

**The Role of Social Media Marketing on the
Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students in
Northern Cyprus during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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ABSTRACT

Social media as a tool for marketing has captivated the interests of businesses as the number of social media users has risen over time. Moreover, social media marketing has been shown to influence the purchasing intentions of customers. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a major issue crippling economies all around the world. Therefore, more businesses have capitalized on this increased number of online usage and have become more active on social media, pushing their brands and offering more online services.

The objective of this thesis was to examine the role of social media marketing, on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research for this study was done in Northern Cyprus, with a case study done mainly on clothing brands pages on social media. This thesis focused on two major social media platforms, which were Facebook and Instagram. The methodology that was employed in this research was the quantitative research methodology, with an online survey questionnaire which consisted of 32 questions and a sample size of 356 participants. The data was obtained from three tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus. These institutions were Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), Girne American University (GAU) and Near East University (NEU). The study was guided through the theoretical framework of theory of planned behaviour (TPB), uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and media dependency theory (MDT). The factors that were taken into consideration in this study included convenient pricing, demographics, SNS usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media influencers' recommendations, social presence and information seeking, and promotional campaigns. The results showed

that all factors, had a positive significant influence on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. Therefore, it can be said that social media marketing is an important and effective strategy used by clothing brands to bring in customers and inciting purchasing intentions. Furthermore, findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic positively impacted the purchasing intentions of tertiary students, as there were behavioural changes, leading to the use of social media as a diversion means as most students stayed home during the lockdown.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Social Networking Sites (SNS), Purchasing Intentions, Tertiary Students, Social Media Marketing (SMM).

ÖZ

Bir pazarlama aracı olarak sosyal medya, kullanıcılarının sayısı arttıkça işletmelerin ilgisini daha çok çekmiştir. Ayrıca, sosyal medya pazarlamasının müşterilerin satın alma niyetlerini etkilediğini göstermiştir. COVID-19 pandemisi, tüm dünyada ekonomileri felce uğratan önemli bir sorun olmuştur. Bu nedenle, artan sayıda çevrimiçi kullanımdan daha fazla işletme yararlanmış ve sosyal medyada daha aktif hale gelmiş, markalarını ön plana çıkarmış ve daha fazla çevrimiçi hizmet sunmuştur.

Bu tezin amacı, COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki üniversite öğrencilerinin satın alma niyetleri üzerinde sosyal medya pazarlamasının rolünü incelemektir. Bu çalışmanın araştırması, sosyal medyadaki giyim markaları sayfalarında ağırlıklı olarak yapılan bir vaka çalışması ile Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta yapılmıştır. Bu tez, Facebook ve Instagram olmak üzere iki büyük sosyal medya platformuna odaklanmıştır. Bu çalışmada nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış, 32 sorudan oluşan bir çevrimiçi anket ile 356 katılımcıdan oluşan bir örnekleme ulaşılmıştır. Veriler, Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki üç yükseköğretim kurumundan elde edilmiştir. Bu kurumlar Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi (DAÜ), Girne Amerikan Üniversitesi (GAÜ) ve Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi (YDÜ) dir. Çalışma, planlı davranış teorisi (TPB), kullanımlar ve doyumlar teorisi (UGT) ve medya bağımlılığı teorisi (MDT) çerçevesi aracılığıyla yönlendirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada dikkate alınan faktörler arasında uygun fiyatlandırma, demografi, COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında SNS kullanımı, sosyal medya etkileyicilerinin tavsiyesi, sosyal varlık ve bilgi arama ve promosyon kampanyaları yer almaktadır. Sonuçlar, tüm faktörlerin üniversite öğrencilerinin satın alma niyetleri üzerinde olumlu ve anlamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Dolayısıyla sosyal

medya pazarlamasının giyim markalarının müşteri çekmek ve satın alma niyetlerini teşvik etmek için kullandıkları önemli ve etkili stratejik mecralar olduğu söylenebilmektedir. Ayrıca bulgular, yaşamsal ve davranışsal değişiklikler neticesinde COVID-19 pandemisi'nin yükseköğretim öğrencilerinin satın alma niyetini olumlu etkilediğini ve çoğu öğrencinin karantina sırasında evde kalmasından dolayı sosyal medya mecralarının oyalanma ve keyifli zaman geçirme aracı olarak kullanılmasına yol açtığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: COVID-19 Pandemisi, Sosyal Ağ Siteleri (SNS), Satın Alma Niyetleri, Yüksekokul Öğrencileri, Sosyal Medya Pazarlaması (SMM).

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the Almighty God, my parents and beloved sister for the invaluable support throughout my education, and the constant encouragement that helped me in pushing to the end. Thank you so much.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and Background of the Study

Currently in our world, technology is advancing at a phenomenal rate, changing the lives of millions of people all across the globe (De Mooij, 2019). One of the major technological advancement that has shaped our world is the Internet. The Internet is responsible for providing virtual platforms for users to stay interconnected. Moreover, it has given businesses the necessary opportunity to promote and sell their goods and services, in order to increase their market share (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Social media has gained widespread adoption by millions of people all around the globe, as other traditional media technologies have experienced a massive decline in their usage, both for personal or business purposes. Social media may be defined as an interaction between groups of individuals, this interaction varies from a dialogue between two people to communication between communities. With the invention of mobile phones, social media has become very close to individuals as these networks have websites and mobile apps that their users are able to access anywhere and anytime. In 2019, there were 3.48 billion online users that were actively using social media, this figure grew to 3.81 billion online users in 2020; this means an increased growth of 9.2%. Interestingly, in 2015, there were just 2.05 billion users and the social network growth rate has average about 12.5% i.e. year in, year out (Statista, 2020).

The development of social media has redefined conventional marketing, allowing firms to capitalize on this technology to reach more potential customers. This has given rise to what is commonly known as social media marketing (SMM). Social media marketing can be defined as a strategic tool used by businesses to manage customer relationship, while still establishing newer ones. This is done by facilitating communication and online exchange (Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar, 2013). Moreover, Jara et al (2014) defines social media marketing as a “new generation marketing tool encouraging higher attention and participation from the consumers through the use of social networks”. Therefore, social media marketing can simply be thought of as marketing that utilises social networking sites (SNS) as a channel for marketing (Kujur & Singh, 2017). It indeed is a vital tool for economic growth, as the tools that are housed within its framework include low cost marketing for information gathering and two-way communication, for establishing and connecting with clients (Irfan et al., 2019). Major global platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have made it easier for likeminded customers to be reached. Additionally, these platforms make it easier for advertisement and promotional campaign to be posted, targeting specific customer base with respect to services and products concerned (Camilleri, 2018). From the consumers’ perspective, before purchases are made, social media communities are usually sought-after in order to get the general opinion on the specific good or service (Hajli, 2015). The consumers usually access online groups through social media in order to have a better sense of the services and products (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020). Moreover, consumers who have close ties with a particular brand share their experience on social media with other individuals and often, recommend these services and goods through positive word of mouth, leading to sales generation. Therefore, marketing through SNS has created a more collaborative virtual environment for the

promotion of brands and businesses, where SNS has served as a strategic marketing tool for the imposition of persuasive influences on the purchasing decision of customers (Elena, 2016).

The customer's purchase intentions have always been considered as a vital and important marketing topic, which has been extensively revised, debated, studied and discussed in literature (Iacobucci & Hoeffler, 2016). From studying past literature, there have been a several factors under social media marketing that have been said to influence purchasing intentions of customers. One of the major factors that has been widely discussed is demographics (Lina et al., 2007). Demographics covers gender, age, education, race and income, are significant variables that impact the shopping behaviour of a prospective customer. Another important factor is influencer marketing, where a social media influencer participates in the social media marketing campaigns. Usually, social media influencers with a good number of followers, offer recommendation for brands on their services and products. Due to how high these influencers are esteemed by their followers, they are able to influence their opinion and sway them to make a purchase on a specific brand they are in contract with. Therefore, it is important to investigate the role of brand influencers' recommendations on the purchase intentions of consumers. Furthermore, other factors to consider with respect to social media marketing (SMM) is the marketing mix theory. The first ever pioneer of this was Jerome McCarthy in the 1960s and it was then popularised and made mainstream by Kotler, who was widely known for the 4Ps of Marketing; Product, Price, Place and Promotion (Londhe, 2014). However, as technology advanced, it became a challenge for the 4P to fit within the framework of our technology driven world of the internet, SNS, e-commerce, etc. Overtime this

framework has been expanded to accommodate more factors. Three additional service mix P's were added by Booms and Pitner which include participants, physical evidence and processes, making it the 7P's of marketing (Alafeet, 2020). Additionally, more careful thought was put into the marketing mix frame work by Bob Lauterborn who proposed another alternative marketing mix, which is known as the 4Cs. This framework was centred on the customer and is perceived as the application of a "people oriented management theory". This means the 4Cs comprises of the customer's needs, cost of goods and services to customers, communication and convenience (Zafar, Ahmad, and Taha, 2017). Therefore, since this research is centred on the perception of customers towards social media marketing, it will be incorporating the factor of pricing and promotional activities, from majorly the 4Cs of marketing mix. With respect to the pricing, from the 4C's, pricing is based on what the perceived value of what the customer is willing to pay for. How convenient it is for the prospective customer to make such payment and what limits apply to the customer's expenditure for that particular good or service. Therefore, it is important to investigate the impact of price on the purchasing intension of customers. Furthermore, promotional activities encompass the strategies that is used by the brand to reach out to prospective customers. For the case of SNS, this is accomplished with the use of advertisement and campaigns posts to increase brand awareness, inform prospective customers on the features of the product or service and redirect prospective customers to the brands official website. Whether or not a customer will make a purchase based on a running advertisement or campaign is dependent on how it is perceived. And so, it is important to also investigate the impact of promotional activities on customers' purchase intension.

The trend of utilising SNS amongst tertiary students seems to be consistent and on a steady rise as more students are using social media on a daily basis and even rely solely on it for interactions and communication. This is because tertiary students are becoming more technologically savvy, as technology is becoming easier, accessible and intriguing. The ripple effect of this is that brands are taking their businesses to these platforms to reel in potential student customers. Amongst the major players in the SNS are Facebook and Instagram, with billions of users on their network. These SNS platforms have been specially designed to keep users consistently on their platforms by offering services that captivate, intrigue, and connect individuals either locally or abroad. In the island of Northern Cyprus, the higher educational institutions have grown significantly by 80% in 2017 to 2018, accounting for over 47,000 students. Moreover, the number of foreign students that are choosing Northern Cyprus for their studies has tripled within a space of only five years, setting Northern Cyprus up as a global educational ground (Katircioglu, Unlucan, and Dalcı, 2011). Therefore, there is a huge potential for brands to use SNS as an effective tool for marketing to reach tertiary students. In one study carried out by Edmunds et al. (2010), Internet usage and online shopping was found to be most common amongst university students between the ages of 18 to 30 years and even though it was found that the funds required to make the purchases wasn't available, it was observed that this age bracket expressed higher purchasing intentions online than other groups studied. This suggests that tertiary students are more active on SNS and with respect to the brand they follow on SNS, express higher purchasing intention especially with brands they follow on these platforms. The advent of the novel COVID-19 pandemic brought about national lockdowns, restrictions, social distancing, travel bans, closures of businesses, etc. The COVID-19 pandemic affected over 90 million people nationwide as of December

2020, with over 1.8million people dead (WHO, 2020). Although the virus had adverse negative impact, it did however keep people in their homes interestingly, experts have argued that due to the pandemic, there has been a major increase in social media usage (SocialBakers, 2020). However, how COVID-19 Pandemic is affecting tertiary students purchasing intension is still a relatively new field of research as much work hasn't been done on it. Following this, there have been very few research on how tertiary students purchasing intension is influenced by brands through SMM. Additionally, most of the past literature were majorly on the efficacy of social media as a tool for marketing to attain marketing goals and impact the target audiences (Arora & Sanni, 2019). Only a little number of research has taken into account the role of social media marketing in tertiary institutions by considering the convenience of the price of the goods or service, recommendation made via brand influencers, promotional campaigns and advertisement, and customer services.

Therefore, this thesis will study on the role of social media marketing on the purchasing intension of tertiary students during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking clothing brands as a case study. Clothing brands are becoming more interested on these platforms, as it provides for them the opportunity to market their products and services, using media where consumers spend their time. Moreover, teenagers and youths are the more active users on these platforms, where they socialise with peers and engage in posts that are presented (Dervan, 2015). Therefore, it presents a good opportunity for clothing brands to market their products and services to these prospective young customers and in the case of this thesis, tertiary students. Most tertiary students are on these platforms and are ardent online users, depending on these platforms for communicating, networking, entertainment and much more. There are lots of factors

that play a crucial role in influencing tertiary student's purchasing intentions using Facebook and Instagram. However, in order to streamline our research, five major factors will be considered in this research, they will include convenient pricing, brand influencers' recommendation, promotional activities, and demographics. Additionally, COVID-19 impact on tertiary students purchasing intention will also be investigated.

1.2 Motivation of the Study

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that took place worldwide, there was a severe threat to the health and safety of individuals. For the case of Northern Cyprus, the economy was severely affected leading to lockdowns and restrictions that started on the 13th of March, 2020. As a result, most tertiary students were confined to their homes and there were policies put in place by the government to reduce social contact. Therefore, social media became a major means of interaction, with many of the social networking sites (SNS) being used by tertiary students to interact with friends as well as provide a diversion from the pandemic fear.

Social media marketing has become a strategic tool used by businesses to manage customer relationship, while still establishing newer ones in order to convince prospective customers to make a purchase online, thereby creating convince purchasing. Facebook and Instagram have become the two main social networking sites being actively used for social media marketing during the pandemic, as most active social media users are tertiary students. The marketing on social media has become of great advantage to fashion industries, where the fashion industries use social media marketing to engage with their customers. Therefore, the motive of this study is to examine the role social media marketing plays on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. Nevertheless, during the pandemic the media

dependency of tertiary students has caused behavioural changes. Therefore, online purchasing became an interest for tertiary students in Northern Cyprus presenting a diversion from the crisis situation, also causing changes to the purchasing intentions of the students.

This motivated the researcher to research on how the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus were influenced by social media marketing, since the social media usage rise, mainly through Facebook and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic by also identifying the factors that contribute to the purchasing intentions, with clothing brands used as a case study. This is due to the fact that as the restrictions were placed, food stores were open. However, the fashion stores were closed and operating solely through social media marketing. Due to the closure of the fashion stores, some tertiary students who were affected massively by the closure were, content creators, and students. During the pandemic it was difficult to purchase the clothing items they required for creating content on their channels as content creators, which during the pandemic was a way for they were engaged and this was a means to generate income, due to employment being unavailable.

Therefore, social media marketing had become a reliable means for purchasing the items they needed. This has prompted this research to examine the role social media marketing plays during the global pandemic on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus.

1.3 Aims and Significance of the Study

The primary purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of social media marketing, (particularly through the use of Facebook and Instagram) on the purchasing intentions

of tertiary students, during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking clothing brands as case study. Tertiary students were used in this study due to the limited amount of research done on tertiary students with respect to the social media marketing role on their purchasing intentions. Moreover, the age bracket that can be captured in this research is between 16 to 35 years, and so it gives a good sample distribution for carrying out this research. The effect of social media on the purchasing intentions of students vary from country to country as cultural differences also play a role in the case. However, a few things appear to be consistent across cultures, the results acquired from this study will be significant in measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing on student's purchasing intentions during this period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it will be relevant for academia, researchers, and businesses that may carry out further investigation on student's purchasing intentions. Additionally, the findings of this research conducted in the three institutions, will be used as a template to educate companies, investors, and individuals contending in the Northern Cyprus market on social media marketing. With the rise in the use of social media in the last few years, a percentage of individuals have stood out and they are sometimes referred to as influencers. These influencers have a large following on social media and like their name entails, they have a certain degree of influence on their following. The amount of influence ranges from an opinion shared to their followers or their thoughts and actions play a major role on the decisions made by their followers. Influencers build this audience though posting content usually relating to a particular niche which may be fashion, food, travel, etc. Through consistent content creation, they are able to attract an audience that is interested in content from that niche. These influencers are seen as leaders in their niches and could affect the buying decisions made by their following. There will be five independent variables that will be analysed under social

media marketing, a huge percentage of fashion brands have adopted social media and most of them make it a core of their business model. It's a good way to stay in touch with customers. Some brands also put out promotions such as sales on their social media pages and that also may cause an increase of sales because it's more affordable at a lower price. Brands could also give out rewards to their audience and maybe even host contests. Therefore, this thesis will take into consideration: demographics, convenient pricing, brand influencers' recommendation, promotional campaign, and COVID-19, as factors that influence the purchasing intention of tertiary students.

1.4 Problem Statement

In our world today, social media have become an important and key strategic tools used by businesses to reach their clients, participation on SNS like Facebook and Instagram, are crucial to remain relevant in the digital world (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010). This is due to the huge number of online users, where over 3.81 billion people are currently actively using social media (Statista, 2020). Within tertiary Institutions, social media has presented newer opportunities for companies to reach and interact with potential student customers. Moreover, with numerous options available to the customers and an ever changing market structure, it has become very important for companies to gain insight into the purchasing intentions of students in tertiary institutions. This will help companies rethink their strategies and better define them to meet up with the expectations of the students. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap as to the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus and so, there is need for more research to be carried out in this area to give more clarity, understanding and contribution social science community.

1.5 Research Questions

This study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there any significant difference between female and male tertiary students' purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2. Is there any significant difference between the nationalities of the tertiary students and their purchasing intentions on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ3. Does convenience/affordable pricing positively influence tertiary students' purchasing intention of a clothing brand during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ4. Is there any significant difference between the age, the faculty and the disposable income of tertiary students as to their purchasing intentions on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ5. During the COVID-19 pandemic, does the interaction between the clothing brand influencers and their recommendations to customers positively impact the purchasing intentions of tertiary students?

RQ6. Do promotional brand activities influence tertiary students' purchasing intention of a brand during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ7. Is there an increase in student's online activity on fashion brand pages on Instagram and Facebook as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ8. During the COVID-19 pandemic has the social media marketing been able to capture and create better customer services for tertiary students?

RQ9. Is the COVID-19 pandemic positively affecting the purchasing intentions of tertiary students?

1.6 Methodology of Study

In this research, a quantitative research methodology will be carried out. The instruments for executing this research will be from journals and scholarly articles and the questionnaire made by researcher. And so, these instruments will be used to put together using the online survey that will be carried out on 356 students from three major tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus, the schools used for the research were from the three main cities in Northern Cyprus i.e. Eastern Mediterranean University, Near East University and Girne American University. The use of purposive sampling method where tertiary students were sent the online survey, and also the snowballing sampling method was employed, were the considered students from these institutions will be from different departments, ethnicity, gender etc., this will be used as a baseline for carrying out the study. A Descriptive analysis will be carried out to attain the data for the questions used in the survey.

1.7 Limitation of Study

One of the target of this study is to highlight the importance of social networking sites (SNS), especially Facebook and Instagram, as a social marketing tool. To understand, it role on tertiary student's purchasing intentions of clothing brands. One of the major limitation of this research is getting its sample size of collecting data of 400 tertiary students during the COVID -19 pandemic restrictions in Northern Cyprus. Moreover, the study was confined to just three Northern Cyprus tertiary institutions in three main cities i.e. Eastern Mediterranean University (in Famagusta), Near East University (in Nicosia) and Girne American University (in Kyrenia). The respondents for this research will be from different faculties in these institutions and the ethnicity will also be randomly selected. There is a limitation as to reaching the initial sample size of 400 tertiary students not being reached due to the timeframe for data collection was within

a space of two months and so, there were limitations in reaching the target number of respondents. Another major challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to shutdown of institutions. This limited the distribution of the survey to online platforms as face to face contact was restricted. Furthermore, there were challenges with commuting between cities during the heat of the pandemic as travel bans were imposed, making it very difficult to source for data. In addition, a qualitative method could not be carried due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, to go more in depth about the research. Furthermore, this research solely focused on five major factors affecting social media marketing in tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus i.e. convenient pricing, brand influencers' recommendation, promotional activities, and demographics. Another drawback was finding sufficient data on the research topic, because not much research has been done in this area. Moreover, personal and cultural differences also placed limits on this the scope of this study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In order to investigate the role of social media marketing on tertiary students' purchasing intentions of clothing brands, this chapter will review previous studies on social media marketing and theories that support purchasing intentions. The first section covers the role of social media networks, the usage frequency of social networking sites (SNS) and the adoption of social media marketing in the fashion industry. Moreover, the main SNS sites (Instagram and Facebook) used in the thesis will be discussed and why it was selected in order to give credence to its why they were used. In the second section, the marketing overview, the marketing mix, traditional and social media marketing, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of social media marketing were outlined and discussed. Finally, the last section discussed the factors influencing purchasing intentions as analysed by previous studies and the theoretical framework, which forms the bases of this thesis.

2.1 Background and Overview of Social Media

In recent years, social media has gained a widespread adoption by millions of people all around the globe, as other traditional media technology have experienced a massive decline in its usage, both for personal or business purposes. Since the introduction of social media to the public, social media applications such as Facebook, Snap Chat, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter etc., have continued to witness increased adoption globally as well as an increase in social media technology implementation (Cisco, 2010). Nowadays, most major companies are turning to social media application for

acquiring valuable information and data (Ransbotham and Kane, 2011). According to a research carried out by Palmer and Lewis (2009), the main stream media have had to deal with a whole lot of challenges in recent times which have led to the shutdown of their operation. Furthermore, there have been setbacks in adopting television as the profit margins have dropped significantly over the years. The study carried out by Palmer and Lewis (2009) to understand the Correlation of performance between the traditional channels and the erratic rise in social media in brand management and marketing, it was found that due to tough economic environment, most companies have reduced their expenditure or tightened up their budget. This has led to the budget reserved for advertising to be shifted to online platforms. In another study carried out by Ernst, David and Cooperstein (2011), it was ascertained that most companies are making major efforts to align their advertising priorities with that of today's customers. As a matter of fact, most buyers are more tech savvy than in the past and are strong believers in the use of social media to entertain themselves, or for business purposes. Although there is variation on the usage of social media by both organizations and individuals, there is still so much to understand on the limitless potential of this technology in the marketing arena. Traditional approaches to executing business processes have been completely dominated and disrupted by processes that are socially driven (Austin et al., 2010). Therefore, it is absolutely vital that social media is better understood as well as highlight the differences between the various social media to make a distinction from marketing.

