SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Is Fashion for the People, loved by all the People?

The Effects of Inclusion in Fashion Brands on Attitude and Purchase Intention in Generation Y Consumers

by
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"Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."
(Vernā Myers)

Abstract

Title: Is Fashion for the People, loved by all the People? - The Effects of Inclusion in Fashion Brands on Attitude and Purchase Intention in Generation Y Consumers

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Thesis purpose: The purpose is to enhance the understanding of the influence inclusion has on Generation Y consumers when utilised in fashion brands. By isolating two areas of interest namely marginalised gender and size, we aim to provide insight into their effects on the attitude and purchase intention.

Methodology: A deductive approach and therefore a quantitative research design is chosen. Through the development of a fictitious inclusive fashion brand and non-probability sampling, a web-based survey was conducted. The study investigated how the fictitious inclusive fashion brand and the marginalization of the respondent influenced the attitude and purchase intention of the Generation Y participants.

Findings: The results show that being inclusive of sizes and genders has a significant positive effect on attitude and purchase intention of Generation Y consumers. Moreover, the respondents saw a similarity between themselves and the brand, which led to an overall high consumer brand identification. Additionally, the results show that the attitude towards the brand is varying if the consumers are part of a marginalized group. While consumers that are part of the marginalized gender group did not have a different attitude than the non-marginalized group, for marginalized size and non-marginalized size a significant difference in attitude can be seen.

Theoretical Perspective / Limitations: This research is based on consumer brand identification theory, which is applied to a practical example in the context of the fashion industry. The findings show that more research regarding the inclusion of marginalized groups is needed. Especially the differences of attitude among different marginalized groups need further investigation.

Practical Implications: The study is novel in its solutions to keeping brands relevant in relation to the current climate and consumer needs. It provides brands with ways in which they can position or reposition themselves within the inclusive space at both the brand and retail level. Thirdly it provides insights into brand expansion at a global level due to the scope of the study. Lastly, it showcases the trends in fashion relating to the marginalised gender and size and how gender has significance. This allows fashion brands to stay abreast of the different way consumers see gender and how it can be applied.

Originality/Value: This study is the first of a kind to investigate the effects of both inclusion of size and gender in the fashion industry on Generation Y consumers. It also presents a new way of understanding size and gender in relation to the fashion industry.

Keywords: Inclusion; Purchase Intention; Inclusive Fashion; Attitude, Generation Y

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1. Introduction

The introduction seeks to provide the reader with insight into the phenomenon of inclusivity, and how it relates to the fashion industry. We will provide an understanding of inclusion before moving into how inclusion is affecting the consumer and in turn, creating an influence on fashion brands. We define a core area of inclusivity as well as a key target group which will be studied through this thesis in order to provide well-rounded research. Lastly, the aim, the research questions and the aimed contributions are presented to showcase how this research grows from current research.

1.1 Background

"Candidly, we go after the cool kids. We go after the attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don't belong [in our clothes], and they can't belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely." Mike Jeffries, former CEO of Abercrombie (Lutz, 2021)

The sentiments of Mike Jeffries, albeit harsh, represent a sobering reality of how many CEOs and CMOs of fashion brands view their business and the people consuming their products. A staple in the lingerie industry, Victoria's Secret, has been in the headlines due to its declining sales and loss of market share (Hale, 2020). In contrast, the inclusive brand Savage X Fenty's sales have been skyrocketing and are expected to become one of the biggest players in the fashion industry (Hale, 2020). Due to its decline, Victoria's Secret has been sold to a private equity firm. Victoria's Secret's, Abercrombie & Fitch, Tommy Hilfiger and many fashion brands like them, have seen similar declines in their market share and consumer interest. This can be attributed to their inability to see the importance of the rising market interest in inclusive, body-positive fashion. This ultimately has led to them being labelled as brands that are "failing to adapt to the times" which other brands like Savage X Fenty have done so well (Hanbury, 2020). Hale (2020) highlights the importance of diversity and inclusivity and the fact that it will continue as an important factor consumers demand. Inclusivity is a phenomenon growing in importance in the fashion industry, leading to a need for an in-depth focus to satisfy the growing consumer need and keep brands up to date.

Inclusivity is a process or the active practice of providing people who are part of a marginalised group with access to opportunities from which they previously were excluded (Lexico, 2021). Inclusivity can be seen as an active way of creating diversity. Previous findings by Schimminger (2021), show that the inclusion of the gender identity and body type categories have been a focus in the fashion industry, spiking in interest in 2016. For the consumer, the inclusion of these two categories has become highly important, as the way in which they view their physical appearance and the fit of their clothing are critical factors for them, especially in younger age groups (Subramania, 2015).

The fashion industry, for a long time, centred its portrayal of body image around an aspirational size consumer should strive to have or want to have. There was not much diversity in the mainstream representation of body types as most of the models walking the catwalks or modelling clothes in magazines were thin, representing an ideal or aspirational body type (McCor, 2020). A 2020 study found that 89% of women who participated felt that their body type was not represented on catwalks (Scanlon, 2020). However, in recent years, the industry has changed significantly. Due to calls to action by consumers wanting to have more inclusive representations, there has been a gradual increase in its focus. The industry seems to have realised the need to make adjustments in order to stay relevant. Representing a small portion of the population, although meant to create an aspiration has become more of a hindrance to them and showing more inclusive representations of society may be the answer. The call for inclusive action with regard to body size has been a significant shift in the industry which has broken the barriers and given rise to the industry acknowledging other forms of inclusion like gender (McCor, 2020).

Fashion has historically been split by binary genders. Yet, the growth in the conversation of inclusion has brought with it the want for acceptance and the acknowledgement of genders outside of the binary. This has ignited a change in the industry and more genderfluid conversations have taken part, due to shifts in cultural and societal views (Fashion Rider, 2017). Consumers are becoming freer with their clothing choices and are not afraid to shop in any department of a store, regardless of the gender label of the clothing. Like the need to acknowledge body size, the industry also needs to acknowledge and seek to cater for the growing interest in inclusive gender options.

As mentioned previously, consumers have been a driving force behind the shifts in the industry. As the focus on inclusion in fashion has increased, its importance can be seen in more societies around the world. The growth in literature and consumer interest around inclusivity can be seen to derive from the effects of globalisation. Societies over time have become more diverse, especially in major cities, which has steadily increased worldwide (Alcántara-Pilar, Del Barrio-García, Crespo & Porcu, 2015). Due to globalisation, the markets are transforming as people flow between countries which has led to the interaction of varying ideas and ways of thinking among societies. Within the marketing context, globalisation has led to the shift in consumer behaviour due to their changing consumer attitudes, habits and lifestyles (Alcántara-Pilar et al. 2015). An implication of consumers having a more diverse perspective is their want for the markets to be inclusive of the different types of consumers existing in it. Thompson (2020), speaks about how customers seek out inclusivity and a sense of belonging in the market, which is heightened when they exist in diverse groupings. As Zalis (2020) states, “consumers expect brands to be inclusive and reflect the reality of their lives”.

This can be seen as consumers gravitating towards reflective marketing as opposed to aspirational marketing which has been used. Both are valid and have their place, but consumers are currently moving towards reflectiveness as it relates to the fashion industry and the way they want to interact with the industry.

Due to the effect of globalization on societies and ways of thinking, it can be seen how changes in the industry have been spearheaded by the youth. More specifically, Generation Y (Gen Y) consumers have pushed the conversation of inclusive change. By isolating the scope to Gen Y, research can look into the members of the cohort and if they do think similarly in this regard. As Dimock (2019) states, by the year 2018 it was clear that a new demarcation between the generations needed to be made, thus giving finality and structure to the Gen Y group. Gen Y represents 30 percent of the population, and are the most diverse generational cohort in history in many countries, such as the US, where 44 percent of them consist of ethnic and racial minorities (Lobaugh, Simpson, & Stephens, 2019). When comparing these numbers to the generation that precedes Gen Y, Generation X (Gen X), only 25 percent belong to ethnic and racial minorities (Lobaugh, Simpson, & Stephens, 2019). The upcoming Generation Z is projected to further develop this trend. Therefore, Gen Y represents a group where inclusion is still fairly novel but is well established as something that is recognised. Secondly, Gen Y is viewed as playing a big part in the changing market previously mentioned, as they possess high buying power, making up a large portion of the market today but jointly the market of the future (Nowak, Thach & Olsen, 2006). They are the right target with the highest economic power of any generation and therefore as an attractive growth market (Grant & Stephen, 2005). Furthermore, they are described as a "free spending but hard to reach generation" (Martin & Turley, 2004, p.464), which showcases a need for marketers to isolate ways in which to reach this generation and benefit from their spending power.

Being a key part of the spending market in fashion has made Gen Y a key consumer group (Williams & Page, 2011). Their impact and spending across different product types in the fashion industry, showcases the significant role they play in the marketplace (Tee, Gharleghi & Chan, 2013). Due to their interest in fashion, Gen-Y consumers payout nearly 70 percent of their money on fashion and apparel goods (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003). Their consumption choices are said to be influenced by many different factors such as individuality, social influence and other psychological variables (Fernandez, 2009). When investigating the fashion apparel industry, researchers always take this significant market segment into account (Joo Park, Young Kim & Cardona Forney, 2006). Gen Y also makes up a large portion of consumers pushing for change in the industry which is why lifestyle and fashion brands attempt to market products to Gen Y more inclusively (Hongjun, 2006). Therefore, while aspirational marketing still has a place in fashion, Gen Y are also pushing for marketing that focuses on a diverse reality. This means that the way in which marketers handle strategies like segmentation needs to be evaluated against the ways that Gen Y consumers see the world and interact with brands, ultimately leading to them making their purchase decisions.

This is due to the fact that the traditional understanding of the consumer is shifting and the things which matter to them should not be sidelined. Therefore, focusing on a group that has a big influence on the conversation about inclusivity and who make up a big part of the market can provide richness to the research in the form of understanding how powerful the want for inclusion in fashion can be from these market drivers and how it can affect the industry decision makers to capture the business of this group of consumers.

1.2 Problematization

In recent years, the fashion industry has not been experiencing as prosperous a market as they have been used to. According to McKinsey (2020), the Global Fashion Index forecasts slower growth for the industry in the next few years. Although the industry grew by 3 to 4 percent in 2020, this is a decline in growth in comparison to 2019 and previous years (McKinsey, 2020). The slowdown in growth is said to be caused by the increase in caution and macroeconomic uncertainty of consumers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This mainly affects small and medium companies, while a small group of big companies continues to grow (McKinsey, 2020). When looking at Europe, the market is further suffering from the uncertainty around Brexit (McKinsey, 2020). Experts believe that once the pandemic is over the demand will come back, but the industry will change and not every brand will survive the crisis (McIntosh, 2020).

With the above and the fact that Gen Y consumers are considered as a hard to reach generation, now more than ever, it is important that brands find a way to connect to consumers in order to be part of their decision-making process. The reality is even though the financial situation is dire, consumers are still spending and have things that they want from fashion brands, and these brands need to pay attention to this. While in recent years many fashion brands have increased their focus on environmental sustainability in order to attract more customers, inclusivity has often been neglected even though to be truly sustainable, companies need to cater to all types of people (Magnusdottir, 2020). It is a possibility for fashion brands to stand out by focusing on inclusivity and catering to different customer segments outside the norm (Magnusdottir, 2020).

Previous research has mainly focused on brands utilising inclusion in their communication and advertising efforts due to its popularity. They have shown that consumers were seen to be more willing to buy products that were advertised as inclusive (Zalis, 2020). In addition, 64 percent of respondents in Zalis' (2020) study said they took some sort of action after seeing an ad that they considered to be diverse or inclusive. This research has been confirmed by various other studies which showed that Gen Y consumers have become increasingly aware of inclusion and react the most to it (Snyder, 2015). The study also found that although consumers want ads to be inclusive, they also want their brands to represent inclusivity (Zalis, 2020). But data also shows that many companies focus on using inclusion as a marketing and PR tool rather than implementing it in their brand identity. This leads to a short-term increase in popularity but does not create long-term effects, as depicted in figure 1 (Snyder, 2015).

Furthermore, research has shown that consumers sense when a brand is only communicating inclusively but does not have inclusivity implemented in its brand identity. In order to be authentic in the consumer's mind, brands not only need to communicate diversity but also “practice what they preach with an authentic voice and consistency” (Zalis, 2019). Research highlights that communication does have some effect but also has some setbacks. While communication is important, and consumers react well to it, there exists a need or want from consumers for brands to utilize inclusivity in what they deem the right way. Yet, there is not much research that looks into alternate strategies which align to the interests of the consumer to make communication efforts and interest in the brands more successful.

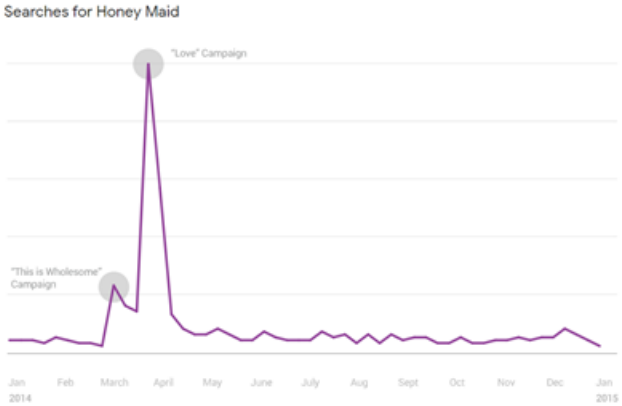

Figure 1: Influence of Diversity Advertising for Honey Maid (Snyder, 2015)

When discussing inclusivity previous research has looked into marginalized groups separately and how those people should be included in the conversation (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019; Boyd, Ritch, Dodd & McColl, 2020) In this way they showcase how people who feel marginalized experience the market and show the need for inclusion to be part of fashion brands’ agendas. Although they do provide a foundational understanding of the need for inclusion they do not go far enough to provide a workable strategy as to how this can be implemented and aligned to the needs of the consumer and to what extent. It has been great foundational research to showcase an existing issue, but there is a need for research to test for the effects of implementation. Lastly, because research observes one specific group's marginalization, none look at how marginalized groups can be combined as a way to create a more collective opposition and in turn, a solution to brands. Due to the industry, there exists a space where similar issues can have solutions or strategies that speak to both.

1.3 Aim of the Thesis

As outlined above, the lack of inclusive representation of minority groups in the fashion industry has become a sizable issue which consumers have been vocal about. Apart from outwardly speaking to the issue, consumers have shown their dissatisfaction by voting with their pocket and spending less with brands that do not reflect the reality of the world, and more with brands who make the effort to cater to a wider population.

On a brand-facing side, this issue comes at a time when there is less spend going into the fashion industry due to global issues, which means needing to find ways to keep their brands top of mind for consumers and as an option that they would choose when making a buying decision.Previous research has shown that advertising poses a viable option for brands in their effort to gain consumer preference and a competitive edge, but it can also be seen that the way in which brands approach inclusivity can be short-lived and can raise questions with the consumer. Especially for fashion brands, consumers demand more than just an inclusive campaign or posting a picture on Instagram (Magnusdottir, 2020). There has been research on the issue of under-representation and how that plays out in the minds of those who are marginalised. Yet, there is a need for research into actual marketing strategies which secure more positive consumer behaviour which would assist in remedying the mistrust mentioned above. Therefore, by creating a more positive attitude there may be a higher likelihood of consumers purchasing the products.

While these measures are useful, this research aims to propose a method of gaining consumer interest and in turn an increase in purchase intention in one's fashion brand. This thesis aims to explore the use of inclusivity as a way for brands to align to the needs of the consumers and create a positive attitude towards their brands which leads to positive purchase intention. Concerning an alternative to the communication angle, we attempt to showcase how aligning a brand to the values and identity of a consumer will result in creating products and from that communication which speaks to the needs of the consumer, leading them to want to purchase from a fashion brand they align to over one which does not align to their values. This ultimately provides a competitive edge and a way to stand out against other brands. The first part of the study will attempt to study the connection between brand values and consumer values which is ultimately known as consumer brand inclusive identity.

Once this has been established, we will be able to test if the consumers value for inclusion and the brand’s value for inclusion results in the consumer having a positive attitude towards the brand and ultimately a positive purchase intention for the inclusive brand. Speaking to the inclusivity category picked, combining groups will be an attempt to expand upon previous literature which has shown the dissatisfaction of singular groups. Many groups' issues are specific to them, but there are also issues that are felt by more than one group and in turn, can be addressed as such. When it is considered that there are more than two genders of consumers who all want the opportunity to fit into whichever clothing items they choose, we can look at inclusivity that speaks to fitting any gender with more inclusive sizing options. As consumers progress we see more fluidity in their clothing choices. They have become less bothered about which gender department (Male or Female) the clothes come from and more about what they enjoy wearing. Therefore, we aim to look at gender in fashion as inclusive of people’s want to pick from anywhere and still be included in size options. Therefore, this research will be looking at gender in two parts: average size and gender which includes S, M and L average sizing and average gender which relates to the average male and female department store choices.

In this research, marginalized size relates to anyone who is below the clothing size small or above large, while marginalized gender relates to people who make more genderfluid choices in their buying of clothes.

RQ1: What is the relationship between the inclusive brand and a consumer's purchase intention?

RQ2: How does the inclusion of marginalized consumption patterns by brands influence consumer behaviour?

1.4 Aimed Contributions

The research we are presenting attempts to contribute to the consumer behaviour topic of marketing. It presents marketers with a better understanding of the Gen Y consumer's behaviour towards the changing landscape of the world, and how they perceive the brands being marketed to them. By internalising the fact that inclusivity holds great importance, the marketer is better equipped to plan for brands that speak to this need. Therefore, creating a positive attitude which could lead to a brand being in a consumer's evoked set, which could lead to purchase intention for their brands.

According to Tuˇskej, Golob & Podnar (2013), the awareness of Consumer Brand Identity (CBI) has increased, but research on the effects of CBI on consumers in the fashion industry is limited. The research will provide a method of implementing ways for brands to increase their consumer base by utilizing a novel inclusion method which expands upon the static traditional segmentation method. It will also attempt to fill the gap of the way that inclusive groups are discussed, by combining two and researching them together. Literature looks at size or gender but does not look at ways of combining like issues to look for solutions which assist both. Lastly, following from the marginalised gender and size gap, the research will fill the gap of understanding how those within the marginalised groups interact with fashion of this kind.

