

# Marketing and social influence of fashion on clothing purchase behavior of consumers

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**Abstract:** The importance of the influence of fashion on sustainable consumption has increased recently. Fashion companies have found themselves in the public eye as the media spreads news about social and environmental issues related to the clothing industry. For this reason, scholars and practitioners have devoted close attention to sustainable fashion marketing. This research aims to explore the influence of fashion marketing on consumer purchase decisions and discuss the factors affecting consumer behavior in relation to clothing. The survey is based on a structured questionnaire distributed online, in which 202 consumers participated. The research results confirm that consumers' choice of clothing is highly influenced by the marketing campaign of the fashion industry. Furthermore, the findings identify consumer attitudes towards clothing and fashion in Georgia.

**Keywords:** Fashion marketing, consumer behavior, social influence, sustainability, Georgia

**JEL classification:** M31, D12, M14

## 1. Introduction

Scholars state that clothes can change our understanding and perception towards both ourselves and others and influence our emotions and even job performance and hence, clothing is a tool that can change a person's mental attitude (Rosner, 2019). Clothes impact attention, self-perception, and competence. Clothes can have positive or negative effects on the mental state. Some people spend a lot of time choosing clothes and consciously choose what to wear. Clothes intended for work, dinner, meeting with friends and relaxing are different from each other. With each garment, a person consciously or unconsciously communicates non-verbally with the outside world. The clothes that a person wears reflect and convey how they want to be perceived by others, as well as how they see himself.

Furthermore, fashion affects the personality and psychological well-being of people as clothes are related to personality. Consequently, the clothes that a person buys have some kind of content and send a certain message by wearing them (Singh, 2023). Thus, Fashion determines people's behavior. A person behaves according to what she wears and is perceived accordingly. Consumers demand more than just satisfaction. They want an emotional experience.

The fashion industry has a bad reputation in terms of social responsibility, as it is one of the leaders in environmental depletion and pollution. For this reason, fashion companies must change consumer behaviour, consumption patterns, and estimate the demand in order to avoid excessive textile

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waste. In this regard, marketing plays a major role in the fashion industry in terms of understanding and altering consumer behaviour (Singh, 2020). Fashion is viewed as a source of communication, which is important when a brand awareness campaign is planned, or when fashion is used to stimulate behaviour shift towards ethical concerns, diversity, ecology, problems of ethnic or marginalized groups, and human rights.

In this context, marketing research on overconsumption, shopping mania and environmental problems caused by the fashion industry is becoming more and more relevant. Shopping is a habit for social enjoyment and relaxation. Moreover, shopping is part of people's activities and identity as they want to be fashionable, look beautiful, and improve their appearance. However, people's habits can be transformed through structured behaviour change programs so that they understand what habits they have and what motivates them to buy more clothes. Therefore, it is necessary to study consumer behaviour related to their dressing and buying habits. Besides avoiding impulsive purchasing and getting more pleasure from emotional experiences than from material things, consumers can also benefit the environment and prevent their discarded clothes from ending up in landfills.

Consumer buying behaviour is complex, requiring extensive research in light of globalization and digitalization. Previous studies emphasize that various factors such as social and cultural trends, new technologies, globalized markets, promotion campaigns, as well as gender, age, and education define consumer behaviour (Makrides et al., 2021). For this reason, interconnected factors need to be investigated. Moreover, consumer behaviour differs by brand and industry (Chovanová et al., 2015) while demographic variables can be crucial (Musso et al., 2022).

Against this background, the paper aims to explore the influential aspects of the buying behaviour of clothing items among consumers in Georgia. Two main research questions for this study are as follows.

RQ1: What factors determine the consumer choice of clothing?

RQ2: To what extent does the advertising of the fashion industry influence the consumer buying behaviour of clothes?

The quantitative research approach was employed to answer the research questions. The findings can have implications for theory and practice. The research results contribute to the broad understanding of the influential aspects of fashion marketing campaigns on consumers' choice of clothing by identifying consumers' attitudes towards clothing and fashion in Georgia. Moreover, the results determine the differences between dressing for personal mood and the social influence of marketing on the fashion industry.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Influential determinants of consumer decision on Fashion apparel

In early civilization, the main purpose of clothing was to keep the body warm. In the 21st century, covering the body with clothing is only one function. As a social interface, Clothing functions as an important and necessary social tool that connects the body to society (Barnard, 2014). Clothing allows people to stand out as members of a particular group. It properly covers the body, expresses the position in the group to which this or that person belongs and helps people to express their uniqueness and creativity (Kodžoman, 2019). In different societies, clothing expresses personal wealth and taste, which was especially marked in the past. George Taylor clearly demonstrated this in 1926 in his theory "Hamline Index" (Kodžoman, 2019). Taylor noted that when the country goes into recession, women prefer long dresses. On the contrary, during the period of economic growth, women cut their dresses shorter and shorter (Gilbert, 2017).