2.1.1 Definition of Social Media

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social media can be defined as a website that allows for the creation of profile and the establishment of relationship amongst users. Moreover, it is a web based application that provides functionality for relationship,

sharing profiles, conversation and groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Other authors have stated that social media simply means social media sites or can be defined as a set of information technology, which makes it possible for networking and interaction to be carried out (Kapoor et al., 2017; Diga and Kelleher, 2009). Another definition of social media was given by Huang and Benyoucef (2013, p.246), which refers to social media as an “Internet-based applications built on Web 2.0, while Web 2.0 refers to a concept as well as a platform for harnessing collective intelligence”. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Web 2.0 can be referred as the set of technologies as well as the ideologies that drive and also enable media rich content creation on the Internet. The idea of Web 2.0 is to be an open source and is a set of ideologies and technologies that help facilitate the creation of rich media content on the Internet. The nature of Web 2.0 is that it allows collaboration of information amongst people and advocates the use of free tools.

2.1.2 Types of Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), there are six major types of social media. These are highlighted below:

- a) Collaborative Projects: In this type of social media, there is a system in place that allows for the joint creation of content simultaneously by multiple end users. An example of this is Wikipedia.
- b) Blogs: This social media is also commonly referred to as weblogs, where numerous issues are published and are usually presented in chronological or reverse order (Leight and Leight, 2008 and Carrington, 2008). An example of this is Twitter.
- c) Content Communities: This type has to do with file sharing of media content amongst users on the platform. This could be in the form of

videos, text, power point presentations, photos, music and much more.

An example of this includes YouTube, Slide share, Flickr, Book crossing etc.

- d) Social Networking Sites (SNS): This type of social media is a web based service that allows individuals to construct identities digitally by the development of profile, viewing list of connections, articulation of list of users of whom they can be able to share connections as well as viewing the connections made by others within their respective space (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Example of this includes Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn etc.
- e) Virtual Game Worlds: In this type of social media, the platform is designed to incorporate a three dimensional environment where users can pose as an avatar and interact with the virtual environment and each other. Example of this is PUBG, World of Warcraft etc.
- f) Virtual Social Worlds: This type of social media allows the users or inhabitants to create or select an avatar, select their own personality and live in a virtual environment, experiencing a sort of life that mimics reality. Example of this is second life, Sims etc.

2.2 Social Media Networks and Their Roles

Palmer and Lewis (2009) stated that social media networks are applications that allow users to be able to build personal websites which are accessible to other users for the exchange of communication and personal content. Moreover, social media networks can be categorised as either platforms, online applications an media, aimed at facilitating collaboration, interactions, and content sharing. Interestingly, Fauser et al. (2011) stated that although communication is the basis on which social media networks

are built, not every platform category is deemed suitable for all marketing objectives. This is because most of the platforms aren't made for collaboration information. Therefore, the major reason for social networks was majorly for exchange of ideas and communication purposes for groups and communities with similar interest groups. Furthermore, Gummesson (2002) stated that frequent communication on the path of marketers, will result in development of friendship between the establishment and the customers. On the other spectrum, information providers are the ones responsible for the creation of their own communities, and having their own social media set up. Therefore, vocal members and staffers of these construct are responsible for leading discussions, this means that the staffers or vocal members become the opinion leaders (Janal, 1998). Through this means, a collaboration is established between the online consumer and the marketer and so, it is vitally important that information flow within brand and businesses takes place, or else engagement amongst the communities online cannot be initiated. In Figure 2.1 below, the interaction that takes place within the confine of the social sphere is illustrated.

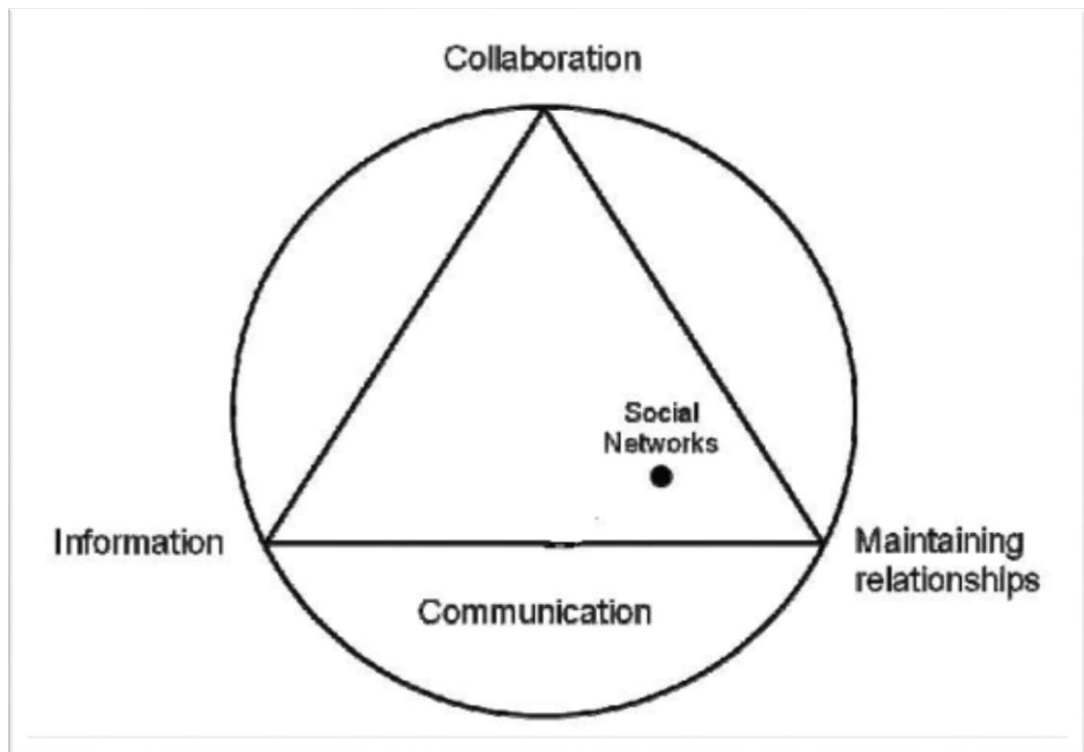


Figure 2.1: A graphical illustration of the dynamism of social networks in a social sphere (Fauser et al., 2011).

According to Palmer and Lewis (2009), the definition of the role a social media networks should involve giving the members a sense of ownership of the community, a feeling of acceptance and if these conditions are not met, the potential for the members of the network to be dissatisfied occurs. And so, in order for companies to fully take advantage of social media technologies, the very first step would be to align and prepare the roles, policies, processes with the objectives of the business.

During this period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the authorities in most nations are recommending social distancing as a measure to combat the spread of the virus. Therefore, social media network, during this period of the pandemic, play an important role in maintaining safe connections between people. Moreover, social media networks have been considered an important means for news and updates on the spread of the virus as well as its containment. Statista (2020) show that the trends of acquiring

news as well as updates from social media has increased substantially. In a survey carried out in 2020, over 70% of the respondents from South Africa, Bulgaria, Chile, Greece, and Argentina stated that social media were the major avenue through which news is gotten. Moreover, it was also observed that most online users preferred to search for their news online as opposed to listening to news on radio or tuning into a televised broadcast. Therefore, when it comes to COVID-19 pandemic, it would not be out of place to state that social media networks have played a role in creating awareness about the pandemic in helping to spread opinion as well as news to its online users. Another interesting fact to note is that during the early stage of the pandemic, people were plunged into a state of what is commonly known as panic buying (Garza, 2020). This was the result of the news that circulated on social media networks where information on the shortage of toilet rolls, sanitizers, masks, brought about panic buying which lead to more problems as its people thought that nations will be plunged into economic depression. On the other hand, the role of social media have been hijacked by certain interest groups bringing about misinformation to the public. With respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, such news can be deemed chaotic. Therefore, the spread of this misleading information without proper conducted research will lead to a state of panic, creating a perfect breeding ground for fear to propagate. Most of the social media platforms have taken steps to scrutinize the wrong information from the right information in order to play their role in protecting users from being misled with false information during the crisis period (Reitere, 2020).

2.3 Social Networking Sites (SNS)

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites can be defined as a web based service which allows individuals to be able to construct identities or profiles, navigate or search within connection lists and display the users connected on the

platform. SNS is an online platform or service which is aimed at easing up the communication process between individuals online and facilitating the building of a network amongst users online that have similar background, interest, and activities connected to real life situations. Moreover, it is a web based service that give the individuals the opportunity to share information within a group that has been selected. Additionally, it has proved itself over the years as a vital tool for keeping individuals connected and provides a convenient way for individuals to share media content with each other (Jara et al., 2014). There are a number of SNS which are widely used for interactions and social media marketing of which a few are; Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Instagram and Whatsapp. During the COVID-19 pandemic period there has been a huge increase in the activity of two SNS, which are Facebook which has 2 billion users and Instagram with over a billion users. These have become the largest platforms for social media marketing (Socialbakers, 2020). The social media marketing role on tertiary students will be studied through the use of two SNS which have had a large increase in their activity usage, which are Instagram and Facebook. Therefore, these are the two major SNS that will be focused on in this thesis.

2.3.1 Instagram

According to Bergstrom and Backman (2013), Instagram as an SNS was founded in the year 2010. As a mobile based application, it provided the users the ability to be able to share videos and photos to their respective followers (Dubovik, 2013). From the research carried out by Dennis (2014), Instagram initially began as a platform for simply sharing and editing photos, and as time progressed, it moved on to the sharing of photos and videos through direct messaging to users. Furthermore, Instagram was very strategic in its approach that it gave the opportunity to users to shoot videos and snap photos at any time and share instantly to their followers in any part of the world.

Initially, the development of Instagram was initiated when Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger wanted to focus on Hypertext Marker Language 5 (HTML5) check in applications which was named as Burbn. This allowed the users the added functionality of location check in, with points awarded to the users who post photos and meet up with new friends. However, as time went on, it was clear that the focus shifted toward the application photo's function i.e. after some confusion emanated with respect to the application and soon afterwards, the Burbn was changed to Instagram. The word Instagram was coined from the amalgamation of the words "instant" and "telegram". In the year 2012, Facebook decided to buy off the company by offering 23 million of its shares to Instagram as well as over 300 million dollars in cash (BBC, 2012). Soon afterwards, a deal was arrived at and the offer was accepted. Amongst all the SNS, Instagram has become a force to reckon with, being one of the most popular SNS amongst university students in the US (Salomon, 2013). According to Maravic (2013), a press release from Instagram in the year 2013, stated that Instagram has a monthly active user of a 100 million, 8500 likes per second, 1000 comments per second and 40 million photos uploaded daily. In a paper written by Tekulve and Kelly (2013), the Pew Internet and American Life Project was cited and from the analysis, 13% of the users on the Internet were on Instagram. Moreover, users that are consistently on Instagram are adults within the age bracket of 18 to 29 years (Duggan and Brenner, 2013).

2.3.2 Facebook

Facebook started up in the year 2004 and as time went on, it was able to build its membership base as more users signed up for Facebook. Currently, Facebook has a membership strength of 2.7 billion active monthly users worldwide (Statista, 2020). Interestingly, in the third quarter of 2012, it was noted that the 1 billion mark of active

users was surpassed, making it the first ever SNS to achieve this. On average, a Facebook user is said to have at least 130 friends and has over 80 community pages, events and pages connected. In the site, there are over 70 languages and the major use is for the maintenance and establishment of relationship amongst friends and peers, political networking, and families. Moreover, according to Eldon (2011), 48.8% of the users are females and 52.2% are males. From an age assessment perspective, 27.5% are over 35years old, 26.1% are with the age bracket of 26 to 34years, 25.8% are between the ages 18 to 25 and finally, 20.6% are between 13 to 17 years old. Facebook over the years has become a powerful tool for achieving marketing objectives. In the year 2011, in the month of April, the company launched a new service for creative agencies as well as for marketers. This new service was in the form of an online platform or portal that gave creative design agencies as well as marketers the necessary resources to build brand promotion on Facebook (Eldon, 2011). As a result, Facebook has set itself up as the biggest competitor to google in terms of ads generation. This has made it realistically feasible for ABC News and Financial Times to be able to create dynamic advertisement and commercial graphics.

2.4 Social Networking Sites (SNS) Usage Frequency and Consumption Habits

In a research done by Miller and Melton (2015), the objective of the research was to evaluate a methodology that can best explain the method of modifying the behaviour of university students. In carrying out the research, 55 students participated in it through a survey and the findings from the preliminary survey carried out showed that Facebook and Twitter were consistently used to a very high degree by students. When asked about how long they have been using their Facebook account, the bulk of the students stated that it has been used for five years or more which were 82% of the

students. While, in the context of familiarity of using Facebook, 89.8% stated that they are familiar with the platform. Moreover, 58.9% stated that their account is visited one or more times a day. Furthermore, 97.4% of the students stated that they had a twitter account for about two year or less and also, 87.2% stated they were familiar with the platform. Moreover, 92.3% stated that the visitation of their account was done once or more per day. In a similar study that was carried out by Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert (2009), the objective was to find out how 92 college students in particular use Facebook. The criteria for assessing its usage frequency and pattern, was in form of time and functionality. Furthermore, follow up questions like why they used the site was also asked. From the results given, it was observed that the respondent average usage on Facebook was for 28.44 min in day during the weekends and 27.93 min in a day during the weekdays (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert, 2009). Furthermore, majority of the site usage was done at night from 9.00 pm to hours of the morning, by 12.00 am.

The process of socialization is important in framing the consumption habits of individuals and so, what drives most of our consumption habits is socialization (Assadourian, 2010; Heath and Chatzidakis, 2012; Michaelis and Lorek, 2004). Therefore, customers usually will imitate choices and purchasing behaviours they perceive, and so, social media plays an important role in influencing the consumption habits of online users. In one study carried out by GoodFirms (2020), more than 450 social media platforms were analysed and surveyed, all across the world in order to better understand their social media consumption habits. A preliminary study was done to assess their level as well as a medium of interactivity and it was found that 74.38% of the users are actively involved, interacting with other individuals via sharing, liking,

subscribing, chatting and commenting. One of the question that was asked was what type of content was being consumed on their SNS platform. From the results that was obtained, it was seen that majority of the respondents i.e. 87.40% tend to engage or post more with personal pictures on their SNS handles. This is so because visuals are easier to consume, identify and perceive, easing the processes of connectivity with other individuals. 69.83% stated that they utilise text messages. One of the major concerns on SNS is privacy issues and so, texting enables direct communication with anyone. Moreover, 48.76% of the respondents engage in more videos posted on SNS. Finally, SNS content consumption included 25.62% life updates, 5.37% live streams.

2.5 Clothing Brands Adoption of Social Networking Sites (SNS)

The exponential growth of the use of digital technologies has empowered consumers of the fashion industry to interact, influence, belong to, and be part of brands. In fact, the vast majority of consumers use digital channels before, during or after making their purchases. The fashion industry is one of the biggest industry globally that utilises SNS as a communication as well as promotional tool to reach customers. There are several sectors that are covered by the fashion industry, and one of the more obvious sector is the clothing brand industry (McKelvey and Munslow, 2011). Clothing brands are becoming more interested in marketing within these social media platforms, as it provides for them the opportunity to market their products and services. In most cases, teenagers and youths are more active users on these platforms, where they socialise with peers and engage in posts that are presented (Dervan, 2015). Therefore, clothing brands capitalise on this and target this age bracket, using SNS as an effective tool for reaching them. Representing this age brackets are tertiary students, who make use of SNS as an effective means of acquiring information about brands they are interested in. Some of the notable brands that have utilised the power of social media to

continually engage and reach customers include Burberry, Chanel, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and Yves Saint Etc. These fashion brands have utilised social media as a policy for promotional campaigns and awareness generation, in order to inform the public as well as get feedback on their products and services. Furthermore, these fashion brands, use these platforms as an avenue to increase sales and meet targets (Kim and Ko, 2012).

It is discovered that the danger in every sector has risen greatly during the beginning phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020 (about 0.205% on an average) in comparison to the same time in 2019 (about 0.042% on an average) as well as 2018 (about 0.021% on an average). Nevertheless, the average loss in revenue of the sectors has reduced little by little. The sector with the most profit during the beginning phase of the covid-19 in Turkey is “pharmaceutical and health industry” with about 9.21% profit while the sector that experienced the largest loss in its profit margin during the time is “clothing and textile sector” with about -17.40% in revenue (Orhan and Tirman, 2020).

Individuals with unprotected employment are exposed to the danger of losing their jobs and sources of income as a result of the social distancing and/or closures of firms around this period, particularly in sectors which are most probable to be troubled by the pandemic as well as those workers that cannot finish their day-to-day jobs from home (ILO, 2020). According to Seker et al. (2020), we discovered that barely 10% of workers in Turkey can work from home. Employment risk is prominent between textile and apparel, food and accommodation, as well as the leather sectors; whereas works in ICT as well finance have the lowest risk. We observed that about 7 million workers in total are exposed to the risk of losing their jobs as a result of the COVID-

19 impact on the economy (Seker et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic affected every area of life and economy as well as the several industries that felt its impact significantly. Apparel and clothing are several of those industries where the pandemic brought about a drastic turndown in income and manufacturing. In Europe, taking into account the main textile exporting nation Turkey, there was a serious drop in the ordering of textile and this became more evident around the middle of part of April. By 16th-28th of April, 2020, the orders received from companies situated in Europe had reduced by approximately 45% on an average (Statista, 2020).

Following this trend, there has been a massive increase in the adoption and utilisation of SNS by clothing brands globally. Zara, one of the clothing giants of the industry, has over 25 million followers on Facebook and on Instagram, over 15.4 million followers. On the other hand, has over 10.5 million followers on Facebook and 6.1 million followers on Instagram (Stanciu, 2021). This adoption comes as a result of the change in shopping habits by consumers of clothing brands, as these consumers are embracing the use of information searching systems to enquire about clothing brands. Furthermore, in 2018, 30.4% of British clothing shoppers utilised social media for inspiring their choices of clothing which was an increase of 2.5% from the year 2017 (GlobalData, 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a huge change in the online shopping behaviours of millions of people all across the globe. According to the survey carried out by UNCTAD (2020), that investigated the impact of the pandemic on the way consumers use digital solutions and e-commerce. Where about 3700 consumers from nine developed nations were surveyed (Turkey, Brazil, Russia, Italy, Germany, China, South Korea, and Switzerland). From the results, more than half of the respondents

were now frequent shoppers online and utilised the Internet more for acquiring information on digital entertainment, health related information and general news. Also, the survey showed that there was a huge shift by these developing nations to online shopping. Moreover, Chinese e-commerce online stores like JD.com and Alibaba were able to increase their number of purchasing, where around \$115 billion dollars was made in sales across these shopping platforms. Furthermore, online shopping over Black Friday in 2020 increased by close 22% (about \$9 billion dollars in revenue) which was a new record as compared to previous years in the United States (Sahelirc, 2020). In all, there has been an increase in the shopping behaviour and intention of individuals globally as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that clothing brands have increased their presence on these social media platforms by capitalizing on the changing consumer behaviour of consumers, employing the use of SNS to connect and improve the shopper's experience.

One of the most influential platforms that is utilised by clothing brands is Facebook, where 44.7% of the clothing shoppers use this medium as their social media outlet (GlobalData, 2018). Facebook is dominant in this space because shoppers can easily navigate the platform from click to purchase through specifically tailored content, owing to the strategic advertising that is used for consumers with respect to their demographics, interest and posts. However, more recent fashion retailers like Topshop and ASOS take advantage of Instagram because 30.2% of generation z, age 16 to 25 years old, are more active and inspired on Instagram's social media network (Global Data, 2018). In all, social media represents a very lucrative marketing tool, where online clothing shoppers seek council on the latest fashion trends. It has also simplified the process for consumers to easily make purchases online as seen on Instagram's with

the shopping function on its platform. This has further increased the adoption of SNS usage by clothing brands as these brands see SNS as a useful tool for creating seamless shopping experience for their customers.

2.6 Overview of Marketing

Marketing can be defined as a set of processes and organizational functions for the communication, creation and delivery of values to customers. Moreover, it is for the management of relationship amongst customers in ways that it is beneficial to both the stakeholders and the organization (American Marketing Association, 2020). Further expanding on this definition, Kotler et al. (2012) stated that marketing can be thought as the process that involves the planning as well as execution of pricing, promotion, conception and the distribution of services and goods to create exchanges which will bring about the satisfaction of organizational and individual goals or targets. Additionally, marketing is focused on customers, where it is an infusion of organizational processes and functions, geared towards making promises through value proposition; where these promises are fulfilled thereby satisfying the expectation of the individual (Kotler et al., 2012; Christian. 2006).

Within the context of clothing marketing, it differs significantly from the generic marketing that is based on need. This is as a result of the fast paced changing nature of fashion and the role designs play within the industry, with respect to innovation and reflecting the demands of customers (Tungate, 2012). The fashion industry is focused on producing desire and according to Barnes (2014), fashion marketing is hinged on understanding the intricate requirements of customers i.e. their needs and wants, thereby orienting both the operational business activities to meet the demands of the customers. The major complexity that sets the fashion industry apart from other

industries is its diversity in fashion related influences which help in shaping the needs of the customer. This is coupled with the fast moving pace of the product life cycle of the product and the drive for the industry to consistently follow the trends (Tungate, 2012; Barnes, 2014).