In addition to the theoretical contributions, we aim for practical contributions for brand managers in the fashion industry. Fashion brands could strategically expand their product lines to represent a more realistic picture of consumers. In this way the research will present a method for brands to stay relevant to consumers according to their needs. Inclusivity adds a richer layer of information to a brand in addition to their segmentation model, which gives them a more dynamic approach to increasing their consumer base. It will also contribute by providing a strategy for positioning one's brand both at the brand and retail level. The research will draw data from consumers worldwide, which means that it will contribute to knowledge of how inclusion is felt by Gen Y consumers from various backgrounds. This can assist in global planning initiatives. Lastly, the research will aim to assist brands' understanding of gender and size in fashion and how they can utilise both in relation to the brand plans. By understanding how the two are understood by the consumer can allow them to create strategies which align.

1.5 Outline

This thesis is structured in seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the research and provides the reader with a background and the aim and purpose. The second chapter gives an overview of the literature review and the current state of research. chapter three provides an overview of the theory that forms the foundation of this research, as well as the hypotheses and theoretical framework that the quantitative study is based on. In chapter four the methodology of research is explained, including the research philosophy and the quantitative research design. Furthermore, the data collection and analysis approach will be explained. The fifth chapter presents and analyzes the findings of the quantitative research. The hypothesis will be analyzed and the research question will be answered. In chapter six, the findings will be discussed and connections to the existing literature, discussed in chapter two, will be drawn. In chapter seven, the conclusions will be presented and the outcomes of the research will be evaluated. The theoretical and managerial implications will be presented, as well as limitations and opportunities for future research.

2. Literature review

The purpose of this section is to present a literature review of the theoretical background of this thesis. The literature review was conducted to gain a better understanding of the classic approach of segmentation, inclusive marketing and branding as well as the connection between the two areas and the current state of research and practice on size and gender-inclusive marketing and branding in the fashion industry. This section furthermore presents potential critical areas within the subject of inclusion in the fashion industry that has been identified in the literature.

2.1 Segmentation in Marketing

When speaking about inclusion, it is pertinent to touch on the fact that the discussion might bring up the idea of exclusion. Inclusion can be seen as an attempt to rectify marginalized groups being overtly excluded from marketing efforts. The strategic reality is that marketers undertake a segmentation process to give their brands direction and target group to speak to, in order to be more precise in their efforts (Quinn, Hines, Bennison, 2005). Segmentation is not an attempt to overtly deny people access or exclude individuals from their products, but rather a process to help businesses direct their organisation to understand customers which in turn means creating more suitable marketing campaigns (Quinn, Hines, Bennison, 2005). Consumers are often unaware of segmentation and categorization, as it occurs easily, frequently and sometimes even automatically (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). In addition, speaking to all people may not be financially viable and not actively possible. By creating marketing campaigns that speak to a segment of the population, another one is inadvertently not being spoken to, therefore segmentation showcases which groups can be spoken to create the most return.

2.1.1 Segmentation Background

Segmentation was developed by John Mathew Culbertson in 1957 as an economic theory. The theory proposes that the reality is that companies are selling their products within a market consisting of heterogeneous buyers, and they can create a situation where they can maximize their profits (Claycamp & Massy, 1968). The heterogeneity of the market refers to the fact that there are separate and varying groups of customers who all belong to the mass market in which the brands want to sell their product. These people behave in different ways and want to buy different products for varying reasons. A brand is then able to cut the mass market up into these smaller customer groups in relation to similar needs and behaviours (Claycamp & Massy, 1968). Initially being an economic-related theory, Culbertson proposed the division to be among pricing lines; using price elasticity to define mutually exclusive segments and sets of prices within those groups. But the process has been seen to have great theoretical and practical relevance to marketing. In its evolution, other variables and ways of segmenting have been added, making it relevant to marketing as a strategic tool (Danneels, 1996). By doing this segmentation exercise, a company can establish a target group for the marketing efforts, which allows for better customisation of goods and services.

The theory's ultimate use advantage is that it isolates a winning formula for a product (Claycamp & Massy, 1968). By understanding who the target group is and the secondary target group that follows, the company has a clear vision of whom they would need to speak to in order to optimise their efforts and gain maximum profit (Claycamp & Massy, 1968).

2.1.2 Traditional Segmentation

Traditional segmentation is based on the idea that markets have a relatively constant demand (Stigler, 1942). It is furthermore based on the assumption that consumer behaviour can be identified deductively by analysing a short moment of the market context (Quinn, Hines & Bennison, 2005). Consumers are identified by a statistical technique and the segments have homogenous characteristics (Quinn, Hines & Bennison, 2005). These characteristics are reflecting a measurable and desired, approximated view of reality (Hines & Quinn, 2005). Furthermore, the traditional approach assumes that customers who are categorized in one segment remain in that certain segment (Quinn, Hines & Bennison, 2005). Overall the traditional segmentation approach follows a very positivist approach as it is most successful in static markets, where consumer behaviour is constantly predictable (Hines & Quinn, 2005).

In 1996, Danneels (1996) talked about the normative prescriptive vs the business reality of segmentation and more recently, Quinn, Hines, Benison (2005) coined the issue as a traditional approach against a more dynamic approach. What the literature shows is they both refer to the fact that segmentation, as it stands, is flawed as a general concept. The tool which marketers draw on has a great foundation from which marketers can make decisions, but the reality is consumers do not act solely in the ways that they are segmented into. Consumers tend to change their minds and progress in the way that they relate to products. This is where segmentation deviates and is seen as static or traditional, as it tends to ignore the complexity and dynamism of consumers in the market, which makes it less likely for marketing initiatives to work in the long run (Quinn, Hines, Benison, 2005). The normative prescriptive nature of segmentation which Danneels (1996) speaks of, cuts consumers into the homogeneous groupings with the thought that these groups will stay as such for an extended period. This traditional segmentation idea implies that there is a relatively constant demand from the homogeneous groupings.

2.1.3 The Issues of Segmentation

Although segmentation has great theoretical and normative implications, the real-world implementation is where many scholars have identified issues. As previously stated, acts of segmentation can be mistaken for planned marketplace exclusion. Although there might not be a planned economic exclusion of people, by marketers taking up traditional segmentation approaches, which does not evolve to the changing face of the market, it can be seen as social exclusion. This can have an effect on the individuals in society as well as a harmful effect on the brand itself.

As stated by Saren, Parsons & Goulding (2019, p.467) " It is both an economic and social/symbolic phenomenon which can result in serious social, economic, psychological and physical problems.", When target groups do not take into account the changing nature of society, it can be seen as the brand committing to under- or misrepresentation. This can result in people from both the excluded group and those who support them, revolting against brands who seem to have taken up an exclusionary stance (Licsandru & Chi Cui, 2018). On the other hand, Licsandru & Chi Cui (2018), found that when consumers do feel represented and included socially, they are more likely to have a positive attitude and perception of the brand and its communication which follows. The study of Licsandru & Chi Cui (2018) focuses on the ethnic aspect of social inclusion and therefore showcases a gap in the field of inclusion of gender and size in social inclusion and the influence on attitude.

Overall, the normative prescriptive approach to segmentation and the criteria that are used has weaknesses and a one-size-fits-all ideal way of segmenting is not achievable. It is indeed pertinent for brands to align their brands and financial ventures therein, to make sure they are having an impact but the way that this is done needs work (Walsh, Henning-Thurau, Wayne-Mitchell & Wiedmann, 2001). One way for this to be done could be to look into additional criteria which could increase the quality of the market segmentation. Therefore, looking at modern-day consumers and how they go about making decisions to create this extra layer of information upon which to decide how they make decisions on updating a target group or realigning it all together (Walsh et al. 2001). In contemporary reality, there are no such predictable consumption patterns and people tend to cut through various demographic, psychographic or financial groupings as time changes. As the market and people evolve, the initial 50's Culbertson version of segmentation does not hold.

When considering the fashion industry, Quinn, Hines, Benison (2007), emphasize the need for organisations to consider their identity in relation to the market. By understanding the organisational identity; what values they hold and that of the market and its people, marketers can make sense of a brand's place in the market (Quinn, Hines, Benison, 2007). Keeping aligned to the market and its identity, companies who wish to succeed shift and change their identity slightly through time. Therefore, by not holding onto one singular snapshot in time of a consumer group, companies acknowledge the shifting nature of people through various groups and work towards aligning this to who the brands are and how people relate to the brands.

2.1.4 Cynicism Towards Brands

Another reason why brands need to ensure that their strategies stay relevant to consumers is the rise in consumer cynicism. Bertilsson (2015), highlighted the importance of keeping abreast of consumer cynicism and how it plays out in their consumption. He finds that research into morality is lacking and it overlooks the connection between it and cynicism. Therefore, he attempts to bring in cynicism as a novel perspective on consumer morality (Bertilsson, 2015).

This is important to our research as morality plays a part in the way consumers relate to the market and the products which they consume within it. Their morality in part provides them with direction as to which brands they consume and which they avoid. Bertilsson (2015) has shown that consumers are wary of brands and the claims they make. Therefore cynicism is a tool they utilise to not take a brand at face value. The contemporary cynic attempts to put themselves in the marketer's shoes and understand their decision or the reason for not making a decision (Bertilsson, 2015).

When this is related back to traditional segmentation, it is clear that consumers begin to question brands and their outdated look. Cynicism in a consumer looking at fashion brands could mean them questioning why they are not inclusive which could lead to the exclusion thoughts presented previously. Although a consumer may be represented by the brand, they might still ask questions and pose retorts to the brand and the decision they make as they are not distracted by the promotions and communications the brand directs to them. Therefore, it is important for brands to recognise that consumers are more inquisitive and vocal about what they see a brand doing or not doing. Brands that do not evolve and do not utilise the information they receive from the market open themselves up to judgment and potential dips in their preference and equity by the consumer. The existing literature on segmentation shows that several problems come with the traditional approach. For many brands and industries, segmentation is an efficient way of attracting customers, however, it can be seen that this is not always the case and in many industries, brands need to be more inclusive of different groups of people.

2.2 Inclusive Marketing and Branding

The function of brands is to give products and services meaning and value (Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2005). To fully drive growth, marketers need to understand and identify the brand meaning and identity (Jevons, Gabbott & De Chernatony, 2005). As shown in the literature on segmentation, Marketing and Brand Management were long built on ideals and stereotypes, which are always related to limitations (Packard 1957; Kilbourne 1999). Since the 1970s, finding new sectors and targeting more niche customers has been a strategy chosen by various companies (McKenna, 1988). Consumers have always demanded variety in their products in all industries (McKenna, 1998). Just like segmentation, the concept of being more inclusive is not new to marketing researchers. Lee, Kim & Vohs (2011) for example highlighted the negative effects of traditional segmentation on women's purchase intention, highlighting the importance of a different approach. Observing modern-day consumers, an even stronger shift away from the ideals and stereotypes previously used in marketing can be identified. Nowadays brands are increasingly trying to represent real images instead of ideals and stereotypes (Khamis, 2020). Social issues like Diversity and Inclusion are starting to become addressed more long term instead of in short term PR and advertising campaigns (Khamis, 2020). According to Licsandrua and ChiCui (2018), inclusive Marketing is characterized by many influential factors, leading to Marketing effectiveness.

Inclusivity is part of a company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). According to the 2004 CSR Competency Framework, “Harnessing diversity., Respecting diversity and adjusting the approach to different situations” is one of the six parts of CSR (Emmott & Worman, 2008). This does not only affect the company internally but also concerns the company's overall branding and marketing. Including marginalized groups is important, as these groups desire not only to be included but to have their full identities engaged with (Cvetkovska, Verkuyten & Adelman, 2020). Marginalized groups do not strive to be a separate demographic category but want to be seen as a part of the general group (Wrigley & Dawson, 2016). This type of inclusion is identified as social inclusion. Social inclusion is seen as a multi-dimensional construct by Licsandrua and ChiCui (2018) and defined as “the individual's feelings of belongingness to a host society in which he/she feels accepted, empowered, respected and fully recognized as an equal member”. This definition is similar to other definitions in the literature such as Westwood (2003, p.3) cited in Davys and Tickle (2008): “Social inclusion is linked to the concept of equal opportunity, the individual is part of a social community where they were educated, raised and employed which is felt to engender feelings of belonging, trust and unity”.

The origin of this trend can be traced back to the shift in society. Millennials are with no doubt different to previous generations and the change in society comes with changes in self-concepts and desires. According to Firat & Venkatesh (1993), the post-modern society conveys less with stereotypes and traditional gender roles, looking for more inclusive marketing. Due to the childhood influences of this generation, Generation Y has a growing demand for diversity of products and services (Young & Hinesly, 2012). According to Young and Hinesly (2012) products need to represent diversity to be successful in the long run. These assumptions can be confirmed by looking at the success of inclusive brands. Marriott International for example has increased the brand preference of consumers by building their brand on diversity and inclusivity (Perkins-Chavis, 2017). Consumers nowadays find self-worth and some of their self-concepts within brands and hold more and more importance to identifying with a brand than previous generations (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020).

This change in society has come with many consequences for marketers. The originally created ideals and stereotypes and the restriction and marginalization of groups in marketing are now looked at from a more critical perspective (Rocha-Rodrigues, 2016). Due to this, we can see a growing discussion about topics like binary gender thinking in various spaces and businesses (Luna & Barros, 2019). This can especially be seen in social media, where politics and discussions around consumption are now concerning many different environmental and social causes (Khamis, 2020).

2.3 Inclusion in the Fashion Industry

When looking at the fashion industry, these findings of section 2 can be confirmed and it can be seen that following this development towards inclusivity is important for companies within this industry. In recent years a rising concern for ethical issues in the industry among consumers can be observed (Aspers & Skov, 2006). In relation to the history of diversity in fashion, it has been used sporadically by sometimes putting a non-white person on the cover of a magazine (McKinsey, 2020). Nonetheless, the industry has remained fairly homogenous in its representation (Cavusoglu & Atik, 2019).

Diversity has been used simply as a way of showcasing marginalised groups in advertisements rather than fully representing them in the brand (McKinsey, 2020) which has led to an increase in brands facing distrust and bad public opinion due to unsustainable practices (Scherer, Palazzo & Seidl, 2013). This type of faux representation follows the research presented earlier by Bertilson (2015) and presents how cynical thoughts towards fashion brands can be created. This increased want from consumers for real representation by fashion brands often leads to rejection of those not doing so.

The previously often chosen non-inclusive strategy in fashion is now shifting towards real representation and the creation of meaningful change (McKinsey, 2020). Nowadays consumers are advocating for diversity and inclusion, giving it a higher priority (McKinsey, 2020). Not only do consumers want more representation, they increasingly want brands to act ethically and have an ethical commitment in their brand positioning (Iglesias, Markovic, Singh & Sierra, 2019). Due to this, people of any race, gender, body type and other classifications now express themselves and their identity and the public demand for inclusivity has increased (Boyd, 2015). Transparency regarding inclusivity can be seen as critical in the fashion industry (Magnusdottir, 2020). Consumers want fashion brands to take a publicly visible stand and include diversity internally and externally (Magnusdottir, 2020).

Leading the discussion is female consumers who have showcased their want for inclusion of marginalized sizes and genders and their disinterest in brands that do this solely for advertising (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). While many fashion companies struggle with the implementation of inclusivity, there are several positive examples of inclusivity in the fashion industry. German fashion retailer Zalandos latest Spring 2021 campaign “Here to Stay” is only one example of brands taking a stand on inclusion (Zalando, 2021). In the campaign, the brand positions its core values around inclusion and showcases Zalando’s new strategy fostering the diversity of consumers, pledging to showcase real bodies and all genders (Zalando, 2021). Retailers that have included more diverse identities in their values in the past have proven to be more progressive (Boyd et al., 2020).

When looking at the inclusion of marginalized genders and sizes in consumer behaviour, a lot of research has been done by various researchers (e.g., Patterson & Elliott 2002; Valtonen & Närvänen 2015). According to Schroeder (2003, p.1), "gender is a basic, cognitive construct, cultural category and political concept that intersects with the entire realm of consumer behavior". This means that these aspects can shape how consumers interact with the world and products therein. "Normal" is a relative concept depending on the culture or social group consumers come from. Therefore the need to realise the effects of speaking to or not speaking to the fact that marginalized sizes and genders are important can showcase a misunderstanding of your consumer group (Orbach, 2009). By utilizing this information, brands are better equipped for targeting consumers outside their identified target market (Boyd et al., 2020). In addition, research shows that marginalised size consumers have a decreased brand preference for fashion brands that exclude their body type and tend to self-exclude from these brands (Dion & Tachet, 2020).

2.3.1 Current State of Body Size Inclusion

In literature, the body type "large" is often described as "special", while other body types like medium and small are considered "normal" (Oldham-Kind & Hathcote, 2000). When looking at brand preference, the findings of Gurrieri & Cherrier (2013) show that members of the plus-size community want their brands to be inclusive and generally prefer inclusive brands. When it comes to body types and the representation in fashion, a clear shift in consumer perception can be seen (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019). Many consumers want to see fashion utilise and showcase an average that represents society and bodies of all sizes (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019). This also concerns previously used descriptions such as "plus-size", "fat" or "thin" instead of treating all bodies as normal (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019).

Despite the shifting mindset of consumers, the fashion industry still classifies bodies and communicates differently to people of different body shapes (Pounders & Marby-Flynn, 2019). Bodies that are not slim or meet the norm have been marginalized (Schooler, Ward, Merriwether & Caruthers, 2004). Starting in the 1950s the body shapes represented in fashion and media have experienced a continuous "slimming" (Voracek & Fisher, 2002), while often "fatter" bodies have been removed or not represented at all (Peters, 2014). Continuing this trend, with the start of mass production of clothing offerings of clothing that does not fit this created norm has been limited (Stearns, 1997). Consumers with these body types found it difficult to find stores that have products available for them at all or in an acceptable range (Friedman, 1996). Research by Oldham-Kind & Hathcote (2000) among US college students showed that all customers of marginalized size groups feel dissatisfied by the offer of fashion brands. As the industry evolves changes have been made, but the sentiments of consumers often remain the same. Consumers who do not match the stereotypes present big opposition to the industry (Volonte, 2019). The previously mentioned ideals are being questioned and a trend towards advocating for "health at every size" is evolving (Rabin, 2008).

Furthermore, more consumers are questioning labelling models and clothing as "plus-size" and are appreciating the body inclusivity of fashion brands and models consumers can relate to (Pounders & Marby-Flynn, 2019). Pounders & Mabry-Flynn (2019) see this as especially important for fashion brands targeting Generation Y consumers, as their desire for inclusivity is particularly high.

