Influencers impact on decision-making among generation Y and Z Swedish females when purchasing fast fashion.
Abstract

**Background:** The twenty first century is synonym of the new era with the implementation of different technologies. Social media is growing in a fast pace and is impacting our generations daily lives. Companies and consumers spend a large amount of time on social media platforms, which in turn, is shaping the consumer behaviour worldwide. Generation Y and Z are two generations that are highly exposed to this new phenomenon. The fast fashion industry is booming and due to the rise of social media and the recently new phenomenon called “social media influencers”, consumer behaviour is altered towards a faster decision-making process. Previous research has investigated and explained issues that have occurred due to the implementation of social media platforms. However, due to the rapid growth of these platforms, current literature is lacking information on what potential impacts social media influencers could have on consumer behaviour and the decision-making process when purchasing fast fashion.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this thesis is to understand and explore the ways in which social media influencers, may or may not, impact the decision-making process of Swedish females of generation Y and Z, when purchasing fast fashion. Due to the fact that many Swedish fast fashion companies are using social media influencers as a marketing tool, this research will be carried out focusing on the Swedish fast fashion industry.

**Method:** The authors of this paper have conducted a qualitative research in order to answer the stated research questions, investigating the potential impacts of social media influencers on
female consumers in Sweden, in relation to the decision-making process. The empirical data have been collected through different focus groups. The use of triangulation has been applied throughout the whole paper in order to bring accuracy to the data presented in the analysis section.

**Conclusion:** According to primary data, collected by the authors, and the use of previous literature, it has been shown that Swedish females of generation Z is highly exposed to influencers on social media. Moreover, it appeared that the purchasing behaviour of this generation have shifted. Two revised models of the decision-making model (EKB) are presented, according to the different generations presented in the purpose, demonstrating the impact of social media influencers on their decision-making process when purchasing fast fashion.
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1. Introduction

This section presents the background to this thesis, social media, social media influencers, generation Y and Z, consumer behaviour and purchasing decision-making. Further, this is followed by the purpose together with the research questions.

1.1 Background

Today a great number of people spends an excessive amount of their time online, on different social media platforms and the time spent online is increasing every day. In 2017, it was found that teenagers spent on an average nine hours a day being online (Asano, 2018). It is also mentioned that, out of the total time spent online, 30% is allocated to social media, which means 2,7 hours a day scrolling through social media platforms (ibid). This significant amount of time spent by consumers is providing companies with the opportunity to integrate social media within their marketing strategies. By doing so, companies manage to stay present where their customers spend most of their leisure time.

The fast fashion industry, is one of those sectors which is embracing the rise and the use of new technologies. Brands are booming every day and stronger awareness among consumers and brands are being developed, which is giving the fast fashion industry a lot of growth potential and new opportunities (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010). The implementation of social media is known as social media marketing and represents the choice of digitalization for companies in terms of marketing communication (Budden et al., 2011). Social media has created a certain proximity with celebrities and regions of the world, without the need of being physically present. With the rise of this new trend, marketers have implemented what is called influencer marketing, in order to engage with virtual communities in a global context. The influencer marketing trend, seem to be taking place in a lot of different industries but the most significant remains in the fast fashion sector. One of the reason why the fast fashion industry is using influencers, partly stems from the fact, that both (fast fashion and influencers) are based on short lead time hence, life cycles are reduced compared to other businesses (Cachon & Swinney, 2011).

When discussing influencer marketing, influencers appear to be divided in two main categories: celebrity endorsement and social media influencers. Companies seem to be shifting from a
strong belief in the use of celebrity, to another approach for their brand, by using multiple social media influencers to impact the decision-making of their customers (Dizon, 2015). This point of view is also shared by individuals who tend to follow more lifestyle/fashion influencers rather than celebrities.

Companies have a large panel of different social media platforms which they can choose from, but Instagram is succeeding in the field. In 2017, Instagram witnessed around 800 million monthly active users, which is 10.5% of the total world population. This result is placing Instagram third on the social network ranking (Millions, 2018; Dreamgrow.com, 2018). New ways of communication are emerging, and interaction is changing with, for example the use of eWoM (Online Word of Mouth which stands for the 2.0 version of WoM (Word of Mouth)), but it is necessary to understand how different generations are apprehending this change in society.

1.2 Problem Discussion

After a review of published research within the field of influencer marketing, one may conclude that the field is yet unexplored due to the subject being a relatively new phenomenon. The majority of research within influencer marketing have been conducted abroad, outside the borders of Sweden. The authors found that the research published within this field, mainly shed light on possibilities and risks but also the relationship between influencers and their individual networks of followers. However, the influence and impact of social media influencers in relation to consumer behaviour is yet a less discussed topic.

As internet and social media platforms are growing bigger, the way in which people and companies socialize and interact with each other, is changing. Virtual relationships are normalized and the behaviour of both companies and individuals are changing. The phenomenon of social media influencers has, over the recent years, become a very attractive occupation for many social media enthusiasts (Biligihan, 2016). Thus, many companies, especially within the fast fashion industry, have embraced the influencer-phenomenon and are now using influencers as a way to promote their products. Having this in mind, the authors found research about the relationship between social media influencers and consumer behaviour to be lacking. Furthermore, this relationship in regard to different generations are not yet sufficiently explored, thus an increased interest within this area was observed.
With the above findings, a lack of literature concerning the impact of social media influencers in relation to generation Y and Z and the decision-making process has been discovered. Thus, the authors argue that in order for companies to understand how to incorporate influencers in their marketing strategies, there is a need to understand the relationship between these components.

Due to the absence of research within the field of social media influencers and consumer behaviour, the authors found an interest to further investigate and explore the possible impact social media influencers have on consumers’ decision-making process.

1.3 Purpose
The purpose of this thesis is to understand and explore the ways in which social media influencers, may or may not, impact the decision-making process of generation Y and Z female consumers. Finally, due to the fact that many fast fashion companies use social media influencer as a marketing tool, this research will be carried out in relation the Swedish fast fashion industry.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ (1)
In what ways do social media influencers play a role in the decision-making process for generation Y and Z female consumers, while purchasing fast fashion in Sweden?

RQ (2)
How do influencers impact the different outcomes that stem from the purchasing step within the decision-making model, for consumers in the fast fashion industry?

1.5 Definitions

*Brand* = is defined as a name, symbol or combination that identifies a seller’s product and differentiates them from competitors’ product. Individuals experience, evaluate and develop feelings towards a brand to perceive value (Rosenbaum-Elliot, Percy & Pervan, 2015).
Brand image = is defined as the association of the perceived brand to the memory of the customer. Brand image is what will stay in the consumer’s mind, and what plays a very important role in the decision-making process (Aaker, 1991).

Digital Marketing = refers to the action of promoting products and brands to consumers through the large use of all digital medias and contact points. It tends to develop more direct and personalised relationship between companies and consumers (Florès, 2014).

Social Media = a communication tool, used by many individuals and companies to share, communicate and interact with others on an online basis (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012; Drury, 2008; Ince, 2013 & Yates & Paquette, 2011).

Social Media Marketing (SMM) = the digitalization of companies has, in the recent years, skyrocketed and a massive number of firms, including several fast fashion companies, are now choosing the digital world as their main platform to market their brand and products, hence engaging in, what is called, social media marketing (SMM) (Budden et al., 2011; Ouirdi et al., 2014)

Influencer Marketing = the phenomenon of using influential people, who are active online and are willing to share brand messages with their virtual communities (Sammis et al., 2015)
2. Frame of Reference

*In the following section, the authors are presenting the frame of reference. Academic articles and research related to the EKB purchasing decision-making model are presented. Furthermore, the topics of social media influencers and generation Y and Z consumer behaviour are discussed.*

2.1 Fast Fashion and Social Media

Companies in the fast fashion industry aim to always be in the forefront of offering their customers the latest trends within clothing and accessories, to the most affordable prices. To make this possible, these companies put much emphasize in decreasing production time in order to shorten the production cycle and thus, moving from an idea or concept to the hands of the customers, in almost no time (Cachon & Swinney, 2011; Kim, Jung Choo & Yoon, 2013). Most commonly, fashion companies tend to release several new collections every season. Within the fast fashion industry, the seasons are overlooked, and new collections are, not rarely, carried out every month or even every week, which contributes to a short life cycle of fast fashion clothing. With a short life cycle and weekly news, the fast fashion companies stimulate the consumers to engage in more frequent purchasing, which in turn contributes to more impulsive buying (Cachon & Swinney, 2011; Joung, 2014; Kim et al., 2013). Short product life cycle and frequent and impulsive purchases in combination with low prices, contributes to lower quality, and thus, creates a wear-and-tear culture within this industry. This has, by many authors, been named as disposable fashion (ibid). In order for a fast fashion company to keep up with the pace, high pressure is put on suppliers and producers to shorten the production cycle (Kim et al., 2013; Joung, 2014).

