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Influence of Psychological Factors on the Choice of Fashion Among Generation Z Male Students in TVET Institutions in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

This study sought to determine the influence of psychological factors on the choice of fashion among Generation Z male students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which holds that the environment influences a person's consumption behaviour. The study employed a correlational descriptive research design with a cross-sectional approach. The target population was 2,000 male TVET students, from which a sample of 333 respondents was drawn using simple random sampling. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, and 290 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 87 per cent. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis. Findings showed that psychological factors had a mean of 15.756 and were strongly and significantly correlated with fashion choice ($r = .821$, $p < .01$). However, regression analysis indicated that psychological factors did not have a statistically significant independent effect on fashion choice ($\beta = .098$, $p = .776$). The study concluded that psychological factors were strongly associated with fashion choice, although their independent predictive contribution was not statistically significant in the regression model. The study recommends further longitudinal and comparative research on the psychological drivers of fashion consumption among Generation Z.

Key terms: Consumer behaviour, fashion choice, Generation Z, psychological factors, TVET students.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z refers to people who were born after the millennial generation, in the mid-1990s to 2000. Gen Z is characterised by one of the most significant attributes, which is that they have been surrounded by the world of technology; the ways they live, socialise, perceive information and make decisions differ completely from those of any other generation before. This is a globalised generation whose thinking and acting are borderless, according to the report by Dimock (2019).

Globally, the Gen Z segment is huge, estimated to be worth US$ 143 billion due to their population size, since they account for approximately 32 per cent of the global population. This is a significant market segment that marketers cannot ignore. Generation Z are called the generation "born digital." They are documented as the most tech-savvy and digitally savvy generation that is converting the world into a digital world. They prefer to buy online (Wansi, 2020).

However, the fashion industry and researchers need to be keen in studying Generation Z to understand the characteristics and behavioural responses of Gen Z, because, as defined by the researchers, they are the next generation who are more knowledgeable and educated with technology and innovation (Don, 1998).

Europe's fashion market is almost the size of the USA and Japan combined. In 2016, the total EU cosmetics market for clothing fashion was estimated to be € 63.5 billion, while that of the US was estimated to be €38.2 billion. By 2026, the US market is predicted to have grown at a rate of 5 per cent annually. The key players identified were Nike, Levi Strauss, Ralph Lauren, Gap, Tommy Hilfiger, American Eagle and Old Navy (Global Insight, 2007).

These players had initially identified the female segment as the major market segment. This situation has shifted, attracting more male consumers because of "men's growing acceptance of the importance of being well groomed." This shift has indicated that brand loyalty among consumers is no longer the key determinant of sales of some fashion products. In two Asian consumer markets, China and South Korea, to establish the influence of consumer values, needs and purchase behaviour, consumers in both countries exhibited brand loyalty in apparel purchases (Dimock, 2019). The findings of the study indicated that meeting changing customer needs by providing the right products and services has been an ongoing marketing challenge for retailing in competitive global markets

The consumer market is heterogeneous, which makes it difficult for producers and marketers to develop strategies that effectively meet the needs of their markets, leveraging a sound understanding of consumer behaviour, particularly why the Generation Z segment makes specific purchase decisions.

Various studies have been conducted globally to understand diversities in fashion consumption behaviour. Some studies done earlier indicate that apparel fashion consumption behaviour between developed and less developed countries significantly differs, as stated by Kimemia (2022), which explains the disparities in factors influencing the choice of similar fashion brands in different countries.

However, many research studies and academic paper reviews indicate that in developing countries such as Kenya, information on the influence of psychological factors on the choice of fashion products among the Gen Z segment is very limited. This justifies the need for a study to establish the determinants of apparel fashion consumption decision-making among Generation Z students in such contexts. Considering the size of the Gen Z population, their 'global' nature means their preferences transcend nationalities.

This makes the group a complex segment whose tastes and preferences are turbulent. Understanding their behaviour will help the fashion industry position itself appropriately to respond to the market dynamics through innovation.

Although previous studies have examined consumer buying behaviour, particularly the factors influencing brand preferences for fashion products, limited attention has been given to Generation Z male students in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Specifically, the psychological factors motivating their fashion purchasing choices remain insufficiently explored. This study therefore sought to address this research gap by examining the influence of psychological factors on

the choice of apparel fashion among Generation Z male students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Factors and Fashion Choice among Gen-Z Male Students

Kiboro et al.(2017) argue that consumers ordinarily purchase goods and services for psychological reasons. Psychological factors influencing consumer behaviour are demographics, personality, and lifestyles (Rao, 2020).