2.6.1 Marketing Mix (4Ps, 7Ps, 4Cs and 7Cs)

The marketing mix can be referred to as a conceptual framework that is built for the purpose of highlighting the most important decisions that are made by marketing management, in tailoring their products and services to suit the requirements or needs of the customer. Marketing mix has been extremely useful and influential for the development of marketing theories as well as practices. Although it was Borden (1964) who first conceptualised the idea of marketing mix into 12 elements, its popularity as an integral tool used by marketers was made mainstream by McCarthy in 1960, who coined variables into the 4Ps of marketing (McCarthy, 1981; Möller, 2006). According to McCarthy (1981) marketing mix can be defined as a set of controllable strategic tools for marketing used by firms to create the predefined responses from its target market. Also, according to Berkowitz, Kerin, Hartley and Rudelius (1997), marketing mix can be referred to as “the controllable variables which a company puts together to satisfy its target market”. Also, it is a combination of price, product, distribution and promotion, which is utilised by the company as well as marketers for addressing a target market within a given timeframe (Agbonifoh, Ogwo and Nnolim, 1998).

According to McCarthy (1981), the 4Ps can be categorised under four which is: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. Under the product category, the business considers the intangible and tangible attributes of the product, with respect to the size, the colour, the packaging, etc. For price, the cost of the product is of great significance,

where the price of the competition is also put into consideration. Moreover, what the target market is willing to accept such as the product life cycle, the discount variants, etc. Under the place category, the objective of the business is to take the product to where it is needed, in this case to the customer. This covers the channel types, location of stores, channel members, salesforce recruitment etc. For promotion, the business strives to create opportunities like offers to the customers. The issues that are under consideration include advertising, direct marketing, publicity, etc. In all, businesses look at how these discussed categories interrelate and communicate with each other as well as what they communicate to the public.

The 4Ps of marketing as introduced by McCarthy (1981), faced harsh criticism from scholars especially with respect to its applications in service marketing (Chai, 2009). In response to this, Boom and Bitner (1981) added the additional 3Ps that served the purpose of the service industry. These additional 3Ps added to the 4Ps given by McCarthy (1981), the 7Ps of marketing includes Product, Price, Place, Promotion, Process, Physical evidence and People. In the process category, it describes the challenges that the consumer must overcome in order to get the product of the consumer. For physical evidence, these are those things that are set in place that give confidence to the consumer that the company will meet up with their expectations. Finally, the people are made up of the person or group of persons that are responsible for setting the machinery in motion that allows for the business to carry out its marketing operation (Boom and Bitner, 1981). However, some scholars have argued otherwise, stating that the additional three Ps, can be incorporated into the framework defined by McCarthy in 1981. According to Buttle (1989), the people category can be

incorporated into the promotion or product elements, whereas the process and physical evidence can be merged into the product elements.

Following this, another classification of marketing was done by Koichi Shimizu in 1973, which includes the commodity, cost, channel and communication. However, Robert F. Lauterborn created a 4C classification which became more generally accepted in the social science community. According to Arpan (2011), Lauterborn proposition takes into account the consumer element. The 4Cs focused on marketing strategies tied to the consumer. This includes the consumer solution, cost, communication and convenience. It is a framework that is designed for addressing the issues that a consumer faces with respect to the traditional 4Ps of marketing proposed by McCarthy (1981). And so, the changes covers exchanging product for consumer solution, price for consumer cost, promotion for communication and finally, place to convenience. In consumer solution, the problem that is addressed is the value of the product and service to the consumer. In other words, this discusses what value the firm is offering the consumer with respect to their product and service. In consumer cost, the problem that is addressed is what cost does the consumer have to incur in order to obtain, utilise and dispose the service or product? Under communication, are you attaining the desired feedbacks from your consumer? And finally, under convenience, is the product or service offered convenient to your consumer for usage and acquisition? Therefore, by reviewing the 4Cs, it is quite obvious that the agenda behind its design is to spur marketers to design marketing programs that ensure that the ultimate consumer is satisfied. Therefore, it is important that a good relationship between the firm and the consumer is built. This means the 4Cs concept helps the conventional marketer to achieve this aim.

Having discussed on the 4Cs of marketing, an expansion of this concept was done by Kiochi Shimizu, who presented an alternative model known as Shimizu 7Cs compass. According to Shimizu (2009), the idea behind its conception is to allow the marketers to be able to positively relate with their customer. The model was designed to incorporate both controllable and uncontrollable variables. The first “C” is corporation and competition, and this is a key variable within the compass model. For a company to be successful, it must think about both accountability and compliance. And so, the undertaken marketing activities need to be encircled by both the organization and the consumers as the individuals that make up the requests. Moreover, for competition, it must be noted that there are other companies as well in the market and so, the activities of those companies should be noted and studied as a vital element of the 7Cs. The second “C” is commodity, where the general idea to address the challenge of what a business should offer to satisfy the needs and wants of its target market. The third “C” is communication and this has to be achieved through a two-way communication process i.e. between the customer and the firm. The fourth “C” is channel and it lays emphasis on how solution is provided to the customer and so, accessibility is of key priority as well as it should be an easy process. The fifth “C” is cost and so, the marketers need to think beyond the price of the product and in actuality, consider the cost to the customer as well as the energy, effort, time and maintenance carried out by the customer. The sixth “C” is consumers. This differs significantly from the customers’ 4Ps marketing model, where the consumers cover both acquired and potential customers. Moreover, factors such as the needs, security, wants and education are considered. Finally, the seventh “C”, is circumstance. This connotes various external factors that are uncontrollable and need to be considered in marketing decision making process. This covers factors like weather, social and cultural,

economics, and national/ international issues (Shimizu, 2009), Also, like the 4Ps, the 7Cs have also faced their fair share of critics, where the inclusion of consumers in the model is said by some scholars to be flawed due to it being a target of marketing with other elements being tactics or strategies for marketing (Thabit and Manaf, 2018). Nonetheless, the 7Cs of marketing have been able to incorporate several strategies for distribution, product development, pricing, while enabling two-way communication between the business and the consumers.

2.6.2 Traditional Marketing

According to Kotler and Dubois (2003), traditional marketing can be defined as a form of promotion that is carried out to reach a target audience through the use of marketing channels such as broadcast, telemarketing, print or direct mail. Moreover, companies that invest in traditional advertising spend a whole lot of time and on creativity crafting a successful marketing campaign in order to generate the predefined targeted reach. Therefore, the idea of traditional marketing is to satisfy the wants and needs of the customers through the aforementioned marketing channels with the aim of creating services and products that sell themselves (Kotler and Dubois, 2003). According to Das and Lall (2016), there are several advantages and disadvantages to the use of traditional marketing to reach prospective customers. These are highlighted below:

2.6.2.1 Advantages

- a) Traditional marketing might be the only means to reach their target audience as they might be an older generation not used to the Internet age.
- b) Face to face strategy for traditional marketing is often more preferable and effective in reaching a particular customer base as a result of the service or product that is being marketed.

- c) It is only through traditional marketing that hard copy materials can be offered to the customers.

2.6.2.2 Disadvantages

- a) It costs a lot of money to put content on radio, TV or print (such as business cards, mailers, brochures etc.) and so, this medium often is prohibited by small businesses.
- b) Usually, buying media, printing materials, and creating radio ads requires some level of hiring which adds up to the cost.
- c) Results in some cases cannot be measured due to the nature of the marketing campaigns carried out.
- d) Usually, traditional marketing is static and so, there is barely any efficient way of communicating with the audience.

2.6.3 Social Media Marketing

According to Chaffey et al. (2003), Internet marketing can be defined as the application of related digital technology as well as the use of the Internet to achieve the objectives or aims of marketing. Interestingly, these marketing objectives can be achieved via the use of social networking sites, which is one of the numerous applications on the Internet. Therefore, SNS such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter etc., can serve as tools for marketing needs and accomplishing strategies for marketing. One of the objectives of a marketing is the acquisition of new customers as well as maintaining customer satisfaction. Three major factors were highlighted by Chaffey et al. (2004) that points towards effective internet marketing execution:

- a) Identify how the internet can be utilised to achieve marketing research objectives, in order to find out the wants and needs of customers.
- b) Predicting the revenue realised through online revenue contribution.

- c) Ensuring customer's satisfaction through the platform. Properties such as site usability, customer service standard, and adequate performance are what determines satisfaction level.

Therefore, social media marketing can be defined as a strategic tool used by businesses to manage customer relationship, while still establishing newer ones. This is done by facilitating communication and online exchange (Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar, 2013). And so, this supports the notion that social media channels are used for achieving customer retention and satisfaction. In a statement given by Anjum et al. (2012), social media marketing is of utmost importance for companies who aim to retain and attract customers. Interestingly, this line of thought is also shared by other researchers, who say that social media as a tool for marketing, helps to increase customer retention as well as satisfaction (Clark et al., 2012). Furthermore, it can be seen that customers are willing to interact with companies via the use of social media if it is believed that it is of benefit to them. Benefits such as getting discounts or coupons, product ratings, viewing reviews, purchasing services and products, accessing specific or general information, presenting opinions, learning about newer products, participating in events, being part of a community and submitting ideas for newer services and products (Anjum et al., 2012).

2.6.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media Marketing

According to Sheth and Sharma (2005), social media marketing has certain advantages, however, there are also certain disadvantages to the use of social media for marketing. In order to better understand this, the advantages and disadvantages will be summarized below.

2.6.4.1 Advantages

- a) **Social Interaction:** One of the major advantages of social media marketing over the years is how it has been able to create as well as increase newer forms or methods for social interaction to occur. This means that the time spent by people for their general leisure as well as for entertainment purposes is almost identical to the time spent on these online communication platforms (Riegner 2007). As stated by Burmaster (2009), SNS have become remarkably pervasive, meaning that over time it became the most popular Internet destination for online users. And so, the SNS has completely changed the status quo by altering the mannerism at which people communicate online. Additionally, it increased the number of people that communicate with each other, thereby providing statistics on how human behaviour can be influenced or changed (Burmaster, 2009). In a consumer behaviour study carried out by Huang et al. (2009), data accumulated showed that individuals online give more attention as well as consideration to information that is shared online. Moreover, they spend more time on websites that host third party applications. It was also observed that this information had the ability to influence the purchasing decisions of users, even though the information was gotten purely from an online source (Pauwels & Weiss., 2008; Awad et al., 2006).
- b) **Reduced Cost:** Another main advantage of employing the use of social media marketing, as stated by Weinberg (2009), is the fact that it brings about reduced cost on the path of the marketer. Social media marketing has eased the financial burden associated with marketing when compared to other approaches. Most of the SNS are free to set up a profile, post and access information. Therefore, businesses can easily set up highly successful social media marketing ads or

campaigns. And so, the advantage of being able to reach your target market with little or no cash expenditure, is actually a huge breakthrough in strategic marketing. Moreover, the audience usually follow or join the campaign based on their interest. Strategic marketing tools like pay-per-click, implemented on Facebook, are usually geo-targeted and so, specific criteria as defined by the market are used as guidelines to reach the targeted audience. The structure at which social media is designed, means that people going through your post and feeds, will eventually lead to more publicity and expanded network or reach (Weinberg, 2009).

- c) Interactivity: The interactivity experienced in consuming newer media, makes the consumer more exposed to the content presented; this is so because users become more than just mere passive recipients of the information or stimulation as opposed to the conventional radio and television broadcast (Steuer, 1992). According to Steuer (1992), the term interactivity can be used as a depiction of the extent to which individuals participate in the modification of the content and form of a mediated setting in real-time. Interactivity of the most important characteristics of new media technologies, making it feasible for information to be easily accessed as well as providing necessary support for increased user engagement and control with respect to the social media content (Hill and Moran, 2011; Fiore et al., 2005). The word, interactivity, depends on the context of usage and so, with respect to social networking sites, it means user interactivity with messages, machines, and other users etc. (Hill and Moran, 2011). According to several studies, higher levels of interactivity can bring about higher participation, improved credibility assessment, and more positive attitudes displayed towards the respective websites (Bucy, 2003;

Hill and Moran, 2011; Sundar& Kalyanaraman, 2003). Moreover, interactivity makes it feasible for users to participate in personal social networking through the selection of the timing content, as well as the specific communication application of the SNS, so as to empower the individual. This is done to carry out two-way communication and control actively the contents available (Liu & Shrum 2002). On the other hand, interactivity can be more elaborate in its system by allowing the individuals to carryout online development of content (Hill and Moran, 2011).

- d) Customer Service: Customer service is indeed an important factor to consider in the development of an SNS. Web developers are oftentimes unable to completely point out the flaws as well as the complexity associated with the social networking sites. Frequently asked questions (FAQs) are important and linked to online representatives, they are useful for the assistance of customers in the buying and selection processes. Moreover, the use of toll free phone calls will also boost the credibility of the site as it makes it convenient for customers to reach out to companies (Gommans et al., 2001). Furthermore, a thoughtful logistic system is important for the guaranteeing fast delivery after a checkout process, which will contribute immensely to customer satisfaction, loyalty and recommendation (Gommans et al., 2001). Due to the insecurity that comes with the use of online services, the social media marketer needs to offer brands that are of good quality, well-known, and, ensures goods and services are optimally delivered (Gommans et al., 2001).
- e) Targeted Marketing: Social media networks have made it easier for specific audiences to be targeted as well as customers, based on personal interest as well as what friends they are associated with. Take for instance, your personal

preference of certain outfits this will most likely result in you seeing ads that showcases these kind of outfits and designs. Therefore, with such smart marketing, marketers are more drawn to offer services to these group of people knowing that these people are interested and connected to their services or products. Moreover, SNS enables word of mouth promotion by customers or users, of which advertising alone cannot achieve (Hill, Provost & Volinsky, 2006).

2.6.4.2 Disadvantages

- a) Copyright and Trademark Issues: It is very important that industries and companies protect their copyrights and trademarks while using social media as a means for promotion of products and brands (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). The ability of social media to facilitate impromptu as well as informal communication often times can assist companies in the dissemination of copyright materials as well as the promotion of brands. However, it can also give rise to third party abuse of firm's copyright and trademarks. It is important that companies need to consistently monitor their social media accounts as well as third party application that advertise their services and products. Impersonating a business is a criminal offense and this can adversely affect the reputation of the company's brand if left unchecked (Steinman and Hawkins, 2010). Therefore, it is vitally important that terms and conditions are defined by these companies on their respective social media accounts, to provide provision as well recommendation on how their social media content should be used.
- b) Time Consuming: Establishing contacts and data on customers usually requires consistent communication in order to solidify long term relationships to bring

in more sales and exposure. However, someone has to be tasked with the responsibility of monitoring the networks, answering questions, responding to comments and posting of product information (Barefoot and Szabo, 2010). Therefore, it becomes a major problem when businesses don't have a means of managing their social networks and one issue that will arise is the challenge of time management (Barefoot and Szabo, 2010).

- c) User Generated Content (UGC): Over the last few years, more information has been shared as well as more opinions and thoughts have circulated across the Internet. Moreover, newer forms of communication, content generation and collaboration have come about as a result of the Internet. User generated contents help Internet users to comment in various forms, such as podcast, videos, photos, reviews, articles, blogs and ratings (Mendes-Filho and Tan, 2009). There are risks involved in incorporating user generated content with marketing strategy, which brings about risks leading to legal liabilities for the individuals who participated in the ad campaign. Some of these risks that lead to legal ramifications could be ownership and licensing issues, and privacy concerns (Podnar, 2017). Under ownership and licensing issues, the question is has the brand utilised and followed all the copyright laws pertaining to the content? If not, there will be backlash on the brand. Furthermore, for the case of privacy, even if a brand chooses to post a user generated content under the creative common license, there might be minors or individuals within the photo whose permission haven't been solicited and so, can lead to legal charges.
- d) Negative Feedback: When it comes to social media, consumers can easily become advertisers and marketers, where negative and positive impressions or reviews can be created about a company's product and services, which is

completely dependent on how the company is perceived by the customer (Roberts and Kraynak, 2008). Product reviews by consumers have overtime served as reliable sources of information for product selection by customers. These reviews have increased rapidly in recent times and has had great impact on the electronic commerce (Ghose, Ipeiroitis, and Li, 2009). One damaging fact of social network marketing campaign is negative responses from post as unsatisfied customers post offensive videos, images and comments on the respective ads (Cheung, Lee, and Thadani 2009).

2.7 Purchasing Intentions

One of the most widely studied concept in marketing literature is purchasing intention. This growing interest in purchasing intention studies stems from its affiliation with the buying behaviour of consumers (Morwitz, (2014). Intentions give an indication of the degree to which people will be moved to execute a certain behaviour; also, it shows how many attempts they try in order to portray a certain type of behaviour. According to Vineyard (2014), purchasing intention can be defined as the likelihood of a customer to purchase a given service or product. Likewise, it is the planned tendencies to make a purchase in the future. It is also one of the major component of consumer cognitive behaviour, which models how individuals intend to make a purchase on a specific brand (Hosein, 2012). On the other hand, online purchasing intention is the willingness of the consumer to carry out a transaction and it is the intention made to execute a purchase. There have been several published researches that have shown that the consumer's intention to make a purchase has a considerable impact on the purchasing decision that is actually carried out (Meskaran, Ismail and Shanmugam, 2013). Therefore, it is one of the tools employed by firms to measure the intent of their consumers to make a purchase; this helps in boosting sales and increase their profit

margins. There are two types of behaviours that are linked to the purchasing intentions which are exploratory and goal oriented behaviour. Consumers that are goal oriented are more likely to make a purchasing decision after they have sourced for the information on a specific product. On the other hand, exploratory oriented consumers are more free minded and don't pre-plan their actions to make a purchase (Ramlugun and Jugurnauth, 2014).

Social media platforms have played a profound role on the consumer's intention to execute a purchase and so, this has led to a huge number of marketers to bank on these platforms to promote their services and products. It is a powerful tool that enables interconnectivity between the clients and the brands. For clothing brands, it is very common for individual shoppers, having the intention to make a purchase, to dedicate a large amount of time and effort to search through the social media pages or groups for the apparel they are looking for in order to meet their needs (Bhatti et al., 2017). In a study carried out by Son, Jin and George (2013), a positive relationship was established between the clothing interest and the purchasing intentions of the consumer. This shows that consumers interested in a brand on social media are likely to make a purchase.

According to a research carried out by Chang, Cheung and Lai (2005), there were over 80 variables that were found to be linked to the purchasing intentions of consumers. For the case of this research in clothing brand purchasing intentions, four important variables will be studied which are, demographics, price, social media influencer recommendation, and promotional campaigns. Moreover, social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic will also be investigated to evaluate its role on tertiary student purchasing intentions through social media platforms.

2.7.1 Factors Influencing Purchase Intention

There are several factors that are responsible for influencing a customer's purchasing intentions through social media marketing. As discussed in the previous section, these factors eventually lead customers to make a purchase and are instrumental in determining the success or failure of a brand through social media marketing. In this section, the five factors will be highlighted and discussed.

2.7.1.1 Demographics

One of the most widely investigated factors that impacts the online shopping characteristics of customers online is demographics. According to Zhou, Dai, and Zhang (2007), factors such as the gender, age, education, race and income, are significant variables that impact the shopping behaviour of a prospective customer. Females and males differ significantly in how they execute activities and meet goals as well as targets. The way they see the world is different and so, this affects how they process information. Therefore, it impacts how actions are taken. Independent factors such as trust, safety, secrecy and computer mediated factors can significantly affect a male and female's purchasing intention (Afshardost, Farahmandian, and SaqiqEshaghi, 2013). Furthermore, the populist belief of shopping simply being a female oriented exercise has been disproved as men spend more money for shopping than their female counter parts (Zhao et al., 2017). Also, younger adults are more accustomed to the technology; this is due to the fact that they were exposed to technology at an early phase of their life. Generations such as millennials and generation Z are more tech savvy as technology has become a vital part of their lives. As a result, they are more active online and carry out more shopping through these social media platforms because of their familiarity with the technology (Rezai et. al.,

2013). Based on these previous researches the ages chosen for this research are ranging from these generations, generation Z and millennials.

In a research carried out by, Kowalska (2012) an investigation was carried out to identify the impact of social media on younger adult buying behaviour. From the data, it was seen that ages 15-24 had a significantly higher cognizance on brands and were more inclined to purchase branded related merchandises. Another important factor under demographics is the disposable income of the individual, as research has shown that individuals with higher income shop more online than lower income earners (Wolfers and Zilinsky, 2015). Therefore, the variable of demographics incorporating the previously listed factors will be considered in this study.

2.7.1.2 Convenient Pricing

Price plays a significant role in influencing the purchasing decisions of individuals as well as the choice of services and products that are made. Before a purchase is made, the reasonableness and appropriateness of the price of the service or product is usually made and this becomes a motivating factor for the customer to make a purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2006; Gauzente and Roy 2012). Moreover, the price that is offered by other competing firms is also taken into consideration when making a purchase (Jayasingh and Eze 2012). Therefore, price matters to the customer and a purchase might not be made, if the price is perceived by the customer as too expensive. This is usually known as price consciousness and to a degree affects the purchasing behaviour of the customer. It is the unwillingness of the customer to make a purchase due to a higher pricing and oftentimes, highly priced conscious consumer usually search vigorously on the Internet for products that have higher economic benefits before making a purchase (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2007). Once customers perceive the value of a product

or service as affordable, there is a high possibility a purchase will be made. This is also true with respect to online shopping as it is a medium to cut cost in their spending and get good discounts on prices. As it saves the customer the time and effort it will take to locate a specific product or service by simply searching through search engines as opposed to traditionally shopping onsite (Lee , 2011). Moreover, through social media, it becomes much easier for information to be dispersed as price signals given by brands can alert prospective buyers and compel them to make a purchase. In a research carried out by Cham et al. (2018), the objective was to examine the factors that affect the clothing interest being developed by generation Y consumers in Malaysia. One of the variable that was studied is price and how price is correlated with clothing interest, eventually leading to a purchase. From the result, there was a strong positive relationship between the clothing interest and the purchasing intentions for the low price conscious group in contrast to the high price conscious group. However, cheaper pricing might not always be the motivating factor to make a purchase especially with respect to luxury brands, as some customers are willing to pay more for brands with higher quality products and image. This is true especially for clothing brands as individual's shop for notable brands like Channel, Versace, Gucci, etc. Therefore, in some cases, pricing won't have an impact on their purchasing intentions. In a study carried out by Izhar et al., (2017), the objective of the research was to examine the moderating impact of social media on its relation to sales promotion and price discounts to the customers purchasing intentions. From one of the results, it showed that price discounts had no significant impact on the purchasing intentions of customers. Therefore, the price variable will be factored into this research to see its significance on purchasing intention of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus using social media.