The trends within fast fashion is highly influenced by media and celebrities. The rapid growth of technology and today’s easy access of internet and social media, contributes to a higher “trend” awareness among consumers (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood, 2010). Thus, by improving supply chain management and shortening the production lead cycle, fast fashion companies can be more responsive to consumer demands and changes within the fashion trends (ibid). Further, due to the availability and easy access of internet and social media, there is a growing need for companies to be visible online (ibid). This has contributed to a creation of online stores, which is a concept that many of today’s fast fashion companies have adopted. Hence, consumers are able to purchase fast fashion either online or in physical stores.
2.2 Influencers

2.2.1 Celebrity Endorsement
Within the marketing field, it is very common to use celebrities to promote products and services because of their wide networks but also because, the impact on generations can be very significant for a brand. A business can use a celebrity in four different ways to promote a product or service. The first way of using a celebrity is as a recommender; if they have used the product they will share their experience and feedback with their networks (Solomon, 2009). The second type is called endorser. An endorser will lend his/her name to the firm and hence, accept to become associated with the brand. The third type is as an actor. The celebrity will be asked to play a certain role towards the brand advertising campaign. Finally, the fourth way is through being a spokesperson. It is crucial for the company, if choosing a spokesperson, to find a celebrity that goes hand in hand with the values and beliefs of the company (ibid). This is what is known as celebrity endorsement, which has been implemented in societies for a long time. However, nowadays it has shifted to something called influencer, mostly due to the rise and the use of technologies and social media platforms.

2.2.2 Social Media Influencers
An influencer is defined as an individual who has the power over the purchasing decision-making process of his/her audience (followers). Influencers are not only marketing tools, they are very important for brands to reach their marketing goals (Dizon, 2015).

Four categories have been defined to understand the different types of influencers that people are dealing with today. The first one directly relates to what was previously mentioned: celebrity, with the same function, they remain very efficient in terms of affecting consumer decisions for a certain brand. The new aspect of it, is to be present on social media rather than just being the image of a brand. However, with the high use of social media, celebrity influencers have set up their influence at a very high price and companies are rethinking using them for marketing campaigns.

The second category which has been identified is industry experts and thought leaders. The influence they have on their network, comes from the position (job) and qualifications they have from or within work; these experts can be journalists, academics, industry experts or
professional advisors. The positive aspect is that they are usually free of charge because they have a real interest in the product/service they will write about (ibid).

The third category is known as bloggers and content creators. Bloggers know how to create proximity and trust between themselves and their readers and therefore become very influential. The internet is cluttered with different blog, covering a lot of different topics and containing interesting and genuine content whom many readers are relying on. Blogs were initially personal web logs, which was about creating a personal journal on a daily basis and share it with readers. It has to be updated frequently in order to maintain readers’ engagement. It is meant to keep people in the loop of new trends. It can be seen as a marketing tool but also as a business itself (The Balance, 2018).

Finally, the last category is called micro influencers, they are the new generation of influencers. These micro influencers are everyday people who share their knowledge about products and services, online, on a daily basis. They are described as taste-makers, opinions shapers and trend forecasters (Moss, 2018). It seems that micro-influencers are getting more and more attention from companies as on a basis of 1 000 followers the like rate will be at around 8% whereas between 1 000 and 10 000 followers it will decrease to 4%. Micro-influencers are over shining celebrities in a certain way as the use of 30 to 40 micro influencers will have more impact on the brand than a million Instagram celebrities (Digiday, 2018).

Influencers have therefore shifted from a celebrity endorsement perspective to a social media influencer, interacting with their followers.

2.2.3 Authenticity & Intimacy

Authenticity is an important aspect to consider when working with third party endorsers, while promoting products and/or brands. Marwick (2013) state that influencers, compared to celebrities, are perceived to be more authentic since they manage to niche themselves towards a group of people more successfully. According to Marlow (2006) influencers focus more on creating consciousness and increase the audience growth, whereas Abidin and Thompson (2012) state that influencers also focus more on creating an intimate relationship between the brand and their followers on social media.
According to Abidin and Ots (2016) it is vital that the influencers are perceived with authenticity and intimacy, both due to the success of the product that is being endorsed, but also for the media brands. If this is not done correctly, it could be both harmful for the influencers personal brand as well as for the brand itself.

Collaborations, which has proven to be the most credible and effective, are the ones that sync the most with the influencers social media page. However, many collaborations with influencers have also failed remarkably due to a lack of credibility. Influencers who endorse products without emphasizing the personal values of the influencer, will reduce the trustworthiness among the targeted audience. Therefore, it is of great importance that the organization find an influencer that matches the values of the organization, yet, allow the influencer to recommend the product in a personalized and genuine way (Abidin & Ots, 2016).

Furthermore, according to Abidin and Thompson (2012) applying persona intimacy as a marketing strategy tool, is highly effective and allows influencers to stay available to their followers. Persona intimacy can be executed in different ways. According to the authors, there are several different strategies that an influencer can implement to create intimacy among its social networks. This could be done by; allowing the influencer to create and use a personalized content and language, display and share a mutual picture of an ordinary matter, engage the followers online as well as set up face to face meetings with the followers (Abidin & Thompson, 2012).

Communication has shifted from physical to virtual communication, in which thoughts, ideas and other information are exchanged through eWoM and social media platforms such as Instagram.

2.2.4 Instagram

According to Sheldon and Bryant (2016) and Recode (2018) Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform in modern time. Instagram was launched in October 2010, and acquired by Facebook in April, 2012 (Instagram, 2018). In 2017 this social media platform reached around 800 million monthly active users, making it the third popular social network used (Millions, 2018; Dreamgrow.com, 2018). In the same year, the company was expected to reach a revenue of 2.8 billion dollars, only generated from advertisements.
When signing into Instagram, a user can upload and share pictures, write comments, like pictures uploaded by other users and also browse the “open” flow of profiles to find inspiration. Members of Instagram can choose to have a private profile or keep it open for other users to visit. According to Instagram.com (2018), there are approximately 500 million daily active users. Further, global statistics shows that half of the members on Instagram are females within the age group 18-30 years old (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Statista, 2018). According to the survey “Svenskarna och Internet, 2017”, 78% of Instagram users in Sweden are between the ages of 12 and 35, whereas 62% of these are women (iis.se, 2018).

According to studies made, individuals that have a larger network of followers on Instagram are perceived to be more credible and popular (Jin & Phua, 2014). This statement is reinforced by Spry, Pappu, and Cornwell (2011), where the authors also state that the use of celebrities and influencers can create a positive eWoM online.

2.2.5 eWoM
WoM is an abbreviation of Word of Mouth and is a type of oral interaction between individuals, a receiver and a communicator, about a commercial matter, such as a brand, service or product (Ismagilova, Dwivedi, Slade & Williams, 2017). The impact of WoM and the way it has managed to influence consumers’ decision-making process, has long been acknowledged by researchers and advertisers. However, as the use of internet has increased substantially and with interactions shifting towards virtual platforms, an online version of WoM has evolved, called eWoM (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler 2004).

eWoM is the electronic version of Word of Mouth and is explained by Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008) as “all informal communication directed at consumers through Internet-based technology that are related to the usage or characteristics of a particular good and service, or their sellers.” Personal blogs, companies’ web sites and social platforms (Instagram and Facebook) are examples of different places where eWoM exists and can be shared by members (Bickart & Schindler 2001). Compared to the traditional WoM, eWoM offer various unique attributes. eWoM opens up for discussion and interaction between individuals (strangers, consumers, friend or family), allowing these parties to publish and share information with one another and with the ability to remain anonymous (Sen & Lerman 2007). Since eWoM occurs over the internet and allows the interactive parties to stay anonymous, members tend to engage
in more honest conversations where they can share their opinions more freely (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). eWoM is said to be the most crucial tool for companies, in terms of online information sources, in order to persuade consumers during their purchasing process (Ismagilova et. al., 2017; Thoumrungroje, 2014).