Dressing sense is quite important to reputation because the clothes a person wears send a strong signal to peers. The mood is projected into society, and the desired image is created. Any artifact that is placed on the body represents the social significance of the person (Dunne, 2010). Clothing serves the process of socialization and acts as a symbol of social status and identity (Kaiser et al., 2001).

The social mood in the set theory refers to attitudes toward people and the social environment, in addition to things. When a person is affected by the social environment, it is a social influence. When people aim to influence others based on social norms, this process is called social pressure (Nadirashvili, 2009). Whether people choose a book, a movie, or clothes, their behavior is influenced by the social

pressure they are under (Nadirashvili, 2009). Since human behavior is determined by both external situations and internal dispositions, people can either react to a situation or influence the situation. There are two main ways of persuasion, direct persuasion and indirect influence. The direct effect refers to arguments that relate directly to the object of the assertion, while the indirect one creates a chain of illogical evidence, but affects it through pleasant associations (Nadirashvili, 2009). An example of direct exposure can be the advertising of tech products, which rarely feature celebrities. Instead, comparative information on technical data is demonstrated. On the contrary, the indirect effect of advertising is caused by emphasizing associations of products with, for example, youth, health, and joy of life (Nadirashvili, 2009).

A person is usually affected by social influences. Well-known experiments show that people often make decisions that come from an authoritative person (Milgram, 1963; Zimbardo, 1969; Zimbardo, 2022). In addition, a person has a tendency to adapt to a group or social environment, to imitate the behavior, attitudes and values of the group. Conforming behavior occurs when a person wants to be liked by the group and not be excluded from it, as a result of the pressure of an opposing majority (Asch, 1955). Conformity is changing one's thoughts or behavior as a result of the influence of others (Yang et al., 2021). Recent studies proved the conforming behavior even among online communities (Wijenayake et al., 2020).

Fashion does not always intend to manipulate others. However, when people use fashion to present a status that often does not match their activities or income, it can be a result of the social influence of marketing campaigns. A person dresses according to the social group she wants to belong to and what is acceptable in that group (Entwistle, 2023). The need for recognition and belonging is satisfied and brings peace of mind. Moreover, clothes in which a person feels comfortable will have a positive effect on her mental state (Adam and Galinsky, 2012). Accordingly, in addition to bringing the physical experience, wearing particular clothes has a symbolic meaning and can be associated with specific fashion items (Adam and Galinsky, 2012). For example, people who wear formal clothes describe themselves as more competent and rational, while those who wear casual clothing describe themselves as friendly and welcoming (Peluchette and Karl, 2007). Studies demonstrated that wearing a lab coat increased selective attention compared to those who did not wear a lab coat (Adam and Galinsky, 2012).

Furthermore, clothes influence not only people's self-perception and attitude (Kellerman and Laird, 1982) but also impact other people's attitudes and perceptions towards a person who wears a certain dress (Adam and Galinsky, 2012). Consequently, changing clothing can change a person's feelings and mood as well as influence other people's emotions and hence, behavior by creating a desired impression (Slepian et al., 2015). Research illustrates that people express their feelings through clothes (Sullivan et al., 2017), which in turn also affects their mood and behavior (Tiggemann and Lacey, 2009). In this sense, people choose, buy, and wear clothes based on the attitude they have towards the clothes and the message they want to send to society through garments. Through clothing, a person informs others about his personal and collective likeness. Clothing can signal many aspects of a person's social identity, including socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and occupation. A doctor, soldier, policeman, postman, judge, or priest can be identified by their attire.

## **2.2. The impact of color on consumer clothing choice**

Color preferences vary by country, culture, gender, and age. The ability to create emotional associations with colors is deeply embedded in human nature (Hurlbert and Ling, 2012). Colors are used to express social identity, hierarchy, emotion, personal identity, image, and aesthetic taste (Kodžoman, 2019). Color affects perceptions, which can evoke certain emotions (Roohi and Forouzandeh, 2019). Thus, a preference for a color is derived from the perception of the desirability of the object that has that particular color (Hurlbert and Ling, 2012). In this regard, product visibility determines consumer choice according to their color preferences.

Since color psychology is a determinant of human behavior, it is at the heart of marketing activities in many business companies. Studies investigating the correlation between color psychology and consumer purchasing behavior in the clothing market found that product color affects consumers' emotions and perceptions (Casas and Chinoperekweyi, 2019). In addition, the symbolic meaning of color echoes consumers' perceptions connecting it to their cultures (Casas and Chinoperekweyi, 2019). Thus, colors associated with positive emotion or perception cause consumers to buy a certain product.

Marketers understanding the emotions behind colors can evoke the desired behavior of consumers and attract customers or trigger buying decisions. Since young people prefer branded products, they are the main target group of marketing promotion activities. Previous research revealed that branded clothes' design, price, brand trust and name, social influence, fashion, and status symbol and the essential factors determining buying behavior (Kansra, 2014).

