphasized. The constant accessibility of online businesses, along with an extensive range of items and intuitive user interfaces, has fostered an environment that promotes impulsive purchasing. This phenomenon has become especially noticeable in the period following the COVID-19 pandemic, as individuals are increasingly depending on e-commerce platforms to fulfill their fashion needs.

> *"I always use a credit card when making payment for a bulk order, it doesn't feel like I am spending money so I even lose track of how much I buy"*

> *"the options online are huge; I sometimes get excited to see many options but sometimes I get confused and end up buying things I didn't want. I buy on sale so it seems like a good offer"*

Overall, the period after the COVID-19 pandemic has witnessed a notable change in consumer patterns when it comes to purchasing fast fashion items, primarily influenced by technological factors, which partially explains the intense buying behavior patterns. The integration of mobile applications, simplified purchasing processes, digital fitting rooms, personalized notifications, cashless transactions, and the widespread availability of e-commerce platforms have collectively increased the likelihood of hyper-impulsive buying among consumers, highlighting the significant influence of technology on consumer behavior in the fast fashion industry.

4.2.4 Sub-category: External triggers

The participants regularly cited the influence of ever-changing fashion trends as a catalyst for impulsive purchasing. One participant provided a specific example that emphasized the ongoing necessity to update their clothes in order to remain fashionable, as styles change quickly. This issue exemplifies a more widespread mood among participants who are concerned about facing social exclusion due to their failure to stay updated with current trends. The pursuit of a stylish image results in an ongoing pattern of buying, influenced by the ever-changing nature of the fashion industry, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era where fashion trends have been noted to evolve at an accelerated pace.

> *"...these days pencil skirts are very in, so I got one; Its like every time a new trend comes up, I feel like I have to buy it"*

> *"It's like a race to stay relevant in the fashion scene. I actually feel afraid to be as perceived old-fashioned"*

The participants highlighted the substantial influence of social media networks as another important aspect. The frequent exposure to friends, celebrities, and influencers on sites such as Instagram, tiktok and Facebook etc, showcasing the most current fashion trends, has cultivated a strong inclination among participants to imitate these looks. The constant influx of new trends on social networking platforms has fostered impulsive purchasing behaviors, as individuals seek to conform to the preferences of their peer group and admired public personalities. This trend has gained pace in the aftermath of the the pandemic.

"I am constantly on social media and scrolling Instagram makes me feel anxious but it's an addiction I guess. I see everyone wearing cool outfits and I am also following fashionistas so my cart is really inspired by them"

The ease and convenience of shopping, whether through online platforms or conventional retail establishments, were identified as significant factors in impulsive purchase. Participants noted that the convenient availability of a diverse range of fashion products, along with appealing store environments and user-friendly online platforms, significantly diminished obstacles to impulse buying. In the post-COVID-19 era, the evolution of both physical and digital shopping experiences has had a substantial impact on the increased frequency of impulsive purchases among consumers.

"Shopping is so easy these days. I go to migros to buy grocery and end up getting clothes, same is online with just few clicks, I can have a whole new wardrobe, this feeling is relaxing for me"

The participants recognized that the significant motives for making similar purchases were attributed to the observation of peers buying new fashion items and the endorsement of specific products and trends by influencers. These individuals, who are seen as reliable influencers, have a substantial impact on the purchasing choices of others. In the era following the COVID-19 pandemic, where there has been a significant increase in digital influence, the effect of these individuals on consumer decisions has been even more noticeable.

"I copy my friends style, she really is good with combining colours, patterns and most of the clothes I buy is from her recommendation or example. I love her style a lot"

The research also emphasizes the impact of time-limited deals and shopping festivals in generating a feeling of urgency among participants. These events, which are marked by appealing promotions and a lively ambiance, motivate participants to make prompt purchases. This behavior is frequently motivated by the apprehension of not wanting to lose out on good opportunities. Furthermore, it was discovered that impulsive purchasing inclinations were heightened at occasions of gift-giving, such as Christmas or Valentine's Day. Participants reported being actively engaged in spontaneous and unpremeditated purchases when shopping for the ideal gifts over these time periods.

> *"Its impossible to miss black Friday sale, I was really sick last year but I still took the 8:40 bus in morning, stood in line for half an hour and shopped from zara and H & M for almost 6 hours"*

> *"I cant miss a big sale because I know I will regret later…whenever I go to buy gift for someone, I also end up buying clothes for myself"*

Moreover, participants highlighted the substantial influence of product display and store ambiance in physical retail settings. They observed that aesthetically pleasing product displays have the ability to attract their attention immediately, resulting in impromptu purchases. An aesthetically attractive and captivating retail ambiance was discovered to augment the whole shopping experience, hence further stimulating hyper-impulsive purchasing tendencies.

> *"Online stores with their interactive sites make shopping so engaging, that I lose track of time while shopping"*

> *"I have been going to zara for over 6 years, I love shopping there. The store ambience makes me feel luxurious"*

The dynamic nature of fashion trends, the widespread impact of social media, the convenience of online shopping, peer influence, influencer endorsements, limited-time offers, shopping occasions, and the visual appeal of items have collectively intensified the inclination for impulsive purchasing among participants. The results highlight the crucial influence of external elements in shaping the framework of HBB.

4.2.5 Sub-category: Internal Stimuli

Participants asserted that a primary intrinsic motivation behind their impulsive purchasing was to enhance their mood. Investing in fast fashion buying was discovered to provide emotional gratification beyond simply obtaining new items. The act of finding, choosing, buying, and eventually donning new products acted as a substantial mood enhancer, offering momentary respite from stress or bad feelings. This feature was particularly relevant during and following the COVID-19 epidemic, as online purchasing served as a diversion from the uncertainty and difficulties of the surrounding circumstances. For several individuals, the act of buying was intimately connected to self-care, providing a dependable source of pleasure and a feeling of achievement, for some others it was a window to the outside world during the long quarantine months.

> *"...the idea and full process of buying and imagining the dress on me makes me happy in the moment, even if it doesn't look the way I imagined"*

> *"...during covid, I was feeling low, I start scrolling, either reels or shopping apps. Even putting good clothes in the cart was comforting and ordering and opening the boxes made me happy"*

The research also emphasizes that curiosity about the current fashion trends and designs is a significant driver for hyper-impulsive buying. Participants often conveyed a strong inclination to seek and test out novel looks and personalities. This predisposition is consistently driven by the dynamic nature of the fashion sector, which is marked by the frequent introduction of new trends and styles. Consumers have been even more fascinated with the faster online interaction during the post-COVID-19 period. A substantial proportion of participants recognized purchasing activity as a method to seek validation from peers and social communities. Wearing the most recent styles or possessing fashionable products was regarded as a means to attract attention, admiration, and endorsement. The necessity for validation was most apparent in social media platforms, where one's physical beauty and material assets are frequently associated with their social standing and accomplishments. Moreover, the impact of conforming to societal and fashion norms was recognized as a substantial determinant of their purchasing behavior. They often felt a need to adhere to perceived cultural conventions when making fashion choices, motivated by the a desire for social acceptance and admiration.

> *"...to be honest, I prefer fashion over comfort, I don't wear jackets when I am wearing off-shoulders, it just doesn't go well"*
>
> "*I notice the compliment patterns on my outfits by my classmates, whenever I wear baggy clothes I get a lot of praise, so I feel that skin tight clothes don't suit me, I buy new stuff keeping that in mind"*

Eventually, the concept of obtaining an appealing discount was acknowledged as a powerful catalyst for hyper-impulsive buying among the participants. They often prioritized potential cost savings and visible discounts, perceiving them as beneficial in terms of value for money. This led to a disregard for

the actual necessity of the items. The impetus behind this quest for apparent discounts was driven not only by financial urgency but also by the psychological satisfaction derived from making what is perceived as a smart purchase.

> *"I once bought boots during summer because of heavy discounts, I buy both in-fashion and off-fashion in advance"*

The participants have revealed that boredom plays a crucial role in triggering hyper-impulsive buying behavior. Participants indicated that, due to the increased availability of online shopping throughout the pandemic, browsing fashion apps and websites emerged as a widespread method to alleviate feelings of boredom. Engaging in this activity, which is frequently used as a means of diverting attention from the uncertainties and pressures of the pandemic, resulted in hyper-impulsive buying. The exhilaration of obtaining new clothes provided a temporary respite from the monotonous daily activities was a strong motive behind these purchases. The emotions of pleasure and joy that arise from the exploration and acquisition of novel fashion items serve as compelling incentives to induce more purchases. The excitement of waiting for a package, the thrill of unpacking a new item, and the satisfaction of donning it for the initial occasion added to the perpetual cycle of buying. This process is frequently propelled by the intense emotional peaks linked to these encounters. Again, participants iterated the influence of quarantine was huge in this timeframe to deal with boredom and uncertainty in the environment. This habit persisted and post-covid and hyper-impulsive buying served as a mechanism to deal with boredom.