Both plus-size men and women tend to show avoidance of stores, therefore it shows that the issue, although spearheaded by women, is also affecting men and their purchasing choices (Maphis, Martz, Bergman, Curtin & Web, 2013). For male consumers, clothing in bigger sizes have been provided by very few retailers (Lubitz, 2017). Currently, there is no consensus in fashion on what a "plus-size" man is (Lubitz, 2017). This has led to men not finding clothing that fits their body and fashion taste (Sindicich & Black, 2011). However, it needs to be said that fashion companies that included models of different sizes, especially plus-size models, have also faced negative reactions (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019). Brands, therefore, need to be cognizant of the fact that while there is a call for more representation, there still remains pushback from other consumers. This means brands need to weigh up their strategy and its effects (Pounders & Mabry-Flynn, 2019).

2.3.2 Current State of Gender Inclusion

Body-size inclusivity in fashion has given way to the recognition of gender inclusion. Consumers have become more vocal and movements, such as the body-positive movement, recognizing that all bodies, despite gender, should be accepted (Brown, 2019). This does not only concern acceptance, but also representation in fashion and media (Brown, 2019). Fashion is important to consumers regardless of gender and affects the identity of all (Kodžoman, 2019). The assumption of a predetermined stereotypical gender (Pettinger, 2005) has been seen as a way to segment the "average" consumer as is the case in body and size. Yet consumers have become more fluid with the way that they make clothing choices, shopping from all departments regardless of gender labels which offsets the "average" stereotype. Therefore, brands have concluded targeting consumers in this manner can be problematic due to the rise in the need for gender inclusion. Fashion brands now increase diversity by offering products catering to different gender identities, marginalized consumption buying habits (Burns & Bryant, 2002). Much like the industry itself, rules are never fixed and concepts are interchangeable which requires brands to stay abreast of (Polhemus, 2011).

Fashion is an area where products are generally more gendered than on average (Test, 2020). Gendering fashion is defined as "imbuing a product with masculine or feminine image and identity", by Alreck (1994, p.6). Gendering fashion and fashion brands have been one of the most important segmentation strategies in marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2012), specifically important in fashion marketing. When it comes to gender, marketing has mainly targeted women, with the majority of research focusing on them too (Miotto & Vilajoana-Alejandre, 2019).

Consequently, research into other genders is lacking. Furthermore, sustainability reports of fashion retailers often contain reports on gender inclusivity in the company, but often lack any information about inclusivity of the gender of consumers (Miotto & Vilajoana-Alejandre, 2019). Another problem regarding gender inclusivity in fashion is binary genders. Despite gender binarity being challenged throughout fashion history, there is still a lack of brands catering to the range of gender identities like the non-binary, transgender or genderfluid (Luna & Barros, 2019). Wilson (1985) already in the 80s highlighted the importance of including all types of bodies and challenging gender norms in fashion. Therefore showcasing that the inclusion of different genders is not new, but a relevant concept. This is important, as for many consumers, both binary and non-binary, fashion is an important subject of self-expression (Luna & Barros, 2019).

But while traditional gender norms in society are shifting, so is the consumer demand in fashion (Test, 2020). Younger generations, who identify more outside gender norms are looking for brands that identify with the same values (Gates, 2017). According to Laughlin (2016), 74% of Gen Y consumers agree that gender does not define a person anymore. This survey has also shown that currently, 54% of Gen Y shop outside of their gender. In recent years, the buying power of LGBTQ+ individuals (which includes non-binary and transgender individuals) worldwide has increased, as well as the number of non-LGBTQ+ consumers that support the LGBTQ+ community (Polakowski, 2016). Due to this, many fashion retailers have increased their inclusiveness of gender, mainly by accepting models outside of the norm (Safronova, 2016). As well as for the reactions to size-inclusive brands, gender-inclusive brands also do not only receive positive reactions. Research has shown that in some cases heterosexuals prefer less openly gay and transsexual advertising (Dotson, Hyatt & Thompson, 2009). In addition, homosexuals and trans people are often sceptical towards inclusive advertising, questioning the motives of the brand (Cheah, Teah, Lee & Davies, 2020).

2.4 Inclusive Marketing as a Tool

As early as the 90s, Lewis and Hawksley (1990) recognized that the traditional segmentation approach is not the most suited approach for the fashion industry. There is no doubt that segmentation assists in positioning a brand in the minds of consumers as well as to direct their marketing efforts in a direction that allows for more return. Nonetheless, as mentioned, brands need to take into account the changing nature of society (Quinn, Hines & Benson, 2007). Rather than staying aligned to the traditional approach to segmentation, brands must look into more dynamic approaches. The traditional approach is a single snapshot of how consumers are in time. But when a strategy relies solely on this it misses the evolving nature of consumer behaviour and therefore has the potential to miss out on growth within the brand and the growth of their consumers (Quinn, Hines & Benson, 2007).

In the postmodern view of consumption, consumers are more complex and multi-dimensional (Amine & Smith, 2009). A postmodern approach to segmentation, therefore, acknowledges the fact that individuals could exist in more than one segment as well as there being more factors that go into a segment other than the basics covered by demographic or psychographic. According to (Hines & Quinn, 2005), it is more important to understand markets in terms of social constructs and by seeing people as individuals, fragmenting more targeted at social identities. When looking at the fashion industry, markets are complex and increasingly diverse, therefore introducing inclusivity into the segmentation mix provides a dynamic aspect that can assist in bringing the segmentation tool into a more practical space.

In the ever-changing world, brands often struggle to find a clear differentiation against competitors (Clark, 2018). Especially with giant players like Amazon, brands can no longer differentiate by solely occupying the "one-stop-shop" niche segment. Consumers increasingly express their disdain for brands that are not inclusive (McKinsey, 2020). They are becoming more aware of social issues and brands' inclusive actions and are more vocal about companies ignoring inclusion (Khamis, 2019). One of the more recent examples of this is the case of Victorias Secret, who long refused to represent different body shapes and non-binary models (McKinsey, 2020). Furthermore, their "Perfect Body" campaign sparked consumer backlash in 2014 for only showcasing slimmer bodies based on idealistic ideals (Pounders, 2018). Due to their inability to stay relevant to the growing requests by consumers relating to inclusion they went bankrupt (McKinsey, 2020). This can be related to the findings that brand identity has gained high importance for creating a relationship with consumers and differentiate a brand from others through a strong identity (Clark, 2018). Through this, brands can motivate consumers to choose their brand over another (Clark, 2018). To do this long term and successfully, brands need to anticipate consumers' future needs and therefore create new demand by value innovation (Madsen and Slåtten, 2019). Applying this to the fashion industry, which is a very saturated industry, previous literature suggests that inclusivity as a brand identity value might be a suitable tool for reconstructing the boundaries.

When looking at the potential benefits for marketers, adding new consumer groups to a brand's target group does not necessarily take away from the group already being targeted. Nonetheless, the inclusion of a consumer base using the dynamic approach has the potential to threaten the traditional segmentation approach which has been widely used in marketing, specifically in the fashion industry. This approach has worked by providing returns for marketers and is a well-established strategy. By making a move away from this, marketers will need to adopt new processes and a new understanding of segmentation. Secondly, following from the above, by increasing segment size, brands worry they may lose their positioning and become vaguer. Therefore, with an increase in inclusivity within segmentation, consumers could lose their connection with the brand because they are not targeted enough anymore.

On the other hand, inclusion in place of the dynamic approach may bring with it benefits for brands in the long term as it aligns with the growing current and future needs of consumers. It is a way to include groups that may not have been previously included due to segmentation strategies which may fit the brand (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). This expands the consumer base which can provide more avenues of income that they had not previously catered to. Minority groups can contribute substantially to a fashion brand but as mentioned by (Licsandru & Cui, 2018), they are less likely to spend money at a brand they do not believe includes them in their target. By adding these groups they receive recognition from brands that they are part of the brand and can see themselves represented.

A study by Donnelly, Gee & Silva (2020), hypothesised that more size options would reduce consumers' willingness to buy from the brand, but this hypothesis was rejected. By focusing on inclusion as an important decision-making tool it has the ability to increase the segmentation approaches effectiveness at increasing preference and equity of the brand, as consumers identify stronger with the brand. If a brand takes into account how they are perceived, they can influence the decision making and in that increase their sales. As stated by Walsh, Henning-Thurau, Wayne-Mitchell & Wiedmann (2001, p.120), “further, it is likely that certain basic needs and product preferences are associated with decision-making styles”.

Therefore, by considering inclusive decisions, brands can align to the attitudes of the market and make their segmentation efforts appealing. According to the McKinsey (2020) State of Fashion report, successful companies will be the ones that make moves early. They furthermore state that companies need to carve out profitable niches and need to respond to the needs of different consumers. It can be argued that evolving with consumers is a crucial success factor in fashion. Therefore, inclusion brings with it the possibility of shifting the narrative concerning segmentation. As a well researched and defined marketing practice, segmentation although useful does have its flaws. In light of this the benefits presented for the adoption of inclusive practices of marginalized size and gender would need to be engaging enough to provide marketers with a tangible reason to incorporate it into their strategic efforts.

2.5 Summary

To conclude, it can be said that fashion branding and marketing is traditionally driven by ideals and norms, both in body and gender, wanting to represent ideals and societal norms and not reality. Nowadays customers are deviating from the ideals to demand a more representative fashion industry that shows reality instead of stereotypes and aspirations. Findings in the literature suggest that to secure brand equity, as well as long term market performance fashion brands will need to be more inclusive (Das, Stenger & Ellis, 2009).

Although using inclusion to open up a brand to increase purchase intention can be a step in a more profitable and real-world aligning direction, brands need to take caution into how they do it and its possible effects. The conversation is fairly new, and there still remains scepticism around the scale, scope and effectiveness of the marketing efforts (Khamis, 2020). Brands should make sure to know if implementing inclusive measures is for their brand and if it has the potential to make a difference. Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, (2007) highlight that consumers who have been in the target group that is considered as the in-group, could have negative feelings towards marketing efforts that focus on inclusion, as it may come across as a threat to their own identity. "attempts to replace highly valued existing group identities with a new superordinate identity can produce identity threat that impedes the development of a common group identity (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, pp.300, 2007). Although the attempts to include are to open up the consumer group and not to remove those already inside, this can be a misconception.

As Khamis (2020, p.21) states, a good vantage point for marketers is "playing off particularly intriguing or contentious issues that dominate the media discourse related to ideology". The key is to find a happy medium for the in-group customers and ones that are trying to be recruited into the brand. When following a more inclusive approach some customers might automatically feel less targeted and the brand might lose some customers while attracting more customers in marginalized groups. Furthermore, customers that do not belong to a marginalized group can still identify with the inclusive brands, as the brand might share their personal beliefs and values.

As the literature has shown, segmentation, stereotypes and inclusion are concepts that have always coexisted in society and Marketing. Currently, the ideals in society are shifting away from marginalized stereotypes and especially in the fashion industry consumers are demanding more inclusion of different sizes and genders. However, brands need to find a balance between segmentation and inclusion and make sure customers identify themselves with their inclusive branding.

3. Theory

Following from the literature review, we can present the backbone of our research which connects the concept of inclusivity, to provide a theoretical explanation as to how inclusivity can be utilised to create a connection and identification with the brand among consumers while targeting a bigger target group. In this section, the Consumer Brand Identification (CBI) Theory is explained. Firstly, in order to better understand CBI Theory, the Social Identity Theory on which the CBI theory is based, is explained. After the CBI Theory is explained the Hypotheses and their connection to the previously presented literature review and the Theoretical Framework of this thesis are presented.

3.1 Preface to Consumer Brand Identity Theory

In order to understand the Consumer Brand Identity (CBI) Theory background knowledge on Social Identity Theory and Consumer Culture Theory will be provided in the following section. The understanding of these two theories will provide a foundation for the later deviated hypothesis, which are based on the CBI Theory.

3.1.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity is a theory proposed in social psychology by Tajfel in 1978 and relates to how people's idea of self is based on the social groups they frequent, for example, a sports team, a nationality, or a religious group (Leaper, 2011). As opposed to personal identity, social identity is focused on the self-categorization of oneself in relation to the "we" or the group. Since one gains parts of the self from being part of these groups, they have strong ties to them. The theory identifies how people's attitudes and behaviours are affected by these social groups, like how being affiliated with a group can aid the self-esteem development of a person. Furthermore, research on social identity theory has found that people feel the need to distinguish themselves in a social context (Tajfel & Turner 1985). This need for distinction varies depending on cultural norms and individual socialization, as well as for recent experience (Brewer, 1991).

Social identity theory and fashion go hand in hand as Noesjirwan and Crawford (1982) propose fashion and the clothing choices that one decides upon is a way for people to communicate themselves within the confines of the social group to which they subscribe to. In the same regard, the way that people in specific groups would regard a brand's clothing would be different relating to the social group they may find themselves in (Noesjirwan & Crawford, 1982). When considering social identity in practice, fashion brands need to remain cognizant of how groups of people interpret what they are selling and how they are selling it as the ways in which these are received by the consumer can affect their purchase intention. The knowledge of social identities equips the marketer to better understand the consumer and the cues they respond to best (Auty & Elliot, 1998).

3.1.2 Consumer Culture Theory

Interrelated with CBI Theory is Consumer Culture Theory (CCT). CCT "refers to a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings" (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p.868). CCT researches how emotions, attitudes and preferences affect buying behaviour. Arnould and Thompson (2005) argue that consumption needs to be understood in the overall context of consumer networks and practices. All perspectives share a theoretical orientation of studying cultural complexity and links collectively shared meanings, ways of life and values within groups. Relevant parts of CCT for this research project are consumer-brand relationships, the theory of ethnicity and the researched influence of community and gender, that characterize diversity. In this research, the socio-historical patterning of consumption and consumers' interpretative strategies will be highly relevant. The socio-historic patterning of consumption as a part of CCT proposed that ethnic identities have become hyper-cultural and that identity is becoming more fluid in social contexts. The consumer's interpretative strategies theory analyzes how customers interpret brands and marketing communication (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

CCT research aims to explore consumer understandings generally and is closely linked to cultural meanings and social dynamics that form consumer experiences and identities. It is relevant for this research problem as the topic of inclusion is highly correlated with different cultural and social groups and the development of more diverse social identities. Furthermore, CCT states that consumers identify with brands they perceive as aligning with their values and their self-concept (Wolter, Brach, Cronin Jr. & Bonn, 2016).

3.2 Consumer Brand Identification Theory

According to Lam (2012), consumer-brand identification (CBI) has been identified as "one of the most important topics in marketing research and practice of the past decade" by research. Several studies have reported positive effects of higher CBI on marketing success such as customer satisfaction (Tuˇskej, Golob & Podnar, 2013) and customer loyalty (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sankar, 2012). It can be argued that in general, CBI leads to sustained, long-term consumer-brand relationships (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sankar, 2012). To maintain their value, brands need to determine the variables that affect the identification of consumers with them (Büyükdağ & Kitapci, 2021). The consumer brand identification theory links the social identity theory to the brand identity theory. The following figure 2 shows the relationship between the consumer's self-identity and the brand.

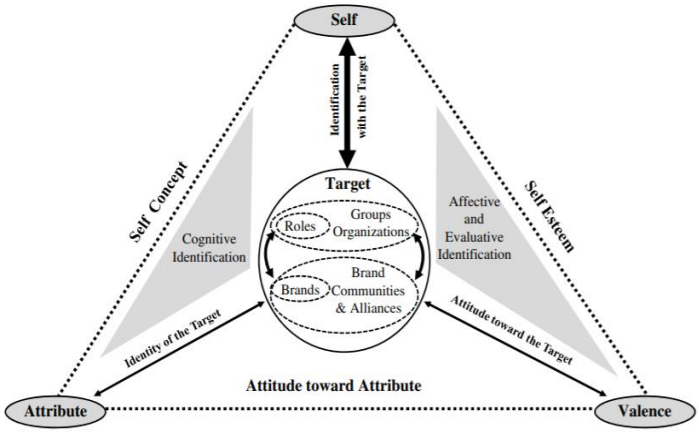

Figure 2: Relationship between the consumer identity and brand identity, adapted from Lam (2012)

Consumers purchase products for the meaning it adds to their lives and for reinforcement of themselves (Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sankar, 2012). Following this, it can be said that products are not only purchased for the purchase itself or their functionality but also for self-identification with the brand. This theory is widely used in tourism and hospitality branding already, as it gives an insight into how consumer-brand relationships develop (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Bhattacharya & Sen (2003, p.77) propose that the relationships between brands and consumers that are communicated are very important as they "satisfy important self-definitional needs". Bhattacharya & Sen (2003) also argue that strong identification relationships between consumers and brands form when self-definitional needs are satisfied, which results in positive engagement with the brand. In a 2012 study Stokburger-Saurer, Ratneshwar, and Sen propose constructs that drive Consumer Brand Identification (CBI). Their results show that positive aspects of brand evaluation and brand-self-similarity have a positive influence on consumer-brand identification. Furthermore, CBI can be associated with an increase in levels of brand advocacy and loyalty according to the study by Stokburger-Saurer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012). CBI is driven by five factors: brand–self-similarity, brand distinctiveness, brand social benefits, brand warmth, and memorable brand experiences (Stokburger-Saurer, Ratneshwar & Sen, 2012). All these factors are enhanced when consumers have a high involvement with the brand's products or product category. In combination with Social Identity Theory and Brand Identity Theory the following model in figure 3, showcases the relationship between the three theories can be developed.

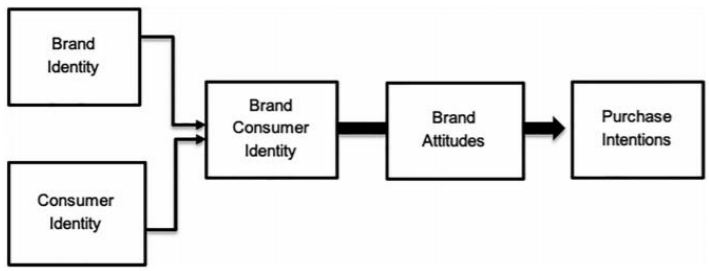

Figure 3: Consumer Brand Identity Consumer Experience Model (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020)

3.2.1 Brand-Self Similarity

There are several antecedent conditions that facilitate the creation of CBI. What this means is that there need to be scenarios that create the alignment between the brand and the consumer which in turn creates CBI. One of the drivers of CBI is brand-self similarity (BSS), which is seen as a cognitive-based driver (Torres, Augusto & Godinho, 2017). BSS is an important element in the building of CBI as it explains the level to which the customers have a personality that is similar to that of the brand (Susanty & Tresnaningrum, 2018). As Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012) put it "the degree of overlap between a consumer's perception of his or her personality traits and that of the brand". When a cognitive-based driver like BSS is combined with an affective-based driver like brand identity, there is the likelihood that CBI can be created (Torres, Augusto & Godinho, 2017). CSR plays an important role in CBI as it enhances the attractiveness of a brand's identity according to Sen and Bhattacharya (2011). According to McKinsey (2020), almost two-thirds of fashion consumers identify as "belief-driven buyers", meaning they choose and also avoid fashion brands based on their stand on social issues. Furthermore, in fashion consumption consumers tend to reinforce their self-concept through the association with brands (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). This can especially be seen with younger buyers as more than fifty percent of 21 to 27-year-olds in the US believe that fashion retailers have a responsibility to address social issues such as diversity (McKinsey, 2020).

