



Informational sources affecting purchase intent in online shopping:

A qualitative approach to determine external informational sources affecting the online purchase intention of high involvement products.

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ABSTRACT

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Title:	Informational sources affecting purchase intent in online shopping: <i>A qualitative approach to determine external informational sources affecting the online purchase intention of high involvement products.</i>
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Keywords:	Purchase intention, online shopping, high involvement products, information search sources.
Research question:	<i>How do different external informational sources affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products?</i>
Purpose:	The purpose of this paper is to give an understanding of how consumer's online purchase intention is affected by external informational sources when seeking high involvement products.
Method:	This empirical study employed a qualitative method approach. The data was collected through four focus groups by using convenience sampling.
Conclusion:	The main findings of this research showed differences among informational sources in their effects on online purchase intentions for high involvement products. Each informational source affects consumer online purchase intention in different ways. It is revealed that source credibility, expertise and knowledge are the main elements that affect consumer perception to a large extent for all factors. These main elements make the information search, adoption and transfer much easier because of their persuasive role which in return affects purchase intent.

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1. Introduction

Imagine you are searching for a fashion apparel on a website, you will find different alternatives and your pre-purchase decision will require a deeper information search in order to evaluate the alternative and stimulate the purchase intention so you can make a buying decision. Nowadays, especially with the internet penetration, a lot of retailers in the fashion industry developed digital platforms in order to boost their sales and exposure. Therefore, the online fashion industry becomes more popular and is considered one of the largest e-commerce segments (Lacy, Long and Spindler, 2020). Fashion garments are considered high involvement products which lead consumers to search and use different sources of information to gather the suitable knowledge related to the product (Johnson, Banks, Smith, and Seo, 2016). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008) the purchase decision of a high involvement product is considered a complex buying process and requires information search to reduce the uncertainty. Therefore, the information search is considered an important process during the purchase decision process (Maity, Hsu and Pelton, 2012). As stated by Hoyer, MacInnis, Pieters, Chan and Northey (2018), in the information search process, consumers can gather information from internal or external sources. In internal sources, the information required is stored in the memory as it is affected by previous experience and it can be limited with time pressure and distraction. While external sources focus on gathering information from the environment. This research will focus on external informational factors such as electronic-word-of-mouth (independent source), family and friends (interpersonal source), influencers (experiential source), and advertisement (media source) and will try to find out how these informational factors affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products.

1.1 Background

A pre-study was done by Khan and Abdelnour (2019) to check the non-controllable marketing factors such as family and friends and controllable marketing factors such as influencers and advertisement having an effect on purchase intent in online shopping. Quantitative method was selected for this method and an online survey was used to gather data (see Appendix A). Now in this study, the scope was broadened by including two new variables such as electronic-word-of-mouth (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018) and high involvement products (Kopanidis et al., 2017, p. 136). The influence of these factors such as family and friends, influencers, EWOM (electronic-word-of-mouth), and advertisement was checked on purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products. As high involvement products can be different for various people (Kopanidis et al., 2017, p.136), to limit the scope, fashion garments were used in the focus groups to collect responses as they are also considered high involvement products (Anum and Abida, 2017).

In present day, exchange and businesses have come to the point of much differentiation that several channels have occurred and as a result of that, online shopping has expanded fundamentally across the world (Johnson et al., 2001). When a customer's mentality is affected positively by online shopping then they have more prominent goals to search for items and/or services through the web (Yu and Wu, 2007). Based on previous researches, when people have the intention of buying high involvement products then they seek more

information related to the product (Verlegh, Steenkamp, and Muelenberg, 2005) and this information is taken from various sources such as EWOM (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018), influencers (Lindh and Lisichkova, 2017), family and friends (Soloman et al., 2010), and advertisements (Usman, Ilyas, Hussain, and Quereshi, 2010).

Laroche, Bergeron, and Goutaland (2003) stated that the more knowledge a customer has on a high involvement product; it reduces the perceived risk towards the product. As per Gu, Park, and Konana (2012) people use EWOM, blogs, and social networking sites to get information about high involvement products because it requires more participation from consumers. Davis, Wang, and Lindridge (2008) stated that when customers perceive certain risks while purchasing online, priority is to ask for family and friends' opinion before making a purchase decision. People also get guidance and information from experts, online reviews, or influencers when they are having doubts in their buying decisions related to a product (Lindh and Lisichkova, 2017). It is also shown from previous research that advertisement helps in giving information such as publicizing the product to consumers which then helps in changing their purchase behavior (Usman et al., 2010).

1.2 Problem discussion and research area

According to Ashman et al., (2015) the pre-purchase phase of the customer journey which consists of need of recognition, information search and alternatives evaluation is still in need of further research. Therefore, the focus of this study was on the informational search part in terms of specified digital and non-digital informational factors to better understand their influence on the purchase intention for high involvement products in online shopping. As stated by Kim and Park (2005), product information searches are considered one of the strongest predictors of consumer's purchase intention. When buying high involvement products, the purchase decision process is affected by it due to the information search and risk factor associated with it. Thus, the purchase intention is affected by internal, external, and marketing variables (Kotler et al., 2008). Online consumers have a need to gather information related to their browsing disregarding the level of knowledge as taking an example of the nature of fashion. There are ongoing changes and the consumer knowledge related to fashion apparel always need to be up to date during a buying process. Accordingly, in the presence of a need, information is required to satisfy this need (Frings, 2014).

Due to the high value of high involvement products, consumers spend a lot of time collecting information through various sources to make the right purchase decision (Jiang et al., 2015). The informational source had been explored by previous researches, but a big part focused on specific or several digital factors. Berger (2014) stated that customers rely on EWOM sources more than other sources that are paid and created by marketers similar to online advertisement while other findings stated that exchanging information with virtual people perceive a lack in trustworthiness (Mathwich et al., 2008). Van Beuningen et al., (2008) find that customers rely on peer sources of information more than corporate sources. People also get guidance and information from experts, online reviews, or influencers when they are having doubts in their buying decisions related to a product (Lindh and Lisichkova, 2017). Chen et al., (2016) explored different digital informational

sources and confirmed that the diversification of information source and availability have a positive contribution to consumers' online purchase intention.

Therefore, this study attempts to gain greater insights on specified digital and non-digital informational factors to better understand their influence on purchase intention for high involvement products in online shopping. This will contribute to the growing literature related to the topic.

1.3 Research question

In order to find out how external informational sources affects purchase intent in online shopping when buying high involvement products, this study leads to the following research question:

RQ: How do different external informational sources affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products?

A qualitative method approach was utilized to help in this research. The qualitative data was collected in four focus groups and convenience sampling was applied.

1.4 Purpose

As with time, behavior and technology changes and people are adapting to new things so this research aims to gain greater insights and a better understanding on how external informational factors such as family, friends, influencers, EWOM, and advertisement affects purchase intention in online shopping for high involvement products. So, in this study these sources will be investigated together and will be found out how they affect purchase intent for high involvement products in online shopping. The findings will help companies to better understand consumer purchase intention in online shopping for high involvement products. Through this study, the findings will contribute to the existing literature and will help students, and researchers in some way.

2. Theoretical framework

This section defines and explains the concept of high involvement products, EWOM, family and friends, influencers, advertisement, and purchase intent.

2.1 High involvement products

The product level of involvement is related to customers' interest in the product that is the more interested the more the level of product involvement. Therefore, the purchase decision process requires more time and effort since the product is considered expensive and the purchase risk is high (Zdravkovic, 2013). According to Kotler et al., (2008) the customer perception of product involvement level is dependent on customer demographic, socioeconomic, and psychographic factors. The purchase decision process of a high involvement product is related to the importance of specific product acquisition. And this degree of involvement is not always related to the price but to the perception of its influence on the customer quality of life which can be related to product features or to social sanctions given by referred groups (Bloch et al., 2009). High consumer involvement occurs during high-end fashion products shopping and this is due to consumer emotion and brand association (Huong et al., 2016).

According to previous studies, Jang et al., (2017) stated that some products purchased that carry high risks or seen expensive lead to stimulate the motivation towards exhaustive search of information and have an impact on the use of cross-channel shopping. Another study by Chen et al., (2016) related to online brand information search analyzed EWOM in parallel to a neutral third party and the retailer influence and the findings showed that EWOM had been selected as the most effective source for customers disposition to informational influence. In Radder and Huang's study (2009) the correspondents that have a high involvement towards a specified product showed high brand awareness while Yun and Lee (2005) stated that high involvement product leads to a high level of purchase intention. In media factors, Lui et al., (2015) stated that marketing influencers have an impact on consumer perception towards products' level of involvement as they create value and need through their integration. The consumer will increase the involvement tendency when the product is being seen as important and valuable to meet the needs and goals (Phua, Jin, and Kim, 2017). According to Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) consumer integration with a credible and trustworthy influencer has a positive impact on purchase intention and product involvement. Other studies show that advertising plays an important informational role, a persuasion role, and has an influence on consumer choice preference (Nihel, 2013).

2.2 EWOM (electronic-word-of-mouth)

Word-of-mouth is defined as a "consumer-dominated channel for the dissemination of product or service information by senders who are independent of the market" (Ayeh, Au, and Law, 2013). The Internet has transformed the way people communicate such as changing word-of-mouth communications into EWOM (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018). Kietzmann and Canhoto (2013) define EWOM as "any statement based on positive, neutral,

or negative experiences made by potential, actual, or former consumers about a product, service, brand, or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet". EWOM such as online ratings and reviews helps the customers to gather information about a product or brand. It enables the customers to get an idea about a product or brand before the purchase as well as it helps the customers in their decision-making process by lowering the risks (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018).

Customers search for other people's views and recommendations in terms of product selection before a purchase (Wang, Wang, and Wang, 2018). According to Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), for customers it is a normal thing to get feedback from online reviews as well as from their friends' comments regarding a product before its purchase. When there are positive reviews posted about a product on EWOM platforms such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, it gets significantly recommended to friends in contrast to the products which have bad reviews (Lee and Youn, 2009). According to Lee, Park, and Han (2008), negative information is given more importance than positive information and is considered more reliable for decision making purposes. Negative WOM messages are having a direct effect on customer purchase intentions in comparison to positive messages. Cheung et al., (2009) from a study on online shopping concluded that positive EWOM helps in nurturing the connection between buyers trust and purchase intention and it also plays an important role in modifying customer viewpoint and integrity.

As per Gu et al., (2012) people use EWOM, blogs, and social networking sites to get information about high involvement products because it requires more participation from consumers. According to Han and Kim (2016), when people are buying high involvement products, they can encounter greater risks. As stated by Anum and Abida (2017), fashion garments come in the category of high involvement products and before buying it people spend a lot of time getting information from various sources as it requires money and can portray the identity of the customer. From a study in 2013, Wolny and Mueller concluded that when EWOM is linked to fashion then it is influenced by high fashion involvement.

2.3 Family and friends

A person's decision-making procedure is affected by other's persuasions (Hsu, Kang, and Lam, 2006). According to Chhabra (2018), family and friends are considered the most important social factors that have a direct impact on the individual decision. Customers take into consideration the information given by their social group (family and friends) related to a certain product (Hsu, Kang, and Lam, 2006). According to Gil, Andreas, and Salinas (2007), consumer purchase behavior to a large extent is influenced by their family. As per Godes and Mayzlin (2004), friends and colleagues perform a significant part in forming individual decisions.