"I was staying with family for quarantine and there was literally nothing to do, I never felt so bored in my life. I used to pass my time on social media and checking stuff online"

"I was so bored staying in the small dorm room, shopping was something that helped me get through that time, that's why its my hobby"

The tremendous emotional highs experienced while acquiring new fashion goods, both the anticipation of delivery and the joy of wearing them, were found to contribute to a continual cycle of purchasing. This phenomenon was notably intensified during the epidemic, as individuals actively sought moments of happiness among difficult circumstances. Furthermore, buying served as a means of rewarding oneself, where individuals established personal objectives and utilized fashion acquisitions as incentives for accomplishing them. One of them mentioned:

"I was telling myself while preparing for exams, for every 30 mins of studying, I deserve one dress. I ended up studying too much and also bought good clothes, that made me so happy"

The impact of FOMO in the digital era is significant, particularly in the post-COVID-19 scenario, where it is mostly driven by social media. The continuous exposure to novel trends and products on the internet, along with the apprehension of being excluded from these trends, served as a strong catalyst for hyper-impulsive buying. The heightened sense of urgency, intensified by the pandemic's heightened digital engagement, led to continuous cycles of consumption. Furthermore, the participants exhibited a prevalent theme of utilizing shopping as a means to establish power. Amidst the pandemic's uncertain and disruptive nature, individuals sought comfort by making assessments of their physical appearance as a way to establish

authority and uniqueness. This component of shopping has extended beyond the realm of fashion, encompassing broader dimensions of personal autonomy and self-expression.

> *"Spending my own money on clothes makes me feel in charge of my life, so that is like my motivation to buy a lot"*
>
> *"Its rare that I don't get the latest trend, even if its expensive I still find its affordable options"*

In summary, post COVID-19, we have seen a consistent and sometimes increased influence of internal factors on impulsive buying inclinations among the participants. The interplay of mood elevation, conformity, perceived bargain, boredom, feelings like excitement, joy, achievement, curiosity, seeking validation, desire for control, fear of missing out, nostalgia, optimism and empowerment were some of the internal stimuli driving hyper-impulsive buying behavior among the participants.

4.3 Core category: Short-term and Long-term effects

Hyper-impulsive buying behavior inevitably has both short-term and long-term effects, while there has been surprising positive effects that motivates participants to engage in this behavior, however there is lack of knowledge of the long-term implications of their behavior specifically in the fast fashion industry.

4.3.1 Sub-category: Short-Term Positive Effects

Our findings indicated that the majority of our participants had a significant positive effect in terms of satisfaction when they were able to acquire the items they desired. This sensation commonly arose from acquiring things that not only adhere to current trends but also strongly resonate with individual style preferences. Due to COVID-19, everyday routines were disrupted and lifestyles altered, acquiring new fashion items provided a sense of normality and advancement. A significant number of participants found great satisfaction and happiness by fulfilling their desires through these purchases, especially in post-COVID-19, when fashion was resurrected in new ways and became a vital means to express individuality and adjust to the new environment. Participants expressed that obtaining and using new fashion items satisfies their need for novelty and change, hence boosting their personal growth and satisfaction.

> *"When I put on new clothes, I feel like myself again. I am a very social person but people say that I am an introvert, which is really true at times when I am not dressed well, it affects my personality"*

> *"I am very moody so that shows in me, I like change that is also true for my shopping, sure I am aware I overdo it but I don't see any harm, as long as its making me happy, its fine for me"*

Furthermore, participants indicated that engaging in shopping sprees enhances their holistic state of being, especially when perceived as a means of gratification or a diversion from the regular routine. The purchase and possession of novel fashion items were discovered to augment their overall sentiments of joy and satisfaction. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, when traditional sources of enjoyment were limited, shopping evolved as a vital means of maintaining optimism

and well-being for many. The immediate satisfaction and delight derived from purchasing new fashion items were highlighted as noteworthy benefits. This phenomenon was particularly apparent during and following the epidemic, as shopping evolved into a source of enjoyment among the existing uncertainty and restrictions.

Eventually, participating in the process of obtaining new clothing was perceived as an opportunity to enhance psychological fulfillment and joy, as well as acting as a method of self-validation and self-care. The thrill and novelty associated with acquiring new items generated a feeling of rejuvenation and vitality, providing a fresh viewpoint during a time marked by substantial globally transitions and hardships.

> *"..there was a time when I was very depressed I went through a rough breakup, my emotional and mental state was crazy and it really affected me I couldn't move forward...I needed something to make me feel better, that time I remember I just changed my style completely, that's how I moved on. I guess, I was like a new person"*

> *"yes it does make me feel good whenever I get new clothes that I really like. It feels like a new beginning, a new chapter so whenever I am going through something tough, I get something for myself"*

Participants emphasized that shopping frequently functioned as a collective endeavor that enhanced social bonds with family and friends. The act of engaging in shopping, offering recommendations, and enjoying newly acquired items collectively cultivates stronger relationships and meaningful connections. The significance of collective participation in fashion was especially emphasized during the post-

COVID-19 period when social connections were re-emerging and being revalued after long periods of isolation.

> *"..exploring new styles and fashion trends with my friends is like a hobby for us as a group. It's surprising because wearing something nice can transform my mood"*
>
> *"Shopping with my sisters is one of my favorite ways to bond. We really enjoy the experience together"*

Many participants recognized fashion as a potent instrument for self-expression. They stated that engaging in shopping and trying out new styles enables them to delve into other aspects of their identities. By using clothing as a means of expression, participants communicated their emotions, interests, beliefs, and personal truths. Post-COVID-19, when the importance of personal expression and the reshaping of one's identity has gained prominence, fashion has grown as a crucial means for this exploration.

> *"Through my clothing choices, I get to show the world who I am and how I feel"*
>
> *"Most people call me gay judging me from my clothes, I am like great, yes I am. You should know it. So yeah I express myself through my clothes and its pretty liberating"*

Participants often characterized the act of shopping as a therapeutic endeavor, they asserted that it alleviated stress and fostered a setting that promoted relaxation and pleasure. Amidst the uncertainty and obstacles brought forth by the pandemic, shopping served as a much-needed relief and solace for many participants. In addition, participants observed that donning new garments, particularly ones that correspond to individual style preferences, greatly enhances confidence and self-esteem. Engaging in self-expression through clothing was observed to significantly

enhance self-image and impact how participants present themselves to others. The impact of fashion on self-perception and confidence was especially significant during the post-COVID-19 era, as people looked for methods to reaffirm their identity in a shifting social environment.

> *"...after a stressful day, online shopping is my therapy"*
>
> *"Treating myself to a shopping spree after a tough week gives a boost to my mental health, It's a little thing, but it makes a big difference"*
>
> *"I view shopping as a form of self-care. It's time I dedicate to myself, focusing on what I want and what makes me happy"*

To conclude, the findings indicate that satisfaction, personal growth, improved well-being, self-care, bonding experiences, confidence boost, stress relief, and a sense of rejuvenation as the main positive effects of hyper-impulsive buying of fashion. These advantages reflect the significant impact of hyper-impulsive buying on improving people's emotional and psychological well-being, both during and after the pandemic.

4.3.2 Sub-category: Short-Term Negative Effects

Participants reported a major issue with the tendency to accumulate more things, was congested closets and a state of mess. The practice of accumulating an excessive amount of items often overwhelmed their living areas, hence leading to feelings of unease and frustration at times. Participants emphasized the challenge of efficiently organizing and handling an ever-growing wardrobe, frequently leading to emotions of anger and anxiety. This issue was especially evident among

many participants who resided in dormitories or small apartments, where the availability of storage space is minimal. Frequently buying clothes often resulted in an oversaturation that paradoxically leads to discontent. Participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by the enormous amount of their clothes, an issue that has been exacerbated post-COVID-19 due to the increase in online shopping options.

> *"There are a lot of items in my closet that I rarely wear. Seeing a lot of stuff that isn't being is frustrating at times"*
>
> *"Where am I going to put all my new clothes? It gives me anxiety like, how will I carry all this when I graduate and leave the dorm"*
>
> *"One issue is I have so many clothes that I don't even remember the clothes that I have so many of them are not worn even once"*

The findings further indicate a tendency for participants to rely on buying as a means of achieving emotional gratification. This dependency is defined by an obsession with the transient emotional highs obtained from buying things which obscures other aspects of life and results in unhealthy patterns. Participants also indicated how the constant and overwhelming arrival of new stuff confuses them. This ambiguity often leads to neglected opportunities as the focus on buying shifts attention and resources from potentially more fulfilling or important investments.

