

MBA Dissertation
Student: Alessandro Ledda - 1921858
Supervisor: Tushara Balendran

Generation Z and Gender Fluidity in Fashion Industry:
How Zoomers Are Impacting on Consumer Behaviour.
A Case Study of Asos - Collusion





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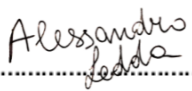
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ABSTRACT

In 2018 Germany, after considered the binary gender man vs woman system as discriminatory for individuals who do not reflect in them, is the second European country to recognise the existence of intersexual, thus abolishing the constraint of labelling newborns as male or female. This seems to be an example of the evolution played by the iGen, even called Generation Z: limited to those born between 1995 and 2010, that Generation is upsetting the binary division pink -female and blue-male, starting from the consumption of fashion until new social and personal identity perception. The marketing literary review around generational consumer behavior does not appear to be particularly updated: the study in question intends to fill, as proportionally as possible, the gaps inherent in the fashion segment of genderless consumerism by the new generation. The methodology has provided a general theoretical basis, identifying the variables of those academic studies concerning the differences in consumption by gender, and a second more specific basis, concerning fashion consumption, the new role of the body as self-determination and new approaches to gender extensions by Asos brand and its gender fluid collection *Collusion*.

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Introduction

This is a quantitative research around Generation Z and its gender fluid fashion consumption, based on the Brand Asos and its gender fluid collection *Collusion*.

It is well known that fashion loves to appropriate: ideas, cultures, ages, sex. From the gender perspective a word has been going around the world: fluidity. Gender fluid fashion is a conception that describes a garment that is not prescribed to a predefined gender when it is designed, differentiating itself from the notions of men's and women's clothing. Brands and designers are becoming the promoters of the gender neutral movement. There is in fact a redefinition of the rules, where socio-cultural references of what have been always considered drivers of masculinity and femininity are now evolving. Today there seem to be well defined needs and requirements around the non-binary identity, and the fluidity of gender. Fashion acts as a mirror of a context that is redefining parameters; the study focuses on the consumer behavior of generation Z, as new target for the Company Asos, and its gender fluid collection *Collusion*.

Research Question

- How Generation Z is approaching to gender identities?
- How Generation Z is influencing the Consumer Behaviour?
- Is the Fashion Industry improving the Generation Z self-expression?

Aim and objectives of the Research

Aim

The aim of this research is to understand how Generation Z and its gender identity conception are influencing the Fashion Market, as temporary trend or, most probably, as present and future.

Research Objectives

- To ascertain how the progressive approach of Generation Z is changing social norms about gender identities
- To establish how the Generation Z lifestyle is reflecting on Consumer Behaviour, in terms of needs and desires
- To establish if a specific gender fluid collection, like *Collusion* of Asos, is considered by Generation Z, to support their own identity

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Generational Cohort Theory

Generational cohort theory is a well-established basis for creating market segments (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Schewe & Noble, 2000; Strauss & Howe, 1991), in which the names of the cohorts, the start and end dates, and the range of the ages years vary across global contexts.

According to The Pew Research Center, the definition of relevant cohorts for marketing have been through: Boomers, between 1946 and 1964, Gen X between 1965 and 1980, Millennials between 1981 and 1996, and Gen Z born since 1997. According to Howe and Strauss (2000), each generation is defined by three drivers, considering adolescence and early adulthood experiences: the perceived awareness of membership in the group, common beliefs and behaviors shared by the group, and shared history significant macro events, both positive and negative. The entry of those events as social norms includes changes in political and economic scenes, innovations, even introducing new celebrities and cultural icons. The effects are on the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of a cohort, with significant differences between generations: the imprint that drives this shared identity typically occurs during a generation's formative years, before full adulthood, when they experience a coming of age moment.

Generation Z

A generation is defined as a distinct group with *a set of historical events and related phenomena that creates a distinct generational gap* (Turner, 2015, p. 103), and according to the Pew Research Center (2019), Gen Z shoppers are born between 1997 and 2012.

Prensky (2001) was the first to introduce the term digital natives for Gen Z, considering and cthis generation as a group that *thinks and processes information fundamentally differently from their predecessors*, even suggesting changes in their brain biology. The letter Z in Generation Z comes from the expression *zapping*, as the act of rapidly changing TV channels in search for topics of interest, ignoring everything else (Berkup 2014). Generation Z is also referred to as *net-Generation*, *e-Generation* or *iGen* and its individuals are often referred to as *homo sapiens digitalis*, *digital natives* or post-Millennials. However, Generation Z literature is still at an emerging phase: there are studies about their values, learning styles, the impact of social media, technology adoption, expectations at the workplace.

The oldest components of Generation Z are now in their 20s, starting to be part of the workforce and, consequently, managing their income (Dimock, 2019; Williams, 2015). Also, Generation Z shaped 40% of consumers globally (Thangavel et al., 2019), since when they are the generation of internet savvy (Kim, 2019; Thangavel et al., 2019). This is the main reason why this generation has already become the focus for digital marketing (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014). As *Digital Natives* (Singh, 2014), technology is the heavy coin-instrument (Priporas et al., 2017) to shop online, like natural behavior. The trend of online shopping is blooming across the globe (Jackson & Ahuja, 2016; Vieira et al., 2019). Shops and brand owners are challenging themselves to be more attractive: the appeal itself does not only depend anymore on the

appearance, but especially to make sure that the target market knows that they exist. In 2018, internet users bought 57% fashion related products online, consequently the competition is aggressive for online shops, especially in the fashion business which contributes 1.3 trillion dollars and employs more than 300 million people globally (Gazzola et al., 2020). The fashion industry is also driven by the trend-behavior *see now buy now*, that increases the competition in a saturated market. Gen Z is more ethnically diverse than any previous generation, staying on track to be the most well-educated generation. According to Pew Research Center (2018), Gen Z's opinions about social and policy issues are likely similar to Millennials: among Americans ages 13 and older are progressive and pro-government, seeing the country's growing by ethnic diversity is a good thing. Also, this Generation is leading the ethnic makeup: a bare majority (52%) are non-Hispanic white, significantly smaller than the share of Millennials who were non-Hispanic white in 2002 (61%). One-in-four Gen Zers are Hispanic, 14% are black, 6% are Asian and 5% are some other ethnic or two or more ethnicities. They are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to be enrolled in college. Among 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in high school in 2018, 57% were enrolled in a two-year or four-year college, compared with 52% among Millennials in 2003 and 43% among members of Gen X in 1987. Due the high engagement in education, Gen Zers are less likely to be working than previous generations when they were teens and young adults. Only 18% of Gen Z teens (ages 15 to 17) were employed in 2018, compared with 27% of Millennial teens in 2002 and 41% of Gen Xers in 1986. Across a number of measures, Gen Z stands out from older generations in the views of family and societal change. Roughly half of Gen Zers (48%) and Millennials (47%) say gay and lesbian couples being allowed to marry is a good thing for our society. By comparison, only one-third of Gen Xers and about one-quarter of Boomers (27%) say this is a good thing. Pluralities of Boomers and Gen Xers say it doesn't make a difference. Gen Zers and Millennials are less likely than older generations to say that single women raising children on their own is a bad thing for society. Still, relatively few in both generations say this is a good thing for society, while about half say it doesn't make much difference (roughly similar to the shares among older generations). Regarding the own home life, three-in-ten of Gen Z (29%) live in a household with an unmarried parent while 66% live with two married parents. A roughly comparable share of Millennials (69%) lived with two married parents at a similar age, but the shares among Gen Xers and Boomers were significantly larger (72% and 86%). Of those Gen Zers who are living with two married parents, in most cases both of those parents are in the labor force (64%). Topics about gender identity are rapidly changing and Gen Z is driving that change. Gen Zers are much more likely than those in older generations to say they personally know someone who prefers to go by gender-neutral pronouns, with 35% saying so, compared with 25% of Millennials, 16% of Gen Xers, 12% of Boomers and just 7% of Silents. There are also stark generational differences in views of how gender options are presented on official documents. Gen Z is by far the most likely to say that when a form or online profile asks about a person's gender it should include options other than "man" and "woman." About six-in-ten Gen Zers (59%) say forms or online profiles should include additional gender options, compared with half of Millennials, about four-in-ten Gen Xers and Boomers (40% and 37%, respectively) and roughly a third of

those in the Silent Generation (32%). Gen Z shows comfort with using gender-neutral pronouns: majorities say they would feel *very* or *somewhat* comfortable using a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to someone if asked to do so. Members of Gen Z are also similar to Millennials in their views on society's acceptance of those who do not identify as a man or a woman. Roughly half of Gen Zers (50%) and Millennials (47%) think that society is not accepting enough of these individuals. Smaller shares of Gen Xers (39%), Boomers (36%) and those in the Silent Generation (32%) say the same.

Gender Fluidity in Fashion Industry

Fluidity offers an alternate way of being, crossing and merging masculine and feminine.

Harris Reed, stylist

According to Harvard Health Publishing (Harvard Medical School), *cisgender means a person's gender identity matches the sex — female or male — designated on their original birth certificate. Gender fluidity refers to change over time in a person's gender expression or gender identity, or both. That change might be in expression, but not identity, or in identity, but not expression. Or both expression and identity might change together.*

The relation between fluidity and fashion has had a long heritage in Japan, pioneered by revered designers Comme des Garçons and Yohji Yamamoto. Since 2016, Tokyo's youth movement has been rejecting ideas of fashion defining sexuality through make-up, clothes and Instagram filters that draws from Japanese anime's fluid beauty standards.

Meantime, on the west side of the world, gender-fluid Fashion is entering in the mainstream: models identifying as non-binary, trans men, and cis men walked alongside cis women at Valentino's Fall 2020 womenswear show. In September, Marc Jacobs introduced *Heaven*, a new range billed as being for *girls who are boys and boys who are girls, [and] those who are neither*. Around the same time, Alessandro Michele launched *Gucci MX*, a new way to shop on Gucci.com, where pieces from his womenswear and menswear shows are merchandised together. According to the New York-based brand consultancy Wunderman Thompsonore, more than half of Gen Z customers shop from both menswear and womenswear offerings. Fashion has been always subverting gender norms, for instance Coco Chanel's wide-legged trousers, Yves Saint Laurent's le smoking, and Jean Paul Gaultier's men's skirting, by and large these designs have been created by people, and for people, who identify as cisgender. Until recently the industry had been slow to adapt to and embrace a more expansive definition of gender itself and a consumer who identifies across a gender spectrum. Pierre Davis, the 30-year-old cofounder and head designer of the L.A. based collective No Sesso (Italian for "no gender") creates conceptual pieces such as skirts made from suit jackets that showcase fluid possibility. Nowaday there is a growing number of gender fluid retailers and brands as well, even in fast-fashion retailers (e.g. Asos). Across the world, the LGBT and gender-neutral community is still fighting with hostility and violence. Gucci's global campaign Chime For Change released the short film *The Future is Fluid*, as a companion to The Irregular Report, a biannual report on and by Gen Z. The voices in the film share this generation's tenacity, curiosity, empathy, optimism and hope, redefining and

representing the world through a prism of fluidity. One Gen Zer expressed: *I hold myself responsible to continue advocating and fighting for the rights of trans and non-binary youth because I have the privilege to*, suggesting a new approach to fluid identities to open up all the barriers.

Asos

Asos is a British online fashion and cosmetic retailer, founded in 2000 in London, by Nick Robertson, Andrew Regan, Quentin Griffiths and Deborah Thorpe. The headquarters are in Camden Town, at Greater London House with additional offices in Paris, New York, Berlin, and Birmingham. Originally as AsSeenOnScreen, with the tagline "Buy what you see on film and TV", in 2003, shareholders agreed to change the names of AsSeenOnScreen Holdings PLC and AsSeenOnScreen Limited to ASOS plc and ASOS.com Limited.

The company sells over 850 brands of clothing, accessories, and beauty and ships to all 196 countries from fulfilment centres in the UK, US and EU. Since 2001 the Company was admitted to the Alternative Investment Market (AIM) on the London Stock Exchange. The mission is become the world's number-one destination for fashion-loving 20-somethings, through the best online customers experience, through values as creativity, positivity, democracy, inclusivity, integrity and drivers like customer-obsessed, on-point personalisation best in class fulfilment, localised experience. Asos' business model is based on two different sides: consumers, with their need to buy latest fashion trends and fashion companies, that produce fashion for possible buyers. The third part is about a niche component which refers to 20s years old people. The business model is supported by five value proposition:

- 1) Accessibility: through *Asos Market Place*, the company is offering 50.000 unique vintage fashion items, from 900 boutiques in 40 countries.
- 2) Customisation: different websites for different countries
- 3) Price: local pricing strategy
- 4) Cost reduction: free delivery and free returns
- 5) Convenience: next-day delivery options, express delivery services, live delivery updates to receive real-time information on details such as driver's name and expected delivery time.
- 6) Brand status: 80,000 different products, with over 3,000 new lines added each week, between menswear and womenswear, accessories and footwear, and beauty and jewelry.

Asos also said that the company could be saddled with £25m of extra costs from World Trade Organization tariffs in the event of a no-deal end to Brexit transition in January.

The company is known as the most valuable retailer in UK focused on only online channels, so market studies use to analyse its competitor considering variables as fashionability, target and range of price.

Asos SWOT

Strengths

- Over 850 brands and large range of products
- UK's largest independent online and fashion beauty retailer
- Innovative display merchandise
- International expansion
- Supply chain platform, Allport, increases visibility and cooperation across ASOS' international supply chain
- 24/7 customer service
- Efficient delivery program
- High fashionability and quality
- Spread over 190 countries accepting foreign currencies
- Green VALUES, integrity and inclusivity
- Independent language sites

Weaknesses

- Online, no possibility to touch the product
- Expensive cost for free shipping
- Only one warehouse in UK
- Asos magazine only in English

Opportunities

- Increasing mobile penetration
- Pop-up stores
- Co-creation with local brands to improve green VALUES
- Children's wear segment
- New trends in customers' behaviours
- Evaluating beyond china background

- Globalization

Threats

- Uncertain economic times
- Experiential marketing: customer want a live experience in the store
- Social media banned in some countries
- HR issues (during pandemic, for example, employees were asking for more safety guidelines)

Asos segmentation

Segmentation is referred to young professionals and students (men, women, and non-binary), interested in lifestyle and beauty, with the need to express the own style and identity. There is not any difference regarding ethnicity and the ability to buy comes from average incomes. Also, the global audience is able to buy using online channel, sharing believes and values like integrity, inclusivity and diversity as drivers for the success.

Asos Targeting

Asos is focused on people *20-something* (15-34), who are searching for the latest trends in fashion, even through social media. The audience is global, anyway most of the consumers are from the UK, USA and Australia. The company follows three type of strategies (undifferentiated, differentiated and concentrated), selling clothes' categories petite, plus size and maternity.

Asos Positioning



Asos Marketing Mix

According to Kotler (1967), Marketing Mix is the combination of four elements, called the 4P's (Product, Price, Promotion and Place), that every company has the option of adding, subtracting, or modifying in order to create a desired marketing strategy. In addition, could be considered as drivers also People, Process, and Physical Evidence.

Product

Product concept refers to a combination of products and services that the company is offering in the market, from branding, design, packaging, sizes, quality until return policies. Asos offers a large range of products, divided into more than 850 Brands:

- Womenswear
- Menswear
- Gender Fluid Clothes
- Accessories
- Beauty

Around the service, asos offers a free shipping across the world, a customer service 24/7 and a personalised delivery, including the mobile communication of direct marketing in this process.