Consumer's purchase decision is affected by different factors when they are fulfilling their necessities and in it, role models influence is an important one (Dix et al., 2010). According to Dix et al., (2010), role models can be family members and celebrities, who have a significant effect on young adult choice of products and services. Consumer purchase intention is also impacted through environmental influences of the family (Du et al., 2007).

As per Niu (2013), friends also have a big influence on online purchase behavior as well as this behavior is constantly put into force by the friend's group. Primary social group was explored by several researchers and it was well documented that family and friends' positive feedback have a positive influence on customer purchase decisions (Madahi and Sukati, 2012). They are considered a credible source of knowledge that helps the customers to evaluate the product value and to estimate the risk (Lei et al., 2017). A study done by Zhang et al., (2018) stated that the primary reference group has a positive impact on customer choice, purchase likelihood, and purchase amount.

Nayeem and Casidy (2013) in their study comparing external influences in car purchase found that conservative buyers consider that family/friends and interacting with the car dealer have a high impact on their purchase decision when it comes to high involvement products similar to car purchase because they assure their choice. From a study in 2012 by Thomas and Wilson among Indian college students, they found that friends' group influence and to compare themselves with others, were affecting individuals to buy high involvement products. Beaudoin and Lachance (2006) researched friend's group impact and found that it was influencing young buyers to buy the same fashion clothes through social interactions. According to Wei and Yu (2012), friend's opinion influences the consumer purchase intention as the individual has the desire to please for the ability of integration to a certain group and to be accepted by the society as well as for the act of imitation.

2.4 Influencers

Influencers can be from different industries such as entertainment or health, or other groups such as they can be friends with famous people, or they can be rich individuals or some other group, who have a liking for extravagance products (Abidin, 2016; Marwick, 2015; Saul, 2016). More and Lingam (2017) define online influencers as individuals who help the potential customers to arrive at a buying decision by having an impact on their views through social media. Influencers use social media to stay in touch with their followers and post information about products to keep them updated (Liu et al., 2012).

According to Abidin (2015), influencers are viewed as unbiased and significant persuaders because the endorsement which they do is very personal and intertwines into their daily life. Influencers can have an impact on their followers' mentalities, choices, and practices with the help of their social media interaction (Watts and Dodds, 2007; Lyons and Henderson, 2005). From the research conducted by Berger and the Keller Fay Group in 2016 found that 82 per cent of people listen to an influencer's advice because they believe that the influencer in a particular field has reliable, accurate, and trustworthy information. According to Soat (2014), New York City-based pharmacy Duane Reade's in 2013, used the services of influencer Donna Kim (a beauty blogger) to promote their hosiery line. Her fans followed her endorsements and purchased the hosiery line. This strategy provided a 28 per cent increase in hosiery sales for Duane Reade storefronts and it also received 19.4 million social media impressions.

According to Freberg et al., (2010), some researchers view influencers as not favorable. As per Gorry and Westbrook (2009), companies must evolve regarding technology and start communication with customers directly so that customers can get reliable and factual

information. It can be damaging for the reputation of both influencers and businesses if the customers found out that the influencer is working with one or different businesses whose core values are different from that of the online community (Bergkvist and Zhou, 2016). According to Cresci et al., (2015), if an influencer has lots of followers and only some of the accounts are following it may signal that the followers are bot or fake, which is also not good for the business and influencer as well. A first UK research of influencers and marketing conducted by influencer analyst CampaignDeus in 2018 showed that 12 per cent of UK influencers used fake followers.

Trust plays an important part for an influencer to affect his followers (Lindh and Lisichkova, 2017), similarly Bakshy et al., (2011) stated that customers view influencers as trustworthy and dependable as well as they are helpful in changing purchaser perspectives. In online shopping when consumers cannot exercise their five senses to check a product, so it has a negative impact on trust and buying decisions which is labelled as high involvement products (Shirkodae and Rezaee, 2014). To check a high involvement product, consumers utilizes their internal information (experience) as well as their external information which is available in the form of influencers, friends, and family opinions (Kopanidis et al., 2017, p. 136). Further indicated by Sarathy and Patro (2013) customers get information from influencers and other personal sources when they are doing high involvement buying which as a result ends in solution of a problem. When influencers endorse a high involvement product, it reduces the perceived risk only if the influencer is a trustworthy fit (a good fit) with the product (Trampe et al., 2010).

2.5 Advertisement

According to Moriarty et al., (2014), in the actual competitive environment the usage of suitable advertisements through appropriate channels is one of a company's success factors. Since the online community is in continuous growth, marketers have more direction towards online advertisement to approach their potential clients. As this medium is considered in terms of reach, feasibility, visibility, and information display more powerful than traditional advertising channels (Shankar and Batra, 2009; Kiang et al., 2000). According to Kotler and Lane (2016), advertisement is considered an expressive communication tool and helps to formulate brand image and stimulate sales. It is used by marketers as an informational channel to inform and create a need as well as have a positive impact on encouragement and persuasion to purchase. Rawal (2013) stated that advertising plays an important role by catching consumer attention, stimulating interest, and then it creates a desire for the advertised product by addressing consumer personal needs and this is related to the advertising model AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action).

Researchers stated that culture and norms affect the consumer perception and evaluation of advertising information (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010). As the customer background has a deep impact on the interest towards the advertisement graphics and content as well as on the visual perception (Wang and Sun, 2010). While the credibility of advertiser and the content has an impact on consumer attitude and purchase intention (Ling et al., 2010). As it might boost the intention especially when the advertised message could promise for a reward or assure a desired satisfaction (Solomon et al., 2016) but consumers might avoid

online advertisement as it might be a spam (Taylor, 2009). Online advertisement influences the online customer as it allows the ability to target a segmented category known as a potential consumer. Since the data collected by tracking consumers digital history helps to specify the target required and this act is known as behavioral marketing (Wirth, 2018). Online advertising technologies help consumers by showing them ads that match their interests (Schmeiser, 2017) while other researchers consider this medium as privacy invasion (Borgesius, 2016).

Previous studies exploring advertisements related to high involvement products stated that the consumer motivation will increase as well as the tendency to check the ad as consumers need to seek more information (Rajasekhar and Makesh, 2013). According to Scott (2016), advertisements have a positive impact on consumer perception towards an expensive product as it means that it's a good quality product. According to a study by Sharifi (2014) stated that online advertisements have an impact on brand awareness by influencing brand appearance and this can affect customer emotions and have a positive impact on online purchase intention of high involvement products. Similarly Chaffey (2009) stated that online advertisement is used by companies in the purpose of brand awareness creation and in order to have an impact on product familiarity and online purchase intention as well as it have a persuasion role in consumer purchase decisions (Fennis, 2015).

Additionally a study done by Rajalakshmi and Purusothaman (2016) stated that online advertisement characteristics have a positive impact on online purchase intention of electronics as it affect the consumer attitude towards the product offered online while Alkubise et al., (2012) stated in their study that retailers should promote their brand name and make it familiar through online advertising.

2.6 Purchase intent

Purchase intention can be defined as when a person makes an attempt such as a well-effort arrangement to buy a product (Spears and Singh, 2004). As per Vineyard (2014), when a person starts looking for products that's when the purchase process begins which in return prompt buying. According to Wei and Yu (2012), a high level of purchase intention results in buying high involvement products. The product level of involvement and consumer interest in the product is connected such that higher interest in the product will lead to high level of product involvement. According to Zdravkovic (2013), high involvement products are considered expensive and purchase risk is high, so the purchase decision process requires more time and effort. The level of involvement impact on the purchase decision process was explored by different researchers and they stated that the purchase decision process is affected more in the presence of high involvement products because the purchase decision has some risk and requires having some information related to the product (Kotler et al., 2008).

In online shopping, intention is used to forecast real behavior (Orapin, 2009); however, it should be kept in mind that purchase intention doesn't lead to buying activity (Kim and Jones, 2009). The study by Kim, Lee, and Kim in 2004 explored the connection between when people have the intention to utilize the internet to look for products and the intention to buy things from the internet, and they came to the conclusion that looking for

information may forecast purchase intention. One of the major shortcomings to online shopping is low level of trust (Rahi, Ghani, and Muhamad, 2017). When there is sufficient trust in online buying, it creates a favorable view as well as a higher intention to purchase (Cho and Jialin, 2008). Cheung et al., (2009) from a study on online shopping concluded that positive EWOM helps in nurturing the connection between buyers trust and purchase intention and it also plays an important role in modifying customer viewpoint and integrity. Customer purchase intentions and customer trust are directly related (Harris and Goode, 2010). From previous literature it can be stated that customer purchase intention can be determined through customer trust (Schlosser et al., 2006). When people are buying products or services and they have a previous trust experience with the merchant, it will lead to a more significant level of purchase intentions. It means that customer trust can lead to consumer purchase intentions (van der Heijden et al., 2003).

2.7 Summary (conceptual model)

The following conceptual model (see figure 1) has been proposed for this study with the help of the outlined theoretical framework and is used as a model for this study. Figure 1 consists of external informational sources such as EWOM, influencers, family and friends, and advertisement which are independent variables and high involvement products online purchase intention which is dependent variable. Figure 1 shows that independent variables such as EWOM, influencers, family and friends, and advertisement are having an effect on dependent variable which is high involvement products online purchase intention. The effect can be seen by the arrows pointing from independent variables towards the dependent variable. The primary objective is to discover how different external informational sources such as EWOM, influencers, family and friends, and advertisement affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products. Figure 1 will help us in answering the research question and to achieve the primary objective of this study. The external informational sources such as EWOM, influencers, family and friends, and advertisement in figure 1 are summarized below to show their effects on online purchase intention for high involvement products.

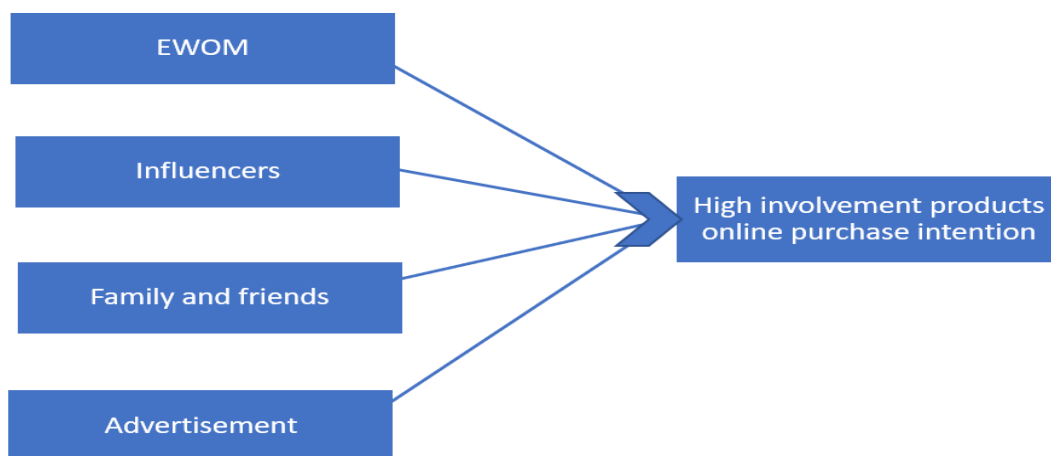


Figure 1: External Informational Factors having an effect on Purchase intent in Online Shopping for High Involvement Products

Figure 1 illustrates that external informational sources (or factors) such as EWOM, family and friends, influencers, and advertisements are having an impact on online purchase intention when buying high involvement products.