> *"I've wasted time and money on shopping to the point that I haven't saved enough to do the things I want to do, like having memorable experiences and going on vacations with friends"*
>
> *"The money I spent on clothing may have gone towards a holiday or an investment, now that I think about it. I feel like I've missed out on a lot of things too"*

The excessive focus on shopping and fashion leads to social isolation, as indicated by numerous participants who prioritized shopping over social interactions. Moreover, being too preoccupied with collecting new material possessions can lead to a loss of focus, detrimentally impacting both personal and professional spheres of life, as indicated by some participants. Engaging in irrational purchases often results in buyer's remorse, characterized by a shift from initial excitement to subsequent feelings of regret, as expressed by the participants. This remorse can arise from economic limitations or the recognition that the purchase was unnecessary. Moreover, the perpetual process of seeking and obtaining new fashion articles was found to induce physical and mental exhaustion. The ongoing process of making decisions and the varying emotions that come with buying frequently contribute to this fatigue.

> *"I realize I've been declining social gatherings just to browse online stores. It's like I'm living in my own shopping bubble"*

> *"There are times I regret my purchases soon after, wondering why I bought them in the first place but then its gone and I buy again"*

4.3.3 Sub-category: Financial and Societal Implications

Economic burden was one of the most highlighted aspects by many participants since they are all university students, some of them are financially supported by their families. Despite the fact, fast fashion items are affordable however, the scaled purchases revamp their buying capacity leading to severe financial constraints. This strain has resulted in financial challenges in terms of

controlling monthly spending and saving for future needs, as a result of the continuous expenditure on clothing. The tendency to make impulsive purchases leads them to accumulate debt, especially when they use credit to make purchases without having the ability to repay them immediately. The accumulation of this debt can rapidly escalate due to the frequent nature of impulse purchases. Financial resources that may have been allocated towards investments, savings, or more significant and fulfilling experiences were instead expended on fleeting and ephemeral fashion fads. Almost all participants exhibiting hyper-impulsive purchases encountered inflated expenses. This frequent buying results in an ongoing pattern of expenditure that surpasses basic necessities, so substantially augmenting their entire expense of living.

> *"I sometimes am struggling to cover all my bills because I spend too much on clothes. It's a constant battle between wanting new things and staying financially stable"*
>
> *"...but if I don't have the money, then I would borrow it from somebody else, but I would end up buying the thing… I've racked up so much credit card debt from shopping. Every month, I worry about how I'll pay it off"*
>
> *"I didn't realize how much my shopping habits are costing me until I checked my bank statements"*

Participants asserted that consistently making impulsive purchases has greatly hindered the capacity to save. Many of them mentioned how savings are crucial given the example of the pandemic since the opportunities to have the finances flowing can be limited. Their prioritization of current purchasing satisfaction often impedes the accumulation of resources for future objectives or unforeseen circumstances, thereby hurting their long-term financial planning. This is another

defining feature of hyper-impulsive buying behavior: the dilemma of the rational and impulsive.

> *"I do wish I should have saved more instead of spending like this. I guess I am someone who cares about how I feel in the moment instead of future"*
>
> *"Many of my clothes still have the tags on them, I don't feel like wearing them, now I am thinking why did I buy them?"*

The lifestyle associated with hyper-impulsive buying has grown unviable over time. The constant need for new fashion items led to an endless cycle of buying that is financially and environmentally unsustainable for most participants, especially given the fact that they are students in a foreign country. The incessant pursuit of material possessions and the insatiable want to have more has led to the development of hoarding behaviors, where they accumulated an excessive amount of things that surpass their practical requirements or storage capabilities. The act of procuring goods in significant quantities, especially during sales, intensifies this inclination, leading to an abundance of things that might never get utilized.

> *"It is clear to me that I can't keep buying new clothes all the time, I know I can't manage this way of life so I am trying not to buy anymore, I do end up buying but I am trying not to"*
>
> *"I feel more attached to things, and I know its not a good thing, I am aware"*

A significant finding from this research is the potential of hyper-impulsive buying behavior to strengthen materialistic values in society. Participants observed that the widespread acceptance of fast fashion exacerbates the notion that one's self-value and societal standing are connected to material belongings. The surge in this

phenomenon, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of e-commerce, leads to a modified societal norm where excessive spending and frequent replacement of fashion items are considered normal practices. Participants observed that the phenomenon of hyper-impulsive buying in the fast fashion industry also exacerbates economic inequalities. The societal expectation to conform to rapidly changing fashion trends places a financial burden on people from different economic backgrounds, forcing them to engage in a consuming cycle that may exceed their financial capabilities. This scenario has intensified following the economic repercussions of the pandemic.

> *"…There's so much pressure to keep up with fashion trends. This has made materialistic ideals, I swear if people around me are not buying like this, I would also rethink but my environment is full of this pressure and I am caught up too"*

> *"Learning about the conditions in which fast fashion clothes are produced makes me uneasy, knowing that a small kid has been exploited to make this cloth for me makes me feel guilty already"*

4.3.4 Sub-category: Environmental Ill-Being

Most participants were partially aware of the issue of clothing waste, while only a few were aware of the environmental impact of how the clothing waste is being treated/disposed of. There is a general lack of awareness regarding the major environmental repercussions caused by the piling of waste fabrics. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in online shopping and the rapid consumption of fast fashion. Consequently, the quantity of clothes manufactured and subsequently discarded has become an increasingly serious concern. Participants were told that the significant quantity of clothing waste generated by the fast fashion

business, which is mostly driven by hyper-impulsive consumer behavior. A significant portion of this garbage is deposited in African landfills and oceans, taking up physical space and exacerbating environmental deterioration as a result of the inclusion of non-biodegradable components in these garments. This encompasses the remaining materials generated during the production process as well as the packaging that is discarded after the transportation and sale of clothing products. The participants were also informed that the waste produced throughout the manufacturing and disposal procedures is directly linked to the transient yet deep-rooted model of fast fashion. The surge in internet shopping following the pandemic has worsened the production of this waste, leading to concerns about the overall environmental impact of the fast fashion sector. Exacerbating water contamination issues through the use of perilous colors and chemicals in the production of garments pollutes water reservoirs, resulting in detrimental consequences for marine organisms and the well-being of humans. Participants were shown snapshots of landfills and oceans filled with abandoned clothes, which significantly influenced their awareness and impression of the environmental toll of their fashion choices.

Upon receiving these facts, numerous participants expressed astonishment and remorse regarding their role in exacerbating these environmental problems while others asserted, they are not to blame since they get rid of clothes through donation rather than disposal, demonstrating a change in consciousness and accountability.

> *"I was not much aware of the thing that where it ends up... but now I know I am thinking that it can affect environmental health as well"*
>
> *"...because probably I did not give it enough time to get myself educated about the whole situation"*
>
> *"Now you have told me, I might think again while buying new stuff that how it ends"*

“No, I don't think about this kind of things when I buy something...”

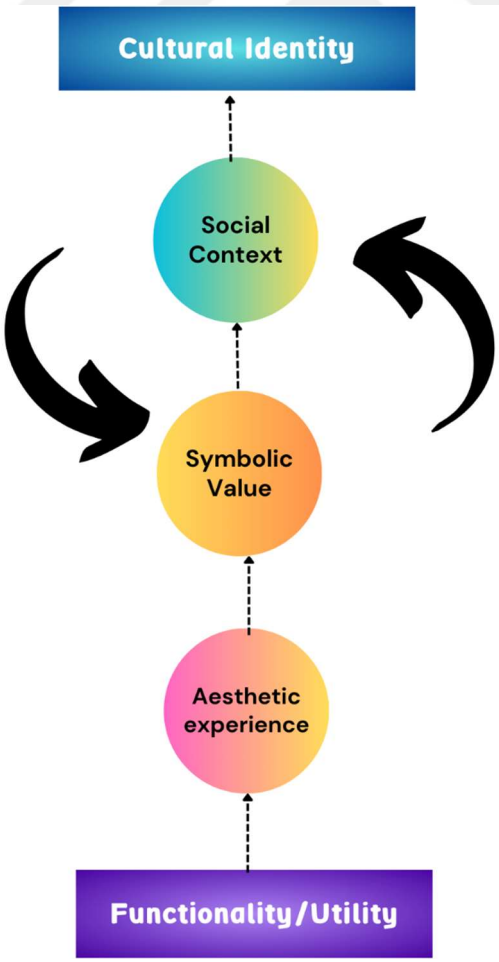
Many participants recognized the problem of excessive consumption, which is defined by a high frequency of getting new clothes that far exceed what is actually necessary or used. The overconsumption of clothing significantly contributes to the depletion of natural resources and the accumulation of waste, as the production process requires large amounts of water, energy, and natural resources. The fashion industry also necessitates a substantial number of resources, and the heightened demand exacerbates the depletion of these resources. The participants were informed about the substantial water and raw material requirements of the textile production process, which consequently puts strain on these scarce resources.