Kumar et al.(2020) noted that psychological factors strongly influence purchase decisions. Mulyono and Rusdarti (2020) explored the role of psychological factors in boosting compulsive buying behaviour in the digital era among Indonesian students. The study established that greed, self-control and money attitude are likely to significantly moderate the effect of income on uncontrollable buying behaviour.

According to Solomon (2017) the five psychological aspects essential to marketing are: motivation, perception, personality and lifestyle, and social behaviour. These are essential for practice and research in the marketplace and are applied in the fields of marketing.

Perception

Solomon (2017) states that perception means how a person responds to information made available. Consumer perception is the process by which individuals interpret and form impressions about a product, service, or company based on their experiences, interactions, and information they receive. Consumers encounter numerous stimuli in their day-to-day life. In some instances, they may ignore some and perceive the stimuli that are related to their current needs. For instance, a consumer who desires to have a new house will pay attention to adverts that talk about houses while neglecting adverts about cars until the time when he/she desires to have a new car (Nakalinda, 2018).

Nakalinda (2018) states that consumers' buying decisions are based on their beliefs, past experience and their attitudes towards that product or service and that it is hard for consumers to retain all the information and stimuli that they are exposed to; hence, a consumer will only select what stimuli to retain in relation to his/her needs at a given time. For instance, in instances where a brand is considered a consumer's favourite, they tend to forget rival brands easily (Kotler, 2012). Perception of a brand in the marketplace plays a vital role, as it influences consumers to have a positive feeling about that particular brand; it is for this reason that big brands will go out of their way to ensure that they create a positive perception in the minds of consumers (Al-Hamdani & Smith, 2017).

Li et al. (2020) did a study on the effect of risk perception on purchase behaviour. The findings showed a negative relationship between risk perception and customer purchase behaviour. The geographical region, purchase channel and country development level affected the relationship.

In developed countries, perceived risk influenced customer purchase behaviour more strongly and negatively than it did for consumers in developing countries. Perceived risk of online purchase channels strongly and negatively impacted customer purchase behaviour compared with that of offline purchase channels.

In a study on the effect of perception on consumer purchase behaviour of organic food products in Malaysia, Wee et al. (2014) indicated that intention to purchase organic food was significantly influenced by consumers' perceptions of safety, health, environmental factors, and animal welfare. It was established that consumers' perceived quality of organic food products had no significant effect on their intention to purchase the products. Actual purchase behaviour of organic food products was significantly affected by purchase intention.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Musa et al. (2016) that attitude refers to knowledge about positive or negative feelings about an object or activity, which determines the preference towards an object, issue, person or action. The attitudes of consumers comprise consumer beliefs, feelings and behavioural intentions towards a product or a service.

These factors are interdependent and influence how a consumer reacts to a product or service. Result of

attitudes, consumers are able to choose a brand or retail shop over that of the competition. A belief is a vision that a consumer has towards a product or a service, which is ignited by past experience (Nasution et al., 2014). A consumer can have either a positive or negative belief about a product or service (Perner, 2018). Consumer beliefs may differ depending on a consumer's situation and experience (Rossiter, 2014).

Carvalho (2013) sought to understand the impact of consumer attitudes in predicting purchasing behaviour. The attitude was measured by applying the Expectancy Value Model (Fishbein, 1963), where beliefs were asked directly and the attributes to be considered as key in purchase decisions. The results indicated that, out of the 12 features studied, the attributes researched- on-time delivery, Food Price and Assortment of Restaurants showed no positive correlation between a positive attitude and higher purchase behaviour.

In a study on the effect of beliefs on attitudes and the effect of attitudes on purchase intentions by Kocaömer and Topsümer (2020), it was found that consumer beliefs about both social media advertising and television advertising partially affected attitudes and that attitudes also affected purchase intention. The credibility dimension, constituting consumer beliefs, affected attitudes towards television advertising but did not affect attitudes towards social media advertising. Similarly, the information dimension affected attitudes towards social media advertising but did not affect attitudes towards television advertising. The degree to which attitudes towards social media and television advertising influence purchase intentions also changed.

Motivation

Solomon (2017) states that "motivation concerns nothing less than why people behave as they do". Therefore, the motivational psychological process is considered to persuade an individual to behave in a certain way. Both personal and social dynamics drive and impact a purchase, regarding human wants and needs. Several types of situations are likely to trigger consumer disturbance, and these energising deficiencies could be either physiological or psychological.