### **2.3. Ecological footprints of Fashion affecting consumer buying behavior**

The fashion industry has developed rapidly. About 50 years ago, the average woman had only two dresses. The fashion industry divides the four seasons of the year into 52 weeks and considers each week as a season. Fashion houses want to sell more and more clothes to consumers as quickly as possible. As a result, clothing is considered to be discarded not when it is useless, but when it no longer has social value or is no longer fashionable. The negative impact of fast fashion is well-documented ranging from poor quality of textiles and questionable sourced raw materials to unacceptable conditions in factories and pressure on the workforce in the South Asian undeveloped countries leading to famous disasters for humans and ecosystems.

In making clothes, companies consume and pollute the Earth's resources, such as land, water, and air with chemicals and emissions (Bailey et al., 2022). For example, the land has been turned into a factory in many areas to harvest cotton using fertilizers and pesticides, which damages soil as the more fertilizer is used the more it needs to be used. Moreover, diseases are spread because food is produced by irrigating from contaminated rivers (Geetha et al., 2008). The fashion industry utilizes a large amount of water under the conditions of shortage of fresh water. Besides, synthetic clothing is made from plastic causing wastes to end up in the oceans poisoning water inhabitants (Pensupa et al., 2018). Additionally, clothing production not only emits greenhouse gases polluting the atmosphere, but also uses raw materials that leave a huge energy footprint (Castro-López et al., 2022).

In general, fashion is known as one of the major contributors to the climate crisis as the second most polluting industry (Bailey et al., 2022) and needs to shift towards a more sustainable way of conducting business (Langdown, 2014). Considering these circumstances, sustainable and eco-fashion, as well as conscious purchases are becoming more and more relevant globally in order to avoid environmental degradation (Mukendi et al., 2020). Additionally, consumer purchase decisions have been shifting towards more eco-friendly products emphasized by green marketing that encourages sustainable consumption, especially among new generations (Shrestha et al., 2023; Estrellado et al., 2022). Thus, consciously purchased clothing that aligns with the consumers' true values will not cause cognitive dissonance after buying and will do less harm to the earth.

### **2.4. Sustainable fashion marketing and well-being of consumers**

Recently, fashion brands moved towards embracing imperfection in order to support the psychological well-being of consumers and avoid the negative effects of unrealistic self-images among customers (Lai and Perminiene, 2020). Prior studies based on semiotic analysis of fashion advertising demonstrated that fashion brands' communication strategy challenges the conventional idea of perfection, and celebrates differences and acceptance of self (Lai and Perminiene, 2020).

Studies show that personality, social influence, status consumption, and materialism influence the purchase intention of consumers in both emerging and developed markets (Bharti et al., 2022). Conversely to fast fashion, slow fashion underlines quality, sustainability, and positive social and environmental impact (Liu et al., 2022). Awareness of sustainability issues and sustainable marketing practices encourage the sustainable behavior of consumers (Masocha, 2018). A survey with 763 consumers exhibited that consumption of slow fashion results in consumers' well-being especially when consumers are engaged in the creation process (Liu et al., 2022). Therefore, sustainable fashion can enhance brand differentiation strategy while improving consumer well-being.

Sustainable fashion as a megatrend incorporates sustainable sourcing, ecological raw materials, a sustainable production process, transparency of the supply chain, a safe workplace, and fair wages (Henninger et al., 2016). Thus, sustainable fashion encompasses social and environmental concerns of production and consumption. In this context, Fashion companies can emphasize their sustainable efforts in their marketing communication programs creating a differentiation strategy to gain a competitive advantage (Henninger et al., 2016). In the same vein, social media advertising affects sustainable

fashion trends influencing consumer behavior. For example, Instagram is growing as a predominant media channel for fashion promotion (Skinner et al., 2023). Researchers investigate sustainable fashion trends on social media as it (re)shapes consumer behavior through Influencers (Gigauri et al., 2023). This tendency can dangerously affect sustainable fashion. Instagram Influencers are urging overconsumption by stimulating fashion purchases (Harris et al., 2015) as a result of their partnership with clothing brands (de Perthuis and Findlay, 2019). Recent studies investigated visual, user-generated content concerning sustainable fashion through hashtag #sustainablefashion and found that the majority of Instagram posts included photos and the hashtag was associated with “four key community groups: online-promotional, artisan-traditional, eco-ethical, and Malay-online-selling” (Skinner et al., 2023). Interestingly, based on the study results, secondhand fashion was considered as a sustainable fashion on Instagram (Skinner et al., 2023). Furthermore, previous studies by Moon et al. (2015) demonstrated that it is difficult for the average consumer to recognize sustainable fashion products in the marketplace. Therefore, Henninger et al. (2016) based on the research results suggest companies to explain the meaning of sustainable fashion to their stakeholders and communicate the way or activities within sustainable fashion in order to avoid associations with greenwashing.