2.3 Generations

A generation is defined as a group of individuals which are born during the same time period in life, and thus, are shaped by the same societal norms and values (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010). It is said that individuals within the same generation are developing and shaping similar traits and behavioural beliefs, values and characteristics (Bilgihan, 2016; Strauss & Howe, 1997). There is no exact time frame for when the different generational groups are born, neither are there one preferred labelling of each group. Depending on authors, the time frame and labels vary, but generalizing the results from many authors the generations are presented as the following: The “Silent Generation” are individuals born between 1925 and - 45, “Baby Boomers” -46 and -64, “Generation X” -65 and-80, “Generation Y” or “Millennials” between -81 and approximately -95, and finally “Generation Z” born around -96 and onwards (Lancaster & Stillman, 2018; Spector, Merrill, Van Merriënboer & Drisdoll, 2008).

As stated earlier in the thesis, the majority of individuals using Instagram are females aged between 18 and 30 (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Statista, 2016). Given this information, the empirical research within this paper will therefore be based upon this age group. With this in mind, the two following sections will discuss generation Y and Z more in depth.

2.3.1 Generation Y

Generation Y, also called the millennials, are born approximately between 1981 and 1995 and currently the generation accounts for almost 25% of the world’s population (Branigan & Mitsis, 2014; Nusair et al 2013).

A general explanation of an individual born in the “Gen Y era” is a person that is flexible, service-oriented, highly sociable and technology savvy (Shamhuyenhanzvae, 2016; Nusair et al 2013). This generation is said to be able to access and process websites and information via internet at a much faster pace than older generations (Kim & Ammeter, 2008), which most
likely is based on the fact that many of the individuals within generation Y are born into a more or less technological world (Palmer, 2009).

Since this generation was the first group to be born into a technological world, they were also the first ones born into the world of social media. The easy access and availability on social media has resulted in the creation of new communication channels, where information travels much faster compared to traditional ways. It has influenced the generation’s way of using different platforms for interacting, socializing and building their own social networks (Bolton et al., 2013). Further, the use of eWoM has grown in line with the development of social media, with regards to the appearance of blogs, microblogs and social networking sites (Shamhuyenhanzvae, 2016). With the growing importance and influence of eWoM, this generation tend to add much value to the opinion of others, hence, posting feedback about products and brands are very common among social media users of generation Y (Bolton et al., 2013).

A goal, jointly held by gen Y’s social media users, is to be influenced by, and to influence others, which connects the value of others opinion (ibid). Cakim (2010) implies that individuals tend to rely more on advices and information obtained through their social media platforms, posted by contacts and influencers, than on traditional advertising by firms.

2.3.2 Generation Z

Post-millenials, Net-Generation, Digital natives (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001), individuals born after approximately 1996 have been given many names, but what seems to be the most common description of these individuals are the “Generation Z” (Bassiouni & Hackley, 2014; Fister-Gale, 2015).

A survey from 2017 states that 8 out of 10 children in the age of two, who are using technology and internet, a third is using a tablet every day. 98% of all children in the age of six are using technology and two out of three are connected to internet every day. Further, the research states that 98% of all children aged eleven own their own smartphone (iis.se, 2018). With this is mind, it is not by surprise that the individuals from generation Z are said to be born with internet and a smartphone in their hands (Bernstein, 2015). From early age, this generation has been exposed
to technology, internet and social media (ibid). Individuals of this generation are said to be quite egocentric, creative, highly educated, innovative and technology and internet savvy (ibid).

Just as the later-born individuals in generations Y, this generation is highly influenced and engaged in social media and its different platforms. Generation Z are said to be even faster in adapting to changes within technology and they are good at multitasking when it comes to using different devices, listening to and communicating with others at the same time (Van den Berg & Behrer, 2016). The Z:ers add much more value in accessing information in a fast and easy way (Obal & Kunz, 2013), which makes social media and especially Instagram a great tool to use for this matter.

Just as previous generation, Z:ers are heavily reliant and dependent on receiving inputs and feedback from others. They are searching for information and inspiration through social media platforms and tend to base their decisions on inputs from retrieved information (Krishen, Berezan, Agarwal & Kachroo, 2016). Furthermore, the concept of eWoM and the phenomenon of social media influencers play a crucial role in many of the generation Z:ers social media life (Sherman, Greenfield, Hernandez & Dapretto, 2017). According to Defy Media (2015) teenagers are more likely to identify themselves and relate to social media influencers than to a celebrity or pro-athlete. By emphasizing the difference between generation Y and Z, marketers have gained a greater understanding of consumer behaviours towards the purchasing process.

2.4 Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is defined as the behaviour of an individual in relation to a purchasing process of e.g. products and services. It includes aspects such as information search, purchase decision and selection and post-purchase feelings of the individual, which eventually result in a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Evans et al., 2009).

Within the consumer behaviour field, the decision-making part is non-negligible. Decision-making is commonly divided into two areas, which is explained as trivial decision and long-term impact decision when purchasing goods/ services. It is said that involvement is a key influencer to the decision-making process and may vary from low involvement decision-making (LIDM) to high involvement decision-making (HIDM) (Szmigin & Piacentini, 2015). When it comes to high involvement decision-making, brand-beliefs are part of an active
learning, that will push the consumer to evaluate the brand before making the purchase decision. For low involvement decision-making, brand beliefs are part of a passive learning and the purchase decision will be made before the brand evaluation (Ibid). Whether the purchase indicates low or high involvement, is dependent on every individual’s own thoughts and feelings.

2.4.1 Decision-making model
Throughout the years, many models have been proposed by several authors trying to explain the behaviour of consumers, during the decision-making process when purchasing. In 1910, John Dewey’s developed the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model. The EKB model (Figure A) is designed as a five-stages process, displaying the steps that a consumer goes through when making a purchase. The model also displays different outcomes that stem from the purchase decision.

![Figure A. A modified model of the decision-making process, adapted from Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1978).](image)

**Problem Recognition**
The first stage of the model is called problem recognition. During this stage the consumers recognize a need or want, which could be driven both by internal as well as external stimuli and could occur due to several different factors, such as individual, social, situational as well as economic factors. When a need is recognized, the consumer has to search for information in order to understand how this want can be satisfied (Darley, Blankson & Luethge, 2010).
Search
Therefore, the second stage of the online decision-making process, is information search. Here the consumer starts the search for different alternatives that could satisfy the need. The search stage includes both internal as well as external search. The consumer compares advantages and disadvantages and rely on previous experiences with brand and products in order to make up their mind and make a final decision (ibid).

Evaluation of alternative
During the third stage of the model, the consumers have already set up criterions of what they want. Now, they actively evaluate the alternatives which they searched for, in the previous stage, by evaluating and comparing them against each other. Therefore, this stage is called “evaluation of alternatives” (ibid).

Purchase
Once the consumer has compared all the alternatives as well as evaluated the information gathered from other customers, they will make an appropriate purchasing decision. Thus, the fourth stage of the process, is “purchase” (ibid).

Post-purchase evaluation / outcomes
The final part of the decision-making process is the “the post-purchase evaluation”. The consumer will evaluate whether or not the purchase they made, met the need they identified during the first stage of the model. According to this model, there are several outcomes that the consumer may be faced with, depending on the perceived value of the product purchased (ibid).

Cognitive dissonance
The first outcome that could stem from a purchasing decision is cognitive dissonance. This is a situation where an individual’s feelings and thoughts are contradicting his or her behaviour. As an illustration, cognitive dissonance may appear when an individual has decided to make a halt in consumption due to a bad economic situation, but then purchases an expensive purse. Thus, a situation where one’s mind and actions are contradicting each other, and the individual are most often left with a bad feeling (Evans et al., 2009). Furthermore, cognitive dissonance could also arise when e.g. an individual, after a thoroughly information search and comparison, makes a decision to purchase a certain product but after the purchase are faced with a friend being sceptical about the choice. Hence, a purchase that the individual may have been quite certain
and satisfied about, could end up resulting in cognitive dissonance if a friend is questioning the choice of product (ibid).

**Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction**

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction is another outcome that most likely will stem from every purchase that an individual would make. Whether or not the person is satisfied depends on the perceived value of the product bought and the experience of the purchasing process as a whole (Evans et al., 2009). Further, if an individual is satisfied with a purchase and a purchasing experience, this individual is likely to share his or her experience with friends and family, thus engaging in so called word of mouth (ibid).