An internal psychological factor could be an unfilled need that creates tension and drives the individual to satisfy it. This type of behaviour is goal-oriented and impacted by previous learning and cognitive processes. To manifest a need that directly serves the consumer's goal, the consumer is likely to be influenced by social, personal, cultural, or hereditary factors. These serve to influence the choice of what, where, and how an individual is impacted by these factors (Kim, 2013).

A clear goal must be articulated to explain the relationship between motivating behaviour and what the market offers, in order to meet a consumer's wants or needs (Kotler, 2012). According to Rani (2014), a goal is an "internal representation of desirable states that people try to attain and undesirable states that they try to avoid" (p.368). Goals are concrete and more specific when fulfilling a need, and they usually have a substantial impact on consumer behaviour.

According to Rani (2014), there are different types of goals that attract consumer behaviour; these could either be so-called "positively valent," reflecting a desire to purchase an attractive good to feel more satisfied or "negatively valent," reflecting a repulsion and undesirable behaviour. Lastly, Gross (1998) states that the motivational process is not complete without crucial factors such as emotions and moods, which are called "affect" in psychology. Emotions and moods are defined as a balanced state with components of experience, expression, and arousal.

An individual's needs are intricately linked and, as a result, can influence behaviour simultaneously. Some needs are emotionally related, while some are status-related, mutually reinforcing a purchase (David, 2018). As a result, several needs may be met by acquiring and using the same product, which runs counter to Maslow's well-known motivational assumptions.

A fixed set of requirements is placed in the form of a hierarchy, as presented in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and impacts behaviour in a sequential pattern. More basic physiological needs, such as safety, and social ones must be met before higher-order, secondary needs can activate a person's behaviour (Maslow, 1943). Furthermore, Maslow's hierarchy of

needs, such as achievement, status, and self-actualisation, has been helpful for marketers to clarify various types of product benefits that claim to individuals consequent to environmental and developmental circumstances (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). To conclude, both "primary" physiological needs, such as the need for hunger, pain, and body temperature, together with "secondary" psychological needs, such as the need for achievement, affiliation, and power, have an impact on consumer behaviour (Kimmel, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the stimulus-organism theory. The stimulus-organism theory by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) holds that a buyer's behaviour is influenced by three factors: stimuli, internal psychological states like attitudes, beliefs and emotions and consumers' responses. According to the theory, a buyer is a living organism whose behaviour is influenced by a blend of internal and external factors. They argued that for successful marketing strategy formulation, they must be aligned and founded on the provisions of this theory. In the past decades, the stimulus–organism–response (SOR) model has become one of the most commonly used frameworks that integrates input, process and outputs into a single model.

To a great extent, this model helps in understanding the influence of an individual's behaviour, and hence it is applied in addressing human behaviour-related issues. The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model is generally used to examine the association between stimulus and response and to examine how the organism mediates these relationships. This is carried out through different pathways that provoke the rational and emotional states of an individual, which then initiate behavioural responses (Islam & Rahman, 2017). In this model, stimuli (S) induce two opposing types of responses (R) in the user: The S-O-R model suggests that an organism's internal feelings or behaviour (person) are caused by the external environment (stimuli).

This internal processing of the activation can be conscious or unconscious and includes perceptions and environmental interpretations that influence someone's feelings. This influence further triggers an emotion that leads to a response and decision-making. The S-O-R paradigm is a leading concept in multiple global management theories and is, therefore, a model mainly developed and used in various research fields. Notably, the internal and external factors influencing consumer behaviour act as the stimuli that trigger a response in the form of product choice.

This position was supported by Kotler (2012), who argued that the competitive advantage of any organisation is based on effective marketing management strategies, and such strategies must be based on a sound understanding of the consumers' demands in order to streamline value chain decisions based on such intelligence. This theory is relevant in this study because the study focuses on seeking to find out the psychological factors that determine fashion preferences, an appendage of consumer behaviour of men.

METHODOLOGY

A correlational descriptive research design was utilised in this study. This design was considered to be appropriate for this study since it sought to investigate how psychological factors influence fashion product choice.

This study focused on TVET institutions in Nakuru County since the researcher did not find any evidence of other studies done on Gen Z buying behaviour in Nakuru.

This study focused on Gen Z and their fashion product buying behaviour. The study targeted randomly selected male students at TVET institutions who are Gen Z. The population was obtained from carefully selected TVET institutions. The total number of the selected students was 2,000, from data obtained from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA).

