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An investigation of the role of envy in the consumption choices of
women.

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# Abstract

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This thesis aims to explore the role of envy in the consumption choices of women, factors influencing the development of envy and the role of social media influencers in creating envy. An explanation of the concept of envy by Van de Ven, Zeelenberg and Pieters (2009) and a contribution by Yang and Tang (2021) are explored. Previous literature is examined, specifically, The Behavioural Perspective Model by Foxall (1993), the Band-wagon Effect and The Framing Effect, particularly in light of consumption choices. Additionally, age as a factor affecting envy and consumption was explored with contributions by Hervé and Mullet (2009). The counterarguments are presented by analysing the Scarcity Principle and the Hype. The literature review led to four key hypotheses: Women's consumption choices vary according to age, Social comparison is a motivator of envy in women, Social media influencers are likely to affect the consumption choices of women, and Women are more likely to feel envious of those that they deem similar to themselves. The primary research question is, "What is the role of envy in the consumption choices of women?".

A survey-based analysis is conducted to explore the consumption choices of women and the role of envy as an emotion influencing their consumption choices, in addition to exploring the hypotheses. The responses are analysed through descriptive analysis, namely crosstabulations. The results indicate that although younger women appear likelier to experience envy affecting their consumption choices, it is difficult to deduce the extent to which it may be generalised on a larger scale. The research supports the hypothesis that social comparison is a motivator of envy in women, and social media influencers affect the consumption choices of women. Furthermore, women are likelier to feel envious of those similar to themselves. These support previous research conducted on the same. Overall, the research question is answered by concluding envy plays a significant role in women's consumption choices, wherein social media influencers and social comparison play a substantial part.

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# 1  Introduction

The world is experiencing a significant shift in how products or services are advertised, thanks to the new age of Digital Marketing and advancements in marketing strategies. As the prominence of social media influencers grows, they become an increasingly popular choice as they may play an important role in employing envy to influence women's consumption choices. Envy is the negative feeling of animosity, inferiority, and anger against others who have something desirable (Smith & Kim, 2007, as cited in Arnocky et al., 2015). For companies, it is a way to obtain favourable outcomes, which is more consumption and hence an alarming concern for consumers. This leads us to the idea that envy, as an emotion, may be a crucial tool for marketers who use social media influencers to facilitate this process. The same brings about the research topic "An investigation of the role of envy in the consumption choices of women", that is, how this particular emotion affects the consumption of goods and services. Understanding this would perhaps lead consumers to become more responsible or at least more aware and thus be more critical of our consuming habits and choices. Whether women purchase because they need something or because they are envious of someone else having it is rather interesting.

Having studied higher-level psychology for two years during my International Baccalaureate education, envy as an emotion in understanding human behaviour has always interested me. Hence, I thought it would be a thrilling experience to write my thesis about something that allows me to relate a business perspective with its psychological foundations. Therefore, I chose to research envy's role in consumption. Just like everything else, envy also has two sides. It may be beneficial to be envious of someone else's success when it makes you want to work harder and be as successful. However, it is often quite harmful for consumption and purchasing habits. For example, it may lead to purchasing and consuming goods or services solely based on envy instead of responsible consumption. As a result, individuals may end up in debt by overspending on goods they did not need or even want until envy takes over. The process of envy

refers to how much consumers identify with or think of themselves as similar to the spokesperson (Bandura 1969, as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020).

Advertising companies understand this well. Hence various advertising campaigns may play this to their advantage by creating a sense of insecurity in one and then presenting another individual who does not have that insecurity or has overcome it by using their product. Potentially, this process could promote a sense of insecurity and present an ideal individual to the audience, evoking envy and thereby may lead to purchasing decisions. Additionally, envy can be an important motivating factor –negative or positive (Van de Ven, 2015). Arguably, marketers turn us into slaves of our own emotions.

The primary reason for researching the role of envy in consumption choices is to allow for a deeper understanding of consumer consumption patterns and decision-making processes. While it may allow marketers to understand these patterns further and consequently enable them to develop marketing techniques, it also allows consumers to be more mindful and conscious of their consumption choices. The research gap I would like to explore essentially revolves around the role of social media influencers, specifically how influencers create a sense of envy among women, affecting their consumption choices. The reason for choosing to explore that is because the previous research on this topic has not dealt much with the power of social media influences. After all, it is quite recently that they have started to shape the digital marketing world. The main research question that will be explored is "What is the role of envy in the consumption choices of women?". Other aspects that will be explored are the development of envy, how social media influencers contribute to the development of envy in women and social comparison.

This thesis will firstly look at why envy as an emotion is essential, specifically for female consumers in this world in the age of digital marketing. Furthermore, previous literature discussing the role of envy and several models and theories, such as the Behavioural Perspective Model (Foxall, 1993), the Bandwagon Effect (Adock Solutions, 2021) and the Framing Effect (Haire, 2022), will be addressed.

Additionally, cognitive and socio-cultural factors that affect the development of envy will be explicitly explored. The role of social media influencers in creating envy amongst female consumers and how that affects their consumption choices will also be explored through the lens of the discussed theories and models. For primary research, data from a questionnaire published online through Google forms will be analysed and supported by the literature review. Age considerations will also be addressed, as they are critical components of the research process. The Hype and the Scarcity Principle (Chen, 2019) will be examined as counterarguments. Finally, a discussion and conclusion will be presented based on the research and suggestions for further investigation will be provided.

This thesis's key objective is to provide a well-balanced view that can lead to mindful consumption. It can develop an awareness of how women as consumers are misled into buying certain things and raise their understanding of the global consequences of consumerism that is affected by an emotion such as envy. For organisations that pursue mindful marketing and ethical capitalism, obtaining customer knowledge and researching consumption choices is critical. (Grewal, Roggeveen & Nordfält, 2017.) Furthermore, the viewpoint presented in this thesis may be helpful to regulators considering establishing methods to help encourage an essential shift in the field of sustainability (Hill & Martin, 2014, as cited in Milne, Villarroel Ordenes & Kaplan, 2019).

# 2 Literature Review – Theoretical Framework

## 2.1 Mindful consumption

Consumers in the economy encounter obstacles such as overconsumption and addicted consumption. Leaning on mindfulness can cure the obstructive parts of consumerism as consumers get educated further and make prudent decisions about what to consume. The decision-making process revolves around what consumers need versus what marketers may manipulate them into thinking they need. (Rosenberg, 2006, as cited in Milne, Villarroel Ordenes & Kaplan, 2019.)

Mindfulness is described as the non-judgmental consciousness that occurs from focusing on purpose in the current moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Envy can be an interruption in this process. The emotion of envy may be so strong that it may lead to unmindful consumption choices. This is where the problem begins. Mindfulness is a technique for stepping out of habitual scripts and seeing the market world from a new perspective (Milne, Villarroel Ordenes & Kaplan, 2019).

In this thesis, being mindful consumers relates to being attentive, aware and conscious as consumers while making consumption decisions, particularly in comprehending envy's role in influencing such decisions. Individuals become more aware of internal and external stimuli due to consciously attempting to be mindful, allowing them to manage their thinking better and concentrate on the present. This enables consumers to make wiser judgments than what they are conditioned to make when overtaken by an emotion such as envy. Therefore, this thesis will investigate the role of envy in the consumption choices of women to determine whether the hypotheses hold true.

## 2.2 Female consumers

The primary reason for explicitly choosing female consumers to investigate is because women represented more than $20 trillion in global expenditure as of 2015 (Ridgway-Cross, 2015). Furthermore, according to an article by Sayre and Silverstein 2015, women as a business market provide a more considerable opportunity than China and India united. Women are becoming the driving force behind the global economy. Food, fitness, beauty, and fashion are the industries where women are willing to spend more. Specifically, fitness, beauty, and fashion, as opposed to health care and financial services, are the sectors where envy is most likely to play a significant role. (Sayre & Silverstein, 2015.) Additionally, on average, clothing costs $161 per month, whereas women spend approximately 76% more than men annually (M, 2021). Therefore, it makes women as consumers rather interesting to investigate.

## 2.3 Envy

Individuals experience a variety of emotions when making a consumption choice or decision. One of these primary emotions is envy. Envy stems from social comparison and negatively influences an individual's behaviour. It is vital to note that envy is a common component of an individual's psychological makeup, affecting their decisions. Furthermore, research regarding consumer behaviour and envy might be an excellent way to learn how this emotion influences product consumption choices made by women. (Demczuk, Manosso & Prado, 2021.) It is a form of social influence aroused when the superiority of close or comparable others is revealed. As a result, envy is likelier to be evident when there is a substantial similarity between the one feeling envious and the superior other. Gender, age, and socioeconomic status are the most common similarities. A social comparison might be meaningless if there are no similarities. (Smith & Kim, 2007 as cited in Schneider 2014.) As an individual who has made terrible decisions solely under the influence of envy, it seemed like an exciting topic to explore further.

The experimental results and theoretical analysis of Giorgio Coricelli and Aldo Rustichini 2010 revealed that an adaptive role of emotions such as envy has two distinct properties. For starters, it is built on rewards. Second, it begins with a counterfactual examination of outcomes. It is the idea that emotions such as envy are prompted by counterfactual thinking of what might have transpired if we had chosen a different decision. Envy analyses actions that we could have performed but chose not to, and we learn about the favourable outcome received by the other person. (Coricelli & Rustichini, 2010.) Hence, we decide to have that favourable outcome to stop feeling envious.

According to Yang and Tang (2021), envy may not be homogenous and may have two sides, one facing up and the other facing down (Sayers 1949, as cited in Yang & Tang 2021). These two characteristics of envy are thought to be more positive on the one hand and more detrimental on the other. Van de Ven, Zeelenberg & Pieters (2009) hypothesised that there are two types of envy

experiences, one benign and one malicious, and that benign envy and malicious envy result in various individual behaviours (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2009). In benign envy, the envious individual may attempt to emulate the person being envied; hence envy can boost personal effort, motivate behaviour to acquire the desired item and shift attention to the methods for obtaining it (Crusius & Mussweiler, 2012; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004; Van de Ven et al., 2012; Crusius & Mussweiler, 2012; Crusius & Lange, 2014; as cited in Yang & Tang 2021). In malicious envy, however, the envious individual may strive to degrade the person being envied by vilifying or demeaning the other person's advantages (Yang & Tang, 2021). For the purpose of this thesis, the envy discussed at hand will primarily be using a theoretical framework that discusses both malicious and benign envy. However, benign envy will be more prominent due to its nature.

Halén, 2019, researched to investigate how young consumers responded to two distinct forms of envy and if the type of envy affected the consumption tendency or the effort to obtain the goods if it drove the respondents to consume conspicuously. The goals also included determining if Attention to Social Comparison Information (ATSCI) influenced the desire to buy or the effort to obtain the goods. The researcher asked young consumers to answer questions about a fictitious setting designed to elicit envy in the responder. Previous studies suggested that responders with benign envy would be more inclined to consume the product and go to extraordinary lengths to obtain it. However, it was shown that respondents who exhibited benign envy and had a higher ATSCI-scale score were prepared to put in increased effort to get the goods than other responders. As a result of its emulation features, it was argued that benign envy is the motivator of consumption. (Halén, 2019.)

According to Eyal and Te'eni-Harari (2013), people may have distinct motives for participating in upward; self-enhancement and downward; self-evaluation comparisons (Eyal & Te'eni-Harari, 2013 as cited in Lewallen, 2016). Tiggemann, Polivy and Hargreaves (2009) suggest that self-evaluation evaluates

one's position concerning others in the same setting or a comparable context. In contrast, self-enhancement, a type of upward comparison, is the evaluation of one's status in contrast to others and is intended to safeguard one's self-esteem. While self-enhancement may result in beneficial outcomes, studies have discovered that it may also lead to harmful long-term impacts. (Tiggemann, Polivy, & Hargreaves, 2009, as cited in Lewallen, 2016.)

Pila et al. (2014) conducted three studies to learn more about body-related envy and its relationship with motivation and exercise behaviour in young adult males and females. Eleven participants were interviewed to discuss body-related envy within the context of social comparison. The second study performed a thematic content analysis on 288 individuals' self-reported narratives of body-related envy emotions. There were themes of body-related envy triggers, cognitions, and cognitive and behavioural effects. Both research findings suggested a potential relationship between body-related envy and exercise motivation and behaviour. These connections were examined in the third study with 595 males and females who filled out a self-report questionnaire. Body-related envy was positively correlated with external, introjected, and identified regulations in the structural equation model, while identified regulation was positively connected with exercise activity. Collectively, these findings emphasise the significance of body-related envy in the perception of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences. (Pila et al., 2014.)

Pila et al.'s (2014) findings shed light on the differences in how people experience social comparisons and body-related envy. Individuals in the first profile do not consider the physical self a significant area, believe that physical appearance is genetically inherited, and participate in minimal social comparisons. This implies that to engage in intense social comparisons, individuals must see the superior one's advantage as unjust. Similar findings have been seen in those who are satisfied with their bodies. Individuals in the second profile best exemplify envy's harsh and malicious characteristics. (Pila et al., 2014.)

## 2.4  Consumer Behaviour

Since there is no shortage of literature on this topic, there are also various approaches that researchers have taken to it, in other words—numerous consumer behaviour models and theories. There are multiple opinions. Some are pretty consistent within several articles. Whereas some arguments will be addressed further.

### 2.4.1  The Behavioural Perspective Model

According to Foxall (1993), the Behavioural Perspective Model relates consumer choice patterns to differing environmental consequences. It provides a socio-cultural approach to consumer behaviour. There are three practical implications of consumer behaviour. The first is hedonic reinforcement which derives from the satisfaction of owning and consuming goods. The second is informational reinforcement, provided by feedback on a consumer's performance, especially the social status acquired by conspicuous consumption- purchasing goods or services to display one's wealth, essentially showing off. The third is aversive consequences which relate to costs of consumption that include money, waiting process and forgoing alternatives. (Foxall, 1993.)