Price

Price concept refers to the amount of money a consumer is willing to pay to obtain products or services. In Asos the price strategy is promotional and market-oriented, through mid-season discounts. Also, the private label business Asos gives the space to be price competitive, with a range from 4£ to over 500£, with a competitive Opening Price Point (OPP).

Place

The place involves company's activities that make the product available, using distribution and trade channels, roles, coverage, assortments, locations, inventory and transportation characteristics and alternatives. Asos supply chain is focused on 24 countries. Also doesn't have any physical store: the customers can buy products just through the online channel.

Promotion

Promotion includes personal and non-personal communication activities. Activities that communicate the merits of the overall product. In Asos:

- Brand Magazine

- Students Discount
- Promo Codes
- Direct Marketing
- Celebrity Endorsement
- Sport Sponsorships
- Asos Foundation
- Social Media Marketing
- Influencer Marketing

People

The individuals involved in the organisation, carrying out the important day to day tasks: in Asos there is not any face-to-face service, which is just by email and phone. The Company provides to its staff a constant training, learning how to be friendly and professional.

Process

From the customer's decision to satisfy their need until the final transaction: in Asos the customer can't try the products; after seeing the item, customers can put it in the basket and go to check out.

Physical Evidence

In terms of the image of the service provided by the business to the customers: in Asos the only one physical evidence possible is the receipt one after the payment, that the system will send by email.

Collusion

In October 2018, Asos launched the exclusive brand *Collusion - for the coming age*, collaborating for more than a year with six unnamed young people of Gen Z's, influencers, stylists, students and activists, to build a fresh collection. Created by and for Generation Z, *Collusion* is a gender fluid collection, as *authentic, vibrant wardrobe which speaks directly to Gen-Z peers* (Asos, 2018), driven by inclusivity and sustainability. Inclusivity strategy is based on the consumers goal to reach their own self-expression through each item, different sizes, and shapes; sustainability is one of the most issue which Gen Z is focused on, and for this reason the brand is founded on animal - free sources.

Collusion SWOT

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
• Sub Asos' Brand - strong awareness • Trendy and affordable • Large online range • Established a typical consumer	• Not yet strong brand image • No physical stores
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
• Collaborations with more influencers • Sustainability • Pop-up stores	• Certain audience • Street style doesn't usually ask further changes

Table 1. Collusion SWOT

Collusion Customer-based Brand Equity Model (CBBE)

Salience

Gender fluid clothes collection, focused on 18-24 target, but also to whoever needs to express own identity beyond binary gender.

Brand Performance

- Universal usability
- Medium range of items
- Supported by Asos Brand strong awareness and image
- Quality
- Asos policy refunds

Imagery

- Trendy
- Sophisticated
- Confident
- Unique
- Sociable

Judgements

- Fabric quality
- Global and recognisable Brand
- Innovative

Feelings

- Excitement
- Fashionable
- Community

Resonance

- Repeat Purchase as Loyalty
- Engagement with Asos community (Asos Insiders, Influencers)

Gender and Identity in Marketing Debate

First marketing researches about gender, focused on consumer behavior, have followed the *paradigma* gender-as-a-variable (Haynes 2008), indicating just sex differences in certain contexts. However the evolution of that approach can be seen through the ACR - Association for Consumer Research: one of the key functions of ACR is to facilitate growth and progress in the field of research consumers, supporting conferences, as well as reviews and publishes academic research publications. These Conferences have contributed greatly to the discussion on gender in consumer behavior; however, these searches were not found in any database, but thanks to recent ACR funding they have recently been disclosed.

The inaugural Conference in 1991, entitled *Gender and Consumer Behavior*, hosted by University of Utah, focused the debate around typical differences between men and women as different responses to the same stimuli, opening to pioneer issues: the correlation between identity and different cultural contexts, for instance.

The 1993 Conference analysed situations of consumption based on context. The focus has been on the relationship between gender and policies in developing countries.

The 1996 Conference *Gender, Marketing and Consumer Behavior*, hosted in San Francisco, established a central role of Marketing in the study of gender. Prominent in this Conference was the study of gender and fashion by Thompson and Haytko, published in the Journal of Consumer Research, in 1997. That specific Conference broke the classic structure, introducing fluidity even into the debate, thanks to the new entry of young PhD students into the panorama of academic research.

The 1998 Conference was related to sexual orientation, presenting what is now known as *Queer Theory*. Of consequence, studies that dealt with the clear distinction between men and women decreased, leaving the space to numerous sub-categories of gender: the concept of neo-traditional masculinity was faced.

The 2000 Conference, hosted by the University of Illinois, continued the investigation of male segment, through new approaches to masculinity, and particularly supported French and American studies on male buying behavior (Otnes e McGrath, 2000). Also it analysed the role of daytime TV in post-war America regarding gender dynamics (Stole, 2000), the feminizing trend in Marketing with the entry of more women as managers and students (Catterall e Maclaran, 2000).

In the 2002 Conference, the American territory was abandoned and flew to Dublin, with the participation of European scholars who were followed by many perspectives. A main role was attributed to the duo gender - identity: particular was the attention paid to the body, until then opposed to the mind (Firat, 1991, 1993). In support of the study on identity, analyses between gender, culture and technology were presented: Chen (2002) dealt with online dating in China, discovering that the Internet, despite allowing freedom of expression for male or the dominant norms on gender culture. 2002 was also the year that marks the entrance of important feminist and transgender works (Hyatt, 2002).

The 2004 Conference marked a return to America, Wisconsin. The direction taken in previous editions was strengthened: new studies included consumers such as female drug addicts (Borrowman e Costa, 2004),

cross-dressers (Nelson and Hegland, 2004) and LGBTQ (Chen e Aung, 2004; Maclaran e Stevens, 2004). Particular attention was paid to the works of Judith Butler and her theories on gender (*Gender Trouble* 1990, and *Bodies That Matter* 1993): the gender is performing, worn as if it were a dress (Schroeder e Borgerson, 2004).

Since that moment, the tradition started dealing with gender fluidity, analysing clothing as a tool for definition, ostentation or repression. An important result was achieved by Brown (2004), in applying the theory of gender - stimuli. The researcher applied the reading of one of the most important articles on the subject, *Marketing Myopia* (Leavitt, 1960), and defining the difference between gender and sex as distinct concepts.

The 2006 Conference, host in Edinburgh, was specifically addressed to masculinity, such as the relationship between male and cuisine (Brownlie and Hower, 2006), the male body in advertising (Senic e Podnar, 2006), and the marriage between man and fashion (Kiaser, 2006).

The 2008 Conference, hosted in Boston, followed the path of masculinity study, addressing issues such as masculine attitude in online forums (Avery, 2008), fashion and the negotiation of male identity (Kaiser et al., 2008). This Conference also maintains an international, but not Western, dimension: a feminist reading on consumption in Iran (Jafari, 2008) and the negotiation of female identity in Mexico (Storgaard, 2008) are some examples.

Gender, Identity, and Consumer Behavior

According to The American Marketing Association, consumer behavior includes the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behavior, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives. In other words, the studies about feelings and actions people go through during the purchasing process, highly influenced by the background. (Peter & Olsen 2008). In the choice to invest their incomes in goods and services, consumers are driven by needs, wants and demands, segmented in: physical (e.g. food), social, to fulfill the feelings of belonging and affection, individual, linked with ones desire to gain knowledge and get new experiences. Marketing is not focused to affect those needs and desires, because they are part of the human nature. (Kotler & Armstrong 2014).

According to Maslow (1943) all the humans needs can be illustrated in a hierarchy, through five different categories, stating that certain needs rely on a satisfaction of a prior need.

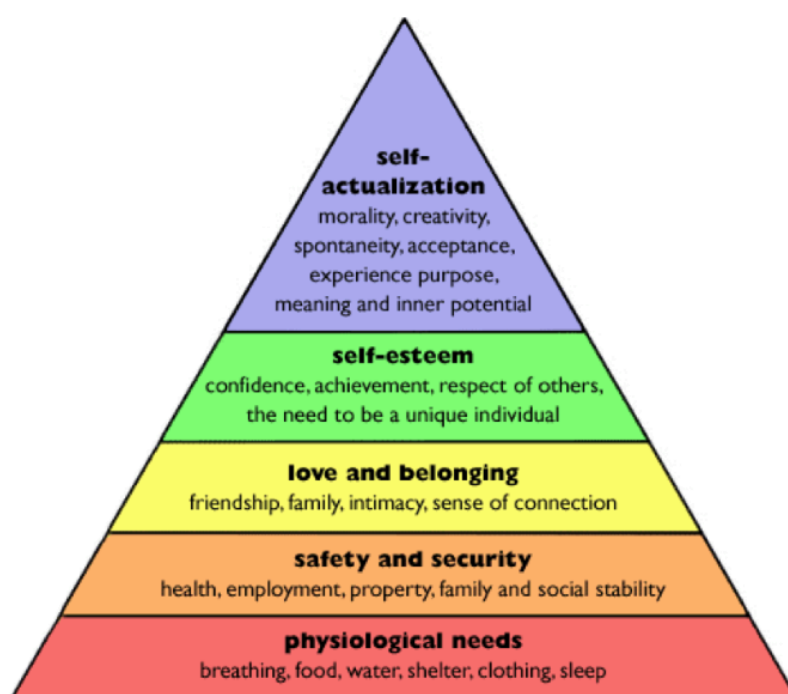


Fig.1. Maslow Pyramid

Physiological needs are the base for all other needs, meaning that they are preparatory, and they have to be satisfied to achieve any other one. Once physiological needs are achieved, needs for safety and security follow. Third in the hierarchy are the needs of love and belonging and fourth come the need for self-esteem. At the very top of the hierarchy are the needs for self-actualisation.

Maslow's hierarchy seems to be straightly linked to the Western Culture: in many of the Asian cultures, in fact, the welfare of the group is what matters the most; also through religious aspects, some consumers might feel certain desires need to be fulfilled before the physiological one, crossing the self-fulfilment as second priority.

Mobile conversations have represented, and perhaps still represent, discursive examples of gender (Rakow 1992; Katz, 1999), in which males goal is about the transmission of information, while women are recognized as chatters (Alexander, et al., 1995). *It's Good to Talk* (Bob Hoskins, 1990) is an advertising campaign that goes beyond this convention, by alluding to gender identity as a more appropriate variable to consumer behavior than biological sex. Gender identity, as psychological sex, is defined a fundamental, existential sense of masculinity or femininity (Spence, 1984), then subordinated to the cultural references (Firat, 1991; Lerner, 1986). The vast terminology referring to gender identity in the literature has perhaps confusion in this regard: typing of sex (Bem, 1974), stereotypes of the sexual role (Spence, Helmreich e Stapp 1975) are some examples. Only the last decade has introduced the official use of gender identities (Fischer e Arnold 1994; Gainer 1993; Kempf, Palan e Laczniak, 1997; Palan, Areni e Kiecker 1999, 2001). That attitude was also fuelled by the convention of interchanging *gender* and *sex*. According to Deaux (1985), sex refers to biological aspects and gender to psychological characteristics associated with sex, organically and socially constructed. One more issue was addressed to the use of *gender role concepts* and *attitudes on the gender role*. The gender role involves the behaviors and activities derived by the culture and related to masculinity and femininity, through which an individual chooses to adapt. Attitudes on the role of gender are referred to the personal conventions of the individual with respect to the rights and responsibilities of men and women. Gender identity is certainly linked to both, roles and attitudes, but they do not necessarily have to be congruent (Deaux 1985; Fischer and Arnold, 1994). Gender identity refers to the extension in which individuals identify themselves with male and female personality traits. There is agreement among researchers on these traits to consider the female ones towards communal / expressive tendencies and the male ones towards instrumental / agency tendencies (Parsons and Shils, 1952): females will tend to focus on the interaction process, while males will tend to be interested in achieving goals, outside the interaction process (Gill et al., 1987). According to Lupetow and Garovich (1995), personality aspects associated to masculinity and femininity can be included as

Masculinity	Femininity
• Authoritative • Athletic • Aggressive • Despotie • Competitive • Adventurous • Confident • Ambitious	• Friendly • Timid • Creative • Obedient • Loving • Talkative • Romantic • Comprehensive

Measures of Gender Identity

Scales has been useful tools to measuring the multidimensionality of masculine and feminine traits, since 60s: the California Psychological Inventory - Femininity Scale (CPI-FE), the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) and the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). First studies, 60s and 70s, were based on the inventory of CPI-FE44, subscale of the California Psychological Inventory, based on one-dimensional gender identity model and showing masculinity and femininity to different poles; in the mid-1970s the one-dimension left for the double dimension and consequently the CPI-FE was replaced.

Between 1971 and 1979 the tool used in consumer research was the PAQ, although the BSRI took on the leading role from 1979. BSRI original version included 20 male elements, 20 female elements and 20 neutrals, however some researches have used the short version of the scale, consisting of 10 male and 10 female elements (Bem, 1981b). According to Palan (2001), consumer behavior studies, developed between 1963 and 2001, have used these last two scales extensively and concerned the preference for cigarette brands (Vitz e Johnston, 1965), attitudes towards hair sprays (Morris e Cundiff, 1971), attitudes towards leisure (Gentry and Doering, 1977), food preferences (Kahle e Homer, 1985), and involvement in Christmas shopping (Fisher and Arnold, 1990).

Due to the results considered inconclusive, BSRI and PAQ scales have been questioned, attributing the blame to take a still one-dimensional position on personality traits, instead of multidimensionality (Taylor and Hall 1982; Spence, 1984-1993).

Scales structure categorizes individuals through median scores along the traits of masculinity and femininity: in both cases the same individuals have been typified on the basis of sex (males are identified with male traits, females with female ones), on the gender-typing intersection (males are identified in female traits and females in masculine traits), on androgyny (males and females declare themselves high on both male and female traits), and on indifferentiation (females identify with low traits of masculinity and femininity). SIS deserves a separate discussion, a disguised measure of sexual identity, which was thought to offer further interpretations of gender identity. It was later found that this measure was strongly connected to biological sex (Palan et al., 1999).

Gender Identity Theories

Gender Schema Theory

Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981) states that individuals acquire and exhibit traits and behaviors according to their gender identity. Consequently gender identity fulfills the function of organization, through which individuals process information about themselves in the environment around them. The effectiveness of that theory depends on whether or not an individual is typed on the basis of sex: therefore, a male or female typed sex is more likely to be influenced by the own gender identity than a non-typed sex.

Multifactorial Gender Identity Theory

That theory contradicts Bem's, argues that gender-related phenomena are multifactorial in nature and as desirable traits of gendered personality which constitute a factor as well (Feather 1984; Spence 1984, 1991; Taylor and Hall 1982). Masculinity and femininity are distinct concepts from gender role expectations, attitudes, and preferences. Therefore, the use of BSRI and PAQs, which are limited to studying variables relevant to instrumentality and expressiveness, is considered inappropriate by Spence (1993) as global indicators. The theory is based on the hypothesis that gender identity is a combination of correlated and associated phenomena to each other in varying degrees. Not only gender identity is multifactorial, but each differentiating factor has its own evolutionary history that varies in individuals, since the factors are influenced by more variables that are not necessarily related to gender (Spence 1993).