In addition, impulse buying behavior can considerably affect sustainable fashion. Obukhovich et al. (2023) highlight that impulse buying causes overconsumption as consumers do not understand the consequences of their purchase habits. Likewise, mainly consumers with less discipline, less self-possession or psychological anxiety are engaged in impulse buying (Obukhovich et al., 2023).

### 3. Research Methods

The research aims to explore the influence of marketing advertising in the fashion industry on consumer purchase decisions and analyze the factors affecting consumer behavior in relation to clothing. To achieve the research objectives, this research is based on the quantitative research conducted among 202 Georgian consumers.

The survey was conducted online through a Google Form. The questionnaire was made as follows. Each question allowed respondents to indicate whether people dress according to (1) personal taste and aesthetics, or (2) the influence of advertising from the fashion industry. In addition, a photographic study of brands was conducted to determine mood and influence, and to reveal the difference between dressing for personal mood and the marketing influence of the fashion industry.

In the survey, 26 closed questions and 30 statements were used. The statements were compiled to explore dressing for personal mood, and fashion-influenced dressing. Respondents had to choose on a scale how much they agreed with the presented statements. A 5-point Likert scale was offered ranging from 1 to 5 where 5 was - completely agree, 4 - agree, 3 - neutral (neither agree nor disagree), 2 - disagree, 1- completely disagree. Another scale was presented to rate the clothes shown in the pictures, where 5 meant "I would wear it" and 1 - "I would not wear it".

### 4. Research Results

In the research, 171 women and 31 men took part (N=202). Their age ranged from 18 to 65 years, and the majority of them work in a private company (Table 1).

*Table 1. Demographics of Respondents*

<b>Age</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-25 years old	96	48%
26-35 years old	59	29%
36-45 years old	38	19%
46-55 years old	7	3%
56-65 years old	2	1%
<b>Gender</b>		
Women	171	85%
Men	31	15%
<b>Workplace</b>		
Private company	73	36%

Student	45	22%
Public service	31	15%
Unemployed	19	9%
Non-governmental/ Non-profit organization	12	6%
Entrepreneur	9	5%
Housewife	7	4%
Self-employed	6	3%

Source: Author's own research.

The items were grouped (1) in questions determining consumer behavior of dressing according to personal taste and aesthetics, and (2) in questions determining consumer behavior of dressing due to the advertising influence of the fashion industry

Questions examining personal mood and social influence powered by marketing activities were asked in the same way for participants of both genders (Table 2). However, during the brand photo study, man and woman respondents were shown different pictures. Female respondents saw photos of women wearing women's clothing from women's collections of brands, and respectively, male respondents saw photos of men wearing men's clothing from men's collections of brands.

**Table 2. Questions that determine the dressing behavior of consumers**

<b>Questions that determine the dressing behaviour of consumers, taking into account personal tastes and characteristics</b>	<b>Questions that determine the dressing behaviour of consumers under the advertising influence of the fashion industry</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is important to you when choosing clothes?</li> <li>• Fashion collection of that season.</li> <li>• What celebrities /influencers wear.</li> <li>• What I feel comfortable with.</li> <li>• Color of clothes.</li> <li>• Opinions of others (recommendations, friends, family members).</li> <li>• I plan shopping in advance.</li> <li>• The clothes I buy match my personal values.</li> <li>• I prefer less fashionable but comfortable clothes.</li> <li>• I think in advance what kind of clothes I want to buy.</li> <li>• I wear the clothes I buy.</li> <li>• I wear only branded clothes.</li> <li>• I am wearing fashion from the latest collection.</li> <li>• I dress according to my mood.</li> <li>• I dress according to my profession.</li> <li>• I dress as I like, wherever I go.</li> <li>• I dress according to where (in what situation) I am going.</li> <li>• I dress according to the weather and the season.</li> <li>• I wear only what I want.</li> <li>• I dress according to my needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How interested are you in fashion?</li> <li>• How often do you update your wardrobe?</li> <li>• What part of your income do you spend on clothes?</li> <li>• I dress according to how others perceive me.</li> <li>• I dress according to what others expect of me.</li> <li>• My clothes express who I am to others.</li> <li>• The clothes I wear affect how others perceive me.</li> <li>• The clothes I wear affect my self-perception.</li> <li>• When shopping for garments: I have a hard time choosing.</li> <li>• I have a hard time figuring out what I want.</li> <li>• I send a picture of the outfit to friends for advice.</li> <li>• When I meet someone, the first thing I notice is their clothes.</li> <li>• I judge a person by what he/she wears.</li> <li>• I think clothes speak about a person.</li> <li>• I choose clothes that will attract the attention of others.</li> <li>• I dress the way others are dressed.</li> </ul>

Source: Author's own research.