> *“ofcourse I have more than I need, I know that always buying is not healthy. I can say its an unhealthy addiction that is hard to get rid of”*
>
> *“I do buy more than my needs, it makes me feel like I shouldn't buy more, but then there are new things, there are new trends coming along and I can’t think logically all the time...”*

4.4 Fashion Perpetuance Model (FPM)

The findings suggest that fashion requires a tangible manifestation in order to exist. However, this visible manifestation carries a symbolic significance that is shared within a social context and also resonates with an individual's identity. The five primary stages of fashion include a Functionality/ Utility aspect, Aesthetics, Symbolic value, social context, leading to the formation of a Cultural Identity. The FPM model proposes that our participants, the fashion consumers strive to attain a higher social standing within a cultural setting by virtue of establishing a cultural identity, which perpetuates hyperconsumption in society. This model effectively represents the various steps involved in the buying behavior of fast fashion.

Figure 17: Fashion Perpetuance Model (FPM)



First and foremost, fashion necessitates tangible items, like clothing and accessories, for its existence. The tangible embodiment of fashion fulfills a utilitarian function for the one who wears it. The initial phase of this concept, known as Functionality/Utility, encompasses the fundamental utilitarian purpose that clothing serves, refer to the first stage in Figure 17.

However, for utilitarian garments to be deemed fashionable, they must include an artistic element. The art component involves the imaginative inspiration, precise design, and skilled craftsmanship necessary to create a garment or item that distinguishes itself significantly from others in its category. As a result, when participants wear the physical form of the product, it evokes a deep aesthetic feeling in them, this is the stage of Aesthetic experience of clothing.

Then, in order for garments and accessories to qualify as fashion, they must additionally get social approval from a certain collective (peers, friends, society), which imparts symbolic meaning to their physical manifestation. Therefore, fashion needs to be the consensus of a social group in order to become tangible. Fashion, as typically defined within a specific social circle, can be utilized by individuals to showcase their social status within their group and in relation to other groups. Therefore, fashion can influence how others perceive an individual, but this influence may be shallow and temporary. Furthermore, the findings indicate that fashion exerts a substantial influence on an individual's self-perception by bolstering their emotional state and self-assurance through the selection of garments and accessories. Fashion holds a symbolic importance that mirrors the shared views of a social group, thereby acting as a depiction of the social structure within that particular society. This refers to the third and fourth stages of FPM, where the symbolic value of the item changes frequently given a social context, so dynamism in clothing is

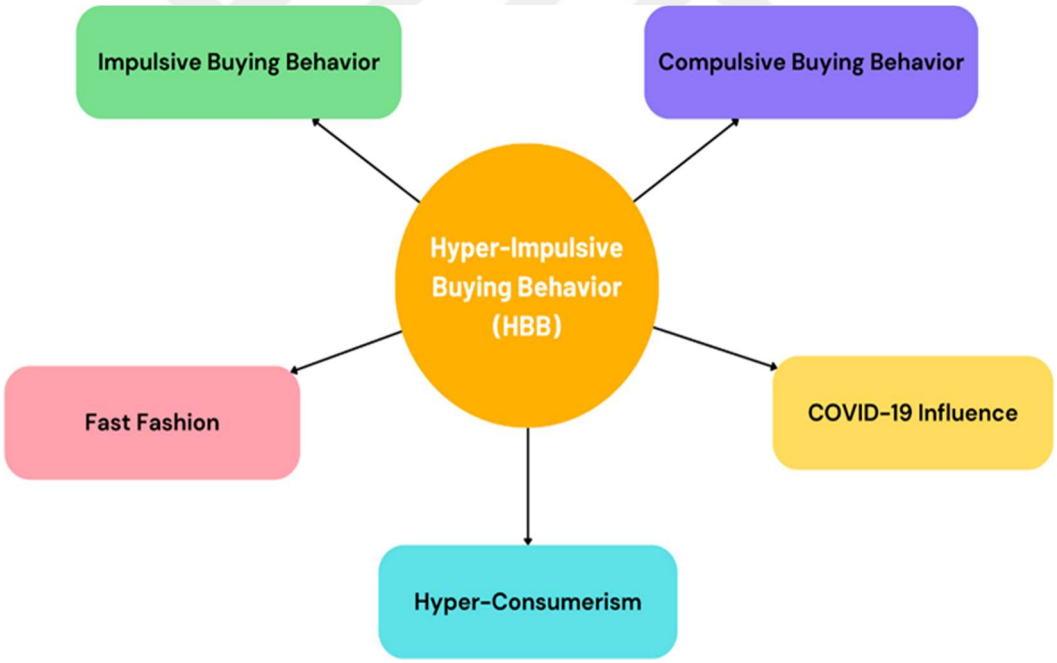
necessitated, giving birth and sustenance to Fast Fashion industry. The hedonic treadmill of fashion commences and perpetuates at the second and third stages of FPM.

The final stage is to strive to achieve acceptance and admiration from society. The subject concerns the efficient establishment of a cultural identity. The characteristics of fashion exhibit similarities to the consumer goods or market offerings in the domain of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) which functions as a social structure that provides consumers with tangible resources to manifest their identity projects in different social contexts (Schau, 2018). In addition, CCT classifies consumer items as having dual functions. They serve as both commodities and tools for expressing one's individuality. Similarly, the tangible representation of fashion fulfills a utilitarian purpose, establishing beyond doubt that fashion also operates as a consumer product.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter will analyze the findings of the thesis in relation to the theoretical framework presented in the literature review chapter. The thesis will first build on and combine major contributions to the literature on consumer buying behavior by establishing links between Hyperconsumerism, Impulsive buying, and Compulsive buying behavior, along with other theories of buying behavior. Then managerial level, public policy, and societal level implications will be discussed. Finally, the limitations of the research will be highlighted before addressing future research avenues.

Figure 18: Consolidation of concepts within the model



5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The most prominent contribution of this research is the contemporary consumer buying model and the preliminary research on Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB) which significantly enhances the current body of knowledge on consumer behavior, specifically in the relevant realm of fast fashion post-COVID-19 pandemic. Through the examination of HBB, this research expands upon the conventional notions of impulsive and compulsive buying behaviors, situating them within the wider context of hyperconsumerism. This shift recognizes the intricate interaction of societal, cultural, technological, and market forces in determining this contemporary consumer buying behavior.

While there has been a scattered body of research on these concepts, a holistic model that captures the actual complexity associated with certain contexts and industry-specific consumer behaviors continues to remain unexplored in the current literature. The examination of HBB in the fast fashion sector fills a void in the current body of research by examining several elements - such as cultural and sociological influences, marketing strategies, technical advancements, and emotional stimuli - into a cohesive framework of established concepts. This comprehensive methodology offers a detailed understanding of the reasons behind the growing trend of consumers engaging in accelerated and frequent buying along with the psychological mechanisms via which this behavior is perpetuated, and intensified by external influences such as social media, cultural norms, and marketing tactics.

5.1.1 Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) and Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB) Versus Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)

Given the pervasiveness of certain elements from existing theories, the differentiation has been documented in detail to ensure clarity and increase the scope, depth, and relevance to academicians. Based on my findings, I would demonstrate how HBB differs from the similar known phenomena in the literature namely IBB and CBB. HBB refers to planned irrational impulse purchases influenced by trends and social media. This distinguishes it from CBB, which involves repetitive and uncontrollable purchases made in response to negative emotions, and IBB, which involves spontaneous and unplanned purchases. (Rook D.W, 1987; McElroy et al., 1994; Black D.W, 2007; O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). The various frameworks for studying consumer habits in the fast fashion business are derived from the choice patterns, frequency, and psychological bases of these behaviors. HIBB's systematic and ritualistic behavior, which is driven by consistent exposure to novel stimuli, is distinctly different from CBB's behavioral addiction and IBB's random nature (McElroy et al., 1994; Stern H, 1962; Rook D.W, 1987). To enhance this conversation, it would be beneficial to use these scholarly references as mentioned in table 3, in order to thoroughly examine the intricacies of these consumer habits.