The difference between the two theories described consists, therefore, in the fact that the Theory of multifactorial gender identity, the measurement of identity coincides with the measurement of multiple factors, such as personality and gender behaviors, while the Theory of the gender schema supports the measurement of a single factor, male and female traits, to indicate multiple concepts related to gender.

Gender Identity Studies

Since 1963, 31 empirical analyses have been conducted regarding consumer behavior and focused on gender identity:

Research	Measure	Sample	Result	Theory
Aiken, 1963	CPI-FE	300 F	Significant positive correlation between femininity traits and decoration	MGTI
Vitz & Johnston, 1965	CPI-FE-MMPI	97 F 97 M	Among smokers, significant positive correlation between the image of the male cigarette brand and the traits of the male personality	MGTI
Fry, 1971	CPI-FE	216 M & F	Female males and females prefer the brands of MGIT cigarettes with female images	MGTI
Morris & Coundiff, 1971	CPI-FE	223 M	Very feminine / anxious males have more attitudes unfavorable to the hair spray product female compared to medium-low female males	MGTI
Tucker, 1976	PAQ	11F 13 M	Traditional sex roles are tarnishing respect to gender identification.	MGTI
Burns, 1977	PAQ	81 F	Masculinity is a determinant of power decision making of wives.	GST
Gentry & Doering, 1977	CPI-FE-PAQ	100 M 100 F	Gender identity is a strong predictor of attitudes Towards leisure activities, but a poor predictor of attitudes towards products, brands and media	GST
Gentry, Doering & O'Brien, 1978	CPI-FE-PAQ	100F 100M	Biological sex explains greater variability than gender identity in perceptions and use of products and recreational activities	GST
Gentry & Doering, 1979	CPI-FE-PAQ	100 F 100 M	Biological sex is more closely related respect for the attitude and use of recreational activities to gender identity	GST
Golden, Allison, & Clee, 1979	BSRI (long)	307 M&F	Biological sex is significantly related to gender typing of the product, while the identity of gender is not	GST

Allison, Golden, Mullet, & Coogan, 1980	BSRI (long)	307 M&F	Biological sex is a better predictor of differences in typing the sex of the product with respect to identity gender	GST
Martin & Roberts, 1983	BSRI (long)	125 M&F	Gender identity is significantly related to performance expectations of women entrepreneurs; significantly correlated sexual role attitudes to the expectations of independently tried individuals their sex	MGIT

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Martin & Roberts, 1983	BSRI (long)	125 M&F	Gender identity is significantly related to performance expectations of women entrepreneurs; significantly correlated sexual role attitudes to the expectations of independently tried individuals their sex	MGIT
Gentry & Haley, 1984	PAQ	86 M 82 F	Biological sex may be a better predictor of recall of the announcement and ease of recall respect to gender identity. Differences in gender identity within sex they are more interesting than differences between sex	GST
Coughlin & O' Connor, 1985	BSRI (long)	420 M&F	Male gender identity explains multiple differences in the purchase intention as a reaction of the roles women in advertisements compared to biological sex	MGIT
Khale & Homer, 1985	BSRI (long)	84 M 55 F	Biological sex is a better predictor of preferences food with respect to gender identity	GST
Barak & Stern, 1986	BSRI (long)	614 F	Scale of masculinity seems to be the index of self- insurance, which may be more important to the consumer behavior with respect to the scale of the femininity	MGIT
Qualls, 1987	BSRI (long)	89 M 89 F	The BSRI, as a measure of sexual role orientation, GST is positively related to the influence of families.	GST
Stern, Barak, & Gould, 1987	BSRI (short)	380 F 380 M	Men identify with the male BSRI, MGIT scale while women identify with the female one, but both are confused about the definitions of opposite sex	MGIT

Jaffee & Berger, 1988	BSRI (short)	100 F	Gender identity is significantly related to preferences for the positioning of the sexual role in the advertising, but the relationship differs by category of product	MGIT
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Schmitt, LeClerc, & Dube-Rioux, 1988	BSRI (long)	111 M 120 F	Biological sex is a better explanatory variable gender identity regarding the tasks of recall, choice and memory	GST
Gould & Stern, 1989	BSRI (long) SIS	65 M 70 M	Biological sex is a better predictor of attitudes of fashion with respect to gender identity, but research on gender identity may be more important when examining the differences between sex and sex	GST
Fisher & Amond, 1990	BSRI (long)	299 M&F	Female gender identity is positively related to involvement in shopping for Christmas gifts for both men than for women; gender role attitudes moderate involvement.	MGIT
Gould & Well, 1991	BSRI (long)	59 M 68 F	Biological sex is a better predictor of the identity of kind of self-descriptions, feelings, attitudes and choice of gift. Gender identity useful for explaining differences within the group in specific contexts	GST MGIT
Jaffee, 1991	BSRI (short)	200 F	The modern representation of sexual roles in advertising improves the advertising response to services financial; more essential positioning for women taller than men, compared to lower male women	GST
Worth, Smith, & Mackie, 1992	M/F traitsc	40 M 72 F	Gender preference for beer and consistent jeans with self-assessment of gender identity	GST
Gainer, 1993	BSRI (short)	147 M 210 F	Both biological sex and female gender identity positively influence participation in the arts	MGIT

Gould & Stern, 1993	BSRI (long) SIS	135 M&F	Females are more gender deprived than males; androgynous and undifferentiated individuals have one greater private gender consciousness	GST
Fisher & Arnold, 1994	BSRI (long)	299 M&F	Both gender identity and gender role attitude explain more differences in Christmas shopping than biological sex	MGIT
Kempf, Palan, & Lacznia, 1997	PAQ	105 M&F	Male gender identity and androgyny positively correlated with confidence in general information processing	MGIT
Palan, Areni, & Kiecker, 1999	BSRI (short) PAQ SIS	64 M 51 F	The female and male scales of BSRI and PAQ are not internally consistent. SIS highly correlated to biological sex.	MGIT
Palan, Areni, & Kiecker, 2001	BSRI (short)	64 M 51 F	Male males are more likely than female males to recall gift giving experiences	MGIT

Table 2. Gender Identity Studies

The first four studies that used CPI-FE have examined the relation between gender identity and attitudes with the product image, for three categories: clothing, cigarettes and personal hygiene. In three of them, consumer beliefs and attitudes were found to be consistent with their gender identity (Aiken, 1963; Fry, 1971; Vitz e Johnston, 1965). Only one study showed inconsistencies between gender identity and consumer behavior: feminine males presented, proportionally to a high level of anxiety, an unfavourable attitude towards a female hair spray product (Morris and Cundiff, 1971).

The first study to use the PAQ brought the concept that not necessarily all women should have female gender identities, as not all men should have male gender identities (Tucker, 1976) and this would affect consumption. Some later studies have found, in fact, changing decision-making patterns between husband and wife: masculine wives have had a greater influence in purchasing decisions for some product categories, compared to more feminine wives (Burns, 1977). Two specific studies used the PAQ to analyze the relationship between gender identity and the General Information Processing Confidence-GIPC (Kempf, Palan and Lacznia, 1997), finding correspondence between masculinity and GIPC. A further study, comparing the gender identity scales used in the research, suggested four other personality traits - vulnerability, emotionality, composure and autonomy - in addition to the already known expressiveness-femininity, and instrumentality-masculinity (Palan et al., 1999).

Regarding BSRI, different issues were addressed, such as the perception of masculinity and femininity in products (Allison et al., 1980, Golden, Allison and Clee, 1979, femininity in advertising (Coughlin e O'Connor, 1985; Jaffee, 1991; Jaffee and Berger, 1988), and gender awareness (Gould and Stern, 1993). The

results of these studies appear to be conflicting, since some argue masculinity as driving force in purchasing intentions (Coughline O'Connor, 1985), while others have focused on femininity (Fischer e Arnold, 1990). However, some studies have raised concerns about the conceptualisation and contextualisation of BSRI: three studies attempted to address them, such as Barak and Stern (1986) who examined demographic, psychological and behavioral variables, concluding that the BSRI masculinity scale was indicative of self-assurance, much more relevant to consumer behavior than femininity could be.

Gender Identity New Theories

In the 1980s, since the new entry of critical points of view of writers, anthropologists and sociologists, the Marketing introduced a new conception of consumer behavior (Belk, 1995). The new era started to consider the pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase, but above all, from that moment, consumers will be considered as being socially connected and no longer just as potential buyers (Faber e O'Guinn, 1988), moving the attention from the functional benefits of the product to the meanings that consumers translate through consumption.

In 1986 Solomon analyzed what Levi's jeans used to mean for consumers, finding out that most of them attributed a magical role to the garment, while others explained how jeans saved their lives: the centrality of *everyday life* started to drive the consumption (Holbrook e Hirschman, 1982; Hirschman e Holbrook, 1982; Hirschman 1985). The new concept in consumer behavior, also affected qualitative researches, particularly thanks to technologies. The comparison between old and new point of view, could be presented through main factors (Belk, RW, 1995):

Old Perspective	New Perspective
Positivist Experiments Quantitative investigations A priori theory Economic Psychological Micro Managerial Focus on purchasing Emphasis on American knowledge	Not positivist Ethnographies Qualitative investigations Emerging theory Sociology Macro Cultural Anthropology Focus on consumption Emphasis on multicultural emotions

Table 3. Gender Identity New Theories

Faced with the established dichotomy between sex and gender, which concepts are different from each other, some researchers persist in not recognising this difference, even the Postmodernity has allowed the diversity of approaches to study consumer culture (Scott, 1992), challenging the truths dictated by the Enlightenment. Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault had exposed the power games developed by language and institutional values. A post-structuralist interpretation of these thoughts is characterised by deconstruction, subverting the binary oppositions which, like a domino effect, generated indefinite dichotomies: male vs female, mind vs body, reason vs emotion. Postmodernity considers gender as a universalising and useless dichotomy, since the gender sub-categories themselves are becoming even more blurred and the boundaries between masculinity and femininity (which divide individuals by gender identity) are almost unproductive (Firat, 1994). Faced with this gender fluidity, feminists still support the importance of sex, boycotting the relevance of masculinity in everyday life, especially the case when quality of life indicators such as education, health and income see women as widely disadvantaged (Hill e Kanwalroop, 1999). However, in recent years, there has been a deconstruction of the gender also into the marketing (Hogg et al., 2000) and since the consumer was traditionally conceptualised as female, feminists also fought on this front. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) argued how advertising and advertisers used to segregate women from housework; Ann Oakley and her *The Sociology of Housework* (1974) introduced topics considered unimportant for marketing.

Fashion Industry's Consumer Behavior

According to Bakewell, Mitchell & Rothwell (2006) the term fashion is used to describe trends in consumer behavior: pop culture usually connects fashion with clothing and accessories, however the term is strongly connected to culture and society changes. In the clothing industry, fashion refers to a certain style that is admired by a group of people at a specific time. Fashion therefore is context dependent and the same style can be interpreted differently in another time, age or culture. (Solomon & Rabolt 2009).

Following Maslow's hierarchy, fashion can satisfy all of different levels of needs, and this is the reason why consumers are available to spend their disposable income to clothes because they feel that sector express their identity, through purchasing habits. (Solomon & Revolt 2009). Fashion buying is driven by hedonic consumption, since consumers are enjoying the act of shopping, that might be more important than the need for a specific product (Park, Kim & Forney, 2006). In the purchasing process, the fastest and easiest decision can be linked to routine response behavior, the opposite of those are known as extensive problem solving. According to Schiffman & Wisenblit (2015) everyday purchases fall between those two opposites because, requiring limited problem solving. Fashion Consumer Behavior doesn't include always extended problem solving, since from fashioned decision are driven by particular criteria (Solomon & Revolt 2009):

- Suitability to personal style;
- Economy
- Aesthetics
- Quality

- Image directed to others
- Country of origin

According to O'cass (2004) females are more interested in fashion than men and are therefore more involved in the trends, reflecting on the amount of fashion magazines, brands and fashion advertisement that are directed only to women. Women tend to be more involved because their time is more consistent in making fashion decisions, considering a variety of options, being aware of sale periods. Also, hedonic consumption of clothing is more common among women than men, which tend to be faster in their clothing buying decisions, and this is the reason why some retailers have designed special areas inside their stores where male consumers can relax when their female partner is shopping. (Tiffered & Hernstein 2012.)

Generation Z and Consumer Purchasing Behavior: The New Model

Even if there are models like *Engel-Blackwell-Miniard* model, structured around a seven-point decision process: need recognition followed by a search of information both internally and externally, the evaluation of alternatives, purchase, post-purchase reflection, and finally, divestment (Solomon, Russell-Bennett, & Previte, 2012), and *traditional five-stage* model (Kotler, 2012), which have been used previously to investigate purchasing behaviour, their ability to approach characteristics of this market segment is questionable: Generation Z consumers have been identified as unique, with digital chromosomes in their DNA.

According to Solomon (2014), consumer purchasing behaviour is based on a series of activities conducted or perceived by people before buying products or services. Also, Brooks (2012) has analysed this behavior through three basic steps: *a)* people perceive the situation; *b)* people use the power of reason to calculate whether taking one or another action will benefit their long-term satisfaction; *c)* people use the power of will to execute the decision. However, especially recently, customers do not go through logical steps every time they buy something (Solomon, 2006), bringing other factors which are influencing the purchasing behaviour, like internal and psychological aspects, social, cultural, economic, and personal factors. Multiple surveys have concluded that the generation-wise variations in the consumer pool also generate variations in the behaviour. According to Lee (2009) age is an important driver in the new digital culture which is why there are different categories of consumers, (i.e., Generation Y, Generation Z) and in their expectations as co-consumers. Generation Z have been exposed to an unprecedented amount of technology during childhood and adolescence., and because of their early exposure to large amounts of data and colourful graphics from the Web, they are very comfortable with managing digital environments and engaging with new online applications (Rothman, 2016), and consequently, also their communication is different (Bencski et. al., 2016; Bursch & Kelly, 2014; Turner, 2015). This is the first generation to have created a natural Internet technologic community of cyberspace, in which people can have many acquaintances without personally meeting anyone, and the cognitive decision-making ability based on the readily available knowledge sources is preferably high within this generation.

Since this generation is yet to significantly enter the full market there is a significant weakness of proper consumer behavioural analysis on this segment, even considering the rapid growth of the same market segment. According to Paine (2017), there are different models of consumer behaviour categorized as:

- *Economic model* that considers consumer behaviour driven by benefits while minimizing costs, keeping relevant the influence of the economic indicators like the consumer's purchasing power and the price of competitive products.
- *Learning model* or *Psychoanalytical model*, based on the idea that consumer behaviour is influenced by the conscious and the subconscious mind (Gomas, 2018), to achieve firstly learning about needs, and secondarily, the satisfaction of the same needs.
- *Sociological model*, based on that the buying pattern of a consumer is focused on his role and influence in the society, and by the people he associates with (Gomas, 2018). Main characters of that model are consequently consumer role and influence in the society.
- *Traditional five-stage model* which suggests that the process typically passes through five stages – need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. The buying process starts long before the actual purchase and consequences long afterwards (Kotler, 2012).
- *Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model* describes decision-making process stages which are affected by an individual's characteristics, in terms of motives and values, social influences, and situational influences. (Engel, 1968). The model shows the consumer behaviour as a decision process and identifies five main activities occurring in that process: problem recognition, need recognition information search, evaluation of alternatives, choice (Jisana, 2014).