2.7.1.3 Social Media Influencer Recommendation

Consumers that are active on online platforms are not only willing to get recommendation on a product or service from families or peers but are more likely to get such information from influencers, celebrities and high status people in their respective fields. Influencer marketing has become an important tool used by brands to reach their target market, boost sales and increase their brand awareness. Social media platforms provide the necessary tool for influencers to reach their target audience and the tools available in this platform allow for consumers to discuss and share information which can severely affect the reputation of a brand. Therefore, brand pages or fan pages are not the only space on social media networks that prospective customers can find useful information but also through influencers, who generate intriguing and captivating content on the brand (Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). According to Welbourne and Grant (2016), such influencer generated contents have been shown to be more effective and popular than professional advertising. One reason for this is that consumers are looking for unbiased opinion on the brands and will normally lean towards the recommendations made by a trusted influencer. Often times, Instagram influencers introduce product or services that they have tried or tested to give their opinion on it to their followers (Abidin, 2016). Therefore, this sort of recommendation is considered by consumers as the true depiction of the quality and the performance of the brand, leading to the consumers eventually making a purchase online. In a research carried out by O'Neil-Hart and Blumenstein (2016), 70 percent of subscribers on YouTube can easily identify with influencers on YouTube than the conventional celebrities on the blue screen. These subscribers also follow these influencers on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat. In a study carried out by Hsu et al. (2013), it was observed that amongst the group of consumers studied, majority of the

participants believe their social media influencers will influence their opinion on brands as well as their ideologies. In a study carried out by Tahirah et al., (2020), this study seeks to pinpoint the features of social media influencers which contribute to the purchasing intentions in the fashion industry. From the findings, it was observed that the trustworthiness of the influencer was one of the key factors that influenced the Instagram users purchasing intentions. This means that social media influencers on Instagram or Facebook have a powerful influence on the marketing strategies being employed by businesses or firms. Therefore, the way social media influencers' recommendations on social media influence tertiary students purchasing intentions in Northern Cyprus will be discussed in this research.

2.7.1.4 Promotional Campaigns

Promotional campaigns are usually series of advertisement messages that are put together to propagate an idea or theme which makes up an integrated marketing communication. Moreover, the promotional campaigns integrate diverse media channel and the general idea is to maximise reach, impact and work with specific time frames. Social media gives brands a wonderful opportunity to capitalise on the growing numbers of users online, where the brands can easily target their specific demographics and create content that is unique to them. This eventually leads to the consumer making a purchase. In a research carried out by Duffett (2015), showed that there is a relationship between marketing on Facebook and the intention to make a purchase through the media. From the result of the study, it was seen that advertising on Facebook had a real positive impact on the behavioural attitudes, with respect to the intention to make a purchase. Another interesting information that was found is that the perception of the users in seeing posts on Facebook was impacted by the demographic status, characteristics, online duration, profile updates etc. Therefore, it

is important that brands invest more time and strategies that will be employed on social media platforms in order to maximise reach and impact. Therefore, promotional campaigns through social media will be taken into consideration in investigating its impact on purchasing intentions in Northern Cyprus, focusing on clothing brands.

2.7.1.5 Social Media Usage during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to over 228 million cases of infected individuals globally in the year 2021. However, the resulting death due to the COVID-19 pandemic counted at 4.6 million globally, (WHO, 2021). Nonetheless, at its early phase, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a global change, also leading to lockdowns and restrictions, as the virus became more of a widespread pandemic, it has gotten deadlier causing millions of individuals all across the globe to stay in their homes and so, more people have become more active online to share information, and access all kinds of information available on social media pertaining to the health risks and repercussions about the COVID-19 virus, the social networking sites (SNS) were used as a means for information to the public about the dangerous diseases. A questionnaire survey carried out in two-stages by Deliotte (2020), was done to capture the fashion industry facts as well as the consumer behaviour in-depth, the survey had over 2000 online participants. Insight of their behaviour before and during the COVID-19 pandemic were analysed. One of the findings showed that there was a significant difference between the increased usage of the individuals purchasing services and goods online and those who tried doing this for the first time. Moreover, with respect to the category of concern, 25 to 45% of the participants who bought from this category online in the past, stated that their online shopping activities rose during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a great change in the food and drugs industries who witnessed a huge boost

in their online channels. Also the clothing brands in the fashion industry strongly took social media marketing to boost sales during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within the social media spectrum, marketing has changed completely to fit into the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In the report given by Socialbakers (2020), the impact of COVID-19 on the trends in marketing, nationwide, is analysed. Moreover, data shows shifts that occurred in the market as well as the reaction of the brands to the pandemic. The results from report showed that fans of brand pages, on Facebook, within Europe spent more time on Facebook than other SNS. Furthermore, statistics showed that there was a rise in the usage of the site from March, from every day of the week from the waking hours, in comparison to the previous months. The peak period of usage was 8pm as opposed to the period when most people were normally not home, in the morning and afternoon. For instance, there was an increase of 13.2% from first Friday night in February to Friday night in March after the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Moreover, 14.8% increase happened on Saturday. Another interesting notable change was in the ad objectives for Instagram and Facebook. There was a significant increase due to the pandemic. For Facebook an increase of 13.5% was noticed while 15.8% was noticed for Instagram (Socialbakers, 2020). Therefore, the social media usage during the pandemic will be investigated in this study to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic played a role in the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

To further explain the role of social media marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic, to analyse the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. The aim

of the study is set to be guided by these theories, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), Media System Theory (MDS), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

2.8.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The UGT is a widely utilised approach for describing the behaviour of the individual with respect to the media and it helps in showing and explaining the social and psychological aftermath. Moreover, it provides a clear depiction of the subsequent behavioural and attitudinal impact of media consumption (Apaolaza and Hartmann, 2014). Therefore, this theory paints a picture of the satisfaction and usage level of a person utilising social media. Moreover, it explains how social media can have an influence on the lifestyle of individuals. In this crucial period, with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, fighting off the cognitive as well as the negative thoughts that is prevalent in our minds is a major undertaking and so, to be able to stay entertained and updated, social media serves as an escape route for the mind to be relieved (Riva et al, 2016). This theory states that consumers make use of media to satisfy their needs. In the light, social media are used for achieving multiple purposes. Some people utilise it for entertainment, others for knowledge gathering and others for communication purposes. Therefore, it is only the human needs that can define the approach in which we use this social media. Furthermore, this theory is mostly used in social media for determining the connection that exist between the various aspects of relationship on social media. According to Ruggiero (2000), it is the intention of the user that helps to explain social media's role within the context of its usage in our society. Additionally, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), can be used for making a comparison between other mediums and social medium in terms of entertainment as well as information acquisition. The choice of which medium is preferable by an individual within the social media space, is also addressed by UGT. The question of the quality as well as

the authenticity of the social media platform as accessed by audience, is also answered by the application of the UGT. Interestingly, UGT also explains the media usage scheme, which indirectly leads to an increase in the adoption and usage of social media. Furthermore, UGT helps to explain cases where its usage declines (Moreno et al., 2012).

In relation to this thesis research, information on clothing brands can be accessed by social media users to enhance their knowledge of the brands. This platform will provide information on their acquaintances, firms and improve their relationship with their desired brands. Therefore, this research will take into account two dimensions of gratifications with respect to the clothing brands. Information seeking such as the needs for tertiary students to enhance their knowledge and awareness of the brand, and social presence.

In a previous study by (Shao, 2009; Venkatesh et al. 2012) it is the extent to which mass communication allows the tertiary students to connect with the brands, experience others and establish the human element of contact through the brand pages and groups.

Furthermore, UGT of social media is most likely to influence the attitude of the user as it is being consumed as seen in a study carried out by Han et al. (2015), to show the relationship between uses and gratification theory and attitude of mobile phone social networking sites users. The results showed that there was a positive and direct relationship between uses and gratifications theory and the attitude portrayed by the consumers in the usage of SNS on their mobile phones in South Korea. Therefore,

within the context of tertiary students' usage of social media for information seeking and social presence with respect to the clothing brand, gratification is anticipated.

2.8.2 Media System Dependency (MSD) Theory

Media system dependency theory (MSD), also commonly known as the media dependency theory is a theory that draws a connection between the mass media, broad social systems and the individual, into a broad comprehensive explanation of the impact of media. This theory was developed in the year 1976 by Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur and the basis of its operation is grounded in sociological literature, where the theory postulates that audiences and media should be evaluated or studied within the context of their bigger social system (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). Therefore, in media system dependency, as an individual continues to depend on a certain media to meet needs, the media level of importance increases in the life of the person and so, there becomes a positive correlation of the impact the media will make in the life of the person. According to the model proposed by Ball-Rokeach and Defluer (1976), the media, society and the audience concerned, influences or has an impact on each other and through interactions, the society as well as the media, piece together an affective, cognitive and behavioural effect on the individual. For the case of social media usage, the media in this context refers to the social media audience, which are tertiary students. Social media is a powerful medium that helps in interconnecting individuals together for a variety of reasons, and so, this medium, helps in creating a system of dependency that has a profound impact on the user of this technology. In a research carried out by Li and Liu (2017), a laboratory experiment was carried out on a 113 adults, to investigate two SNS websites with two different languages (i.e. Spanish and English). This two website differed in the sense that one was with an American cultural construct, while the other was with a Hispanic cultural

construct. The application of MSD theory was used to evaluate their usage and motives behind this usage. From the result, it was found that the usage of both the websites were motivated on each individual social play dependency on such SNS platform. Moreover, the usage of either the English SNS or the Spanish SNS, did not significantly influence the cultural orientation and attitude formation of the user. Furthermore, in another study carried out by Yang, Ha, Wang and Abuljadail (2015), to compare the online purchasing behaviour of older and younger individuals by evaluating those who began online purchases through the use of MSD theory. The focus, however, were on actual purchases online and not on the purchasing intentions of the individual online. From the results, it was seen that younger individuals made more purchases online when compared to the older generations. The beginning of content behaviour online were captured, which included the online shopping habits, age group and ownership of the mobile devices. Moreover, mobile phone dependency, social dependency and Internet dependency with respect to intensity and referent dependency were studied. It was found that referent dependency such as, the variety of ways respondent gained access to the media had a higher level of importance than intensity dependency (frequency of usage or hours spent on that media), in the prediction of the online content purchase. As seen, MSD theory has been utilised in numerous studies and so, it will be applied in this study to examine the social media usage frequency dependency in predicting purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus during the global pandemic.

2.8.3 The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is an extension of the theory of reasoned action (TRA), which was initially developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). This theory was developed on the assumption that the attitude of an individual is linked to the behaviour

of the individual. This theory was developed by Aizen (1991), due to the inadequacies of the theory of reasoned action to account for the behaviours of which individuals did not have complete control (Sentosa and Mat, 2012). Furthermore, according to Aizen (1991), “Intentions to perform behaviours of different kinds can be predicted with high accuracy from attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control; and these intentions, together with perceptions of behavioural control, account for considerable variance in actual behaviour” (p. 171). In other words, the theory of planned behaviour states that the purchasing intention of an individual is basically gotten from the subjective norms, attitude and perceived behavioural control. These major three factors are therefore important for the prediction of intent of an individual and the resulting in the behaviour portrayed (Aizen, 1991).

Subjective norms can be defined as social impacts that have an influence on the individual’s beliefs and behaviour. Moreover, it is how they will be viewed by other people (Tariq et al., 2017). There have been studies that show the positive relationship that exist between subjective norms and the intention to use a social media platform (Hsu et al. 2015; Wu et al., 2015; Tariq et al., 2017). With respect to purchasing intentions, there was a study carried out by Cho and Yang (2012) that shows that subjective norm is one of the indicators of attitude towards making a purchase through social media.

The next component of theory of planned behaviour is attitude. It is a function of cognitive beliefs and shows a positive and negative feeling about carrying out a specific behaviour. According to a research carried out by Tariq et al (2017) and Hsu et al. (2014), there is a significant positive correlation between the intention to use

social media platforms and the attitude of the respondents. Furthermore, there were other studies that showed a positive connection established between users following brands on Twitter, and the intentions of the individuals to make posts on Instagram of their selfies (Chu et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016). However, studies on the intention to make a purchase using social media platforms directly are quite rare. Nonetheless, a study carried out by Pöyry, Parvinen, and Malmivaara (2013), was able to find a positive correlation between the intention to use and browse through Facebook travel agency pages and intention to make a purchase online. Therefore, the use of the Internet is a characteristic of an intention to purchase.

Finally, Yousafzai et al. (2010) stated that controlled beliefs are tied to the opportunities and the resources that an individual possesses. Moreover, it is the anticipated impediments channelled towards the performance of the targeted behaviour. Lim et al. (2016) stated that when a person perceives that they have the necessary resources, opportunities as well as abilities to carry out a certain behaviour, there is a tendency of that individual to have a perception of being more in control. However, in this research, subjective norms and attitude will be studied from the theory of reasoned action. These components will be used to investigate the ties to purchasing intentions on social media by tertiary students on clothing brand pages.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology of the thesis is discussed. This chapter covers the research design, research questions, data collection methods and instruments, pilot study, reliability of data collection instruments, sample size and population.

3.1 Research Overview

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the role of social media marketing, particularly through the use of Facebook and Instagram, on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Five independent variables will be analysed i.e. demographics, social media influencer's recommendation, convenient pricing, promotional campaign, and social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1. Is there any significant difference between female and male tertiary students' purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2. Is there any significant difference between the nationalities of the tertiary students and their purchasing intentions on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ3. Does convenience/affordable pricing positively influence tertiary students' purchasing intentions of a clothing brand during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ4. Is there any significant difference between the age, the faculty and the disposable income of tertiary students as to their purchasing intentions on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ5. During the COVID-19 pandemic, does the interaction between the clothing brand influencers and their recommendations to customers positively impact the purchasing intention of tertiary students?

RQ6. Do promotional brand activities influence tertiary students' purchasing intentions of a brand during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ7. Is there an increase in student's online activity on fashion brand pages on Instagram and Facebook as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ8. During the COVID-19 pandemic has the social media marketing been able to capture and create better customer services for tertiary students?

RQ9. Is the COVID-19 pandemic positively affecting the purchasing intentions of tertiary students?

3.2 Research Design

A descriptive analysis is used in this research, also a quantitative research method will be used. According to Ramanathan et al., (2020), the quantitative research methodology can be described as a holistic step that is utilised by researchers as a means for analysing variables or quantifying data in a numerical format. And so, this methodology's operational system works by utilising statistical tools to analyse data numerically. Under the quantitative research methodology, the descriptive research method will be utilised to achieve the objective of this research. It is a method that is used for describing existing situations and ongoing phenomenon. Therefore, it will fit perfectly within the context of social media marketing and its role on tertiary students' purchasing intentions. Sukamolson (2007) stated that a survey incorporates a design,

sampling and the distribution of the survey, for data acquisition from a group of people or population that are participants of a study. Analysis is then carried out for the purpose of extracting the behaviours as well as the features that are tied to the participants in the research. In terms of its construct, interview and questionnaires might look similar. However, the approach in which it is conducted differ vastly. One major difference between these two approaches is that in the questionnaire approach, the participants answer the questions on their own, (Vehkalahti 2008, p. 12).

The research for this study as carried out by online questionnaires, the data collection period was from April 5th to June 15th, 2021. The google forms survey were shared to the students in tertiary institutions in three main cities Northern Cyprus, Famagusta, Nicosia, and Kyrenia. The universities in these cities were chosen because of the high diversity in the population of international students studying in different faculties in order to have a variety of responses. Moreover, the correlation method will be used in this study to investigate the relationships that exist between the variables as well as determine the existing level of variance to portray the relationship effect.



Figure 3.1: Research Model

Furthermore, this research will incorporate the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) as the primary theory for addressing the aforementioned questions. Based on the TPB, tertiary students purchasing intentions is the dependent variable. Demographics and price are dimensions of attitude, which make up two independent variables. Moreover, social media influencer and promotional campaign are dimensions of subjective norms which make up two independent variables. Additionally, the COVID-19 as an extraneous variable will be considered with respect to online activity, better customer service and the role it played on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. Furthermore, SNS intension to use clothing brands is a sub-dimension under purchasing intentions. Also, the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and media

system dependency theory (MDT) will also be incorporated into the research to contribute to addressing these the research questions. The SNS intension to use clothing brands also constitutes the MDT and the UGT. Under the MDT, supplementary discussions will be given with respect to the social media usage frequency (clothing brand pages) stated in the literature review. Finally, the UGT will be discussed within the context of tertiary students' usage of social media for information seeking and social presence. Based on this research, a brief review on descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and ANOVA is provided in the sections below to give insight as to the type of analysis that will be carried out.

3.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics is the term which is used for evaluating the data that shows, describes or summaries data in a meaningful way and so, is quite useful for uncovering patterns that emerge. Descriptive statistics is incredibly vital as it is plays an important role in representing the data in readable format through the use of graphs, plots, mean, standard deviation etc. In all, it enables data to be presented in a meaningful way so as to allow for simplified interpretation of the data. Descriptive statistics can be utilised for summarizing the data in an organised way thereby describing the connection between the variables in a population or sample. Therefore, calculating descriptive statistics is an important step to carry out when conducting the research and it includes various types of variables such as ordinal, nominal, ratio and interval (Kaur, Stoltzfus, and Yellapu, 2018). Moreover, it covers the measure of central tendency, frequency, position and dispersion/variation. Therefore, descriptive statistics will play an important role in representing the data and organizing it in tabular format in order to investigate the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2.2 Pearson Correlation

The essence of the correlation coefficient is for determining whether or not a significant relationship between two variables that are compared exists. Hence, the most commonly utilised correlation coefficient is the Pearson correlation introduced by Karl Pearson (Pearson, 1895). Therefore, Pearson correlation is used for depicting the relationship between two continuous variables, where the analysis will yield a value in between +1 and -1. Furthermore, a correlation coefficient of zero will mean that there is no relationship that exists either negative or positive. When the value of the correlation coefficient is +1 it means that a perfect correlation is realised. Additionally, in a +1 scenario, as one of the variable increases, there will be a direct proportional increase with other compared variable. Likewise, as one variable decreases, the other variable will decrease in proportionality. However, when a value of -1 emanates, it means an inverse proportionality relationship exist between the two compared variables. This means as one variable increases, the other decreases and vice versa. According to Cohen (1988), the strength of the association is based on the r-coefficient, where 0.1 is at the minimum value, 0.3 is at the medium value and 0.5 and upwards is very high. The formula for Pearson Correlation is stated below:

$$K = \frac{\sum ab - N\bar{a}\bar{b}}{\sqrt{(\sum a^2 - N\bar{a}^2)(\sum b^2 - N\bar{b}^2)}}$$

Where:

K = Pearson Correlation

a = variable 1

b = variable 2

\bar{a} = average of the variable 1

\bar{b} = average of the variable 2

N = Number of data pairs or cases.

3.2.3 ANOVA

The analysis of variance also known as the ANOVA, is a more generalised version of the t-test that is utilised for evaluating the difference that exists in a continuous dependent variable between two or more independent groups. In simple terms, ANOVA helps in identifying if there are any statistical differences between the means of two or more independent groups. ANOVA sometimes also called Fisher's ANOVA was developed by Sir Ronald Fisher and is a novel approach used by researchers globally (Kremelberg, 2011). For the case of this study, the one-way ANOVA is employed as it is utilised for comparing two means from two independent groups by ascertaining the F-statistics. The table below highlights the formula that is used for acquiring the F-statistics and evaluating the significance between compared groups. In all, the test ascertains a significant value between the variables, where we define the level of significance (also commonly known as the probability of error) as 0.05. Therefore, if the p -value is less than 0.05 then we can say with 95 % probability of not arriving at an error that the difference between the compared groups is statistically significant (Kremelberg, 2011).

Table 3.1: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Formulas (Kremelberg, 2011)

Variation Sources	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square (MS)	F-statistics
Within	$SS_w = \sum_{e=1}^m \sum_{f=1}^n (a - \bar{a}_f)^2$	$df_w = m - 1$	$MS_w = \frac{SS_w}{df_w}$	$F = \frac{MS_w}{MS_b}$
Between	$SS_b = \sum_{e=1}^m (\bar{a}_f - \bar{a})^2$	$df_b = z - m$	$MS_b = \frac{SS_b}{df_b}$	
Total	$SS_t = \sum_{e=1}^z (\bar{a}_f - \bar{a})^2$	$df_t = z - 1$		

Where:

$\sum a$ = Sum of all the values of that specific group

$\sum \bar{a}_f$ = the mean of all the values in that specific group

$\sum (a^2)$ = A sum of the square of the group's values

$\sum (\sum a)$: Summation of the various values for each group

$\sum [\sum (a^2)]$: Summation of the values for $\sum (a^2)$ that we calculated initially

3.3 Data Collection Method and Instruments

Therefore, this study employs the survey research design and solely utilises primary data. A questionnaire was the major data acquisition tool for the primary data. Moreover, the questionnaire was written in English as most tertiary students in Northern Cyprus are accustomed to the English language as means of writing and communicating. The format that was used in the questionnaire were closed ended questions. In closed ended questions, the structure of the questions is scalar based, where the participants have a list of options to choose from (Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2009). Additionally, the inductive approach is utilised, where the results of the data acquired from the questionnaire is compared with the previous studies and findings in literature, in order to disapprove or confirm the literature. For the case of this thesis, the questionnaire is categorised under three headings. In the first heading, the demographics are presented. Under this heading the respondents are required to answer some general questions with respect to their personal data such as their ethnicity, gender, age, current academic level, relationship status and income. The second heading discusses the preliminary data on social media marketing. Questions such as social media usage type, frequency, most active social media account, clothing brands followership, and shopping are discussed. Thirdly, the role of social media marketing on tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, where questions on convenient

pricing, social media influencer's recommendation, promotional campaign and impact of COVID-19, are enquired. Moreover, questions on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students, which represents the dependent variable are given. Altogether there are 32 questions, 19 of the questions are Likert scale questions. The Likert scale questions is based on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Where strongly agree =5, agree=4, undecided =3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. These scale based questions gives the participants the opportunity to rate factors based on their own personal opinion. Therefore, this scale will be incorporated as a means to rate the tertiary students personal opinion on the role of social media marketing in their purchasing intentions through clothing brands. In table 3.2, the questions that were used in conducting this research are presented.