Table 3: Enhanced Differences Between Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HIBB), Compulsive Buying, and Traditional Impulsive Buying

Aspect	Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)	Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB)	Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB)
Planning	'Planned' irrational impulse purchases, influenced by trends and social media	Planning may occur but is driven by an overwhelming internal compulsion.	Sporadic and occasional spontaneous unplanned purchases (Rook, D. W, 1987) (McElroy et al, 1994).
Definition	Accelerated purchase decisions without rational thought driven by hyperconsumerism and insatiable desire for novelty	A repetitive, uncontrollable purchase, which serves as a response to negative emotions (Black, D. W, 2007) O'Guinn & Faber (1989)	A spontaneous, on-the-spot purchase, often triggered by an external stimulus. Rook, D. W. (1987)
Purchase precursors	Moderate deliberation, purchase intention, mixed with hedonic and reward systems, and sometimes a distorted risk-reward assessment.	Compulsion overrides rational decision-making, despite knowledge of the consequences	Low levels of pre-purchase evaluation, without much deliberation. No prior purchase intention (Stern, H., 1962)
Frequency	Frequent and episodic regular occurrences like a cognitive endorsement of impulsive tendencies as a part of lifestyle	Frequent, intense (Black, D. W., 2007), with a pattern of increasing frequency Dittmar & Drury (2000)	Occasional and situation-specific (Beatty, S. E., & Ferrell, M. E., 1998)
Decision Pattern	Fast decision pattern, yet part of a 'planned' impulse purchase cycle	Blind purchases, tend to be repetitive with a lack of control over the buying process.	Immediate and prompt decision, lack of cognitive Evaluation (Beatty, S. E, & Ferrell, M. E, 1998)
Behavioral pattern	Systematic and ritualistic, driven by continuous exposure to new stimuli	Considered a behavioral addiction (McElroy et al., 1994), Chronic and long-term condition (Stern, H, 1962)	Sporadic, is not classified as an addiction (Rook, D. W,1987)
Control and Awareness	A gradual erosion of self-control due to cultural and market pressures	Buyers often feel out of control (O'Guinn & Faber, R. J, 1989) and may lack full awareness of their behavior (Frost & Hartl, 1996)	Buyer is often aware but gives in to temptation Lack of premeditation, and momentary lapse of self-control (Baumeister, 2002)

Aspect	Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)	Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB)	Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB)
Identity integration	An integral part of consumers' identity through societal values & and group affiliation	Shopping to resolve identity disturbances may be tied to personal identity	Not typically tied to the consumer's identity
Shopping well-being	Can involve a psychological need for fulfilment and identity reinforcement	Shopping is a dysfunctional coping mechanism for dealing with stress or trauma	Shopping can be a form of "retail therapy," a temporary mood enhancer (Kasser et al, 2014)
Underlying Motivation	Temptation and impulse pursuit of items, tied to "the urgency of now and allure of the new"	Desire to alleviate negative feelings or cope with stress and anxiety (Miltenberger et al, 2003)	Sudden, often powerful, and persistent urge to buy something immediately.
Emotionally driven	Hedonic escalation; seeking amplified emotional and identity rewards, A mix of positive emotions (the thrill of trends)	Emotional repair; often associated with negative feelings mostly depression, and anxiety, may feel relief after purchase followed by guilt (Faber, R. J., & O'Guinn, T. C, 1992)	Emotional lift; pleasure-seeking, sudden urge or desire, positive emotions during the purchase often without deeper emotional complexities (Rook, D. W, & Fisher, R. J. (1995)
Triggers	Heavily influenced by both external factors like aggressive marketing, triggered by culture/people in social environment, and positive internal stimuli like craving for novelty, identity, etc.	Driven by deeper psychological issues and internal urges like compulsions, psychological distress, and internal conflict (Faber, 1992)	Heavily influenced by momentary feelings, and external factors like store environment (Kacen & Lee, 2002)
Marketing Efforts	Highly susceptible to advanced marketing practices, smart algorithms, and social media influences.	Driven more by internal compulsion than external advertising	Susceptible to visual factors like store design, sales, or marketing that triggers spontaneity
Societal influence	Rooted in hyper-consumerism and the fast-paced nature of modern trends. Amplified by social media, brand hype, and the desire to belong or be seen	An internal uncontrollable urge & linked to personal pathology (Bearden & Etzel, 1982), Less influenced by external factors	Reactive to immediate surroundings or short-lived desires, slightly influenced by social norms

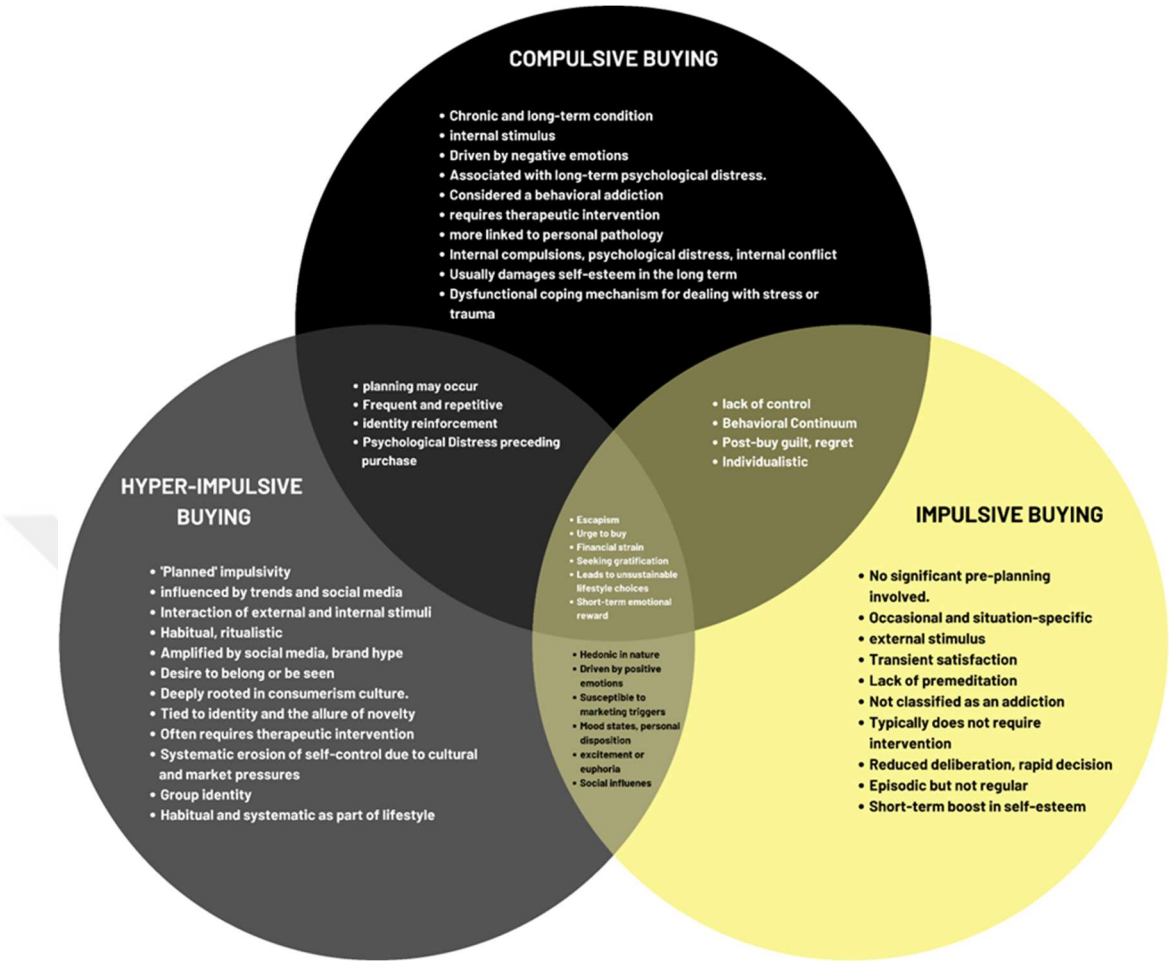
Aspect	Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB)	Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB)	Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB)
Consumer well-being	Instant gratification but also long-term negative consequences such as regret from hoarding Guilt or regret, especially if overspent or bought unnecessary items	Long-term psychological guilt and anxiety lead to emotional turmoil. Often frequent and intense, leading to significant distress or dysfunction, shame, or embarrassment (Yurchisin & Johnson, 2004)	Short-lived satisfaction, short-term regret (Rook, D. W, 1987) mild regret or satisfaction, depending on the perceived value of the purchase
Financial Impact	Might overspend frequently, especially during sales or promotions. Can lead to financial strain.	Severe financial consequences like debt, often spending beyond means	May lead to financial inconvenience or occasional overspending, but usually within financial limits
Sustainability/ Environmental Impact	Unsustainable behavior, leading to hoarding, contributes to environmental ill-being through overconsumption and waste generation	Unsustainable lifestyle choices due to the compulsive nature and lack of control, contribute to waste (Tarka, 2018)	Unsustainable practices could culminate into hyper-impulsive buying and eventually compulsive buying

To thoroughly understand the distinctions among Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HIBB), Compulsive Buying Behavior (CBB), and Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB), it is crucial to examine the subtle intricacies of each phenomenon. HIBB, which is defined by impulsive purchases that are influenced by trends and social media, combines both impulsive behavior and intentional decision-making. In contrast to CBB, which involves frequent purchases used as a means of coping with negative feelings (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; McElroy et al., 1994), this suggests a more profound underlying psychological problem. IBB is characterized by impulsive, unplanned buying choices (Rook, 1987; Black, 2007) motivated by instant satisfaction (Stern, 1962), without the foresight typically seen in HIBB.