Critics argue most of those models seem a mechanical overview of human behaviour, difficult for practical purposes. Generally, through the evaluation of stimulus-response, factors that affect human behaviour are divided into two main groups, external environment factors or stimuli, and internal environment factors. External environment factors include two groups - marketing stimuli, which companies can control, and other stimuli, on which companies have very limited control (Kaspars, 2016). The five-stage model supports the assumption that people carefully and rationally process as much information about the product as possible, that they consider all the pros and cons of a product, and make the logical decision, however, most often customers do not go through this logical process every time they buy something (Solomon M. 2006). Previous models assume that the customer initially goes through cognitive stage followed by affective stage, followed again by behavioural stage. The main drawback of most commonly used models is their logical step-by-step sequence of stages that excludes such situations where customer forms attitudes and knowledge about the product after the actual purchase. During recent studies, also, the *Theory of Planned Behaviour* (Ajzen, 1991) as a theory in socio-psychology has been identified as a useful framework, since it contains constructs as attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, behavioural intention and behaviour. The attitude, refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours toward a particular object, person, thing, or event. The attitude is based on three more components: Informational or Cognitive component; Emotional or

Affective component; Behavioral component. The Subjective norm is considered to be the perceived pressure imposed by others such as neighbours, friends, etc who influence directly or indirectly on respondent's behaviour. In other words, Subjective norms include the person's perception around who are important to the person (Khalil and Michael, 2008). The Perceived behavioural control refers to people's perceptions, opinions, views of their ability to perform a given behaviour. Generally, people who feel that they can access resources such as money and opportunities for performing a behaviour are likely to perceive the behaviour successfully.

Considering Generation Z as *digital native* group, more than any other segment, means that there are three more constructs to be added for the expansion of TPB: Market mavenism, Technology self-efficacy and Social identity (Kahawandala, Peter 2020).

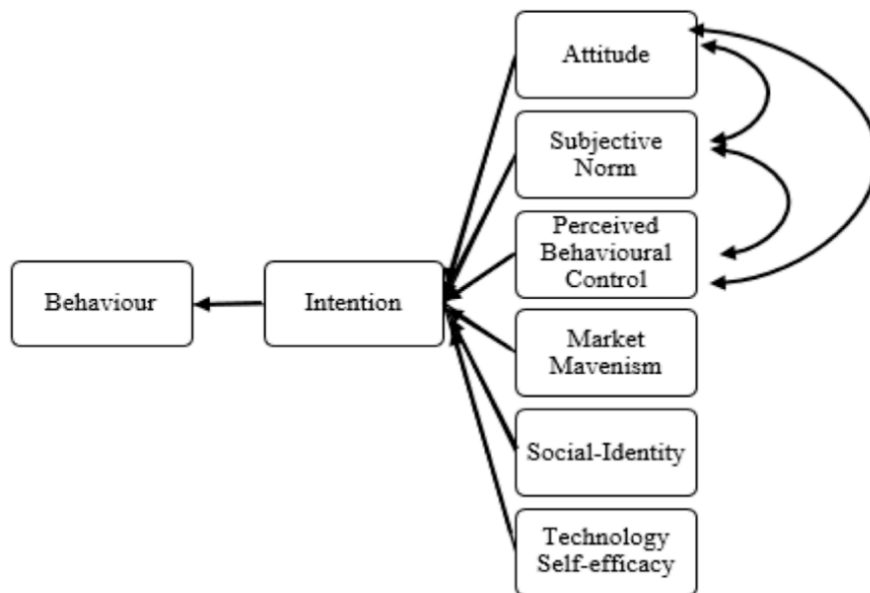


Fig 2. Generation Z and Consumer Purchasing Behavior: The New Model

Market Maven refers to an opinion leader, who possesses a wide range of information and consumer knowledge about different types of products, places and other dimensions of markets. Consumer knowledge could be measured by the awareness, in terms of performance of assurance the buyer or consumer is aware of the information about products, goods, services, and consumer's rights.

Social identity is referring to an individual's self-concept, from perceived membership in a relevant social group, encouraging a sense of self-esteem and a framework for socializing, and reflecting the social influence on behaviour. Technological self-efficacy (TSE) is the belief in the ability to perform a technologically sophisticated new task, through technological tools. These beliefs are thought to be based on one's previous performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. When applied to technology use, the theory suggests that people with higher levels of self-efficacy would engage more frequently in technology-related activities and persist longer in coping efforts whereas those with lower self-efficacy would tend to 'give up' more easily (Jing, Dothang 2018).

Module 1 - Market Mavenism

The concept market maven indicates an influencer supported by general marketplace expertise, and refers to an involvement in the marketplace, with the goal to communicate and provide other customers market information (Higie and Feick, 1987). Studies report the power of market mavens is based on overall market awareness and experience and does not require such persons to be early buyers or even customers to have information about products (Goldsmith et al. , 2006). The identification of influencers in the general market place and their use in delivering an effective marketing message distribution, is also related to word of mouth (Darley, 2020), driving the pleasure and satisfaction feeling to support companies, especially through virtual environments (Belch et al., 2005). Market mavens could be considered as a subset of influencers, combining experience with attitude to influence the group, a process linked to market expertise, in which the knowledge is being disseminated into different aspects of the discussion (Chelminski & Coulter, 2007; Sudbury-riley, 2016). Nowadays, there is a straight connection between e-mavens and market mavens (Feick and Price, 1987): market mavens are individuals who are actively spreading general marketplace information, but e-mavens are individuals who spread information via electronic networks, through different channels. Consequently e-mavens are closer to the idea of Internet mavens (Belch et al., 005), supported by both email and the Internet. Feick and Price (1987) developed a scale to measure these propensities, ensuring that consumers acknowledge the existence of these figures, believing that the market maven is influencing their purchasing decisions. Market Maven has something in common with early adopters and opinion leaders, however there are some differences:

	Early adopters	Opinion leaders	Market mavens
Purchase/Usage of a product	Yes	Not necessarily, but generally yes	Not necessarily
Product knowledge	Product specific	Product specific	Product specific and general, spanning multiple categories
General market knowledge (on retailers and prices)	No	No	Yes
Communication style	Mainly active, but also passive	Active/passive	Active/passive, but mainly active
Which stage of the product life cycle is of interest for marketing?	Introduction	Primarily introduction	In every stage

Fig 3. Comparisons by Wiedmann, 2001

According to Wiedmann (2001), early adopters, opinion leaders, and market maven are independent of each other: the first two figures are more focused on the initial stage, and market maven is more effective in the search and dissemination of oral information, considering as main driver contents related to the entire product life cycle. Also, Market Maven includes economic consumption, in terms of value perception and low price pursuit. (Goldsmith et al., 2003). Solomon (2009/2011) says that Market Maven likes to inform about all kinds of market information, and the interest in a specific product is not a must and may not necessarily be the initial buyer of the product. Since the fashion distribution environment is rapidly and constantly changing, the competition in the distribution market is intensified by online-offline channels: consumers can navigate through a variety of retail sectors, comparing prices and products, place, and the same process of making a purchase decision, exploiting a mixed loyalty to various stores (Chung & Rhee, 2002). Consequently, the market maven is receiving a lot of information from various angles, willing to voluntarily deliver the information achieved. It is a target market that should be noted in the distribution market as an information provider and influencer as an information provider because they feel this as a pleasure (Abratt, Nel, & Nezer, 1995; Walsh, Gwinner, & Swanson, 2004). Also, studies have been analysed how social and psychological influence factors outcome as variables of market expertise: self-esteem (Chun & Ahn, 2010; Clark & Goldsmith, 2005), consumer confidence (Clark, Goldsmith, Goldsmith, 2008), desire for uniqueness (Clark & Goldsmith, 2005), including gender (Goldsmith, Clark, & Goldsmith, 2006). Market experts are not only seen useful to anticipate trends and opinion (Chun & Ahn, 2010; Clark & Goldsmith, 2005), but they also affect overall satisfaction, multi-brand loyalty, and word of mouth intention (Chun & Ahn, 2010; Stokburger-Sauer & Hoyer, 2009).

According to Jeon and Park (2012), in the fashion market, mavvenism perception is more sensitive to quality, in terms of a higher materialism tendency, and a higher degree of involvement in clothing. Following this direction, the main word assumes the meaning of *involvement*, known as “*the degree of importance or interest perceived by an individual to a specific object in a given situation or the degree of relevance perceived by an individual to a specific object in a given situation*” (Lee et al., 2013). In online channels, involvement seems to be a basic feature, linked to oral theories (De Meyer & Petzer, 2014). In the case of *clothing*, involvement is influenced by online word-of-mouth information (Kim, 2003), and viceversa. According to Hourigan and Bougoure (2012) there is as strong relationship between involvement in clothing and market mavenism, referred to a positive influence, not only in collecting fashion-related information, but also in sharing it with others. In addition, Goodey and East (2008) argued that in order to understand Marketmaven, the degree of involvement, which is the motive of word of mouth activities disclosed by Dichter (1966), should be examined first. In other words, research has begun to investigate the significant relationship between clothing involvement and Market Maven, and it seems that a further study using this is needed.

Gen Z and Market Mavenism

The newest generation of market mavens in Gen Z are an attractive segment especially for social media marketing campaigns, because their heavy involvement in social media, and are committed to the pursuit of credibility in promoting products and services (Flynn, Goldsmith, & Pollitte, 2016). Generation Z Market mavens are consequently motivated to reach huge quantity of information about many kinds of products and places, to shop and initiate discussions with consumers (Feick & Price, 1987).

Gen Z expression goes through shopping and consumption, engaging brands that reflect their aspirational self-concept (Ismail, Nguyen, Chen, Melewar, & Mohamad, 2020 in press). The main difference considering previous generations is that Gen Z have had a much earlier exposure in age to and a broader relationship with online and digital technology (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014). According to Warthon (2015), even if it is an independent-minded generation, Zoomers are still influenced by others', to satisfy a need for uniqueness, especially through style, and unusual hobbies and interests (OC&C, 2019). Consequently, for Gen Z achieve a personal style means high quality and fashionable perception of an exclusive look to intensify their personal brand to others (Vision Critical, 2016). Also, Gen Z discusses brands throughout their entire shopping journey (Center for Generational-Kinetics, 2018), through social media, enabling connections with companies to explicitly praise or complain. Feedback from others via *likes* or comments seem to be synonyms of recognition and acceptance by the peer group (E.Y., 2015). Gen Z mavens constantly work to increase the personal reach and status with metrics such as likes, shares, and followers. Gen Z Mavens are focused on growing their social networks, establishing social relationships, and exerting personal influence (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004).

UNICA - Report (2021) has analysed 230 Italian Zoomers, describing how, particularly during lockdown, the need emerged has been to rely on competent as well as charismatic figures, such as politicians, scientists and

journalists, considered authoritative and capable of dictating behavioral lines. Also, Gen Z claims the importance of contact and closeness, showing a protective attachment towards the family of origin, perceived as a *safe haven* with respect to the uncertainties of society.

The sample have identified as have identified as suitable and interesting figures:

- Industry Experts, 34%
- Friends, 33%
- Family, 23%
- Influencer, 17%
- Blogger, 15%
- Teachers, 14%
- Tv Personalities, 13%
- Journalists, 12%
- Politicians, 7%.

The report shows also how 57% of the sample considers the influencer a real profession, recognising the strength in the ability to act as a filter and as a translator of information flows (e.g. brokers). Gen Z is seeking some specific characteristic through the trust in others:

- a) Competence, the leader must know how to internalise and understand the context., through leadership skills with respect to multiple situations, showing the correct behavior and directing the community to more specific sources of knowledge;
- b) Communication, the leader must follow a clear and effective communication method, by a simple language, but not simplistic, specialized/ technical but not exclusive, concise but exhaustive, never too summary. Also the ability to listen is fully among the aspects capable of differentiating a positive leader from a negative one;
- c) Respect, the opposite of the respectful leader is someone who is toxic, that is the one who interprets own power in a purely self-referenced perspective to increase the own fame and not to help / disseminate useful content to the community;
- d) Contribution, a leader is required to be able to express and safeguard a personal dividing point (even if in a minority and against the current), showing own courageous and determined, leading, influencing, and aggregating.

Critical Analysis

Market Maven seems to have nothing to do with buying process: regarding the product knowledge and market information sides, it is a main driver in the adoption of opinion leaders figure's structure, where the knowledge touches various areas. However, since opinion leaders act more in a passive way, Market Maven seems to be more active, participating in conversations and communicating information, through innovative point of view, especially for technologic products. The continuous search for information, would activate a domino process, linking not only new products but also existing ones, like a journey through the ranges. As a Market Maven feature, according to Clark and Goldsmith (2005), a high degree of market involvement could be read as an important source of market information, mentioning retailers (Abrat, 2008), marketing mix, and pricing of products groups.

From the personal traits side, Market Maven are driven by the main social sharing as first goal, and the connected risk could be a lower (or secondary) degree in interpersonal participation, in terms of barriers for the co-creation, since from customers motivation is focused on the core need, and not only around the simple information. Linking the Self-determinant theory (Deci, EL, Ryan, 1985), it's understandable how customers would be more connected to intrinsic motivation, in terms of individual need to feel competent and pride in something, and market maven to extrinsic motivation, in terms of performance. To reach values co-creation between opinion leaders and customers, Market Maven should include through the scales, even one more category, a mixed between the first twos, as internalized extrinsic motivations, aligning personal motivation with rewards: the mavenism goal will be always focused on the information, improving extrinsic motivation by social one, and giving customers the opportunity to be the part of the community building, not only the results. Removing those non-economic barriers, consumers could be involved in the cognitive effort to acquire knowledge, the basic construct for the co-creation.

Gen Z, Market Mavenism and Asos

According to Toledo (2012) Gen Z is highly critical, frequently changes opinion, demanding, versatile and flexible professionals. Born into a deep technological world, Gen Z can't live without having access to the internet or to technological devices, through which they share information, express their opinions, consumption desires and feelings (Gollo et al. 2019; Vizcaya-Moreno and Pérez-Cañaveras 2020). Zoomers are satisfied when sharing opinions and feelings about the buying experience: according to Neto (2010), comments seem to be more critical and well-formed opinion. Vizcaya-Moreno and Pérez-Cañaveras (2020) add that understanding consumer's behavior is complex, especially when it comes to a young audience, as they are increasingly demanding and live at a fast pace. According to Tapscott (2010), collaboration is one of the eight attributes which characterise Gen Z. Also known as the generation of collaboration and relationships, Zoomers social networking is based on online different groups, gaming, and interacting with other participants. Exploiting the collaboration as driver, ASOS has introduced *Asos Insiders*, a marketing initiative designed by to give its users more personal content, through fashion tips and style advice.

Insiders are a group of stylish 20-somethings – male, female, and genderfluid – hailing from different corners of the globe, and their individual profiles can be found on the ASOS Insiders page. Each Insider uses his or her social media accounts (mainly Instagram, but also Pinterest and YouTube) to promote clothes, accessories and/or beauty products that are available to buy on ASOS.com.