2.7.1 Non-controllable marketing sources

EWOM enables the customers to get an idea about a product or brand before the purchase as well as it helps the customers in their decision-making process by lowering the risks (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018). According to Han and Kim (2016), when people are buying high involvement products, they can encounter greater risks. As per Gu et al., (2012) people use EWOM, blogs, and social networking sites to get information about high involvement products because it requires more participation from consumers.

According to Chhabra (2018), family and friends are considered the most important social factors that have a direct impact on the individual decision. Customers take into consideration the information given by their social group (family and friends) related to a certain product (Hsu, Kang and Lam, 2006). Thomas and Wilson (2012) study among Indian college students, they found that friends' group influence and to compare themselves with others, were affecting individuals to buy high involvement products.

2.7.2 Controllable marketing sources

Previous studies exploring advertisements related to high involvement products stated that the consumer motivation will increase as well as the tendency to check the ad as consumers need to seek more information (Rajasekhar and Makesh, 2013). According to Scott (2016), advertisements have a positive impact on consumer perception towards an expensive product as it means that it's a good quality product especially when the advertised product exists in limited quantity on the website.

To check a high involvement product, consumers utilize their internal information (experience) as well as their external information which is available in the form of influencers, friends, and family opinions (Kopanidis et al., 2017, p. 136). Also further indicated by Sarathy and Patro (2013) customers get information from influencers and other personal sources when they are doing high involvement buying which as a result ends in solution of a problem. When influencers endorse a high involvement product, it reduces the perceived risk only if the influencer is a trustworthy fit (a good fit) with the product (Trampe et al., 2010).

3. Methodology

This chapter describes and explains the different parts of investigation such as which method was used and how the data was analyzed. The selection was made on the basis to better support the research question and purpose of this study.

3.1 Research methodological choice and approach

The chosen research topic was broad and complex and can be better understood with direct interaction with consumers. In qualitative approach, there is a communication between people and based on that, findings are gathered which are dependent on people's conduct and social attributes (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It emphasizes words by providing further insights and understanding of a phenomenon by investigating the experiences, thoughts, and meanings directly from respondents rather than quantifying the data collected and analyzed (Saunders et al., 2012). The qualitative method will help us in extracting further insights and richer data.

Another reason for choosing this method was that it contributes to high internal validity, transparency and flexibility. Since we had already explored the quantitative method in our pre-study. Therefore, through the qualitative method for this study, we had the opportunity to gain a better understanding of consumer thoughts along with their actions and motives (Malhotra, 2010).

An abductive approach was implemented for this research. It can be referred to as interplay between the gathered data and the theory (Duboi and Gadde, 2002). We developed the preliminary framework questions from concepts in previous researches and these questions were used to collect the primary data from respondents through focus groups and after that the findings were interpreted and analyzed in order to get new insights. This method helped the researchers to start from known facts and directed their work towards seeking further explanation and deeper understanding which permitted the researchers to move back and forth between data and theory (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.2 Data collection

Primary data and secondary sources were used for this research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). When a researcher collects empirical data to support the aim of a study, that refers to primary data. While secondary data refers to the information collected previously by other researchers from pre-studies (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010). In order to explore the selected external informational sources impact on online purchase intention of high involvement products, focus group method was used as primary data source.

3.2.1 Focus groups

The choice of having focus groups instead of interviews is that participants might stimulate each other which can reveal new perspectives (Carey and Asbury, 2016). As this method

leads to a deep understanding related to the topic investigated and a deeper understanding of participant's experiences and beliefs as the interaction and engagement between the participants' elicit rich experiential data (Wilson, 2014). According to Saunders et al., (2012), this method draws upon participants' experiences, feelings, and reactions.

According to Krueger and Casey (2015), focus groups that consist of 4 to 6 respondents are preferable as this number of participants lead to a more comfortable setting. This allows an active participation of all group members and gives us the ability to extract an in depth and rich data related to respondents' experience in a minimum intimidating setting. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) stated that a minimum of two groups is required to conduct proper research while we conducted four focus groups along with four correspondents in each group.

For the focus groups, we chose semi-structured questions. As the concept of high involvement products purchase intention might be complex for some of the participants which will require additional explanation from the moderators. Additionally, we might extract more clarifications from the respondents' answers which will allow us to receive the most relevant and rich data. This less structured approach is used since the aim is to understand the participant's thinking by encouraging the free flow of discussion and stimulating the personal experience, description and interpretation (Waren, Gubrium and Holstein, 2002).

Due to the covid-19 global pandemic, we used online focus groups on a digital platform. According to Saunders et al., (2009), online focus groups encourage participants to be less influenced by other participants. Online focus groups also lead to gathering more honest and open answers (Sweet, 2001). Another advantage of the online focus group is that it removes the geographical barriers as the focus group included participants from different countries but a risk of connectivity was taken into consideration in order to avoid delaying the process.

3.2.2 Secondary sources

To start this research, existing theory was checked with a specific focus on the chosen study and then the broad issues were narrowed down into defined problems in order to highlight the research objectives (Zikmund, 2003). To have a greater insight on how external informational factors affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products, secondary sources such as existing literature and a pre-study was used to have a clearer idea about the chosen research topic because this type of data collection is highly productive and efficient in terms of expertise (Smith et al., 2011). Apart from the pre-study, scientific articles, annual publications, and books were used in this research. The databases which were utilized to gather secondary sources were ScienceDirect, Emerald, ResearchGate, and many others. Mälardalen University library database and Google Scholar were used for this and peer review was used as a filter to narrow down the search. The AAOCC-criteria such as authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency, and coverage are used for web pages so that only reliable, updated, and useful information is utilized for this study (Kapoun, 1998). Relevant keywords that were important to the chosen study, only that were used in research databases and search engines to collect information and the search results were narrowed down based on relevance, peer-reviews, and timeframe. The

keywords which were used to collect information from the internet included such as online shopping, high involvement products, social circle, influencers, EWOM and many more. To strengthen the validity of the research, keywords were narrowed down so that the chosen study is investigated more by the research process (Bagozzi, Yi, and Phillips, 1991, p.422). The search was done by both authors individually and together and then both findings were cross examined. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), this triangulation increases the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected.

In addition to the above, the results of Khan and Abdelnour (2019) pre-study were utilized in this research to compare with the new findings (see Appendix A). The pre-study explored the influence of social circles that consist of family and friends along with influencers and advertisement towards online purchase intention. For this, an online survey was used to collect data. The international data set collected, consists of 910 valid respondents from 81 countries and after analyzing the data on SPSS, a positive correlation between family, friends, influencers and advertisement towards the online purchase intention was confirmed. The findings of Khan and Abdelnour (2019) pre-study also stated that family, friends, advertisement and influencers impact online purchase intention and social circle that consists of family and friends has the most influence on online purchase intention.

3.3 Operationalization

The questionnaire design is considered very important due to its impact on the validity and reliability of the data collection (Saunders et al., 2003). For this research, we reviewed literature related to our research question and purpose of the study and after that, the focus group questions were developed based on questions used in previous research. Necessary modification was applied to the questions in order to make them more suitable for the researched topic as we implemented semi-structured focus group questions. English language was the exclusive language utilized during the focus group sessions. Prior to the focus group sessions, we explained the purpose of the study and highlighted the ethical consideration in order to help the participants to better understand the research objective, the procedure and their rights. We started the preliminary framework by two general questions related to their online shopping history and experience inspired from McKnight et al., (2002) study in order to break the ice and to make them feel comfortable. After that, to gather insights on each factor influencing the online purchase intention and to get a better understanding on the informational search process while seeking high involvement products twelve questions were presented. Lastly we asked the respondents which source they take into consideration and they consider having the most impact on the online purchase intention for high involvement products. In order to have a clear idea, the below table shows the operationalization process (questionnaire) that was used in this research for data collection.

Items	Focus Group questions	Source	Purpose
1. Online Shopping	<p>Q1: Do you use an online platform to buy fashion garments? If yes, can you tell us about the process?</p> <p>Q2: Are you comfortable with purchasing fashion garments online and is it related to a specific online platform or in general?</p>	McKnight et al., (2002)	To know if participants use online platform to buy high involvement products such as fashion garments and to know about their experience.
2. Informational search	<p>Q3: Before purchasing a product, which sources you usually rely on for finding information and you rely on one source or different sources?</p> <p>Q4: How much time do you spend while searching for information related to the product?</p>	Costa, (2013); Simonson and Rosen, (2014); Wolny and Charoensuksai, (2014); Ashman, Soloman, and Wolny, (2015); Dias, (2016)	To understand how participants perform their information search and through which sources.
3. EWOM	<p>Q5: Before purchasing fashion garments online, do you rely on positive or negative electronic-word-of-mouth? Please explain why?</p> <p>Q6: In what way EWOM stimulate your purchase intention while searching for fashion garments online?</p>	Kietzmann and Canhoto, (2013); Krishnamurthy and Kumar, (2018); Lee, Park, and Han, (2008); Cheung et al., (2009)	To know how participants perceive EWOM and to understand its effect on online purchase intention of high involvement products such as fashion garments.
4. Advertisement	Q7: How do you perceive online advertisements when searching for fashion garments and is it a reliable source or you consider it annoying by invading your privacy?	Rajasekhar and Makesh, (2013); Rajalakshmi and Purosothaman, (2016); Borgesius, (2016)	To know if participants use online advertisement in their online information search and to understand its effect on high involvement products

	Q8: How advertisement contributes to your information search and what is its effect on your purchase intention?		online purchase intention such as fashion garments.
5. Influencers	<p>Q9: In what way influencers help in your pre-purchase decision process?</p> <p>Q10: Do you find influencers review trustworthy and reliable? Can you explain?</p> <p>Q11: How influencers contribute to your information search for high involvement products such as fashion garments and what is its effect on your purchase intention?</p>	More and Lingam, (2017); Berger and Keller Fay Group, (2016); Bakshy et al., (2011); Kopanidis et al., (2017); Trampe et al, (2010)	To know if participants follow influencers in their online search for high involvement products such as fashion garments and to understand its effect on their purchase intention.
6. Family and friends	<p>Q12: When you are searching for a high involvement product such as fashion garment from an online store, do you rely on family or friends advice or you follow your own feelings? Can you clarify?</p> <p>Q13: Have you ever searched for the same fashion garment that your family or friend already bought? For what reason?</p> <p>Q14: In what way does your family or friends affect your online</p>	Chhabra, (2018); Hsu, Kang And Lam (2006); Beaudoin and Lachance, (2006); Thomas and Wilson, (2012); Nayeem and Casidy, (2013)	To know on whose advice such as family and friends participants rely the most in online shopping process and to understand its effects on their online purchase intention.

	purchase intention of high involvement products?		
7. Most influencing factor	Q15: Consider you are looking for dress/suit on an online platform: Rank the following informational sources such as EWOM, family, friends, influencer, and advertisement, from high to low that would have the most influence on your purchase intention?	Self-constructed by the authors	To extract the external informational source that have the highest impact on high involvement products online purchase intention.

Table 1: Preliminary framework

Table 1 shows the focus group questions along with their concepts, author names and purpose.