When CBI is utilised in marketing strategies for the inclusive brand, it is more accurate to speak of the term Consumer Inclusive Brand Identity (CIBI). This means that the inclusive brand is attempting to align to the inclusive values of the consumer to enhance the consumer's involvement in the brand. It follows then that an important process in understanding how CIBI affects the relationships between brands and consumers' decision making is understanding how the concept of CBI can be built. There needs to be an alignment of BSS to further discuss a scenario of CBI. As shown in figure 3 in the previous section, an alignment of the brand's identity and the consumer's identity needs to be made, in order to create CIBI. This alignment of the two identities can be defined as a high perceived BSS of the customer. From the above explanation the first hypothesis is derived;

H1: Brand-Self Similarity has a positive influence on consumer inclusive brand identity

3.2.2 Attitude

It is important to look at the relationship between the formation of CBI and its ability to influence consumers as it can be a predictor of a consumer's attitude towards a brand (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020). Attitude has been a popular research topic in marketing (Mitchell & Olson, 1981). It allows for the prediction of consumer behaviour while facilitating research on social psychology, as they are both based on several theoretical psychological constructs (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Mitchell and Olson (1981, p. 318) define brand attitude as an "individual's internal evaluation of the brand."

It is further defined as the consumer's beliefs and judgements about a brand's benefits and attributes, as well as their overall assessment of the brand (Keller, 1993). When it comes to the fashion industry, Gen-Y's attitude towards a brand is mainly shaped by the brand and by the consumers' self-identity (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017). When it comes to marketing, research by Debevec and Iyer (1986), has shown that advertising that is out of the gender norms increases interest, but the attitude towards the ad is dependent on the openness of the consumer towards the subject of inclusion. According to Jung and Seok (2016), consumers' attitude towards a brand is higher if they perceive the company's CSR as positive and identify with the company's values.

Above and beyond purchasing the clothing for its functional purpose, the brand is attempting to connect to the additional aspects the consumer might connect to when making their choices. The CIBI is therefore an attempt to affect the attitude of the consumer in relation to their values and their choices therein. This leads us to our second hypothesis;

H2: CIBI has a positive influence on the attitude of the consumer towards the inclusive brand

3.2.3 Purchase Intention

According to Spears and Singh (2004), a positive attitude towards a brand leads to purchase intention. Purchase intention is defined as the consumer's personal preference towards a product (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), and measures the possibility of a consumer buying a product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). While attitude summarizes a consumer's sentiment towards a brand, purchase intention measures a consumer's conscious plan to act (Spears & Singh, 2004). Purchase intention is a significant predictor of consumer behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and is easier to measure than actual purchase behaviour according to Kimery & McCord (2000). Understanding a consumer's purchase intention allows marketers to successfully understand consumers in the long run (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). When it comes to purchase intention, just like the attitude, Gen-Y's purchase intention is highly dependent on the brand and the consumer's social identity (Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017).

Therefore when we consider the inclusive brand, there is an attempt to elicit a positive attitude from the consumer towards the brand and build towards their purchase intention due to the fact they relate to their inclusive stance. When the consumer can self identify with the inclusive values of the brand there is a likelihood that the attitude they would have towards said brand will, in turn, be positive and they will be more inclined to purchase an item they feel covers the general reason for them buying it but also relates to their values or identity. This leads us to our third hypothesis;

H3: Consumer attitude towards an inclusive brand has a positive influence on purchase intention

Although a consumer may not themselves be within the marginalized group, their values still align to inclusive values. Similarly, a consumer who is within the marginalized group also aligns with the values of inclusion. However, being part of the group being highlighted may increase the interpretation of the communication more strongly as it pertains to them specifically according to Arnould & Thompson (2005). As highlighted within the social identity theory by Noesjirwan & Crawford (1982), the way consumers perceive a fashion brand is dependent on the social group they belong to or identify with. Furthermore, as seen in the literature review, it can be seen that traditional segmentation has shown that included consumers and consumers that are traditionally not included perceive brands differently (Licsandru & Chi Cui, 2018). As marginalized groups have not been included before and have experienced several issues due to the traditional segmentation approach, it can be assumed that the added value for these groups is higher than for traditionally not marginalized groups.

Therefore, following from theory and the understanding of marginalized consumers, marginalized gender or wearing a marginalized size, has an additional effect on attitude, in addition to brand-self similarity and the consumer's identification with the brand. This leads to the following hypotheses;

H4: Marginalized gender has a positive influence on consumer attitude towards inclusive brands

H5: Marginalized size has a positive influence on consumer attitude towards inclusive brands

3.3 Conceptual Framework

Overall, the hypotheses developed from the literature review and the CBI Theory, lead to the theoretical framework this research is based on.

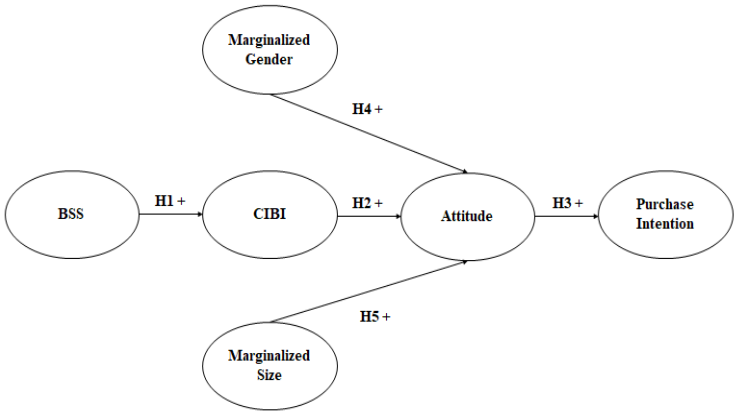

Figure 4: Conceptual framework

4. Methodology

In this section, the methodology of the thesis is presented. Firstly, we discuss our research philosophy and our research approach. Secondly, the conceptual framework that the methodology is based on is presented. The conceptual framework is followed by the research design, measurements and data collection methods. Lastly, the methodology for data analysis is presented.

4.1 Research Philosophy

In general, researchers develop their methodologies for the conduction of research based on different ontological and epistemological approaches (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Jaspersen, 2018). Ontology represents the underlying philosophical assumptions of reality, while Epistemology represents the assumptions about ways of seeing the nature of the world (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018). Following the ontological and epistemological approach, the methodology represents "a combination of techniques used to inquire into a specific situation" (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018, p.47). After the methodology, the methods and techniques represent the individual approach for data collection and analysis (Easterby-Smith et al, 2018). According to Easterby-Smith et al (2018), understanding these concepts can increase the quality of research and can help when applying a methodology to answer research questions.

4.1.1 Ontological Position

When doing research, the main concept is the investigation into something. We are trying to solve a problem to gain insight into a phenomenon to either create change in the real world or to provide more information as to how change or more research can be directed. There is no difference with the marketing research we are conducting here and its relation to ontology. Ontology is the inquiry into the nature of reality and existence (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015). Fundamentally it is studying, what there is. The deeper into the understanding of ontology one goes, the more deviations different people might have on its meaning which would lead to questions of metaphysics, which in itself is an ontological position. But we can make two claims about ontology; firstly, that it tries to answer questions about what exists in reality and secondly, it looks at what the actual features of these existing things are and how they relate (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017).

Ontological debates have been going on as long as philosophers could coin the term. There have been deeper roots in the science field, but the social science area has had a long history in the field as well. Although there are similar notions to both, they do differ, and thus for this paper and its nature, we will look at the social science side of the conversation as we deal with marketing and the social and human interactions which come about in the world. There are three main positions within social science that one can take when they take on ontological research: internal realism, relativism and nominalism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015).

Nominalism is the furthest from the direction we will take as it proposes that all truth and facts do not exist and are purely creations of man. These are all created by people and don't exist in the world (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015). Closer to our position, is relativism, which proposes that everything is relative to the person and the context in which it occurs. Therefore there cannot be an overall truth to reality as it all depends on who experienced it (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015).

For this research, we will take the internal realist position, which says that truth does exist, but we do not have a full grasp of it as it is obscure (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015). We do have facts that we use to better understand the truth but they require investigation to obtain. This is relevant to our research as branding is a well-researched phenomenon that exists outside of our understanding of it, and our research which attempts to increase the preference and equity of a brand using inclusivity as a strategic tool seeks to increase the knowledge in the field. Since we will be researching this on a global front, a relativist position could be relevant as the varying experiences and understanding of inclusion are relative to each group and their experience of brands and inclusion. Therefore it could also be an angle which we use. For this research however, we will be sticking to the internal realist position, as we hold a specific definition of inclusion and how it relates to branding, and seek to see if this specific stance holds within the global experience.

4.1.2 Epistemological Position

If we consider ontology as the central idea of existing knowledge, we can zoom out slightly to epistemology as a contributor to how we grasp the ontological knowledge. Epistemology relates to how one would research the nature of reality or more specifically, which routes we would need to take to find out and make sense of our assumptions of reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015). It studies the theories which explain knowledge of what we know. There are two contrasting ways in which theory research can be done, and those are the positivism and social constructionism perspectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2015).

Due to the fact that the research we will be doing will attempt to quantify and measure the nature of the social world, using quantitative methods, we will use the positivist construct. The key tenet of positivism is that one attempts to measure knowledge through objective methods instead of it being inferred through subjective means. Seeing as the point of our research is to aid the development of strategic tools, we need to be able to show our explanation and the causal effects we propose in order for them to be utilised objectively by a business. This is not to say we see no relevance in a social constructivist stance. On the contrary, we believe that the foundation of our study comes from here, as we have taken from qualitative studies on inclusion to build our research. The subjective realities of minority people and the market reality in which they exist are the social pieces we have put together to create an ordered positivist understanding.

4.2 Research Approach

For this study, a deductive approach and an online survey are used. Research can be conducted by description and explanation (Burns & Burns, 2008). According to Burns and Burns (2008), the deductive approach means developing hypotheses from an existing theory and confirming the theory by observations. In this study we take the existing CBI Theory and apply it to consumers' fashion brand preferences, therefore the research approach in this study is the deductive approach. Due to our ontological and epistemological beliefs, we chose this approach as it follows a positivist approach. According to Burns and Burns (2008), positivist researchers tend to prefer the deductive approach over the inductive approach. As the concept of inclusivity in branding and consumer-brand identification based on beliefs and values are already established in the literature and have been explored by several researchers, we chose to apply these concepts to our chosen specific aspect of inclusion and fashion consumers. Through deduction, the hypothesis developed can then be demonstrated as either true or false (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2016). The deductive approach following from an inductive developed theory allows for a controlled study (Burns & Burns, 2008). In the first stage of following the deductive approach, an extensive literature review on inclusive branding and the CBI theory was conducted. These theoretical concepts were then operationalized in the form of hypotheses to quantify them and confirm them by observations of Generation Y consumers.

4.3 Research Design

In this section, we discuss our choice of data collection method and tool, as well as ethical considerations of our data collection. We furthermore elaborate on how the data collection was planned and how the needed sample size was calculated.

4.3.1 Survey Tool

For the collection of data, we will utilise Google forms as a surveying tool. Google Forms is a google generated free surveying tool (Melo, 2018). It allows the user to do surveys with many variations in terms of the responses such as “short answers, paragraphs, multiple selections, verification boxes, pull-down, linear scale, grid of several options” (Melo, 2018). It is a useful tool that is free and quick to set up and only requires the user to have a google account. The form is connected to Google’s spreadsheet option and one can access the curvy information in spreadsheet form (Melo, 2018).

4.3.2 Ethical Considerations

When doing marketing research, it is important as researchers to keep abreast of the considerations that need to be met to keep our research and its findings ethical. Research is normally done to create some sort of means to an end. In this case, we are looking to create a strategic tool for businesses.

There are times when the end of research can be motivated by profit which could lead to researchers and the businesses they are researching for, compromising the integrity of the study process and the objectivity it holds. This can put the subjects of the research being studied and the research itself into danger (Malhotra, 2010). Therefore it is important that throughout the process we undertake, appropriate marketing research procedures are adhered to. We also ensured that we correctly represent the findings so no ethical norms are violated (Malhotra, 2010).

Since we will be using a survey to receive data from our respondents, we need to ensure that we do so in a manner that protects the interests of the respondents. Therefore, at the beginning of the survey, we will provide them with an opt-in notification which showcases that no one is forced or coerced into doing the survey and whereby respondents give their consent to participating in the survey. Seeing as we will be doing the research in Europe, we will ensure that we follow the GDPR guidelines on research. For example, we will make sure that the data is not disseminated outside of Europe and the information is kept in a secure location. In the survey itself, we will stipulate the basic GDPR guidelines and the options the respondents have regarding their data. We will also ensure we remove any information which can be traceable to any respondents so that they are protected. Lastly, we will provide our contact information to assist with any follow-up questions or concerns the respondents have about the survey.

4.3.3 Data Collection

Primary Data Collection

As previously described, the primary data was collected in the form of a questionnaire. In deductive research, as well as business and market research, the survey is the most common approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). For this study, we choose to do a direct, electronic interview in the form of a web-based survey, created on Google Forms. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the questionnaire will be conducted online, as face-to-face interviews and other forms of distribution are not possible. The advantages of online surveys are the low cost and that there is no need for direct contact between the researchers and the respondents (Burns & Burns, 2008), which is essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the respondents are not influenced by the presence of the researchers, which according to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2018) can negatively affect the respondents into answering socially desirable instead of honestly. In this research, if being influenced by the presence of the researchers, the respondents could answer dishonestly about their valuing and consideration of inclusion. This is further avoided due to the anonymity of an online survey. According to Burns and Burns (2008), the anonymity of online surveys leads to more honest responses. Potential problems, such as the reachability of the target population, don’t apply here as the target population is reachable online.

The survey is sent out through the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram as they provide high reachability for Gen Y (Statista, 2019). On Facebook, the questionnaire will be sent to various Facebook groups. The groups will be selected through a screening process to determine whether the target group is reachable in these groups. The questionnaire has been conducted for a period of ten days. In order to increase the number of respondents, an incentive for answering the questionnaire in the form of one 100 SEK and two 50 SEK Amazon vouchers, that will be given to one participant will be used. Respondents could fill out their email address at the end of the survey to participate in the lottery of the voucher.

Questionnaire setup

The questionnaire will be available in English, as we try to reach as many different people as possible and English is one of the most spoken languages in the world. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2018), the language used is a form of excluding people, therefore we tried to limit this by using the English language for our survey. Furthermore, English is the native language of one of the authors of this thesis and therefore there were no translation issues, such as poor data due to translation issues (Behling & Law, 2000). As the study is aimed at all nationalities there is no need to translate the questionnaire to a second language. The total time of the questionnaire will be about 10 minutes to cover all questions. This is within the interval of the ideal survey length of 10 minutes and the maximum survey length, which is 20 minutes (Revilla & Ochoa, 2017). The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

The questionnaire will consist of four different parts. Firstly, the Introduction will explain the reason and purpose of the study, as well as providing information about the anonymity of the responses and data storage. Due to the nature of the study, an explanation of the term inclusivity will be provided. This will allow them to better understand the full spectrum of the term in order to answer the questions correctly. In addition, it will be explained that the questionnaire focuses on the inclusion of appearance in terms of body and gender. The first section will furthermore contain a question about the respondent's age, to filter out unwanted participants. At the beginning of the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents will be shown the fictive brand A that was created for this questionnaire and are instructed to familiarize themselves with the text. Afterwards, the respondents will be shown the five brand personality dimensions and will firstly be asked how much they agree or disagree with the association of these statements with Brand A. Secondly, the respondents will be asked how much they agree or disagree with the association of these statements with themselves. In the third part, the respondents will be asked for their identification with Brand A. Afterwards, the attitude towards Brand A and the purchase intention will be measured in several statements. The fourth part of the questionnaire concerns the demographics. The participants will be asked for their gender, nationality and clothing size. Respondents that identify as male or female will furthermore be asked for their need for product-gender congruity.

To respect the respondent's privacy and any cases of discomfort with providing sensitive information, the respondents will be given the option not to disclose the demographic information. Lastly, the questionnaire ended with a final page thanking the respondent for the participation and the opportunity to provide contact details to participate in the drawing of the gift cards. To avoid incomplete questionnaires, it was mandatory to answer each question before continuing to the next question.

4.3.4 Development of The Fictitious Brand

To give the questionnaire respondents a consistent understanding of the inclusivity of a brand in terms of appearance and to measure the brand preference, a fictive inclusive brand was created to present in the questionnaire. The brand is based on the inclusive values of existing brands, but the brand names were changed in order not to create biased opinions influenced by other characteristics of the brand. The brand that was created is based on the concept of inclusivity of marginalized size and genders presented in the literature review. Furthermore, the inclusive brand is inspired by the mission, vision and values of the inclusive fashion brands Universal Standard, Pretty Little Thing and Savage X Fenty. Universal Standard has been named one of the most inclusive brands by several references (Westover, 2020), as well as Pretty Little Thing (Ristanovic, 2019; Eldor, 2019) and SavageX (Newbold, 2018). In order not to influence the respondents by the brand name the universal name Brand A will be used in the questionnaire.

Mission & Vision

"We set out to change everything - create unprecedented access, make size irrelevant, represent all of us, as we are - and establish a new normal for future generations." (Universal Standard, 2021) " [Brand A] is committed to accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. We believe all guests should be able to easily shop our products" (SavageX, 2021). We want to give our customers the opportunity to express themselves, no matter how they identify themselves and what their size is.

Culture

Brand A has a culture where people and their identity come first. Everyone is valued the same, no matter what they look like or how they identify. Brand A also advocates for inclusion and diversity internally and externally. Inclusion is truly intertwined with the culture of the brand.

Personality

Brand A can be described as innovative and open-minded. Brand A cares for its customers and its employees and is extra careful when listening to their needs. Brand A employees represent the inclusion that they represent in their products.

Size Range

Brand A offers all clothing items from size 4XS to 4XL.

Genders

Brand A “comes in all shapes and sizes" (Newbold, 2018), for all genders. Brand A offers clothing for men and women, as well as unisex clothing and is also targeted at transgender individuals, during/before and after transition. Furthermore, Brand A caters to people that identify as non-binary.

Product & Model examples

For the visualisation of an inclusive Brand, images of these companies’ websites and social media sites, as well as product images from the online shop will be used. Furthermore, images of the inclusive 2021 Zalando “Here to stay” campaign will be used to showcase the example of an inclusive fashion campaign.