Previous studies have shown that not every consumer wills to engage in the co-creation process (Chen, 2011; Chen et al., 2012; Hoyer, Chandy, Dorotic, Krafft, & Singh, 2010; Jauhari, 2017). According to Hoyer (2010), market mavens are one of the four segments of consumers that might be highly motivated in co-creation activities, particularly driven by altruism (Zhang & Lee, 2015). In the process experience & co-creation the main focus sees the customer as a driver of value, mediating through the company and the target (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy, & Prebensen, 2016), exploiting relational exchange, to achieve relationships within networks of partners (Obradovic, Cicvaric Kostic, & Mitrovic, 2016). Experience is essential resource to value co-creation, and the driver strategy for Asos is to being the bridge offering stimuli for that experience, and let it develop in customers everyday life: the collaboration makes sense from when the message translated by co-operators become the tone of voice for the community.

Modul 2 - Social Identity

Judith Butler's works (*Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, 1988; *Gender Trouble*, 1990; *Bodies That Matter*, 1993; *Undoing Gender*, 2004; *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 2005; *Subjects of sex/gender/desire*, 2005) are considered academic guides in relating gender bending as an entanglement, where the single factor does not acquire importance, rather a physical hybridization of male and female stereotypes that lead to ambiguity. A consensus has been reached in considering gender as a process of cultural and social formation, as result of a performative expression. The performativity is repeated with the aim of activating identity and, at the same time, breaking the boundaries highlighted by hegemony. According to Butler, gender is nothing more than a game of appearance, and style, based on Foucault's assumption, where the mask is a mere presentation of what history has shown: the parody, in particular, shakes the binary dimension.

Since the post-industrialization process, it has begun an economic and political celebration of the body, such as pleasure, diversity, playfulness, as traits of contemporary consumerism. The transition to the industrialization of services, consequent to the reorganization of the work organization which has decreased working hours and increased wages, transforms the workforce into a demanding body (Turner, Bryan S., 1996). The body assumes the role of self-project, in which individuals can express their emotional needs, creating a solid basis for the construction of identity (Jagger, Elizabeth, 2000). Human beings are conceptualized as subjects and their body references are receptors of social stimuli. In this sense, the body is not only a translator of meaning through speech, but also it is constructed by speech: the body as a biological identity disappears and becomes a socially and highly unstable product (Shilling, Chris, 1999). The key in understanding this change needs to be considered as the evolution of commercial life and cultural capital, triggered by mass advertising which has created a new type of personality corresponding to the concept of the self-performing (Turner, Bryan S., 1996). The self-perform reflects the self-understanding in the public sphere, when the body is accepted as a text of significant signs: Jameson (1995) and Baudrillard (1983) supported the body centrality in the definition of identity. The self, in consumerist culture, becomes a reflective project that is modeled through the consumer's choices; representing the body as a communicative text, gender performance revolves around that: femininity and masculinity. According to Jean-François Lyotard (1984), contemporary media offer the opportunity to create new identities; Jean Baudrillard (1983) affirms the presence of changing pseudo-identities that revolve around the concept of simulation. Contemporary modernity is therefore characterized by the game of overcoming and deconstructing codes and meanings, where parody, mimesis, and irony become the foundations for new representations of gender.

The simulation violates cultural references with the aim of identifying others, overcoming the bipolarity of gender roles. Another key to playing with the gender seems to be the disguise, where clothes take on a symbolic role. Cross-dressing, according to Marjorie Garber (1993), arises as a critique of the binary system: *"Cross-dressing is about gender confusion. The disguise regards the phallus as being constitutively veiled. Cross-dressing is about the power of women. Cross-dressing is about the emergence of gay identity. Cross-dressing concerns the anxiety of economic or cultural dislocation, the anticipation or recognition of "otherness" as a loss. All true truths, all partial truths, all powerful metaphors. But the irresistible force of*

transvestism in literature and culture does not derive, or not only, from these effects, but also from its historical metaphors, not as that for which a literal meaning must be found, but precisely as that without which there would be it is not the meaning of this in the first place. "

A further specification of Garber consists in the difference between cross-dressing and cross-over, where the latter being a form of cross-dressing, more socially accepted and corresponding to the woman wearing men's clothes and the man wearing clothes and feminine accessories.

Gender *resistance* describes the restructuring and recontextualization of objects to communicate new meanings (Clarke, John, 1970). According to Stuart Hall (1996), it should be understood as a changing metaphor for cultural change, allowing us to think about cultural transformations; it is not a universal concept, but proportionally connected to a context and a social relationship. The distinction between resistance and dominance develops through two poles of the same dichotomy, where the hegemonic discourse develops on the one hand and that of polysemy and resistance on the other. Through Judith Butler's studies as theoretical foundations, gender bending is understood, in the academic field, as an act of resistance to discursive practices, capable of shattering the hegemonic boundary between masculinity and femininity, recognizing upstream the semiotic power of the public who legitimate in the possibility of conferring a plurality of meanings to the same text. It was born then the twinning power - resistance, as stated by Torpe (1999):

"Resistance is omnipresent in a similar way to power and, at its extreme, this culminates in possibility and communicative activity is made open to representation as resistance."

The power-resistance link has led to the reconsideration of marginality: the margins, after being deconstructed, are redefined by resistance as social change, and this cooperation acts as the engine of the social revolution.

An erroneous assumption to re-evaluate is the consideration of resistance as the opposite of domination: Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998) explained how it can be fragmented and through the concept of Incorporation Resistance Paradigm (IRP) they assume that public research can cause problems, since when the public could be completely compliant with the dominant ideology known thanks to their participation in the media circuit or, on the contrary, resistant to this perspective. Another related concept is flexibility, of a neo-liberal capitalist nature, to indicate the entry of gender bending into consumerism: the social revolution is exploited by marketing, incorporated into popular culture and gender identity is offered as a consumer good.

Generation Z and Social Identity

The entry of Generation Z on a global level coincides with what is recognized as social liberalism: equality of sexes and ethnicities, non-discrimination, albeit in different ways in the various countries, have almost become typical practices of any self-respecting civilization. This reading does not mean that generation Z does not worry about these aspects, but on the contrary, channels it towards a continuous comparison and debate that involves preparatory aspects. An example of this is the debate on gender fluidity and the right of transsexuals, which have rapidly reached considerable importance. The common thread of this global communication seems to be fashion. Another aspect connected to this topic is the widespread acceptance of gender neutrality, since generation Z is proving to be inclined to purchase products designed and designed for a pre-established gender. As well as the feminist movement, which in recent years has been carving out a leading role, which sees its significance and subsequent conceptions of equality and rights amplified. The limits of such conversations are overcome thanks above all to social media and the use of hashtags such as *#everydaysexism*, *#heforshe*, *#timesup* and *#metoo*, which shift the focus of feminism to the new lever of equality no longer limited to the terms of remuneration. The new perspective of feminism, which emerges from the opinions of Generation Z, sees men increasingly engaged in domestic life and women, on the other hand, increasingly in work environments. There is a constant growing acceptance of lifestyles, now daily, and identities: according to Ipsos Mori Report (2018), 73% young people believe, for example, same-sex relationships as not wrong. In the United Kingdom, this change in vision is a wake of cultural change, also triggered by the importance that the LGBTQ community has assumed and continues to assume throughout the nation. These factors have had and are having an impact on the way young people view and experience sexuality: three out of five children (60%) in British schools refer to it as a scale, within which people can occupy one. step. Similarly, only 66% of 16- to 22-year-olds say they are attracted to the opposite sex, compared to 71% of previous Millennials. 84% of young people of generation Z therefore find themselves in disagreement with the traditional nature of gender roles; over 56% said they know someone who uses neutral pronouns, as *them* and *ze*, compared to 47% of Millennials; seven out of ten agree that the statement that public spaces should provide gender-neutral bathrooms¹⁸³. 38% of the young people in the study said they completely agree with the statement that gender no longer defines a person as it once did.

In the specific case of purchases, young people are oriented towards products designated for their gender of reference acquired from birth, according to the following percentages:

- 39% shoes;
- 44% clothing;
- 42% deodorants;
- 39% perfumes;
- 19% sports crew;
- 37% accessories.

Furthermore, 74% of young people of generation Z define themselves as more favorable towards people with an identity that does not follow the binary gender compared to the previous year; 88% believe that if a sport

is practiced publicly by one gender at school or university, it should also be available for the opposite gender. Among the terms that indicate new identities, the best known are asexual (69%), gender fluid (49%), pansexual (59%), transgender (84%) and queer (72%). Almost 69% believe that the term transsexual is the most explainable to people who have never heard it before.

Ideas and concepts about gender identity are rapidly changing Gen Z is much more likely than those in older generations to say they personally know someone who prefers to go by gender-neutral pronouns: there are also stark generational differences in views of how gender options are presented on official documents, asking about a person's gender it should include options other than man, and woman.

Critical Analysis

Market Maven seems to have nothing to do with buying process: regarding the product knowledge and market information sides, it is a main driver in the adoption of opinion leaders figure's structure, where the knowledge touches various areas. However, since opinion leaders act more in a passive way, Market Maven seems to be more active, participating in conversations and communicating information, through innovative point of view, especially for technologic products. The continuous search for information, would activate a domino process, linking not only new products but also existing ones, like a journey through the ranges. As a Market Maven feature, according to Clark and Goldsmith (2005), a high degree of market involvement could be read as an important source of market information, mentioning retailers (Abrat, 2008), marketing mix, and pricing of products groups.

Critical Analysis

In a contemporary background, most market research avoids the context of shopping malls, explaining how women are the main shoppers in that background. From the latest research, however, is emerging how men are more active in shopping (Dholokia RR, 1999), even for those categories that were considered feminine up to now, such as cosmetics, fashion magazines. It seems like the new entry of a perspective, which testifies how male segment is improving its decisions. Dholokia (1999) explained how males used to consider shopping unpleasant and undesirable, spending less time on it than women, connecting a lack lacking about sensitivity to the opinions of friends (Shoaf F., Scattone J., Morrin, M., Maheswaran, D., 1995), and making imprudent decisions quickly (Campbell C., 1997).

The truth is that Generation Y had already initiated greater awareness for the way of dressing and presenting the own identity, responding positively to fashion, which from now on will cover the role of activity for leisure and creative research, and dedicating a good percentage of its own consumption to clothes (Bakewell, Cathy, Mitchell, Vincent & Rothwell, Morgan, 2006). The introduction of yummy and young urbans (Duboff, 2014), explained how men were not born by an inherent degree of masculinity, but it has been built guided towards by social codes; it could be considered as a constructionist concept, subordinated to the interpretation that each individual, and the ability to elaborate it (Edwards, 1997). This masculinity concept finds an emphasis in fashion, even through perception, and the industry should take in consideration those new parameters of a new man, attentive to the rigorous attention to physical fitness and to its presentation.

1980s did not focus exclusively on the model of the muscular man, but launched a plurality of style alternatives, triggered by the different fashion magazines which resulted in a clash between plurality of masculinity. For instance, the 2000s metrosexual man has started an integration of metropolitan sexuality, approaching elements of gender and fashion that until now had been associated with the female world before and gay after (Ervin, 2011). This kind of innovation is still working out new approaches and concepts, and the marketing literature should even consider how the fear of being considered perhaps too feminine compared to fashion, could involve consumer behaviour motivation.

Generation Z, Social Identity and ASOS

Considering the Asos collection *Collusion*, collaboration become character in the content creation: launched globally on 2018, the first drop has been *a manifestation of what this first contingent of six want the future of the fashion industry to look and feel like*. Collaborating with ten Gen Z content creators, Asos asked them to design a vibrant wardrobe which speaks directly to themselves and their Gen-Z peers. Also, the online retailer launched a UK campaign featuring 100 British teenagers who have turned eighteen this year. Captured in their hometowns in London, Glasgow, Birmingham and Brighton, each of them are asked the question: “What do you wish for, in the year you come of age?”. To better understand what young consumers want from ASOS apparel, the fast-fashion e-tailer went straight to the source, starting by the casting process: the Brand set aside the usual requirements for a casting call, such as height, waist measurements that have been no relevant. Unlike other youth fashion brands, painfully focused on appearance alone, *Collusion* cast selected 100 UK residents, from Glasgow to Brighton and Birmingham, who were born in the year 2000. 100 portraits of the individuals were shot by photographer Tom Sloan and 100 individual films directed by filmmaker Dan Emmerson. Aiming to reflect the authentic diversity of British youth culture there were no limits in terms of size, gender, race, ability or sexuality.

Genderless fashion can be also seem as a more strength news of self-appreciation, sometime confused with narcissism. The process of establishing self-identity, in fact, is *built on relationships and other developments through constant interaction with all that is encountered in the surrounding social world* (Hattie, 2014). The Self-presentation becomes then the focus of acts and the medium to translate that acts into the group (Burns, 1999). Self-image and self-concept, could refer to the same paradigma, since they include and regulate the picture of the self, in terms the sum of own thoughts and emotions, which are followed by specific desires (Leary & Tangney, 2012). According to Davis (1994) clothing support the identity of oneself and others, for the communication in social interaction.

Module 3 - Technology Self-Efficacy

Constant social changes require new interpretative skills and one of these is the technological one (van Deursen, A., van Dijk, J., & Peters, 2011): for the digital native generation the use of these devices is simplified. According to Faulkner (2001) dealt with analyzing the theories of mutual relations that exist between gender and technologies, in production and consumption. Technological struments follow the *gendered by association* process: in fact, there are few domestic technologies used by males and females at the same time, known as *white technologies* and now instinctively connected to women, as washing machines for instance. Other types of non-domestic technologies or *black, brown technologies* are related to males, as electric and musical drills. From a production standpoint, Cockburn (1997) examined how the gender affects the design studied: technicians consider white technologies as easy to understand and unattractive, while they pay more attention to leisure technologies, associated with avant-garde work.

From users point of view, technologies can be studied in their new usability, as in the case of the microwave oven (Cockburn, 1997), originally designed for men. Another example is represented by wireless (Horowitz e Mohun, 1998), known as with a masculine term precisely because it was initially addressed to males. Gender relations and stereotypes can thus be strengthened by both the production and consumption of technology, since when gender and technology are both socially co-produced (Lerman et al., 1997). Despite this apparent advantage, it has been analyzed how women have less positive personal fears and opinions towards the cyber world (Durndell, A., & Haag, 2002). This attitude could be connected to the fact that technologies are identified as non-neutral, obviously to the detriment of the female segment (Smith-Doerr, L., & Feldscher, 2007): this instead dominates the use of technologies recognized as domestic (vacuum cleaner - washing machine - oven), (Schwanen, T., & Morahan-Martin, 2014). Like a domino effect, Li and Kirkup (2007) explain, this would be a consequence of humans using the Internet for chat rooms and games. The gender gap that has developed in usage has also been reflected online: females who shop online are more involved in fashion and have a higher awareness compared to men (Pentecost, R., & Andrews, 2010): their exposure to different fashion trends, including fashion without gender, could be higher, also having less stereotyped views on gender.

Gender fluid fashion also allows companies to rethink traditional communication practices, with the aim of attracting new customers (Ross, 2010), cooperating in creating the identity of potential customers, which will result in loyalty. From the consumer's point of view, genderless fashion is able to satisfy the bipolarity of the needs flowing in the segment ranging from luxury needs to retail sales, such as minimalism. This minimalism is also transmitted on the Web, dictated by the fact that users appreciate the readily evident qualities and the simplicity of navigation (Suki, 2013). Cyberbullying is recognized as any bullying that develops through Internet platforms, with the use of mobile phones and computers (Balakrishnan, 2015). According to Wang (2012), individuals take greater pleasure in being cyberbullies, while there is no gender distinction in victimization. Girls, on the other hand, engage more assiduously in this power game, from the moment they prefer relationships of verbal aggression (Baker, 2010); moreover, women are more

sensitive and aware in recognizing actions of this magnitude (Agatston, P., Kowalski, R., & Limber, 2007). The first instance of cyberbullying episodes, as evidenced by the media, derives from gender behaviors recognized as non-compliant and for this reason a policy of neutralization of schools was launched in 2014, recognized as the environment where self-sufficiency should develop. expression of any individual (Henshaw, 2014).