Foxal (1993) suggests that consumers can be presented in two main ways. Firstly, their learning history is the cumulative effect of rewarding and punishing outcomes of their past purchasing behaviour. In other words, if a consumer had a rewarding purchase outcome, they are more likely to have an approach response leading to repetitive purchases. Similarly, if a consumer has a punishing purchase result, they are more likely to have an avoidance response. Secondly, state variables, namely mood, paying ability, health and deprivation, can highly influence monetary consumption. (Foxall, 1993.)

## 2.5  Age as a factor

Hervé and Mullet (2009) conducted a study with a sample of 160 French adults aged 18–90 who rated their likelihood of purchasing a clothing item in 27

scenarios, in which three levels; low, moderate and high, and three factors; price, suitability and durability were combined in an orthogonal factorial design. The results suggested that a low price was an adequate reason to purchase clothing for younger participants. For older participants, suitability was a more critical factor. The most seniors, durability was the most crucial factor in determining their purchase decision. Overall, this study highlights the different factors that influence consumption about age. This study essentially emphasises that people's consumption choices vary depending on age. It can be suggested that other factors, such as envy, are likely to affect people differently, depending on their age. Even though the sample size is relatively small, it helps to recognise what factors are considered most important for what age group in terms of consumption. (Hervé & Mullet, 2009.)

Henninger and Harris (2015) conducted two studies investigating envy across adulthood. The first research looked at the feelings of envy in a group of 987 participants. The second research looked at 843 people who were the object of someone else's envy. According to the data, envy was most common among those of the same gender and age. Fewer elderly persons reported envy events. There was envy in both distant and close relationships. Both studies discovered that the likelihood of envying various areas changed with time. For example, academic accomplishment, social success, attractiveness, and romantic success were less envied as people aged, but money was more envied as people aged. Envy was continuous over the life span in several aspects, such as luck and an overall better lifestyle. (Henniger & Harris, 2015.) Envy was reported by almost 80% of those under the age of 30, compared to 69 percent of those aged 50 and over. It was also discovered that persons of a similar age within around five years and gender are more likely to envy or report being envied by their contemporaries. (Perry, 2015.)

Fekete-Farkas et al. (2021) aimed to look at the impact of demographic characteristics like gender and age on online consumer purchasing behaviour (CPB) on Facebook in Hungary. The current study's statistical population comprised Facebook users in Hungary, namely Hungarian locals, foreigners

residing in Hungary, and students. A total of 433 internet shoppers of various ages were questioned. The questionnaire was sent through an online link on Facebook and other media. Welch's t-test was applied to evaluate the gender variable, and the Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests were conducted to investigate the age variable. The findings revealed a substantial disparity between CPB in all age categories and the over-50 age range on Facebook. This significant finding highlighted the value and effect of social networks as marketing platforms for youth. Additionally, there was a distinction between male and female purchasing tendencies. The results of this study may have consequences for organisations in terms of generating competitive advantages and implementing appropriate tactics in advertising and marketing campaigns based on people's socio-demographic traits. (Fekete-Farkas et al., 2021.)

Although the role of envy was not necessarily explored in this study, factors such as age and gender on online consumer behaviour were investigated, which sheds light on the fundamental concept of consumer behaviour discussed in this thesis.

## 2.6  Conspicuous Consumption

According to Patsiaouras and Fitchett (2012), conspicuous consumption refers to the competitive and extravagant consumption habits and leisure behaviours that signify membership in a higher social class—in other words, buying or consuming products of a higher quality or quantity than would be deemed appropriate in practical terms solely to increase one's reputation or prestige. This is often a result of several factors, but arguably the role of envy is prominent. The researchers used a chronological periodisation to perform their analysis. The effect of broader institutional and socio-economic factors on the evolution of conspicuous consumption phenomena is analysed and discussed. The paper demonstrates how marketing and consumer behaviour researchers reinvented conspicuous consumption with new terms in the twentieth century. (Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012.)

Patsiaouras and Fitchett (2012) suggested that the role of interpersonal relationships in determining consumer desires and choices was a source of concern for economists such as Adam Smith (1776/1999), who argued that consumption helps to maintain or boost social status to some extent. From a cross-cultural perspective, it is evident that the significance of conspicuous economic displayed to community or group social stratification was primarily determined by environmental and political circumstances and cultural norms. (Adam Smith 1776/1999 as cited in Patsiaouras & Fitchett, 2012.) This source does not explicitly explore the role of envy. However, it provides a great deal of information on consumer behaviour in general and conspicuous consumption with cross-cultural evidence and historical references, which can therefore be applied to the role of envy to answer my research question.

## 2.7 The Role of Social Media Influencers

Social media's rise has made it an intriguing sector for companies to target, giving marketers a new chance to connect with potential and existing consumers. Advertising using social media influencers is a standard marketing approach on social media. This means that an influencer, a third party with many followers, advertises something through a post on their social media account. However, not all paid influencers for a post include unveil that the post is through a paid sponsorship. (Dieben, 2017.)

Jin and Ryu (2018) discussed the role of envy and para-social engagement with influencers in Instagram celebrity-based brand promotions. It essentially explores the changes in engagement between content that is related to the brand and/or created by users that is uploaded on platforms like Instagram, social media-based brand communication with Instagram celebrities, Para social engagement and envy, and consumers' characteristics referring to social comparison tendency, compulsive buying tendency, and materialistic envy. Three experiments were conducted to test the effects of Instagram influencers and their branded user-generated content on consumer behaviour outcomes. The first experiment's results suggested that Instagram influencers' photo types and gender moderate

the effects of envy and Para social engagement with them on consumers' intention to purchase the products they were wearing. The results of the second experiment suggested that content generator types and gender seem to moderate the effects of envy and Para social engagement on source trustworthiness perception. Lastly, the results of the third experiment highlighted that branded content types and content generator types moderate the effects of consumers' physical appearance, social comparison tendency, compulsive buying tendency, and materialistic envy on brand trust. Overall, this study makes theoretical contributions to retailing and consumer services literature. Furthermore, it also provides managerial implications for Instagram's famous influencer marketing. (Jin & Ryu, 2018.)

Lee and Eastin (2020) used brand personality literature to identify social media influencers, referred to as SMIs hereafter, as human brands to investigate influencer performance. More specifically, it examines how consumers' perceptions of an influencer's sincerity trait and consumer envy affect their assessments of the influence of brand endorsements across various product types. According to the data, participants reported a more favourable attitude toward a high-sincerity influencer. Envy was a significant moderator of moods, proving participants' attitudes toward a low-sincerity influencer. Furthermore, though brand attitude was unaffected by the sincerity of influencers when endorsing a symbolic product, when endorsing a utilitarian product, the high-sincerity influencer was more efficient in eliciting a favourable brand attitude from participants. This research is especially relevant as SMIs hold much power over consumer choices today, especially envy. For example, they are paid hefty amounts of money to upload a single picture of them wearing a particular piece of clothing or drinking a specific coffee. That is often all it takes for their followers to go ahead and consume the same. (Lee & Eastin, 2020.)

Lee and Eastin's (2020) research suggest that two factors play a crucial role. The first is perceived sincerity which refers to how sincere an individual perceives the SMI to be. This is often based on the reputation they have built for themselves. Secondly, the factor of envy becomes apparent. It is very likely for an individual

to feel inspired and envious of how good, healthy, or beautiful their favourite SMI may look with a particular product. Seeing the appreciation and love that an SMI may be receiving can naturally cause one to feel the need to fit in as they fear missing out simply because they wish to be perceived in a particular way. In both cases, envy plays a prominent role. As previously discussed, envy can be so intense that it may lead to conspicuous or impulsive buying. (Lee & Eastin, 2020.)

This article also highlights a vital psychological theory– Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura 1969 as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020). It asserts that the more people identify with and view themselves as similar to a role model, the more likely they will observe, adapt, and exhibit behaviours learned from the role model. Envy is affected by identification because social comparison and envy are intensified when the source of envy is similar and psychologically near. (Heider 1958, as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020.) This further supports the idea of employing SMIs for the same, since what sets them apart from celebrities is that they are more similar to the common public than movie stars.

## 2.8   Customer Purchasing Choice

Oflazoğlu and Aydın (2016) explored the specific role of envy in the customer purchasing choice. Consumer behaviour is influenced by both the intent of use and feelings. The paper examines the impact of envy on consumer buying decisions in general and in the fashion industry. The main aim of this research is to understand how envy influences consumer buying decisions and, as a result, to recommend using envy as a marketing tool in the fashion industry. In this context, 320 questionnaires for quantitative analysis were developed. According to the findings of the empirical report, envy plays a significant role in customer purchasing choices. Furthermore, it is suggested that envy in the customers' purchasing decision process leads to price premiums, impulsive buying, and conspicuous consumption. (Oflazoğlu & Aydın, 2016).

Schneider (2014) examined envy and how it affects people's willingness to pay. An experiment with 80 subjects was organised based on previous studies about

malicious envy of branded goods. A better-off and worse-off participant was decided by eliciting malicious envy through a pitch-and-toss game with an unfair result. Malicious envy was intended to affect people's willingness to pay for even a bar of chocolate during the experiment. After collecting the willingness-to-pay data, the experimental and control groups' results were compared. The results suggest that malicious envy has a detrimental impact on individuals' willingness to pay for both branded and non-branded products. (Schneider, 2014.)

## 2.9 The Development of Envy

Acknowledging the differences in the psychological approaches to understanding envy is essential because the approaches are subject to different paradigms. For example, the cognitive approach has different assumptions, namely the discursive approach. This thesis will focus on cognitive and socio-cultural approaches. As the methodology used in this thesis is also quantitative, these two approaches that essentially rely on quantitative data are deemed fit for answering the research question. These approaches will be presented to provide a well-developed and comprehensive view. However, a discussion of the biological explanations of envy will also be provided to allow for a more thorough understanding of the same.

### 2.9.1 Biological Explanation

The core assumptions of the biological approach are essentially focusing on evolutionary theories. Although the primary focus of the thesis is not on the biological explanation of envy, it is nevertheless helpful to understand that envy may also be characterised by biological factors. Regardless of its reputation as being unpleasant, ugly, petty, and plain gauche, it is probable that envy has played a significant part in humans' pursuit of the resources needed for successful survival across evolutionary history (Hill & Buss, 2008).

According to Ramachandran and Jalal (2017), although one is often fully aware that one feels envious of someone, the true causes for envy are often hidden in one's unconscious and masked by rationalisations. Interestingly, asking oneself

who they are envious of rather than explicitly asking what one values frequently reveals what one truly values in life. The latter often looks into what society expects one to value. One's "superego" takes control. Hence one is only aware of what one should want rather than what one truly desires. Envy and jealousy, on the other side, begin as a subconscious response in the emotional/evaluative system long before one is aware of it. (Ramachandran & Jalal, 2017.)

According to Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical Theory (1923), the internalisation of the conscious is known as the superego. It is characterised by rules, conflict, morals, and guilt. The superego is the last personality component to emerge. It begins to develop around the age of five. Not only do individuals learn morals and values from their parents, but they also learn about the ideas of right and wrong through society and culture. (Freud, 1923, as cited in Kadam, 2017; Cherry, 2020.).

Ramachandran and Jalal's (2017) study's fundamental premise is that introspective "thought experiments" may help one better understand emotions by questioning oneself - and others - which social setting (A or B) would make one more susceptible to that feeling and what the environmental factors are. One may then build relevant evolutionary scenarios to explain why a particular trigger (A) developed to create a given feeling, even when common sense would suggest that another factor (B) should be more efficient. The question was, "Are you more envious of: (A) someone who is similar to you in most ways but is a little wealthier (e.g., 50% wealthier) or (B) Bill Gates?" Is a beggar envious of a little more prosperous beggar or Bill Gates? Most of the time, the former was the correct response; 10 out of 11 people chose A. (Ramachandran & Jalal, 2017.)

Ramachandran and Jalal (2017) suggested that the power of emotion is generally assumed to be precisely proportionate to the resource sought. Following this reasoning, one should be more envious of Bill Gates. Common logic would suggest that the more fortunate somebody is than one, the more envious one should be. However, contrary to popular belief, this is not the case. "Common sense" (the logical or reasoning component of the brain) evolved, too, but for

different reasons, i.e., abstract assumptions such as rules of logical inference - which have only restricted access to "laws of emotions". One ought to be more envious of Bill Gates since he has more significant resources than a slightly better beggar. However, the "emotion module" is wired for quick "gut reactions" such as envy, which can occasionally override rational deductions. Generally, gut instincts and the "rationality faculty" provide consistent results - but not always. As per Ramachandran and Jalal 2017, the rationale behind envy is to encourage you to act, either by independently striving harder (envy) or by coveting and taking what the other has (jealousy). This is why jealousy may be hostile, whereas envy is more pleasant, often tinged with fondness. Envy is said to have developed to motivate access to resources in high demand by others in one's community. The poor beggar's brain immediately calculates that the wealthy Gates is either justifiably much richer (i.e., far wiser) or simply extraordinarily lucky. There is no use in being envious of him since he is off the scale in aptitude or luck. Therefore, no effort by the beggar would culminate in achieving Bill Gates's level of wealth. Envy would encourage an unnecessary and pointless waste of resources. On the other hand, the wealthy beggar may be wiser, luckier, or more diligent than the poorer beggar. (Ramachandran & Jalal, 2017.) This provides an evolutionary explanation for why individuals may tend to feel envious of those who are more similar or closer to themselves than those who are dissimilar.

## 2.9.2 Cognitive and Socio-cultural Explanation

Social comparison may play an integral role in how envy plays out as an emotion. Arguably, social comparison is an essential component of human cognition. People make social comparisons on a frequent and unconscious basis (Mussweiler, 2003, as cited in Yang & Tang, 2011). This could potentially be an important factor affecting the development of envy, especially in today's age of Digital Marketing. As further emphasised by Yang and Tang, Envy is an unpleasant feeling resulting from an unfavourable social comparison with someone with superior qualities, accomplishments, or assets (Parrott & Smith, 1993; Smith & Kim, 2007, as cited in Yang & Tang, 2021).