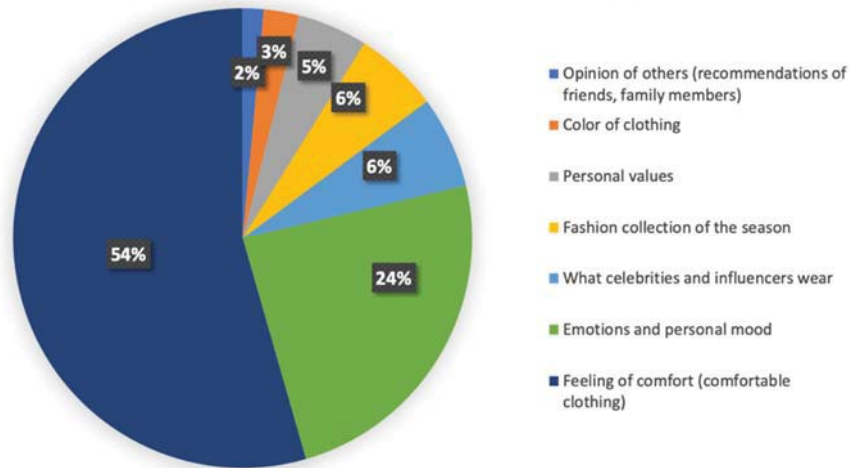
#### **4.1. Clothing purchase behavior of consumers under the personal and social influence**

Questions determining the dressing behavior of consumers with personal tastes and characteristics show that most respondents buy clothing according to their mood, needs, and self-perception. It is noteworthy that the respondents could choose all relevant items simultaneously as several options were possible for most questions.

110 participants of the survey stated that a significant factor when choosing a garment is the feeling of comfort (Figure 1). 49 respondents mentioned emotions and personal mood as important

factors and 12 respondents took into consideration the Fashion collection of the season when choosing clothing. For 10 survey participants, personal values are important and for 13 - what celebrities and influencers are wearing plays a significant role. Color of clothes and recommendations of friends and families are important for 5 and 3 respondents, respectively.

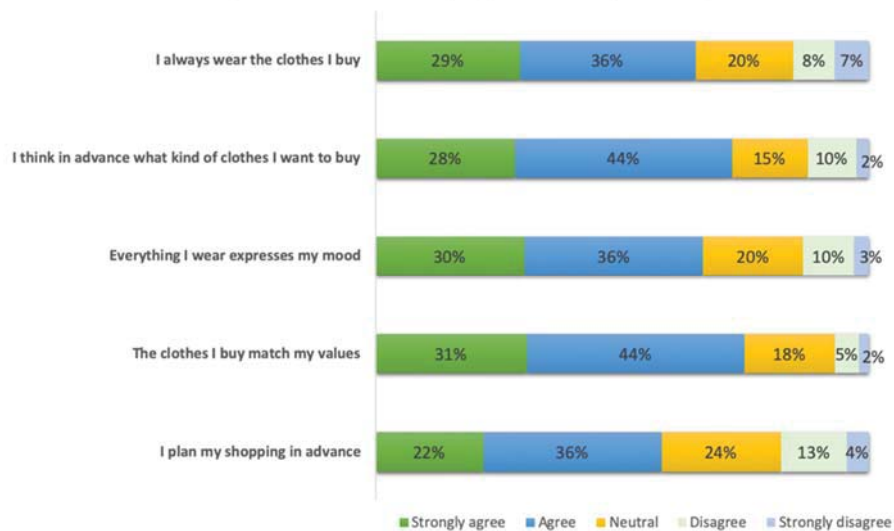
Figure 1. What is important to you when choosing garments?



Source: Author's own research.

The participants in the research should indicate to what extent they agree with the following statements: (1) I plan my shopping in advance, (2) The clothes I buy match my values, (3) Everything I wear expresses my mood, (4) I think in advance what kind of clothes I want to buy, (5) I always wear the clothes I buy. Response options were as follows: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Consumer buying behavior of clothing



Source: Author's own research.

The research findings show that the majority of respondents agree (73) or strongly agree (44) with the statement that they plan their shopping in advance. 49 respondents indicated that they neither agree nor disagree while 27 - disagree and 9 - strongly disagree with that statement. To the next statement, 62 participants strongly agree and 89 agree that the garments they purchase match their own values, while 37 indicate 'neutral', 10 - disagree and 4 - strongly disagree with that notion. To the idea

that clothes express their mood, 61 respondents strongly agree, 73 - agree, 41- neither agree nor disagree, 21 disagree and 6 strongly disagree. A vast majority of participants agree (89) or strongly agree (57) that they think in advance about what kind of clothes they want to buy. However, 20 participants disagree and 5 strongly disagree with the statement, while 31 are neutral. Interestingly, 59 respondents strongly agree and 72 agree with the declaration that they always wear the garments they buy. Yet, 40 of them indicate 'neutral', while 17 people disagree and 14 strongly disagree with the statement.