The entry of digital natives (Prensky, 2001) is actually shifting society from an advanced industrial-based economy towards an information-based economy, needing a huge quantity of critical thinking skills to be successful in this information era. The impact of the digital divide remains a gap for certain groups (Hassani, 2006; Vandoninck & Roe, 2008), especially regarding access to ICTs. Social inequality has been now translated into digital one, and the inclusion needs to be a driver to reduce the information access disparity (Robinson, 2015), in which technologic self-efficacy seems to be the solution. According to Bandura (2004), self-efficacy formation process extends the traditional environmental and impulse based learning theories, introducing a component of self-reflecting, also through enactive experience, and vicarious experience. The self-efficacy concept refers to beliefs about own ability to perform an action, and reaching a goal: this process influences the way in which people think, feel, and motivate themselves to behave (Bandura, 1994). It could be seen as as a powerful driver to the motivation and accomplishment, as an essential element for overcoming different situations across the many stages of life. According to Bandura (1994, 2004) there are four drivers to influence self-efficacy, however the main one is reflected on enactive experiences: experiences in which people develop beliefs about their ability, by interpreting the results of their actual behaviors (Pajares, Prestin, Chen, & Nabi, 2009).

In other words, individuals interpret outcome feedback in order to develop their knowledge and skills through practice (Wei, Teo, Chan, & Tan, 2014).

According to Hatlevik, Throndsen, Loi, & Gudmundsdottir (2018) self-efficacy associated with computers has become an important extension of the concept of self-efficacy.

Gen Z and Technology Self-Efficacy

Studies on the subject suggest that young people around the world have access to digital technology. In the face of continuous evolution, however, there will always be groups that will lag behind in learning this skill and it is therefore almost unlikely that a balance will be achieved. Although the children of low-income families have fewer opportunities to approach the latest generation technologies, there is basic digital literacy, triggered and supported by schools and/or other educational authorities. The presence of technology into primary education, artificial intelligence will play a key role: robots have already been implemented in this regard with the task of tutoring the same children, as an alternative to the classic human tutor. However, the increasingly close integration between technology and daily life presents not only positive aspects; in 2013 the Natsal - National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles - published another study according to which Britons between 16 and 44 had had fewer than five sexual intercourse in the past month. Furthermore, the BBC published research in 2017 describing a decline in the sex life of the British, attributable to the use of social media, a decline that began with the rise of TV. By exploiting digital communications, brands can trigger those processes of self-expression, entrusting the body with multiple concepts and meanings. The common strategy is to make online and offline coincide, adapting creative contents to socio-economic contexts: Coca Cola, for example, in India adapts its contents for users who do not have broadband, studying the texts ad hoc, which will be used as digital content. Generation Z, of course, is the most connected; 96% of British young people between 5 and 15 years old have internet access from their home, just as 49% of them have their own tablet and 46% have their own smartphones¹⁸⁷. Access to the various platforms and devices does not translate directly into the ability to use it, as evidenced by the more than 300,000 British people between the ages of 15 and 24 who do not have basic knowledge. Published studies affirm that this technological everyday life is causing a drop in attention in generation Z: there is talk of an attention span of 8 seconds, compared to 12 seconds of the previous generation. The criticisms of these publications support the improbability of the studies carried out and the lack of supporting longitudinal data. A common agreement, on the other hand, concerns the thesis that technology is taking on a significant weight in the mental health of the generation; there is a strong correlation between the time spent online and the degree of mental well-being. Almost 27% of UK children aged 15 and under, who spend more than three hours on social and / or other networking platforms on a typical school day, are mentally ill, compared with 12% of those who don't spend time at school ¹⁹⁰. Not only is mental well-being a matter of concern; think also of depression and anxiety states¹⁹¹. Another worrying figure is related to cyberbullying: in 2017, 12% of British young people between the ages of 12 and 15 reported having been bullied online.

There is a positive correlation between being bullied offline and time spent online: OECD data on schools show that 17.8% of extreme users (those who spend more than two hours connected on a weekday) said they heard bad rumors about their person, unlike moderate users (1-2 hours online) whose percentage is only 6.7% ¹⁹². In this regard, with regard to self-expression, brands have launched strategies that encourage online data sharing, such as the proposal to publish certain photos with products behind the promise of publishing the same on websites and other channels. Generally, generation Z is less worried about sharing

their data with companies than the previous generation (65% vs 75% of Millennials), especially for young people between 11 and 16 years¹⁹³. It should be emphasized that the technological ability of the generation also lies in the ways of setting privacy, which allows young people to choose which and how much information to make public. An interesting fact is the widespread practice of updating one's private profiles more than public ones, as in the case of Snapchat which represents a percentage of 43% compared to only 21% of Facebook. Despite the persistence of basic security in sharing some information, it does not mean that young people are not worried about the breach of their data: 36% of young Americans between 13 and 17 years immediately affirm the involuntary publication of at least one photo and / or a video. This discourse intersects proportionally to that of personalization, where young people present themselves as more likely to share their data with companies, albeit in exchange for products and promotions: in emerging markets, 56% of young people between 16 and 24 years they even declare happy to do so; in consolidated markets, 45% is, compared to 42% of 25-34 year-olds. Generation Z thus seems to be more aware of the personalized and customizable approach to products and services, which for other generations are presented as intrusive. For example, 39% of 16-22 year olds in the United States would be more loyal to a brand that provides one-hour drone delivery, compared to only 22% of Millennials (23-37 years old).

Generation Z digital self-efficacy is also focused on the building of the online personal branding: according to Kotler and Armstrong (2012), brands have six levels of meaning including attributes, benefits, values, culture, personality and user. Following this direction, personal branding is based on developing a certain quantity of symbols and associations, with the goal to give the same benefits offered by a company's brand equity (Wight, 2009). This process involves managing the own reputation, attitude and style, shifting the impact of the business into a psychological recognition upon the ideas and the consciousness individuals about themselves (Baltezarević & Milovanovic, 2014). According to Smith (2018), the success keys make the difference through social media is being proactive about self-presentation, influencing and regulating the information people could find. Following the same line of thought, Liu and Suh (2017) underline the idea that personal branding practice provides social media users with enormous opportunity and autonomy. Generation Z is nowadays able to empathize on its specific, exploiting its responsibility to help improve it (E&Y, 2015), particularly through analytical and pragmatic (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Market Maven vs Technology Self-Efficacy

Unlike innovators, Market Mavens are general opinion leaders with an overall market-related knowledge, which is not product specific (Wiedmann et al., 2001). Because of their marketplace orientation, Market Mavens become especially attractive targets to today's big retailers, especially for the world web wide. Consequently the point common between Market Maven and Technology could be considered as an extension of the eWom: as a contemporary marketing, this encourages consumers discussions about product, services, companies, or brand favourably in various virtual social avenues (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Through factors like satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Casaló et al., 2008), social capital (Hung and Li, 2007), altruism, social benefits, self-enhancement, economic incentives (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), and gender (Awad and Ragowsky, 2008), the known co-creation is developed also around the sense of social obligation to support the sharing value.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology Structure

The purpose of the research is to gain familiarity with the phenomena of the already known gender fluidity in the Fashion Industry, trying to anticipate possible variables for the new paradigm in consumer behaviour, driven by Generation Z. According to Miller, Poli and Rossel (2013) these efforts to know the future in terms of *anticipation*, is the strategy for thinking about the possible consequences, and plan future actions straight linked to them. According to Voros (2017), from a cognitive approach, *anticipation* could be seen as an explorative method (Voros, 2017), supported by summarized by the demands to (Aspinwall, 2005; Miller et al., 2013; Molis, 2008).

Methodology

Methodology is a general research strategy which drives the way how research should be undertaken, including beliefs and assumptions, shaping the meaning of the research questions and justifying research methods. As integral part of a dissertation, research methodology ensures the uniformity of chosen tools, techniques and philosophy. The most known construction of research methodology is based on the theoretical concept of *research onion* (Saunders et al., 2016), as a meticulous description of main layers to formulate and reach research answers.

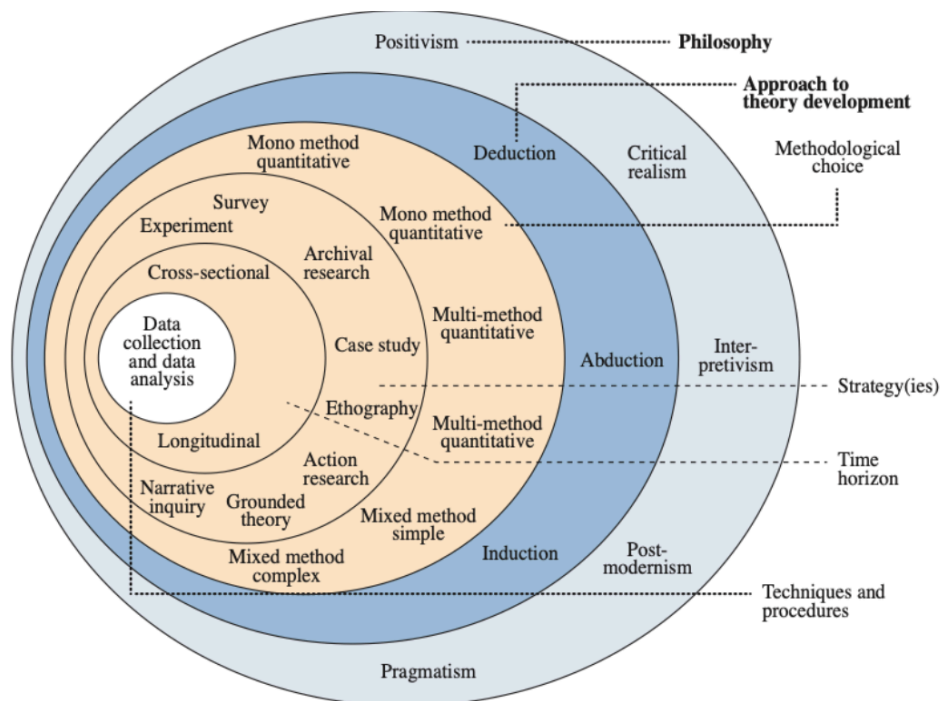


Fig.4 Onion Model

Philosophy

As base of the research, philosophy delines ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (nature, sources of knowledge or facts and axiology), values, beliefs and ethics.

The research is following an *interpretivist* philosophy, through the subjective interpretation of reality to fully understand the topic. The study of the phenomenon in its natural gender fluid environment, supported by the gender studies in literature will help in the interpretation of reality. According to Patomaki (2006), Bell (2003) and Van der Heijden (2000), social reality is an open-system, observable, as well as non-observable components, therefore a scientific prediction is impossible: anticipation of future, based on observation of generative mechanisms can still be efficient.

Approach to Theory Development

According to Kuosa (2011), the main research approaches can be divided in *deductive* , to direct knowledge and functions control, through the use of physical argumentation; *inductive* , to control information, through the use of structural and categorization argumentation; *abductive*, to identify structures, connections, contexts and constraints, involves the use of cognitive argumentation. The researcher is following an *abductive* approach, reaching a conclusion through the data collection.

Research Strategy

Research strategy refers to a general way to support the researcher in the main choice of data collection methods or sets of methods in order to better answer the research question and objectives. According to List (2005) two main types of research methods could be identified in quantitative (analyzed through statistical analysis) and qualitative (analyzed by summarizing, categorizing and interpreting). Given the gender fluid phenomena as the main characteristic for Generation Z, the choice has involved the quantitative strategy to analyse the quantity of social actors, linked to the fashion field. According to Sajjad Kabir (2016), advantages and disadvantages of quantitative data can be featured as basic guidelines for research, in terms of advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages: cheaper implementation, and higher standardisation; experimental design linked to the ability to replicate both the test and the results; results interpretation is straightforward and less open to error and subjectivity; technical advances, as proof of prestige and value.

Disadvantages: overlook the meaning behind social phenomena; forbidden option to review answers with participants, even if the information seems confusing or it is invalid; possible unnatural environments, due the participants attempton to skew results by providing falsified answers.

Methodological Choice

According to Saunders (2016), mono method is used is focused either on quantitative or qualitative data gathering; mixed methods refer to quantitative and qualitative approach within the same research in order to achieve different aims and offset the constraints of the use of single method; multi-method include the use of both, qualitative and quantitative. The research has followed a mono method choice, combining survey, grounded theory, and case study as quantitative variables.

Time Horizon

Time horizon indicates periods to be studied, in terms of chronological horizon of varying breadth. According to Kosow and Gaßner (2008), there are three basic time horizons: short-term, up to 10 years; medium-term, up to 25 years; long-term, more than 25 years. The research is driven by a short-term time horizon.

Techniques and procedures

The final layer of the research onion includes techniques and procedures, as the design towards data collection and analysis. Data collection is the process to measuring variables of interest, to answer research questions stated research questions, and evaluate outcomes. Methods should ensure accurate and honest collection, starting with data required followed, until the selection of a sample. Quantitative data follow a mathematical nature, through different scales and standardised approaches. The research has followed :

- Primary data - *Questionnaire*, to identify how many people of Generation Z consider themselves as a gender fluidity supporters;
- Secondary Data - *Reports, Published Censuses*, to create an updated literature review about the target of Generation Z, but also around the evolution of gender variables in the marketing debate.

Primary Data

Primary data include all type of data collected from first-hand-experience: especially in statistical surveys it is necessary to develop the information from primary sources and work on them. Although primary data are basic for the research, at times it becomes difficult to obtain specific data from that primary source, due the lack of cooperation. Survey is the most used method in social sciences, management, marketing and psychology: questionnaire is one of the most commonly used method in survey, as Questionnaires are a list of questions either open-ended or close-ended for which the respondents give answers. Nowadays, questionnaires can be conducted via telephone, mail, live in a public area, or in an institute, through electronic mail or through fax and other methods.

Questionnaire Designing

The structure of the questionnaire has begun from the analysis of the published theories, to the identification of specific variables to be investigated, in order to strengthen the gender fluid research objects. Through eleven (11) closed answers, also supported by 4 points Likert Scale, five chronological sections were thus established, in the following order:

- Demography
- Psychological factors, to know if and how socio-cultural associations of masculinity and femininity have been changing. Attitudes proposed which in previous publications had marked a very precise boundary between those recognized as typically feminine and those typically masculine: terms such as *creativity*, *authority*, *competitiveness*, *romanticism*, *shyness*, *blue* and *pink* had obtained an extreme binary evaluation by the first champions; it was therefore decided to exploit them to underline that mental reversal, which is spreading thanks to generation Z.
- Factors of choice in the purchase, to identify what are the levers that trigger purchasing choices in consumers. Starting from the theory of gender extensions initiated by fashion brands, the perception of the narratives activated by the same brands in the male and female segments is now required and whether or not there is an extension of communication between the two segments. In this section is also introduced the Brand Asos, through its collection *Collusion*, to evaluate its awareness around the target.
- Satisfaction and self-perception, to investigate the role of clothing in the construction of identity and how the body can be a vehicle for achieving ego satisfaction. The last question reflects on the degree of knowledge of genderless fashion and what could be the strategic policies for greater dissemination and socio-cultural acceptance.