Table 3.2: Data Collection Instruments

No.	Constructs	Measures
4	Demographics	1) Which region are you from? 2) What is your age? 3) What is your gender? 4) What is your program type? 5) What is your faculty? 6) What is your relationship status? 7) How much would you say is your disposable income after the bills have been settled?
5	Preliminary Data on Social Media and Marketing	1) Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) do you have an account with? (Tick all that applies in this section) 2) How many hours do you spend daily on the SNS that you have an account? 3) Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) are you most active on? 4) Do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/ and Instagram? 5) If yes, how often do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram 6) Which social media have you ever bought clothing from?

6	Role of Social Media Marketing on Tertiary Students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) I often follow clothing brands on social media platforms because of their good discounted prices. 2) Clothing brands on social media that are affordable are of great interest to me. 3) I am more loyal to a clothing brand that offers rewards such as price discounts, free gifts, etc. to engage with me on their page on Facebook or/ and Instagram. 4) I am attracted to check the page of a clothing brand on Facebook or/and Instagram that has a colourful and welcoming appeal. 5) Info graphics, videos and pictures of clothing brands I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram are interesting and captivating. 6) I like seeing advertisements on clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram. 7) It is easy to engage in conversions with social media platform operators of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 8) It's easier to access contents of clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram than through any other social media platform during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 9) The COVID-19 Pandemic has made clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more effective in handling the demands of their customers online. 10) I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 11) I am more likely to be interested with a clothing brand on Facebook and /or Instagram that is recommended to me by a social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, and Blogger etc.). 12) I am more likely to recommend a clothing brand to my friends and family, if the social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, Blogger etc.) I follow recommends it to me. 13) Positive reviews from social media influencers (Celebrities, YouTubers, Bloggers etc.) I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram develop my interest in a clothing brand. 14) The COVID-19 Pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram.
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		<p>15) I follow information relating to clothing brands on Instagram or/and Facebook more often during the COVID-19 Pandemic than in previous years.</p> <p>16) I often comment on posts of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more often during the COVID-19 Pandemic than in the past.</p> <p>17) I use the “like” option on clothing brands posts; I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic more than the previous years.</p> <p>18) Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram helps me make better decisions before purchasing a good during the pandemic.</p> <p>19) Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic has added to my interest in purchasing products online.</p>
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However, in carrying out a survey based research, there are some drawbacks that inhibit the validity of the research which includes, the lack of accurate responses by some participants (especially in open ended questions) or incomplete submissions. Also, there could be misunderstandings in trying to understand the questions dispersed as some participants may not have enough knowledge on the subject matter. Most of these problems can be limited and avoided by conducting a pilot test to see its accuracy before conducting the full scale research. Another important measure to take to reduce errors is to have a cover letter that describes and explains the objective of the research. Information which involves the selection process, content, and what the results will be used for should be stated (Vehkalahti, 2008). Therefore, this thesis will conduct a pilot test to reduce the likelihood of errors. This will be discussed in subsequent sections, however, the next section gives more details on the pilot study.

3.4 Pilot Study

Before proceeding to the main research, a pilot study was carried out first. The pilot study serves as a small scale trial in preparation for the main study to be carried out. Moreover, it is a pre-test of the instrument of the research and this test serves as a basis on how the entire study will perform when the actual sample size is utilised. Moreover, the pilot study serves as a means of validation of the questions being asked through the questionnaire. To make progress with the research, the questionnaire design had to be simple to prevent misinterpretations by respondents. Moreover, it had careful reviewing and adjustments to provide more clarity and focus to the subject that will be analysed. According to Malhotra (2006), the importance of pilot testing cannot be overemphasized as it gives opportunities as well as chances to revise the process of instrumentation and data collection. Also, the pilot test helps in the elimination of errors and mistakes within the actual survey questionnaires. In this research, no specific clothing brand was targeted and so, the respondents choice of clothing brands were subject to their own discretion as the objective of this thesis was to investigate the role of social media marketing on tertiary students purchasing intentions in Northern Cyprus during the pandemic by taking clothing brands as a case study.

To conduct the pilot test, a total of 20 respondents were used to analyse the questionnaires and capture if the questions are understandable and test the timing to be distributed to the rest of the participants. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions of movements, the purposive sampling method was used for the pilot test. The researcher focused on Eastern Mediterranean University students since the researcher is a student of the mentioned tertiary institution and could select students from the various departments to participate in carrying out the pilot test, the test was

conducted online via a google form questionnaire. The pilot test was carried out on the 5th of April and the first phase was sending the questions to 20 respondents from the faculty of Communication and Media studies, Art and Science, Business and Economics and Education. This was done to get their feedback on the questions, in order to know if they are understandable. Moreover, the second phase was having the respondents fill the data and give feedback on the different sections as well as their opinions on the answered questions.

3.5 Reliability of Data Collection Instrument

Cronbach Alpha (1951) reliability test was carried out on the answered questions, for the evaluation of consistency amongst the variables of the study. There are various arguments that are utilised from previous literature to determine the acceptability criteria for the reliability and validity investigation. According to Hair et al. (2011), if the Cronbach alpha coefficient value is lower than 0.6, then there is a poor association amongst the variables, while a value greater than 0.7 and higher signals a strong association. The reliability of the study can be calculated by using the formula from Neuendorf (2002), which is the Cronbach coefficient alpha method. This is defined as follows:

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum S^2y}{S^2x} \right]$$

Where:

α = Coefficient alpha reliability estimate.

k = Number of test items

S^2y = Variance of individual test

S^2x = Variance of the whole test

Statistically, the result is as follows:

$$\alpha = 19 / (19 - 1) \times (1 - (13.94 / 99.01))$$

$$\alpha = 0.91$$

Therefore, from the reliability tests carried out for the pilot study, in the results it can be seen that the questionnaire is valid and reliable. With the Cronbach alpha value **0.91**. In essence, this has satisfied the standard defined by Hair et al. (2011), which means the data analysed can be relied on.

3.6 Sample Size and Population

In this research, the sampling techniques that was employed is the purposive sampling method. In this sampling method, a specified targeted number of participants are chosen. For this research, the target number of students were 400 students from three tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus. Due to the COVID-19 virus spread which made the government of Northern Cyprus to impose the lockdown and restrictions to curtail the spread of the disease this lead to the sample size of 356 tertiary students participating in the survey using the snowballing sampling method to meet the time frame for the collection of data. The names of the three institutions are Eastern Mediterranean University (Famagusta), Girne American University (Kyrenia) and Near East University (Nicosia). The universities that were used in this research were chosen because these universities are the universities with the highest number of students in the main cities in Northern Cyprus because they are also known amongst the oldest tertiary institutions in Northern Cyprus and this served as a diverse sample to carry out this research due to the high number of students, in which they have a variety of faculties, nationalities, and students of different age groups, to have more accurate mean values and interpret the results significantly. The targeted participants were tech savvy tertiary students who are accustomed to the use of social networking sites and have access to it. Moreover, the sample covers tertiary students at any

educational level in undergraduate, masters and PhD programs. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, the questionnaires were distributed through digital platforms. As of April 2021, the COVID-19 cases in Northern Cyprus were seen to rise across the country and so, most participants were indoors. Therefore, the strategy employed was to contact the NEU and GAU international offices to inform them of the research in order to solicit their support in distributing the questionnaire through their online platforms.

For EMU, links were shared with participants in school and links were being shared to student participants on the campus, the international office was notified via email and informations on the research topic and the objectives were provided. Once the questionnaire was submitted, the international office assisted by broadcasting the links to the students emails. Aside this, the links were shared via SNS and emails, to students reached on campuses. This was done by personally distributing the links to students encountered on campus and creating groups on WhatsApp to encourage the contacts collected to fill the questionnaire. Moreover, the Nigerian Student Association (NSS) was notified on the activity and assisted by communicating with other associations to share the links to international students, these were done using the snowballing method to distribute the surveys, and this was done in order to meet up with the sample size of 356 students which was gotten at the end of the distribution period, which started on 5th of April and was concluded June 15th, 2021.

3.7 Analysis of Data

In this research, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software was employed for carrying out descriptive statistics, Correlational analysis and ANOVA amongst the variables. SPSS was used for presenting the data in graphical

format, tables, and plots. In all, the general idea is to ascertain the relationship amongst the independent variables and the dependent variable (Freund, Wilson and Sa, 2006). Furthermore, the goal is to determine the relationships the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), media dependency theory (MDT), and uses and gratifications theory (UGT) on the online purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus during the COVID-19 pandemic, by taking clothing brands as case study.

Chapter 4

DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, analysis of the findings of the research are presented and discussed. The information covered in this chapter includes the demographic data on tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, preliminary data on social media marketing, role of social media marketing on tertiary students purchasing intentions, to analyse the differences amongst the demographic factors and purchasing intentions, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) is used, also to analyse the relationship between the social media marketing factors and purchasing intentions Pearson correlation is used, and finally, the reliability statistics of the data accumulated from the total number of respondents in this thesis is given.

4.1 Demographic Data of Tertiary Students

In this section, the demographic data of the tertiary students is depicted under the category of region, age, gender, program type, faculty, relationship status, and disposable income after paying bills.

Table 4.1: Region

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Sub-Saharan Africa	173	48.6	49.0	49.0
	South east Asia	12	3.4	3.4	52.4
	North Cyprus	73	20.5	20.7	73.1
	Turkey	24	6.7	6.8	79.9
	MENA (Middle East North Africa)	45	12.6	12.7	92.6
	Others	26	7.3	7.4	100.0
	Total	353	99.2	100.0	

	Missing System	3	.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.1, the region in which the tertiary students hail from is illustrated. From the results shown, it can be seen that Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest percentage of 49%, with 173 respondents out of 353 valid responses. This is followed by North Cyprus with the second highest percentage of 20.7%, with 73 respondents. The third highest is MENA which had a percentage of 12.7%, with 45 respondents representing. Others had a percentage of 7.3%, with 26 respondents and finally, South East Asia had a percentage of 3.4%, with 12 the respondents out of the total sample size. Therefore, this means the majority of the respondents that participated in this survey are from Sub-Saharan region of Africa.

Table 4.2: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	16-19	67	18.8	18.8	18.8
	20-25	224	62.9	62.9	81.7
	26-30	38	10.7	10.7	92.4
	31-35	19	5.3	5.3	97.8
	35 and above	8	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.2, the ages of the tertiary students are illustrated. From the results shown, it can be seen that the age range of 20-25 had the highest percentage of 62.9%, with 224 responses from 356 total responses. Following this, the second highest is the age range of 16-19 which had a percentage of 18.8%, with 67 responses. Moreover, the age range of 26-30 had a percentage of 10.7%, representing 38 responses, followed by the age range of 31-35 had a percentage of 5.3%, representing 19 responses and finally, the

age range of 35 and above had least percentage value of 2.2%, representing 8 responses. Therefore, this means that most of the respondents who participated in this research are from the generation Z generational cohorts, who are more in tune with technology usage and application. Especially with respect to social media, and so, this is a perfect sample group for this research.

Table 4.3: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	156	43.8	43.8	43.8
Female	200	56.2	56.2	100.0
Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.3, the gender distribution of the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus are illustrated. From the results shown, it can be seen that females had the highest percentage of 56.2%, with 200 respondents and males had the lowest percentage of 43.8%, with 156 respondents. In all, the frequency margin between the males and the females is 44, which isn't majorly significant. However, it does show that more females participated in this research than males.

Table 4.4: Educational level of Study in the University

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Undergraduate	247	69.4	69.4	69.4
Masters	90	25.3	25.3	94.7
PhD	19	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.4, the educational level of the tertiary students are illustrated. From the results shown, it can be seen that undergraduate students had the highest percentage of

69.4%, with respondents representing 247 out of the total number of 356 respondents. Following this, master students had the second highest percentage of 25.3%, with 90 respondents and finally, PhD students had the lowest percentage of 5.3%, with 19 respondents. This results shows that more undergraduate students participated in this research and this data tallies with the findings from the age distribution, where generation z where the generational cohorts that participated the most.

Table 4.5: Faculty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Communication and Media Studies	99	27.8	28.0	28.0
	Business & Economics	76	21.3	21.5	49.6
	Engineering	87	24.4	24.6	74.2
	Architecture	9	2.5	2.5	76.8
	Arts & Sciences	24	6.7	6.8	83.6
	Pharmacy & Medicine	34	9.6	9.6	93.2
	Tourism	10	2.8	2.8	96.0
	Others	14	3.9	4.0	100.0
	Total	353	99.2	100.0	
	Missing System	3	.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.5, the faculty distribution of the tertiary students are illustrated here. From the results shown, it can be seen that students from communication and media studies had the highest percentage of 28%, with 99 respondents from the total number of 353. Following this, engineering students had the second highest percentage of 24.6%, with 87 respondents. Moreover, business and economics students had a percentage of 21.5%, with 76 respondents. Furthermore, Pharmacy and medicine students had a percentage of 9.6%, with 34 respondents. On the other hand, Art and science students had a percentage of 6.8%, with 24 respondents. Additionally, others students had a

percentage of 4%, with 14 respondents. Also, tourism had a percentage of 2.8%, with 10 respondents. Finally, architecture students had the lowest percentage of 2.5%, representing 9 respondents. This means that more students participated in this survey from Communication and Media Studies faculty.

Table 4.6: Relationship Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Single	284	79.8	79.8	79.8
	Married	23	6.5	6.5	86.2
	Divorced	6	1.7	1.7	87.9
	No comment	43	12.1	12.1	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.6, the relationship status of the tertiary students are illustrated. From the results shown, it can be seen that most tertiary students that participated in the survey were single having a percentage of 79.8%, with the respondents representing 284. Those students that would rather not disclose their relationship status had a percentage of n=12.1%, with the respondents representing 43 in number. Furthermore, students that were married had a percentage 6.5%, with 23 respondents. Finally, students that were divorced had the lowest percentage of 1.7%, representing 6 respondents. This shows that majority of the students that participated in this research are single. This is justifiable as most students are categorized under the generation z.

Table 4.7: Disposable Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Less than 1500TL per month	111	31.2	31.4	31.4
	1500TL-3500TL per month	132	37.1	37.4	68.8
	3501TL-5500TL per month	53	14.9	15.0	83.9
	5501TL-7500TL per month	39	11.0	11.0	94.9
	more than 7500TL per month	18	5.1	5.1	100.0
	Total	353	99.2	100.0	
	Missing System	3	0.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.7, the disposable income distribution of the tertiary students are shown. From the results shown, it can be seen that most tertiary students in Northern Cyprus stated that they spend between 1500TL to 3500TL per month with a percentage of 37.4%, with 132 respondents out of 353. Following, tertiary students having a disposable income of less than 1500TL per month had a percentage of 31.4%, with 111 respondents. Furthermore, tertiary students with a disposable income of 3501TL-5500TL per month had a percentage of 15%, with 53 respondents. Also, tertiary students with a disposable income of 5501TL-7500TL per month have a percentage of 11%, with 39 respondents. Finally, students with a disposable income of more than 7500TL had the least percentage of 5.1%, with 18 respondents. These results show that most students that participated are not working and so, are confined to a certain monthly allowance which they use to meet up their expenses.

4.2 Preliminary Data on Social Media Usage Frequency amongst the Tertiary Students in Northern Cyprus

In this section, the results on the preliminary data on social media usage frequency amongst the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus are discussed. This section majorly reveals the tertiary students preferred SNS, the daily frequency of usage, the tertiary students most active SNS, also how often the tertiary students follow the clothing brands on SNS, and the SNS that the students have bought clothing on. Therefore, this section presents the descriptive statistics of these mentioned data of the tertiary students studying in Northern Cyprus.

Table 4.8: Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) do you have an account with?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Facebook	112	14.6	14.6	14.6
Twitter	102	13.3	13.3	27.9
Instagram	145	19.0	19.0	46.9
Snap Chat	94	12.3	12.3	59.2
WhatsApp	82	10.7	10.7	69.9
TikTok	75	9.8	9.8	79.7
YouTube	53	6.9	6.9	86.6
Telegram	37	4.8	4.8	91.5
Others	65	8.5	8.5	100.0
	765	100	100.0	

In Table 4.8, the tertiary students' response to the question "Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) do you have an account with?" is depicted. From the results, the majority of students with a percentage of 19% stated Instagram, with the highest frequency of 145 out of 356. Following this 14.6% of the students stated Facebook, with a frequency of 112. Furthermore, 13.3% of the students stated Twitter,

having a frequency of 102. Additionally, the students that stated Snap Chat had a percentage of 12.3%, with a frequency of 94. Moreover, the students that stated WhatsApp, had a percentage of 10.7%, with a frequency of 82. Also, the students that stated TikTok had a percentage of 9.8%, with a frequency of 75. On the other hand, the students that stated others has a percentage of 8.5%., with a frequency of 65. Within this “others” category, the higher percentages where Pinterest and Reddit, with a percentage of 3% and 2.5%, respectively. Following this, 6.9% of the students stated YouTube, with a frequency of 53 and finally, 4.8% of the students stated Telegram, with a frequency of 4.8%. This data shows that most students in Northern Cyprus are more active on Instagram. Moreover, this ties into the research carried out by Duggan and Brenner (2013), where majority of Instagram users are young adults within the age bracket of 18 to 29. In order words, this age bracket represents students that are more tech savvy and are active users of SNS.

Table 4.9: How many hours do you spend daily on SNS you have an account on?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1-2 hours	79	22.2	22.4	22.4
	3-4 hours	122	34.3	34.6	56.9
	5-6 hours	88	24.7	24.9	81.9
	7 hours and more	64	18.0	18.1	100.0
	Total	353	99.2	100.0	
	Missing System	3	.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.9, the tertiary students’ response to the question “How many hours do you spend daily on SNS you have an account on?” is presented. From the results, majority of the students stated 3-5 hours this had a percentage of 34.6%, with 122 respondents representing out of 353. Following this, tertiary students who stated 5-6 hours had a

percentage of 24.9%, with 88 respondents. Furthermore, students who stated 1-2 hours had a percentage of 22.4%, with 79 respondents. Additionally, students who stated 7 hours and more had a percentage of 18.1%, with 64 respondents representing this data. This shows that most students are actively engaged on SNS for 3-4 hours daily. These students are actively involved on these SNS, interacting with other individuals by sharing, liking, subscribing, chatting and commenting on post and pages. Moreover, SNS presents the perfect opportunity for the students to seek information and be informed and also communicate with peers and families.

Table 4.10: Which SNS are you most active on?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Facebook	25	7.0	7.1	7.1
	Twitter	56	15.7	15.9	22.9
	Instagram	192	53.9	54.4	77.3
	Snap Chat	56	15.7	15.9	93.2
	Others	24	6.7	6.8	100.0
	Total	353	99.2	100.0	
	Missing System	3	.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.10, the tertiary students' response to the question "Which SNS are you most active on?" is presented. From the results, majority of the students, having a percentage of 54.4% stated Instagram, with 192 respondents. Following this, 15.9% of the students stated both Twitter and Snap Chat, with 56 respondents representing both. Furthermore, 7.1% of the students stated Facebook, with 25 respondents and finally, 6.8% of the students stated others, with 24 respondents. From the results, it can be seen that most students are active on Instagram. Instagram is one of the most popular social

media platforms, commanding a huge number of users. Therefore, most students that are active on SNS will most definitely have an Instagram account.

Table 4.11: Do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or Instagram?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Yes	282	79.2	79.2	79.2
	No	74	20.8	20.8	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.11, the tertiary students' response to the question "Do you follow clothing any brands on Facebook or Instagram?" is outlined. From the results, majority of the students stated yes with a percentage of 79.2%, with 282 respondents representing from 356. Finally, 20.8% of the students stated No, with 79.2 respondents. This data shows that most tertiary students in Northern Cyprus follow clothing brand pages on Facebook and Instagram. This comes as a result of the change in shopping habits by consumers of clothing brands during the COVID-19 pandemic, as these consumers are embracing the use of information searching systems to enquire about clothing brands. In most cases, the information searching systems are brand pages on SNS.

Table 4.12: If yes, how often do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	All the time	42	11.8	12.7	12.7
	Often	133	37.4	40.2	52.9
	Sometimes	87	24.4	26.3	79.2
	Rarely	69	19.4	20.8	100.0
	Total	331	93.0	100.0	
	Missing System	25	7.0		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.12, the tertiary students' response to the question "If yes, how often do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram?" is depicted. From the results, majority of the students, having a percentage of 40.2% stated "often", with 133 respondents representing out of 331. Following this 26.3% of the students stated "sometimes", with 87 respondents. Furthermore, 20.8% of the students stated "rarely", with 69 respondents. Finally, 12.7% of students stated "all the time", with 42 respondents. The data shows that most students engage in activities on these clothing brands SNS pages often. Indicating there is a high interest on these clothing brand pages as the students seek information on new trends, check product catalogue, engage with posts and communicate with the brands.