Blumberg et al.(2014) define a sampling technique as the method employed by the researcher to develop a sample from the entire population. In this study, simple random sampling was adopted. An equal number of respondents was selected from each faculty to ensure that every member of the target population had an equal chance of being represented in the sample.

In any empirical study that aims to make inferences about a population from a sample, sample size is an important attribute (Taherdoost, 2016). Yamane (1973) formula was used to determine the sample size in this study. The appropriate sample size for the study was 333 respondents.

$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$

Where n = corrected sample size, N = target population, e = margin of error (0.05).

$n = 2000 / 1+2000(0.05)^2 = 2000/6 = 333$

From the target population, a sample of 333 respondents was developed. The study developed structured questionnaires which were handed out to students. Questionnaires enable the researcher to obtain in-depth information from the respondents. The section of the questionnaire relevant to this study covered psychological factors.

At this stage, the researcher tested the questions and questionnaires on members of the target population to evaluate the reliability and validity of the survey instruments before final distribution (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The researcher distributed some pre-testing copies of the questionnaire to 120 sampled respondents to identify any problems with data collection regarding the research instrument and get likely solutions. The tests indicated an internal consistency of 0.7, which indicates dependability.

Validity and reliability in research are measures of establishing the suitability of a method of research in assessing what is intended to be measured, and whether the outcomes thereon are a true reflection and representation of the intended investigation, as opined by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The Cronbach Alpha method was the main method used to check internal consistency. According to Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2014), a good internal consistency ratio for Cronbach's alpha should be 0.7 and above.

Content validity was used to ensure that all variables of the research, including psychological factors, are presented in the questionnaire.

The study used primary data to make inferences and conclusions about the study population. The research instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered on a face-to-face, researcher-administered basis. Out of the target sample of 333 respondents, 290 were interviewed in the survey, representing a response rate of 87 per cent.

The researcher sought approval from the Board of Postgraduate Studies for data collection. Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) is mandated to regulate and assure quality in research, science, technology and innovation. The researcher sought a NACOSTI permit in order to ensure that the research study complies with the regulator's set standards. The county government oversees the operations of TVETs; the researcher sought consent to collect data from the director of TVET in Nakuru.

Further, the researcher sought consent of the principals in charge of the selected TVET institutions before administering the questionnaires to the respondents. Finally, the researcher sought voluntary consent of the respondents. Confidentiality of the responses obtained was assured.

A quantitative approach was used for data analysis. The SPSS program was used to run descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages so as to present the quantitative data in the form of tables. A regression analysis was used to analyse the data collected so as to establish the presence of a relationship between the dependent variable (fashion product choice) and psychological factors as the independent variable of interest. The study used a 95 per cent confidence level. A 95 per cent confidence interval reflects a significance level of 0.05, which shows that for an independent variable to have a significant effect on the dependent variable, the p-value should be below the significance level (0.05).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

333 structured questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, of which 290 questionnaires were filled in, representing a response rate of 87 per cent, which is sufficient for answering the study questions and the objective. Mugenda (2008) states that a study with a

response rate above 50 per cent is always considered to be sufficient to address the objectives of a study.

Demographic Characteristics

From the findings, 62.1 per cent of the respondents were aged between 18 and 22 years, while 37.9 per cent of the respondents were aged between 23 and 27 years. These findings indicated that the respondents' population was negatively skewed towards the lower age bracket. It was further shown that 39.7 per cent of the respondents had a monthly income ranging from K.sh. 5001-10000, 36.2 per cent had an income less than K.sh. 5,000, while 24.1 per cent of the respondents had a monthly income of between K.sh 10,001 - 15,000. These findings indicated that data on respondents' income was normally distributed.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–22	180	62.1
Age	23–27	110	37.9
Income	Below 5,000	105	36.2
Income	5,001–10,000	115	39.7
Income	10,001–15,000	75	24.1

Descriptive Statistics for Psychological Factors

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics – Psychological Factors

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Psychological factors	57	.00	21.03	15.756	4.5319	-1.567	5.471

The Psychological factors had a mean of 15.756. The minimum value was 0.00, and the maximum was 21.03. The data were negatively skewed at -1.567, with increasingly fewer values clustering on the left side of the x-axis with a long tail towards the axis, and a Kurtosis of 5.471. In statistics, kurtosis greater than 3 is considered a leptokurtic distribution and indicates a more serious outlier problem, which can compromise the data integrity.