Arnocky et al. (2015) conducted two studies to investigate the role of envy on women's drive to improve their physical beauty. In the first study, a cross-sectional sample of 188 undergraduate women was used to investigate the impact of dispositional envy in moderating the link between social comparison and women's resource expenditure on three variables; beauty-enhancing items, planned weight reduction and tanning intention. When age and self-perceived mate value were controlled, the results indicated that social comparison strongly predicted all three dependent variables, with envy mediating intended weight loss, consumer expenditure, and tanning aspirations. The second study repeated and expanded the first study's findings, using an experimental social comparison priming approach. In magazine adverts, ninety women drew social comparisons to beautiful women. A 45-woman sample expressed more state envy than 45 other women seeing a product-only advertisement. Furthermore, induced state envy predicted a higher propensity to use face cosmetics and a harmful diet medication and enhanced positive views about cosmetic surgery. These findings support the role of envy in encouraging compensatory competitive appearance improvement activities when triggered by unfavourable social comparisons. (Arnocky et al., 2015.)

Hill, DelPriore and Vaughan (2011) suggest that whether it is coming across attractive celebrities on Twitter or Facebook, people are captivated by even the little information about individuals we perceive to be better fortunate than ourselves. This information frequently makes its way into our memory more quickly than people would like to acknowledge, taking up crucial cognitive space. The researchers investigated the effect of envy in directing cognitive resources towards information processing about relevant persons using a socio-functional paradigm. It was hypothesised that experiencing envy would increase attention to and memory for advantaged targets. A total of four experiments were carried out.

Hill, DelPriore and Vaughan's (2011) first study with a sample size of 69 found that those primed with envy paid more attention to and remembered information about imaginary peers than a control group. The second research, which included

187 participants, and the third study, which included 65 participants, conceptually reproduced similar findings. They demonstrated that target-evoked envy predicts attention and later memory for information about them. It highlights that these effects are not explained by admiration or increases in negative emotion or arousal caused by the targets. The results indicate that envy could be essential in attention and memory processes, diminishing limited self-regulatory resources for voluntary control behaviours. (Hill, DelPriore & Vaughan, 2011.)

Furtardo, Medeiros and Diniz (2020) aimed to observe how the emotion of envy affected the consumption of fashion goods on the social media platform Instagram. Forty users who follow fashion accounts were interviewed. Through direct content analysis, qualitative methodological approaches were used in the study. The snowball approach was employed to identify the interviewed users, with the amount determined by the saturation of the interview material. Sublimated envy, neurotic envy, and perverse envy were identified as factors utilised to investigate the effect of envy on fashion consumption. According to the findings, all research respondents had at least one form of envy, with sublimated envy being the most commonly mentioned by interviewers. Some participants expressed various levels of envy. Thus, it was established that posts from fashion accounts elicit envy and that this emotion motivates consumption among Instagram users. (Furtado, Medeiros & Diniz, 2020.)

## 2.10 The Bandwagon Effect

The Bandwagon effect is a psychological phenomenon, or a cognitive bias wherein people do something mainly because others are doing it, irrespective of their personal opinions, which they may disregard or ignore. It is triggered by psychological, social, and economic reasons. This is similar to a herd mentality, wherein individuals are inclined to conform their thoughts and behaviour to those of a group. The phrase "Bandwagon Effect" stems from politics, although it has far-reaching ramifications in consumer behaviour. In the context of this thesis, it emphasises people often like to be on the winning team- what is favoured by most or what may be trending and popular amongst, e.g., the social media

influencers.  However, this type of bandwagon effect might be problematic since it offers every customer an incentive to free-ride on the knowledge and interests of other consumers, e.g., social media influencers. It can be criticised to the degree that it leads to a scenario in which consumer product information is the main limiting factor or is produced entirely or primarily by marketers. Individuals may purchase a new technological device because it is popular, irrespective of whether it is a genuine need, they can afford it, or even genuinely desire it. Consumption bandwagon effects can also be linked to conspicuous consumption, in which people acquire expensive things to show their economic standing, as discussed earlier. (Investopedia, 2022.)

The bandwagon may frequently be associated with celebrities' commercials. This is a traditional method of advertising products featuring celebrities. Companies and marketers use this approach frequently because they recognise that individuals follow trends and movements when they gather knowledge from others and need to conform. For example, the products are developed, and celebrities are merely used to advertise them. Whether celebrities use the products they advertise or promote is unanswered. However, it does raise raises a valid point – consumers who still hop on the bandwagon may not necessarily evaluate the bandwagon effect; envy and group conformity or a sense of belonging may all play a part. Many individuals are inspired by celebrities and popular culture, which means they will embrace a specific style of clothes after seeing their favourite famous figure wear them. Social media plays a significant role in generating this mental state since people observe everyone's life and are envious because people want to be a part of what others are doing or possess what others possess. (Adock Solutions, 2021.)

Besides the general celebrity commercials, companies may collaborate with celebrities such as Megan fox with Boohoo (Whitehead, 2021) and Gigi Hadid with Maybelline (Maloney, 2017). The products are developed in a way to cater for the celebrity that is promoting them. There is an additional personal touch. For instance, Boohoo collaborated with Megan Fox and developed clothes that fit her style. Similarly, celebrities also have their brands, which are especially attractive

to the followers and fans of that particular celebrity, for example, Fenty Beauty by Rihanna, Rare Beauty by Selena Gomez, and Kylie Makeup by Kylie Jenner. These brands are specifically targeted towards women. Additionally, social media influencers have become prominent. Initially, influencer marketing was celebrity endorsements. In today's digital environment, however, social content providers with a specific following may frequently provide more excellent value to companies. These smaller accounts have a highly engaged social media following. They are paid to promote various products and get sponsorship, particularly free products. (Newberry, 2021.)

When famous celebrities are shown with the marketed brand, it is doubtful that malicious envy would result since these celebrities are often considered superior hence social comparison is useless (Smith & Kim, 2007, as cited in Belk, 2008). However, views that people too can feel like or be more like them by using the same products can assist benign envy in converting into positive brand perceptions and sales (McCracken, 198,9 as cited in Belk, 2008).

## 2.11 The Framing Effect

Marketers are essentially people who understand and know how to alter information presentation to obtain the desired result. How marketers present, their product may affect how a potential consumer receives it. In other words, when a marketer wishes to create a sense of envy, they would present it in a manner which would do so. Framing is described as a person's reaction to a particular decision based on how it is presented. Consumer behaviour is closely related to how a product or service is viewed. As a result, framing is critical in customers' purchase and decision-making processes. (Haire, 2022.)

Kao (2019) applied cases of envy and psychological distance to consumers to examine whether the style of brand storytelling can moderate their brand preference. The researchers conducted three experimental studies. The first experiment investigated the effect of envy on consumer evaluations of an advocated brand by watching several advertisements that differed in brand

storytelling styles. Using a single factorial design, a waste of 104 working students was randomly allocated to underdog brand storytelling or top dog brand storytelling.

Kao's (2019) second experiment investigated the effect of envy on consumer evaluations of the advocated brand by watching advertisements that differed in the psychological distancing single factorial design, a waste of 108 working students were randomly allocated to either proximal or distant psychological distance sign. The last experiment investigated the effect of envy on brand evaluation by watching advertisements that differed in brand storytelling style and psychological distance. A sample size of 208 working students was randomly allocated to either underdog or top dog and either proximal or distant psychological distance between-subject factorial design. The results suggested that for consumers experiencing envy, advertisements characterised by brand storytelling (underdog or top dog) and psychological distance (proximal or distant) would evoke distinctive brand preferences. This study brings much value to my thesis as it explores how consumer envy influences brand preference and the role of moderating effects, namely brand storytelling and psychological distance, in this context. (Kao, 2019.)

Shan, Diao and Wu (2020) investigated customers' attitudes about and purchasing intentions for organic food concerning the framing and anchoring effects and the function of knowledge. According to the findings, whether the message framing conveys the advantages of purchasing organic food or the cost coming from not buying organic food has a substantial impact on customers' attitudes and purchase intention. Their findings support the notion that framing can influence how potential buyers see a product, influencing their purchasing decisions. (Shan, Diao & Wu, 2020.)

Huang and Wang (2010) examined how the task domain influenced gender differences in framing effects. Five hundred and eighty-six participants (63.3% female) were randomised to distinct frame valences, namely positive vs negative, and task domains, for example, life-death vs money vs time. A participant

completed all three framing tasks: attribute, goal, and risky-choice frames. According to the findings, females responded more strongly to negative frames in the life-death realm. Males responded more strongly to negative frames in the monetary domain. The trends of gender difference in the time domain were inconsistent across various framing tasks, such that in the goal framing task, females were more open to taking actions under negative frames while males were the opposite. In the risk-choice task, females were likelier to take risks under positive frames while males did not show substantial framing effects. These findings suggest that the framing effect is gender-specific, altering according to gender roles in various task domains. (Huang & Wang, 2010.)

According to Lewallen (2016), framing may have a significant effect on women, especially by creating a social comparison. How marketers define women's bodies can influence other users' conceptions of body standards and their attitudes and actions toward their wellness. Lewallen (2016) performed an online experiment with 58 women in the United States to better comprehend how text frames on image-based social media participate in social comparison and self-perception. The results suggested that women in the body-positive experimental condition showed increased levels of self-esteem than women in the body-negative experimental condition. Women in the negative conditions had higher ranks than those in the positive conditions regarding state social comparison with images. Furthermore, women who compared themselves to the women in the test pictures were likelier to dream about having the same look and lifestyle as the women in the pictures. The findings are addressed in light of framing theory and social comparison theory. (Lewallen, 2016.)

According to 2008 research carried out by the Dove Self-Esteem Fund, 62% of girls ages eight to eighteen were unsatisfied with themselves, and 71% of those girls were unsatisfied because they considered they were not as attractive as they should be. However, before-and-after cosmetics commercials, which can elicit feelings of envy in viewers, are undoubtedly the most known in the realm of insecurity-inducing marketing. These advertisements depict a wrinkled, unclean, and unattractive woman in a single frame captioned "before." The following

image, "after," shows her looking nice and free of flaws. This form of advertising has led to women feeling insecure about their body image and purchasing and consuming more to look more attractive. This highlights how strong of an impact framing can have on envy and consumption choices. (Reed, 2014.)

Subashini (2018) investigated the 'influence of advertising frame on audience frame' concerning body image. She aimed to shed light on how photos of women are produced - framed in advertising - and how it affects the brains of young women. A quantitative technique investigated the mechanism underlying young women's body image perception in Pondicherry, India. One hundred six respondents, comprising students and employed women between the ages of 17 and 27, were chosen as samples. The gathered data were analysed using frequency and correlation tests. As a result, quantitative data were taken into account for analysis. The study discovered a linear correlation between the 'ideal women' presented by commercials in various media and the building of audience frames concerning their body image. This demonstrates how framing is developed in marketers' brains, influencing women's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. (Subashini, 2018.)

## 2.12 The role of Marketers

Marketers may play an integral role in influencing the consumption choices of women in particular. They can employ various marketing strategies to evoke a sense of envy in potential consumers, such as The Scarcity Principle (Chen, 2019), the Framing Effect (Haire, 2022) and The Bandwagon Effect (Adock Solutions, 2021). The primary strategy through which marketers purposefully strive to inspire envy is promotion. Advertising, retail displays, fashion shows, paid reviews, product placements in movies and shows, online and computer games, and occasionally "seeding" the product with famous or "cool" individuals are all examples of the same. (Quart, 2004 as cited in Ferreira 2021.) Marketers can use these as a way to shift people's perspectives.

According to Ferreira (2021), if marketers do not employ envy in advertising appropriately, it can provoke unfavourable brand connections in consumers and lead them to competitor companies. Envy has been regularly employed in advertising campaigns by international businesses such as Revlon, Estée Lauder, BMW, and Calvin Klein to make their products appear more attractive. Envy is a popular motivator for customers to purchase things to fulfil personal goals such as beauty, riches, or status. Researchers conducted three studies in three different competitive environments - a job selection process, a promotional competition, and an academic exchange program - to investigate the effect of fairness and controllability on malicious envy and to determine whether disliking a colleague influences the type of envy a consumer feels. The researchers questioned approximately 2000 people in Brazil. Envious sentiments are benign when consumers feel their opponent deserves a particular product. A consumer's connections with a brand are favourably influenced by benign envy. However, when consumers dislike their opponent, they will feel malicious envy and dismiss a brand, even if they believe their opponent deserves the goods. Ms Ferreira advised marketers to include a liked individual in their marketing campaigns to prevent malicious envy. (Ferreira, 2021.)

# 3  Counter Arguments

Although it appears that individuals tend to feel envious of those that have something they do not have but not, the flip side of the coin is proposed as well.

## 3.1  The Scarcity Principle

The Scarcity Principle is an economic theory that states that a limited supply of a product and strong demand for that good or product causes a discrepancy between the intended supply and demand equilibrium. Marketers frequently employ the principle of creating fake scarcity and exclusivity for a particular product or item to drive demand. (Chen, 2019.) In other words, it essentially refers to limited availability, which may stimulate purchasing behaviour. For example, seeing "only 100 in stock" or "limited edition" gives a sense of urgency and

creates a desire to buy. Furthermore, the apparent popularity leads one to believe it must be a good decision. (Adock Solutions, 2021.) Various companies may employ the scarcity principle by only releasing a fixed number of a product, Yeezy's releasing a limited stock of their shoes. They essentially decreased the supply, increasing the demand; hence people were more willing to purchase the shoes. (Minhaj, 2018.) Essentially, people want to buy what not everyone can have. This provides a different perspective to the Bandwagon Effect people simply wish to have others have.

For example, Yeezys are a collaboration between Kanye West and Adidas. Since the beginning of the Yeezy and Adidas partnership, each new release has garnered a lot of interest, especially limited-edition products like the YEEZY Boost 350 V2 "Zebra," which had a resale price of $1,600 before falling back to $550 upon restocking. (Highsnobiety, n.d.) The overall idea of the Scarcity Principle is that the more difficult it is to obtain a product, the more valuable it becomes and the more desperately people want it.