Table 4.13: Which social media have you ever bought clothing from?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Facebook	19	5.3	6.2	6.2
	Instagram	229	64.3	74.6	80.8
	None	41	11.5	13.4	94.1
	Others	18	5.1	5.9	100.0
	Total	307	86.2	100.0	
	Missing System	49	13.8		
Total		356	100.0		

In Table 4.13, the tertiary students' response to the question "Which social media have you ever bought clothing from?" is depicted. From the results, majority of the students, having a percentage of 74.2% stated "Instagram", with 289 respondents representing from 307. Following this 13.4% of the students stated "none", with 41 respondents. Furthermore, 6.2% of the students stated Facebook, with 19 respondents and finally, 5.9% of the students stated "others", with 18 respondents. This shows that most

students that participated in this survey have bought clothing items through Instagram than any other SNS page. Instagram has a unique shopping feature that is integrated on the site, and prices also could be checked with the photos that are advertised by the brand, making it easier for prospective consumers to proceed to check out by one click.

4.3 The Role of Social Media Marketing on the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students in Northern Cyprus

In considering the factors influencing social media marketing, factors such as price, social media influencer recommendation, promotional campaigns, social presence and information seeking, social media usage during COVID-19 pandemic, were identified as the main independent variables that constitute the purchasing intentions of tertiary students, which is the dependent variable. A descriptive statistics on a 5-point Likert scale was done in order to identify and pinpoint the status of these aforementioned factors on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. Where the Likert scale questions is based on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Where strongly agree =5, agree=4, undecided =3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. The findings are presented below:

4.3.1 Price

Table 4.14: I often follow clothing brands on social media platforms because of their good discounted prices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	14	3.9	3.9	3.9
	Disagree	47	13.2	13.2	17.1
	Neutral	101	28.4	28.4	45.5
	Agree	137	38.5	38.5	84.0
	Strongly Agree	57	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.14, it can be seen that the item which states that “I often follow clothing brands on social media platforms because of their good discounted prices”, had most of the tertiary students at (38.5%) agreed with the item, with 137 respondents representing this data out of 356. Following this, 28.4% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 101 respondents. Furthermore, 16% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 57 respondents. Additionally, 13.2% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 47 respondents. Finally, 3.9% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 14 respondents.

Table 4.15: Clothing brands on social media that are affordable are of great interest to me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	11	3.1	3.1	3.1
	Disagree	41	11.5	11.5	14.6
	Neutral	73	20.5	20.5	35.1
	Agree	133	37.4	37.4	72.5
	Strongly Agree	98	27.5	27.5	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.15, it can be seen that the item which states that “Clothing brands on social media that are affordable are of great interest to me”, had most of the tertiary students at (37.4%) agreed with the item, with 133 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 27.5% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 98 respondents. Furthermore, 20.5% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 73 respondents. Additionally, 11.5% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 41 respondents. Finally, 3.1% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 11 respondents.

Table 4.16: I am more loyal to a clothing brand that offers rewards such as price discounts, free gifts, etc. to engage with me on their page on Facebook or/ and Instagram.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	21	5.9	5.9	5.9
	Disagree	18	5.1	5.1	11.0
	Neutral	83	23.3	23.3	34.3
	Agree	124	34.8	34.8	69.1
	Strongly Agree	110	30.9	30.9	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.16, it can be seen that the item which states that “I am more loyal to a clothing brand that offers rewards such as price discounts, free gifts, etc. to engage with me on their page on Facebook or/ and Instagram”, had most of the tertiary students at (34.8%) agreed with the item, with 124 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 30.9% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 110 respondents. Furthermore, 23.3% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 83 respondents. Additionally, 5.9% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 21 respondents. Finally, 5.1% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 18 respondents.

Table 4.17: Mean Distribution of the Price Item Set

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Price	
1.	I often follow clothing brands on social media platforms because of their good discounted prices	3.49
2.	Clothing brands on social media that are affordable are of great interest to me.	3.75
3.	I am more loyal to a clothing brand that offers rewards such as price discounts, free gifts, etc. to engage with me on their page on Facebook or/ and Instagram.	3.80
	Average Mean	3.68

In Table 4.17, the mean distribution table for the price factor is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the three item sets arrives at 3.68. This suggest that most tertiary students are leaning more towards price as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions. In other words, they feel positive about the price factor as it impacts their decision making process to continually follow clothing brands on SNS. Moreover, item 3, from table 4.17, shows that price discounts, free gifts, will influence tertiary student's loyalty to clothing brand page. Therefore, convenient pricing will improve customer's engagement and participation on such platforms. This is further verified in table 4.14, 4.15, and 4.16, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.3.2 Promotional Campaigns

Table 4.18: I am attracted to check the page of a clothing brand on Facebook or/and Instagram that has a colourful and welcoming appeal.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	18	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Disagree	12	3.4	3.4	8.4
	Neutral	42	11.8	11.8	20.2
	Agree	150	42.1	42.1	62.4
	Strongly Agree	134	37.6	37.6	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.18, it can be seen that the item which states that “I am attracted to check the page of a clothing brand on Facebook or/and Instagram that has a colourful and welcoming appeal,” had most of the tertiary students at (42.1%) agreed with the item, with 150 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 37.6% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 134 respondents. Furthermore, 11.8% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 42 respondents. Additionally, 5.1% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 18 respondents. Additionally, 3.4% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 12 respondents.

Table 4.19: Info graphics, videos and pictures of clothing brands I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram are interesting and captivating.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	11	3.1	3.1	5.6
	Neutral	44	12.4	12.4	18.0
	Agree	139	39.0	39.0	57.0
	Strongly Agree	153	43.0	43.0	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.19, it can be seen that the item which states that “Info graphics, videos and pictures of clothing brands I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram are interesting and captivating.”, had most of the tertiary students at (43%) strongly agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 153 out of 356. Following this, 39% of the students agreed on the item, representing 139 respondents. Furthermore, 12.4% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 44 respondents. Additionally, 3.1% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 11 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents.

Table 4.20: I like seeing advertisements on clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	10	2.8	2.8	5.3
	Neutral	89	25.0	25.0	30.3
	Agree	118	33.1	33.1	63.5
	Strongly Agree	130	36.5	36.5	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.20, it can be seen that the item which states that “I like seeing advertisements on clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram,” had most of the tertiary students at (36.5%) strongly agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 130 out of 356. Following this, 33.1% of the students agreed on the item, representing 118 respondents. Furthermore, 25% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 89 respondents. Additionally, 2.8% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 10 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents.

Table 4.21: Mean Distribution of Promotional Campaign

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Promotional Campaigns	
1.	I am attracted to check the page of a clothing brand on Facebook or/and Instagram that has a colourful and welcoming appeal.	4.04
2.	Info graphics, videos and pictures of clothing brands I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram are interesting and captivating.	4.17
3.	I like seeing advertisements on clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram.	3.98
	Average Mean	4.06

In Table 4.21, the mean distribution table for the promotional campaign factor is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the three item sets arrives at 4.06. This means that most students strongly agreed with the items and so, are strongly leaning positively towards promotional campaign as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions. In order words, promotional campaigns are useful marketing strategies employed by clothing brands, where these brands integrate diverse media

content in order to maximise reach, impact and work with the specific time frames of the online users on SNS. These contents indirectly force the users to engage with the content, appealing to their senses, leading to a purchase intention. This is further verified in table 4.18, 4.19, and 4.20, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.3.3 Social Media Influencer Recommendation

Table 4.22: I am more likely to be interested with a clothing brand on Facebook and /or Instagram that is recommended to me by a social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, and Blogger etc.)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	12	3.4	3.4	3.4
	Disagree	39	11.0	11.0	14.3
	Neutral	56	15.7	15.7	30.1
	Agree	127	35.7	35.7	65.7
	Strongly Agree	122	34.3	34.3	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.22, it can be seen that the item which states that “I am more likely to be interested with a clothing brand on Facebook and /or Instagram that is recommended to me by a social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, and Blogger etc.)”, had most of the tertiary students at (35.7%) agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 127 out of 356. Following this, 34.3% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 122 respondents. Furthermore, 15.7% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 56 respondents. Additionally, 11% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 39 respondents. Finally, 3.4% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 12 respondents.

Table 4.23: I am more likely to recommend a clothing brand to my friends and family, if the social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, Blogger etc.) I follow recommends it to me.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	15	4.2	4.2	4.2
	Disagree	19	5.3	5.3	9.6
	Neutral	91	25.6	25.6	35.1
	Agree	154	43.3	43.3	78.4
	Strongly Agree	77	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.23, it can be seen that the item which states that “I am more likely to recommend a clothing brand to my friends and family, if the social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, Blogger etc.) I follow recommends it to me”, had most of the tertiary students at 43.3% agree with the item, with the respondents representing 154 out of 356. Following this, 25.6% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 91 respondents. Furthermore, 21.6% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 77 respondents. Additionally, 5.3% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 19 respondents. Finally, 4.2% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 15 respondents.

Table 4.24: Positive reviews from social media influencers (Celebrities, YouTubers, and Bloggers etc.) I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram develop my interest in a clothing brand.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	14	3.9	3.9	6.5
	Neutral	78	21.9	21.9	28.4
	Agree	163	45.8	45.8	74.2
	Strongly Agree	92	25.8	25.8	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.24, it can be seen that the item which states that “Positive reviews from social media influencers (Celebrities, YouTubers, Bloggers etc.) I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram develop my interest in a clothing brand”, had most of the tertiary students at (45.8%) agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 163 out of 356. Following this, 25.8% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 92 respondents. Furthermore, 21.9% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 78 respondents. Additionally, 3.9% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 14 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents.

Table 4.25: Mean Distribution of the Social Media Influencer Recommendation

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Social Media Influencer Recommendation	
1.	I am more likely to be interested with a clothing brand on Facebook and /or Instagram that is recommended to me by a social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, and Blogger etc.).	3.87
2.	I am more likely to recommend a clothing brand to my friends and family, if the social media influencer (Celebrity, YouTuber, Blogger etc.) I follow recommends it to me.	3.73

3.	Positive reviews from social media influencers (Celebrities, YouTubers, Bloggers etc.) I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram develop my interest in a clothing brand.	3.88
	Average Mean	3.82

In Table 4.25, the mean distribution of the social media influencer recommendation category is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the three questions in this category arrives at 3.82. This means that most students agreed with the items set and so, are leaning positively towards social media influencer recommendation as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions. In other words, social media influencer recommendation is used in social media marketing by brands to reach their target market, boost sales and increase their brand awareness and influence the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. And so, this sort of recommendation is perceived by the consumers as being honest and the true depiction of the performance as well as the quality of the brands. Eventually, it leads the consumers making an online purchase. This is further verified in table 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.3.4 SNS Usage During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 4.26: It is easy to engage in conversions with social media platform operators of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	14	3.9	3.9	5.6
	Neutral	70	19.7	19.7	25.3

	Agree	194	54.5	54.5	79.8
	Strongly Agree	72	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.26, it can be seen that the item which states that “It is easy to engage in conversions with social media platform operators of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic”, had most of the tertiary students at (54.5%) agreed with the item, with 194 respondents out of 356. Following this, 20.2% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 72 respondents. Furthermore, 19.7% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 70 respondents. Additionally, 3.9% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 14 respondents. Finally, 1.7% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 6 respondents.

Table 4.27: It’s easier to access contents of clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram than through any other social media platform during the COVID-19 pandemic.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	11	3.1	3.1	4.8
	Neutral	67	18.8	18.8	23.6
	Agree	189	53.1	53.1	76.7
	Strongly Agree	83	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.27, it can be seen that the item which states that “It’s easier to access contents of clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram than through any other social media platform during the COVID-19 pandemic”, had most of the tertiary students at (53.1%) agreed with the item, with 189 respondents out of 356. Following

this, 23.3% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 83 respondents. Furthermore, 18.8% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 67 respondents. Additionally, 3.1% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 11 respondents. Finally, 1.7% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 6 respondents.

Table 4.28: The COVID-19 pandemic has made clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more effective in handling the demands of their customers online

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	8	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	4.8
	Neutral	82	23.0	23.0	27.8
	Agree	184	51.7	51.7	79.5
	Strongly Agree	73	20.5	20.5	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.28, it can be seen that the item which states that “The COVID-19 pandemic has made clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more effective in handling the demands of their customers online”, had most of the tertiary students at (51.7%) agreed with the item, with 184 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 23% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 82 respondents. Furthermore, 20.5% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 73 respondents. Additionally, 2.5% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 8 respondents.

Table 4.29: I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	6	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Disagree	16	4.5	4.5	6.2
	Neutral	99	27.8	27.8	34.0
	Agree	163	45.8	45.8	79.8
	Strongly Agree	72	20.2	20.2	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.29, it can be seen that the item which states that “I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic”, had most of the tertiary students at (45.8%) agreed with the item, with 163 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 27.8% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 99 respondents. Furthermore, 20.2% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 72 respondents. Additionally, 4.5% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 16 respondents. Finally, 1.7% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 6 respondents.

Table 4.30: Mean Distribution of Social Media Usage during the COVID-19 pandemic

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Social Media Usage During the COVID-19 Pandemic	
1.	It is easy to engage in conversions with social media platform operators of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.88
2.	It's easier to access contents of clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram than through any other social media platform during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.93

3.	The COVID-19 pandemic has made clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more effective in handling the demands of their customers online.	3.86
4.	I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic.	3.78
	Average Mean	3.86

In Table 4.30, the mean distribution of the social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic category is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the four item sets arrived at 3.86. This means that most students agree with the items set and so, are positively towards social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brand, giving rise to purchasing intentions. COVID-19 pandemic confined millions of people globally to their homes as a result of the lockdown and regulatory measures that had to be taken by the government to curb the spread of the virus. As a result, more people spent considerable amount of time on online platforms such as SNS, with increased usage of the individuals purchasing, services and goods online to limit onsite shopping appearances. Therefore, the more time spent on these clothing brands SNS pages, the more likely that an online purchase will be made through these platforms. This is further verified in table 4.26, 4.27, 4.28 and 4.29, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.3.5 Social Presence and Information Seeking During the Pandemic

Table 4.31: The COVID-19 pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	32	9.0	9.0	11.5
	Neutral	90	25.3	25.3	36.8
	Agree	143	40.2	40.2	77.0
	Strongly Agree	82	23.0	23.0	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.31, it can be seen that the item which states that “The COVID-19 pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram,” had most of the tertiary students at (40.2%) agreed with the item, with 143 respondents representing out of 356. Following this, 25.3% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 90 respondents. Furthermore, 23% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 82 respondents. Additionally, 9% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 32 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents.

Table 4.32: I follow information relating to clothing brands on Instagram or/and Facebook more often during the COVID-19 Pandemic than in previous years.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	18	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Disagree	23	6.5	6.5	11.5
	Neutral	74	20.8	20.8	32.3
	Agree	173	48.6	48.6	80.9
	Strongly Agree	68	19.1	19.1	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.32, it can be seen that the item which states that “I follow information relating to clothing brands on Instagram or/and Facebook more often during the COVID-19 pandemic than in previous years”, had most of the tertiary students at (48.6%) agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 173 out of 356. Following this, 20.8% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 74 respondents. Furthermore, 19.1% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 68 respondents. Additionally, 6.5% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 23 respondents. Finally, 5.1% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 18 respondents.

Table 4.33: I often comment on posts of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more often during the COVID-19 pandemic than in the past.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	49	13.8	13.8	13.8
	Disagree	57	16.0	16.0	29.8
	Neutral	114	32.0	32.0	61.8
	Agree	92	25.8	25.8	87.6
	Strongly Agree	44	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.33, it can be seen that the item which states that “I often comment on posts of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more often during the COVID-19 pandemic than in the past”, had most of the tertiary students at a percentage of 32% were undecided on the item, representing 114 respondents. Following this, 25.8% of the students agreed with the item, representing 92 respondents. Furthermore, 16% of the students disagreed on the item, representing 57 respondents. Additionally, 12.4% of the students strongly agreed with the item, representing 44 respondents. Finally, 13.8% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 49 respondents.

Table 4.34: I use the “like” option on clothing brands posts; I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic more than the previous years.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	18	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Disagree	31	8.7	8.7	13.8
	Neutral	80	22.5	22.5	36.2
	Agree	150	42.1	42.1	78.4
	Strongly Agree	77	21.6	21.6	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.34, it can be seen that the item which states that “I use the “like” option on clothing brands posts; I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic more than the previous years”, most of the tertiary students at 42.1% agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 150 out of 356. Following this, 22.5% of the students were undecided on the item, representing 80 respondents. Furthermore, 21.6% of the students strongly agreed on the item, representing 77 respondents. Additionally, 8.7% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 31

respondents. Finally, 5.1% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 18 respondents.

Table 4.35: Mean Distribution of Social Presence and Information Seeking

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Social Presence and Information Seeking	
1.	The COVID-19 pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram.	3.72
2.	I follow information relating to clothing brands on Instagram or/and Facebook more often during the COVID-19 pandemic than in previous years.	3.70
3.	I often comment on posts of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more often during the COVID-19 pandemic than in the past.	3.07
4.	I use the “like” option on clothing brands posts; I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic more than the previous years.	3.67
	Average Mean	3.54

In Table 4.35, the mean distribution of the social presence and information seeking category is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the four item analysed in this category arrives at 3.54. This means that most students agree and so, are leaning positively towards social presence and information seeking as an important factor that gives rise to purchasing intentions of clothing brands on SNS. Most often these online customers use SNS as a platform to uncover facts about a certain brand online and seek more information on the products features, attain recommendation from peers and families and engage with the brand page posts. Moreover, this further leads to consumers spending more time and have increased activities on these SNS clothing brand pages. And so, the more time spent on these

clothing brands SNS pages, the more likely that an online purchase will be made through this platform. This is further verified in table 4.31, 4.32, 4.33 and 4.34, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.3.6 Purchasing Intentions during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Table 4.36: Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram helps me make better decisions before purchasing a good during the pandemic

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	8	2.2	2.2	4.8
	Neutral	75	21.1	21.1	25.8
	Agree	152	42.7	42.7	68.5
	Strongly Agree	112	31.5	31.5	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.36, it can be seen that the item which states that “Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram helps me make better decisions before purchasing a good during the pandemic”, had most of the tertiary students at 42.7% agree with the item, with the respondents representing 152 out of 356. Following this, 31.5% of the students were strongly agreed on the item, representing 112 respondents. Furthermore, 21.1% of the students undecided on the item, representing 75 respondents. Additionally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents. Finally, 2.2% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 8 respondents.

Table 4.37: Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic has added to my interest in purchasing products online.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Strongly Disagree	9	2.5	2.5	2.5
	Disagree	15	4.2	4.2	6.7
	Neutral	70	19.7	19.7	26.4
	Agree	163	45.8	45.8	72.2
	Strongly Agree	99	27.8	27.8	100.0
	Total	356	100.0	100.0	

In Table 4.37, it can be seen that the item which states that “Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic has added to my interest in purchasing products online,” had most of the tertiary students at 45.8% agreed with the item, with the respondents representing 163 out of 356. Following this, 27.8% of the students were strongly agreed on the item, representing 99 respondents. Furthermore, 19.7% of the 70 students were undecided on the item. Additionally, 4.2% of the students disagreed with the item, representing 15 respondents. Finally, 2.5% of the students strongly disagreed with the item, representing 9 respondents.

Table 4.38: Mean Distribution of the Purchasing Intentions

No.	Factors	Mean (\bar{x})
	Purchasing Intentions	
1.	Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram helps me make better decisions before purchasing a good during the pandemic.	3.98
2.	Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic has added to my interest in purchasing products online.	3.92
	Average Mean	3.95

In Table 4.38, the mean distribution of the purchasing intentions category is depicted. From the findings, it can be seen that the average mean for the two item sets arrives at 3.95. This means that most students agreed with the items. This result shows that the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus are interested in clothing brands and are willing to make a purchase online through SNS. Also, it is very common for individual shoppers having the intention to make a purchase to dedicate a large amount of time and effort to search through the social media pages or groups for the apparel they are looking for in order to meet their needs. Therefore, this means that consumers on social media pages are influenced by the brand they follow on social media and are likely to make a purchase. This is further verified in table 4.36, 4.37 and 4.38, as most of the respondents agreed with the questions.

4.4 Differences amongst Demographic Factors and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

In order to address the significant differences amongst the variables with respect to the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, a one-way ANOVA test is conducted to analyse the data. ANOVA also known as the analysis of variance is used for making comparison between a dependent variable and a predictor, to ascertain the statistical evidence to conclude if the associated mean has a statistical difference amongst the compared group. The equation that will be utilised will be gotten from the methodology in section 3.2.3. In this section, the difference in region, gender, age, faculty and disposable income will be analysed under ANOVA as the predictor against the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. The test ascertains a significant value between the variables, where we define the level of significance (also commonly known as the probability of error) as 0.05. Therefore, if the p -value is less than 0.05

then we can say with 95 % probability of not arriving at an error that the difference between the compared groups is statistically significant (Kremelberg, 2011).

4.4.1 Difference in Region

Table 4.39: Descriptive Statistics for the Different Region

Regions	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
Sub-Saharan Africa	173	4.01	0.82
South east Asia	12	4.67	0.39
North Cyprus	73	3.77	0.85
Turkey	24	4.29	0.74
MENA (Middle East North Africa)	45	3.90	0.87
Others	26	3.88	0.62
Total	353	3.98	0.82

From Table 4.39, the descriptive statistics between region and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is shown. From the results, it can be seen that there is a varying difference between the average mean and standard deviation of the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students with respect to their different regions. With South East Asia, having the highest mean of 4.67, with a standard deviation of 0.39. Following this, Turkey with a mean of 4.29, with a standard deviation of 0.74. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan Africa had a mean of 4.01, with a standard deviation of 0.82. This result shows that there is a difference in purchasing intentions with respect the regional demographics. And so, this means that the regions in which the tertiary students hail from can influence their purchasing intentions of clothing brands. To further confirm this data, the ANOVA test result is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.40: ANOVA Test for Region Difference

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	11.725	5	2.345	3.631	.003
Within Groups	224.094	347	.646		
Total	235.819	352			
a: Dependent variable: Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students b: Predictor: Region					

In table 4.40, the result from the ANOVA test between region and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is depicted. The purchase intention is the dependent variable and the region serves as the factor, the result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being 0.003, with $p < 0.05$. Hence, this confirms the findings in table 4.39, where a statistical significant difference can be observed between the groups that participated in the survey.