3.4 Data approach and sampling

The purpose of sampling is to gather different sources that could bring different perspectives on the discussion topic (Creswell, 2017; Creswell and Poth, 2007). According to the research purpose and research topic, we collected data from respondents that could provide relevant insights (Bryman and Bell, 2011). In other words, convenience sampling was used for selecting the participants that are available, accessible, and willing to participate in the focus group (Etikan et al., 2016). Also, an important criterion was taken into consideration that the respondents will have an experience related to shopping on an online platform or the willingness to shop via online.

In order to gather the focus group respondents, we asked our peer groups if they know people who fit the criteria mentioned above in order to participate in the focus groups. We also applied snowball sampling which helped us in finding potential candidates who have the potential of providing valuable data (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The same was done on our social media accounts to reach the suitable respondents. Accordingly, we filtered the required number of participants by considering a variety in the sample such as different demographics perspectives in order to be applicable later on for a larger context (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The above directions helped us to find potential participants that do not have any previous relation with us. After the respondents selection, we gathered the groups homogeneously to have a smooth, natural, and comfortable session (Krueger and Casey, 2015). Accordingly, four focus groups were conducted between first and second May 2020. Minor differences between participants may be available in each session as this will help in uncovering deeper insights (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). For this research, a cross-sectional time horizon was selected as the purpose was to make observations under a short period of time (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.4.1 Participants Background

The participants of the focus groups consisted of sixteen respondents aged between 22 and 41 and were from thirteen different nationalities. The participants of the first focus group consisted of four males of Swedish nationality such as first participant working as a teacher, second participant working at a store, third participant working in real estate, and fourth participant working in social service. The participants of the second focus group consisted of one female of Lebanese nationality working as a quality control manager, one male of Armenian-Lebanese nationality working as an IT manager, one male of Portuguese nationality working as a mechanical engineer, and one female of French nationality working as a pharmacist. The participants of the third focus group consisted of one male of Spanish nationality doing an internship, one female of Indian nationality working as a nurse, one female of Turkish nationality working in the medical field, and one male of Ghanaian nationality working as a financial engineer. The participants of the fourth focus group consisted of one male of Kazakhstani nationality working in IT field, one female of Russian nationality working in Micrana Electronics, one male of Iranian nationality working as a design engineer, and one male of Indonesian nationality working as an automobile engineer.

Participants codes	Gender	Nationality	Age	Focus group number	Focus group session date	Duration	Way of communication
F1a	Male	Swedish	27	1	01/05/2020	50 minutes	Skype
F1b	Male	Swedish	29	1			
F1c	Male	Swedish	30	1			
F1d	Male	Swedish	27	1			
F2a	Female	Lebanese	36	2	02/05/2020	48 minutes	
F2b	Male	Armenian-Lebanese	37	2			
F2c	Male	Portuguese	40	2			
F2d	Female	French	35	2			

F3a	Male	Spanish	24	3	01/05/2020	53 minutes
F3b	Female	Indian	30	3		
F3c	Female	Turkish	25	3		
F3d	Male	Ghanaian	32	3		
F4a	Male	Kazakhstan i	26	4	02/05/2020	52 minutes
F4b	Female	Russian	22	4		
F4c	Male	Iranian	24	4		
F4d	Male	Indonesian	41	4		

Table 2: Focus Groups Demographics

Table 2 shows all the participants' codes for the focus groups, their nationalities, their age, focus group number, focus group duration and its date and way of communication.

3.5 Focus group procedure

While conducting the focus groups, we were the moderators of the focus groups as we had good knowledge related to the subject and were able to answer respondent's questions. One directed the focus group while the second focused on having notes related to the discussion and observing the participants as the facial expression could say a lot. The roles were equally switched in order to have a balanced and trustworthy account from the perspective of both researchers as to extract valuable data from the focus groups. It is very important that it is executed in the right way (Krueger and Casey, 2015). We handled the situation and at the same time, created an open atmosphere so that the essential topic is totally covered within the time frame and made sure evolving all participants. We also focused on that the discussion is related to the explored topic. We were quick-witted and were able to act quickly especially in the case of disagreement and argument and also, stimulated the participants by making the conversation interesting, focusing on the discussion even if we were not participating and remained neutral (Wilson, 2014).

Prior to the four focus group sessions, we practiced a pre-focus group with 3 participants; it was recorded but not transcribed as the aim was to rephrase the questions and a practice for the moderators to ameliorate the discussion. At the beginning of the focus group sessions, we informed the participants on the study topic, and told them that the session

will be audio recorded after their agreement and also motivated them to express themselves and to be honest (Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook, 2014). The participants were notified that their identity will be anonymous as well as that they have the right to quit the session or to reject answering a question if they view it as intrusive. During the focus group sessions, a focus group guide was applied in order to keep the discussion flow (see Appendix B). The online focus group sessions were implemented using Skype application and they were communicated in English language as participants were from different countries. This ease of language allowed participants to feel comfortable, to express themselves and to get expressive and vivid answers as much as possible. The session timing was set based on the convenience of the participants and the focus group sessions happened for two days in a row while executing two focus groups daily.

Time is very important in the focus group as enough time leads to more interaction and longer answers and the choice of having a focus group instead of interviews is that participants might stimulate each other which can reveal a new perspective. One-hour duration was recommended for each focus group session (Carey and Asbury, 2016). As having long focus group sessions might lead participants to lose interest. Accordingly, it was communicated with participants that the session duration is one hour with the possibility of extending 30 minutes if needed.

3.6 Data analysis method

Based on the purpose of this study, we implemented a theory-driven qualitative content analysis as it is considered one of the most suitable methods for analyzing the data collected. This method helps to identify important aspects in the content and to describe individual experiences. It is considered one of the most suitable methods for analyzing written data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). To answer the research question, this method examines information on a certain level. This approach can also strengthen existing literature and can formulate new theories as well. In qualitative content analysis, codes are developed from theory key concepts (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

For transcription, the audio recorded during the focus group sessions was transcribed directly after the focus groups by both authors amended with the notes taken along with a description of any facial expression or other observations was added in order to keep the data stored and make sure that no information is lost (Saunders et al., 2012). To extract data coding, the transcription was read several times and different colors were assigned for positive and negative feedback. After analyzing the focus groups data, the dominant themes found in the analysis were presented based on the conceptual model (see figure 1) which is the focus point for the preliminary framework. The relevant themes in the empirical findings chapter were explored with the help of a preliminary framework used in the operationalization (see chapter 3.6). We conducted the analysis together in order to agree on the material interpretation and for incongruence minimization (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The findings were compared with the results of pre-study and other researchers.

3.7 Research development process

Figure 3 (see Appendix C) tries to portray the research development process which we adopted in this study. Based on the research question and purpose of this study, relevant literature was selected for this research through scientific articles and peer reviewed researches found in Mälardalen University library database along with books. After that, the methodology was explained such as the suitable method and approach selected for this research in order to fulfil the research purpose. The literature extracted previously was very beneficial which helped us in formulating the questions used for this study. The respondent's data selection along with the focus group procedure and the analysis method used to extract the findings were explained. After gathering the data collected from the focus groups, the findings were reported, analyzed and interpreted. In the empirical findings and discussion sections, we extracted the insights and findings gathered and then we compared them against the literature and pre-study. In the last stage, conclusions were drawn and then they were compared with the research question and purpose which enabled us to highlight the theoretical along with practical implications.

3.8 Quality criteria

The concepts used to measure quality in quantitative research such as validity and reliability cannot be utilized in the similar structure for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, this research adapted the concepts such as confirmability, transferability, credibility, and dependability which are commonly used in qualitative research approaches for measuring quality (Bryman and Bell, 2015). These criteria are equivalent to the concepts used in quantitative methods such as validity, replicability, and reliability. Accordingly, this part reflects the trustworthiness of this research.

3.8.1 Confirmability

It is of importance that the researcher does not interpret what the research participants said in a different way to fit it into a certain story (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This means that the findings are obtained from participants' responses and not from the researchers' personal motivations. In order to be bias free, we prepared for the focus groups in advance and also a pre-focus group was done before the four focus groups in order to improve it, minimize the errors and to be able to extract the most valuable data (Saunders et al., 2003). Furthermore, while conducting the focus groups and when analyzing the findings, we remained neutral such as did not share our opinions or influenced the respondents neither intruded by our own views (Cavana et al., 2001). According to Bryman and Bell (2015), confirmability refers to the study findings degree of neutrality by evaluating if the researchers intrude by their values/beliefs.

3.8.2 Transferability

This study can be replicated and if a bigger sample size is used for future investigation it will give more clear outcomes. It's also worth mentioning here that exact replication can't be achieved (Bryman and Bell, 2015) as qualitative studies are broad and constantly changing

such as in the focus group it is difficult to maintain the same flow each time, which makes it difficult to maintain constancy (Saunders et al., 2003). The focus groups cannot be executed in the exact same manner again and somehow, if the same respondent's participant again their responses will have an influence from the last participation (Yu et al., 2005).

Taking into consideration that knowledge can be transferred into a bigger scope of informational search or customer pre-purchase journey. Even though it was stated that the findings might be relevant and appealing to other studies, we do not state that the results of this study can be generalizable because four focus groups were used to collect information for this study and it can't account for the whole population (Saunders et al., 2003).

3.8.3 Credibility

In order to fulfil the credibility criterion, interviewers were unbiased with regard to the interviewee's viewpoints (Saunders et al., 2003). The questions used in the focus groups were based on previous literature which further strengthen the credibility of the questions and were supervised by the tutor and colleagues of research. To increase credibility even more, the questions were not given to the participants beforehand but were shared with them at the time of focus groups so that their honest views and opinions can be recorded and the participants were informed of transparency regarding data collection.

For this qualitative study, triangulation method was adopted such as the pre-study, existing literature and focus groups results were compared against each other (Cooper and Schnidler, 2006; Saunders et al., 2003). We conducted a pre-focus group before the four focus groups in order to further check the questions and to remove any unnecessary questions from it which in return helped to get meaningful responses from the participants. The focus groups respondents were gathered through snowball sampling and the respondents were not familiar with each other nor with the researchers.

3.8.4 Dependability

In order to increase the process and findings accuracy, we recorded the audio of focus groups. The data collected were manually transcribed and analyzed by both of us so that the same conclusion was drawn from it to avoid any errors or biases. All steps of this study were documented and saved on different storage devices. These steps were followed to evaluate the research process by satisfying the trustworthiness requirements (Bryman and Bell, 2015). As stated by Bryman and Bell (2015), dependability is the study trustworthiness evaluation for other researchers through its context explanation.

3.8.5 Ethical considerations

When contacting respondents for the focus groups if they want to participate, they were told about the research topic at that time (Sekaran, 2000; Cavana et al., 2001; Davis, 2000; Cooper and Schindler, 2006). In order to get reliable and truthful responses from the participants, they were told that their real identities will be protected, and fictitious names

will be used for them in the study. The respondents were told that the information which they shared during the focus groups will only be used for educational purposes (Sekaran, 2000). The audio of the focus groups was recorded and transcribed so that no important information is left out (Polonsky and Waller, 2005). In focus groups, it's difficult to maintain confidentiality since the interviewers can't be fully sure that the respondent doesn't talk to other people regarding the questions (Sekaran, 2000). One option is to use non-disclosure agreements to maintain safety of all the participants. Respondents have the freedom if they don't want to be a part of the study or they don't want to answer a question or they can end the focus groups any time they want (Sekaran, 2000; Cavana et al., 2001).