**Consumption**

The third outcome of the decision process is the consumption. Consumption is impacted by the feedback, either positive or negative. A positive feedback is accomplished by the need full field. For the negative feedback, it usually results by having expectation too high from the customer’s side or the product had some shortcomings. Consumption relies on satisfied or unsatisfied consumer upon the degree of fulfilment achieved throughout the process (Phillips, Olson, & Baumgartner 1995). Therefore, post-consumption is inevitable.

**Disinvestment**

The fourth outcome of the decision-making model is known as disinvestment. It is defined as the fact that demand for a specific product (purchased), will not remain the same; there is a chance for it to decline after a while. Once consumption is done, the availability for a close substitute product may appear in the decrease of the demand level (Sewing, 2010). Disconfirmation could also be a reason for an individual to reach an outcome of disinvestment. This happens when an individual has certain expectations about a product prior to purchase and then, these expectations are disconfirmed in the post-purchase phase. Thus, this may lead to the outcome of disinvestment, since the expectations of the product was not fulfilled (Evans et al., 2009).

### 2.4.2 Decision-making among generation Y and Z female consumers

Studies have found that age is a determining factor when it comes to consumer behaviour and the use and acceptance of online shopping. Thus, differences could be found between
generations (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). However, research within the consumer behaviour field, orientated towards generation Z, have so far been spares, but the opposite is to be said for the earlier generation, generation Y. Bilighan (2016) states that generation Y is a society that prefers online shopping over traditional manners, but they also spend less money on shopping compared to previous and subsequent generations. Similarly, individuals of generation Z are frequent users of online shopping, but they tend to make more use of shopping apps and applications compared to previous generation (ibid).

Individuals within generation Y are seen as sophisticated shoppers with a somewhat status-driven behaviour towards consumption. This is due to this generation being born and raised in a relatively materialistic world. They are happily willing to display their purchasing power and affluence. Due to the rise of internet and later also social media, both generation Y and Z have been provided with information abundance, which as a result, have shifted their acts towards consumption (Krbová & Pavelek, 2015; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Parment, 2012). However, even though these individuals are set with more information, these generations are said to make faster and more impulsive purchasing decisions than individuals within earlier generations. Furthermore, these generations are said to be brand conscious but also brand disloyal. This stems from their indecisiveness when trends and fashion is changing, brands become more or less popular (Krbová & Pavelek, 2015; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Hence, building unique relationships with consumers of these generations are crucial for companies and brands to succeed (Kandampully, Zhang & Bilgihan, 2015; Lazarevic, 2012).

Ha and Stoel (2009) argue that one factor which could have a significant impact on a consumer's decision-making is the way in which websites, pictures and advertisement on digital platforms are designed and thus, attracting the consumer. This is emphasized by the statement of Lissitsa and Kol (2016), who argue that individuals within generation Y and Z tend to be more sceptical towards different marketing styles and approaches than earlier generations.

According to Parment (2012) and Peres, Shachar and Lovett (2013), if a company or brand manage to build meaningful relations towards individuals within these generations, these individuals are more likely to reward the brand or company by purchasing their products and engage in positive WoM and/or eWoM. In order for a brand to succeed in this, the individuals need to feel associated with the brand and it has to be a continuous flow of information and visibility provided to the consumer (ibid).
2.5 State of literature and suggested framework
Looking at today’s society, it exists two main generations (Y and Z), whom are highly exposed to social media platforms, such as Instagram. It can be said that one of these generation had to learn how to use technology (generation Y) and the other one was born with it (generation Z). In Sweden, 78% of Instagram users are aged between 12 and 35 (hence, generation Y and Z), within this percentage 62% are women (iis.se, 2018). The rise of technologies seems to have become an important aspect of the female users’ daily lives.

Therefore, the literature review has outlined the different behaviours, from one generation to the other, while looking at the fast fashion industry (Bolton et al., 2013). The authors have found that the state of literature have not yet discussed the effect that social media might have on these generations when reviewing the decision-making process. Further, they are confident that the use of social media affects the two generations in different manners and thus, the way they perceive and use the decision-making model when purchasing fast fashion.

As the field remains fairly unexplored, previous literature found by the authors, have not been able to fully answer the authors problem and purpose. For this reason, the authors aim to conduct extensive research, in order to determine the potential impacts of social media influencers on the decision-making process and its outcomes, for generation Y and Z female consumers. The authors argue that the younger generation (Z), may be more affected by social media influencer when purchasing fast fashion thus, a comparison between the two different generations will be executed.
3. Method

In the following section, the authors of the paper are explaining the method applied throughout this paper. The method selected has been implemented in order to answer the purpose expressed in previous sections.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The frame of the research philosophy for this paper will be carried out in an interpretivist way. The idea behind the use of this facet of research philosophy, is to understand and analyse the own reality of different social actors (female of generation Y and Z), and deeper explore the field investigated. According to Hurworth (2017), interpretivism relates to the beliefs of a reality built upon meanings and interpretations. Within interpretivism, different variations appear such as phenomenology. Phenomenology is known as the tradition which tends to understand the world through direct experiences related to the phenomenon (Dudovskiy, 2016). While investigating the field of social media, the authors are directly concerned about it, due to the constant exposure to social medias. This is one of the reason why, having focus groups will bring accuracy and modernity to the purpose of the paper. This paper is aiming to understand some of the impacts of influencers through Instagram on the decision-making process for Swedish female consumers of generation Y and Z when purchasing fast fashion.

3.2 Abductive Reasoning

According to Anderson (2005), abductive reasoning starts with an incomplete set of observations and throughout the process, will develop the likeliest possible explanation to the decision. In this study, the use of abductive reasoning is providing to the authors another way to understand the female decision-making through influencers when purchasing. It is brought up, to help the understanding of the human reasoning in regard to certain actions taken. The conclusion resulting from this kind of reasoning is adding value to the research paper and to the qualitative method, it is based on the evidences which have been provided through the data collection (ibid).
3.3 Research Purpose
The intention of an exploratory research is not to provide a final answer, but rather to examine a research question which have not yet been explored in depth, in order to provide a better understanding of the problem being researched and up to date data (Saunders et al. 2015). As previously mentioned in the thesis, there is a lack of research covering this topic. The term social media is often mentioned in research papers, but the authors aims to explore this area by adding some actors (social media influencers) in order to bring specificity to it.

Therefore, the purpose of the thesis is to investigate the following research questions:

(1) In what ways do social media influencers play a role in the decision-making process for generation Y and Z female consumers, while purchasing fast fashion in Sweden?

(2) How do influencers impact the different outcomes that stem from the purchasing stage, within the decision-making model, for consumers in the fast fashion industry?

Hence, in accordance to this paper, an exploratory research will best correspond to the content of this paper.

3.4 Research Strategy
According to Johannesson and Perjons (2014), research strategy is the path which is implemented in order to carry a research study. Research strategy is strongly linked with the research method as it gives a plan on how to collect data, conduct interviews and many other strategies. It is necessary for the authors, in order to achieve the tasks required, to fulfil the purpose expressed in the paper and to answer the research questions previously stated in the paper (ibid). Within this paper, the authors case studies will be the main focus for the research strategy, as it will allow the researchers to get a better understanding of the gap found in the literature and the opportunity to bring knowledge to it. The strategy to obtain data in this research paper will mostly be conducted via focus groups, as explained in the following section.

3.5 Methods for Data collection - Focus Groups
The primary data collected for this thesis is based on the results of the focus groups. It will bring support and help to construct the analysis expressed in the purpose of this paper.
According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), a focus group is a group of individuals who have been selected to take part in a topic discussion based on their personal experiences, with interaction with others but also with the researchers. The main results will be extracted from the interactions among the participant within the focus groups. Thus, it is important for the moderator to let the individuals freely exchange their own experiences and thoughts, in order to strengthen the quality of the data collected (Eriksson et al., 2008). With an increasing use of focus groups, in order to collect data in the field of media research, it seems to have become a trustworthy method for researchers. It can be used as a method on its own or used in combination with other methods.

A focus group should be composed of five to eight people and a moderator who has the role to lead the conversation within the group, on a particular topic. The moderator has to ask questions, to manage the flow of talk between the participants and to collect the information (Scott, 2014). A key feature of focus groups is the interaction among the participants, the group dynamic is necessary to stimulate data for the researchers. At the end of the focus group session, the moderator may hand out a questionnaire in order to collect demographic data on the participants to analyse the results and to compare the collected data between the different focus groups conducted (ibid).