The frequency and regulation of these buying habits also distinguish them. HIBB exhibits a tendency towards being methodical and ritualistic, which is affected by consistent exposure to emerging patterns. On the other hand, the compulsive nature of CBB frequently results in a behavioral addiction characterized by a loss of control over purchasing decisions (McElroy et al., 1994). Impulsive Buying Behavior (IBB) is characterized by random occurrences, often triggered by specific situations, rather than following a consistent pattern (Rook, 1987).

Comprehending the underlying reasons and emotional drivers behind these behaviors is essential for understanding their impact on consumer well-being and their financial well-being. HIBB is frequently motivated by a need for social approval and adherence to trends, whereas CBB arises from more profound emotional instability (McElroy et al., 1994). IBB, on the other hand, focuses mostly on the excitement derived from the act of making a purchase (Rook, 1987; Stern, 1962). Marketers and retailers in the fast fashion business must understand this differentiation in order to formulate specific tactics and for politicians to make well-informed actions. An Amalgamatory model as shown in Figure 19 is also proposed to ensure clarity in the differentiation among these related concepts. The overlapping and unique characteristics are more lucid through this depiction.

Figure 19: Amalgamatory Model



The findings also indicate that HBB is a transitionary stage from IBB TO CBB, refer to Figure 20. Given the pervasive elements of HBB with both CBB, In this intermediary stage, the characteristics of impulsive buying, such as spontaneous purchases driven by immediate gratification, begin to evolve towards more compulsive patterns. These compulsive patterns are marked by a lack of control and repetitive purchasing behavior. This progression indicates a deepening of the psychological underpinnings behind consumer purchasing habits, moving from impulsive spontaneity to compulsive necessity. HBB is characterized by moderate deliberation and intention, blending hedonic and

reward systems, suggesting a cognitive endorsement of impulsive tendencies. This represents a shift from IBB's occasional, situation-specific buying to CBB's frequent, intense, and increasingly compulsive purchases. The systematic and ritualistic nature of HBB, driven by continuous exposure to new stimuli, shows an evolution from IBB's sporadic behavior. Simultaneously, it precedes CBB's chronic and addictive purchasing, highlighting a gradual erosion of self-control in HBB that is more pronounced in CBB. Understanding this transition can provide valuable insights into consumer behavior and aid in developing strategies to address potential negative consequences associated with these buying behaviors.

These distinctions underscore HBB as a transitional behavior, evolving from the spontaneity of IBB to the compulsivity of CBB, marked by a gradual increase in purchase frequency, deliberation, and a shift in control and awareness, and it can be concluded that Hyper-impulsive buying behavior (HBB) can be seen as an intermediary phase in the consumer's progression from impulsive buying (IBB) to compulsive buying (CBB)

Figure 20: Transitionary Model

5.1.2 Comparison with established theories

Our findings are consistent with established notions of consumer culture and provide an in-depth comprehension of the personal experience of consumption in highly consumer-driven societies. Examining Hyper-Impulsive Buying Behavior (HBB) in light of the post-COVID situation enhances our understanding of the heightened consumer vulnerabilities that have emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic. The contemporary period has observed a shift in consumer buying behaviors, in accordance with the theories proposed by (McCracken, 1988), (Baudrillard, 1968), and (Campbell, 1987), while also displaying unique characteristics that have become more influential due to the pandemic.

The notion of misplaced meanings, as introduced by McCracken (1988), which posits that consumption is driven by a profound psychological longing, aligns well with the findings of this study. In the realm of HBB, the act of acquiring fast fashion items is mainly driven by the symbolic significance they possess rather than their intrinsic features. These goods symbolize an individual's ambitions, desires, or ideal way of life. The pandemic has heightened the psychological inclination towards consumption, as observed by McCracken (1988). In the face of increasing social isolation and psychological distress, a significant number of participants have turned to fast fashion as a means of coping, finding solace in the process of obtaining new and unique products. This behavior is consistent with the desire to achieve emotional well-being through the acquisition of material goods, but it is further accentuated by the distinctive pressures caused by the pandemic, the difference between actual and desired conditions became more noticeable after the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst

the pandemic, consumers who have been restricted and distressed have shown a growing inclination for online purchasing, especially in the fast fashion industry, in order to regain a feeling of normalcy and control. Our investigation highlights the disparity identified by McCracken (1988) between the current and ideal conditions. Within the framework of HBB, customers acquire products not just for their functionality but also as a mechanism to close the disparity between their present circumstances and an idealized portrayal of themselves or their lifestyles. This phenomenon is especially apparent in the fast fashion industry, where the frequent and rapid changes in fashion trends consistently influence and redefine consumers' ideal self-image, where participants referred to shopping for fast fashion with words and phrases like habit, an addiction, hobby, enjoyment, happiness, novelty, fun, sense of achievement, confidence, etc.

The significance of Campbell's (1987) focus on fantasy and daydreaming becomes even more relevant post-COVID-19 pandemic. Due to limited physical mobility, consumers have progressively resorted to imagination and fantasy, reflecting their goals and dreams onto their fashion acquisitions. In a post-COVID world, the fast fashion business, with its swift trend cycles, efficiently caters to these dreams. The focus on fantasy and imagination in hyperconsumption by Campbell (1987) aligns well with the findings of this research. The appeal of fast fashion for consumers is not solely derived from the clothes themselves, but rather from the fantasies and aspirations they symbolize. According to Campbell (1987), consumers actively pursue the joyful experiences that they have previously envisioned, and each purchase they make serves as a momentary realization of these imagined ideals. One of the participants comprehensively iterated an extreme inclination to fantasize about vacations and trips via shopping for fast fashion, as a coping mechanism to repel the

uncertainty and fear surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. The hedonistic consumption pattern identified by Campbell (1987) intensified after the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst an international crisis, consumers seek comfort and pleasure in the constantly evolving options offered by fast fashion.

Consequently, the conduct of HBB consumers reflects the hedonic and pleasure-seeking ideology that Campbell (1987) characterized as the driving force behind modern buying behaviour. The quest for pleasure and indulgence is heightened in the fast fashion sector, where the continuous emergence of new trends caters to consumers' dreams and cravings. Our findings emphasize that the attractiveness of fast fashion stems from its consistent capacity to offer consumers a feeling of novelty and empowerment, akin to the pleasure-oriented buying patterns identified by Campbell (1987).

Similarly, the concept of Baudrillard's (1968) theory of lack, which posits that consumerism is fueled by a perpetual stimulation of an unfulfilled psychological want, is evident in the essence of HBB. Our research indicates that the participants exhibit a perpetual inclination towards desiring new and diverse products, motivated by an unsatisfied longing. Baudrillard's (1968) notion of lack gains a new significance in the post-COVID period by virtue of this research. The unfulfilled psychological needs that motivate consumerism are intensified by the pandemic's effects, including economic instability and a heightened sense of mortality, which contribute to a perpetual cycle of desire and purchase.

Our research also suggests and adds to the consumer-oriented perspective of "I consume, therefore I am." The profound integration of consumerism into contemporary culture is exemplified by this research, where these hyper-impulsive

buyers of fast fashion express their identities through new clothes and exemplify this ideology. HBB illustrates this change, where the act of buying and acquiring, becomes an essential means of self-identity and social validation. Baudrillard's (1968) object-relations theory, particularly highlights the act of consuming the idea or a representation of an item, which is especially pertinent in the context of HBB. Our research indicates that in the fast fashion industry, buyers are not merely purchasing clothes; rather, they are investing in a concept, a way of life, or a desired sense of self. This is consistent with Baudrillard's (1988) concept that the objects alone are unable to fulfill the underlying psychological impulses that motivate consumer behavior. The research also demonstrates that hyperconsumption is sustained by the social and cultural contexts. The rapid rotation of fashion trends and the societal expectation to adapt to these trends are the driving forces behind HBB in the fast fashion industry. Consumers are motivated not only by their individual preferences but also by a need to conform to the shared conventions and beliefs of their social circles. The results of our study emphasize the subjective aspect of consumption in HBB. The extent to which individuals participate in fast fashion is shaped by their own personal background, values, and the cultural context in which they inhabit. This subjectivity reinforces the notion that consumer behaviour in the fast fashion industry is not solely driven by practicality or necessity, but rather is profoundly intertwined with personal and social narratives.