4. Empirical data

In this chapter we will discuss the focus groups findings by expressing them in a narration form. We will display the findings related to each part of the preliminary framework in the operationalization chapter.

4.1 EWOM findings

This section has two questions and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). First question is, when participants were asked before purchasing fashion garments online, if they rely on positive or negative EWOM and what's the reason for it?

Some respondents said that they rely on positive EWOM because these reviews reflect real customer satisfaction and they are revealed from a personal experience. They further stated that positive EWOM affects consumers' feelings positively and it increases their trust towards the product and modifies their viewpoint towards it. On the contrary, half of the participants stated that they rely more on negative EWOM because they find it more credible and effective. They stated that it is more genuine and helps to detect and compare the product in different ways. The respondents stated that negative feedback is related to customer dissatisfaction which leads to a risk perception and it's more trust-worthy since companies will not write a negative review for their own product while on the contrary they can write a positive review.

"I would also go for negative because you know nowadays for example if I am the manufacturing company. I would send my I don't know family or other people send them to write positive reviews about my product. So it's not trustworthy but negative one are the one who give you more information about the product." Respondent "F4c".

Few respondents stated that they don't rely on both (positive and negative) since they don't trust virtual people's feedback and they doubt the source credibility of these reviews as nowadays anyone can write reviews regardless of if they have used the product or not. While on the contrary, some respondents said that they rely on both positive and negative EWOM because nowadays there is too much information and you can't just rely on one aspect. It gives you an idea and opinion about it such as there can be an insider from the company posting on their behalf or a competitor posting negative stuff about their opponents. So, you have to filter the information to know what is real and what is fake.

"It helps me to get a rough idea and opinion regarding the product now yes there could be an insider from the company or from the competitors but usually you can filter them by reading and using your common sense." Respondent "F2c".

For the second question, participants were asked in what way EWOM stimulates their purchase intention while searching for fashion garments online. Some respondents said that negative EWOM stimulates their purchase intention when searching for fashion garments as the negative comments help in their decision making to avoid the risks and, in this way, it affects their purchase intention. The respondents stated that the negative EWOM helps them to remove unnecessary doubts by searching for more information. On

the contrary, some respondents said that positive EWOM stimulates customer feelings as previous customers' satisfaction has a direct effect on their purchase intention since it reduces uncertainty and assures the customer choice.

"If I found a lot of positive feedback then I will feel that I am doing the right choice and yes in this way they stimulate my purchase intention." Respondent "F2a".

Some respondents said that both positive and negative EWOM affect their purchase intention as the reviews complement their knowledge related to the product quality especially when they are not experienced with fashion. The respondents stated that they rely on other people's views and recommendations which satisfy them and have an effect on their purchase intention. Contrary, few respondents claimed that EWOM didn't affect their purchase intention because they don't trust the source credibility and they prefer real people's feedback.

4.2 Influencers findings

This section has three questions and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). First question is, when respondents were asked in what way influencers help in their pre-purchase decision process?

Majority of the respondents answered that influencers don't help in their pre-purchase decision process because they lack credibility as they are getting paid to promote a product. The respondents said that they are fake and are perceived as a marketing tool aiming to get paid and have extra followers. They said this gap increases when they promote a product that they don't use in their personal life and when they buy virtual followers. Few respondents stated that they don't follow influencers due to the reasons stated above.

"They don't affect my pre-purchase decision because I see them as fake and I think what they are doing is because of money or just to get extra followers." Respondent "F2c".

On the contrary, few respondents stated that influencers help in their pre-purchase decision process especially when they have experience in what they are promoting through their posts such as celebrities like famous football players when they promote sports shoes. Furthermore, they stated that influencer style sense affects them such as when they personally use or wear as their appearance influences the customer's sensory and accordingly have an influence on their purchase decision.

Second question is, when respondents were asked if they find influencers review trustworthy and reliable. Most of the respondents said that they don't find their review trustworthy and reliable because they are getting paid to promote a product to their followers. As the more followers they have the more they get paid in return (more brands) and will not say bad things about a product even if it has some. Furthermore, respondents stated that influencers promote products which they haven't utilized in their personal life which make their feedback doubtful and for these reasons; most of the respondents don't consider their reviews trustworthy and reliable.

“The influencers most of the time are paid for advertisement. I mean promoting the product so no they are not. I don’t think they are trust-worthy and reliable.” Respondent “F4c”.

On the contrary, few respondents said that they find influencers to be trustworthy and reliable if they promote what they stand for especially when they use the product in their personal life and afterwards, promote it then they find their reviews credible. The respondents said that when an influencer is experienced in a field and promotes a product within that field then their reviews are reliable and trustworthy.

Third question is, when respondents were asked how influencers contribute to their information search for high involvement products such as fashion garments and what is its effect on their purchase intention. Majority of the respondents said that influencers don’t contribute to their information search and also don’t affect their purchase intention because they are getting paid and for this reason, they don’t take them into consideration. They mentioned further that influencer’s main focus is on marketing and to increase their followers which leads them to look for other reliable sources as high involvement products are usually expensive and require lots of information search before their purchase.

“I don’t know how some people usually believe them but for me no. They don’t affect my intention and I don’t take them into consideration.” Respondent “F2b”.

Few respondents answered that influencers' style affects their purchase intention as the way the influencer wears the clothes stimulates their intention and creates a need to have that product. Few respondents answered that influencers contribute to their information search and affect their purchase intention if that influencer is trustworthy. They expressed further that since its a high involvement product so if that influencer is a successful celebrity or has experience in that field, so it will have a great effect on them.

4.3 Advertisement findings

There are two questions for this section and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). In the first question participants were asked about online advertisement perception. Many respondents considered advertisements annoying most of the time due to their repetition and the heavy spread. Since they found these ads everywhere and especially when they don’t have any interest in the product, and it pops up on every platform. The advertisements are considered pushy and are seen as privacy invaders.

“ads are annoying, they are everywhere on the website, mobile and application”. Respondent “F2a”.

It was detected among these respondents that consider the ads annoying that different factors might be taken into consideration that change their attitude. One factor is visual attractiveness and the content of the ad. If the ad was creative and the product was presented in an attractive way. This will create or increase the need for the product especially if the consumer is interested in the product and the attractiveness has more influence such as the content is related to a sale campaign or launching a new product. Another factor is if the actors used in the visual were popular like a celebrity or a football

player this will affect and stimulate the consumer intention especially if they are a fan of that actor.

“attractive ads make me want to buy the product and I end up by buying it”. Respondent “F3a”.

Almost half of the respondents perceive personalized ads as beneficial and an important source of information because it helps them to know more details on a product when they receive ads related to a product of their interest.

“disregarding how they track my product search but I feel happy when I receive different ads for a product that I need, it helps”. Respondent “F2c”.

For the second question the respondents were asked how advertisement contributes to their information search and what is its effect on their purchase intention. Few respondents stated that advertisements don’t contribute to their information search nor affect their purchase intention as they don’t check them. They consider that the annoying repetition has a negative effect on the product and the platform. Contradictory respondent “F4a” considered that this repetition might push him to purchase the product.

“ads repetition for a long duration affect my sub-consciousness and stimulate my purchase intention towards that product”.

While the rest of the respondents mentioned that advertisement affects their purchase intention in a way depending on several factors. It was detected that visual attractiveness such as creative design, usage of celebrities plays a major role and stimulates the purchase intention since it catches the attention of the visual. Along these respondents, it was stated that advertisements have an important informational role as well. The ads message content has great importance when informing about sale or launching a new product which stimulates purchase intention by spreading awareness on that product and by playing a reminder role towards a need that the consumer is not aware of which also leads to positively affecting the purchase intention.

“for me the advertisement is important when it is about sale or new product launch, it stimulate my interest and I feel like I need to have that product”. Respondent “F1b”.

According to respondent “F4d”, the source of advertisement credibility affects positively the purchase intention. Since the ads on online platforms perceive a risk of information consistency as they might be fake or spam, so the ad source credibility is important.

4.5 Family and Friends findings

Three questions were addressed for this section and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). The first question is about family and friend’s advice reliability during fashion garments online search. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants have the same thoughts and similar patterns as they rely on family and friends directly or partially especially if they had already used the platform or the product. They stated that

their experience is very important as they are a trustable and honest source that don't have any interest when they share their opinion. They stated further that their advice reduces the uncertainty related to price, and value and consumers reduce the risk by relying on trustworthy feedback. The findings also revealed that single respondents rely more on friends' advice due to the similarity in age and style. They perceive the friend's feedback as more reliable and this is affected by their relation power and the same applies to siblings as well. The respondents stated that what is related to fashion, parents might have a different style as they are not UpToDate especially that fashion industry is on continuous change while contradictory married respondents rely most on their partner advice because sometimes they search for products related to their kids and they care about their partner feedback when buying fashion garments.

"Family and friends' advice is trustworthy and reliable because they will not try to sell me the product and they will give me their honest feedback". Respondent "F2a".

It was detected that when respondents are confused they rely on family and friends advice partially and on their own feelings at the same time and if both didn't match then this requires more search when it's related to fashion garments since it is a complex process. Contradictory, only one respondent "F3d" relies on his own feelings instead of family and friend's advice because he considers that fashion style is something personal.

The second question was if the respondents had ever searched for the same fashion garment that their family or friend already bought. Most respondents admitted that they have already done it because they feel comfortable asking their friends especially when they see a nice outfit and like the style. They stated that it helps to reduce confusion and insecurity related to choosing the suitable garments because they trust them, and they can rely on their feedback. According to the respondents, friends' feedback reduces the need to search and accelerate the purchase decision.

"I ask my brothers and friends because it's very important when I see the product on others because I always get confused and their feedback helps me a lot". Respondent "F1b".

Some respondents consider it an act of imitation, so they don't ask their friends about their clothes, but they rely on their advice related to fashion products that they have an interest in like for price or color.

The last question related to this part explored family or friends' influence on the online purchase intention of high involvement products. Only one respondent "F3d" considered that they might have an effect in the physical store because of the product's appearance but not when he is searching online while the rest of the participants stated that family and friends have an influence on purchase intention of high involvement products but at different levels. It was obvious that the experience in terms of using the platform or using the product played an important role especially when the peers were satisfied and spread positive feedback. The respondents said that family and friends are seen as trustworthy and their feedback is reliable as they don't have any interest and are not trying to sell the product, so their transparency is valuable. They influence the intention by their motivation and their advice reduces the uncertainty and the perceived risk.

"I trust my friends and family feedback on fashion product because they are honest and their advice stimulate my purchase intention". Respondent "F2d".

4.6 Online Shopping findings

This section has two questions and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). First question is, when respondents were asked if they use an online platform to buy fashion garments and if they can tell about the process or the experience.

Most of the respondents answered that they use online platforms to buy fashion garments and have a good experience related to it. They stated that they use an online platform to buy fashion garments when there is a sale or discount on it. They stated further that when they get their favorite fashion garments at a low price, they feel happy and it's a good experience for them. They expressed that with online shopping there are many options to choose from and it saves them time as well. The respondents said that when they get their desired products or fashion garments at a reduced price so they feel happy which is a natural thing and the advantage of using online shopping is that it saves them time and gives them many alternatives to choose from. On the contrary, few respondents mentioned that they don't buy fashion garments online because of the size issue. They expressed that when they buy fashion garments online and their correct size is not delivered to them then it is too much of an effort for them to send it back to get a new size or a refund.