## 3.2  The Hype

According to Minhaj (2018), envy may not be alone that results in confident consumption choices but may be a combination of factors such as hype around a product. The desire to fit in and buy into hype can lead to consumption decisions. However, the desire to fit in may not constantly develop from envy. For instance, the hype around a particular product can make potential consumers interested and decide to consume it. The concept of hype indicates that when there is enough hype built around a product, people tend to make their consumption choice based on their desire to fit in with others. The Cognitive factors such as status and social hierarchy may play a crucial role here.  (Minhaj, 2018.)

# 4 Research Questions & Hypotheses

Based on the literature review, several hypotheses are formulated which will be tested in the primary research.

H1: Women's consumption choices vary according to age.

H2: Social comparison is a motivator of envy in women.

H3: Social media influencers are likely to affect the consumption choices of women.

H4: Women are more likely to feel envious of those that they deem similar to themselves.

The primary research question is, "What is the role of envy in the consumption choices of women?".

# 5 Methodology – Primary Research

This thesis employs primary research and an extensive literature review that helped develop the theoretical framework. The literature was also used to create the questionnaire to collect primary data. The survey was shared across various online platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn, to conduct quantitative research. The survey was specifically targeted towards women to meet the research requirements and was developed using Google Forms due to convenience. All questions were compulsory to answer. Convenience sampling was utilised best served the purposes of this research. A majority of the theoretical framework is based on studies that use both women and men; the same will be put to the test with only women in this survey. Questions have been developed to explore the cognitive and socio-cultural aspects, of social-comparison and concepts such as the Bandwagon Effect, The Scarcity Principle, and the role of social media influencers and celebrities in

relation to demographics such as age, occupation, educational background and average monthly income.

The central hypothesis is that envy plays a critical role in the consumption choices of women, and social media influencers act as a catalyst for the same. Additionally, the survey questions aim to understand women's overall demographic concerning their consumption choices to draw any other relation and inference from the obtained data. A survey design is used as it is cost-efficient, less time-consuming, allows the collection of data from a large sample size in a short time and helps describe the characteristics of women about their consumption choices. The survey contains quantitative questions. The data is analysed using SPSS Data Analysis Software, utilising descriptive analysis, namely crosstabulation tables to look at subgroups of survey respondents to determine any potential relationship, and charts for a visual representation of the data to allow for effective data analysis. The data obtained through the survey is examined through the lens of the literature review.

The questionnaire was divided into parts. The first set of questions focused on the demographics, namely respondents' age, where they reside, employment, marital status, educational background, and average monthly income. The demographic questions were designed to provide a comprehensive vision of who participated in the survey and to identify patterns and potential relationships. The first question the participants had to answer was "Do you identify as a female?" to ensure that only women would respond. Following the demographic questions, there was a combination of Dichotomous Questions. This was used since it is quick and straightforward, reducing ambiguity in its responses. Additionally, it helped simplify the survey experience for the respondents.

5-point Likert Scale and Semantic Differential Scale were also employed. It aided in assessing respondents' ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. They were primarily utilised to determine respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with several statements and how likely or unlikely they are to feel or do something. The final question was imagination-ba,sed where respondents were faced with a

dilemma, with a presumption that they were envious. This question primarily dealt with discovering how the respondent would react in a situation where they feel envious of a social media influencer, and what course of action they would choose. The aim was to explore whether respondents would, out of envy especially caused by a social media influencer, purchase the dress and why. This was a multiple-choice question with numerous explanations and courses of action. Respondents had to pick what they deemed the most appropriate. Each question of the survey is relevant to the theoretical framework discussed in the literature review section and aims to investigate whether those concepts hold true for women.

# 6 Data Analysis

Firstly, visual graphs of the responses will be discussed, followed by SPSS Analysis, primarily crosstabulations. As previously mentioned, the research was targeted only towards women. The total number of respondents was 50, all identified as female. Although, ideally, a much larger number of respondents would have been the goal.
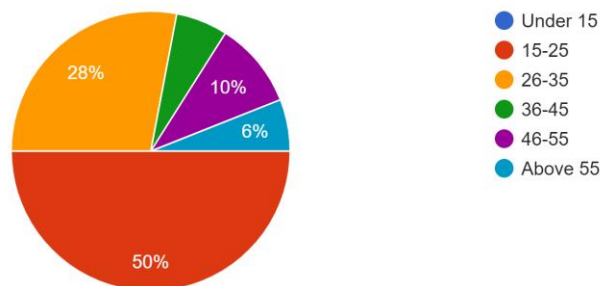


Figure 1. Age of Respondents

Half of the respondents fall into the age category of 15-25 (n=25), followed by 28% falling into the age category of 26-35 (n=14), 6% being 36-45 (n=3), 10% being between 46-55 (n=5) and 6% being above 55 (n=3). Evidently, the majority

of the respondents are between the ages 15-25 whereas there are no representatives of ages under 15.

Where do you live?
50 responses
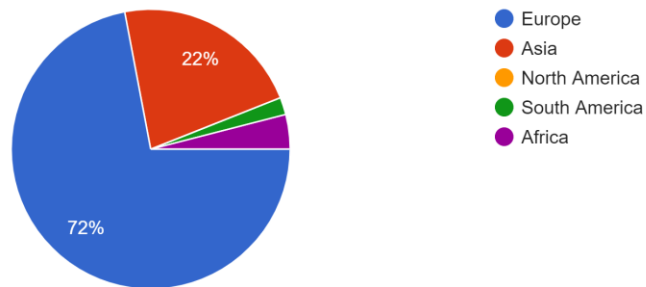


Figure 2. Where respondents live.

72% of the respondents live in Europe (n=36), followed by 22% living in Asia (n=11), 4% in Africa (n=2), and 2% in South America (n=1). Due to the lack of respondents from Africa, South America and North America this research will not be drawing any conclusions in regard to women from these continents.

Marital status
50 responses
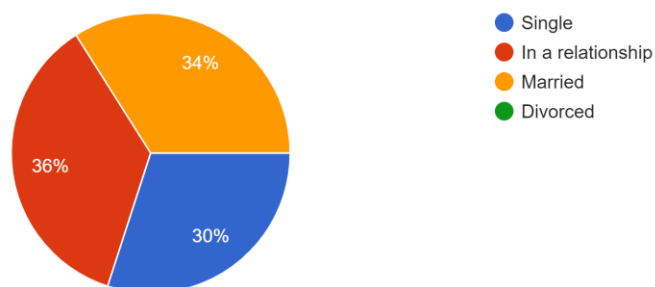


Figure 3. Marital Status of Respondents

36% of the respondents were in a relationship (n=18), 34% were married (n=17) and 30% were single (n=15). None of the respondents were divorced thereby this research will not excluding divorced women.
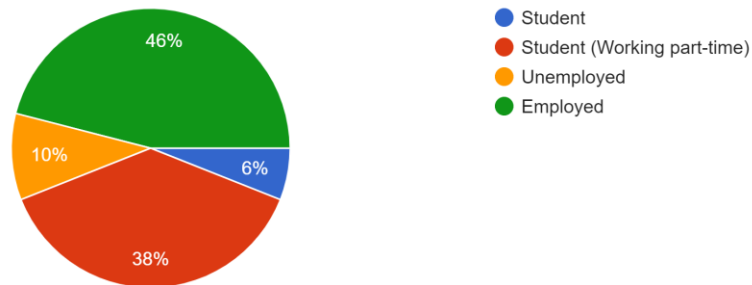


Figure 4. Occupation of Respondents

46% were employed (n=23), 38% were students working part-time (n=19), 10% were unemployed (n=5) and 6% were students (n=3). Evidently, a majority of the respondents were employed or working part-time. It is important to note that essentially the category of students is for students that are not working.
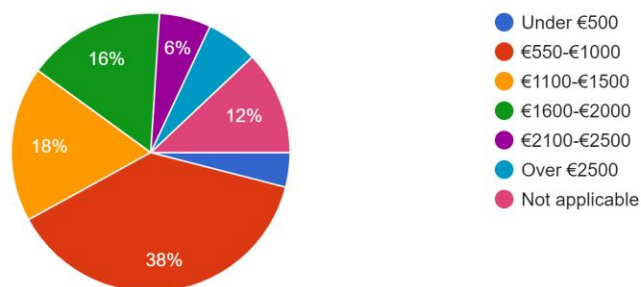


Figure 5. Average Monthly Income of Respondents

The average monthly income of 38% of the respondents fell between €550-€1000 (n=19), followed by 18% earning between €1100-€1500 (n=9), 16% making between €1600-€2000 (n=8). Only 6% of the respondents made between €2100-€2500 (n=3). Similarly, 6% made over €2500 (n=3).

Educational background:
50 responses
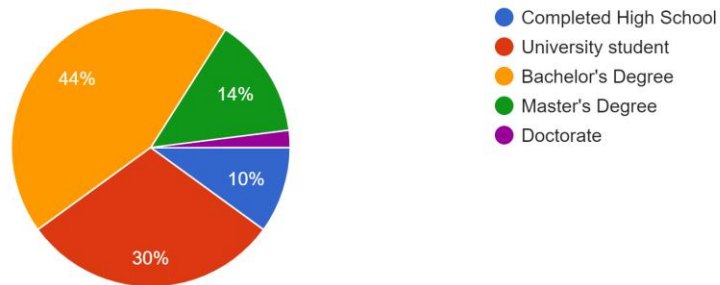


Figure 6. Educational Background of Respondents

44% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree (n=22), 30% are currently university students (n=15), 14% have a master's degree (n=7), 10% have completed High School (n=5), and 2% have a Doctorate (n=1). MostMost of the respondents are either university students or have a bachelor's degree.

Do you actively follow and watch social media influencers?
50 responses
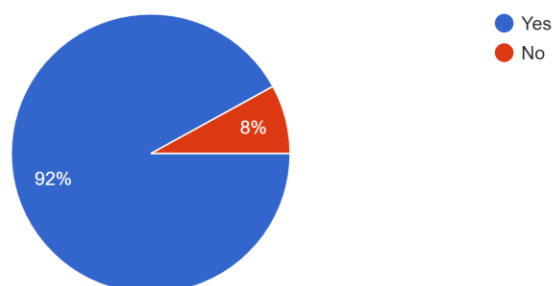


Figure 7. Responses to actively following Social Media Influencers.

92% of the respondents actively follow and watch social media influencers (n=46) whereas 8% do not (n=4). Since social media influencers are a key component of this research, it is vital to have asked this question.

How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?
50 responses
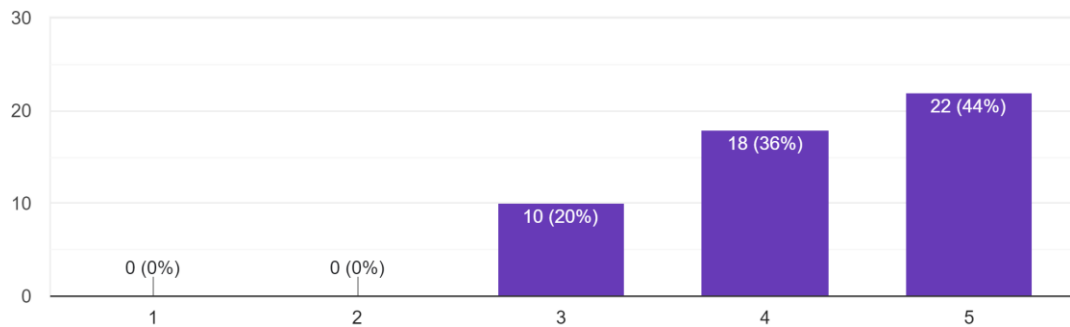


Figure 8. Purchasing habits

In the Semantic differential scale-based questions, 1 refers to highly unlikely and 5 refers to highly likely. 44% of the respondents chose number 5 expressing that they are highly likely to purchase something just because someone else has it (n=22). This was followed by 36% respondents choosing number 4 (n=18), and 20% choosing number 3 (n=10). Overall, none of the respondents picked number 1 or 2 hence it can be suggested that none felt that they were highly unlikely or unlikely to purchase something just because someone else has it. Majority of the participants were either in the likely or highly likely category.

How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype?

50 responses
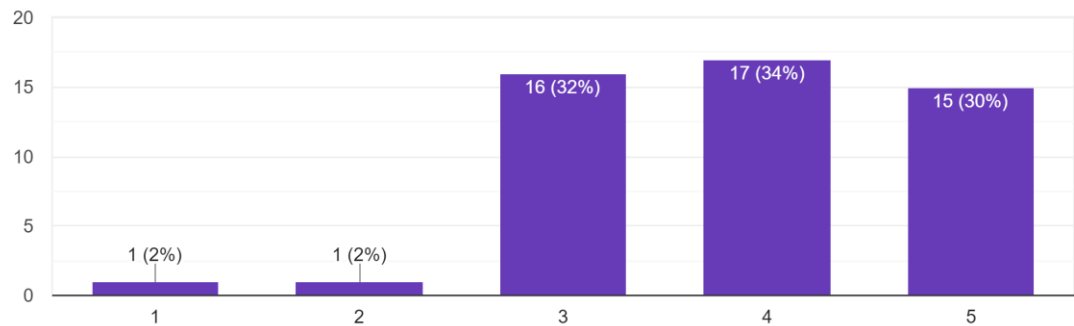


Figure 9. Purchasing Habits due to Hype

30% of the respondents picked number 5, indicating that they were very likely to purchase something simply owing to its hype (n=15), 34% picked number 4 (n=17), 32% picked 3 (n=16), 2% picked number 2 (n=1) and 2% picked number 1 indicating that they are highly unlikely to purchase something simply owing to its hype (n=1). Overall, majority of the respondents feel that they are somewhat likely to highly likely.

Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others?

50 responses
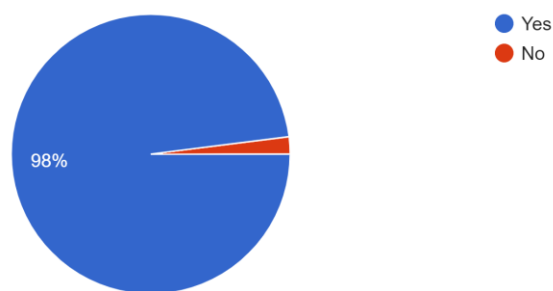


Figure 10. Desire to look or feel better than others driving consumption.