Furthermore, by virtue of this research, the non-consensus on the interpretations of hyperconsumption is resolved by demonstrating that all definitive interpretations hold and are subjective given the context it is studied. This research on the context of fast fashion, exhibits and defines hyperconsumption associated with symbolic aspects (Charles, 2009), individual and communal preoccupation

(Dürrschmidt and Taylor, 2007), emotionally driven (Lipovetsky and Serroy, 2011), non-functional purposes (Sirgy, 2001), obscured ecological referent (Dolan, 2002), and contributes by inculcating the pace, irrationality and intensity aspect through integration with impulsive buying behavior leading to the construction of HBB model. Additionally, fast fashion provided an ideal framework to analyze HBB, as it encompasses the swift pattern of acquiring and discarding that defines contemporary consumerism. The industry strategies, which include assertive marketing and the frequent emergence of new trends, foster a climate that is favorable to HBB. This thesis elucidates the manner in which fast fashion not only satisfies the immediate cravings of consumers but also perpetuates a constant state of wanting. The permanent discontentment is a fundamental element of consumer capitalism, as conceptualized by Baudrillard, and is essentially exemplified in the fast fashion industry.

5.1.3 Fashion Perpetuance Model (FPM)

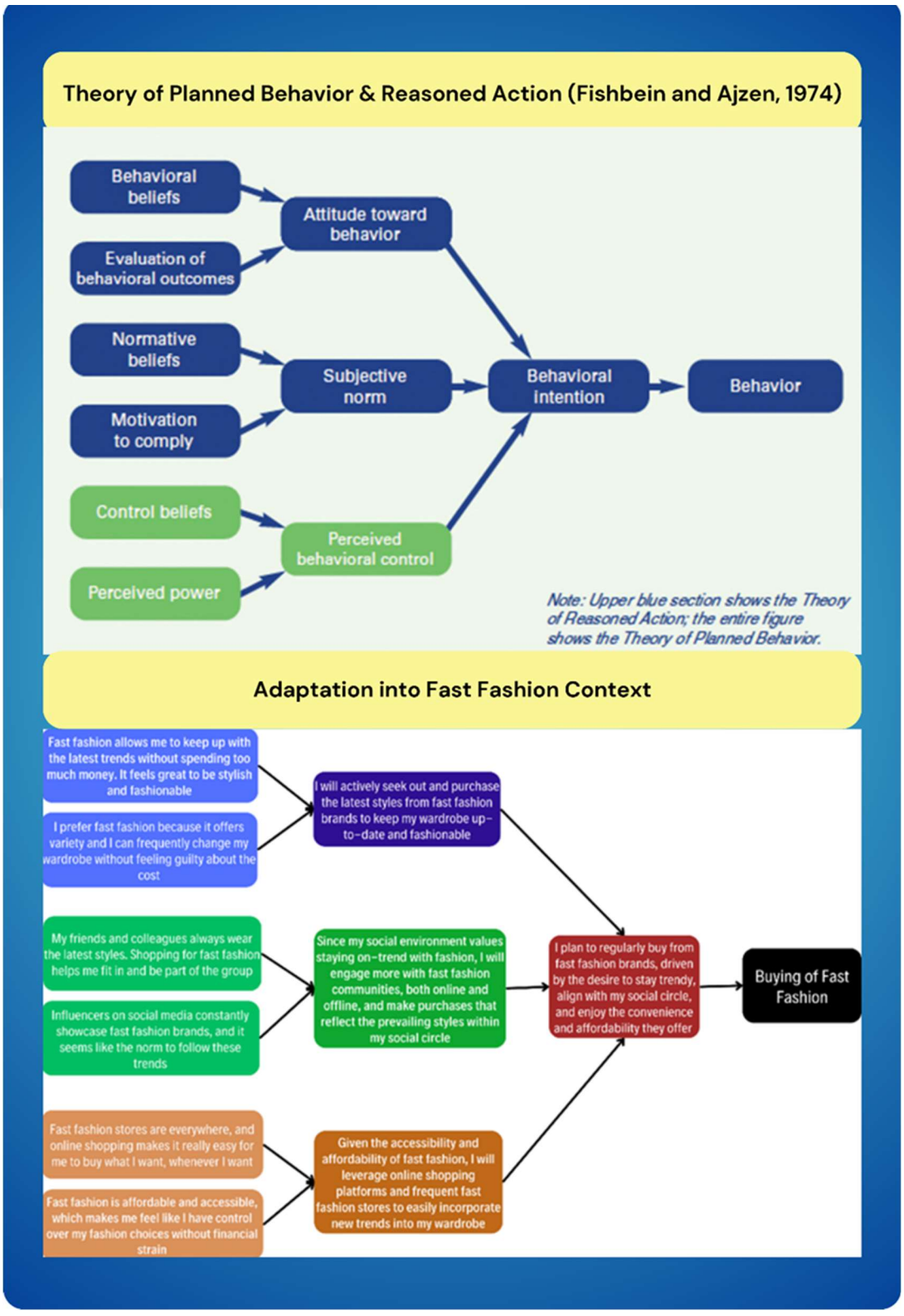
Another prominent contribution of this thesis to the existing body of research is the Fashion Perpetuance Model (FPM) which is an interplay of four stages that perpetuates the roots of Hyper-impulsive consumption of fast fashion. This model adds the hyperconsumption perspective to the literature on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Reasoned Action (TRA).

The 'Theory of Planned Behavior' has been utilized in several research studies examining environmental behavior. In a study conducted by Fishbein and Ajzen (1947), it was shown that there were notable correlations between attitudes and behaviors. For instance, adopting a sustainable attitude is likely to lead to the

purchasing of ecologically friendly products (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). This notion is not entirely true for this research since our findings support the idea that there is a huge attitude-behavior gap (Carrigan & Attala, 2001; Auger & Devinney, 2007; Carrington et al., 2010; Papaoikonomou et al., 2011; Claudy et al. 2013; Shaw et al., 2016) in fast fashion consumers along with a lack of awareness of the environmental aspect of fast fashion.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was formulated to elucidate the psychological processes that underpin the observed correlations between attitudes and behaviors (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 168), and TRA utilizes attitudes and subjective norms as determinants that impact an individual's behavioral intention. The Theory of Planned Behavior was expanded to include the concept of perceived behavioral control (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993), culminating in an appropriate model to inculcate the context of fast fashion. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is still important for behaviors motivated only by desire, whereas the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a more advanced framework that explicitly pertains to behaviors that are not completely within one's control. This encompasses consumer buying patterns, in which economic variables play a significant role in shaping decision-making processes.

Figure 21: Theory of Planned Behavior & Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1974)



The adaptation of TPB and TRA in the context of fast fashion shed light on how fashion ideals translate into the belief system to culminate into a behavior pattern, refer to Figure 21.

Fashion Perpetuance Model (FPM) is thus introduced by this research to help trace the origins and understand the processes and reasoning around the ritualistic consumption of fast fashion. The adaptation of fast fashion context and components of Theory of Planned Behavior and Reasoned Action serves as the basis of this model.

Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to FPM, particularly in the post-COVID era, provides valuable insights into the interplay between consumer attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions throughout the different stages of the Fashion Perpetuance Model.

Aesthetic Experience and Attitude: Post-COVID, there has been a heightened recognition of the aesthetic value of tangible products in the fast fashion industry. Participants are becoming more discerning in their buying decisions, seeking out products that not only meet their utilitarian needs but also have aesthetic appeal. The shift in consumer attitudes, wherein individuals assign increased significance to aesthetic enjoyment, exerts a substantial influence on their purchasing choices. This is consistent with the Theory of Planned behavior (TPB), which highlights the significant influence of attitude on evaluating behavior.

Symbolic Value and Subjective Norm: Subjective Norm in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) refers to the individual's perception of the social pressure to either engage in or abstain from a particular behavior. In the context of fast fashion, this phenomenon can be ascribed to the influence of societal standards and dominant

fashion trends. The importance of the symbolic value ascribed to fashion goods is significant. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, as social interactions resume, there is an increased tendency to either conform to or depart from established norms and tendencies in order to fit in or stand out within social groups. Subjective standards have a significant influence on consumer behavior, as individuals either conform to or defy fashion trends, which are shaped by the social context of their surroundings.