"We use online platform to buy fashion garments when they are on sale or something, so it has benefits." Respondent "F2d".

Second question is, when the respondents were asked if they are comfortable with purchasing fashion garments online and is it related to a specific online platform or in general. Majority of the respondents replied that they feel comfortable when buying fashion garments online and sometimes they use the brand website or other platform which they have tried before and are satisfied with it. They stated that nowadays in online shopping there are a lot of fake products being sold as branded or original products. So, for this reason they use the brand or other platform which they have tried before. They stated further that they look at other aspects as well such as free delivery, delivery time and refunds and exchanges.

"I only buy from either the brands website or some website that I trust and know and have shop before." Respondent "F3c".

On the contrary, one respondent "F3b" mentioned that she prefers the general platform due to previous bad experience on a brand platform because of size issues which created confusion and she had to pass through the return procedure.

4.7 Informational search findings

This section has two questions and for the average number of responses (see Appendix D). First, participants were questioned if they rely on different informational sources during

their product search on an online platform. It was obvious that when buying a high involvement product consumers select specific platforms to reduce risk and also it needs to be searched as stated by different respondents. The respondents said as the process is complex and creates confusion such as the more costly the product is the more informational sources are used. The participants rely on non-controllable marketing sources like family, friends and EWOM due to their credibility and trustworthiness especially when they are based on an experience.

“when I am buying expensive product, I search through different sources”. Respondent “F4c”.

Despite the non-controllable sources mentioned above, few respondents stated that they still count on physical stores as an informational source to check the fashion garment for the sensory feeling and by doing this they reduce the research required for the product. As well as Google is another source that few respondents rely on in order to compare prices and delivery.

Second, when questioned on the time required during the product search process. Most of the participants mentioned that they require a lot of time during their search on high involvement products. As they are considered expensive and of certain value which create confusion and the consumer perceives a risk. The respondents said this requires excessive information search in order to reduce the uncertainty and to be able to get more knowledge from the information searched in order to reduce the confusion and compare the prices.

“when a product is considered costly for me, I need a lot of time to gather information and search for it”. Respondent “F4d”.

Contradictory, few respondents have different point of views such as they stated that in the presence of a trustable source then the search does not take time because it satisfies their need for information and they can count on that feedback while one respondent stated that during sale season the process is very quick and there is no time for search.

4.8 Most Influencing Factor

This section has one question which was created by us to find out what the most influencing factor is according to the respondents. The respondents were asked to consider they are looking for a dress or suit on an online platform and they have to choose among the following factors (family, friends, influencers, EWOM and advertisement) from high to low that have the most influence on their purchase intention (see Appendix D).

For this question, the majority of the respondents answered that non-controllable marketing informational sources such as family, friends, and EWOM are more reliable and more trustable in comparison to controllable marketing informational sources such as advertisement and influencers.

For the non-controllable marketing informational sources, the respondents gave the following reasons. For friends, the respondents mentioned that they are the same age as them, have the same fashion taste, and understand them more. For family, the respondents stated that they trust them more and will give their honest opinion without any hidden interest. For EWOM, the respondents answered that it helps them in knowing the pros and cons of a product.

For controllable marketing informational sources, the respondents gave these reasons. For advertisement, the respondents expressed that it helps them in knowing about a new product or existing product which they do not know. For influencers, most of the respondents answered that it does not affect them as they get paid to promote a product.

To conclude, the majority of the respondents answered that friends are the factor that has the most influence on their purchase intention especially when they have a high level of knowledge related to the product.

5. Discussion

In this chapter the authors will discuss the literature review, pre-study and findings. The discussion will be done for each factor separately.

5.1 EWOM

The empirical findings of EWOM revealed that most respondents are affected by both positive and negative EWOM when searching for fashion garments online and they influence the online purchase intention positively based on the focus group sessions. Almost half of participants rely more on negative EWOM while some respondents rely on positive EWOM.

EWOM such as online ratings and reviews helps the customers to gather information about a product or brand (Krishnamurthy and Kumar, 2018). As per Gu et al., (2012) people use EWOM, blogs, and social networking sites to get information about high involvement products because it requires more participation from consumers. According to the empirical findings, some respondents said that they rely on EWOM (positive and negative) before purchasing fashion garments online because you can filter the information and it gives you an idea and opinion regarding the product because it is shared based on other customer's previous experience. It can be stated that nowadays there is too much information available online which makes it difficult for people to rely on one aspect. It can be further mentioned that people look for other people's reviews and recommendations both positive and negative in terms of product selection. So, it can be the reason that people focus on both aspects of EWOM (positive and negative) to have a better understanding related to a product. So, this study supports the arguments of Krishnamurthy and Kumar (2018) and Gu et al., (2012).

According to Lee, Park, and Han (2008), negative information is given more importance than positive information and is considered more reliable for decision making purposes. In the empirical findings, half of the respondents claimed that they rely more on negative EWOM before purchasing fashion garments online because they find it more credible, trustworthy and reliable. It can be claimed that negative EWOM is more truthful; it gives you more information regarding the product and helps you to compare the product in different ways. It can be mentioned that negative EWOM helps people in their decision making when they are having doubts and also to avoid risks. It can be stated that negative EWOM helps the people in better selection of a product such that anyone can write a positive review for a product. Accordingly, this study supports the arguments of Lee, Park, and Han (2008).

Cheung et al., (2009) study on online shopping concluded that positive EWOM helps in nurturing the connection between buyers trust and purchase intention and it also plays an important role in modifying customer viewpoint and integrity. In the empirical findings, some respondents said that when searching for fashion garments online if it has positive EWOM then it stimulates their purchase intention and they feel more satisfaction and they want to buy the product more. It can be stated that when there are many positive reviews

then people can get the feeling that many people have used the product and they were satisfied with it. It can be further stated that positive EWOM has a positive effect on people's feelings and modifies the customer viewpoint towards the product. So the empirical finding supports the study done by Cheung et al., (2009) while at the same time it contradicts the argument that negative WOM messages are having a direct effect on customer purchase intentions in comparison to positive messages done by Lee, Park, and Han (2008).

Mathwich et al., (2008) stated that exchanging information with virtual people perceives a lack in trustworthiness. Based on the empirical findings, few respondents stated that EWOM didn't affect them and also the source of the review cannot be tracked. It can be stated that some people are not influenced or they do not take into consideration EWOM because they have this perception that there will always be positive and negative reviews. Maybe they have used the product and were satisfied with it regardless of the negative reviews and vice versa. It can also be stated that the company itself can write positive reviews for its products or a competitor can write negative reviews for its opponent products. Another reason for this can be the source credibility issue as sometimes people write reviews regardless of if they have used the product or not. It can be further stated that the reviews are perceived with lack of trustworthiness due to the virtuality of people commenting. So, the empirical findings confirm the study of Mathwich et al., (2008).

5.2 Influencers

The empirical findings of influencers revealed that majority of the participants said that influencers don't contribute to their information search for fashion garments and they don't affect their purchase intention as well as they don't find influencers review trustworthy and reliable while on the contrary some participants stated that they trust influencers reviews on the condition that the influencers were promoting their own fashion products or they are experienced in that field or they know them personally.

More and Lingam (2017) define online influencers as individuals who help the potential customers to arrive at a buying decision by having an impact on their views through social media. Influencers use social media to stay in touch with their followers and post information about products to keep them updated (Liu et al., 2012). Based on the empirical findings, majority of the respondents said that influencers don't help in their pre-purchase decision process because they are getting paid to promote a product or to get extra followers. It can be stated that influencers are not viewed as favorable because sometimes they promote the product to their followers and instead not use the product in their personal life. Another reason can be that sometimes influencers use fake followers to show their fan following and because of it, they are not viewed as credible. On the contrary, few respondents said that influencers help in their pre-purchase decision process because they have experience, the products which they use you can see those in their posts. They stated further that through their style sense as well they help in our pre-purchase decision process. It can be said that when influencers use the product or wear the clothes and post about it to their followers so they get influenced by it. It can also be stated that when an influencer is a celebrity or has experience in a particular field then people trust their opinion and are

influenced by it. So, this study confirms and contradicts in what is related to that online influencers help potential customers to arrive at a buying decision which More and Lingam (2017) mentioned. This study also confirms the argument by Liu et al., (2012).

From the research conducted by Berger and the Keller Fay Group in 2016 found that 82 per cent of people listen to an influencer's advice because they believe that the influencer in a particular field has reliable, accurate, and trustworthy information. According to the empirical findings, it is shown that the majority of the respondents said that they don't find influencers review trustworthy and reliable because they are getting paid to promote a product and will not say bad things about it. It can be said that when people see that an individual is getting paid to promote a product so people have this belief that the sponsored person will not identify faults in a product even if it has some. This can also be said that when an influencer has many followers, some people have this belief that the influencer wants to show the sponsored product to as many followers as he/she can. So that he/she can be paid more in return and do more marketing. So, for these reasons most people don't consider their reviews trustworthy and reliable which contradicts the research findings of Berger and the Keller Fay Group (2016).

Trust plays an important part for an influencer to affect his followers (Lindh and Lisichkova, 2017), similarly Bakshy et al., (2011) stated that customers view influencers as trustworthy and dependable as well as they are helpful in changing purchaser perspectives. Based on the empirical findings, it is stated that the majority of the respondents said that they don't trust influencers because most of the time they are getting sponsored by a brand to promote a product and it's not credible. As high involvement products are expensive so that's why people are not relying on influencers because they are getting sponsored by brands and people do not view them as trustworthy. So, for this reason people search for information from other reliable sources. So, this study supports the statement of Lindh and Lisichkova (2017) and contradicts the Bakshy et al., (2011) statement. According to Cresci et al., (2015), if an influencer has lots of followers and only some of the accounts are following it may signal that the followers are fake, which is also not good for the business and influencer as well. A first UK research of influencers and marketing conducted by influencer analyst CampaignDeus in 2018 showed that 12 per cent of UK influencers used fake (or bot) followers. Based on the empirical findings, it is revealed that most respondents said that they don't follow influencers because they are fake, and it is about marketing and to get more followers. So, this study supports the statement of Cresci et al., (2015) and the research findings of CampaignDeus (2018).

To check a high involvement product, consumers utilizes their internal information (experience) as well as their external information which is available in the form of influencers, friends, and family opinions (Kopanidis et al., 2017, p. 136). Also further indicated by Sarathy and Patro (2013) customer's get information from influencers and other personal sources when they are doing high involvement buying which as a result ends in solution of a problem. From the empirical findings, majority of respondents stated that influencers don't contribute to their information search when searching for high involvement products such as fashion garments and they don't affect their purchase intention because the influencer is promoting a product for money and for fame on social media. So, this study contradicts the arguments of Kopanidis et al., (2017, p. 136) which is

related to influencers and Sarathy and Patro (2013) which is also related to influencers. When influencers endorse a high involvement product, it reduces the perceived risk only if the influencer is a trustworthy fit (a good fit) with the product (Trampe et al., 2010). Based on the empirical findings, few of the respondents stated that for high involvement products if the influencer is a good fit such as the influencer has experience or is successful or is a celebrity in a particular field then it would have a great effect on them. It can be said that if an influencer has knowledge or experience in a related field and then promotes the product within that field. So, it would reduce the risk and would help their followers in their decision making. So, this study approves the findings of Trampe et al., (2010).