Even though, the use of focus group for qualitative data research becomes more and more common, some risks are present as no method is perfect. According to Krueger and Casey (2014), it exists three main risks of conducting focus groups.

The first risk expressed is the tendency for participants to intellectualize. This means, that they may want to be rational and reflect too much during the interaction whereas they are asked to be spontaneous in answering and interacting with others. It will then have an impact on the collected data and could change the trustworthiness of the answers.

The second risk for using data collected from focus groups is that the participants may have a limited or no experience in the discussed topic. Therefore, they can feel embarrassed and instead of just saying “I don’t know”, they may, make up answers and this would have an impact on the results (ibid).
The third risk is the dominance of individuals; which is one of the most common risk that appears in focus groups. It is the role of the moderator to control, if one of more participants tend to be dominant in the group, by constantly talking, cutting others answer. It is important to be careful as it could lead to an unhealthy focus group, participants not willing to pursue etc. All methods used to gain knowledge and data for research matter contain risks, it is about how to manage them, and minimize them to obtain the best possible outcome (ibid).

3.6 Focus Group Technique

3.6.1 Sampling

The focus groups took place mid-April 2018 and was arranged at Jönköping University, Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet (high school in Jönköping) and in Tibro. The focus groups were divided in four, two groups of generation Y females and two groups of generation Z females. This distinction was made in order to answer the research question, which aim to explore and understand the impacts of influencers on the decision making of female consumers from generation Y and Z in the fast fashion industry. Another criteria, for selecting the participants, was that they had to be Swedish, as the authors are investigating the Swedish market. In order to gain as much relevant data as possible and to feel free to express themselves, the participants have been informed that the use of the collected data will be anonymous. To analyse the information collected, the participants will be categorised under Z1, Z2 [...] and Y1, Y2 [...] with Z for generation Z female students and Y for generation Z female students.

Regarding the sampling methods, Uprichard (2011) states that sampling is divided into two main areas: probability sample and non-probability sample. In this paper, the authors are conducting a non-probability sampling, which means that population elements have been selected on the basis of their availability. This method suits the paper as it is an exploratory research. Within non-probability sampling it exists three different types of samples: convenience sample, purposive sample and quota.

In this paper, the authors are focusing on purposive sample, which is defined as sample chosen by the researchers based on who they think will be appropriate for the study (ibid). The purposive sample was therefore developed in two different ways for the research. The first one, was when the authors searched Swedish female at Jönköping University and in Tibro, who were born between 1981 and 1995 with the idea of selecting the oldest as possible, to create a bigger
difference between the focus groups. Once selected, the individuals were invited to join a Facebook group where they could decide which focus group session they would like to attend. The other purposive sample was created when the authors went to Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet to present the project of the paper to female students from generation Z, born 1996 onwards. They had to be between 18 and 19 years old to be able to conduct focus groups without parental permission. Once the project of the thesis was presented to all of them, the authors offered different focus groups sessions, for the ones who wanted to take part in it. In total, four focus groups were conducted, with a total of 22 participants. Table 1 presents a compilation of abbreviation of participants, duration, place and date of execution and length of each focus group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Generation &amp; Year of birth</th>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Length of focus group</th>
<th>Meeting place</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Y1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1989</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1993</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1992</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01:15:23</td>
<td>Jönköping University</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 2000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>01:30:17</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>11.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1992</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:15:16</td>
<td>Tibro</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1993</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:15:16</td>
<td>Tibro</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1992</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:15:16</td>
<td>Tibro</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1993</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:15:16</td>
<td>Tibro</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Y, 1991</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>01:15:16</td>
<td>Tibro</td>
<td>14.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gen Z, 1999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>00:50:04</td>
<td>Erik Dahlbergsgymnasiet</td>
<td>18.04.2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Compilation of focus groups

3.6.2 First section: Questionnaire

At the beginning of each focus group session, the researchers welcomed the participants to take a sit and have a Fika. But also, to feel comfortable by breaking the ice with some general questions about themselves, in order to collect relevant data. It was mentioned to the
participants that there was no “right or wrong” answers, and if they did not understand the question they could express the need to repeat it. Three different documents were distributed to the group: a policy agreement, a demographic questionnaire and a model. The policy agreement can be found in Appendix 3 and was created for the participant to agree on the terms and conditions of the focus group and that it would be audio recorded for research purpose. Once this paper was signed, the researchers handed out the questionnaire. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1 and was given to the participants for demographic purpose based on nine general questions such as age, gender, the use of Instagram, knowledge on influencers etc. It was important for the authors to collect demographic data for the analysis and to understand the difference between the two generations, which took place during the focus groups. After these two documents were filled in, the researchers started to audio record the general discussion.

3.6.3 Second Section: General Discussion
In order to create a relaxed feeling within the focus group and an ease among the attendants, a general discussion focused on influencers were conducted. Responsibilities of the researchers were divided in the way that one researcher (also called moderator) led the discussion with the group, whereas the other researcher took the minutes and also made notes of the physical behaviour of the participants. Before the discussion were conducted, the researcher presented the focus of the discussion in order to make sure that all the participants understood the purpose. First, questions of how the attendants perceive an influencer, what they associate with the word, and how they characterize an influencer were brought up. Secondly, the fast growth of social media influencers was discussed, together with positive and negative aspect of the phenomena. Thirdly, a link between social media influencers and fast fashion was drawn. Here, the impact and influence of a social media influencer, in relation to fast fashion and trends were elaborated upon. Thus, the third and last part of the general discussion provided an easy and natural transition into the next section where the purchasing-decision model were discussed.

3.6.4 Third section: Decision-making model
The researchers started the third section by explaining the decision-making model, which was presented on the paper given to the participants in the first section. The moderator of the focus group explained and defined each step of the model as well as the outcomes, in order to provide knowledge to the participants before the discussion. Afterward, the moderator asked question oriented towards each step, discussing if all steps were relevant and followed, as presented in
the original model. Furthermore, the participants were asked to discuss whether or not they have experienced the different outcomes presented in the model. In addition, the moderator presented a potential outcome which appeared to the authors while conducting the literature review (chapter 2). Finally, the impact of social media influencers in relation to the Purchasing decision model and its different steps were elaborated upon. This, in order to seek for a potential need to revise the original model.

3.7 Transcription Style
In general, there are two main styles one may use when constructing a transcription of e.g. a speech, an interview or a focus group discussion. These are known as a naturalism and de-naturalism (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005). When using a naturalism transcription technique, the transcriber focuses on every detail given within the speech or discussion. Pauses, stutters, non-verbal communication etc. are all transcribed using different signs that corresponds to a certain element. This technique is an in-depth transcription, made in order to recreate a transcription as similar to the “real” discussion as possible. Thus, capture the feeling of the discussion. If one chose to use a de-naturalism approach towards the transcription, the adapter oversees “small talk” and removes all stutters, vocalizations, pauses etc., which may be perceived as unnecessary. Thus, only the relevant elements within the discussion are transcribed (ibid).

Since the main focus of the focus groups, were to discuss the participants’ views and behaviour in relation to a certain topic, and not to study the perceived interaction among the participant, the need for a naturalism approach felt too extreme. Hence, a strict verbatim style with an in-depth transcript where seen as unnecessary. Thus, the style used to transcribe the focus group discussions, conducted for this thesis, were a de-naturalism approach.

3.8 Secondary data
Secondary data is defined as data that has already been analysed and collected in previous research from third parties (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2015). The use of secondary data enables the authors to investigate the field with a larger background and apply a triangulation of the information in order to obtain more accuracy in the research. The authors have to adopt an open and transparent approach by referring to secondary data. For the research paper,
secondary data helps to add more specificity to the primary data collection and to identify the gap and deficiency present in the problem research (ibid). Within secondary data, it exists three different types of data which are the following: documentary data, surveys and multiple sources. In order to fulfil the purpose of this thesis, the authors are using the documentary data. It has been developed in the frame of reference, in the previous section. It gathers different academic articles, journals and books which have been cross-referenced throughout the whole literature review.

3.9 Data Analysis

According to Dudovskiy (2013), qualitative data analysis allows the researchers to gain a better understanding throughout a permanent process of data collection. The data analysis itself is about identifying common patterns between responses but also to be critical while analysing those responses in order to meet the purpose and the objectives expressed (ibid). Throughout the research, the authors of the paper have taken into account, during the data collection, the idea of phenomenology.