Data Analysis Tool

The interoperation of the data will be through Microsoft Excel., allowing the researcher in the creation of charts, graphs, and diagrams.

Secondary Data

Secondary data include all type of sources already published, as a review of the literature. The Marketing Literature developed on this research is based on scientific publications on Marketing, Psychology, Self-Brand, plus reports about Generation Z.

Sample

The research has been supported by Generation Z sample, worldwide based, due the web-based survey.

Sample Type

The sample type has included Zoomers participants: Generation Z includes people aged between 15 - 23 (1997- 2007). The research target has been included all type of gender (males, females, and non-binary, etc.).

Sample Size

The ample size has been of 50 participants: the questionnaire has been shared in the web-based form, with the support of Influencers and experts straightly linked to the topic. First step has been academic email to these figure, introducing research and objectives, asking for any support to the survey, sharing a link though their Instagram Accounts.

According to Mertler (2002), online data collection is an efficient and convenient alternative to the more traditional method of gathering information, allowing researchers the access to a large, diverse and global population with the potential of huge amounts of data. Also, some researchers prefer online data collection to protects the loss of data and simplifies the transfer of the same. According to Carbonaro and Bainbridge (2000), online surveys should follow some basic guidelines to simplify the usability, and guarantee a security system to ensure credibility and anonymity. According to Comley (2000), the main three factors that affect response rates in online surveys include the style of the first page, relationship with the website/brand, and respondent interest. However, reaching the target population through online methods also shows some difficulties, by different nature: external technical problems, mail messages announcing surveys are frequently interpreted as junk mail, also the control of the population that should be achieved could be very difficult.

Possible limitation in that approach, would have been around younger individual, that might not know the case study Brand Asos - Collusion. Also, the collaboration with gender fluid influencer community, could been the possibility to analysed a subcluster of a cluster.

Clustered Sample

The research has been supported by clustered sample, dividing a population into smaller groups known as *clusters*. This method of probability sampling is often used to study large populations, particularly those that are widely geographically dispersed. Some advantages of the clustered sample could involve the fewer resources required for the process: it is generally cheaper relative to simple random or stratified sampling as it requires fewer administrative and travel expenses; also, the division of the entire population into homogenous groups increases the feasibility of the sampling, since each cluster represents the entire population, more subjects can be included in the study. Some disadvantages could include The method biases: if the clusters that represent the entire population are formed under a biased opinion, the inferences about the entire population would be biased as well. Generally, the samples drawn using the cluster method are prone to higher sampling error than the samples formed using other sampling methods.

Research Ethics

The research ethics will follow a responsible conduct of norms, values, cultures, and behaviours, focusing on the welfare of participants and society. Considering gender and gender identities as sensible data that need to be protected, the researcher has considered ethical issues that need to be attended during the process of the research:

- a) The aim of the research will be explained in details
- b) Consent from participants will be taken, prior the research
- c) Anonymity of participants will be maintained
- d) No confidential data will be asked and participants will decide if bypass any question

Chapter 3: Analysis and Evaluation

Presentation of Data

Response Rate

Total number of 50 respondents have filled the online questionnaire, through url link, satisfying the research purpose, as a good representative sample of the targeted population for a quantitative research.

Age of Respondents

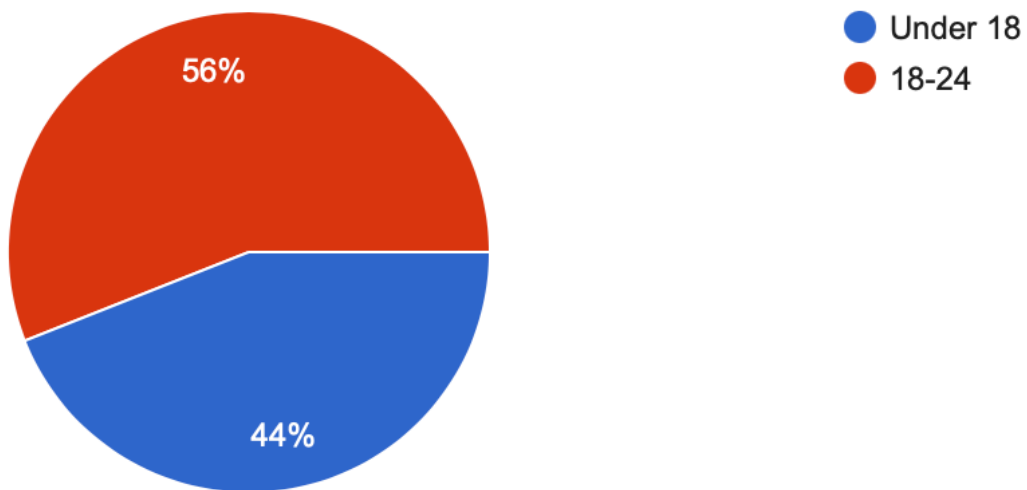


Fig. 5 Age of Respondents

The figure shows that 56% of respondents belong to the age group 18-24, while 44% belong to the under-18 group: the majority of respondents is included in the range 18-24.

Gender Identity Pronoun of the Respondents

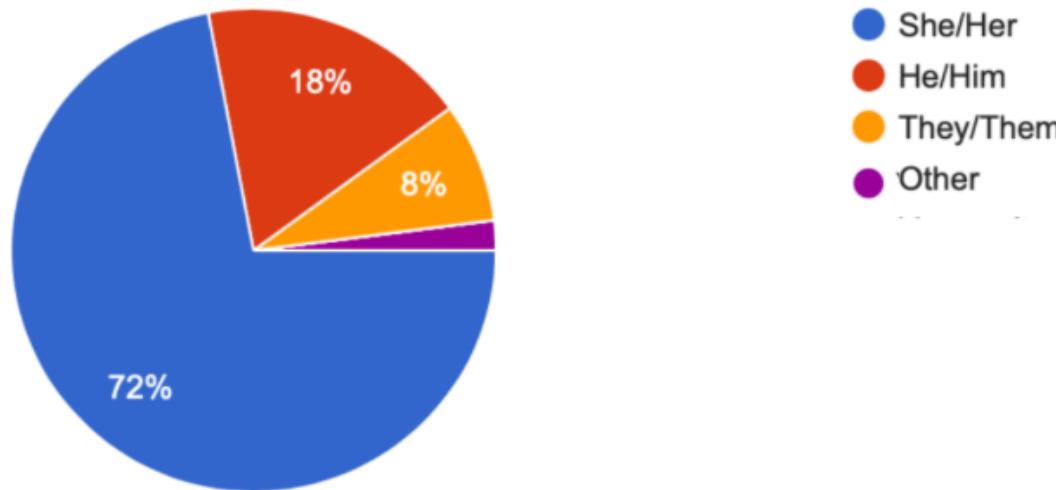


Fig. 6 Identity Pronoun of Respondents

The figure shows that the majority of the sample, 72% of respondents, considers themselves under the pronoun She/Her; the pronoun He/Him includes 18% of respondents, while the non-binary pronoun shows a percentage of 8%; 2% of respondents have chosen Other as alternative answer, describing how language can not control identity.

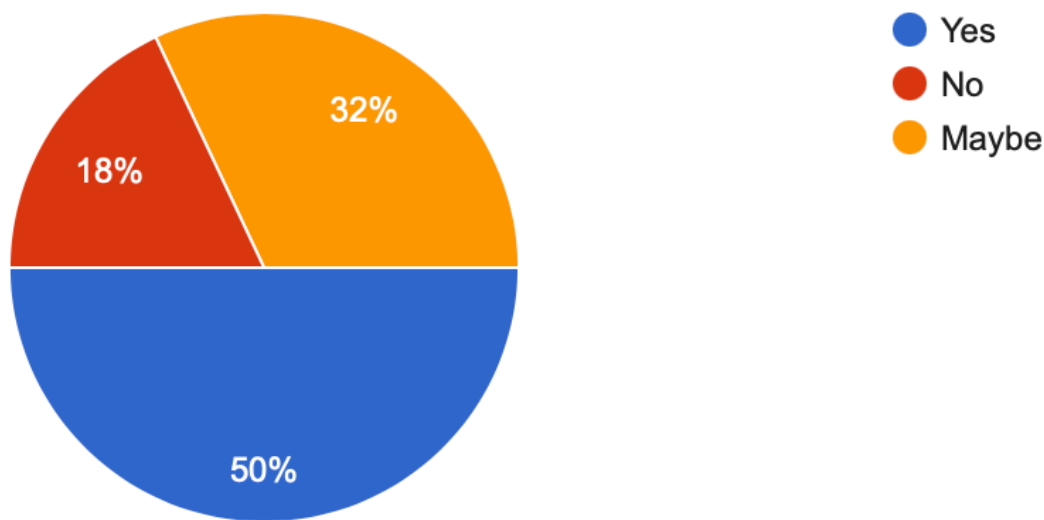


Fig. 7 Gender Fluidity into Society

The majority of the sample, 50% of respondents, say Society is favourating the awareness of Gender Fluidity into society; 32% of respondents say Maybe, while 18% of the respondents don't recognise Society as main character for Gender Fluidity topics.

Masculinity and Femininity Stereotypes

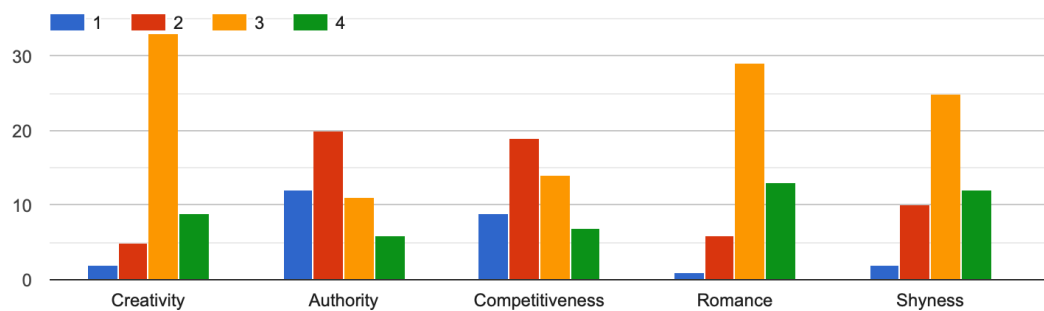


Fig. 8 Masculinity and Femininity Sterotypes

The figure shows how the sample has rated the following terms, through a Likert Scale values, from 1 to 4, in which 1 means Masculinity and 4 Femininity:

- Creativity: the majority of the sample, 33% of the respondents, rated the term as 3, 9% of the respondents as 4, 5% of the respondents as 2, and only 1% as 1.

- Authority: the majority of the sample, 20% of the respondents, rated the term as 2, 12% of respondents as 1, 11% of respondents as 3, and 6% of respondents as 4.
- Competitiveness: the majority of the sample, 19% of respondents, rated the term as 2, 14% of respondents as 3, 9% of respondents as 1, and 7% of respondents as 4.
- Romance: the majority of the sample, 29% of respondents, rated the term as 3, 13% of respondents as 4, 6% of respondents as 2, and 1% of respondents as 1.
- Shyness: the majority of the sample, 25% of the respondents, has rated the term as 3, 13% of respondents as 4, 6% of respondents as 2, and 1% of respondents as 1.

Purchase Decision Maker

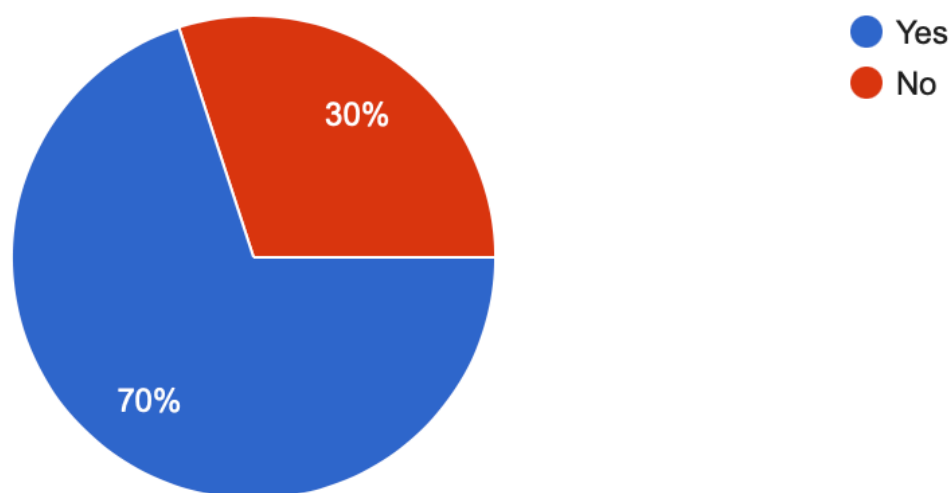


Fig 9. Purchase Decision Maker

The figure shows that the majority of the sample, 70% of the respondents, takes own purchase decision, considering themselves as primary household; 30% of respondents says No.

Gender Fluidity Clothes

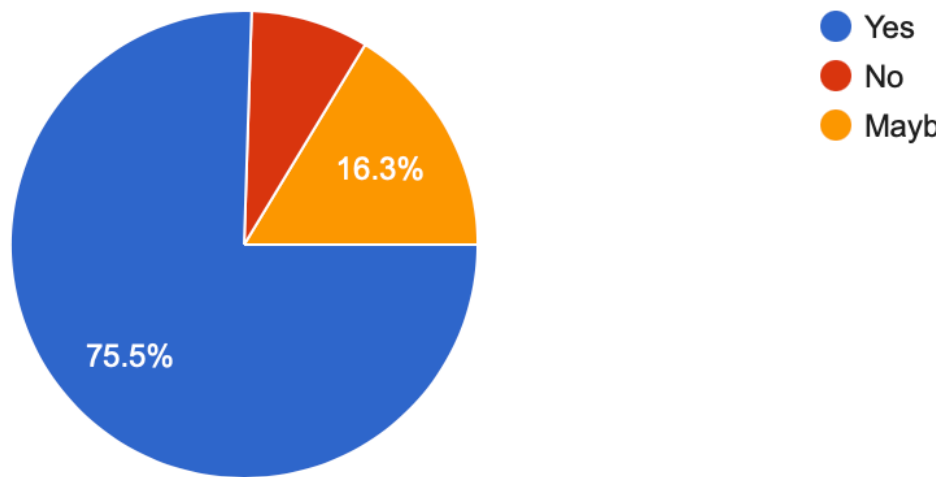


Fig. 10 Gender Fluidity Clothes

The figure shows how the majority of the sample, 75,5% of the respondents would buy gender fluid clothes; 16,3% of the respondents is not sure if they would buy gender neutral items, while 8,2% of the respondents says they wouldn't buy any gender fluid cloth.