To the statements related to the consumers' attitude related to clothing and dressing, the majority of respondents agree that although they dress as they wish, they still consider where they go, and take into account the weather and season of the year (Table 3). In addition, clothing as a factor of self-perception and personal mood was studied in this research. A vast number of respondents indicated that the clothes they are wearing affect their self-perception and they prefer more comfortable clothes even if they are less fashionable.

**Table 3. Consumer attitude related to clothing**

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>I dress as I like, wherever I want to go</b>	99 (49%)	67 (33%)	26 (13%)	7 (3%)	3 (1%)
<b>I dress according to where (in what situation) I go</b>	99 (49%)	85 (42%)	14 (7%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
<b>I dress according to the weather and season</b>	104 (51%)	84 (42%)	12 (6%)	1 (0%)	1 (0%)
<b>I wear only what I want</b>	89 (44%)	79 (39%)	29 (14%)	4 (2%)	1 (0%)
<b>I wear according to my needs</b>	81 (40%)	96 (48%)	21 (10%)	4 (2%)	0
<b>The clothes I wear affect my self-perception</b>	57 (28%)	90 (45%)	27 (13%)	23 (11%)	5 (2%)
<b>I choose clothes that attract others' attention</b>	18 (9%)	31 (15%)	61 (30%)	74 (37%)	18 (9%)
<b>I dress like the people around me</b>	4 (2%)	26 (13%)	40 (20%)	91 (45%)	40 (20%)
<b>I prefer less fashionable but comfortable clothes</b>	36 (18%)	59 (29%)	66 (33%)	30 (15%)	11 (5%)

Source: Author's own research.

Thus, research has shown that clothes are a factor in creating a personal mood. According to research, comfort, emotion, and personal mood are preferred when choosing clothes. Most of the survey participants plan their shopping in advance, and the clothes they buy correspond to their personal values. In addition, everything they wear expresses their personality and they think in advance about what kind of clothes they want to buy. In addition, what they acquire, they definitely wear.

The research found out that most of the respondents dress as they like and depending on where they are going - in what situation, and they also take into account the weather as well as their needs. It should be pointed out that the vast majority agree that the clothes they wear affect their self-perception. However, they do not choose such clothes that will attract the attention of others. Moreover, consumers do not dress in accordance with what others around them are wearing.

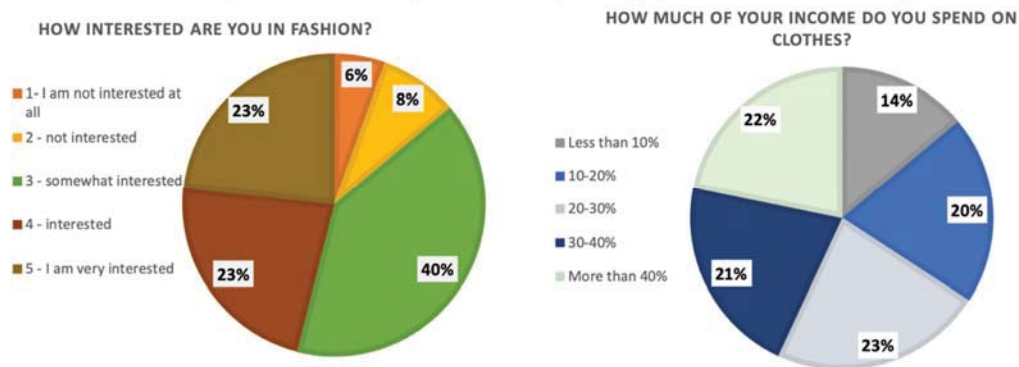
#### **4.2. Dressing behavior of consumers under the marketing influence of the fashion industry**

This study also aimed to reveal the intensity of the advertising influence of the fashion industry on consumer buying behavior of clothing.

Respondents should indicate their interest level in fashion on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 means 'Not at all interested' and 5 - 'Very much interested'. Accordingly, the majority of them answered that they were either very interested (47) or interested (46), while 17 people claimed not being interested and 11 were absolutely not interested, yet 81 respondents indicated '3' - somehow interested in fashion. To the question of how much they spend on clothes, most respondents (46) answered that they spend 20-30% of their income on garments, 44 participants stated 'more than 40%', and 43 of them indicated from 30 to 40%, while some participants (41) answered that they spend approximately 10-

20% of their income on clothing and 28 respondents spend less than 10% of their income on updating their wardrobe (Figure 3). In the same way, survey participants indicated on a scale from 1 to 5 how often they update their wardrobe, where 1 meant ‘rarely’ and 5 - ‘constantly’. Most of them (82; 41%) gave a neutral answer indicating number 3, while 43 respondents (21%) answered that they update often and 45 respondents (22%) - very often. 18 participants (9%) rarely update their wardrobes and 14 respondents (7%) very rarely.

Figure 3. Interest in fashion and spending of consumers on clothing



Source: Author’s own research.

Furthermore, in the statements determining the fashion influence, the respondents did not admit that they are under the influence of the fashion industry rather they dress according to other factors (Table 4).