Before analysing the data collected, the authors carried out a literature review of past research (secondary data) in order to gain knowledge on the topic discussed and conducted four focus groups (primary data) that were recorded to be able to analyse the data later on. In order to analyse the data in the most efficient and beneficial ways the authors have followed the three major steps expressed by Dudovskiy (2013). The first step applied to the qualitative data analysis for this paper is known as developing and applying categories to the data collected. This phase can be associated to the term “brainstorming” by generating the ideas that will be transformed in added value to the purpose. The second step for the qualitative data analysis is identifying the themes, patterns and relationship by comparing primary and secondary data to extract what is relevant for the purpose. It is about going through the frame of reference, seeking for missing data and crossing it with the primary data collected through the focus groups (ibid). Finally, the last step is about summarizing the data. For this final step, the authors combined the two previous steps with the purpose of the paper aiming to achieve the objectives pre-set at the beginning of the research.
3.10 Trustworthiness of Research

On one hand, conducting qualitative research is, according to Patton (2002), known as a naturalistic approach, which aims to understand and comprehend a phenomenon happening in a specific context. Qualitative is synonym of finding different views and perceptions on the investigated field in order to conduct research on the behaviour. On the other hand, according to Patton (2002), there is still two majors factor that should be included in designing a qualitative research: validity and reliability to increase the trustworthiness of the study. These factors, therefore pushed Lincoln and Guba (1985) to reflect on “how can an inquirer persuade his/her audience that the research findings are worth paying attention to?”. For quality purpose and trustworthiness, five criteria have to be taken into account which are the credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity (ibid).

In order to bring forward and develop a trustworthy research and thesis, there was a need for the authors to ensure the credibility within the paper. Credibility is seen as the most important aspect to create trustworthiness. One technique, among many others, are known as triangulation (Golafshani, 2003). The authors of this paper have used triangulation in the research process to bring as much credibility as possible to their analysis. Triangulation has become a “go for” method as it tends to evaluate and control bias in naturalistic and qualitative research. By having three researchers involved in this paper, the credibility was increased. During the data collection and analysis, each of the researchers studied upstream, first on their own to get their own point of view and then developed and shared within the group. By doing so, the data wasn’t influenced by each other’s and tended to gain credibility.

Dependability is another factor to trustworthiness within this paper and it refers to having consistent and repeatable findings from the research study. The reader of this paper and the authors should come down to the same conclusion in regard to the purpose expressed throughout the whole development (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To increase the dependability of the research, focus groups helped confirming some data but also explaining others.

Confirmability is present to determine how findings from the research have been analysed in order to avoid risks of bias. Throughout this paper, the authors have used triangulation in order to avoid the bias from each other. But mistakes are part of the human nature and therefore risks are still present, but the researchers have minimized it as much as possible to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study.
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the analysis of research lead to results aiming to answer the purpose. When the results of it are providing some sort of evidence to the reader, that the findings could be used to other context, it is known as transferability. By investigating the potential impact of social media influencer on the decision-making of Swedish female within generation Y and Z in the fast fashion industry; companies in the sector could use the results to understand their potential consumer more in depth but also develop their marketing strategies.

Finally, the last factor to trustworthiness is the authenticity, how the authors managed to reflect the emotions and behaviour of the participants to make the results even more real (ibid). This last factor was developed during the focus group by the note taker, who watched the participants moving around, how they behaved while answering certain questions.

3.11 Time Horizon

According to Saunders et al., (2015), the time horizon of a research paper is determined through two different approaches: cross-sectional and longitudinal approach, which are both observational studies. The authors of this paper have used the cross-sectional approach to carry out the purpose of the research. Cross-sectional study refers to the fact that; data are collected on the whole study population at a single point of time (ibid). The main reason for using this approach, is the time limit of approximately five months, for realisation of the thesis, which the authors had to face. Another reason is the purpose, which aims to make a comparison between females within generation Y and Z. Hence, the use of a cross-sectional approach is favoured due to the possibilities to compare different groups within the population and at the same time, compare different variables.

3.12 Summary of Methods

The purpose of this paper is to determine any potential impact of social media influencer on the decision-making for Swedish females within generation Y and Z, within the fast fashion industry. In order to carry out the study in the most effective and efficient way, the authors based their research on a specific methodology. The researchers based their study on the idea of phenomenology, because of the newness of the field. The strategy applied to the paper was to use focus groups as primary data. This, in order to generate a great amount of data extracted from interaction, which is necessary for a qualitative research paper. The focus groups were
mostly conducted to reflect on the original decision-making model, to seek for any changes due to the use of influencers in the fast fashion industry. After gathering information, the researchers focused on the data analysis, in which they used a non-probability sampling, more specifically with purposive sampling. It is necessary to keep in mind, that the time for conducting the research composing this paper was around five months, which is restricting the authors in some aspects. However, the trustworthiness of the research is to be found, by following the five main factors expressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity. On top of it, the researchers used the triangulation method throughout the entire paper, in order to bring more accuracy and less bias to the results.
4. Empirical Findings

This chapter will present a detailed outline of the data collected for this research. Firstly, the responses obtained from the questionnaire are summarised. Secondly, a discussion of the findings emerged from the focus groups will be outlined, followed by a comparison and linking between different aspects and responses obtained within the two generations.

4.1 Questionnaire findings

In the beginning of each focus group, all participants were handed a questionnaire containing nine short questions. The first question was connected to the demographic factor of generation and age. This question was asked for the purpose of allowing the authors to make possible comparisons between ages and not just the two generations.

The five succeeding questions were directed toward the social media platform Instagram and influencers on Instagram. The reason behind these questions, was to get a grip around each participant's perception and use of Instagram and their perception and knowledge about influencers. Analysing the responses, the authors could clearly see that the time spent on Instagram differed extensively between the two generations, where the majority of the participants of generation Z stated that they spend more than two hours a day scrolling on Instagram. In comparison, the respondents of generation Y spends approximately one hour on the platform. All the participants responded that they follow at least one influencer on Instagram. Within generation Z, the number of influencers followed, ranged between 10 to 50 influencers per person, whereas the amount among the respondents within generation Y was clearly lower. Notably, there were two participants within generation Z that responded that they only followed one influencer each. The primary reason to follow an influencer is because of inspiration.

Furthermore, the last three questions were directed towards fast fashion and consumption, online and offline, this in order to obtain a somewhat understanding of the participant preference and general consumer behaviour. A larger percent of generation Y stated that they prefer to shop online due to simplicity and convenience. However, physical stores seem to attract many of the individuals within generation Z even though online shopping seem to be the preferred way of shopping. The reason why some individuals favoured physical stores over
online shopping was due to the convenience of being able to try the clothes before making a purchase decision.

4.2 Findings from discussion: Generation Y

4.2.1 Social Media Influencers

After the questionnaires were filled out by all the participants in generation Y, the discussion began and was directed towards social media influencers. The aim of this section was to get a deeper understanding of the participants’ view, perception and knowledge of social media influencers in general.

A general consent among a majority of the respondents was that an influencer is someone who inspires and influence others in one way or another.

“An influencer is a person who inspires a consumer to either purchase a product or create a feeling” Y6.

Y1 and Y5 do not only consider the large network to be important but also, the previous experiences and performances of the individual decides whether or not the person is regarded as an influencer. Y1 does not consider running a blog is being categorized as an achievement. Y1, Y5 and Y9 strongly emphasizes the importance to feel a connection and being able to relate to the influencer. Y2, Y5, Y6, Y7 and Y10 think that the main reason why influencers have experienced a fast establishment, is due to the boom of social media usage. Y3 explains that the boom of influencers on Instagram and other social media platforms are significantly impacting society, resulting in schools offering educational programs within the field of influencer.

When discussing how social media influencers presents/picture their lives on Instagram, participants explain this as a picture-perfect life, filled with expensive and luxury trips, mass consumption and superficiality, where only the “good” parts of life is being presented. However, all participants agree that this life and behaviour is not achievable and realistic.

Y1 argue that influencers do not have a direct impact on her but admits that it may be an unconscious affect. This statement is further agreed upon by Y7. A positive aspect commonly
shared by participant Y3, Y8, Y9 and Y10 is that influencers help them to keep updated about the latest fashion trends.

Many respondents, both in generation Y and Z, share the value that collaborations and discounts offered by the influencers is good and something they take advantage of. Nevertheless, it seems to be a fine line between personal posts and posts that are in collaboration with companies. Y1, Y4, Y5, Y7, Y10 all agree, that too many sponsored posts shared by the influencer decreases the credibility and trustworthiness of that person and sometime also the company and the brand.