98% of the respondents chose option yes indicating that they have purchased something because they desired to look or feel better than others (n=49),

whereas 2% chose option no (n=1). Evidently, nearly all of the respondents admitted to purchasing something because of their desire.

How likely are you to purchase something because it was advertised as a "limited edition"?
50 responses
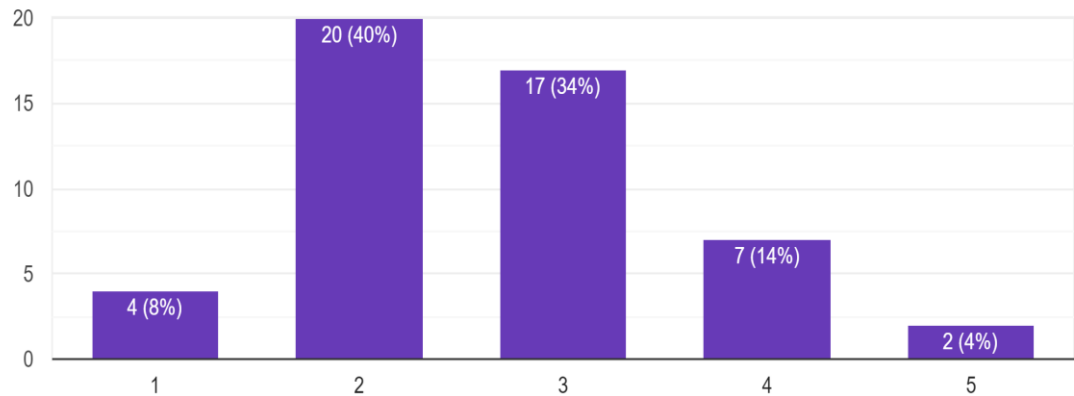


Figure 11. Responses to purchasing Limited Edition.

4% of the respondents picked number 5 (n=2), indicating that only 4% felt that were highly likely to purchase something because it was advertised as a limited edition. 14% picked number 4 (n=7) and 34% picked number 3 (n=17) indicating they are somewhat likely. On the other hand, 40% picked number 2 (n=20) and 8% picked number 1 (n=4) indicating, that they are either unlikely or highly unlikely to purchase something advertised as a limited edition.

Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it?

50 responses

Yes
No

96%
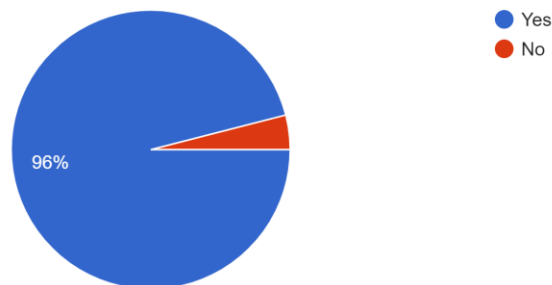
Figure 12. Purchasing Habits of Respondents

96% of the respondents chose option yes (n=48), indicating that they have purchased something they did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it. Whereas 4% selected option no (n=2), suggesting the opposite. This question is similar to Figure 8 as it aims to understand how women consume based on what others have. However, this is presented as a dichotomous questions and a semantic differential scale to explore whether they have consumed based on what others have, and how likely they are to do that. The responses of both the questions are consistent with each other.

How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer?

50 responses

1 (2%)   3 (6%)   7 (14%)   22 (44%)   17 (34%)
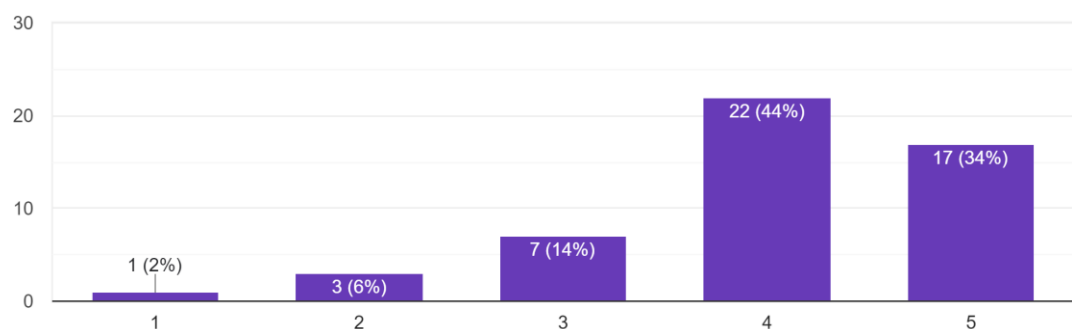
Figure 13. Influence of Social Media Influencers.

34% of the respondents chose number 5 (n=17), suggesting that they are highly likely to purchase something because a social media influencer promoted it. 44% chose number 4 (n=22) suggesting that they are likely to, whereas 14% chose number 3 (n=7), 6% chose number 2 (n=3) and 2% chose number 1 (n=1) respectively. The majority of the respondents are either likely or highly likely to purchase based on promotion by social media influencers.

How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity?

50 responses
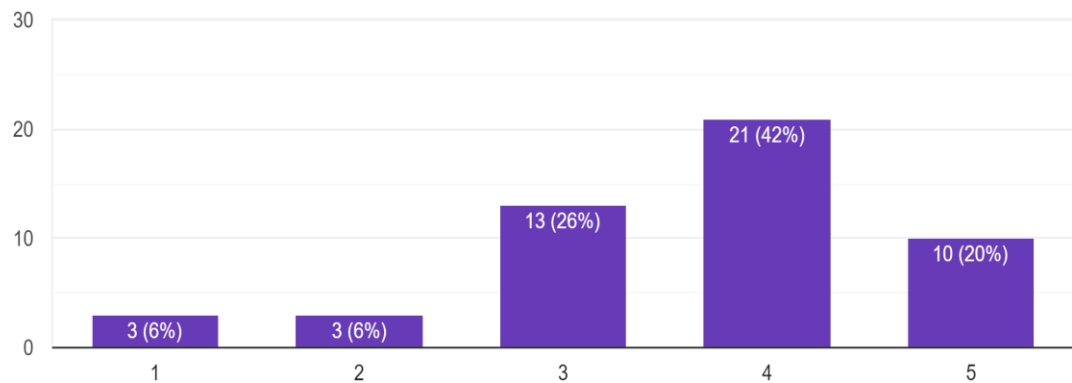
Figure 14. Celebrity-owned Brands

20% of the respondents chose number 5 (n=10), implying that they are highly likely to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because they are a fan of that celebrity. 42% chose number 4 (n=21) and 26% chose number 3 (n=13), implying that they are either likely or somewhat likely. Whereas 6%

chose number 2 (n=3) and 6% chose number 1 (n=3) implying that they are either unlikely or highly unlikely to do the same.
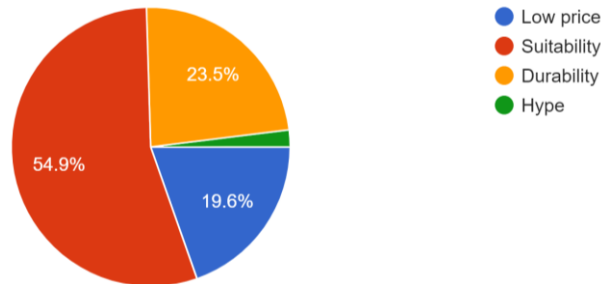


Figure 15. Most important factor when making a purchasing decision.

When asked what the respondents think is the most critical factor when making a purchasing decision, 54.9% picked Suitability (n=28), 23.5% picked Durability (n=12), 19.6% picked Low price whereas 2% picked Hype (n=1). Suitability is considered the most important followed by Durability by most women.
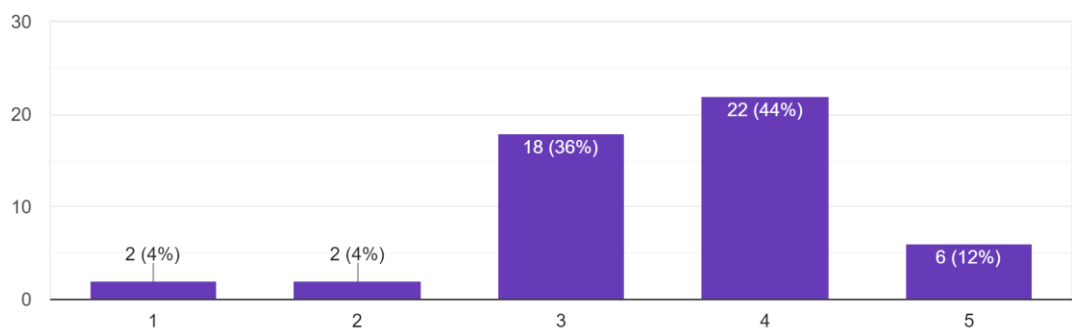


Figure 16. Compulsive Buying Tendency.

12% of the respondents chose number 5 (n=6), indicating that they are highly likely to have a compulsive buying tendency when they feel envious. 44% chose number 4 (n=22), and 36% chose number 3 (n=18), indicating that they are either likely or somewhat likely to do the same. On the other hand, 4% chose number 2

(n=2), and 4% chose number 1 (n=2), indicating that they are either unlikely or highly unlikely to have a compulsive buying tendency when feeling envious. Overall, majority of the respondents are either likely to or somewhat likely to follow the same and have a compulsive buying tendency as a result of envy.

How likely are you to have a social comparison tendency (determining your own social and personal worth based on how you stack up against others) when seeing a social media influencer?
50 responses
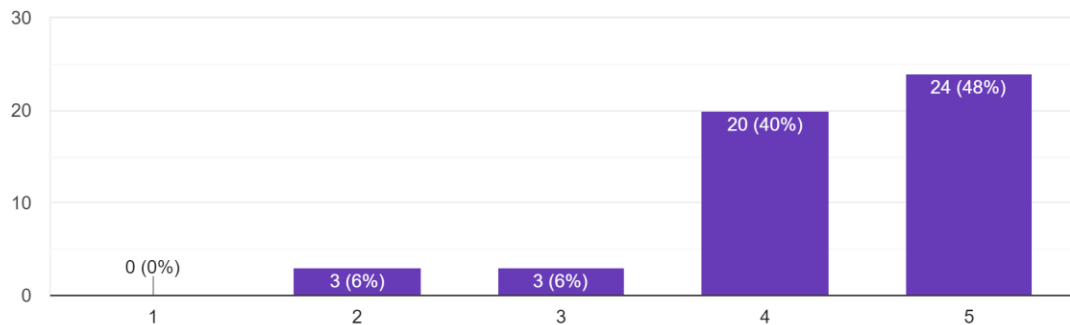


Figure 17. Social Comparison Tendency.

48% (n=24) of the respondents are highly likely to have a social comparison tendency when seeing a social media influencer. 40% of the respondents chose number 4 (n=20), suggesting that they are likely to whereas 6% chose number 3 (n=3), suggesting that they are somewhat likely to. 6% chose number 2 (n=3), suggesting that they are unlikely to do the same. Overall, majority of the respondents are either likely or highly likely to develop a social comparison tendency as a result of seeing social media influencers.

The respondents were asked to choose how much they agreed with the following statements, using a 5-Likert scale with options ranging from Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly agree. It helped to understand and measure women's overall opinion about each statement.
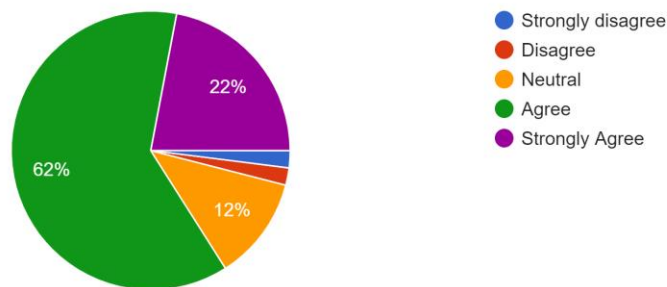
Figure 18. The role of Envy.

62% of the respondents (n=31),  agreed that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices. 22% strongly agreed (n=11), 12% were neutral (n=6), whereas 2% strongly disagreed (n=1), and 2% disagreed (n=1). Overall, the majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.
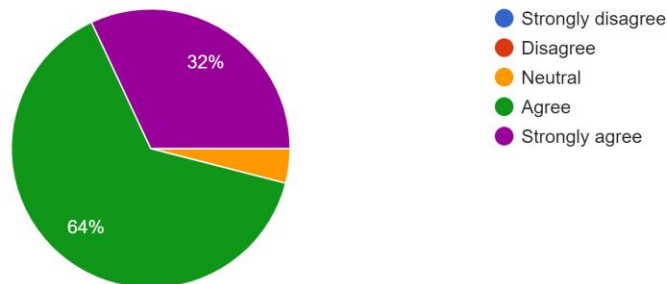


Figure 19. Social Status

64% of the respondents (n= 32) agreed that the desire to have a higher social status plays a role in their consumption choices. 32% strongly agreed (n=16) and 4% were neutral (n=2). Majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Reflecting on my consumption choices could lead me to become a more mindful consumer.
50 responses
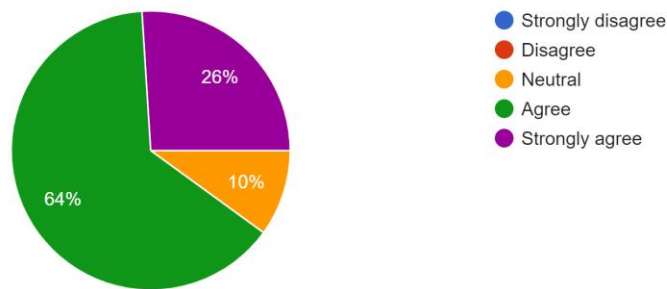


Figure 20. Mindful consumers

64% of the respondents (n=32) agreed that reflecting on their consumption choices could lead them to become more mindful coconsumers26% strongly agreed (n=13) and 10% were neutral (n=5). Overall, the majority of the respondents either agreed or strongly agree with to the statement.