“Our campaigns are rooted in strength and positivity with collections that pay homage to the LGBTQ+ community, [...] power and diversity, with models and advocates who inspire us regardless of [...], sexuality or gender” (Pretty Little Thing, 2021).

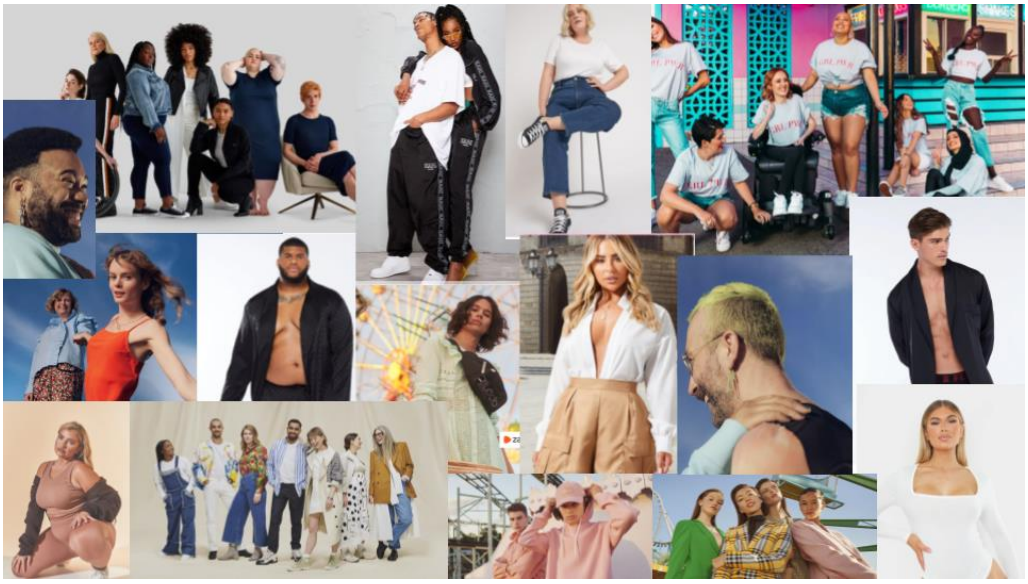

Figure 5: Brand A

4.4.5 Sampling

Sampling Method

For this research, we will be making use of a nonprobability sampling method. Due to the time allocation, the scope of the study and our resources, this method would be the easiest to perform, the fastest way to gain information and provide us with the lowest cost option. Although it would be pertinent to have a non-zero chance for all, we are unable to put the questionnaire on every platform possible which would reach all manner of people. The type of nonprobability sampling we will do is convenience sampling, as it will be posted online for anyone to select and participate. Due to Covid safety regulations, it is difficult to have a non-convenient method, so we must ensure we can get as many respondents as possible to cover our required sample size.

Sample size

We will take a statistical approach for sample size determination using the confidence interval. By using this method, we can estimate our population proportion π. Since we are trying to get the richest information from our respondents, we will not set out to have an extremely large sample, but a smaller one. This will be done by estimating our population proportion π to be 0.25. A 95 percent confidence level gives us Z values of 1.96, to calculate for deviation from the true mean while using the suggested width of 10.

95% confidence interval:

$$p \pm 1.96\sqrt{\frac{\pi(1-\pi)}{n}} \qquad n = \frac{\pi(1-\pi)(1.96)^2}{(0.05)^2}$$

Figure 6: Sample size

((1.96)2 (0.25) (0.25)) / (0.05)2 = 289

If we consider π=0.25 as previously stated, a totality of 289 respondents is needed.

According to Dimock (2019) and many researchers, Gen Y or Millennials as they are commonly referred to, are made up of individuals born between 1981 and 1996 is considered part of the cohort. It is widely agreed upon that generational cutoff points like the ones presented are not an exact science, but rather a way for analysis detailed above to take place. To ensure that we include all Gen Y people, we have placed our cut off at 24-40 as some are not yet 25 yet and we would not want them to be left out of our data collection due to them still being 24 but in their 25th year.

4.5 Measurements

The research will be done by survey, using a 7 point Likert scale. This scale has several advantages, like being able to be easily put together. Due to the nature of our research, it will likely help us produce homogenous scales which increase the likelihood of a unity attitude being measured, increasing the validity and reliability of our study (Burns & Burns, 2008). There are however some disadvantages. The scale does not allow the user to have a basis to gauge how much more favorable a respondent's attitude is towards one thing over another. The midpoint, 4, has an issue when it comes to definition as the way that it is named may be interpreted differently by different respondents which could affect the integrity of the answer (Burns & Burns, 2008). Due to the nature of the study, we will be evaluating in two sections; first by evaluating CBI's existence with regard to inclusion using value. Secondly, we will evaluate if inclusive CBI results in positive brand association and purchase intention for consumers.

Brand-self similarity

Brand-self similarity will measure how similar the consumers perceive the inclusive brand to themselves. For the measurement, the scale by Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012) will be used. The brand personality will be measured in the five dimensions by Aaker (1997): Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness. While the authors used different subcategories to measure the brand personality, we will stick to the five main dimensions. The respondents association of these dimensions with the brand will be measured with a 7-point Likert scale, followed by their association of the dimension with themselves. To measure the brand-self similarity, the Euclidean distance D between the two assessments was computed. After that, this distance was rescaled to a similarity measure S with a range from 1 (minimum) to 7 (maximum), by applying a linear transformation ($S=7-.2582D$). This procedure has been determined by Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012).

Consumer Brand Identification

This section will measure if we have cases of consumer brand identity. Here we are trying to see if the consumers valuing inclusivity is aligned with the brands valuing inclusivity which creates CBI. This will be done by using the CBI scale created by Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar & Sen (2012), which showcased a composite reliability value of 0.88. Here the dependent variable is CBI and the independent variable is valuing inclusivity. We will take the factor loadings they had proposed as meaningful to CBI and score them on a 7 point Likert scale. CBI is measured by five items, such as "I feel a strong sense of belonging to brand X".

Attitude

This section will measure the attitude of the respondents towards the inclusive brand. Attitude will be measured by using the Brand Attitudes scale by Spears & Singh (2004), which showcased composite reliabilities of 0.97. It is measured by five different items and by a 7-point Likert scale, with five different extreme points such as "Unappealing/Appealing".

Purchase Intention

This section will measure the purchase intention the respondents have towards the inclusive brand. Purchase intention will be measured by using the Purchase Intention scale by Spears & Singh (2004), which showcased composite reliabilities of 0.97. It is measured by five different items and by a 7-point Likert scale, with five different extreme points such as "Never/Definitely".

Gender

Gender will be measured in 3 different categories, namely "Male", "Female" and "I identify differently" on a nominal scale. The last category will show how many respondents belong to a gender minority and therefore represent a marginalized gender.

To further determine how many people identify as Male or Female but are not satisfied with the current stereotypical gender clothing choices, we used Fugate & Melacon Philips (2010) "Need for product gender congruity" scale. This scale determines how many respondents are not the typical gender consumers (Fugate & Melacon Philip, 2010), with a reliability of 0.67. In Fugate and Melacon Philips (2010) study the average product-gender congruency mean for males was 3.22 for males and 2.87 for females. The statements for measuring the need for product gender congruity variables will be measured by three different statements. After the data collection, two dummy variables were created. Gender_1, where 1 represents respondents that are part of the marginalized gender group and 0 represents respondents that are not and Gender_0, where 0 represents respondents that are not part of the marginalized gender group and 1 represents respondents that are part of the marginalized gender group.

Size

Size will be measured in two different categories, namely "S, M, L" and "Other", on a nominal scale. The last category will show how many respondents belong to a category that does not fit the current standard sizes of the fashion industry and therefore is a marginalized size. After the data collection, two dummy variables were created. Size_1, where 1 represented respondents wearing a marginalized size and 0 representing respondents not wearing a marginalized size and Size_0, where 0 represented respondents wearing a marginalized size and 1 representing respondents not wearing a marginalized size.

4.6 Pre-Test

To secure the quality and understandability of the questionnaire, we performed a pre-test in the middle of April. According to Reynolds, Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch (1993), a pre-test is good for fixing spelling and grammatical errors. Furthermore, the pre-test can help secure the understandability of the questionnaire, as the researchers are not present during the answering process to clear up any misunderstandings or to answer questions (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, the pre-test was used to test the technical functionality of Google Forms.

10 different people participated in the pre-test of our survey. The participants were selected from different backgrounds to secure the clarity of the questionnaire from different perspectives. In addition to filling out the questionnaire and giving feedback about the clarity and understandability of the questions, the participants were asked to measure the time it took them to complete the questionnaire. The average time needed was 8:33 minutes, with a range from 6:30 to 10:30 minutes. The overall feedback of the participants was that the questionnaire is clear and easy to understand. The participants highlighted the importance of the descriptions of the adjectives used in Section 2. One participant requested that the brand description is shown several times, however as this concerned only one respondent, the overall questionnaire design was kept. Three participants highlighted that one question was repeated, however, this was dependent on the measurement scale used. The overview of the pre-test can be found in Appendix B. After the pre-test small spelling mistakes were fixed in the questionnaire.

4.7 Data Analysis

In this section, we discuss the tool we used to perform the data analysis and how the analysis was performed. We furthermore discuss the number of respondents of the questionnaire and their characteristics.

4.7.1 Data Analysis Tool

The core of our research seeks to analyse how certain strategic moves can affect the attitude and purchase intention in the mind of the consumer. Therefore we would need to analyse if there is a positive relationship we believe there to be between inclusion and purchase intention. In order to do this in the smoothest way, which will provide us with the results of our two research questions, we will be utilising Smart PLS as a data analysis tool. This will allow us to analyse the data we collected and see if our hypotheses can be accepted. PLS path modelling is applied in various fields of business administration (Betinez, Henseler, Castillo & Schuhberth, 2020). PLS-SEM is a suitable technique for examining data and is frequently used for modelling (Jumani & Sukhabot, 2020). Through PLS-SEM, theoretical constructs can be modelled and complex interrelationships can be estimated (Albers, 2010).

The program allows for one to view the relationship between independent variables and multiple dependent variables on the response side. Secondly, on the predictor side, it can run multiple independent variables even when there are multicollinearity issues which are then accounted for (Garson, 2016). PLS-SEM can be used as a regression model to predict a dependent variable from one or more independent variables which are relevant to the study we are conducting. When conducting research, PLS-SEM is useful when one is either focusing on an exploratory study or a confirmatory. Our research takes on a confirmatory study which is best for PLS-SEM as PLS-SEM does not work as well for an explanatory technique as it has low power when filtering out variables of minor causal importance (Garson, 2016). One of the disadvantages of PLS-SEM is that it has a hard time interpreting the loadings of independent variables. When we have the case that the distributional properties of estimates are unknown, we are less able to predict the significance of the P values except when using the bootstrapping function (Garson, 2016).

For our study, we will be utilizing PLS-SEM as this will allow us to utilise a multivariate analysis method. This means that we can test our measurement models and several variables in our structural models simultaneously (Garson, 2016). The measurement model measures the latent constructs, which are the questionnaire questions we used to define our dependent variables. This model helps us assess the validity and reliability of our constructs, assess the relationship between the variables as well as test for discriminant validity. Therefore, we are sure that we have selected questions that correctly represent the dependent variable we are trying to test for. Once we have this, we can move onto the structural model which is the core of SEM-PLS (Garson, 2016). This will be a path analysis for us to see if our variables are related to one another in the way that we assume in our hypotheses. We are interested in looking at the impact of one variable on another variable and understanding if each path is significant.

4.7.2 Number of Respondents

The number of respondents was checked several times during the ten day data collection period to see if the minimum sample size n=289 was reached. This was achieved on the 17th of April 2021, reaching N=293 respondents. After the ten days, on the 23rd of April 2021, N=444 participants filled out the survey. Even though the description of the questionnaire clearly stated the target group of the questionnaire, 8.1 % of people who started the survey were not in the target group and were therefore filtered out before starting the survey. Out of this group, 33 respondents were in the age group of 18 to 23 year olds, one respondent was 41 to 56 years old, one respondent was 57 to 75 years old and one respondent was of another age. Therefore, the sample of 24 to 40 year olds consisted of n=408 participants. The respondents were from 42 different countries, with the majority being American (48.8%), German (15%), South African (8.6%) and British (8.6%).

4.8 Research Quality Criteria

To secure the quality of the research, several coefficients will be taken into consideration when analysing the data. To assess the fit of the model, several coefficients are put by default by PLS, namely r square, f square, the average variance extracted (AVE), the composite reliability, Chronbach's Alpha, the Discriminant Validity Collinearity Statistic (VIF) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Garson, 2016). Furthermore, the data will be analysed for convergence. According to Garson (2016), convergence rarely is a problem in PLS-SEM, but if convergence occurs the outputs of the analysis are unreliable. Due to this as a first step, we will check for convergence, following the process of Garson (2016). Secondly, the data will be analysed for outliers, which reflect "bad respondents", overfitting and other statistical artefacts according to (Becker, Rai, Ringle & Völkner, 2013). Furthermore, before the analysis, the segment sizes will be analysed. The rule of thumb for segment sizes according to Garson (2016) is that segment splits of 90:10 or smaller should be avoided if there are only two segments.

Significance of Data

The data is automatically standardized with loadings from 0 to 1 in SmartPLS (Garson, 2016). Any value above 0.5 shows that the variable has a positive effect on the other variable (Garson, 2016). For a well-fitting model, all path loading should be above the value of 0.70 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2012). According to (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014), the larger the loadings are, the stronger the measurement is. Furthermore, (Hair et al., 2014), argue that any indicator with a loading within the range of 0.40 to 0.70 should be dropped if dropping the item will improve composite reliability. Another criterion for dropping items according to Hair et al. (2014) is an outer weight and outer loading below 0.50, even if the loading of the item is significant.

Reliability

An important assessment for data collected with PLS-SEM is a test of reliability. According to (Hair et al., 2014), the larger the loadings of the variables, the more reliable the measurement is. Therefore reliability indicates how consistently the methods we have used measure the latent variables we are trying to draw conclusions for (Hair et al., 2014). To assess the overall reliability, we will look at the internal consistency by analysing the Cronbach's Alpha levels. According to Burns & Burns (2008), a Chronbach's Alpha level of α=.7 and higher is needed to have an acceptable internally consistent model. Garson (2016) further defines that values above 0.80 show a good scale and values around 0.6 can be used for exploratory purposes. As Chronbach's Alpha might overestimate or underestimate the scale reliability, the composite reliability will be analysed as a second coefficient to secure the reliability. The composite reliability is furthermore preferred among PLS-based researchers. The composite reliability can vary from 0 to 1, with 1 being the perfect reliability. As we are analysing the model for exploratory purposes, the composite reliability should be 0.60 or greater (Höck & Ringle, 2010).

To test for convergence and divergent validity, the AVE will be analysed. The AVE should be greater than 0.5 according to (Höck & Ringle, 2010). For the AVE, the value should be higher than the cross-loadings, explaining at least 50% of the variance of their indicators. As the last measurement for reliability, the SRMR will be analysed. SRMS measures the model fit and the difference between the observed and model-implied correlation matrix (Garson, 2016). An SRMR lower than 0.08 indicates a good fit according to (Hu & Bentler, 1998), while Henseler, Dijkstra, Sarstedt, Ringle, Diamantopoulos, Straub, Ketchen, Hair, Hult & Calantone (2014) use 0.10 as the cut-off value.

Validity

Validity ensures that the variables are measuring what they are supposed to measure (Burns & Burns, 2008). Internal validity ensures that the results of the study are true and credible and that the conclusions are correct (Burns & Burns, 2008). Through our pre-test, we secured content validity (Burns & Burns, 2008), as participants were asked if they understood the concepts and questions asked. Furthermore, adaptations to increase understandability were made. In addition, internal validity was increased by assuring anonymity (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Despite this, it can not be avoided that participants answered in a socially desirable way (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015), therefore total internal validity can not be guaranteed. All questionnaire items were taken from the literature and previously tested scales, securing construct validity according to Burns and Burns (2008).

Replicability

According to Bryman & Bell (2015), researchers must ensure the replicability of their study and that the results are accurate. Due to this, the measurements that were used in this research and their origin in the literature are explained in section 4.5. Furthermore, the data analysis procedures and tools are explained transparently. To secure replicability, the research process is explained in a readable and understandable manner.

5. Analysis

This section presents the results of the PLS-SEM analysis and the steps that were taken after the data collection to analyse the data in SmartPLS. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics of the data analysis will be presented and analysed. The results of the data analysis of the individual variables will be presented. Additionally, the sample has been separated by nationalities, to investigate whether major differences exist between nationalities and to perform a robustness check. At the end of this section, the results of the Bootstrapping data analysis and the PLS Path model will be presented.

5.1 Preparation of Data

Before starting the data analysis, we took a first look at the collected data. As 36 participants were not in the target group of this research project, the data file was cleared from these respondents. Furthermore, several respondents had spelling errors in the specification of their nationality. These mistakes were corrected in order to guarantee the clarity of the results. After that, the five respondents that preferred not to disclose their gender or their clothing size were deleted from the file, which resulted in the sample size n=408 being reduced to n=403. To identify which respondents belong to the majority category and which belong to the minority category, the product-gender congruity of all male and female respondents was calculated. Therefore, the mean of the product-gender congruity questions was calculated as determined by Fugate & Melacon Philips (2010) and described in Section 4.5. Secondly, we analyzed the clothing size of all participants. Furthermore, the Brand Self Similarity score of all respondents was calculated for all respondents as described in 4.5 Measurements. As the answering of all questions was mandatory, we did not observe any missing values or incorrect data.

5.2 Descriptive Statistics

In order to gain a better understanding of the respondents, the demographics are briefly presented. Out of our 408 respondents, 306 (75%) identified as females, 90 (22.1%) identified as male, 10 (2.5%) identified differently and 2 (0.5%) preferred not to disclose their gender. The answers of the two respondents that did not disclose their gender were removed from the data. The descriptive statistics show that there was a high number of female respondents. According to Miotto & Vilajoana-Alejandre (2019) we previously discussed that traditionally, fashion mainly targets women. Therefore, it can be assumed that questionnaires regarding fashion mainly attract women as well. Furthermore, as we chose to do a convenience sampling, we did not influence the distribution of genders participating in the survey.

332 (81.4%) of the respondents wear the clothing size S, M or L, while 73 (17.9%) wear another size. 3 respondents (0.7%) preferred not to disclose their clothing size in the questionnaire. The answers of those three respondents were then removed from the data.