4.2.2 Fast Fashion

The second part was designed with the aim to obtain an understanding of the participants’ thoughts about fast fashion in general. Connections were made with social media influencers, and the perceived impact of these people were elaborated upon. Further, connections were made between fast fashion and consumer behaviour.

When it comes to fast fashion, all participants except one, agree that they always tend to buy fast fashion to satisfy a temporary want. The participants discussed the underlying reason for this is because fast fashion is relatively cheap and continuous updates online, makes you want to keep up with the latest trends. Y8 states that it has become much easier and convenient today to purchase fast fashion, especially online. Hashtags and direct links to companies’ web pages, products and simplified payment methods have made it much easier and convenient to find and purchase fast fashion.

“I probably have everything I need, but if you want to keep up with trends and have an interest in fashion, you somehow manage to create a want. Simply, material happiness!” Y3.

Y6, Y7, Y8, Y9 and Y10 all agree on this statement and further explain that they engage more in online shopping today compared to shopping in physical stores. All participants agree that it takes less effort and time to purchase online.

“It takes too much time to go to a physical store. Today you can just lay on your couch, watch Netflix series and buy some new clothes, simultaneously. Two days after your clothes are delivered to your door. So easy!” Y6.
“Everything is just easier when you shop online! It is convenient, and you do not have to try the clothes in a warm dressing room and feel stressed when the staff comes and ask you if the jeans fit or not. When you shop online, you can try the clothes at home in your own comfort zone” Y9.

The only respondent who opposes this view is Y2 who only buy fast fashion when she has a real need for it. She rather saves her money to spend on other things, such as food.

When an influencer posts a picture on Instagram, Y1, Y5, Y6, Y9 and Y10 all state that they are inspired by the actual apparel rather than inspired by the influencer who wears it. Y1 further explains that she personally does not admire the influencer but instead, she argues that in the end, it is the company who have produced the clothes and not the influencer.

“Today, new technology such as BankID enables you to open other apps, sign and approve purchases online. It is so convenient, that all of a sudden, you have made a new purchase, without noticing the withdrawal on your account” Y8.

4.2.3 Decision-making Model
The third and final part of the discussion covered questions connected to the decision-making process, its steps and outcomes. The decision-making process was presented to the participants and each step and outcome was thoroughly explained in the context of purchasing. The aim was to gain a better understanding of whether the participants tend to fully or partly follow these steps when purchasing fast fashion. Further, the authors wanted to investigate if the impact of influencers could affect the decision-making process, thus, the authors integrated social media influencers and their potential impact, into the discussion.

When evaluating the responses from generation Y, one can clearly see that they do not entirely share the same view as generation Z. Y3 is confident that she skips the search step in the model. According to her, due to social media influencers and their constant updates about new fashion and trends, she is being served with the latest trend and thus, do not need to do this search herself. Participant Y6 and Y8 agree on this, but further states it only applies for cheaper products and not high involvement products. However, when purchasing more expensive products, they claim that all steps in the model is thoroughly followed.
“If it is something expensive that I am going to buy, I would definitely go through all the steps. However, I would never care to do so, if it is t-shirt for 200 SEK that I am going to buy” Y6.

This opinion is being contradicted by Y2 who is arguing that she rather skips the first step but instead she is constantly searching for different alternatives, which she believes is due to the simplicity of social media. A third view, shared by Y1, Y4, Y9 and Y10 is that they all go through the whole decision-making process, even though it is a cheap product and fast fashion when purchasing.

A majority of the respondents believe that social media in general have had an effect on consumer behaviour, thus the tendency to shop more today has increased significantly.

“I do not think I have ever engaged in online shopping as much as I do today, and I think this is because of the accessibility stemming from social media” Y3.

Y5 feel that social media and influencers have helped her to increase her awareness for fast fashion and provided her with a wider perspective among different brands. Nevertheless, a slightly more negative aspect brought to discussion, was the fact that the participants felt that a constant exposure of fast fashion posted by influencers, often saturates the need to actually purchase the products themselves.

A collective view among the participants from generation Y is that they experience cognitive dissonance every now and then. However, the underlying factors for experience this condition seem to differ. Y3, Y4, Y5, Y8 all agree with each other, that the discount codes provided by the influencers affect the shopping behaviour and therefore they tend to buy more clothes even though they might not need to. Y3 and Y6 on the other hand, feel stressed that the clothes they want might run out of stock, which results in unplanned and a precipitously purchases.

“When I find something that I really want, I can become really stressed over the fact that it might run out of stock, thus I buy it directly. Somehow, I try to compensate this purchase, thinking I will save more money next month instead, which never happens” Y3.
All participants agree that they would continue to purchase from a company and brand if they are satisfied with the purchase. However, they do not give the credit to the influencer that have promoted the apparel. On the contrary, if the participants experience dissatisfaction due to a purchase, a commonly shared view is that, if they purchase clothes that do not live up to their expectations, this will automatically present the company as the black sheep and not the influencer. For some, such as Y1, Y4, Y5, Y7 and Y10 a dissatisfied purchase would result in them actively making the decision not to purchase from that company anymore.

“I would definitely stop purchase from the company and then I would share my experience with others, since I think it is important, especially when you are dissatisfied” Y5.

Y3 and Y6 would never stop purchase from the company due to dissatisfaction, nor blame the influencer for promoting the clothes. Neither would Y8 and Y9 blame the company or the influencer, but instead they argue that consumer have to keep in mind that clothes fit people in different ways.

“I would not blame anyone, but instead think that ‘well... this shirt did not fit my body, we all look different’” Y9.

In the end of the discussion, the authors presented an additional outcome. This outcome reflected the way in which people tend to share their purchases with one another, both online as eWoM and offline known as WoM. Generally, all participants said that it is more common for them to engage in WoM (such as face to face with friends). According to Y1, Y2, Y3, Y4 and Y5, this is something that they engage in quite frequently. On the contrary, Y6, Y7, Y8, Y9 and Y10 rarely engage in any WoM at all. However, if they are to share a purchase, they say that they prefer WoM over eWoM.

Discussing the engagement of eWoM within generation Y, almost all participants claimed that they never engage in it. Y3 was differentiating herself from the crowd when stating that she often shares their purchases online as well as tagging the company and/or brand.

“I usually do not write about my purchases on Instagram, but I usually tag the company and/or brand. I appreciate when other people do it, so I do it as well” Y3.
4.3 Findings from discussion: Generation Z

4.3.1 Social Media Influencers

As mentioned above, a general consent among a majority of the respondents was that an influencer is someone who inspires and influence others in one way or another. According to Z3 an influencer is characterized as a person who is famous and who has a great number of followers on Instagram. This explanation is emphasized by Z5, Z8, Z9 and Z10.

Z1, Z4, Z5 and Z7 all consider that “real” influencers are those who run blogs as their occupation. Z3, Z4, Z6 further elaborate on this and agree that being an influencer have become an easy way to earn money and make a living out of it.

“Due to the fact that there is a lot of money to earn within this industry, an increasing amount of people have spotted the opportunity to make a living out of it” Z3.

Z8, Z9, Z10 and Z12 all suggest an influencer to be a person who put much emphasis and focus on posting nice pictures, which are edited and filtered, in order to fit into their feed. They further argue that these influencers put much focus on displaying themselves and things (clothes and accessories) that they have bought.

“I would say that you are an influencer if you have a ‘K’ on your feed. Also, if you post pictures focusing on yourself and all the stuff you have, like showing off” Z10.

A shared view among the respondents within generation Z is that they tend to strive to obtain and live a life similar to the influencers that they follow.

“Somehow you tend to admire those influencers who have a lot of followers and so you strive to become just like them. They are a real inspiration. You tend to look up to those who are above you, rather than those that are equal to you” Z6.

Z2 believe that this behaviour could capture a feeling of inadequacy and anxiety, which Z3, Z5, Z6 and Z7, Z9, Z10 and Z13 agree on. Z11 argues that there are several influencers that she has chosen to unfollow because of the reason stated above.
“Yes, there is so many influencers that I have chosen to unfollow because I cannot deal with
the posts that they upload every day” Z11.

“You get irritated. You follow the influencers because they look good, but at the same time
you get irritated” Z13.

Z8 also explains that influencers create a pressure on her to always keep up with trends and
thus, having to buy all the newest clothes. She further emphasizes this by discussing the peer
pressure that stems from her group of friends, who all reasons in the same way.