I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar.
50 responses
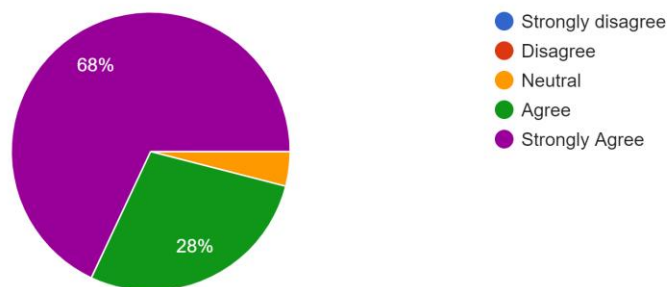


Figure 21. Similarity vs Dissimilarity in creating envy.

68% of the respondents (n=34) strongly agreed that they are more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. 28% agreed (n=14) and 4% were neutral (n=2). Evidently, the majority either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement.

I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar.
50 responses
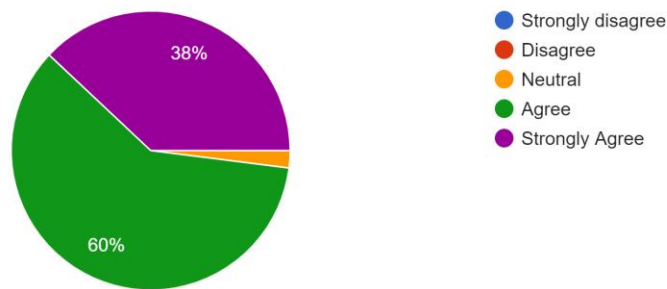


Figure 22. Similarity vs Dissimilarity in affecting purchase decisions.

60% of the respondents (n=30) agreed that they are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to them than dissimilar. 38% strongly agreed (n=19) and 2% were neutral (n=1). Overall, the majority either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement.

I engage in conspicuous consumption (the purchase of goods or services for the specific purpose of displaying one's wealth).
50 responses
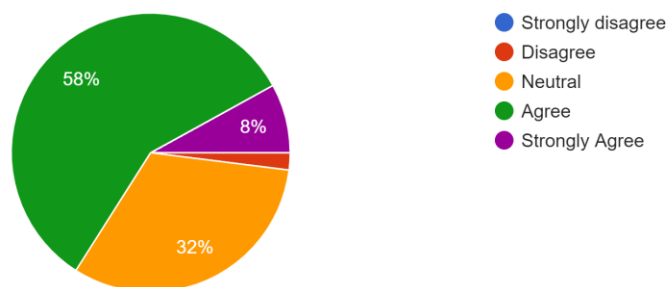


Figure 23. Conspicuous Consumption

58% of the respondents (n=29) agreed that they engage in conspicuous consumption. 32% were neutral (n=16), 8% strongly agreed (n=4) and 2% disagreed (n=1). Overall, the majority appears to be either neutral or agree with the statement.

The responses to the last question, which was an imagination-based scenario (see appendix 2) were mixed. 32% of the respondents (n=16) chose that they would purchase the dress because they want to fulfil their desire to have a cinched waist and curves. 20% of the respondents (n=10) chose that they would purchase the dress because they want to eliminate their feeling of envy by having the same dress. 14% of the respondents (n=7) chose that they would purchase the dress after assessing whether they currently have extra money for it. 8% of the respondents (n=4) chose that they would purchase the dress after assessing whether they really need it. 8% of the respondents (n=4) chose that they would purchase the dress through "Buy now, pay later" option because they do not have the money but really want the dress. 6% of the respondents (n=3) chose that they would purchase the dress because they really like the social media influencer who is promoting the dress. 4% of the respondents (n=2) chose that they would not purchase the dress because they do not follow social media influencers.

2% of the respondents (n=1) chose that they would ask someone else to buy them the dress because they really want it. 2% of the respondents (n=1) chose that they would not purchase the dress because they do not care about having a cinched waist and curves. 2% of the respondents (n=1) chose that they would not purchase the dress because they cannot afford it. 2% of the respondents (n=1) chose that they would not purchase the dress because they do not need it. Overall, the top three answers that were chosen by most women in order of popularity are that following: I will purchase the dress because I want to fulfil my desire to have a cinched waist and curves, I will purchase the dress because I want to eliminate my feeling of envy by having the same address and I will purchase the dress after assessing whether I currently have extra money for it. Evidently, these three answers are focused on purchasing the dress, as opposed to not purchasing it.

## 6.1 Age

Crosstabulations were developed using SPSS to determine whether there is any potential relation between Age and their responses the asked questions.

Table 1. Crosstabulation: Age & How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it? | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | 1 | 9 | 15 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | | 10 | 18 | 22 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women aged 15-25 and 26-35 are more likely to purchase something because someone else has it. Whereas, on the other hand, women belonging to an older age group such as 46-55 and above 55 are less likely to do the same. It appears that with age, the tendency to purchase something because someone else has it diminishes.

Table 2. Crosstabulation: Age & How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype? | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 10 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---:|---:|---:|---:|---:|
| Above 55 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women aged 15-25 and 26-35 are more likely to purchase something owing to its hype. Whereas, on the other hand, women belonging to an older age group such as 46-55 and above 55 are less likely to do the same. It appears that with age, the tendency to purchase something owing to its hype diminishes.

Table 3. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others? | | | |
|---|---|---:|---:|---:|---:|
| | | No | Yes | Total | |
| Age | 15-25 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | | | | | |
| Total | | 1 | 1 | 49 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women of all age groups have purchased something because they desired to feel or look better than others. In this case, age does not seem to be a factor affecting their choice. No relationship is observed between age and the question stated.

Table 4. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else, had it?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Have you ever | No | Yes | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | | 0 | 25 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | | 1 | 13 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | | | 2 | 48 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women of all age groups have purchased something they did not need had a desire to have because someone else has it. In this case, age does not seem to be a factor affecting their choice. No relationship is observed between the two.

Table 5. Crosstabulation: Age & How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 13 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | | 1 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 17 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women aged 15-25 and 26-35 are more likely to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer. Although women in the age group of 26-55 and above 55 seem to be less likely overall, they are still relatively likely to be purchase due to the same reason.

Table 6. Age & How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity? | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 12 | 7 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | | 3 | 3 | 13 | 21 | 10 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women aged 15-25 and 26-35 are more likely to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because they are a fan of that celebrity.The same trend can be observed in this case as well that – women are less likely to purchase something for the aforementioned reason as their age increases.

Table 7. Crosstabulation: Age & What do you think is the most important factor when making a purchasing decision?

Count

| | | What do you think is the most important factor when making a purchasing decision? | | | | | Total |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Durability | Hype | Low price | Suitability | | |
| Age | 15-25 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 17 | | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 10 | | 14 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 36-45 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3 |
| 46-55 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 5 |
| Above 55 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 3 |
| Total | 12 | 1 | 10 | 27 | | 50 |

As evident in Table 7, according to women aged 15-25 suitability is the most important factor when making a purchasing decision followed by low price. The same holds true for women aged 26-35. However, for women aged 36-45, 46-55 and above 55 durability appears to be the most important factor.

Table 8. Crosstabulation: Age & Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices.

| | | Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Strongly disagree | Total |
| Age | 15-25 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | | 31 | 1 | | 6 | 11 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women of all age groups either agree, agree strongly with the idea that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices. However, women aged 46-55 and above 55 also appear to have a neutral stance to some extent. In this case, age does not seem to be a factor affecting their choice. No relationship is observed between the two.

Table 9. Crosstabulation: Age & I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar. | Total |
|---|---|---|

|  | | Agree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 15-25 | 7 | | 1 | 17 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 4 | | 1 | 9 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 1 | | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 2 | | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 0 | | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | | 14 | | 2 | 34 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, majority of the women of all age groups either agree or strongly agree that they feel envious of someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. There is no difference observed in the different age groups concerning the statement.

Table 10. Crosstabulation: Age & I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | | I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar. | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Neutral | Strongly Agree | |
| Age | 15-25 | 18 | 0 | 7 | 25 |
| | 26-35 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 14 |
| | 36-45 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | 46-55 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 5 |
| | Above 55 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Total | | 30 | 1 | 19 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, majority of the women of all age groups either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. There is no difference observed in the different age groups concerning the statement.

## 6.2 Occupation

Crosstabulations were developed determine whether there is any potential relation between occupation of the respondents and their responses to the asked questions.

Table 11. Crosstabulation: Occupation & How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it? | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Occupation: | Employed | 7 | 8 | 8 | 23 |
| | Student | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 8 | 11 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | | 10 | 18 | 22 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women that are employed and students that work part-time are the most likely to purchase something just because someone else has it. It appears that employed women, whether full-time or as students working part-time, are more likely than students who are not working and women who are unemployed.

Table 12. Crosstabulation: Occupation & How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype? | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation: | Employed | 0 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 23 |
| | Student | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 7 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 50 |

As per the crosstabulation, employed women and student's working part time are either likely or highly likely to purchase something owing to its hype. Whereas students that are not working appear to be either likely or somewhat likely to do the same. Additionally, unemployed women on an average appear to be

somewhat likely. There does not seem to be a significant observable difference between the occupation categories besides that of unemployed women.

Table 13. Crosstabulation: Occupation & Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others? | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Occupation: | Employed | 0 | 23 | 23 |
| | Student | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 19 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | | 1 | 49 | 50 |

As per Table 13, women of all occupational categories have purchased something because they desired to feel or look better than others. Although 1/3 of the students selected the option no, overall there appears to be no observable significant difference between the occupational categories.

Table 14. Crosstabulation: Occupation & Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it? | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Occupation: | Employed | 1 | 22 | 23 |
| | Student | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 19 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | | 2 | 48 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women of all occupational categories have purchased something they did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it. Although 1/3 of the students selected the option no, overall there appears to be no observable significant difference between the occupational categories.

Table 15. Crosstabulation: Occupation & How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer?

| | | How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer? | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Occupation: | Employed | 0 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 8 | 23 |
| | Student | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 8 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Total | | 1 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 17 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, students working part-time are likely or highly likely to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer whereas, women in other occupational categories are rather scattered over the scale. Although, majority of the employed women are either highly likely or likely, some are unlikely or somewhat likely. Additionally, unemployed women are scattered between highly unlikely, somewhat likely, likely and highly likely. There is no significant observable difference between the unemployed and students.

Table 16. Crosstabulation: Occupation & How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity? | | | | | Total |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupation: | Employed | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 23 |
| | Student | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 0 | 0 | 4 | 11 | 4 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | | 3 | 3 | 13 | 21 | 10 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, students working part-time are likely or highly likely to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because they are a fan of that celebrity whereas, women in other occupational categories are rather scattered over the scale. Although, majority of the employed women are either likely or somewhat likely, some are unlikely or highly likely. Additionally, unemployed women are scattered between highly unlikely and likely. Students on the other hand are divided between unlikely and somewhat likely. There is no significant observable difference between the unemployed and students' categories. Overall, it appears that students working part-time as well as

employed women are more likely than the other two categories to purchase from a celebrity-owned brand due to being a fan.

Table 17. Crosstabulation: Occupation & Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices.

Count

| | | Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices. | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Disagree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Strongly disagree | |
| Occupation: | Employed | 14 | 0 | | 5 | 4 | 0 | 23 |
| | Student | 1 | 0 | | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 13 | 0 | | 0 | 6 | 0 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | | 31 | 1 | | 6 | 11 | 1 | 50 |

According to Table 17, majority of the employed women agree that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices, followed by being neutral and strongly agreeing. The students working part-time agree and strongly agree with the statement. The majority of unemployed women agree, the others either disagree or are neutral. Students are equally distributed between agreeing, strongly agreeing and strongly disagreeing, with one student choosing each. Overall, more employed women and students working part-time have agree to the statement than the other two categories.

Table 18. Crosstabulation: Occupation & I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar. | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | |
| Employed | 10 | | 0 | 13 | 23 |

| Occupatio n: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Student | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 4 | 0 | 15 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Total | | 14 | 2 | 34 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, employed women, student's working part-time and unemployed women either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. Additionally, students seemed be either neutral or strongly agree with the statement. However, no significant difference between the categories is observed.

Table 19. Crosstabulation: Occupation & I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | | I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Total |
| Occupati on: | Employed | 13 | 1 | 9 | 23 |
| | Student | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | Student (Working part-time) | 12 | 0 | 7 | 19 |
| | Unemployed | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Total | | 30 | 1 | 19 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women in all occupational categories either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to them than dissimilar. No significant difference between the categories is observed.

## 6.3  Educational Background

Crosstabulations were developed to determine whether there is any potential relationship between the educational background of the respondents and their responses to the questions asked. Since only one respondent had a doctorate, it will be ruled out for the analysis as it is not sufficient amount to draw any conclusions.

Table 20. Crosstabulation: Education & How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 4 | 9 | 9 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 2 | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| | University student | 1 | 6 | 8 | 15 |
| Total | | 10 | 18 | 22 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women in all educational backgrounds were either somewhat likely, likely ot highly likely to purrchase something just because someone else has it. Majority of the women with a bachelor's Degree are either likely or highly likely. Similarly, the majority of university students are either highly likely or likely.

Table 21. Crosstabulation: Education & How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype?

Count

| | How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 0 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| | University student | 0 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 15 |
| Total | | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 50 |

As per the crosstabulation, women with bachelor's degree are either somewhat likely, likely or highly likely to purchase something simply owing to its hype. Whereas, majority of the women that have completed high school are somewhat likely. Additionally, woman with master's degree is scattered between the scale from unlikely, majority falling under somewhat likely, likely and highly likely. The majority of university students are likely to, followed by highly likely and somewhat likely.