As previously stated, the respondents are from 42 different countries, representing many different cultures and backgrounds. A full list of the respondent's nationalities can be found in Appendix D2. The sample displays a high variety of nationalities.

For the remaining 393 Male or Female respondents that disclosed their size, the need for product-gender congruity was determined. To do this, the product-gender congruity mean was determined. All respondents that indicated a product-gender congruity mean below the average of all respondents were assigned the dummy variable for marginalized size. 188 respondents display a below-average need for product-gender congruity. The rest of the respondents were assigned the dummy variable for non-marginalized gender.

5.3 Measurements Model

An important precursor to the assessment of data in PLS is to assess the formative measurement models. This needs to be done before proceeding to analysing the structural model as the results in the measurement model will indicate that the data which follows is reliable and not subject to error. There are four steps when analysing the model: firstly, is assessing convergent validity of the measurement models. The second step is to test for reliability and validity, followed by testing for collinearity issues. The last step is assessing the significance and relevance of the formative indicators which are used to explain our latent variables.

5.3.1 Mean Values and Standard Deviations

	Mean	SD	ATT	BSS	CIBI	MG	MS
Attitude	5.43	1.12					
BSS	6.728	0.212	0.281				
CIBI	4.56	1.381	0.706	0.625			
Marginalized Gender	0.47	0.499	0.083	0.287	0.240		
Marginalised Size	0.18	0.386	0.099	0.033	0.041	0.001	
Purchase Intention	5.03	1.38	0.819	0.539	0.863	0.080	0.080

Table 1: Mean values, standard deviations and HTMT

An important assessment criterion for our data is discriminant validity as it is a way to analyse the relationships between our latent variables (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). This needs to be done to ensure that the reflective construct we are assessing has the strongest relationships with its indicators as opposed to any other construct. As the data in Table 1 shows, this has been done using the HTMT assessment. This shows that discriminant validity has been established between two reflective constructs as all our results are below the recommended level of 0.90 (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt 2015).

5.3.2 Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach Alpha	Rho	CR	AVE
Attitude	0.933	0.935	0.949	0.790
BSS	0.719	0.739	0.823	0.538
CIBI	0.923	0.925	0.942	0.766
Purchase Intention	0.951	0.954	0.962	0.837

Table 2: Reliability and Validity

Secondly, is analysing the measurement model against reliability and validity. This needs to be done in order for us to ensure that our data is strong enough to draw conclusions from when moving forward and analyse the structural model. Specifically, the Cronbach Alpha, Rho, Composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) were utilised. As is visible from Table 2 all values for the Cronbach were between 0.71 and 1.0 which are above the acceptable range of 0.70 (Garson, 2016). The Rho values are also above the threshold as they are between 0.73 and 1 which is above the cut off of 0.70. The values for composite reliability (CR) were between 0.82 and 1.0, which support reliability. Finally, the AVE values for the first-order constructs were between 0.53 and 1.0. These values were greater than the acceptance level of 0.50 and support convergent validity (Garson, 2016). To ensure our values are reliable, the latent variable BSS2 was omitted due to it providing a low contribution which affected the AVE of BSS as a whole. Therefore, by removing it, our AVE value moves to an acceptable level.

When testing for collinearity issues, the results show the inner and outer VIF values. These values should not be higher than 5 to stay within an acceptable limit to ensure we do not have a multicollinearity issue (Garson, 2016). In the case of this study there could be a chance of multicollinearity since marginalized size, marginalized gender and CIBI have the same dependent variable, attitude. In Appendix E1, PUR1 is 0.4 over the value 5 threshold. We can safely ignore this as it is not largely over the limit and we do not have any other issues of the sort. Seeing as we are being conservative with making the cut off 5, as VIF can go up to 10, we will not see this as a problem. There are no collinearity issues for our inner VIF values as they are all between 1.000 and 1.05. When we observe the outer VIF values we can see that all but one value are within the acceptable range as they are also below 5.

The final test is to analyse the components of the measurement model and ensure that the measurement items we utilised to draw data from having high enough loadings to represent the latent constructs we are attempting to analyse. As indicated by the data in Appendix E1 the outer loadings for our latent variables are all above the 0.60 threshold (Garson, 2016). This tells us that our chosen variables correctly describe the constructs we are trying to explain.

5.4 Structural Model and Analysis of Variables

BSS

The data analysis shows that Brand A was seen as mostly seen as Exciting, with a mean average of 5.34. The respondents furthermore perceived Brand A as Sincere and Competent. On average, Brand A was seen as a little less Sophisticated and Rugged. Firstly, the majority of respondents perceived themselves as sincere, with a mean average of 5.59. The respondents furthermore perceived themselves as Competent and Exciting. Similar as for Brand A, the respondents perceived themselves as a bit less Sophisticated and Rugged.

	Respondents Mean	**Brand Mean**
Sincere	5.59	5.14
Exciting	5.05	5.34
Competent	5.52	5.06
Sophisticated	4.58	4.46
Rugged	4.34	4.03

Table 3: Brand-Self Similarity

As shown in the measurements table in Appendix E1, BSS2 did not show a significant loading (0.519), despite being a pretested measurement variable that showcased a significant loading in previous studies. As it did not display a significant loading we deleted this item. BSS5 did not display a very high loading (0.625) but was kept. In total, Brand Self Similarity displayed a mean average of 6.728, meaning in general a very high percentage of respondents perceived the brand to be similar to themselves.

CBI

For CBI the mean value among the respondents was 4.56, meaning most respondents identified with Brand A. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis shows that the path coefficient for the influence of BSS on CIBI displays the p-value=0.000 < 0.05, therefore H1 was accepted for Hypothesis 1. It can be concluded that BSS has a significant positive effect on CIBI. The R2 and the adjusted R2 values are 0.273 and 0.272, suggesting that the PLS-SEM model explains 27.2 % of the variance of CIBI.

Attitude

The attitude of the respondents towards Brand A was high, with a mean of 5.43 meaning that the majority of respondents displayed a positive attitude towards Brand A. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis shows that the path coefficient for the influence of CIBI on Attitude displays the p-value=0.000 < 0.05, therefore H1 was accepted for Hypothesis 2. It can be concluded that CIBI has a significant positive effect on Attitude. The R2 and the adjusted R2 values are 0.487 and 0.483, suggesting that the PLS-SEM model explains 48.3 % of the variance of Attitude.

Purchase Intention

In general, the purchase intention of the respondents towards Brand A was high, with a mean value of 5.03, the majority of respondents displayed a purchase intention for Brand A. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis show that the path coefficient for the influence of Attitude on Purchase intention displays the p-value=0.000 < 0.05, therefore H1 was accepted for Hypothesis 3. It can be concluded that Attitude has a significant positive effect on Purchase Intention. The R2 and the adjusted R2 values are 0.604 and 0.603, suggesting that the PLS-SEM model explains 60.3 % of the variance of Purchase Intention.

Marginalized gender

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis show that the path coefficient for the influence of belonging to a marginalized gender on Attitude displays the p-value=0.000 < 0.05, therefore H1 was accepted for Hypothesis 4a. It can be concluded that marginalized gender has a significant positive effect on Attitude.

Marginalized size

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis show that the path coefficient for the influence of marginalized size on Attitude displays the p-value=0.075 > 0.05, therefore H1 was not accepted for Hypothesis 5 and H0 was accepted. It can be concluded that marginalized size has no significant positive effect on Attitude, for the chosen significance level of 95%. For a lower significance level of 90% and the according p-value <0.1, H5 would be significant. The low significance level of H5 (p=0.075) calls for further future analysis and discussion. As the sample size for marginalized sizes was only 17.9% of the total sample, the analysis might need to be repeated with a bigger sample. However, it can be concluded that independent of their clothing size, the respondents displayed a positive Attitude towards Brand A.

5.5 Robustness Check

Lastly, we performed a robustness check. Robustness checks have become common in regression-based studies, according to Lu and White (2014). To perform the robustness check, we wanted to see if differences between nationalities existed. As our sample displayed a high variance of nationalities, we additionally analyzed if the nationality of the respondents influenced their responses. Therefore, the sample was divided into 4 different subgroups, Americans (48.8%), Germans (15%), South Africans (8.6%) and respondents from a different Nation, further labelled as “Other”, as there were the four biggest sample subsets. The analysis shows that nationality influenced the attitude of the respondents towards Brand A. Closer inspection of the data shows that for the mean attitude towards Brand A, respondents from Germany and South Africa have a higher mean value, while respondents from the U.S. and other nationalities have slightly similar, but lower values. The same can be seen for Purchase Intention. On the contrary, Americans displayed the highest mean values for BSS and CBI.

Furthermore, we analysed the model for the three biggest nationalities separately to see if there are any differences among the significance of the relationships between the variables. The results show that there are no significant differences among Americans, Germans and South Africans in this sample. For all three groups H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted and H5 is not accepted. The results of the robustness check can be found in Appendix E4 and E5.

5.6 Summary of Results

An overview of the results is presented below. Based on these results, we could conclude that all hypotheses except H5 were supported. The overview shows the final PLS-SEM Bootstrapping results and the results of the structural path analysis.

	Path coefficient	S.D.	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis
Brand-Self Similarity → CIBI	0.523	0.042	12.559	0.000	H1: Supported
CIBI → Attitude	0.704	0.040	17.389	0.000	H2: Supported
Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.777	0.031	25.318	0.000	H3: Supported
Marginalized Gender → Attitude	0.199	0.040	4.995	0.000	H4: Supported
Marginalized Size → Attitude	0.069	0.040	1.728	0.075	H5: Rejected

Table 4: Path coefficients

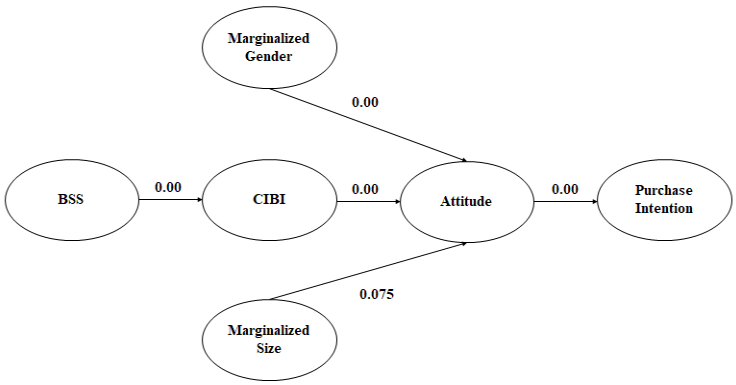

Figure 7: P-values of conceptual model

The findings showed statistically significant results for the relationship between Brand-Self similarity and purchase intention, through CBI and Attitude. This implies that inclusion for a fashion brand enhances purchase intention, as an increase in seeing similarities of oneself with the inclusive brand. Furthermore, the results show that especially consumers that are more open to Genderfluid clothing identify even more with inclusive fashion brands and showcase a more positive attitude. To summarise, with regard to the statistical results, we accept the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4 and do not accept H5. These results will be further discussed in the next chapter.

6. Discussion

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the findings of this research. The literature discussed in chapter two and the findings of the quantitative research in chapter five will be discussed.

6.1 Brand-Self Similarity and CIBI

The analysis shows that H1 is supported meaning that BSS does have a positive influence on CIBI. One of the key factors in this relationship established earlier is that previous research showed BSS to be an antecedent condition for CBI. (Torres, Augusto & Godinho, 2017; Susanty & Tresnaningrum, 2018). By providing respondents with a brief of the brand the alignment between the brand and the consumer could be tested. The results suggest the respondents have a BSS alignment to the inclusive brand which means that the way that they view the brand aligns with how they view themselves. As stated by Grubb & Grathwohl (1967), consumers in fashion are drawn to brands that assist them in building their concept of self. Therefore by respondents seeing themselves reflected in the brand, they can relate to the brand as it is similar. By having similarities it is easier for the consumer to harness the reflected personality of the brand to build up their own as they have traits that align. The key element to the brand is its inclusive personality, which is an important trait that respondents acknowledge and translate as something that they can see within themselves which can showcase the importance of this particular CSR element for Gen Y consumers as mentioned by McKinsey (2020).

Sincerity and excitement ranked the highest as traits that consumers saw in themselves and Brand A. This can provide insight into the main traits that are important to the respondents. These traits can also showcase the elements of the brand which stand out most for the respondent which can increase their connection to the brand possibly over others. As highlighted by Bertilsson (2015) consumers tend to be cynical towards brands and the claims which they make about their products. This reduction in trust towards the brand can also mean the reduction of connection the consumer feels for the brand and therein, reduction in interest due to the fact the brand does not reflect the things that are important to the consumer. As the results show, respondents felt most strongly for and had the highest relation to the brand through sincerity. This means that they saw themselves to be sincere and saw Brand A to be the same. The high rate of sincerity that consumers feel could assist in reducing the feeling of cynicism as it means that they perceive Brand A to be genuine and honest in the image that it presents. Seeing as this is also high for themselves and rated the highest of all the traits, this can mean that it's a trait that is highly important to the respondents and therefore has an effect on the relationship they have to Brand A. The reduction in cynicism can mean that Brand A is viewed more positively morally to the consumer which can therefore increase the trust in Brand A and the potential alignment in its values with that of the consumer when it comes to CIBI.

Secondly, the prevalence of fashion brands expanding their lines to be inclusive of marginalised groups is on the rise but can still be considered fairly novel considering the history of the industry. As stated by (Boyd et al., 2020), retailers who are including more diverse identities in their lines are fairly progressive. This can be related to retailers seeing the need from consumers for these kinds of changes. As stated, consumers have expressed the want for brands to be more inclusive. Therefore respondents who consider Brand A to be exciting can align to their want for something fresh and aligned to the things they want from brands. As per, Madsen and Slåtten (2019) brands need to be forward-looking and anticipate the current and future needs of consumers to create value, be top of mind and be innovative. Therefore a brand like Brand A which is catering to the needs of consumers can be seen as exciting to consumers as the values they are expressing align with that of respondents. As per the research by Martin & Turley, (2004), Gen Y consumers are hard to reach, therefore by Brand A relating to the respondent's connection to excitement, it has a higher chance of gaining their business.

6.2 CIBI and Attitude

The data suggests that H2 is supported, which means that there is a positive influence on consumers' attitude towards an inclusive brand when there is an aligned consumer inclusive brand identity. Therefore, relating this to RQ1, the inclusive values of brands affect the way that consumers behave as it positively influences their attitude. This is in accordance with the research done by Addie, Ball & Adams (2020) who made the connection between CBI and attitude. They too saw the connection between the younger generation and the importance they hold towards identifying with the brands which they purchase Addie, Ball & Adams (2020). In this case, respondents showcased their values being similar to that of the inclusive brand which ultimately increases their attitude towards the said brand. A positive attitude towards a brand increases the preference that respondents have for the brand which can influence their buying decisions.

Brands are constantly jostling for consumers' attention in the market especially in a time when people are more cautious about their purchases due to things like covid. Brands that can increase the attitude that a consumer may feel towards their brand can increase their chances of being part of the consumer evoked set and potentially the purchase decision they ultimately make as the consumer identifies strongly with the brand as per Henning-Thurau, Wayne-Mitchell & Wiedmann (2001). Lastly, from previous studies, it was highlighted that the existence of CBI with a positive attitude can lead to brands having a higher likelihood of things like consumer satisfaction (Tuˇskej, Golob & Podnar, 2013) or purchase intention (Addie, Ball & Adams, 2020). Much like BSS being an antecedent to CIBI, attitude can precede purchase intention. Therefore, brands knowing that they can affect their consumer's attitude have a higher likelihood of affecting their purchase intention. As stated by Alcántara-Pilar et al. (2015), globalisation could be seen as a driving force behind the dispersion of inclusion into societies and cultures. This showcases how inclusive fashion is more visible on runways and in retail stores around the world.

This drives the want for inclusion from consumers in different parts of the world. Therefore in this study, the nationalities of respondents were identified to further understand how inclusive thought is seen. Although respondents came from many countries with each their own culture, the research showed that there was a communal positive attitude and acceptance of inclusive brands in relation to their values. From a robustness check, nationality has little influence on the results which shows that the inclusive values of Gen Y consumers from different parts of the world are similar.

6.3 Attitude and Purchase Intention

Following the research by Addie, Ball & Adams (2020), the support of H3 showcases that a positive attitude towards an inclusive brand leads to a positive influence on purchase intention. Respondents showcase that the behaviour that they have about the inclusive brand can lead to the purchase intention of that brand, leading to the conclusion that inclusion plays an important role for the consumer. As highlighted by Licsandrua and ChiCui (2018), inclusion not only affects the general feelings of consumers but can create market effectiveness, which can be seen in the support of the third hypothesis and a contributing factor to the answer to RQ1.

Research by Spears & Singh, (2004) highlighted the importance of attitude as it showcases the consumer's sentiment while purchase intention reveals their plans towards action. With the support of H2 and H3, the data suggests inclusion not only creates interest in the brand for the consumer but leads to planned action. This means that inclusion in a brand can lead to sales which is the ultimate goal of a brand. Simply having a positive attitude does not mean that consumers are moved to action as they are when there is purchase intention. Therefore, inclusion not only has the ability to align value but also create sales.

In line with prior research (Licsandru & Chi Cui, 2018; McKenna, 1998; Khamis, 2020), the results for H3 indicate that Gen Y consumers feel positive about purchasing inclusive products. Relating this to the subject of segmentation, there are two related findings. From the data, respondents who fall into both the marginalized and non-marginalized groups are indeed interested in inclusive brands of this sort and have purchase intentions for the brand. This means that consumers who may be part of a target group and those outside it are both interested in Brand A. This showcases the dynamic assistance inclusion provides to the segmentation process. Brands expand their consumer group and have purchase intentions for their products. Secondly, the research looks at a fairly novel idea of combining two marginalized areas and attempting to remedy them together. Therefore, one can see how a joint approach can elicit a positive attitude which then leads to purchase intention. Consumer's identities are vast and always shifting as has been highlighted in the issue of traditional segmentation (Quinn, Hines, Benison, 2005).

6.4 Marginalized Gender and Attitude

According to Amine and Smith (2009), consumers are seen as more complex and multidimensional in a postmodern view of consumption. This is also the view we chose in this research. Instead of analysing fashion consumption for males and females, we chose a more inclusive approach. Our findings that 188 out of 403 respondents do not display a need for product-gender congruency when buying clothes confirms the findings of Laughlin (2016), that about 50% of Millennials shop outside of their gender. Overall, our sample showcased the change in society that Gen Y consumers are shifting away from gender norms and prefer their fashion brands to do the same. These findings highlight the importance of fashion brands adapting to changing times and the changing needs and values of their existing and potential customers. The analysis showed that belonging to a marginalized gender has a significant positive influence on attitude. This highlights that consumers that are less bound to traditionally gendered fashion consumption overall perceived Brand A as more positive than respondents that do not belong to the marginalized gender group. However, it needs to be noted that respondents of all groups displayed a positive attitude towards Brand A.