Social context and Perceived behavioral control: Perceived Behavioral Control in TPB pertains to an individual's subjective assessment of their capability to execute a specific behavior. Fast fashion revolves around the consumer's conviction in their ability to convey their identity through their fashion choices. Expressing one's identity through fashion choices is a crucial component post-COVID-19 pandemic, as work and social settings undergo changes, there is a revived emphasis on utilizing fashion as a means to convey one's individual personality. Consumers' perception of their ability to manage their fashion choices empowers them to utilize fashion as a means of expressing their identity in a social context

Cultural Identity and Intentions: In the context of TPB (Theory of Planned conduct), intention refers to the motivating factor that impacts a person's conduct. It is determined by their attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. The cultural identity of consumers is significantly influenced by their clothes choices. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased recognition of how fashion decisions mirror individual principles and cultural associations. The buying decision of certain fashion items is significantly influenced by how these goods adhere to or deviate from cultural conventions, hence highlighting the TPB's focus on purpose shaped by cultural perspective.

The Theory of Planned Behavior is applied in the post-COVID Fashion Perpetuance Model to understand how consumer behavior in the fast fashion industry is shaped by a complex interplay of aesthetics, social influences, self-expression, and cultural perspectives. This theoretical framework provides an in-depth view for comprehending the lasting allure and advancement of fast fashion in the post-pandemic era, highlighting the complex manner in which participants choose their fashion objects.

5.2 Managerial implications

This research offers major implications for managers. Marketers and brand managers ought to give priority to developing targeted marketing strategies that leverage visual appeal and align with prevailing societal trends. To effectively engage with the surge in online purchasing activity resulting from the pandemic, it is advisable to utilize digital channels. Emphasizing the education of consumers regarding sustainable fashion should be the main priority since this will encourage more conscious shopping decisions. This involves both educating consumers and integrating sustainable practices into company operations, such as introducing recycling programs and implementing transparent supply chain protocols.

The findings indicate that personalization of the purchasing experience is significant as it targets the unique preferences of individual consumers. Retailers can leverage technology, such as virtual try-ons and augmented reality, to enhance the consumer experience, leading to a more engaging and cutting-edge shopping experience. Adapting to the altered client behaviors post-COVID-19, which currently

emphasize value and quality, is of utmost importance. To achieve this change, it is necessary to focus on improving the e-commerce infrastructure and ensuring seamless online purchasing experiences.

Engaging with customers and building a community through social media platforms and other channels can lead to increased brand loyalty. It involves creating a brand narrative that deeply connects with consumers and fosters a sense of connection and involvement. Furthermore, fashion companies must acknowledge the influence of social environment and cultural perspectives. They are advised to demonstrate cultural awareness in both their marketing techniques and the products that they offer. Through participating in partnerships and inclusive endeavors, brands can enhance their attractiveness and coordinate with customer values, therefore embracing diversity. Authorities are strongly encouraged to enact legislation that promotes sustainable practices in the fashion industry, thereby addressing the extensive repercussions. These policies may include incentives for eco-friendly behaviors and increased transparency, enabling consumers to make educated choices.

In essence, the research findings provide a concise strategy for industry experts to tackle the challenges that emerge in the fast fashion sector following the COVID-19 pandemic. Brands may successfully adjust to the changing environment and encourage responsible and lucrative business practices by incorporating marketing techniques that include consumer psychology, promoting sustainability, personalizing interactions with consumers, and being culturally sensitive. Fast fashion companies can successfully address these challenges by utilizing digital transformation, placing importance on environmental and ethical principles, adapting to evolving consumer attitudes and ensuring diversity and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, dedicating efforts to consumer research and actively engaging in policy

advocacy can help companies preserve a competitive advantage in the rapidly changing fashion business.

This research deepens our understanding of the psychological underpinnings of consumer behavior in a culture characterized by excessive consumerism. It highlights the need for more mindful and sustainable consumption practices, both at the individual and societal levels. This thesis establishes a correlation between conventional theories of consumerism and contemporary phenomena like HBB, offering distinct insights into the complex dynamics of purchasing behaviors in the era of evolving fashion trends.

5.3 Public policy implications

The insights obtained from this research raise significant issues about the sustainability of current consumer purchasing patterns in the long run. The environmental and social impacts of HBB need a reevaluation of consumption habits and marketing strategies. Furthermore, it has major implications for policymakers. Prioritizing the mitigation of environmental impacts caused by fast fashion is of paramount significance. It is necessary to establish stringent regulations for the production, waste management, and recycling processes, while also enforcing mandates for the utilization of sustainable materials. Public policy should proactively promote sustainable consumption through the implementation of educational campaigns and transparent labeling. These initiatives aim to educate customers about the environmental impact of clothing goods and encourage responsible shopping habits.

Ensuring compliance with labor regulations and fostering global cooperation is crucial for ensuring equitable wages and secure working environments in the fashion industry, thereby upholding ethical labor standards throughout worldwide supply networks. Policy measures ought to actively promote the implementation of sustainable economic models, which seek to extend the lifespan of items through the implementation of recycling and upcycling initiatives. This could be achieved by offering subsidies or tax rebates to businesses who adopt these sustainable practices.

Ensuring consumer protection is of utmost importance, particularly in promoting transparency and fairness in advertising and digital marketing and addressing issues like the planned obsolescence of fashion goods. Directing government finances towards innovations and research in sustainable resources and manufacturing processes has the potential to yield significant advancements in environmentally sensitive operations.

Implementing a comprehensive taxation policy is crucial, which involves imposing taxes on fast fashion companies that have negative environmental impacts and offering rewards for sustainable practices. This approach possesses the capacity to discourage unsustainable activity while facilitating a shift towards environmentally aware operations.

In order to successfully address the global impact of the fashion supply chain and its implications, it is crucial to set global standards for sustainable fashion and promote international cooperation. These standards aim to guide the fast fashion industry towards a future that is less harmful to the environment, ethical, and responsible. Through the implementation of these measures, policymakers as well as

governments, can exert significant influence in guiding the industry towards more sustainable development and ethical accountability.

5.4. Limitations

The research albeit informative, has several limitations. Firstly, the scope of the study is limited both geographically and demographically despite having participants from 26 different countries, the data cannot be generalized, similarly having university students as the sample could also be restricting in many ways, thereby failing to encompass the worldwide range of consumer habits in the fast fashion industry. Methodological limitations are also evident; the dependence on self-reported data obtained through the questionnaires and interviews may inculcate biases and could impact the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The constant changes in consumer behaviors following the COVID-19 pandemic pose a difficulty, as current research may not comprehensively capture these ongoing modifications. Furthermore, the swift progress in technology in the field of e-commerce and digital marketing may surpass the conclusions of the study, perhaps rendering certain elements outdated.

Thoroughly addressing sustainability and ethical labor standards in the fast fashion industry may be insufficient in addressing the environmental and social aspects. Finally, this research may lack a comprehensive analysis of the intricate psychological elements that lead to HBB, therefore overlooking crucial cognitive variables that influence consumer behavior. The existence of these limitations underscores the need for careful review of the results and highlights certain aspects requiring further exploration.

5.5 Future research avenues

Given the limitations mentioned in the existing research on HBB, there are numerous prospects for further research. To attain a more comprehensive viewpoint, it is essential to enhance contributions by incorporating a wider array of participants in terms of geographical and demographic representation. Longitudinal studies can effectively track the evolving consumer habits over time, providing valuable insights into how these behaviors adapt in the post-pandemic age. To reduce reliance on self-reported data, a mixture of multidisciplinary research and diverse data sources might be employed. This technique would entail incorporating observational studies and assessing actual buying behaviors, leading to a more comprehensive and holistic viewpoint. Analyzing the consequences of emerging technologies and advancements in e-commerce is crucial for understanding their influence on consumer buying habits in the fast fashion industry. In order to adequately tackle these essential elements, it is essential to conduct thorough research that specifically focuses on sustainability and ethical labor practices in the industry. Furthermore, doing a comprehensive examination of the cognitive and psychological variables that drive HBB can provide more complex consumer insights. Finally, conducting cross-cultural comparative studies is necessary to comprehend the impact of cultural disparities on customer behavior in the fast fashion industry. These study directions can greatly enhance the development of a more intricate, comprehensive, and nuanced comprehension of HBB in the fast fashion industry in a constantly changing post-COVID-19 era.

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APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM FOR THE STUDY

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet about the study.		
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study.		
I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the study, or to any other party. No identifiable personal data will be published.		
I agree to take part in the study by being interviewed, which can be face-to face or over the internet.		
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.		
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs (while ensuring anonymity of the interviewee).		
I agree to the interview being audio or video recorded to enable data analysis.		

Name of participant…….

Signature …….

Date ……