Table 22. Crosstabulation: Education & Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others? | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 1 | 21 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| | University student | 0 | 15 | 15 |
| Total | | 1 | 49 | 50 |

According to Table 22, women with all educational background chose option yes indicating that they have purchased something because they desired to look or

feel better than others. No signifcant difference was observed between the educational backgrounds and responses.

Table 23. Education & have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it? | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 1 | 21 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| | University student | 0 | 15 | 15 |
| Total | | 2 | 48 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, women with all educational background chose option yes indicating that they have purchased something they did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it. No significant difference was observed between the educational backgrounds and responses.

Table 24. Crosstabulation: Education & How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer? | | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 0 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Master's Degree | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| | University student | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 15 |
| Total | | 1 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 17 | 50 |

As per Table 24, university students, women with Bachelor's degree and Master's degree are either likely or highly likely to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer. Additionally, the majority of woman that have completed high school are likely to do the same. Overall, educational background does not appear to be a pivotal factor affecting how likely women are to purchase something because of promotion by a social media influencer.

Table 25. Crosstabulation: Education & How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity? | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 0 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| | University student | 1 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 15 |
| Total | | 3 | 3 | 13 | 21 | 10 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, the majority of university students are likely to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because they are a fan of that celebrity. Additionally, women with bachelor's degree are either likely, somewhat likely or highly likely to do the same. On the other hand, women that have completed high school appear to be either highly unlikely, somewhat likely

or likely to follow the same. Women with master's degree are divided between the scale with either being unlikely, somewhat likely, likely and highly likely.

Table 26. Crosstabulation: Education & Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices.

Count

| | | Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | Disagree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Strongly disagree | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 12 | 0 | | 2 | 7 | 1 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 3 | 1 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 1 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 4 | 0 | | 2 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| | University student | 11 | 0 | | 1 | 3 | 0 | 15 |
| Total | | 31 | 1 | | 6 | 11 | 1 | 50 |

As per the crosstabulation, it appears that women either agree or strongly agree that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices. There seems to be no apparent distinction between the educational background and responses to the statement.

Table 27. Crosstabulation: Education & I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar. | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Total |
| Bachelor's Degree | 7 | | 1 | 14 | 22 |

| Educational background: | Completed High School | 0 | | 1 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Doctorate | 0 | | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 3 | | 0 | 4 | 7 |
| | University student | 4 | | 0 | 11 | 15 |
| Total | | 14 | | 2 | 34 | 50 |

According to Table 27, it appears that women either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. There appears to be no discernible difference between educational background and responses to the statement.

Table 28. Crosstabulation: Education & I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | | I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar. | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Agree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Total |
| Educational background: | Bachelor's Degree | 14 | | 0 | 8 | 22 |
| | Completed High School | 1 | | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| | Doctorate | 1 | | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | Master's Degree | 3 | | 1 | 3 | 7 |
| | University student | 11 | | 0 | 4 | 15 |
| Total | | 30 | | 1 | 19 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, it appears that women either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to them than dissimilar. There appears to be no discernible difference between educational background and responses to the statement.

## 6.4  Average Monthly Income

Crosstabulations were developed to determine whether there is any potential relationship between the average income level of the respondents and their responses to the questions asked. The option "Not applicable" refers to women who are unemployed and thereby do not have an income.

Table 29. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it? | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | | 10 | 18 | 22 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, majority of the women with an income between €1100-€1500 are either likely or strongly likely to purchase something just because someone else has it. The same can be applied to women with an income between €1600-€2000 and €550-€1000. It appears that even respondents who belonged to the category of "not-applicable" were either somewhat likely, highly likely or likely. Overall, all the respondents are either likely, somewhat likely or highly likely. Hence, no significant difference can be observed between the average income levels concerning their responses to the question.

Table 30. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype? | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | | 1 | 1 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, all the respondents are either somewhat likely, likely or highy likely to purchase something simply owing to its hype. No significant difference can be observed between respondents' average monthly income in relation to the responses.

Table 31. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others? | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 0 | 19 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | | 1 | 49 | 50 |

As per the crosstabulation, 49 of the 50 respondents chose the option "Yes" to indicate that they have purchased something because they desired to look or feel better than others. There is no significant difference observed between the different average monthly incomes and the responses to the question. It appears that average monthly income is not a determining factor when it comes to the specific question.

Table 32. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it?

Count

| | | Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it? | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | | 1 | 2 | 48 | 50 |

As per Table 32, 48 of the 50 respondents chose the option "Yes" to indicate that they have purchased something they did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it. Although, a total of 2 respondents from average monthly income over €2500 and under €500 chose the option "No", there is no observable significant difference between the average monthly incomes and responses to the question. It appears that average monthly income is not a determining factor when it comes to the specific question.

Table 33. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & What do you think is the most important factor when making a purchasing decision?

| | | What do you think is the most important factor when making a purchasing decision? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Durability | Hype | Low price | Suitability | Total |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | | 12 | 1 | 10 | 27 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, average monthly income group €1100-€1500 and €550-€1000 consider suitability the most important factor when making a purchasing decision, followed by low price. Respondents belonging to the €1600-€2000 group consider suitability the most important factor followed by durability. Respondents belonging to €2100-€2500 chose durability as the most important factor followed by Hype. Respondents earning Over €2500 and Under €500 chose durability as the most important followed by low price. However, the sample size in these three specific income groups is rather small to make any significant conclusion. The respondents belonging to the category of "Not applicable" chose durability followed by low price and suitability as the most important factors.

Table 34. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices.

Count

| | Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agree | Disagree | | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Strongly disagree | Total |
| €1100-€1500 | 7 | 0 | | 0 | 2 | 0 | 9 |

| What is your average monthly income? | €1600-€2000 | 7 | 0 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | €2100-€2500 | 2 | 0 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 10 | 0 | | 0 | 9 | 0 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 4 | 1 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 0 | 0 | | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 1 | 0 | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | | 31 | 1 | | 6 | 11 | 1 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, majority of the respondents in average monthly income €1100-€1500 and €550-€1000 either agree or strongly agree that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices. The majority of respondents in €1600-€2000 group strongly agree with the statement. Most of the respondents belonging to the income group "not applicable" agree with the statement. Respondents earning €2100-€2500, over €2500 or under €500 have insufficient number of respondents to draw any significant conclusions.

Table 35. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer? | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 9 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | | 1 | 3 | 7 | 22 | 17 | 50 |

Accoring to the crosstabulation, majority of the women belonging to the €1100-€1500, €1600-€2000, €550-€1000 and "Not applicable" either likely or strongly likely to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer. The other income groups do not have a sufficient number of respondents to draw any significant differences.

Table 36. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity?

Count

| | | How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity? | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 10 | 4 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | | 3 | 3 | 13 | 21 | 10 | 50 |

As per the crosstabulation, the majority of respondents in groups €1100-€1500, €1600-€2000 and €550-€1000 are either likely, somewhat likely or highly likely to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because they are a fan of that celebrity. However, respondents in the "non-applicable" group are either highly unlikely, somewhat likely or likely to do the same. Whereas, respondents in the group over €2500, although insufficient to draw any conclusions, are unlikely to follow the same.

Table 37. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | | I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar. | | | |
| | | Agree | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 3 | 0 | 16 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| | Under €500 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | | 14 | 2 | 34 | 50 |

According to Table 37, majority of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to them than dissimilar. No significant difference between the average monthly income levels concerning the responses to the questions can be observed.

Table 38. Crosstabulation: Average monthly income & I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar.

Count

| | | I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar. | | | |
| | | Agree | Neutral | Strongly Agree | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What is your average monthly income? | €1100-€1500 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 9 |
| | €1600-€2000 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| | €2100-€2500 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| | €550-€1000 | 11 | 0 | 8 | 19 |
| | Not applicable | 4 | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| | Over €2500 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under €500 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 30 | 1 | 19 | 50 |

According to the crosstabulation, majority of the respondents either agree or strongly agree that they are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone that is more similar to them than dissimilar. No significant difference between the average monthly income levels concerning the responses to the questions can be observed.

# 7  Discussion

This thesis aimed to investigate the role of envy in women's consumption choices. To achieve that, previous literature and numerous concepts were addressed. The research's primary findings are compatible with previous literature, as will be discussed further in this section. In addition, the survey responses were analysed, which revealed additional possible relationships and study areas. Firstly, a general discussion will be provided to examine the overall findings, followed by discussing the four core hypotheses and answering the primary research question that this thesis aimed to investigate.

Majority of the respondents actively follow and watch social media influencers. As previously discussed, it is only recently that social media influencers have become such a crucial part of digital marketing. Hence, it is unsurprising that most follow and watch these influencers. The responses indicated that women would likely purchase something just because someone else had it. The majority also agreed to have purchased something because they desired to feel or look better than the others.

Additionally, the majority agreed to have purchased something they did not necessarily need but wanted to have because someone else had it. These responses bring attention to the role of envy. As was mentioned earlier in Arnocky et al.,'s (2007) research, envy is the negative feeling of inferiority against others

who have something desirable (Arnocky et al., 2015). Halén's 2019 argument can explain why women are likely to purchase something just because someone else has it- it may be benign envy which is the motivator of consumption (Halén, 2019). The reason for this is that when an individual experiences benign envy, they essentially attempt to emulate the person being envied in a way that motivates behaviour to acquire the desired item, as previously suggested in Yang and Tang's (2021) research.

Moreover, this highlights the problem previously mentioned regarding unmindful consumption – envy causes women to purchase products they do not necessarily need. Recognizing this could be a first step to mindful consumption. This idea is supported by Oflazoğlu and Aydın (2016) who suggested that envy in purchasing decision process leads to impulsive buying and conspicuous consumption. (Oflazoğlu & Aydın, 2016).

Contrary to what Chen, 2019 proposed regarding the scarcity principle driving up demand, it appears that most women were unlikely to purchase something advertised as a limited edition (Chen, 2019). This is rather interesting and can spark further interesting studies focusing primarily on the scarcity principle's effect on consumption choices of women. Most women were likely to purchase something promoted by a social media influencer. It is supported by Yang and Tang's (2021) research which emphasizes the role of benign envy. It could be used to explain how social media influencers become a source of benign envy, where the envious individual would want to essentially be like the person, they are envious of. This would result in increased personal effort and motivating behaviour to acquire the desired item and shift attention to the methods for acquiring it. (Yang & Tang 2021.) This could be a simple "Buy now" button especially in online sales, which means that the effort is minimal as opposed to physically going into a shop and purchasing the item.

Similarly, most women were likely to purchase something from a celebrity owned brand simply because they were fans of that celebrity. The bandwagon effect may be used to explain the same. For example, people may purchase something

because it is popular or trendy irrespective of whether they genuinely need it, can afford it or even want it. The consumers who hop on the bandwagon may not necessarily understand it but need to feel a sense of belonging for example of the celebrities' fan group. (Adock Solutions, 2021.)

According to the survey, the most important factor when purchasing was suitability followed by durability, low price and hype. The responses were cross tabulated with age. They were consistent with the findings of the study conducted by Hervé and Mullet (2009) to a large extent. The results suggested that younger respondents considered suitability and low price the most important factors. Whereas, for the older participants, durability was more important. Most women reported being somewhat likely to have a compulsive buying tendency when they feel envious. These aspects are critical in understanding the consumption choices of women. This can be supported by Oflazoğlu and Aydın's (2016) argument that envy in customers' purchasing decisions results in price premiums, compulsive buying tendencies and even conspicuous consumption. (Oflazoğlu & Aydın, 2016). Envy seems to play a crucial role in all the aspects mentioned.

Furthermore, most women reported being highly likely to have a social comparison tendency when seeing a social media influencer. Pila et al., (2014) argued that to engage in intense social comparisons, individuals must see the superior one's advantage as unjust (Pila et al., 2014). This could imply that social media influencers are seen as superior with an unfair advantage, which develops envy in women. The same idea is supported by Furtado, Medeiros and Diniz (2020), who established that posts from fashion accounts provoke envy, which motivates consumption (Furtado, Medeiros & Diniz, 2020). Most women agreed that envy is an important factor affecting their consumption choices, and that their desire to have a higher social status plays a role in their consumption choices.

Interestingly, most women are aware of these trends in their consumption choices. The idea of social comparison can explain this and benign envy previously discussed. Additionally, most women agreed that reflecting on their

consumption choices may make them more mindful as consumers, which is a great first-step to a more conscious consumerism.

Most women reported that they are more likely to feel envious of someone they deemed similar to themselves and are more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar than dissimilar. This is quite logical when understood in light of Schneider's (2014) argument, that a social comparison may be irrelevant if there are no similarities. Most often, these similarities could be gender, age or status. Hence, when women engage in social comparison, they are more likely to feel envious of those that share similarities which could be as general as their gender. (Schneider 2014.) Most respondents agreed they engage in conspicuous consumption. As mentioned earlier, according to Lee and Eastin (2020), the feeling of envy may be so strong that it leads to conspicuous consumption hence the role of envy becomes quite prominent in this aspect as well (Lee & Eastin, 2020). The same idea is also supported by Oflazoğlu and Aydın (2016).

For the last question, it was framed in a way to make women feel more envious of the social media influencer and her cinched waist and curves. This was done by using words like "beautiful" and "famous" in addition to a picture of happy women. Framing can affect women's consumption choices as discussed in the literature review. The responses were indicative of the idea that social media influencers evoking a sense of envy can have a strong influence on the consumption choices of women, as majority of the women chose to purchase the dress than not. Social-comparison may also have played a strong role here in eliciting benign envy, as there were similarities between the social media influencer and women – the gender, and the assumption that most women prefer to have a cinched in waist and curves.

H1: Women's consumption choices vary according to age.

According to the data analysis, younger women, mainly those aged 15-25 and 26-35, are more inclined to purchase something because someone else has it.

Women of all ages agreed that envy significantly influences their purchasing decisions. However, younger women reported a more substantial agreement than older women. Women of all ages reported purchasing something because they wanted to feel or look better than others and purchasing something they did not need but wanted because someone else had it. Although it appears that age younger women may be more likely to experience envy affecting their consumption choices, since there was a larger representation in the sample of younger women, it is difficult to deduce the extent to which age may be a crucial factor affecting women's consumption choices on a larger scale. However, it is important to note that most of the previous studies discussed in the literature review seem to support the idea that people's consumption choices vary depending on age.