4.4.2 Difference in Gender

Table 4.41: Descriptive Statistics for Gender Difference

Gender	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
Male	156	4.09	0.86
Female	200	3.84	0.84
Total	356	3.95	0.86

From table 4.41, the descriptive statistics between gender and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is shown. From the results, it can be seen that there is a varying difference between the average mean and standard deviation of the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students with respect to two genders i.e. male and female. From the table, male had the highest average mean of 4.09, with a standard deviation

of 0.86. Following this is the female with a mean of 3.84, with a standard deviation of 0.84. This result shows that there is a difference in purchasing intentions with respect to the two genders. Male and female differ in their reasoning abilities as well as in their mode of conduct and expression. And so, when it comes to making a decision to make an online purchase, the opinion of both sexes will differ. For the tertiary students, their gender will influence their decision making process. To further confirm this data, the ANOVA test result is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.42: ANOVA Test for Gender Difference

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	5.497	1	5.497	7.581	.006
Within Groups	256.691	354	.725		
Total	262.188	355			
a: Dependent variable: Purchasing intentions of Tertiary Students b: Predictor: Gender					

In Table 4.42, the result from the ANOVA test between gender and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus is depicted. The purchasing intention is the dependent variable and the gender of the students serves as the factor. The result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being 0.006 with $p < 0.05$. Hence, this confirms the findings in table 4.41, where a statistical significant difference can be observed between the genders that participated in the research.

4.4.3 Difference in Age

Table 4.43: Descriptive Statistics for Age Difference

Age	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
16-19	67	3.96	0.91
20-25	224	4.33	0.86
26-30	38	4.13	0.67
31-35	19	4.29	0.56
35 and above	8	3.25	1.39
Total	356	3.95	0.86

From Table 4.43, the descriptive statistics between age and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is shown. From the results, it can be seen that there is a varying difference between the average mean and standard deviation of the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students with respect to their ages. With the age bracket of 20-25, having the highest mean of 4.33, with as standard deviation of 0.86. Following this, the age bracket of 31-35, had the second highest mean of 4.29, with as standard deviation of 0.56. Furthermore, the age bracket of 26-30, had a mean of 4.13, with a standard deviation of 0.67. Interestingly, the age bracket of 16-19 had a mean of 3.96, with a standard deviation of 0.91. This result shows that there is a difference in purchasing intentions with respect to age. And so, this means that the difference in the ages of the respondents affect their purchasing intention of clothing brands. To further confirm this data, the ANOVA test result is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.44: ANOVA Test for Age Difference

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	7.643	4	1.911	2.635	.034
Within Groups	254.545	351	.725		
Total	262.188	355			
a: Dependent variable: Purchasing intentions of Tertiary Students					
b: Predictor: Age					

In Table 4.44., the result from the ANOVA test between age and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is depicted. The purchasing intention is the dependent variable and the age of the students serves as the factor. The result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being 0.034 with $p < 0.05$. Hence, this confirms the findings in table 4.43, where a statistical significant difference can be observed between the ages of the respondents that participated in the research.

4.4.4 Difference in Faculty

Table 4.45: Descriptive Statistics for Faculty Difference

Faculty	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
Communication and Media Studies	99	4.00	0.53
Business & Economics	76	4.03	1.14
Engineering	87	4.05	0.69
Architecture	9	3.50	0.75
Arts & Sciences	24	4.08	0.48
Pharmacy & Medicine	34	3.87	1.18
Tourism	10	3.40	1.26
Others	14	3.36	1.01
Total	353	3.96	0.86

From Table 4.45, the descriptive statistics between faculties and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is shown. From the results, it can be seen that there is a varying difference between the average mean and standard deviation of the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students with respect to their faculties. With art and science faculty, has the highest mean of 4.08, with a standard deviation of 0.48. Following this, engineering faculty had a mean of 4.05, with a standard deviation of 0.69. Furthermore, the business and economics faculty had a mean of 4.03, with a standard deviation of 0.53. From observing the data, it can be seen that faculty can impact the purchasing intentions of tertiary students on clothing brands, as various faculties depicted varying responses with respect to purchasing intentions. And so, this means that the difference in the faculties of the respondents affect their purchasing intentions of clothing brands. To further confirm this data, the ANOVA test result is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.46: ANOVA Test for Faculty Difference

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.984	7	1.712	2.366	.023
Within Groups	249.586	345	.723		
Total	261.569	352			
a: Dependent variable: Purchasing intentions of Tertiary Students					
b: Predictor: Faculty					

In Table 4.46, the result from the ANOVA test between Faculty and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is depicted. The purchase intention is the dependent variable and the Faculty of the students serves as the factor. The result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the

significance level being 0.023 with $p < 0.05$. Hence, this confirms the findings in table 4.45, where a statistical significant difference can be observed between the faculties of the respondents.

4.4.5 Difference in Disposable Income

Table 4.47: Descriptive Statistics for Disposable Income

Disposable Income	N	Mean (\bar{x})	Std. Deviation
Less than 1500TL per month	140	3.77	1.03
1500TL-3500TL per month	97	4.15	0.63
3501TL-5500TL per month	53	4.18	0.53
5501TL-7500TL per month	39	3.94	0.61
more than 7500TL per month	18	3.64	1.34
Total	347	3.95	0.86

From Table 4.47, the descriptive statistics between disposable income and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is shown. From the results, it can be seen that there is a varying difference between the average mean and standard deviation of the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students with respect to their disposable income. The income between with 3501TL-5500TL per month, has the highest mean of 4.18, with a standard deviation of 0.53. Following this, 1500TL-3500TL per month had a mean of 4.15, with a standard deviation of 0.63. Furthermore, the 5501TL-7500TL per month had a mean of 3.94, with a standard deviation of 0.53. From observing the data, it can be seen that the disposable income of the respondents has a varying impact on their purchasing intentions. Logically, the more money at the disposal of an individual, the more opportunities the person has to purchase goods and services. Most tertiary

students receive monthly allowances and so, their disposal income will be based on their savings after paying their bills. Therefore, based on the tertiary student's savings, they can make a decision to purchase through the SNS. Therefore, the disposable income of tertiary students can impact their purchasing intentions of clothing brands. To further confirm this data, the ANOVA test result is illustrated in the table below.

Table 4.48: ANOVA Test for Disposable Income Difference

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	<i>p</i> -value
Between Groups	12.859	4	3.215	4.482	.002
Within Groups	245.308	342	.717		
Total	258.167	346			
a: Dependent variable: Purchasing intentions of Tertiary Students b: Predictor: Disposable Income					

In Table 4.48, the result from the ANOVA test between disposable income and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students is depicted. The purchase intention is the dependent variable and the disposable income of the students serves as the factor. The result revealed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being 0.002 with $p < 0.05$. Hence, this confirms the findings in table 4.47, where a statistical significant difference can be observed between the disposable incomes of the respondents.

4.5 Relationship between Social Media Marketing Factors and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students in Northern Cyprus

In order to investigate the relationship that exist between the social media marketing factors and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students, Pearson correlation is employed. Pearson correlation serves as a vital and important statistical tool for

analysis that measures the strength of an association to tell if a relationship exists between two variables or not. It is a statistical tool that shows the relationship between two variables compared linearly. Furthermore, the values that is gotten from the test serves a bench mark for measuring the factors. These values include the r-coefficient and the p-value, which ranges from -1 to 1, as seen in the previous section. Recall previously from Cohen (1988), that a correlation is said to be true if there is a statistical positive or negative significance between the compared variables. And so, the strength of the association is based on the r-coefficient, where 0.1 is at the minimum value, 0.3 is at the medium value and 0.5 and upwards is very high. The equation that will be utilised will be gotten from the methodology in section 3.2.2. Therefore, this section will present the correlation results amongst the compared variables.

4.5.1 Relationship between SNS Usage during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students in Northern Cyprus

Table 4.49: Pearson Correlation between SNS usage during COVID-19 Pandemic and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students in Northern Cyprus

		SNS usage during COVID-19 Pandemic (Average)	Purchasing Intention (Average)
SNS usage during COVID-19 Pandemic (Average)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	356	
Purchasing Intention (Average)	Pearson Correlation	.586**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4.49 highlights the Pearson correlation between social networking sites (SNS) usage during COVID-19 pandemic (average) and purchasing intentions (average) of tertiary students. From the findings of this analysis, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the SNS usage during the COVID-19 pandemic (average) and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students (average) in Northern Cyprus, having an r-coefficient of 0.586, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups, since the value is higher than Cohen (1988) predefined set point of 0.5.

4.5.2 Relationship between Convenient Pricing and the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

Table 4.50: Pearson Correlation between Convenient Price and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

		Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Convenient Price (Average)
Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Pearson's Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	356	
Convenient Price (Average)	Pearson's Correlation	.541**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4.50 highlights the Pearson correlation between convenient pricing (average) and purchase intentions (average) of tertiary students. From the findings of the analysis carried out, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the average convenient pricing variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r-coefficient of 0.541, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This

shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups, as shown that the value is higher than Cohen (1988) predefined set point of 0.5.

4.5.3 Relationship between Social Media Influencers Recommendation and the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

Table 4.51: Pearson correlation between Social Media Influencers Recommendations and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

		Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Social Media Influencer Recommendation (Average)
Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	356	
Social Media Influencer Recommendation (Average)	Pearson Correlation	.636**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4.51 highlights the Pearson correlation between social media influencers' recommendations and the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. From the findings of the analysis, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the average social media influencer recommendation variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students having an r-coefficient of 0.636, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups.

4.5.4 Relationship between Promotional Brand Campaign and the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

Table 4.52: Pearson correlation between Promotional Brand Campaign and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

		Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Promotional Brand Campaign (Average)
Purchasing Intentions (Average)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	356	
Promotional Brand Campaign (Average)	Pearson Correlation	.605**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	356	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4.52 highlights the Pearson correlation between promotional brand campaign and purchasing intentions of tertiary students. From the findings of this analysis, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the promotional brand campaign variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r -coefficient of 0.605, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups, since the r -coefficient is higher than 0.5.

4.5.5 Relationship between SNS Usage Frequency (Clothing Brand Page) and the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

Table 4.53: Pearson correlation between SNS Usage Frequency (Clothing Brand Page) and Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students

		SNS Usage Freq. (Clothing Brand Page)	Promotional Brand Campaign (Average)
SNS Usage Freq. (Clothing Brand Page)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	331	
Promotional Brand Campaign (Average)	Pearson Correlation	.311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	331	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 4.53 highlights the Pearson correlation between the SNS Usage Frequency (Clothing brand page) and purchasing intentions of tertiary students. From the findings of the research, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the SNS Usage Frequency (Clothing brand page) and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r-coefficient of 0.311, this shows that there is a medium positive correlation between both compared groups, which is significant at the 0.01 level.

4.6 Reliability of Instrument

As stated previously in the methodology, Cronbach alpha (1951) reliability test is carried out for the evaluation of consistency amongst the variables. Moreover, according to Hair et al. (2011), if the Cronbach alpha coefficient value is lower than 0.6, then there is a poor association amongst the variable, while a value greater than

0.7 and higher, signals a strong association. The reliability of the study can be calculated by using the formula from Neuendorf (2002), as seen below.

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left[1 - \frac{\sum S^2y}{S^2x} \right]$$

Where:

α = Coefficient alpha reliability estimate.

k = Number of test items

S^2y = Variance of individual test

S^2x = Variance of the whole test

Statistically, the result is as follows:

$$\alpha = 19 / (19-1) \times (1-(4.23/16.45))$$

$$\alpha = 0.78$$

Therefore, from the results, it can be seen that the data accumulated from the 356 respondents is valid and reliable. The Cronbach Alpha value is **$\alpha .78$** . In essence, this has satisfied the standard defined by Hair et al. (2011), which means the data can be relied on.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

In this section, a discussion of the findings based on the research questions will be presented and then a summary of the theories used in relation to the research questions will be discussed. Also this chapter will discuss the recommendations for further research academically and managerially.

5.1 Major Findings from the Research Questions

5.1.1 (RQ1) Is There Any Significant Difference between Female and Male Tertiary Students' Purchasing Intentions during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

From the result shown, in both Table 4.41 and Table 4.42, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between the female and male tertiary students purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Male respondents had the highest average mean, followed by the females. Therefore, there is a difference in the purchasing intentions with respect to the two genders. Where, both sexes differ significantly between the groups. This finding was further verified by the ANOVA test results, which showed that the compared variables (gender and purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic) is statistically significant. This could be for several reasons, as male and females differ in their decision making process. Moreover, in this research the role of social media marketing impacted the male gender more than the female gender in their purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic in Northern Cyprus. This confirms the research carried out by Zhou, Dai, and Zhang (2007). , where one of the factors such as the gender, plays a significant role in impacting the

shopping behaviour of a prospective customer. Females and males differ significantly in how they execute activities and meet goals as well as targets. The way they see the world is different and so, this affects how they process information. Therefore, it will have an impact on how actions are executed. Furthermore, in another research carried out by Koca and Koc (2016), to determine the degree to which gender can influence the purchasing behaviour of fashion apparel. It was found that male and female consumers had varying perspectives as well as preferences when it came to fashion brands in clothing purchases, and so, gender had a significant impact on the purchasing intentions of clothing apparels, with females being more influenced by fashion than men. These studies confirm there is a significant difference between genders with respect to purchasing intentions of clothing brands.

5.1.2 (RQ2) Is There Any Significant Difference between the Nationalities of the Tertiary Students and Their Purchasing Intentions on Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

From the results shown in Table 4.39 and Table 4.40, it can be seen that there is a significant difference amongst the nationalities of the respective students and their purchasing intentions. Moreover, it was observed that there was a varying difference between the average mean of the different regions. Where South East Asia, had the highest mean with respect to their purchasing intentions on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this was followed by Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa region. To confirm the data from the descriptive statistics, an ANOVA test was carried out. And from the result, there was a statistical significant difference between the two compared groups i.e. regions and purchasing intentions of tertiary students this shows that, due to each nationality having certain factors that influence the purchasing intentions of its citizens such as cultural beliefs and family orientation, the purchasing

intentions of tertiary student in Northern Cyprus were influenced by their different nationalities, showing that students from South East Asia were impacted the most by social media marketing during the pandemic . Therefore, this result aligns with the research carried out by Zhou, Dai, and Zhang (2007), where the race factor was a significant variable impacting the shopping behaviour of a prospective customer. Another research was carried out by Wekeza and Sibanda (2019), to investigate the factors influencing the purchasing intentions of organically grown products (OGP), where the consumer demographics, such as ethnicity, were revealed to be significant and positively influencing the purchasing intentions of OGPs. In a study carried out by Stafford et al. (2004), an investigation was carried out to compare the online shopping behaviour of consumers in Finland, Turkey, and US. However, the study also found out that there was no significance difference between the US and Turkey based on the masculinity criteria, meaning that other variables are at play for defining the difference in online shopping behaviour between the consumers from the different regions. Therefore, these studies support our findings, showing that there is a significant difference between nationality and tertiary students purchasing intentions. As the various regions respondents, responded differently with respect to their intentions to make a purchase of the clothing apparel through SNS. However, the sample size between the various respondents differed. For the case of the South East Asia, the number of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus who were from this region were smaller and most leaned towards the idea of social media marketing influencing their purchasing intentions of clothing brands during the COVID-19 pandemic, when compared to the other tertiary students from the other nationalities with larger sample sizes. Interestingly, since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a rise in the number of online purchases made through social media marketing, and regions like South East

Asia, recorded a significant rise in online purchases of more than 70million people since the pandemic according to the report by Facebook and Bain and company, than in previous years (Jacob, 2021). This could also explain the high mean with respect to the purchasing intentions compared to the other regions.

5.1.3 (RQ3) Does Convenience/Affordable Pricing Positively Influence tertiary Students' Purchasing Intentions of a Clothing Brand during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

To address this question, in Table 4.50, a Pearson correlation between convenient pricing and purchasing intentions of tertiary students was undertaken. From the findings of the analysis, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the average convenient pricing variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r-coefficient of 0.541, which is significant at the 0.01 level. Moreover, from the price factor table, in Table 4.14, it can be seen that most students are positively leaning towards price as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions, this was confirmed with the average mean of 3.68, which falls under the “agreed” category. This confirms the research carried out by Cham et al. (2018), where the objective of the research was to examine the factors that affect the clothing interest being developed by generation Y consumers in Malaysia. The price factor was one of the variables and from the result, there was a strong positive relationship between the clothing interest and the purchasing intentions for the low price conscious group in contrast to the high price conscious group. This confirms our result, showing that the price of clothing brands positively influences the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in such a way that it impacts their decision making process, and tertiary students psychologically are programmed to go for fashion apparel that sits well with their budget and expenses.

Moreover, the cheaper the price of the product or services online (through incentives, price discounts, etc.), the more likely it is for a purchase to occur.

5.1.4 (RQ.4) Is There Any Significant Difference between the Age, the Faculty and the Disposable Income of Tertiary Students as to Their Purchasing Intentions on Social Media during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

In order to address this question, Table 4.43 to Table 4.48 is evaluated. The age bracket of 20-25, had the highest mean. Following this, the age bracket of 31-35, had the second highest mean. Furthermore, the age bracket of 26-30, had the third highest mean. This result shows that there is a difference in purchasing intentions with respect the age demographic and the ANOVA test showed there was a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being less than the p-value. Moreover, for the case of faculty factor, the art and science faculty, had the highest mean. Following this, the engineering faculty had the second highest mean and finally, the business and economics faculty had the third highest mean. By observing the data, it can be seen that the faculty of tertiary students can impact the purchasing intentions. This research shows that with respect to clothing brand purchasing intentions in Northern Cyprus the students in the art and science faculty had higher purchasing intentions during the COVID-19 compared to the other faculties. Also, the results from ANOVA test showed that there is a statistical significant difference between the two compared groups due to the p-value significance level being less than 0.05, from the descriptive statistics, the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus studying in the art and science faculty strongly agreed they had their purchasing intentions impacted by social media marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, respondents having a disposable income of 3501TL-5500TL per month, had the highest mean, signalling that there were more students in agreement with the

purchasing intentions of clothing brands through SNS. Following this, 1500TL-3500TL per month had the second highest mean. Furthermore, 5501TL-7500TL per month had third highest mean. Moreover, to confirm the statistical difference, an ANOVA test showed that there is a statistical difference between the two compared groups due to the significance level being 0.002. This explains that, the amount of disposable income a tertiary student in Northern Cyprus will have after settling their bills influences their purchasing intentions and, this research shows that the students with 3501-5500TL per month have their purchasing intentions influenced by social media during the COVID-19 pandemic . This shows that in this research, the purchasing intention in terms of age, faculty and disposable income, there is a statistical difference. This is supported by the research carried out by Zhou, Dai, and Zhang (2007). , where factors such as the gender, age, education, race and income, are significant variables that impact the shopping behaviour of a prospective customer. With respect to age, generations such as millennial and generation Z are more tech savvy and as a result, they are more active online and carry out more shopping through these social media platforms because of their familiarity with the technology (Rezai et. al., 2013). Confirming this, is the research carried out by Kataria (2016), where an investigation was carried out to identify the impact of social media on younger adults buying behaviour. From the data, it was seen that certain age groups had a significantly higher knowledge on brands and were more inclined to purchase branded related merchandises. This ties in with our findings, where the age group of 20-25, showed a higher agreement rating over the other age groups that participated with respect to their purchasing intentions on clothing brands pages on social media. This specified age group represents majorly generation Z cohorts. This group is more tech savvy and highly dependent on technology for their day to day activities. Furthermore, for

disposable income, the research carried out by Wolfers and Zilinsky. (2015). showed that individuals with higher income shop more online than lower income earners. This makes it logical, as more money presents more opportunity to be able to acquire more assets. However, this research focuses on tertiary students and so, their disposable income is within a limited range. The results showed that students with a disposable income of 3501TL-5500TL per month, scored higher in agreement rating with the purchasing intentions of clothing brands on social media. Also, based on the findings, the disposable income differs between students which in turn influences their purchasing intentions of clothing brands. This means that there is a statistical difference between the disposable income and purchasing intentions of Northern Cyprus tertiary students.

5.1.5 (RQ5) During the COVID-19 Pandemic, does the Interaction between the Clothing Brand Influencers and Their Recommendations to Customers Positively Influence the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students?

To address this question, Table 4.25 and Table 4.51, are evaluated. It can be seen from the social media influencer recommendation category that the average mean arrives at a value of 3.82. This shows that most students agreed with the items set and so, are leaning positively towards social media influencers recommendations as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brand, giving rise to purchasing intentions. Also, from the Pearson correlation study, the findings of the research showed that there is a significant positive correlation between the average social media influencer recommendation variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r-coefficient of 0.636, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups. Therefore, this results are in line with the result gotten by Tahirah et al., (2020), where

the study investigated the features of social media influencers that contributed to the purchasing intentions within the fashion industry. From the findings, it was observed that the trustworthiness of the influencer was one of the key factors that influenced the Instagram users' purchasing intentions. Therefore, our results confirm that social media brand influencers play a significant role in influencing the purchasing intentions of tertiary students on social media in Northern Cyprus.