Asos and Collusion Awareness

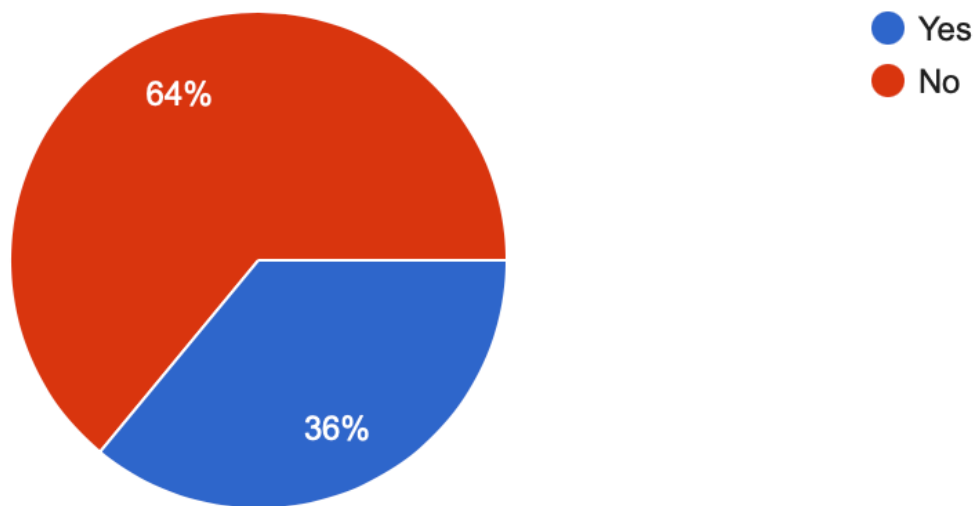


Fig. 11 Asos and Collusion Awareness

The figure shows that the majority of the sample, 64% of the respondents don't know the Brand Asos, neither its collection Collusion; 36% of the respondents say Yes, regarding the awareness of the Brand and the collection.

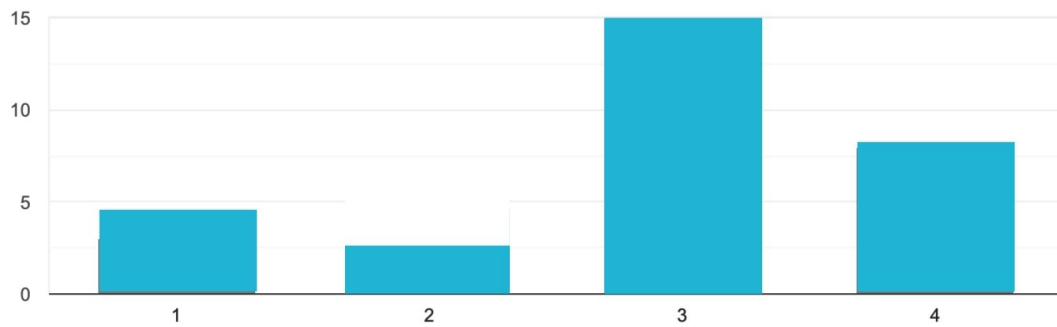


Fig. 12 Collusion and Identity

The figure shows how the percentage of the respondents who know Asos - Collusion, from the previous question, consider the brand and the collection helpful in the identity creation process, through Likert Scale, by 1 to 4 value. The majority of the sample, 53,6% of the respondents, rated the collection as 3 points; 28,4% of the respondents as 4 points; 10,7% of the respondents as 1 point, and 7,1% of the respondents as 2 points.

Personal Style

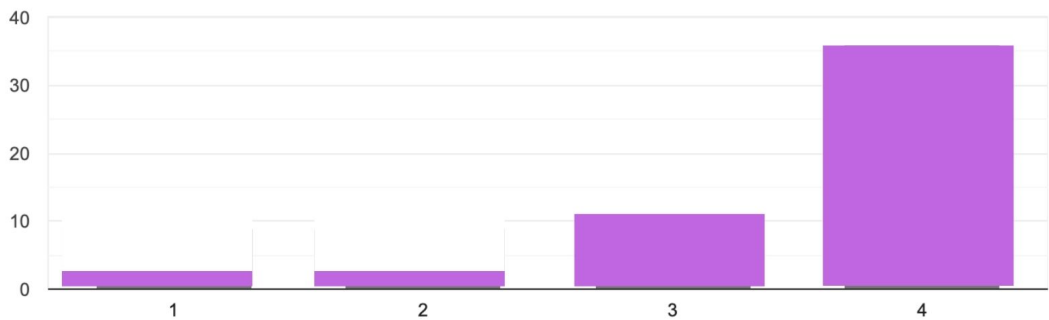


Fig. 13 Personal Style

The figure shows that the majority of the sample, 72% has rated the importance of the personal style through 4 point Likert Scale; 20% of the respondents has rated the same importance as 3 points, while 4% of the respondents as rated the personal style respectively by 2 points and 1 point.

Fashion vs Sexual Orientation

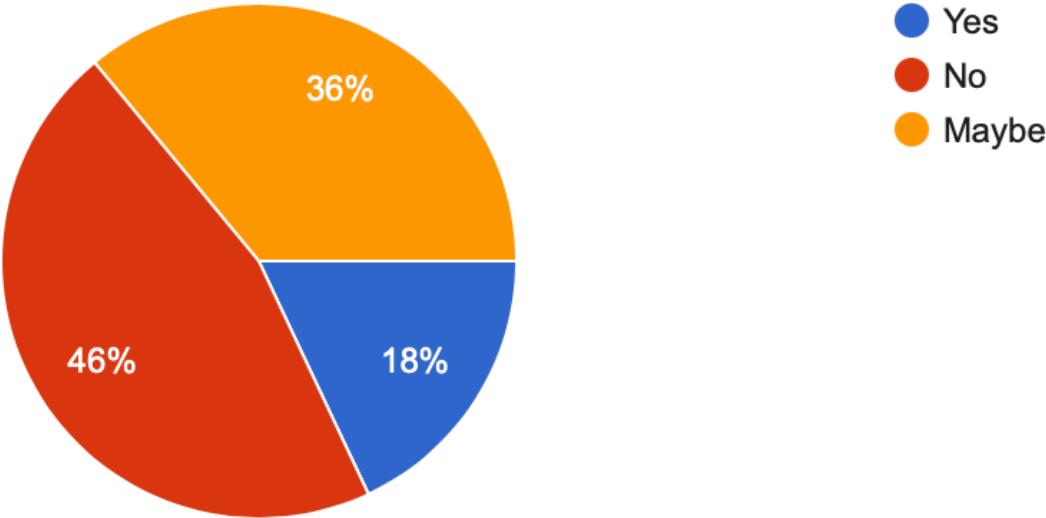


Fig. 14 Fashion vs Sexual Orientation

The figure shows that the majority of the sample, 48% of the respondents don't think that fashion style could reflect sexual orientation; 36% of the respondents say Maybe, referring to any possibility; the 18% of the respondents say fashion style describe the own sexual orientation.

Personal Style vs Others Opinion

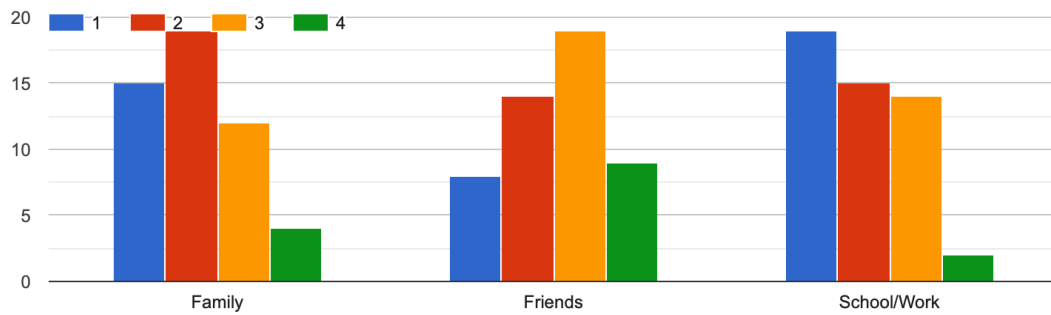


Fig. 15 Personal Style vs Others Opinion

The figure shows the rating of the importance about Family, Friends, and School/Work regarding the personal style opinion. Through the likert Scale 1-4, the sample has rated the three condition, as following:

- Family: the majority of the sample, 19% of the respondents, rated the family's opinion by 2 points, 15 % for 1 point, 12% for 3 points, and 4% for 4 points.
- Friends: the majority of the sample, 19% has rated friends opinion important for 3 points, 14% for 2 points, 9% for 4 points, and 8% for 1 point.
- School/Work: the majority of the sample, 19% of the respondents, has rated School/Work opinion by 1 point, 15% for 2 points, 14% for 3 points, and 2% for 4 points.
-

Interpretation of Data

Research Objectives

Objective 1: *To ascertain how the progressive approach of Generation Z is changing social norms about gender identities*

From the analysis of the responses, it emerges how the gender neutral theme has now entered in the routine conversation practices, especially thanks to the segment of the new generation. Socio-cultural references, which until recently have driven the mainstream mentality in relation to masculinity and femininity (Lupetow and Garovich, 1995), are moving towards a balance, leaving those poles that have characterised the old consumer community. Attitudes like *competitiveness* and *authority*, previously considered variables of masculinity, are now considered respectively by 11% and 14% of the sample, on a scale with values 1 (Masculinity) and 4 (Femininity), with a value equal 3. Femininity attitudes, such as *romanticism* and *shyness*, are now rated halfway, respectively by 29% and 25% of the sample studied. Also, the change in the perception of what was once defined as a binary gender, is starting upstream, with a review of the terms of reference that are now driven the new consumer towards new constructions of the social background. 75.5% of the sample states that they have no problem, in the immediate future, of purchasing clothing designated without a specific gender of reference; it is certainly an answer to the indirect question regarding the fact that the trend could evolve into a real market. Also, referring to the identity pronouns revolution, 8% of the sample identify the own identity as They/Them; 50% of the respondents agree in stating the acceptance of Gender Fluidity into the Society. Regarding sexual orientation, through a fashion perspective, 46% of the respondents agree that fashion style doesn't necessary reflects the own sexuality.

Objective 2: *To establish how the Generation Z lifestyle is reflecting on Consumer Behaviour, in terms of needs and desires*

A guideline in the redefinition of personalisation activities for the Generation Z shopping experience can be represented by the benefits that the same shopping should satisfy, in relation to the needs that individuals have expressed in this study. Especially, the importance of supporting and claiming one's own style, already appeared from past studies, but rather modelled and maleate. For the crucial issue of identity, clothing plays a key role for 72% of the sample, which rated 4 the importance of the personal fashion style, as a drive for achieving self-satisfaction. In this sense, one more main role is played by the *fashion police*: through the literature review has been clear how others' perception of binary gender could create embarrassment and fear, in the self-expression style, especially for male segment to be understood as *androgynous* or *metrosexual*, (Sender, Katherine, 2006) indirectly affect the purchasing behaviour. For the studied sample, opinions of others could still influence style choices: on the Likert Scale 1 - 4, 19% of the sample rated 2 the importance

of family's opinion; 19% rated friends' opinions by 3, and also 19% of the respondents rated 1 school/work's opinions.

Objective 3.: *To establish if a specific gender fluid collection, like Collusion of Asos, is considered by Generation Z, to support their own identity*

Brands already known in the fast fashion scene, that refer mainly to a target of young adults, have already started inclusive strategies, highly perceived by the generation. Especially Asos, the British clothing and accessories online store, which since 2018 has collaborated with the Generation Z community in the creation of the gender fluid Collusion brand. Despite the engagement methods activated for the presentation of the brand, involving more than 100 young people from the United Kingdom, 64% of the sample don't know the brand Asos, neither Collusion: 53.6% of the sample that do know it, rated Collusion 3, on the Likert Scale 1 - 4, as supportive for the identity creation process. Marketing literature has also shown how brands storytelling is become more inclusive and *unisex* (Veg, Nyeck, 2007) interchange codes and signs for the non-binary gender. Considering that side, differentiation between *unisex* and gender fluid fashion is acceptable, on the other it cannot be, since there is a greater intrusion of clothing and accessories considered first female in the panorama of the neutral gender . A possible limitation to the unexpected result about Asos and Collusion awareness, could be addressed to demographic variables of the sample, especially regarding geographic ones: the online form didn't allow to take under control the location, consequently there are some European countries in which the brand didn't enter properly in the fashion market.

Conclusion

The deconstruction of the gender concepts from society, through technologies, consumers, and then marketing, is leading the world reality: key words are Generation Z and identity, both supported by the need to satisfy the one's self-expression. Different pronouns and gender identities are focused on a fluid and international network. According to the Marketing Literature, identity isn't necessarily related to sexual orientation, and this is the reason why the intention of the new consumer behaviour model, led by Generation Z, is focused on new social norms developed around the concept of *diversity*, in terms of multiple different needs and desires. The first step of the new consumer behaviour model is represented by *attitudes*, meaning a feeling of comfort around inclusion; subjective norms could be considered as the approach to gender neutral pronouns and open minded to consider at the same level more than two gender options; the perceived behavioural control could be related to integration and inclusivity topics, which could improve the loyalty of brands, through engagement contests. The three main aspect of the model, market mavenism, social identity, and technology self-efficacy, are considered now as the basic drivers for the new brands strategies of inclusivity and diversity: the sharing of fluid codes and signs, for instance, would be considered as a part of brands messages, to create and reach consciousness about the topic. Also, social-identity driver needs to be considered is still updating, by the target of Generation Z, and would be considered as basic strument to reach a larger target, even across different subcultures.

Recommendation

Due the lackness of Asos and Collusion awareness around the sample studied, possible recommendations suggested for the Company would include strategies to activate a discussion around the gender fluid topic. Even if the product needs to stay on the message core, the Company could start conversations to reach a main role for Collusion in the sharing of fluid values, elevating diversity as main driver in agenda, even through:

- Fluid imagery in advertising;
- Ad hoc Marketing Team for the collection Collusion, and fluid personalities in senior leadership, to reach a literate level about the topic, even gaining credibility;
- Fluid and sustainable packaging, to integrated main needs of the target;
- Fluid customer service, as integration of diversity in customer journey, to share and present gender fluid benefits around diversity.

Recommendation for Future Researchers

Future researchers could improve not only the study of gender fluid customer journey by fashion perspectives, but also how Generation Z and future Generations could coordinate needs and requests with fashion industries, considering a co-creation process around street style, in which subculture usually find more specific meaning and codes.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Dear Zoomer,

Your Generation is the focus on the relation between Identity, Fashion, and Asos.

You are the present, as you are the future: thanks for your support.

What's your age?

- *Under 18*
- *18-24*

What's your pronoun?

- *She/Her*
- *He/Him*
- *They/Them*
- *Other*

Do you think is Fashion supporting Gender Fluidity into Society?

- *Yes*
- *No*
- *Maybe*

On a scale from 1 to 4, in which 1 means masculinity and 4 femininity, how would you rate the following terms?

- *Creativity*
- *Authority*
- *Competitiveness*
- *Romance*
- *Shyness*
- *Blue*
- *Pink*

Are you the primary decision maker in your household regarding purchasing clothes?

- *Yes*
- *No*

Would you buy Gender Fluid clothes?

- *Yes*
- *No*
- *Maybe*

Do you know the Brand Asos and its collection Collusion?

- *Yes*
- *No*

If yes, on a scale from 1 to 4, how do you think Collusion helps in the identity creation process?

How much do you think is important to take care of the own personal style?

1, 2, 3, 4

Do you think people's Fashion style could describe their sexual orientation?

- *Yes*
- *No*
- *Maybe*

How much important is others' opinion about your personal style,

- *Family 1 - 4*
- *Friends 1 - 4*
- *School/Work 1 - 4*