A pre-study done by Khan and Abdelnour (2019) previously showed that influencers and online purchase intention has a positive correlation. Based on the empirical findings, most of the respondents said that influencers don't contribute to their information search when searching for high involvement products such as fashion garments and they don't affect their purchase intention because the influencer is promoting a product for money and for fame on social media. So, this study contradicts Khan and Abdelnour (2019) pre-study findings.

5.3 Family and friends

The empirical findings of family and friends revealed that almost all participants agreed that family and friend's advice is reliable when searching for fashion garments online. This reliability is related to different causes and factors.

According to the study by Lei et al., (2017) family and friends are considered a credible source of information that helps in product value evaluation as well as in risk estimation. The empirical findings revealed that family and friends have a big impact on purchase intention. Family and friends are seen as trustworthy and a credible source of knowledge which favor the importance of source credibility as they don't have any interest in persuading others when they give their opinion, so it increases their influence even more which conform the findings of Lei et al., (2017). Furthermore, family and friends advice helps in reducing uncertainty related to a perceived risk especially the price and value of the product. The empirical findings revealed that experienced friends in fashion or sports reduce the confusion when buying a fashion or sport product because due to their knowledge level their advice is trustworthy and they affect the customer choice which stimulates purchase intention. So, this study also confirms the results of Zhang et al., (2018).

Based on the empirical findings, the majority of the respondents confirmed searching for the same fashion garment that their family or friend already bought because they like the style which highlighted the sensory importance when seeking fashion products and the outfit look created a need. The influence was not by parents because they are seen as not up to date concerning fashion garments so the level of expertise and knowledge have a big influence even if it comes from a credible source. Respondents were influenced mainly by friends and siblings due to the age and style similarities as well as due to the power of their relationship which agree with the findings related to Beaudoin and Lachance study (2006). Wei and Yu (2012) stated that imitation is one of the reasons that friends' opinions influence customer purchase intention. According to the empirical findings, some

respondents didn't do it because they consider it an act of imitation which contradicts the arguments of Wei and Yu (2012). Based on empirical findings, married respondents rely more on their partner advice because they trust them which leads to the importance of the family influence within households and this is consistent with the findings of Dix et al., (2010).

The empirical findings of this research confirms that family and friends have a positive influence on high involvement products online purchase intention which is consistent with the findings of several researches such as Chhabra, (2018); Niu, (2013); Madahi and Sukati, (2012); and Nayeem and Casidy, (2013). As well as it agrees with the pre-study done previously by Khan and Abdelnour (2019) which found a positive correlation between family and friends and the online purchase intention. This research also explored that family and friends have a big influence due to their reliability, trustworthiness, transparency, uncertainty reduction, credibility, motivation and experience.

5.4 Advertisement

Investigating the advertisement effect on high involvement products online purchase intention uncovered that advertisement affects positively the purchase intention which conforms with the results of Khan and Abdelnour (2019) pre-study in which a positive correlation was found between advertisement and online purchase intention.

Based on empirical findings, this study revealed that advertisement effect is depending on several factors such as visual attractiveness which affect consumer perception towards the product and this perception leads to a desire which creates a need and stimulates the purchase intention. As the consumer will feel in need of that product which agrees with Rawal (2013) findings. Another aspect is the advertising content as respondents stated that when the content is related to sale or launching a new product and presented in a good way, this will stimulate the purchase intention. This information stimulates the consumer desire of having that new product or in case of sale creates an urgent need to get the product in a good deal which agrees with the statements of Salomon et al., (2016). The advertisement source credibility is another aspect because it is considered that even if the ad attracted the consumer it might be spam which leads to seeking more information on other sources in order to assure on the reality of the content and the product. The usage of a celebrity in the advertisement visually changes the customer's rejection into interest and this was pointed out by the respondents as a football player promoting sport shoes attracted them especially if the consumer admires that celebrity. This points out the direct effect of expertise usage in the content as the knowledge level increases the credibility which encourages customers to click on the advertisement in order to check the product and this stimulates the purchase intention. So, this study approves the findings of Ling et al., (2010).

A contradiction was stated when asking about the advertisement perception as almost half of the respondents confirmed that the personalized ads are highly appreciated and considered a great source of information. They help the consumers in finding information related to a product that matches their interest and they might need them which help in having several options and more information related to the product which is considered

beneficial. This is consistent with the study findings of Schmeiser (2017). Respondents stated that when they have an interest in a specific product the advertisement motivates them as they will find more information related to the product which agrees with the study held by Rajasekhar and Makesh (2013). The other half consider them annoying due to their repetition since they are pushy and spread everywhere on different platforms which lead to rejecting them. As well as the cookie's acceptance on every website was rejected since it allows marketers to track their search history and they consider that this invades their privacy and they don't agree with it which confirms the findings of Borgesius (2016). Even with the fact of being annoying by repetition, a big part of respondents agreed that the advertisement is considered a source of information and influences their purchase intention. Since the repetition of the advertisement allows the consumer to be familiar with the product and sometimes it leads to convince the consumer to have an interest in the product. While the majority stated that the advertisement is an important source for product awareness as they know the presence of a new product due to the advertisement which confirm the studies results done by Chaffey (2009) and Fennis (2015) and it can be stated that advertisement increase consumer level of knowledge which stimulate the purchase intention.

The respondents came from different backgrounds and ethnicities so they have different attitudes and this could be one of the reasons that different contradictions were detected in their statements and this correlates with the findings of Wang and Sun (2010).

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to research how different informational sources impact online purchase intent for high involvement products. The reason for this research was to identify and gain understanding into how different informational sources are managing to affect the online purchase intent of the consumers when seeking high involvement products such as fashion garments. Therefore, this study combined non-controllable marketing sources (family, friends and EWOM), controllable marketing sources (advertisement and influencers) and online purchase intent for high involvement products in one framework and the empirical results of this study allowed us in answering the following research question:

How do different external informational sources affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products?

To begin with, the main findings of this research showed differences among informational sources in their effects on online purchase intentions for high involvement products. Each informational source affects consumer online purchase intention in different ways. We found out that source credibility, expertise and knowledge are the main elements that affect consumer perception to a large extent for all factors. These main elements make the information search, adoption and transfer much easier because of their persuasive role which in return affects purchase intent. Based on our findings, this calls for further research.

This research confirms that external informational sources such as family, friends, EWOM, influencers, and advertisement affect purchase intent in online shopping for high involvement products but due to different reasons.

This research revealed that family and friends affect consumer online purchase intention for high involvement products due to their trustworthiness, credibility and transparency specifically when they have experience in the platform and product usage. They are considered a credible source of knowledge that helps in product information search and risk estimation as they don't have any interest in persuading while giving their opinion. This research also revealed that when friends have experience in fashion garments then their advice is trustworthy and stimulates purchase intention. We also found out that concerning fashion garments, people don't follow their parent's advice because fashion continuously changes and they don't consider their parents up to date and they rely on friends and siblings due to the style similarities, age, and power of relation. For married people, they rely more on their partner advice which leads to the importance of family influence within the households.

Regarding EWOM, this study revealed that consumers rely on both positive and negative EWOM before purchasing fashion garments online because they can filter the information and it gives them an idea and opinion regarding the product because it is based on other customer previous experience. We also found out that negative EWOM is given more importance in comparison to positive EWOM because people consider it more truthful, gives more information regarding the product and provides the option of comparing the product in different ways. We also found out that when people search for fashion garments

online and it has positive reviews then it gives them the feeling of satisfaction. Based on this study, it is revealed that both positive and negative EWOM stimulate consumer purchase intention.

This study provided evidence that advertisements affect consumer online purchase intent through different ways such as by the visual attractiveness if the product is advertised in a good way it affects consumer perception towards the product which in turn creates a desire and stimulates purchase intention. Through content credibility such as usage of experts and celebrities in the advertisements encourage customers to click on the advertisement and it can stimulate their purchase intention. The advertisement source credibility is also given much importance even if the ad is attractive; consumers might still search for other sources of information to avoid being targeted by spam. This study also found out that for some, personalized ads are considered a great source of information as they help the consumers in finding information related to the product that matches their interest. Based on this research, for privacy in online advertisements, some people considered them a privacy invasion because they are not comfortable that marketers track their search history and then use their personal data.

Regarding influencers, this study revealed that if influencers are experts in a field for what they are promoting then they are seen as a credible source especially if they use the product in their personal life which they are promoting then it will have an effect on their followers online purchase intention. This research also found out that for some people the influencer's style has an influence on their sensory as it will create a need to have what the influencer wears. Based on this research, the majority of respondents said that influencers don't contribute to their information search when searching for high involvement products such as fashion garments and they don't affect their purchase intention because they are promoting a product for money and for fame on social media.

To conclude, this study confirms that consumers require an excessive information search and rely on different sources when seeking high involvement products and they prefer utilizing a specific and well known platform because they perceive a risk and uncertainty due to the fact that the products are expensive and are of value. Furthermore, the results of this study showed that non-controllable marketing informational sources such as family, friends, and EWOM are more reliable compared to the controllable marketing informational sources such as advertisements and influencers in terms of purchase intention for high involvement products in online shopping. This study also revealed that despite the effect of the mentioned factors, physical stores still remain of importance because customers need to fulfill their sensory needs such as touch, smell, feel and experience.

6.1 Theoretical implications

This study findings can enhance existing knowledge and can contribute to the literature and empirical material related to the field of informational search, online purchase intention and specifically the external informational sources as well as high involvement products, especially fashion garments by narrowing particularly to that context. The study findings gave a deeper understanding as a large part of the results confirmed the findings of previous researches and provided new insights to the external informational sources effect on online purchase intention. The source credibility, level of knowledge and expertise of the source is very important in determining the effect of that source towards high involvement product online purchase intention.

6.2 Managerial implications

The findings of this study have implications for the fashion industry and especially for marketing managers working in this field.

EWOM is considered a reliable source and affects the webstore as consumers trust reviews, especially the negative ones on which marketers should develop their customer service channels to please the unsatisfied customers. While in advertisement, it was detected that behavioral marketing amended with attractive ads is acceptable and has an influence on purchase intention while bulk ads with big repetition were annoying. Therefore, this study suggests that marketers should focus more on this kind of advertisement.

Regarding influencers, it was found out that they were rejected because they are considered fake and paid to say what they are saying while some respondents mentioned that influencers style influence them in fashion products and it was also revealed that an expert influencer promoting a product within his field is credible and affects purchase intention. Therefore, this study advises that marketers should work with those influencers who have experience in a particular field.

6.3 Limitations

Despite the findings of this study there are certain limitations to it.

First limitation, the covid-19 global pandemic is considered the biggest limitation for this study along with the time constraint since it was hard to conduct a face to face interaction with the respondents. Due to the availability of participants during a specific time so it was challenging to find a suitable time for everyone with the time zone difference. Since the authors extracted the primary data through online focus groups.

Second limitation is the age sample of this study since the respondents are aged between 22 and 41 years old, so having a wider age category could help in extracting more insights and point of views.

Third limitation to this study is that it characterizes high involvement products by referring to fashion garments as an example. Therefore, the results could have different relevance for other high involvement products available online.

Fourth limitation is due to the qualitative nature of this research, the authors conducted four focus groups of sixteen respondents which created a lower generalizability as the findings might not be applicable on a whole population.

