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KASBIT Business Journal, 14(2), 73-83, June 2021

The Generation after Millennials - What is in a Brand!

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Abstract
This study analyzes brand consciousness, social influence, and experiential purchase intentions in branded clothing on Karachi's generation Z consumers. A deductive research approach was taken. Generation Z consumers of Karachi have been selected to propose the relationship among variables. A conceptual model was developed. Data was collected from 264 cases through the survey method. PLS-SEM (Partial Least Square) path modeling has been employed for testing the proposed hypotheses. The research sheds light on the attitude of generation Z consumers towards branded clothes. Brand consciousness, social influence, experiential, and vanity trait positively impact and significantly affect z- generation consumers' purchase intention of branded clothes. This research's uniqueness lies in focus on the purchase intention of Gen Zers for branded clothes, which is an evolving segment in the branded clothing market.
Keywords: Brand Consciousness, Experiential, Social Impact, Trait of Egotism and Purchase Intention.

Introduction
Generation Z is considered as "True Gen," as they value individual expression. They evaluate the result and make decision and relate to associations in a high level of methods and in a logical way (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). It is observed by Mamat et al. (2015) very rightly that the purchase intention of a consumer depends on various motives that influence consumers to make a purchase. Hence purchase intention of Gen Z customers is bound to reflect by their value system and cognition. The extant literature supports that generation Y consumers buy branded clothing to display wealth, prosperity, and success (Giovannini et al., 2015). Still, the rationale behind the purchase of branded clothing by generation Z customers (born between 1996 and 2010) is scant in the existing literature. Although report published by Francis & Hoefel (2018) proposed that the basic of Gen Z is the concept of expressing individual personality and for Gen Z intake, therefore, becomes a means of creativity as divergent, for example, buying in this way or wearing brands according to standard in this way to fit in standards of groups . But this drawn conclusion is based

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on descriptive analysis necessitating the need for a study based on inferential statistics. This study aims to examine the effect of brand consciousness, experiential, social impact, and trait of vanity on the purchase intention of generation Z customers related to the purchase of branded clothing and addresses a gap in the literature studied to a lesser extent.

Research Questions:

RQ1: To what extent brand perception, experiential, social impact, and trait of vanity impact purchase intention?
RQ2: To what extent the trait of vanity moderates the relationship between experiential and purchase intention?
RQ3: To what extent the trait of vanity moderates the relationship between social impact and purchase intention?

Literature Review

Clothing is an elementary requisite for consumers, but now it has transcended the boundary of basic necessity and is viewed as a way to reflect lifestyle (Hassan et al., 2014). It is the backdrop of globalization that has helped consumers become aware of trends in clothing, and such awareness has an impact on consumers' purchase intention for branded apparel (Koca & Koc, 2016). Purchase intention is an individual's planning of purchase (Rahim et al., 2016), subject to his awareness about the product (Ahmad et al., 2013). However, the study of Ahmed et al. (2013) needs further substantiation due to the methodological limitation of data collection from Pakistan's only province, Punjab. The common ground between the studies of Rahima et al. (2016) and Ahmed et al. (2013) is selecting student samples with variation in selecting product categories of mobile phones and imported apparel, respectively. Such a situation leaves the space for the inclusion of local apparel brands as well for generalizability.

This case study works on a theory of planned conducts. Since the study's approach is deductive, its assumption is based on theory (Zalaghi, 2016), which has to be tested. According to Ajzen (1991), the theory of planned conducts is about an individual's behavioral intentions, which are the combination of humans' attitudes, subjective standards or norms, and observed social control. Kumar (2012) suggested that the planned behavior theory helps in studying the different aspects of an individual's purchase intention. Theory of planned behavior links with gathering information and measuring human beings' behavioral intentions, leading to acting (Thoradeniya et al., 2015). Purchase intention is influenced by brand consciousness because brand consciousness affects consumers' perceptual process of value and quality evaluation, impacting consumer purchase intentions (Zeithaml, 1988). The purchase of branded goods by brand-conscious consumers is logical from a consumer standpoint, as it helps consumers in the portrayal of social class and ideal self-image (Bian and Moutinho, 2011). The predictive influence of brand consciousness on purchase intention is endorsed by recent research (e.g., Chiu & Leng, 2015; Yang, Kim & Kim, 2017). Methodologically, the study of Yang et al. (2017) is a multigroup analysis between American and Korean College students, warranting the need for another study with a South Asian context to strengthen the reliability aspect of the interlink between brand perception and purchase intention. Although the research of Chiu & Leng (2015) endorsed brand consciousness's impact on purchase intention, the selected product category is counterfeit sporting goods requiring additional study with a change in the product category.