As discussed previously, gender-inclusive brands also do not only receive positive reactions. Despite our respondents having an overall positive attitude towards Brand A, some respondents displayed a negative attitude. This did not only concern respondents with high product-gender congruity, but also respondents of a marginalized gender. Yet, as mentioned previously, there needs to be an effort to consider the changing nature of society (Quinn, Hines & Benson, 2007). This can also be seen in our study, as some respondents might still need to adapt to the current changes in society and the overall change in attitude and needs of many peers in Gen Y.

6.5 Marginalized Size and Attitude

In the analysis of the attitude of respondents towards Brand A that wear a marginalized size, it can be seen that being part of the marginalized size segment did not showcase a significant positive effect on attitude towards Brand A. Therefore, following the statistical analysis, we conclude that marginalized size has no significant effect on attitude. This does not confirm the literature of Wrigley and Dawson (2016) that marginalized groups thrive to be seen as a part of a group and the findings of Gurrieri and Cherrier (2013), showing that members of the plus-size community want their brands to be inclusive.

This conclusion is confirmed through the robustness check, which showed that among the three main nationalities of the respondents of this study, no nationality displayed a significant difference among marginalized size and non-marginalized size. However, our results can also be caused because the respondents of the non-marginalized size group had as positive attitudes as the marginalized size respondents.

Respectively of their marginalization of size, it can be concluded that the respondents felt included and showcased a positive attitude. Another potential explanation for H5 not being accepted could be that the respondents that belong to the marginalized size group were more sceptic towards Brand A. As previously discussed, the findings of Khamis (2020) showed that the topic of inclusion is still fairly new to many consumers, therefore a lot of skepticism around inclusive marketing efforts exists. This was also seen in the literature by Bertilsson (2015), who showcased that consumers are weary of brands and their claims. Furthermore, as discussed previously by Dion & Tachet (2020), marginalized consumers tend to self-exclude from brands that exclude their body type. Our research shows that despite marginalized size consumers not showing a more positive attitude towards Brand A than the other consumers, however, they did identify with the brand and did not show a negative attitude or self-exclusion.

A conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis of this study is that in general, consumers of the not marginalized size group did not feel a more negative attitude than consumers of the marginalized size group. This contradicts several theoretical findings in the literature, such as Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguys (2007) findings that consumers that have been in the target group before the expansion could have negative feelings towards inclusion. The authors stated that consumers who are not in the newly added target group might not identify with the brand anymore and feel an identity threat. This can not be seen in our sample, as the previously solely targeted groups did not display an overall negative attitude towards Brand A. As previously mentioned, all respondents showcased an overall identification with the inclusive brand, which is being reflected in the overall attitude towards the brand for all studied segments. Due to this, it can be hypothesized that the extension of the segment of the brand did not lead to a diffusion of the group identity but strengthened the identity of the overall group. However, it is important to note that hypothesis five not being supported is dependent on the significance level chosen for this study. With a lower chosen significance level hypothesis five would have been accepted. Therefore, it can be argued that there might be an influence of marginalized size on attitude that needs to be further investigated in the future.

6.6 Effects of Inclusion on Gen Y Consumers

Overall, it can be concluded that the inclusion of more sizes and a more genderfluid segmentation approach had a positive influence on all types of consumers no matter their size and gender and nationality. Generation Y is a hard to reach generation and brands need to find new ways to cater to this target group to remain attractive. Inclusion is a way for fashion brands to differentiate themselves and create a positive attitude towards the brands as well as purchase intention. The results of this research support the findings of Wolter, Brach, Cronin Jr. & Bonn (2016) that consumers identify with brands that align with their self-concept of values and it can be seen that this is the case for inclusive values. The findings in previous research that consumers want fashion brands to be inclusive and not only include different consumers in their advertising but overall integrated as by Magnusdottir (2020) can be confirmed.

According to the McKinsey (2020) state of fashion report, it is predicted that successful fashion companies will be the ones that make moves towards inclusion early to attract customers. This can be confirmed by the findings of this research. Overall, both research questions of this study can be answered by our literature review and quantitative research.

RQ1: What is the relationship between the inclusive brand and a consumer's purchase intention?

For the inclusive brands, the results showed that the consumers saw a high brand-self similarity, leading to them identifying with the inclusive brand and therefore creating CBI. This then led to a positive attitude as they identified with the company's values or saw themselves represented by the fictitious brand. This positive attitude also created actual purchase intention as a consequence. This positive attitude and the purchase intention are further elevated if the consumer showcases a low need for product-gender congruity and therefore belongs to the marginalized gender group. Overall, it can be concluded that for fashion brands, being inclusive of marginalized consumption patterns regarding gender and size creates purchase intention among Generation Y consumers.

RQ2: How does the inclusion of marginalized consumption patterns by brands influence consumer behaviour?

Overall, being inclusive of marginalized consumption patterns had a positive influence on their identification with the brand, attitude and purchase intention. The respondents of the quantitative study did not only have a good attitude, but they consciously planned on acting and buying from the fictitious brand. As per the research by Kim & Mauborgne (2004), there is the risk of consumers who are already within the target group feeling sidelined. Donnelly, Gee & Silva (2020) who researched this in relation to increased size, found that their hypothesis relating to consumers reducing spend on venues that increased size options was rejected. This finding falls in line with this research as respondents showed an interest in fashion that is inclusive of various size options and gender conformity. Being part of a group with marginalized consumption patterns partly influences consumers in their behaviour towards an inclusive brand. It influences the consumptions regarding the need for marginalized gender, but not significantly for marginalized size. In general, all respondents showed positive behaviour towards the fictitious brand. However, a difference between the two marginalized groups analyzed in this research can be identified. Respondents with a marginalized gender significantly showed a more positive attitude, the respondents clothing size did not significantly influence the respondent's attitude. As the literature review has shown, the inclusion of size has been an important topic in fashion, whereas the inclusion of genders is fairly new. Therefore, it could be possible that consumers wearing a marginalized size are more sceptical of size inclusion, while non-marginalized size consumers are more aware of the topic of size inclusion than gender inclusion and therefore value it more. For the fairly new topic of inclusion of gender, non-marginalized consumers might not be as aware of the issue, while marginalized gender consumers hold a higher value in their inclusion as very few brands currently include genders outside the traditional segmentation.

7. Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the research by providing an overview of the aims, objectives, as well as theoretical and practical implications. Furthermore, we discuss the limitations of this research and provide suggestions for future research.

7.1 Research Aim

The aims of this thesis have been fulfilled by a quantitative study in the form of an online questionnaire, testing how inclusion influences consumer behaviour of Gen Y consumers', by the use of a fictive brand. By analyzing the existing literature and the results of the quantitative study, all research questions that were derived at the beginning of this thesis could be answered. As a result, this thesis provides new insights into the sentiment of Generation Y towards inclusion in the fashion industry. The results show that overall inclusion has a positive effect on the attitude and purchase intention of the studied groups.

Our research highlights the importance of consumer identification with a brand to create a positive attitude and purchase intention. We conclude that being inclusive of consumers of marginalized genders and inclusive of all sizes is key for fashion brands to form a connection with Generation Y consumers. Overall, the findings provide a novel approach to bettering traditional segmentation which has been utilised by many fashion companies. Moreover, by following a more inclusive approach and including marginalized groups, brands can create a positive attitude and purchase intention among Generation Y consumers.

7.2 Implications

Our study is contributing to the literature and business practice with several theoretical and practical implications that will be discussed in the following section.

7.2.1 Theoretical Implications

Firstly, our findings extend the research on the connection between brand-self similarity and CBI and provide an application to the fashion industry and inclusion. The findings of our study, especially the findings of H1, H2, and H3 extend the literature on brand-self similarity and consumer perception of inclusive fashion brands. Our findings furthermore extend the existing literature on CBI theory and the effects of CBI on consumer attitude and purchase intention. According to Stokburger-Saurer, Ratneshwar, and Sen (2012), brand-self similarity is a driver of CBI. This can also be confirmed through our study. Our research combines the CBI theory with existing literature on inclusive fashion and new quantitative findings and gives new insights on consumer behaviour of Gen Y consumers in the fashion industry.

Secondly, as the fashion industry is very dynamic and bound to changing trends (Kim, Fiore, Payne & Kim, 2021), we identified the need for a different segmentation approach. Analyzing the literature on traditional segmentation approaches, we identified several issues regarding this approach and its applicability in the changing environment of society. As seen in the literature, a traditional segmentation approach is suitable for static markets, with predictable consumer behaviour (Hines & Quinn, 2005). According to Claycamp & Massy (1968) by following the traditional approach, customers have been separated into smaller customer groups with similar needs and behaviours. By following this approach, the customers of the fashion industry have been put in different categories that have not changed alongside the changes in consumer behaviour and societal change.

Through our study, we contributed to the existing literature on the inclusion in the fashion industry. Our findings highlight the importance of inclusion of genders and body types in the marketing and branding of fashion companies. Through our research, we bridged the existing gap in the literature on inclusion in fashion by analyzing the effect of inclusion of genders and sizes, which has previously not been studied together. Adding onto Licsandru and Chiu's (2018) research on the inclusion of ethnicities and its influence on attitude and purchase intention, we showcased that these findings are also applicable for the inclusion of genders and sizes. Furthermore, the findings of H2 and H3 highlight the importance of inclusion as it leads to a positive attitude of consumers towards the brand, as well as purchase intention.

Additionally, this research provides an extension of the literature on different forms of inclusion. The different findings of H4 and H5 show that there are differences in the effects of inclusion of gender and size on Generation Y consumers. While consumers of any size showcase no significant difference in attitude and purchase intention towards the inclusive brand, our research shows that for inclusion of gender differences among consumers can be found. As this study isolated marginalized groups, a new understanding of inclusion was created that has previously not been discussed in the literature. Especially the gap of isolated research on the rising topic of gender-inclusion in terms of gender-fluid consumption is a new theoretical angle this research provides. The findings on differences among inclusion of size and gender have previously not been discussed in the literature and therefore our research contributes new insights. Furthermore, the findings show that there is a lack of research on marginalization of gender in the fashion industry.

Overall, our findings show that a more inclusive segmentation approach, rather than the traditional approach, can be beneficial for fashion brands. While traditional segmentation has been successful for previous generations and remains a suitable strategy for many industries. When it comes to the fashion industry and younger generations, we highlight the advantages of a more inclusive approach to achieve identification of consumers with the brand.

The results of this research support the findings of Wolter, Brach, Cronin Jr. & Bonn (2016) that consumers identify with brands that align with their self concept of values and it can be seen that this is the case for inclusive values. Our findings provide a starting point for further research in the field of Generation Y consumer behaviour and the effects of inclusion on these consumers. Overall, our thesis provides insights on the relationship between inclusive branding of fashion brands on attitude and purchase intention of Generation Y consumers. This research creates a novel perspective on segmentation and the way how fashion brands can differentiate by being more inclusive of different consumers and expanding their segmentation.

7.2.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications provide insight into ways in which the findings can be utilised by marketers and brands alike taking the research into the practical space. Determining the practical implications of inclusive marketing can help brands decide if the results fit their products and possible results they can get from utilising the information. An initial issue that research presented was the declining interest in brands like Victorias' Secret and Abercrombie & Fitch due to their inability to innovate and keep abreast of the consumers' needs. The research assists brands by providing a way for them to remain relevant to the shifting needs of consumers. It closed the gap by providing an area of Gen Y interest that brands can utilise to expand their consumer base and grow their consumer interest. While aspirational marketing is effective, and works well with traditional segmentation, companies in the fashion industry need to realise that there is a need to be more dynamic about their target group. This is in order to stay abreast of the interests of their consumers if they are to provide them with products which they want to purchase. Gen Y consumers hold financial influence in the market, therefore ensuring that one's brand identifies their needs is important. Inclusion of marginalised size and gender products create excitement in consumers, leading to purchase intention for. This exists for consumers who are both marginalised and non-marginalised. Consumers want to be reflected in their products but also to see others reflected as well. Therefore, aligning the brands' identity and that of the consumer ensures that consumers are more interested in the brand and leads to the creation of purchase intention. As previously mentioned, the industry has seen declines and with the Covid-19 brands need a way to stay relevant to consumers to stay afloat in the uneasy climate. Incorporating inclusive practices showcases a viable way of doing just that.

A second takeaway is the positioning insights which the research provides. By utilising the research and realising that inclusion has the ability to translate into purchase intention, brands have the opportunity to position themselves in the inclusive space. As can be seen with Fenty X Savage, being a first mover has its perks. The business is a leader in the segment and has been able to capitalize off its inclusive values and garner support. This has led to other brands following suit and making the change, due to the success they have witnessed.

However, it is important to note that the research has shown consumers to be personally connected to the concept of sincerity, therefore, inclusion needs to be adapted in such a manner. As discussed in the literature review, according to Zalis (2019), brands do not only need to communicate inclusion but need to be consistent in their actioning of it. The study also opens the door for brands to incorporate new department ideas at the retail level. They have the opportunity to position themselves as retailers who shift the retail space narrative and incorporate more fluid sections, which are inclusive of consumers shopping where they want to and not being bound by binary constructs. Part of finding a niche does not necessarily mean incorporating all aspects of the research but the ones that work for the brand and could create an advantage. This has the ability to do this as brands can gauge interest at the store level, which could translate to more inclusive designs over time.

A third area that this research contributes to practice, is the insight it gives to brands' understanding of the consumers' need for inclusion around the world. Data for this study was received from consumers from around the world, which therefore shows that there is an interest in the subject from Gen Y consumers globally. The level of interest may differ from place to place but brands are able to plan for the fact that the interest may exist in the place they are trying to extend a line to or invest in. This means that when they are researching they have another element they can add to their research to ensure that they provide products that align to the consumer in that country.

The last area of interest for brands is that marginalised gender inclusion provided a significant result. The research fills the gap of increasing the knowledge of what is important in inclusive fashion. Rather than looking at gender as binary constructs, the research sort to understanding non-binary genders in relation to fashion and therein, its effects in being inclusive to that way. Brands are aware that gender is an important topic and contributes to the focus they should give. As mentioned previously, brands have options in the way in which they expand or position themselves, in this case, they are able to see an option that they can lead with for their products. Expanding their understanding of gender in fashion can ensure that they translate their efforts in a way that fits the brand and their consumers.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

The first limitation of this thesis has been the limited time frame. The complete research period lasted 10 weeks, including the literature review, data collection and analysis and all other related work. During the first weeks of research the topic and literature review needed to be adjusted consistently, as a result, the overall time frame for this project has been very limited. The second limitation for this thesis has been the current Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, the data collection method was limited and only an online questionnaire and non-probability sampling were possible. If it had not been for these circumstances the sample would have been different and bigger, increasing the significance of our results. With a larger sample, the results could have shown stronger relations between the variables analyzed in this study. Furthermore, stronger results in terms of mean values could have been possible.

Due to this, it would be interesting to analyze larger sample sizes over a longer time frame in future studies regarding inclusion in the fashion industry. Additionally, this study has been limited since the inclusive brand was fictitious. To influence the respondents of the quantitative research with other factors, we created a fictitious brand. However, in the market brands are built on more values and consumers judge a brand based on more attributes. Therefore, in the future, it would be interesting to test the influence of inclusion on Gen Y customers of real fashion brands. Furthermore, as the literature review has shown, the fashion industry is currently transitioning into being more inclusive, but there are currently only a few companies that are perfectly inclusive. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate how customers perceive this shift of real companies instead of a company being totally inclusive. In addition to that, a comparison of attitude and purchase intention between exclusive and inclusive brands would provide interesting insights on Gen Ys consumer behaviour. As previously discussed, in our study, contrary to the literature, no significant effect of marginalized size on attitude could be found due to various potential reasons. We recommend further investigating the effect of marginalized size on attitude in the future. Our sample has a limited number of respondents wearing a marginalized size, limiting our research. Therefore, we recommend further studies investigating more or only consumers of the marginalized size segment and their consumer behaviour regarding inclusive fashion brands. This research could provide further insights into this growing consumer segment. In addition, in our research, we did not differentiate between consumers wearing a large or small marginalized size. While there is a lot of research on plus-size consumers, we also identified a lack of research on consumers wearing very small sizes. This could be further investigated in future research, differentiating between different segments of marginalized sizes.

Due to the limitations of this research, only Generation Y was studied. As stated by Lobaugh, Simpson, & Stephens (2019), the upcoming Generation Z is projected to further develop this trend of demanding inclusion. In future research, it would be interesting to further develop this research by analyzing if the same influences and effects can be seen among Generation Z consumers.

Furthermore, despite our research covering 42 different nationalities, not all nationalities are represented significantly. Our robustness check showed that there are slight differences among nationalities. In future research, individual nationalities should be investigated further, and we recommend studies further investigating the differences among nationalities more.

As Fashion is always based on trends and constantly develops (Kim et al., 2021), it is important to constantly monitor the developments in the industry. In further research, it would be interesting to monitor the development of consumer behaviour regarding inclusion of fashion brands, as well as investigating the difference among Generation Y and Generation Z. Furthermore, it would be interesting to monitor the long term development of inclusive companies such as the development of Zalando's (2021) diversity campaign and its influence on consumer behaviour as well as its influence on the business. The results of this study can not be generalised for the whole population, but we can nevertheless provide valuable insights on Gen Ys attitude and purchase intention of inclusive fashion brands. Furthermore, our research showed that there were not only positive reactions and not all consumers reacted positively to inclusion. This would be an interesting area to investigate in further research, to further explore the consumer sentiments that are causing negative backlash and a negative attitude towards inclusion in the fashion industry.

Lastly, the positive influence of inclusion on consumer behaviour that we identified in our research was only studied for the fashion industry. However, the topic of inclusion and the effect of changes in consumer sentiments towards the topic of inclusion and diversity could be relevant for more industries than the fashion industry. Due to the nature of the topic, the issue of size inclusion is mainly relevant solely for the fashion industry, however, the issue of gender inclusion and its effect on consumer behaviour is relevant for all gendered industries. We, therefore, encourage further research on inclusion and diversity in other industries.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Master Thesis Questionnaire

Hello! We are Alexandra Brüchert and Nsunge Kaniki, two masters students from the International Marketing and Brand Management program at Lund University in Sweden. In this research, we would like to find out more about consumers and their sentiments towards inclusion in the fashion industry.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This questionnaire is conducted according to GDPR guidelines. You are in control of the personal data that you provide in this questionnaire and you can contact us at all times to have your information deleted.