H2: Social comparison is a motivator of envy in women.

As was mentioned earlier, envy is the negative feeling of inferiority against others who have something desirable (Smith & Kim, 2007, as cited in Arnocky et al., 2015). To feel inferior, there needs to be a comparison made and envy stems from social comparison. The survey findings suggest that social comparison is a motivator of envy, especially when there are similarities between the parties. For example, Arnocky et al.,'s (2015) findings supported the role of envy in encouraging compensatory competitive improvement activities when triggered by unfavourable social comparisons. (Arnocky et al., 2015.) As Coricelli & Rustichini (2010) stated, envy analyses actions that people may have done but chose not to, and they learn about the favourable outcome received by the others (Coricelli & Rustichini, 2010). As previously mentioned by Pila et al., (204), to engage in intense social comparisons, people must view the envied one's advantage as unfair (Pila et al., 2014). Since majority of the respondents reported that they are likely to have a social comparison tendency when seeing a social media influencer, it can be suggested that it may be because they consider the social media influencer's advantage unfair. Therefore, they feel envious, which supports the hypothesis that social comparison is a motivator of envy in women.

H3: Social media influencers are likely to affect consumption choices of women.

Women aged 15 to 25 and 26 to 35 were more likely to purchase something after seeing it endorsed by a social media influencer. Although women aged 26-55 and over 55 appeared to be less likely overall, they were still somewhat likely to purchase for the same reason. Social media influencers seem likely to affect consumption choices of women, than not. For example, the responses of the final question highlighted the same. Firstly, most women chose to purchase the item promoted by the social media influencer because they wish to have the benefits of the product that the social media influencer seems to be having. This emphasizes how social media influencers become a source of benign envy. In benign envy, the envious individual may attempt to be more like the person being envied; hence envy can boost personal effort, motivate behaviour to acquire the desired item and shift attention to the methods for obtaining it (Yang & Tang 2021). The women wanted to have what the social media influencers had as they felt envious of the same. The other popular answer was that they would purchase the dress to eliminate the feeling of envy they were experiencing. This supports Furtado, Medeiros & Diniz, 2020's argument that posts from fashion accounts elicit envy, and that this emotion motivates consumption (Furtado, Medeiros & Diniz, 2020). Overall, social media influencers appear to influence the consumption choices of women.

H4: Women are likelier to feel envious of those they deem similar to themselves.

The results of the survey indicate that women reported to feel more envious of those that are similar to themselves. This is consistent with the idea proposed by Bandura (1969), that envy is how much one identifies with or thinks of themselves as similar to the one they are feeling envious of. (Bandura 1969, as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020). As Perry (2015) suggested, persons of a similar age within around five years and gender are more likely to envy or report being envied, in this case the social media influencer that the participants were made to envy was a woman as well (Perry, 2015). Additionally, the reason women are more likely to feel envious of someone similar can be explained by Bandura's Social Learning

Theory (1969). It suggests that the more someone identifies with and considers themselves similar to a model, the more likely they will be to adapt and emulate behaviours learned from that model. (Bandura 1969 as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020.) As discussed, envy is affected by identification as social comparison and envy are intensified when the one feeling envious and the one being envied are psychologically near (Heider 1958, as cited in Lee & Eastin, 2020). Ramachandran and Jalal's (2017) evolutionary explanation of why women have responded this way can also lend valuable substance to the same.   The hypotheses can be supported by previous literature in addition to the responses of the survey.

The primary research question is "What is the role of envy in the consumption choices of women?".

Envy plays a significant role in the consumption choices of women. It motivates consumption in women hence it's role may be deemed a motivator. Social media influencers can instigate the development of envy by social-comparisons especially with similarities between the one feeling envious and the other being envied. Once a woman purchases something to eliminate the feeling of envy and has a favourable response, she will be more likely to repeat the same, which could lead to excessive consumption. The Behavioural Perspective Model by Foxal (1993) supports that as it suggests if someone has a rewarding purchase outcome, they are likelier to have an approach response resulting in repetitive purchases.

## 7.1  Critical Evaluation of Research

The research was rather fruitful as it allowed us to investigate several factors under one umbrella that are often discussed separately but are interconnected to a large extent. For example, social comparison, conspicuous consumption, the bandwagon effect, and the scarcity principle are all related to one another in that they can affect consumption. As previously mentioned, there is not as much literature on the role of social media influencers on consumption yet, as it is quite

recently that this topic has garnered attention. This thesis may be an exciting starting point for anyone willing to investigate the same. Additionally, as most of the research on the topics discussed deals with both genders, my research can create a spark of interest to focus on women as they can be a rather interesting segment to explore.

However, it is also essential to recognize and address flaws in my research. The sample size was a significant flaw. A sample size of only 50 women may not be sufficient to establish generalizability on a larger scale. Ideally, the same would need to be repeated with a much larger sample size representative of different ages and backgrounds to obtain more meaningful data representing the women population. The survey failed to reach women of elderly ages precisely above the age groups 26-35. It may be because of the lack of time and resources that the survey did not successfully reach a more significant number of women. Another reason for the lack of respondents may be that the survey was extensively long, which may have negatively affected the response rate. The sample was primarily representative of ages 15-25 and 26-35 due to the apparent lack of responses from the other age groups. Furthermore, due to the lack of replies from different continents, the sample was only representative of European and Asian women.

Due to time constraints and the Covid-19 situation, I could not conduct one-on-one interviews in addition to the survey, as was initially planned. Having done this may have broadened the scope of this research. However, envy concerning consumption choices may be a topic many women may not wish to openly admit or discuss, which could have led to low-quality and unreliable data. Perhaps a survey that could keep the responses confidential and anonymous allowed the respondents to answer truthfully.

# 8 Scope for Improvement & Further Research

At this stage, it is essential to emphasise that it merely a preliminary survey whose goal is to prompt further inquiry using the rigorous methodology to collect formal data with a much higher number of respondents to establish generalizability.

Narrowing down the specifications of the target audience may provide a grounding from which to derive new predictions about the features of envy and its role in motivating various behavioural outputs of that specific population. For example, choosing only a particular age group and continent may help keep the research more focused and narrower. The quality of this research can be improved drastically with additional respondents, and hence is strongly recommended to anyone wishing to replicate the same study. Furthermore, a more detailed survey dealing with one specific topic at a time would be recommended for more in-depth analysis and understanding of the role of envy in women's consumption choices.

For example, a survey solely focuses on the effect of social comparisons in developing envy with imagination-based scenarios to evoke a sense of social comparison with object x in the respondents. This could then be followed up with consumption-based questions asking respondents to choose whether they would purchase x (that had been a part of the social comparison question) or y. This could allow us to see whether the envy evoked by social comparison would result in the respondent choosing to purchase that object or not. Similar questionnaires could be turned into real-life experiments where subjects could be divided into two groups. One group could be exposed to a situation employing the Bandwagon Effect featuring their close peers or social media influencers, and a control group that is not exposed to the bandwagon effect featuring those people. The groups can then be asked to answer consumption-based questions to investigate whether there is any significant difference between the two. Dedicating more time and resources to conducting the suggested research could be rather rewarding as this topic is fascinating, not merely for companies but people as consumers too.

# 9  Conclusion

Consistent with prior research, this thesis confirms that social comparison is a motivator of envy in women, especially those deemed more similar than dissimilar. Additionally, envy can be considered an essential factor affecting women's consumption choices. However, this is primarily prominent in women aged 15-25 and 26-35, as the sample size represented the same. No significant difference was observed between the education or income levels and consumption choices. Additionally, social media influencers seem to affect the consumption choices of women – in that they are likely to lead to more consumption. However, as proposed by the scarcity principle, the limited edition does not seem to be a motivator of envy or more consumption in women. Based on these findings, it is possible that although envy plays a prominent role in women's consumption choices, it is limited to a particular segment of the women population. Hence, it must be tested further on other age groups with larger sample sizes to establish generalizability. This thesis would ideally assist women in understanding and relying on mindfulness to remedy the disruptive aspects of their consumerism and make intelligent selections about what to purchase.

To conclude, envy plays a significant role in the consumption choices of women. It can be further expressed through social comparisons, especially concerning social media celebrities and those considered more similar than not.

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## Appendices

**Survey: The Consumption Choices of Women**

# The Consumption Choices of Women

Hello!
This survey aims to get insight into the role of envy in the consumption choices made by women. The data will be kept anonymous and confidential and used merely for my thesis. Participating in this survey is voluntary and will take approximately 15 minutes. If you choose to participate, please answer truthfully.

**\*Please note: This survey is targeted towards women.\***

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me:
shahreen.hussain@metropolia.fi

Thank you for your time :)



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Do you identify as a female? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

How old are you? *

◯ Under 15

◯ 15-25

◯ 26-35

◯ 36-45

◯ 46-55

◯ Above 55

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Where do you live? *

○ Europe

○ Asia

○ North America

○ South America

○ Africa

Marital status *

○ Single

○ In a relationship

○ Married

○ Divorced

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Occupation: *

◯ Student

◯ Student (Working part-time)

◯ Unemployed

◯ Employed

What is your average monthly income? *

◯ Under €500

◯ €550-€1000

◯ €1100-€1500

◯ €1600-€2000

◯ €2100-€2500

◯ Over €2500

◯ Not applicable

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Educational background:

◯  Completed High School

◯  University student

◯  Bachelor's Degree

◯  Master's Degree

◯  Doctorate

Do you actively follow and watch social media influencers?

◯  Yes

◯  No

Please note the scale:
**1 (Highly unlikely) 2 (Unlikely) 3 (Somewhat likely) 4 (Likely) 5 (Highly likely)**

How likely are you to purchase something just because someone else has it?

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly unlikely | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | Highly likely |

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How likely are you to purchase something simply owing to its hype? *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly unlikely | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | Highly likely |

Have you ever purchased something because you desire to look/feel better than others? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

How likely are you to purchase something because it was advertised as a "limited edition"? *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly unlikely | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | Highly likely |

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Have you ever purchased something you did not necessarily need but had a desire to have because someone else had it? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

How likely are you to purchase something because it was promoted by a social media influencer? *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly unlikely | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | Highly likely |

How likely are you to purchase something from a celebrity-owned brand simply because you are a fan of that celebrity? *

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Highly unlikely | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | Highly likely |

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**How much do you agree with the following statements?**
Please pay attention to the scale.

Envy is an important factor affecting my consumption choices. *

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

The desire to have a higher social status plays a role in my consumption choices. *

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Strongly agree

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Reflecting on my consumption choices could lead me to become a more mindful *
consumer.

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly agree

I am more likely to feel envious of someone that is similar to me than dissimilar. *

- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Agree
- ○ Strongly Agree

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I am more likely to purchase something advertised by someone more similar to me than dissimilar. *

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

I engage in conspicuous consumption (**the purchase of goods or services for the specific purpose of displaying one's wealth).** *

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Neutral

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

**Please imagine the following situation:**
Please read the scenario carefully and choose the option that fits you best.



You are browsing on your favourite social media platform when you come across  *
a beautiful shapewear dress worn by a famous social media influencer. The
shapewear makes her waist look narrow while also making her look curvy. You
click on her post to find out more. She has tagged the company and shared an
online link for the dress.

You start reading the comments, where everyone else compliments her on how
beautiful she looks with that dress. You start feeling envious of how she
looks, and how everyone else loves it.

You click the link and find out that the dress costs €34.99 and is available in your size. The dress claims to cinch in your waist and give you curves, just what the influencer seemed to have.

Now, you are in a dilemma.
Which option fits your ultimate decision the most?

○ I will purchase the dress after assessing whether I really need it.

○ I will purchase the dress after assessing whether I currently have extra money for it.

○ I will purchase the dress because I want to fulfill my desire to have a cinched waist and curves.

○ I will purchase the dress just-in-case I need it.

○ I will purchase the dress because I want to eliminate my feeling of envy by having the same dress.

○ I will purchase it because I really like the social media influencer who is promoting the dress.

○ I will ask someone else to buy me that dress because I really want it.

○ I will purchase the dress through the "Buy now, Pay later" option because I do not have the money but really want the dress.

○ I will not purchase the dress because I do not care about having a cinched waist and curves.

○ I will not purchase the dress because I do not follow social media influencers.

○ I will not purchase the dress because I cannot afford it.

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○ I will not purchase the dress because I do not think I need it.

○ I will not purchase the dress because I am making a conscious effort to be a responsible consumer.
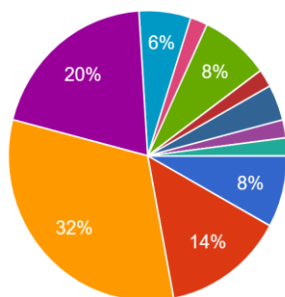
**Thank you for your time and truthful responses** ♡

Submit                                                                    Clear form

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**Final Question's Responses**

You are browsing on your favourite social media platform when you come across a beautiful shapewear dress worn by a famous social media infl...h option fits your ultimate decision the most?
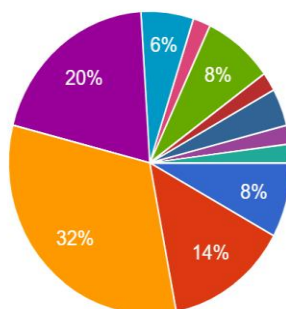50 responses



- I will purchase the dress after assessi...
- I will purchase the dress after assessi...
- I will purchase the dress because I wa...
- I will purchase the dress just-in-case I...
- I will purchase the dress because I wa...
- I will purchase it because I really like t...
- I will ask someone else to buy me that...
- I will purchase the dress through the "...

▲ 1/2 ▼

50 responses



- I will not purchase the dress because I do not care about having a cinched w...
- I will not purchase the dress because I do not follow social media influencers.
- I will not purchase the dress because I cannot afford it.
- I will not purchase the dress because I do not think I need it.
- I will not purchase the dress because I...

▲ 2/2 ▼