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Social and personal factors have long been thought to influence consumers' purchase intentions (Anam, 2014). Akar, Yuksel, & Bulut (2015) concluded that social impact has the most powerful effect on alternative assessment. Gillani (2012) concluded a major and positive relation between equal pressure and purchase intention. The common ground in the studies of Akar et al. (2015) and Gillani (2012) is to check the effect of social influence on consumers with the Methodological difference of statistical technique. The study of Akar (2015) used co-variance-based SEM for regression analysis, and Gillani (2012) used multiple linear regression with the help of first-generation statistical software SPSS. They are hence leaving the room for variance-based SEM to handle non-normal distributive assumptions. According to Song and Kim (2006), social impact from internal referents is related to family, friends, and colleagues. Social networking sites are external referents, and they are the sources which effect decision on purchasing due to social impact (Currás-Pérez et al., 2013).

Experiential is the experience of an individual of a particular brand (Shukla & Purani, 2016). All three structural experiential modules of experiential, that is, feel, think, and sense, have a strong influence on customer purchase intention (Khan and Rahman 2014). Many studies have shed light on customer experience's positive impact on customer purchase intention (Babin & Attaway, 2000; Turley & Milliman, 2000). Only some of them have given practical evidence concerning their statements. Practical research focus on more testing whether customer experience impacts customer loyalty and satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009).

Vanity is a psychological construct which describes a person's extreme concern with achievement or physical appearance (Durvasula et al. 2001). Physical superiority has a strong positive impact, while only achievement vanity has a moderately positive effect on luxury brand consumers (Hung et al., 2011). The extant literature does not provide enough evidence for applying the vanity construct trait in a South Asian context and between branded clothing as the selected product category. Studies of Feiereisen et al. (2009) and Mandel et al. (2006) vanit works in both it can affect behavior while it can also act as a moderator between purchase intention and experiential perception. As the garments brands are related to physical appearance and conspicuous consumption, vanity would influence young consumers' purchase intentions in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2013). The study of Abrar et al. (2019) proposed that Vanity traits moderates the relationship between the social factor and online purchase intention of luxury brands. Hence, further research is present to check the same moderating effect of vanity in the relationship between social influence and offline purchase intention. Finally, the extant literature review divulges into the purchase intention of generation Y customers (e.g., Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015; Soh, Rezaei, & Gu, 2017), but the purchase intention of generation Z customers still need to be explored.

Hypotheses Development:

H_1: Brand consciousness has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.
H_2: Experiential has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.
H_3: Social influence has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.
H_4: Trait of vanity has a significant positive impact on purchase intention.
H_5: Trait of vanity acts as a moderator between experiential and purchase intention.
H_6: Trait of vanity acts as a moderator between social influence and purchase intention.

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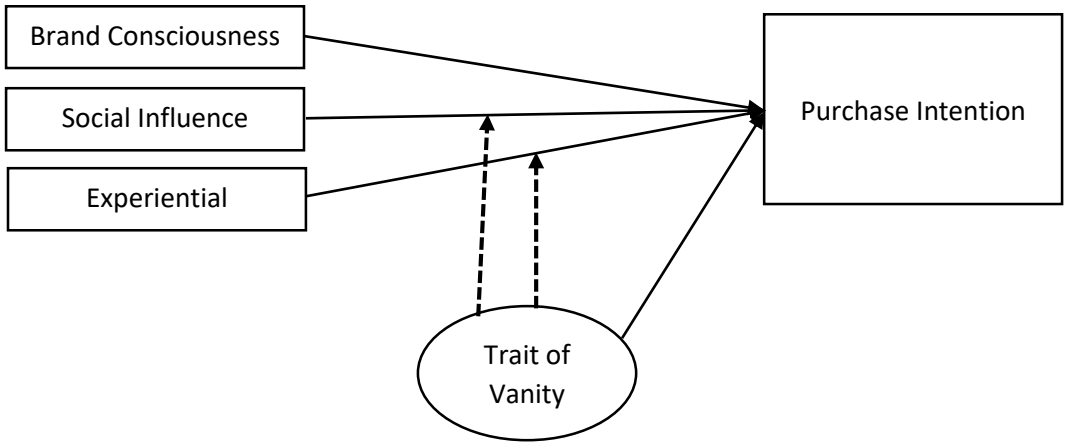
Conceptual Model:



Methodology

Measurement of Variables:

The questionnaire used in this study contained the measures for brand consciousness (BC), social pressure (S), experiential (E), the trait of vanity (TV), and purchase intention(PI). The questionnaire also includes demographics (gender, age, marital status, education, status of employment, city of residence, the channel of purchase, monthly spending on branded, frequency of purchasing, the timing of the purchase, and financial status). The latent variable of brand consciousness is measured with the help of four observed variables are adopted and then adapted a little from the study of Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas (2015). The constructs of experiential and social pressure are operationalized by five items for experiential and three social pressure items taken from the study of Mamat, Noor, and Noor (2016). The moderating variable trait of vanity and the dependent inconsistent purchase intention is operationalized by adopting four and five items, respectively, for the trait of vanity and purchase intention from the study of Punyatoya (2014).

Population and Sample:

The study used a non-probabilistic sampling design based on sample frame unavailability, thus leaving an unequal chance for individuals being selected as respondents (Statpac, 2014). This study's sampling technique is purposive sampling due to compatibility with the research objectives (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007). Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of proficient and well-informed individuals with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell et al, 2011). The target population is the buyers of branded clothing in Karachi. The sample unit is generation Z consumers as they are trendier and more passionate about the purchase of branded products (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Further, it is expected that this generation would make about 40% of the consumers across the world by 2020 (Perlstein, 2020). Initially, the minimum sample size for four independent variables (see Table 1) with a statistical power of 80%, level of significance of 5%, and minimum R2 of 0.25 are calculated at 65 respondents (Hair et al., 2017). Then for getting stable beta coefficients, a sample size over and above the minimum requirement is calculated at 210 cases with 10 cases/item for a total number of 21 items in the instrument (Hair et al., 2013). However, the data

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is collected from 220 respondents keeping the cushion for response error and missing values provision. The research setting is Karachi for its megapolis status of representing consumers from all over Pakistan.

Statistical Technique:

PLS-SEM is used for data analysis for the primary reason of the imposition of less stringent normal distribution assumptions of data (Civelek, 2018) and the broad application of this marketing (Hair et al., 2012). This reason for the non-normal distributive assumption is that social sciences studies almost always rely on non-normal data (Civelek, 2018). Further justification includes a higher degree of robustness of PLS-SEM for a smaller sample size (Sarstedt et al., 2016).

Data Analysis and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics:

The total number of cases for the study was 264 selected from three major cities of Pakistan that is, Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. Tables 2 to 4 were developed with cross-tabulation of data and reveal important insights into the sample characteristics and a few important considerations for marketers. For instance, out of 264 cases (155 females and 109 males), 89% prefer to shop via the traditional channel of physical outlets (see Table 1) than online shopping or social media platforms. This pattern is typical across all three age categories below 19 years, between 19 and 22 years, and 22 to 24 years. The respondents' age brackets are quite interesting as the respondents belong to generation Z, considered digital natives (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Another interesting finding is the equal split of new arrival versus clearance sale as the occasion of purchase, both for married and unmarried categories of respondents (Table2).

Data Analysis via PLS-SEM:

Data analysis is done through partial least squares (Smart-PLS), which is a structural equation modeling based on variance variance (SEM) technique and deals with multiple regression modeling (Henseler, Hubona & Ray, 2016). It is considered the most advanced variance-based SEM method as it models both factors and composites (Miao et al., 2020). Two models define it, i.e., the measurement model, which describes the relationship between developed construct and its observed indicator, and the structural model, representing the relations between the constructs (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). A hypothesized model is built up for structural model evaluation or assessment and measurement (See Figure 1).

Measurement Model Evaluation

Reliability and Validity:

Figure 2 shows the measurement model evaluation. Indicators' dependability is established in the measurement model through item loadings on their respective constructs. All of the item loadings are well above the minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, beta coefficients for the trait of vanity and brand consciousness are the highest among all the four independent variables for the dependent variable of purchase intention, depicting the strong influence of TV and BC on PI. However, the beta coefficients' statistical significance is tested in the structural model assessment separately via bootstrapping.