Thus, the research has demonstrated that clothes create social influence through marketing activities. As a result of the research, it was revealed that most of the respondents in Georgia are interested in fashion, often update their wardrobe and spend a large part of their budget on buying clothes. At the same time, most of the participants do not wear only branded clothes, nor from the latest collection. Instead, most of them dress according to their profession and mood.

Table 4. Influence of fashion marketing on consumers

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<b>I wear only branded clothes</b>	10 (5%)	35 (17%)	39 (19%)	80 (40%)	38 (19%)
<b>I wear from the latest fashion collection</b>	5 (2%)	27 (13%)	36 (18%)	78 (39%)	56 (28%)
<b>I dress according to my mood</b>	64 (32%)	82 (41%)	34 (17%)	19 (9%)	3 (1%)
<b>I dress according to my emotions</b>	57 (28%)	81 (40%)	38 (19%)	23 (11%)	3 (1%)
<b>I dress according to my profession</b>	31 (15%)	82 (41%)	50 (25%)	27 (13%)	12 (6%)
<b>I dress depending on how others perceive me</b>	8 (4%)	32 (16%)	47 (23%)	82 (41%)	33 (16%)
<b>I dress according to what others expect of me</b>	9 (4%)	27 (13%)	28 (14%)	90 (45%)	48 (24%)
<b>My clothes express who I am to others</b>	19 (9%)	32 (16%)	41 (20%)	72 (36%)	38 (19%)
<b>The clothes that I wear affect how others perceive me</b>	34 (17%)	41 (20%)	50 (25%)	55 (27%)	22 (11%)
<b>When buying clothes, it is difficult for me to make a choice</b>	39 (19%)	66 (33%)	48 (24%)	39 (19%)	10 (5%)
<b>It's hard for me to find out what I want</b>	23 (11%)	55 (27%)	34 (17%)	76 (38%)	14 (7%)
<b>I send photos of garments to friends for advice</b>	17 (8%)	49 (24%)	29 (14%)	71 (35%)	36 (18%)
<b>When I meet someone, the first thing I notice is their clothes</b>	29 (14%)	53 (26%)	56 (28%)	49 (24%)	15 (7%)
<b>I judge people according to what they wear</b>	5 (2%)	33 (16%)	40 (20%)	69 (34%)	55 (27%)
<b>I think clothes speak about a person</b>	36 (18%)	49 (24%)	60 (30%)	41 (20%)	16 (8%)

Source: Author's own research.

It is worth noting that most consumers participating in the survey do not dress according to how others perceive them or what others expect of them. In addition, their clothes do not represent who they are to others, and they do not accept that the clothes they wear affect how others perceive them.

However, most respondents indicate that they have difficulty making a choice, but do not agree that it is difficult to find out what they want, and therefore do not send a photo to a friend for advice.

Research has displayed that when participants meet someone, the first thing they notice is their clothes. However, people are not judged by what they wear. At the same time, a great number of respondents believe that clothes speak about a person.

### **4.3. Study with photos about the influence of brands on consumer choice of fashion items**

After respondents indicated whether they were female or male, the survey was divided into two parts. We showed men and women different photos of the clothes of the respective genders. On the scale, the respondents had to indicate how likely they would wear the presented clothing. 1 meant I would not wear it, and 5 meant I would. The photos were selected from the brands that are at the top of The Lyst Index's latest research. These brands are Gucci, Nike, Dior, and Balenciaga. Each photo corresponds to the fashion house's concept, style, colors and signature of recent years.

The reason behind choosing the Lyst Index for this study is that brands usually reflect modern society and resonate with consumer preferences. As a result, consumers find association with brands and create self-image accordingly. Every quarter, a fashion technology company and premium shopping app Lyst announces the Lyst index using data from 200 million consumers. The Lyst Index analyzes data about the browsing and buying behavior of consumers including product views, searching for brands, mentions in social media, and engagement statistics worldwide. According to the Lyst index of Q2 and Q3, 2023, the leading brands are Miu Miu, Prada, Dior, Nike, Loewe, Valentino, Balenciaga, Dolce & Gabbana, Saint Laurent, Gucci, Bottega Veneta, and Versace (LystInsights, 2023).

The research has found that women consumers would not wear distinctive, eye-catching clothes with sharp colors and free or outrageous styles that emphasize individuality. Likewise, the research exposed that the clothes of the style and color offered by the leading brands in the mentioned ranking would not be worn by the male participants.

The question is, if the majority of respondents refuse to wear the top-rated brands, then what determines their place in the top-rankings? These results may be explained by the fact that the brand name was not known to the participants. Another important factor can be social influence as it may not be accepted in a particular society or culture to wear extravagant or eccentric attires.

It should be remembered that the recent Covid pandemic and economic crises changed not only the psychological state of people as stress increased, moods and values changed, but also consumer behavior was altered giving more preference to sportswear and freestyle. Thus, the increased interest of consumers towards Nike can be explained by the changing circumstances and alterations in consumer purchase behavior.

## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

On the one hand, William Hazlitt claimed that "Those who make their dress a principal part of themselves, will, in general, become of no more value than their dress" (Hazlitt, 2023), and on the other hand, Thomas Carlyle argued that "Those who consider clothes frivolous should consider that we live our lives in clothes" (BPS, 2018). Still, the social and marketing influence of Fashion on consumer purchase decisions is remarkable. Therefore, this research was dedicated to exploring what kind of role clothes play for consumers, how they make purchase decisions, and why they choose particular clothes. The choice of clothing affects both one's image (self-image) and how others treat or perceive the individual. In this respect, fashion can influence body image, self-perception, and self-presentation.

The research results confirm that consumers' choice of clothing is highly influenced by the marketing campaign of the fashion industry. Furthermore, the findings identify consumer attitudes towards clothing and fashion in Georgia. A photographic study of brands was conducted to determine

mood and influence, and the differences between dressing for personal mood and the marketing influence of the fashion industry were revealed.

The aim of the research was to study the social and marketing impact of fashion and clothing on personality according to the set theory and consumer behavior. As a result, it was determined that clothes are a factor in creating social influence and fashion marketing can impact consumer behavior. The research hypothesis was that the majority of people dress under the advertising influence of the fashion industry. The survey questionnaire explored clothing choices based on (1) personal taste and aesthetics, (2) advertising influences from the fashion industry. As a result of the research, the hypothesis that people dress under the advertising influence of the fashion industry has been justified.

The research determined consumer attitudes towards clothing and fashion in Georgia. Based on the research results, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Consumers in Georgia do not choose clothes that attract attention and prefer to dress according to what others wear around them.
- Preference is given to less fashionable but comfortable clothes, as well as emotion and personal mood play a significant role in choosing clothing.
- Consumers purchase clothes that correspond to their personal values.
- Clothes create social influence. Most of the respondents are interested in Fashion, often update their wardrobe and spend a large part of their budget on buying clothes.
- However, consumers in Georgia do not wear only branded clothes, nor from the latest fashion collection. Instead, most of the survey participants dress according to their profession and mood.
- Even though most of the interviewees dress as they like and according to where, and in what situation they are going, taking into account the weather and needs, they still agree with the statement that clothes influence mood and attitudes.
- Clothing and fashion influence consumers' moods, attitudes, and emotions about themselves and others around them.
- Consumers in Georgia do not choose distinctive, eye-catching, highly individualistic, imposing, and bright-colored clothes when the brand name is hidden. It is striking to note that those fashionable brands are popular among Georgian consumers, yet they prefer more modest clothing.
- Most of the respondents are interested in spending a large part of their income on clothes and often update their wardrobe, confirming the advertising influence of the fashion industry. At the same time, this influence is so hidden that the respondents answered negatively to the direct questions determining the influence. This result confirms the success of the marketing campaigns of fashion companies.
- Despite the proven influence of clothing, most respondents do not admit to dressing according to how others perceive them or what others expect of them. Their clothes do not define who they are to others, and they do not accept the statements that the clothes they wear affect how others perceive them. Therefore, further research is needed to explore these issues in depth.

The research results have implications for the theory and practice of marketing, in particular, in the domains of fashion marketing and consumer behavior. The research results contribute to the literature by identifying the influence of fashion marketing on consumers' choice of clothing and by revealing consumers' attitudes towards clothing and fashion in Georgia. Moreover, the results establish the difference between dressing for personal mood and the marketing (social) influence of the fashion industry on consumers. Based on the study results, marketers and managers can plan marketing strategies of companies according to consumer preferences taking into account ethical and environmental factors emphasized in this research.

Given the importance of the fashion industry, the results highlight the influence of fashion marketing on sustainability issues. The current context of sustainable development requires that the marketing activities of fashion companies be shifted towards sustainable fashion and integrate sustainability into their production and consumption process.

Companies need to understand the current changes in consumer behavior in order to appropriately respond to them (Apostu et al., 2023; Makrides et al., 2021). Furthermore, emotions

significantly influence consumer purchasing patterns (Obukhovich, 2023). In particular, consumers remember negative and positive images that form their buying behavior, while older consumers' habits are more determined by positive emotions (Mohammad and Drolet, 2019).

It is worth mentioning that the limitations of this research are derived from the sample size and Internet survey allowing for gender disparity as only 31 men participated in the study. However, the research is the first attempt to investigate fashion marketing and consumer behavior regarding clothing in Georgia. Therefore, the research results can serve as a foundation based on which future studies will be conducted.

Since research results may differ from other countries as consumer preferences, values, attitudes, and habits vary from developed to emerging markets influencing different buying behavior of consumers, further studies should examine the study questions in diverse cultures. Future studies should also consider the issue of fashion marketing and fashion psychology from a sensory marketing perspective to create a complete picture of consumer response to marketing stimuli shaping buying behavior.

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