5.1.6 (RQ6) Do Promotional Brand Activities Influence Tertiary Students' Purchasing Intentions of a Brand during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

From the results in Table 4.21 and Table 4.52, the findings from the promotional campaign category is shown, it can be seen that from the promotional campaign category, the average mean arrived at the value of 4.06. This means that most students agreed with the items in the category and so, are leaning positively towards promotional campaign as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions. Furthermore, the findings from the Pearson correlation shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the promotional brand campaign variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, having an r-coefficient of 0.605, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a strong positive correlation between both compared groups. Therefore, based on the findings, it can be seen that promotional activities of a brand on social media have an impact on tertiary students' purchasing intentions. This is also confirmed in the research carried out by Duffet (2015), who showed that there is a relationship between marketing on Facebook and the intention to make a purchase through the media. From the result, it was seen that advertising on Facebook had a real positive impact on the behavioural attitudes, with respect to the intention to make a purchase. Therefore, the results of from the mean distribution and Pearson correlation

of the promotional brand activities, demonstrates that the promotional brand activities influence the purchasing intentions of tertiary students.

5.1.7 (RQ7) Is There an Increase in Student's Online Activity on Fashion Brand Pages on Instagram and Facebook as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic?

To address this question, Table 4.31 and Table 4.35 are investigated. Under the social presence and information seeking table, from the item which states “the COVID-19 pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram”, had an average mean of 3.72 and so, this means that the tertiary students generally agreed on this item. By analysing the data on Table 4.31 carefully, therefore, it can be seen that the activity of the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus on SNS increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, to which they engaged more in posts on fashion brand pages. The reason for the increase in social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, is due to the healthy measures, by the lockdown and restriction laws, confining people to their homes. Fortunately, social media also provided the perfect opportunity for people to stay connected with their families and peers. This result is in agreement with the research carried out by Socialbakers (2020). According to the report, the results showed that people who engaged in brand pages, on Facebook, within Europe spent significantly more time on Facebook. The statistics showed that there was a rise in the usage of the site from March, from every day of the week to the waking hours that is in comparison to the previous months. The peak period of usage was at 8pm, when the individuals were mostly at home. In all, this means that the COVID-19 pandemic had tremendous impact on the activities of the users of the SNS, where more people were seen to be more active on these sites. This will inevitably lead to more time spent exploring pages that the individual follows. Therefore, for the case of clothing brand pages, the tertiary students have become more interested in post,

videos and other media content that is propagated through these pages and will probably end up influencing their purchasing intentions.

5.1.8 (RQ8) During the COVID-19 Pandemic, has the Social Media Market been able to Capture and Create Better Customer Services for Tertiary Student?

To address this question, Table 4.29 and Table 4.30 were explained. Under the COVID-19 table category, from the item which states “I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic”, had an average mean of 3.78 and so, this means that the tertiary students generally agreed on this item. Looking more closely at the data in table 4.29, this means generally that most students agreed with the item, leaning positively towards social media marketing as means for capturing and creating better customer services for tertiary students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in agreement with some of the previous studies done on customer relationship and customer service delivery. In a research carried out by Wang and Kim (2017), the influence of social media marketing in improving customer service delivery, relationship and firm performance was investigated. The findings of the research showed that social media is important in moderating the relationship between customers and brands, and improves service delivery of the firm. In another study carried out by Syaifullah et al. (2021), the objective of the study was to evaluate the role of social media marketing on the performance of the micro, small and medium sized enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the results, it was seen that social media marketing had a positive impact on the performance of the micro, small, and medium sized enterprises, bringing about higher sales turn out, improved productivity and customer service delivery, and creativity. In all, it can be said that from the responses of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, the use of social

networking sites (SNS) during the COVID-19 pandemic brought about an improvement in customer services.

5.1.9 (RQ9) Is the COVID-19 Pandemic Positively Affecting the Purchasing Intentions of Tertiary Students?

In order to address this question, Table 4.30 and Table 4.49 are evaluated. The result from the total average mean from COVID-19 category shows the mean at a value of 3.86. This means that most students agreed with the analysed item, the tertiary students are leaning positively towards COVID-19 pandemic as an important factor that influences social media marketing of clothing brands, giving rise to purchasing intentions. Moreover, from the Pearson correlation data, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the average of the COVID-19 variable and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that COVID-19, an extraneous variable, positively influences the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. One of the main reasons, COVID-19 positively influences the purchasing intentions of tertiary student in Northern Cyprus is due to the increase in the SNS activities of the students during the pandemic. As the lockdown persisted, with most of the institutions using e-learning strategies to limit the spread of the virus, most of the students were more active on SNS platforms. Also before the COVID -19 pandemic students dealt with perceived risk by involving family members and friends to validate their choices. Therefore, during the pandemic the role of social media in marketing played a significant role, by engagement with social media influencers to reduce perceived risks and increase purchasing intentions. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic positively influenced the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus through the use of social media marketing. In a report given by Socialbakers (2020), the impact of COVID-19 on the trends in

marketing, nationwide, were analysed. Results from report depicted that fans of brand pages, on Facebook, within Europe spent significantly more time on Facebook. There was a rise in the usage of the site from March every day of the week than in the previous months. Also, a research was carried out by Deloitte (2020) to capture the in-depth industry facts as well as the consumer behaviour of over 2000 online participants. Following this, an insight of their behaviour before and during the COVID-19 pandemic was analysed. One of the findings showed that there was a significant difference between the increased usage of the individuals purchasing services and goods online and those who tried doing this for the first time. Moreover, with respect to the category of concern (clothing brands), 25 to 45% of the participants who bought clothing items in the past, stated that their online shopping activities rose during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, these studies are in line with the research done for this thesis, which shows that the Social media usage during the COVID-19 Pandemic had a positive role in influencing the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus.

5.2 Summary of Conceptual Framework

As stated previously, the Theory of Planned of Behaviour (TPB), which represents the primary framework for this research, is integrated with the Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT) and the Media Dependency theory (MDT) to investigate and understand the factors that influence tertiary students purchasing intentions of clothing brands through social networking sites (SNS). In this thesis, information seeking and social presence are the sub dimensions of UGT. And so, based on the research model, UGT forms part of the antecedents that measures the SNS role leading to a purchasing intentions of clothing brands. Based on this research, it was found that the dimension of information seeking and social presence, which makes up UGT, has an influence on

the intention to purchase. This is because most of the tertiary students agreed with the item discussed in Table 4.35, with an average mean of 3.54. This is consistent with previous studies carried out by Ku et al. (2013), where UGT had an influence on the intention to use SNS. Furthermore, in a research carried out by Hsu et al. (2015), the dimension of information seeking and social presence were important factors that lead to SNS usage. These results can easily be interpreted as information gratification being significant to tertiary students, who are often users of clothing brands SNS pages. These findings show that tertiary students, who are users of clothing SNS pages, use SNS for information seeking about the brand, as well as for establishing social networks. SNS can also be used for communicating with peers, families, classmates and teachers. Moreover, gratifications in terms of the dimension of information seeking and social presence, explain why clothing brand pages are gratifiers that encourages the usage of SNS amongst tertiary students in Northern Cyprus.

Furthermore, MDT also forms one of the existent theories that measures the SNS usage leading to a purchasing intention being developed for clothing brands. The dimension that makes up the MDT for this research is the social media usage frequency. And as anticipated or expected, an individual that is actively involved on SNS through their respective devices will be positively influenced towards having an intention to participate on SNS clothing brands, eventually leading to purchasing intentions. Thus, exposure to these brand sites give rise to encountering promotional messages and videos that appeal to their senses. As seen in table 4.53, a Pearson correlation between the SNS usage frequency (clothing brand page) and purchasing intentions of tertiary students was undertaken. From the findings of the research, it can be seen that there is a significant positive correlation between the SNS usage frequency (clothing brand

page) and the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students, which is significant at the 0.01 level. This shows that there is a medium positive correlation between both compared groups. Therefore, this means that tertiary students SNS usage frequency on clothing brand pages has a direct influence on their purchasing intentions, and so the time spent on SNS is a variable that impacts the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. This result ties in with Lee and Kim (2011), where increased communication activities on mobile devices influence and predict online shopping activities through the device used. Moreover, this also means that the mobile devices serve as an effective avenue to be utilized by apparel marketers for promotion of clothing brands. In all, SNS Usage frequency dependency on clothing brand pages is a predictor of the purchasing intentions of tertiary students.

Finally, the findings from employing the TPB, highlights the major role of attitude a constituent of demographics and price), subjective norms (constituent of social media influencer and promotional campaign) and the SNS intention to use (constituent of MDT and UGT), to predict the purchasing intentions of tertiary students on clothing brands. Based on these presented factors, and the results presented in chapter 4, it can be seen that collectively these factors exert a strong positive influence on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students. The likely explanation for this is that SNS affords tertiary students the opportunities to see clothing collections, novelties, influencers, promotional offers and recommendation, price discounts, as if it were a physical store (Cham et al., 2018; Tahirah et al., 2020; Duffet, 2015; Socialbakers, 2020; Syaifullah et al., 2021). Therefore, these factors play an important role in defining the subjective norms and attitude of the tertiary students, leading to the use of SNS and eventually, leading up to the development of their purchasing intentions.

Additionally, extraneous variable like social media usage during COVID-19 was also seen as an important factor that influenced the purchasing intentions of tertiary students as the lockdowns, social distancing and safety protocols, kept most tertiary students at home and so, created the perfect opportunity to be more active on SNS. With more activities of clothing brand pages, tertiary students were reeled into the marketing strategies used by clothing brands leading to a purchasing intentions (Deliotte, 2020).

5.3 Conclusion

In this thesis, the objective was to investigate the role of social media marketing, (particularly through the use of Facebook and Instagram) on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, during the COVID-19 pandemic by taking clothing brands as a case study. The institutions that were selected to participate in this research were Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), Girne American University (GAU), and Near East University (NEU); making up a sample size of 356 students. The study utilised the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which was combined with the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and the Media Dependency theory (MDT) to investigate and predict the purchasing intentions of clothing brands by tertiary students. Based on the TPB, tertiary students purchasing intentions was the dependent variable. Demographics and price were the dimensions of attitude. Social media influencer recommendation and promotional campaign were the dimensions of subjective norms, of which were collectively made up four independent variables. Additionally, the social networking sites (SNS) Usage during the COVID-19 Pandemic was the fifth variable.

Based on this research, it was found that a significant difference exists between female and male tertiary students purchasing intentions during the pandemic. As both sexes differ in their decision making process and how they shop for fashion apparel on SNS brand pages, in this thesis it was found that in Northern Cyprus, male tertiary students purchasing intentions were impacted more than the females through social media marketing. Furthermore, a significant difference in purchasing intention was observed between the respondents based on their regions. From the results, it was seen that South East Asia had the highest influenced region, this showed that regional differences play an important role in impacting the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus, where regional difference can stem from cultural practises of the individuals country of origin as well as the adoption of technology, in this research though the highest number of respondents were from Sub-Saharan Africa, due to difference in cultural practices, in Africa, and Turkey, respondents from South East Asia had a higher purchasing intention from social media marketing due to COVID-19 pandemic in Northern Cyprus. Also, it was seen that convenient pricing had a positive influence on tertiary students purchasing intentions of clothing brands, as price discounts, cheaper pricing and giveaways, are useful strategies employed by clothing brands to attract customers and get them thinking about their product line and service. It is a way to boost sales by inciting a purchasing intention. Moreover, from the results, it was observed that there were significant differences in ages of the respondents showing that students of which social media influences their purchasing intentions in Northern Cyprus the most were ages 20-25 years, also the art and science faculty had a higher mean inciting a higher purchasing intention from social media marketing compared to other faculties analysed in this research, with respect to their purchasing intentions on SNS, it was observed that generation Z were more influenced

by SNS to instigate a purchasing intent on brand pages on SNS. Furthermore, the results showed that students with a disposable income of 3501TL-5500TL per month, after settling bills scored higher in agreement with the purchasing intentions of clothing brands. In all, these demographics explain factors influencing tertiary students in Northern Cyprus purchasing intentions of clothing brands through the use of social media, (Facebook and Instagram) being the SNS focused on in this thesis. Likewise, it was found that the interaction between clothing brand influencers and their recommendation to customers impacts tertiary students' intentions to make purchase. Recommendation from clothing brand influencers are perceived by tertiary students as an honest review of the product and service and so, the students are more accepting of the information and tend to follow the lead of the influencers. Additionally, the result acquired in this research, showed that promotional brand activities have a significant influence on the tertiary students purchasing intentions. As media content is a powerful tool utilised by brands to attract prospective customers. This is achieved through SNS advertisements, campaigns and posts.

COVID-19 pandemic presented a serious challenge to companies all across the globe. With tighter restrictions and lockdowns, it was a serious challenge for companies to open freely and do business. However, it presented a unique opportunity as most individuals were confined to their homes, meaning this brought an increase in online activity. The result of this research, confirmed that tertiary student's in Northern Cyprus online activities increased on fashion brand pages on Instagram during the pandemic than pre-COVID-19 pandemic. Also, it was found that COVID-19 pandemic enabled brands on SNS to create better customer services for their users. This happened in order for the brands to stay relevant and engaging, by improving their

service and product delivery boosting sales during the lockdown. It was found that social media usage during COVID-19 Pandemic positively impacted the purchasing intentions of the tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. This was confirmed by the Pearson correlation test and mean distribution table. Therefore, social media marketing presents a wonderful opportunity for clothing brands to build a relationship with their customer base, and engage them with their product line and services. The factors discussed in this thesis proved important in this research, by discussing the role of social media marketing on purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus. Finally, throughout this research the researcher has mainly pointed out the role of marketing on social media sites in the fashion industry through the use of Facebook and Instagram during the COVID-19 pandemic, showing the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and usage of social networking sites (SNS) during the pandemic. Also, the relationship between the variables that influence the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus during the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed. This thesis explored how social media serves as an informative platform and served as a distraction from the fear of the COVID-19 virus during the pandemic, making tertiary students in Northern Cyprus more social media active. This research shows that the role of social media marketing on purchasing intentions is influenced by several factors which were discussed previously in this thesis. This enabled the researcher to draw a conclusion that there was an increased level of activity from the tertiary students on social media which lead to a corresponding increase in their purchasing intentions. Most importantly, the increase in activity level was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, it can be emphasized that the role of social media marketing during the COVID-19 Pandemic significantly increased, when the purchasing intentions of tertiary students in Northern Cyprus were investigated, the social media marketing is

found as a means to influence convenient purchasing for Northern Cyprus tertiary students.

5.4 Recommendation for Further Research

This thesis focused on addressing the tertiary students purchasing intentions on clothing brands with the use of social networking sites (SNS), (particularly through Facebook and Instagram). However, there is still an ongoing research in this field and thus, there is always need for adjustments and refining. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies are carried out to explore external and internal factors that impact social media marketing, in order to have a more comprehensive information with respect to tertiary students and clothing brands in Northern Cyprus.

5.4.1 Academic Recommendation

For enhancement, besides demographics, convenient pricing, brand influencers' recommendations, promotional campaigns, and effect of SNS usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, future researchers can extend the framework by introducing more independent factors. For instance, brand equity, trendiness, customization, etc. Moreover, the technology acceptance model (TAM) can be integrated into the conceptual model, to measure factors like perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and behavioural intentions. Moreover, as the clothing brand context is vast, future researchers can narrow down clothing brands particular to Northern Cyprus like LC Waikiki, Terranova, Koton, Defacto etc., to compare brands efficacy amongst tertiary students. However, future researchers can make a comparative study on the previous research focused on Northern Cyprus and that of other countries, additionally, a more detailed systematic reviewed study of the previous research and merge it with a qualitative research, thereby carrying out a mixed method based research, carrying out a face-to-face interview with the respondents in order to acquire more data on the role

of social media marketing on the purchasing intentions of clothing brands. This will enable the researchers to have a better understanding on the gap of the research which would be the beginning for a much larger research for the academia.

5.4.2 Managerial Recommendation

Future researchers can interview experts in the field of social media marketing in Northern Cyprus and clothing brand executives, to further understand the marketing strategies employed and introduce innovative approaches which will benefit both sides. Also, this will be instrumental in helping distribution as well as retail companies to make better valuable decisions and forecast accurately the demands of the customers because customer's preferences can differ during crisis situations. Therefore, by researching more innovative techniques during the post COVID-19 pandemic era, the company's goals and objectives in terms of marketing can be realised, as more customers can be captured and maintained. Moreover, this could be of interest to more researchers in the field of managerial studies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

The Role of Social Media Marketing on the purchasing intentions of Tertiary Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Respondents,

My name is Jennifer Sylvester, I am a graduate student from the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Eastern Mediterranean University. I am conducting a research on the impact of social media marketing on the purchasing intentions of tertiary students during the COVID-19 pandemic. All data that will be gotten from this questionnaire will be used solely for the purpose of this research and all the answers provided will remain anonymous and confidential. Please, answer all questions accurately, Thank you for your time, and valuable contributions.

SECTION A: Demographic Information

1. Which of the below categories is your country of origin?
(a) Sub-Saharan Africa (b) North Cyprus (TRNC) (c) Turkey (d) MENA (Middle East North Africa) (e) other (please specify).....
2. What is your age (in years)?
(a) 16-19 (b) 20-25 (c) 26-30 (d) 31-35 (e) 35- and above.
3. What is your gender?
(a) Male (b) Female (c) other (please specify).....
4. What is your educational level of study in the university?
(a) Undergraduate (b) Masters (c) PhD (d) other (please specify).....
5. What is your faculty?

(a) Communication and Media Studies (b) Business & Economics (c) Engineering (d)Architecture (e) Arts & Sciences (f) Pharmacy & Medicine (g) Tourism (h) Other (please specify)

6. What is your relationship status?
(a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorced (d) I would rather not mention
7. How much would you say is your disposable income after the bills have been settled? (a) Less than 1500TL per month (b) 1500TL-3500TL per month (c) 3501TL-5500TL per month (d) 5501TL-7500TL per month (e) more than 7500TL per month

SECTION B: Preliminary Data on Social Media and Marketing

8. Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) do you have an account with? (Tick all that applies in this section)

(a)Facebook (b) Twitter (c) Instagram (d) Snap Chat (e) other (please specify).....
9. How many hours do you spend daily on the SNS that you have an account? (a) 1-2 hours (b) 3-4 hours (c) 5-6 hours (d) 7 hours and more
10. Which of the following social media networking sites (SNS) are you most active on?

(a) Facebook (b) Twitter (c) Instagram (d) Snap chat (e) other (please specify)
11. Do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/ and Instagram? (a) yes (b) no
12. If yes, how often do you follow clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram

(a) All the time (b) Often (c) Sometimes (d) Rarely
13. Which social media have you ever bought clothing from? (a)Facebook (b) Instagram (c) other (please specify).....

Section C: The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Tertiary Students purchasing intentions.

(Please tick the applicable response; 5: Strongly Agree 4: Agree 3: Undecided 2: Disagree 1: Strongly Disagree)

	Statements	SA	A	U	D	SD
14.	I often follow clothing brands on social media platforms because of their good discounted prices.	5	4	3	2	1
15.	Clothing brands on social media that are affordable are of great interest to me.	5	4	3	2	1
16.	I am more loyal to a clothing brand that offers rewards such as price discounts, free gifts, etc. to engage with me on their page on Facebook or/ and Instagram.	5	4	3	2	1
17.	I am attracted to check the page of a clothing brand on Facebook or/and Instagram that has a colourful and welcoming appeal.	5	4	3	2	1
18.	Info graphics, videos and pictures of clothing brands I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram are interesting and captivating.	5	4	3	2	1
19.	I like seeing advertisements on clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook and/or Instagram.	5	4	3	2	1
20.	It is easy to engage in conversions with social media platform operators of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic.	5	4	3	2	1
21.	It's easier to access contents of clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram than through any other social media platform during the COVID-19 Pandemic.	5	4	3	2	1
22.	The COVID-19 Pandemic has made clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more effective in handling the demands of their customers online.	5	4	3	2	1

23.	I feel there is an improvement in the customer service offered in the clothing brand pages I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic.	5	4	3	2	1
24.	I am more likely to be interested with a clothing brand on Facebook and /or Instagram that is recommended to me by a social media influencer (Celebrity, You Tuber, and Blogger etc.).	5	4	3	2	1
25.	I am more likely to recommend a clothing brand to my friends and family, if the social media influencer (Celebrity, You Tuber, Blogger etc.) I follow recommends it to me.	5	4	3	2	1
26.	Positive reviews from social media influencers (Celebrities, YouTubers, Bloggers etc.) I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram develop my interest in a clothing brand.	5	4	3	2	1
27.	The COVID-19 Pandemic has made me more active on clothing brand pages on Facebook or/and Instagram.	5	4	3	2	1
28.	I follow information relating to clothing brands on Instagram or/and Facebook more often during the COVID-19 Pandemic than in previous years.	5	4	3	2	1
29.	I often comment on posts of clothing brands I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram more often during the COVID-19 Pandemic than in the past.	5	4	3	2	1
30.	I use the “like” option on clothing brands posts; I follow on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic more than the previous years.	5	4	3	2	1
31.	Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram helps me make better decisions before purchasing a good during the pandemic.	5	4	3	2	1
32.	Following clothing brands on Facebook or/and Instagram during the COVID-19 Pandemic has added to my interest in purchasing products online.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B: Approval letter



Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee

Reference No: ETK00-2021-0056

16.01.2021

Subject: Your application for ethical approval.

Re: Jennifer Syllvester Gogvin (19500160)

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies.

EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board (BAYEK) has approved the decision of the Ethics Board of Communication (date: 16.03.2021, issue:96) granting Jennifer Syllvester Gogvin from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies to pursue her MA thesis titled "**The Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Purchasing Intension of Tertiary Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic**" supervised by Assist. Prof. Dr. Ülfet Kutoğlu Kuruç.

Best Regards

Prof. Dr. Yücel Vural

Chair, Board of Scientific Research and Publication Ethics - EMU

YV/şk.

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