Fifth limitation for this study was the language barrier as the focus group sessions were conducted in the English language. Since it is considered an international language for communication. All the respondents were English speakers but it was not their mother tongue. The usage of mother tongue might have helped the respondents to express themselves more freely and clearly and to generate more valuable insights.

The restrictions of this study can give guidelines for future researches related to the topic area.

6.4 Future research

Based on the findings and limitations of this research, several points have been found for future research.

The empirical findings revealed that source credibility, level of knowledge and expertise have a big impact on consumer attitude and source influence, which is highly recommended for further research.

Fashion garments were used as a high involvement product. It is suggestable using other products and also it could be of value to relate the brand equity effect on consumer perception towards informational sources in order to understand its influence on online purchase intention.

It is interesting to examine this study on a larger scale by utilizing mixed methods such as implementing quantitative surveys and exploring more diverse samples by conducting more in-depth interviews and focus groups in order to generate new and more insights related to the topic. We believe that investigating internal and external informational sources together would be interesting as well.

It was noticeable that the cultural background influenced customer perception and also the married respondents answered differently from singles. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct further studies examining the relation between different cultures and life situations and their perception towards different informational search sources.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Pre-study data analysis

Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	14,761	,893		16,532	,000
	Advertisement	,294	,046	,219	6,368	,000
	Influencers	,243	,045	,186	5,366	,000
	social network	,197	,074	,086	2,640	,008

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase intent content

Pre-study data analysis of the advertisement, influencers and social network (family and friends).

Appendix B: Focus Group Guide

Hello, thanks for your time, as discussed previously we are students in the international master's program in MDH and we are exploring different factors such as family and friends, influencers, EWOM and advertisement that have an impact on online purchase intention for high involvement products. This focus group session interview will be recorded, and the data will be delivered in an anonymous form. The expected time for the focus group session is expected to be one hour but could be extended for half an hour if needed so. Prior to beginning, please note that you can stop your participation anytime if you don't want to participate longer.

We will start with the questions, remember that It is important to be honest and to make room for other comments and there are no wrong or right answers so we appreciate your feedback as is and please note that all of you have to answer each question.

I will ask you the questions and my colleague will take note related to this session.

Online shopping

Q1: Do you use an online platform to buy fashion garments? Can you tell us about the process?

Q2: Are you comfortable with purchasing fashion garments online and is it related to a specific online platform or in general?

Informational search

Q3: Before purchasing a product, which sources you usually rely on for finding information and do you rely on one source or different sources?

Q4: How much time do you spend while searching for information related to the product?

EWOM (electronic-word-of-mouth)

Q5: Before purchasing fashion garments online, do you rely on positive or negative EWOM (electronic-word-of-mouth)? Please explain why?

Q6: In what way EWOM (electronic-word-of-mouth) stimulates your purchase intention while searching for fashion garments online?

Advertisement

Q7: How do you perceive online advertisements when searching for fashion garments and is it a reliable source or you consider it annoying by invading your privacy?

Q8: How advertisement contributes to your information search and what is its effect on your purchase intention?

Influencers

Q9: In what way influencers help in your pre-purchase decision process?

Q10: Do you find influencers review trustworthy and reliable? Can you explain?

Q11: How do influencers contribute to your information search for high involvement products such as fashion garments and what is its effect on your purchase intention?

Family and Friends

Q12: When you are searching for a high involvement product such as a fashion garment from an online store, do you rely on family or friends advice or you follow your own feelings? Can you clarify?

Q13: Have you ever searched for the same fashion garment that your family or friend already bought? For what reason?

Q14: In what way does your family or friends affect your online purchase intention of high involvement products?

Most influencing Factor

Q15: Consider you are looking for dress/suit on an online platform:

Rank the following informational sources such as EWOM, family, friends, influencer, and advertisement, from high to low that would have the most influence on your purchase intention?

Appendix C: Research development process

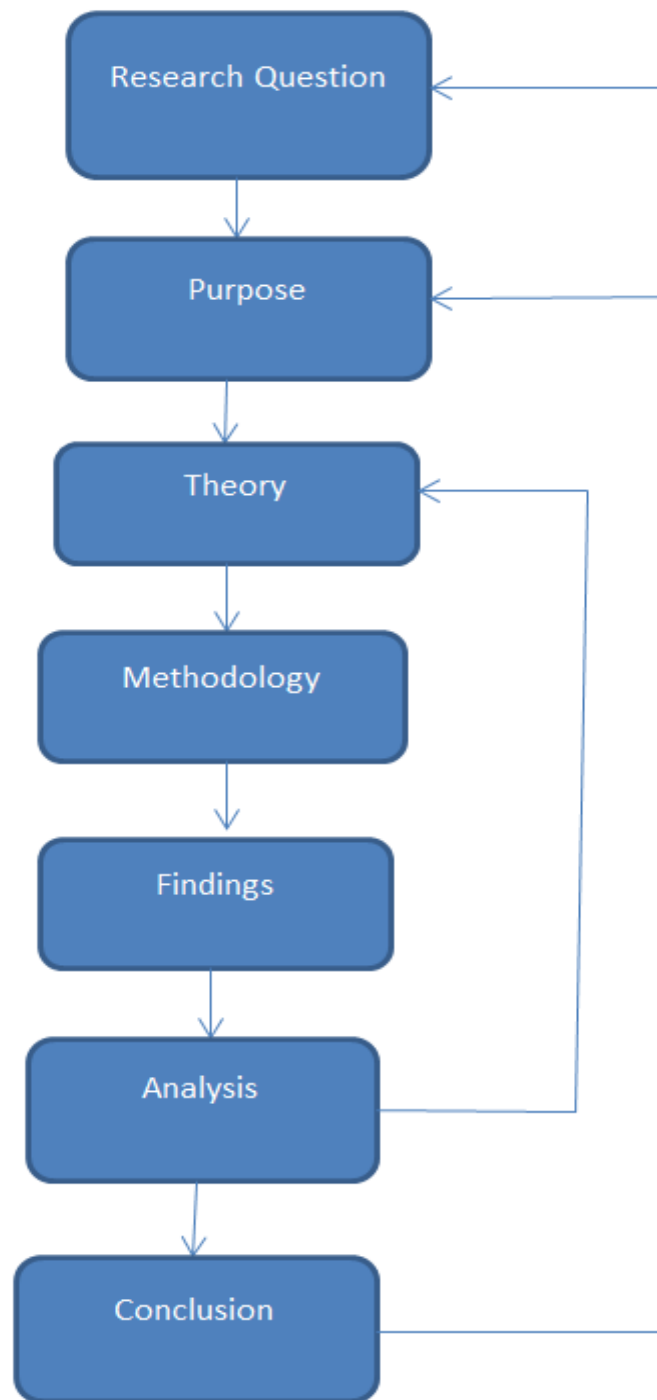


Figure 2: Research Development Process

Figure 2 shows the research development process which was applied in this research.

Appendix D: Average number of responses for the Empirical data

EWOM

Average response Q5	Half of the respondents said that they rely on negative EWOM
Average response Q6	Most respondents said that EWOM stimulate their purchase intention

Table 3: EWOM average responses

Table 3 shows the average responses for both of the questions for the EWOM section. For the first question, half of the respondents said that they rely on negative EWOM and for the second question, most respondents said that EWOM stimulates their purchase intention.

Influencers

Average response Q9	Majority of the respondents answered that influencers don't help in their pre-purchase decision process
Average response Q10	Most of the respondents said that they don't find influencers review trustworthy and reliable
Average response Q11	Majority of the respondents said that influencers don't contribute to their information search and also don't affect their purchase intention

Table 4: Influencers average responses

Table 4 shows the average responses for the three questions for the influencers section. For the first question, majority of the respondents answered that influencers do not help in their pre-purchase decision process and for the second question, most respondents said that they do not find influencers review trustworthy and reliable. For the third question, the majority of the respondents said that influencers do not contribute to their information search and also do not affect their purchase intention.

Advertisement

Average response Q7	Almost half of the participants consider that advertisements are annoying due to repetition and invading their privacy while the other half consider that visual attractiveness, layout and content play an important role towards the ad perception and especially personalized ads are considered a reliable and beneficial source of information.
Average response Q8	Thirteen participants consider that advertisements influence their online purchase intention in a way but this influence is dependent on several factors similar to visual attractiveness, layout, content, source credibility and celebrity usage in the visual.

Table 5: Advertisement average responses

Table 5 shows the average responses for both questions for the advertisement section. For the first question, half of the respondents mentioned that advertisements invade their privacy while the other half consider them useful. For the second question, more than half of the respondents mentioned that advertisements affect their online purchase intention due to several factors such as attractiveness, layout, content, source credibility and celebrity usage.

Family and Friends

Average response Q12	Almost all respondents rely on friends and family advice completely or partially because of their trustworthiness, experience, relation power, value and price uncertainty, honesty and similarity in age and/or style.
Average response Q13	Twelve respondents had searched for the same fashion garment that their family or friend already bought because they like the style on their peer groups, they trust in their friends and family feedback, they found that there peer groups are transparent and don't have any interest in convincing them
Average response Q14	Almost all respondents agreed that family and friends have a positive influence on high involvement products online purchase intention

Table 6: Family and friends average responses

Table 6 represents the average number of responses for the three questions for the family and friends section. For the first question, all respondents mentioned that they rely completely or partially on family and friends advice and for the second question, more than half of the respondents said that they searched for the same fashion garment that their friends or family already bought. For the third question, almost all respondents agreed that

family and friends have a positive influence on their high involvement products online purchase intention.

Online Shopping

Average response Q1	Most participants said that they use online platform to buy fashion garments
Average response Q2	Majority of the participants feel comfortable when buying fashion garments online and preferred brand websites or other platform which they have used before and feel satisfied with it

Table 7: Online shopping findings

Table 7 shows the average number of responses for both of the questions for the online shopping section. For the first question, most respondents mentioned that they use an online platform to buy fashion garments and for the second question, the majority of the participants answered that they feel comfortable using a brand website or other platform which they have tried before to buy fashion garments.

Informational search

Average response Q3	Most of the participants rely on different sources during their informational search process
Average response Q4	Thirteen participants take much time while searching information related to fashion garments

Table 8: Informational search average responses

Table 8 shows the average number of responses for both of the questions for the informational search section. For the first question, most of the participants mentioned that they rely on different sources during their informational search process and for the second question, more than half of the participants stated that they take much time while searching for information related to fashion garments.

Table 9: Factors ranking

Family	Friends	Electronic-word-of-mouth	Influencers	Advertisement
F2a, F3c, F3b, F4b, F4c, F4d	F1a, F1c, F1d, F3b, F4a, F4b, F4c, F4d	F1b, F2b, F2d	F3a	F2c, F3d
F1d, F2b, F2c, F4a	F1b, F2b, F3c	F1a, F2a, F3b, F3d, F4b, F4c, F4d		F1c, F2d, F3a
F1a, F1c, F2d, F3d	F2a, F2c, F3a	F1c, F3c	F1d, F3b, F4a, F4b, F4c, F4d	F1b, F2b
F1b, F3a	F2d, F3d	F1d, F2c, F4a	F1c, F2b	F1a, F2a, F3c, F3b, F4b, F4c, F4d
		F3a	F1a, F1b, F2a, F2c, F2d, F3c, F3d	F1d, F4a
6 votes	8 votes	3 votes	1 vote	2 votes

Table 9: Factors ranking

Table 9 shows the factor rankings by the respondents for family, friends, EWOM, advertisement and influencers.