Diagnostic Tests

A test for autocorrelation was conducted to determine the correlation of residuals across time. In this study, the Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation was adopted. The results showed that the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating that there is no serial autocorrelation of any order and that the residuals were not autocorrelated (Durbin-Watson (D) = 1.075).

A multicollinearity test was also conducted. A VIF value of 1 means there is no correlation between that variable and any other. A rule of thumb is that a VIF above 5 indicates the presence of multicollinearity. Psychological factors recorded a VIF of 5.246, indicating that the predictor was moderately correlated with the other predictors in the model.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation between Psychological Factors and Fashion Choice

Variable	Fashion Choice
Psychological factors	.821**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a strong positive statistically significant relationship between fashion product choice and psychological factors (r = .821).

Regression Analysis

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.746[a]	.557	.576	.26854

As presented in the model summary, the model indicates that 57.6 per cent of the variation in fashion choice was attributed to variations in the predictor variables (adjusted R^2 = .576).

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.362	.150		8.203	.000
Psychological factors	.098	.019	.098	.286	.776

There was a positive relationship between psychological factors and fashion choice. The relationship was not statistically significant at the coefficient level (β = .098, $p > .05$).

Interpretation of Findings

Correlation analysis established a strong positive and statistically significant association between psychological factors and fashion choice among Generation Z male TVET students ($r = .821$, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that students' psychological characteristics, including attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and past experiences, were closely associated with their fashion choices. However, regression analysis revealed that psychological factors did not have a statistically significant independent effect on fashion choice ($\beta = .098$, $p = .776$).

Therefore, although psychological factors were strongly associated with fashion choice, the regression results do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that they independently predicted fashion choice in the model.

The ANOVA results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant ($F = 13.695$, $p < .05$). This suggests that the predictors included in the model collectively explained variation in fashion choice. However, the overall significance of the model does not establish that psychological factors individually contributed a statistically significant effect.

Discussion

Psychological Factors and Gen Z Fashion Choice

The findings established a strong positive association between psychological factors and fashion choice among Generation Z male TVET students. The correlation results ($r = .821$, $p < .01$) suggest that students' attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and past experiences were closely related to their fashion choices. This finding is consistent with Nakalinda (2018), who observed that consumer buying decisions are influenced by beliefs, past experiences, and attitudes towards products or services.

However, regression analysis indicated that psychological factors did not have a statistically significant independent effect on fashion choice ($\beta = .098$, $p = .776$). This distinction suggests that although psychological factors were strongly associated with fashion choice, their independent predictive contribution was not statistically established in the regression model. The findings should therefore be interpreted in terms of association rather than a confirmed independent influence.

The findings support the relevance of psychological considerations in understanding fashion consumption among Generation Z students. Nevertheless, the non-significant regression coefficient indicates the need for further investigation into the contribution of psychological factors alongside other determinants of fashion choice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study established a strong positive and statistically significant association between psychological factors and fashion choice among Generation Z male TVET students in Nakuru County ($r = .821$, $p < .01$). This suggests that students' attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and past experiences were closely associated with their fashion choices. However,

regression analysis indicated that psychological factors did not have a statistically significant independent effect on fashion choice (β = .098, p = .776). Consequently, the study concludes that psychological factors were strongly associated with fashion choice, but their independent predictive influence was not statistically established by the regression results.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed for future research. First, a longitudinal study should be conducted to examine changes in psychological and behavioural factors over time, particularly by investigating the differences between younger and older generations. Such a study would provide a deeper understanding of how psychological drivers of fashion choice and consumer behaviour evolve across generations.

Second, future studies should investigate the influence of digital marketing on the psychological factors that drive consumer purchase decisions. Given the increasing use of digital platforms among Generation Z, examining how digital marketing strategies shape perceptions, preferences, attitudes, and purchasing intentions would provide valuable insights into contemporary consumer behaviour.

Third, the study should be replicated in other institutions of higher learning to provide a broader perspective on the psychological factors influencing fashion choice among Generation Z students. Conducting similar research in different institutions and geographical settings would enhance the generalisability of the findings and allow for meaningful comparisons across different contexts.

Finally, a comparative study should be conducted among the adult population aged 27 years to provide clearer insights into the differences in psychological drivers of buying behaviour between older adults and Generation Z. Such a comparison would help establish generational variations in consumer motivations, preferences, and decision-making processes, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour across age groups.

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