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Table 4 specifies the dependability and convergent rationality of constructs. Since all the constructs are reflective (Hair et al., 2017), reliability is measured through Cronbach alpha and composite reliability. The Cronbach alpha threshold is 0.704 (Taber, 2018), and the threshold for composite reliability is 0.700 (Hair et al., 2017). All Cranach's alpha and composite reliability values are above the minimum threshold; hence, the constructs' reliability is established. Convergent validity is measured using AVE. The threshold for AVE is 0.5 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). Convergent validity of reflective constructs is established as all values of AVE are above the minimum threshold. Table 5 identifies the discriminant validity of reflective constructs. Discriminant validity is measured using the HTMT ratio. The threshold for HTMT is 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Since all HTMT ratio values are below the maximum threshold value, reflective constructs' discriminant validity is established. Table 4.5 identifies the discriminant validity of reflective constructs. Discriminant validity is measured using the HTMT ratio. The maximum threshold for HTMT is 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Since all the HTMT ratio values are below the maximum threshold value of 0.85, all the constructs' discriminant strength is established.

Structural Model Evaluation:

For structural model assessment, metrics of R^2 (explained variance) and In this study the statistical significance and the size of the structure path are used. As it is evident from figure 2 that R^2 for the endogenous variable of PI is 0.465; that is, 46.5% variance in the endogenous variable is described by the exogenous variables of brand consciousness, social influence, experiential, and trait of vanity. Since R^2 is the squared parallel relation of predicted and actual figures or values which includes all type of data that is used in model assessment to check the model predictive power, hence it is represent the predictive power measures (Rigdon, 2012; Sarstedt, Ringle, Henseler, & Hair, 2014). The research by scholar that focus on issues on marketing, R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a rule of thumb, be respectively described as substantial, moderate, or weak (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2009). Hence it is established that the model has moderate explanatory power for the endogenous variable of PI. Table 6 shows p values and t values for the structural model relationships resulting from the bootstrapping procedure. Subsamples are randomly replaced and drawn from the original data.Which is used to estimate the model (Hair et al., 2017). This process is continuously repeated many times to create subsamples around 5,000, typically about 5,000. Figure 3 shows that since t-values are greater than 1.64 & p-values are less than 0.05 (Hassan, Khurshid, & Mohammad, 2001). Hence, hypotheses H1, H2, H3 & H4 are supported.

Moderation Analysis:

When interpreting moderation analysis results, the primary interest is with the interaction term's. If the interaction term's effect on the endogenous construct is significant, We concluded that this moderator have the moderating effect between the relationship of dependent variable and independent variable. Table 7 shows the results of moderation. Both H5 & H6 are rejected as t-values are less than 1.64 & p-values are greater than 0.05 (Khan & Mohsin, 2017). Hence, it shows a statistically insignificant vanity trait as a moderator in the relationship between social influence (impact) and purchase intention and between experiential and purchase intent.

Conclusion

From a self-concept perspective, this research reflects the purchase intention of generation

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Z consumers for branded clothing. The selection of generation Z is on purpose. The foremost reason is, as they transcend from youth to adulthood, they are beginning to wield an influence on purchasing disproportionate to their ages and personal wealth. Secondly, they have they have exact ideas about the chain that what they want, how they want and the procedure of delivery. By this they want attention in detailed about personalization and willing to be a part to create a product and services according to desire. Two findings from the study are valuable from the marketers' perspective. Firstly, despite enjoying being digital natives, Gen Zers in Karachi still prefer to go to outlets for the shopping attires physically. They were leaving much of the room to digital marketers to improvise upon the thinking pattern of Gen Zers to attract them toward online shopping of branded clothing. From a cognitive perspective, sensory input of feel works as a prerequisite in clothing specifically. Hence, marketers need to look into how they can enrich consumer experience for online shopping of clothing with artificial intelligence and augmented reality. Secondly, structural equation modeling results reveal that the trait of vanity and experiential are the topline predictors for branded clothing's purchase intention among Gen Zers consumers. This phenomenon speaks volumes of the marketers' intervention to limelight the vanity and brand experience in marketing communication strategies.

Reviews of studies using the Theory of Planned Behavior as a theoretical foundation have found that the relative importance of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control in predicting intention can vary across behaviors and situations. In situations where attitudes or subjective norms are powerful, perceived behavioral control may be less predictive of intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Armitage and Conner, 2001). For Gen Zers' attitude, that is, the trait of vanity and subjective norm, that is, experiential are the most critical component predicting purchase intention.

Limitations/ Future Research

A small sample size and confined area compel limitations on the generalizability of findings. The qualitative approach with the interview technique would provide better insights into the problem examined. Future researchers may extend this study to determine a few more factors that affect the purchase intention of z-generation consumers of branded clothes in Pakistan

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