At the end of the questionnaire you can leave your email to participate in the draw for 3 Amazon gift cards (1 x 100 SEK, 2 x 50 SEK).

Please press "next" to consent to participating in this research.

* Required

Instructions

Please read all instructions in this questionnaire carefully.

This questionnaire concerns the topic of inclusion.

The Cambridge Dictionary (2021) defines the term "Inclusion" as "the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc." In this questionnaire the term "Inclusion" is defined as Inclusion of Appearance Indicators, namely all body sizes and genders.

1. How old are you? *

For this questionnaire, only participants age 24-40 are relevant. If you are not in this age category, the questionnaire will end.

Mark only one oval.

- 18-23
- 24-40
- 41-56
- 57-75
- Other

Please make yourself familiar with the description of Brand A. The following questions will be based on your opinions on this fashion brand.

Brand A

Mission & Vision
We set out to change everything - create unprecedented access, make size irrelevant, represent all of us, as we are - and establish a new normal for future generations. Brand A is committed to accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. We believe all guests should be able to easily shop our products. We want to give our customers the opportunity to express themselves, no matter how they identify themselves and what their size is.

Culture
Brand A has a culture where people and their identity come first. Everyone is valued the same, no matter what they look like or how they identify. Brand A also advocates for inclusion and diversity internally and externally. Inclusion is truly intertwined with the culture of the brand.

Brand A

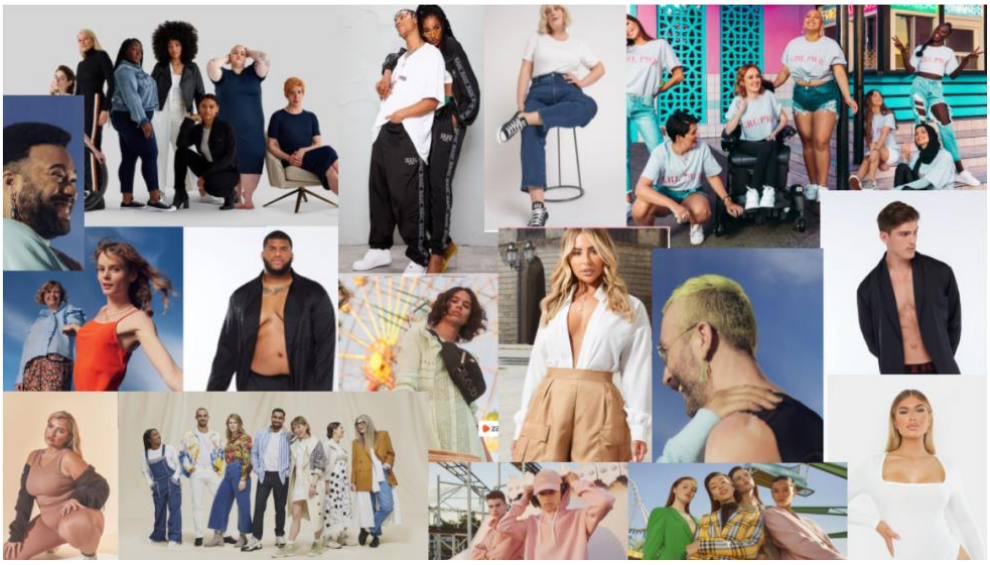
Personality
Brand A can be described as innovative and open minded. Brand A cares for its customers and its employees and is extra careful when listening to their needs. Brand A employees represent the inclusion that they represent in their products.

Size Range
Brand A offers all clothing items from size 4XS to 4XL.

Genders
Brand A comes in all shapes and sizes, for all genders. Brand A offers clothing for men and women, as well as unisex clothing and is also targeted at transgender individuals, during/before and after transition. Furthermore, Brand A caters to people that identify as non-binary.

Product & Model examples
Brand A campaigns are rooted in strength and positivity with collections that pay homage to the LGBTQ+ community, power and diversity, with models and advocates who inspire, regardless of size or gender.

Visualization of Brand A (Please do not answer the following questions based on your liking of the style of the clothes, but the overall impression you get from the brand)



Section 2.1

From your understanding of Brand A, what do you think about the following statements?

2. Brand A is sincere *

Sincere can be described as: Down-to-earth, Honest, Wholesome, Cheerful

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

3. Brand A is exciting *

Exciting can be described as: Daring, Spirited, Imaginative, Up-to-date

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

4. Brand A is competent *

Competent can be described as: Reliable, Intelligent, Successful

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

5. Brand A is sophisticated *

Sophisticated can be described as: Upper-class, Charming

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

6. Brand A is rugged *

Rugged can be described as: Outdoorsy, Tough

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Section 2.2

From your understanding of yourself, what do you think about the following statements?

7. I am sincere *

Sincere can be described as: Down-to-earth, Honest, Wholesome, Cheerful

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

8. I am exciting *

Exciting can be described as: Daring, Spirited, Imaginative, Up-to-date

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

9. I am competent *

Compentent can be described as: Reliable, Intelligent, Succesfull

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

10. I am sophisticated *

Sophisticated can be describes as: Upper-class, Charming

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

11. I am rugged *

Rugged can be described as: Outdoorsy, Tough

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Section 3

Imagine Brand A is a real brand you saw on the market (either a new one or one you feel you have seen before which relates to Brand A), from your understanding of Brand A, what do you think about the following statements?

12. I feel a strong sense of belonging to Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

13. I identify strongly with Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

14. Brand A embodies what I believe in *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

15. Brand A is like a part of me *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

16. Brand A has a great deal of personal meaning to me *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Section 4.1

Assuming Brand A is a real brand on the market, describe your overall feelings towards the brand from the description you just read.

17. I think Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unappealing	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Appealing

18. I think Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Bad	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Good

19. I think Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unpleasant	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Pleasant

20. I think Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unfavourable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Favourable

21. I think Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Unlikable	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Likable

Section 4.2

Assuming Brand A was a real company on the market today, describe how you would interact with it.

22. I would buy from Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Definitely

23. I would intend to buy from Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Definitely not	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Definitely

24. My purchase interest for Brand A is *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very low	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very high

25. I would definitely buy from Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Definitely not	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Definitely

26. I would probably buy from Brand A *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Probably not	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Probably

Demographics

27. I identify as *

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Female *Skip to question 28*
- ◯ Male *Skip to question 28*
- ◯ Other *Skip to question 31*
- ◯ I prefer not to disclose *Skip to question 28*

Demographics

Please answer these questions based on your preferences for fashion items.

28. I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

29. I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

30. I do not care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Strongly agree

Demographics

31. Nationality *

Mark only one oval.

- Swedish
- German
- South African
- Danish
- French
- Spanish
- Dutch
- British
- American
- Italian
- Greek
- Other: _____

32. I wear size *

Please answer based on your average size. If you don't know which is your accurate size, pick the size that represents most of the items you own.

Mark only one oval.

- S, M, L
- Other
- I prefer not to disclose

Skip to question 33

End!

Thank you for participating in our research!

If you have any questions, feedback or are interested in the results of this research, you can contact us at al7268br-s@student.lu.se.

If you want to participate in the draw for one of 3 Amazon vouchers you can leave you email in the field below. Your email will not be connected to your answers.

33. Email

Appendix B - Pre-Test Respondents

Number	Background	Gender	Feedback
1	Bachelors Student in International Management	Female	Understandability of Brand A is good
2	Master Student in International Marketing and Brand Management	Female	One statement is in twice
3	Masters Student in Accounting and Finance	Female	One statement is in twice
4	Masters Student in Business Informatics	Female	Spelling mistake, one statement is in twice
5	Masters Student in Economics	Male	Spelling mistakes
7	Teacher	Female	Spelling mistakes
8	Psychologist	Female	No issues
9	Strategist	Male	No issues
10	Advertiser	Female	No issues

Appendix C - Survey Texts

The following text has been sent out to group members on Facebook

Hello everyone! We are two Masters students in International Marketing and Brand Management at Lund University and we are currently writing our Master Thesis. In this questionnaire, we would like to find out more about consumers aged 24-40 and their sentiments towards inclusion and diversity in the fashion industry. The questionnaire approximately takes 10 minutes.

As data collection in times of COVID-19 is hard, by filling out this questionnaire you do us a huge favour. By participating in the survey you have the opportunity to win one of 3 Amazon vouchers (1x 100 SEK, 2x50 SEK).

https://forms.gle/AMm6vPjThSDGJB7Q9

Thank you!
Alexandra and Nikki

The following text has been sent to the administrators of Facebook groups

Hello XY,
I saw that you are the admin of the group XY. I am a student at Lund University currently writing my master thesis. Due to COVID, we are having a hard time finding respondents for our survey now, and would like to post the link in your group. I wanted to check with you first if it is allowed to post links for questionnaires to ask for help.

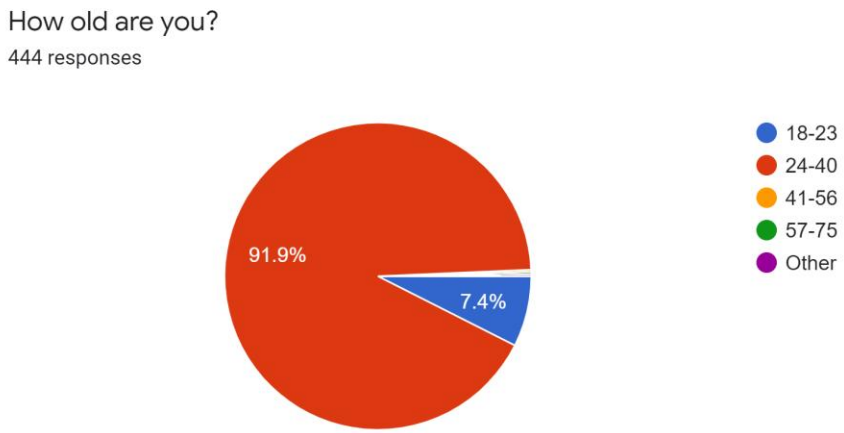
This is the link: https://forms.gle/AMm6vPjThSDGJB7Q9

We look forward to hearing back from you! If you have time it would also be great if you could fill it out for us.

Kind regards,
Alexandra Brüchert & Nsunge Kaniki

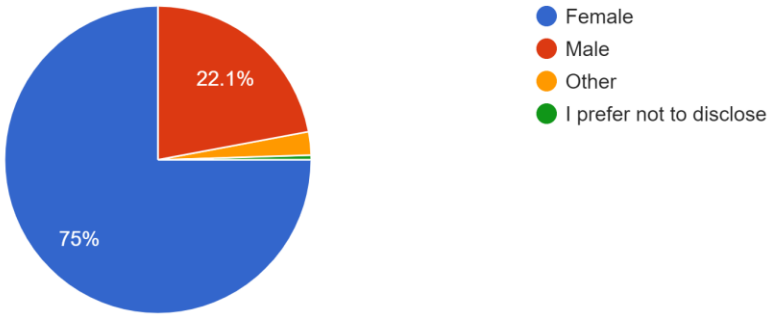
Appendix D - Descriptive Statistics

Appendix D1: Descriptives



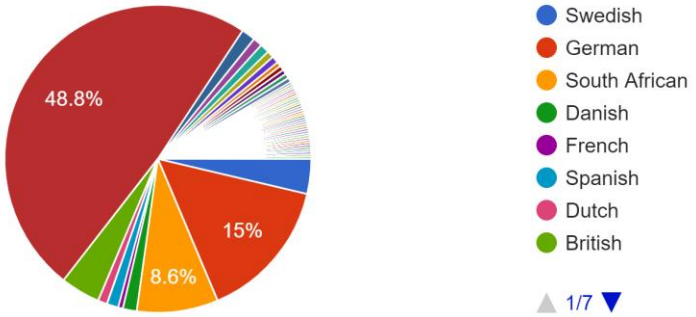
I identify as

408 responses



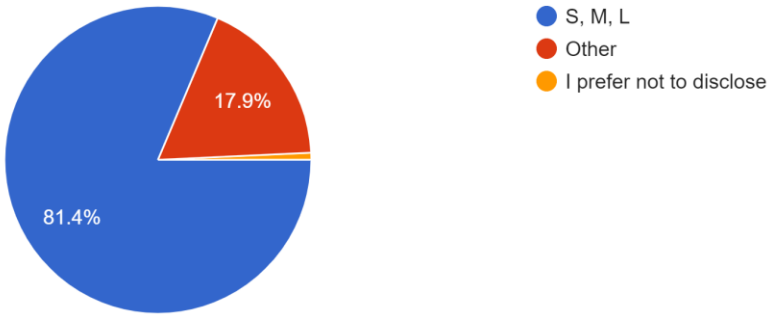
Nationality

408 responses



I wear size

408 responses



Appendix D2: Nationalities

Nationality	No of respondents	No of countries
Albanian	1	1
American	199	2
Arab	1	3
Australian	3	4
Austrian	3	5
Brazilian	1	6
British	17	7
Canadian	4	8
Chinese	1	9
Colombian	1	10
Czech	1	11
Danish	6	12
Dutch	4	13
Ecuadorian	1	14
Egyptian	1	15
Estonian	2	16
Finnish	1	17
French	2	18
German	61	19
Greek	4	20
Indian	7	21
Irish	4	22
Italian	6	23
Japanese	1	24
Latvian	1	25
Lebanese	1	26
Lithuanian	1	27
Malaysian	1	28

Nepalese	1	29
Norwegian	1	30
Other	1	31
Pakistani	1	32
Romanian	2	33
Russian	2	34
Singaporean	2	35
Slovenian	1	36
South African	35	37
Spanish	5	38
Swedish	15	39
Taiwan	1	40
Vietnamese	1	41
Zimbabwean	3	42

Appendix E - Analysis

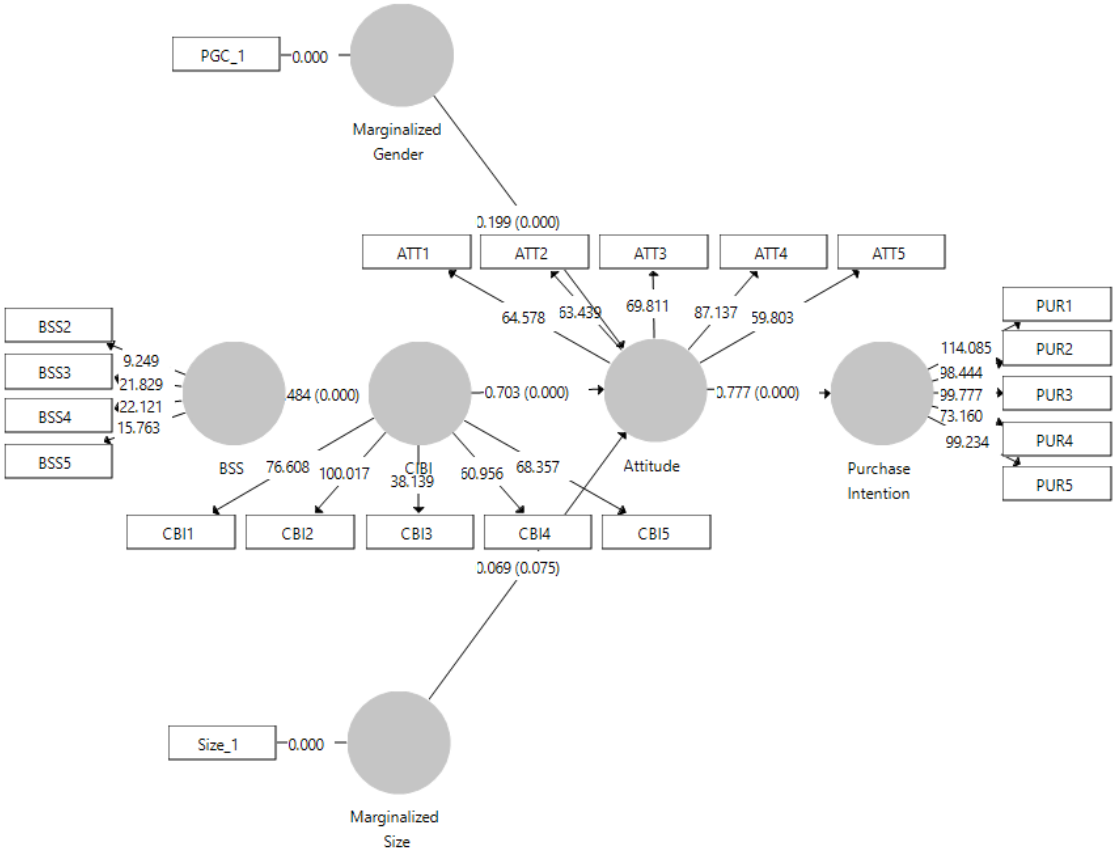
Appendix E1: Loadings and Outer VIF

Variables	Loadings	Outer VIF
BSS		
BSS1	0.774	1.396
BSS2	0.519	
BSS3	0.731	1.345
BSS4	0.722	1.515
BSS5	0.625	1.372
CBI		
CBI1	0.909	3.704
CBI2	0.919	4.133
CBI3	0.783	1.885
CBI4	0.871	3.533
CBI5	0.89	3.495
Attitude		
ATT1	0.879	2.779
ATT2	0.879	3.110
ATT3	0.896	3.408
ATT4	0.901	3.625
ATT5	0.888	3.232
Purchase Intention		
PUR1	0.931	5.407
PUR2	0.913	3.808
PUR3	0.921	4.360
PUR4	0.895	3.784
PUR5	0.914	4.078

Appendix E2: Inner VIF

	Inner VIF
BSS	1
CIBI	1.045
Attitude	1
Marginalized Gender	1.043
Marginalized Size	1.002

Appendix E3: SmartPLS Path Model



Appendix E4: Mean Values Robustness Check

	Total Sample	American	German	South African	Other
	Mean | SD	Mean | SD	Mean | SD	Mean | SD	Mean | SD
BSS	6.73 | 0.21	6,77 | 0,19	6,71 | 0,22	6,66 | 0,26	6.68 | 0.22
CIBI	4.56 | 1.38	4,63 | 1,23	4,52 | 1,41	4,57 | 1,17	4.43 | 1.67
Attitude	5.43 | 1.12	5,20 | 1,10	5,78 | 0,86	5,72 | 1,35	5.58 | 1.13
Purchase Intention	5.03 | 1.38	4,96| 1,14	5,27| 1,32	5,23 | 1,47	4.95|1.57

Appendix E5: P-values Robustness Check

	American	German	South African
BSS → CIBI	0.000	0.000	0.000
CIBI → Attitude	0.000	0.000	0.000
Attitude → Purchase Intention	0.000	0.000	0.000
Marginalized Gender → Attitude	0.000	0.000	0.000
Marginalized Size → Attitude	0.073	0.068	0.069