“I buy new clothes and use them like once or twice, because then they are outdated” Z8.

4.3.2 Fast Fashion

The second part was designed with the aim to obtain an understanding of the participants’
thoughts about fast fashion in general. Connections were made with social media influencers,
and the perceived impact of these people were elaborated upon. Further, connections were made
between fast fashion and consumer behaviour.

When it comes to purchasing fast fashion, the majority of the respondents within generation Z
argues that they usually do not think through their purchases. They explain fast fashion as
clothes that are more “wear and tear” and cheap. Z1, Z3, Z6, Z7, Z10 and Z11 all argues that
the real source of inspiration is the influencers, due to the fact that they provide them with a full
image on how to wear and style the clothes. Z10 elaborate further and explains that she has her
“favourite” influencers whose style she really wants to copy. Thus, she is always looking for
fashion that she has seen this influencer wearing. However, she also explains the difficulties in
keeping up with all trends, due to the clothes, many times being too expensive for a student.

“I often think of buying an apparel, but then I do not, mostly because of the price. But I would
say that this influencer affects me and influence the things I have in my wardrobe to like,
90%” Z10.
4.3.3 Decision-making Model

Participants Z1, Z3, Z4, Z7, Z8, Z9, Z11 and Z13 stated that, when an influencer is marketing an apparel that they really want, they often tend to click on the link and buy the product directly. They argue that almost all the steps in the decision-making process become irrelevant when the products are being displayed, thus, they tend to go directly to the purchasing decision.

“If I see a product that an influencer is promoting and which I want, then I click the link and go directly to the product and buy it. I never check for other similar alternatives” Z3.

“I mean, the influencer has already done the search for me, there is no reason for me to look for alternatives or to even think about it” Z13.

A general opinion was, if you are satisfied with the purchase, you will continue to consume from that brand or company. It seems like all the participants in generation Z commends and thank the influencer for promoting the clothes, rather than the company. They argue that the influencer manages to create a full picture, in terms of the surroundings with props, styling of products, accessories, hair and makeup and finally, how they edit the pictures.

“It is all about how the influencer is matching the clothes, the whole outfit and the surroundings, how she has done her hair and makeup” Z1.

When discussing the use of eWoM, one could clearly see that generation Z engage in this quite frequently. Though they would never tag the products and/or companies in their pictures, they would instead upload a selfie when wearing their new clothes. When discussing the reason behind this, Z3, Z4 and Z7, Z8, Z9 and Z10 justified this behaviour by stating that when they feel comfortable, they will upload a selfie, thus seek confirmation from friends and followers.

“If I buy a sweater that I feel really good in, off course I upload a selfie. The focus may not be on the apparel, but I feel pretty and then I want to show it!” Z10.

Z9 discusses the rise of social media to be a major factor for people to share and upload content. She thinks it has become much easier and convenient to share your purchases with others. This is further emphasized by Z11, Z12 and Z13.
4.4 Summary of empirical findings

Summarizing the answers obtained from the focus group discussions, one can clearly see that generation Z spend more time on Instagram compared to generation Y. Furthermore, this generation also tend to follow a greater number of influencers. These influencers seem to have a greater impact on the individuals within generation Z. Not only do they affect and speed up the decision-making process when purchasing apparels, but also, they affect these individuals on a cognitive and emotional level.

Empirical findings further show that both generations stress the rapid development of social media and technology, to have made it more convenient to shop online, which in turn has resulted in more spontaneous shopping.

When discussing the purchasing decision-making model, one can see that individuals within generation Z tend to skip more steps in the model compared to generation Y, who rather evaluate and elaborate before making a purchase. However, a common view between both generations is that everyone believes this process is followed, step by step, when purchasing products that are more expensive.

Cognitive dissonance is a condition that each and every individual within the groups have experienced and still do, quite frequently. The participants are experiencing this condition more often when purchasing fast fashion, due to new trends constantly being released and a need to keep up with these new trends occur. Finally, generation Z gladly engage in eWoM, whereas generation Y rather share thoughts about their purchases face to face (WoM).
5. Analysis

The following chapter presents the analysis of the empirical findings crossed with the frame of references, both investigated in previous chapters. While conducting the analysis, the authors were seeking for the potential impact of social media influencers on the decision-making, of Swedish female from generation Y and Z, when purchasing fast fashion. At the end of this chapter, the authors are presenting a potential revised model that has been developed throughout the results of the data analysis comparing the two generations investigated.

5.1 Fast Fashion and Social Media

5.1.1 Fast fashion

In the chapter presenting the frame of reference, fast fashion was defined as a rapidly growing industry, due to frequent releases of new collections, monthly and weekly. This constant flow of clothes on the market is encouraging consumers to engage in more frequent purchasing, seen as compulsive buying (Cachon & Swinney, 2011; Joung, 2014; Kim et al., 2013).

According to Biligihan (2016), females within generation Y, who are born between 1981 and 1995, seem to prefer online shopping rather than offline, but the money spent is less than previous generations. This statement is supported by findings obtained from primary research. The primary data analysis (empirical findings) has shown similarities in the concept of compulsive buying from the participants in both generation Y and Z. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most of the participants agreed on the idea of buying fast fashion in order to satisfy a temporary want but also for convenient reasons. The short product life cycle of the apparel, and their very affordable prices are constantly pushing consumer to spend more money. In this sense, the primary data is supporting the secondary data, with a total awareness of intense consumption among the participants.

“When it comes to fast fashion, I purchase mainly because of a want. I seldom feel that I really need it. Fast fashion is more about fast decisions because you fall in love with an apparel” Y4.

“I do not usually purchase things that I need, only what I want. Like, if I go into Instagram and see something I like, then I will buy it, even though I do not need it” Z3.
According to Barnes and Lea-Greenwood (2010), the reason why fast fashion nowadays is largely implemented in the society, is due to the constant growth of technology but also public personalities (celebrities). With social media as a main marketing tool, the fast fashion industry knows how to reach out to consumers. It is a necessity in today’s society for fashion businesses to have a strong presence on internet and social media platforms such as Instagram.

During the focus groups, most participants from both generation Y and Z agreed on the idea that social media play an important role in their decision-making process when purchasing fast fashion. Participants from generation Y, in general, expressed that their purchasing decision is influenced by the apparel itself, whereas individuals from generation Z are more sensitive and susceptible to the influencer promoting it. Both generations are reacting differently while being exposed to the fast fashion industry, the implementation and growth of technologies is noticeable in their behaviour.

“I do not think I have ever engaged in online shopping as much as I do today, and I think this is because of the accessibility stemming from social media” Y3.

“You can find everything you need online. It is so simple!” Z2.

Furthermore, according to the questionnaire handed out during the focus groups, generation Y seems to prefer online shopping rather than offline (physical stores) due to simplicity and convenience. This statement had the authors wondering about the degree of “social media usage” in each generation and how it differs from each other’s. According to comparisons between primary and secondary data, convenience and time are two factors shaping consumers purchasing decisions on different levels within generation Y and Z. Generation Z seem to be fully exposed to and enjoy the growth of technology within the fast fashion industry. However, generation Y seem to be more rational and sometimes reluctant to technology, but still uses it to avoid the feeling of falling behind.

5.1.2 Social Media
The rapid growth of technology has resulted in frequent usage of social media among individuals and businesses. Social media is defined as a communication tool, which is mostly used to share content, communicate and interact with others online (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen,
The society is experiencing a shift from physical relations and interactions, to virtual relationships, due to the significant usage of these platforms. One of the fastest growing social media platform is Instagram. In 2017 the platform had approximately 800 million monthly active users (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016; Statista, 2018).

To get a better understanding of the Instagram usage, the authors handed out a questionnaire at the beginning of the focus groups. After analysing the results from the questionnaire, a significant difference in the use of social media between the respondents within generation Y and Z was noticed. The first difference observed by the researchers was the time spent scrolling on Instagram on a daily basis. Generation Y is on average spending one hour per day on Instagram, whereas generation Z agrees on that their time spent is around two hours a day.

Another question asked in the questionnaire was the number of influencers the participants were following on Instagram. The results showed that all participants from both generation X and Y, are following at least one influencer. However, a clear difference where noticed between the generations, in terms of the number of influencers followed. Not only are generation Z spending more time (>2 hours) on Instagram, they also follow a greater number (between 10-50) of influencers. In comparison, generation Y both spend less time on the platform and do not follow as many influencers as generation Z. As a conclusion, one may argue that generation Z is influenced and affected by social media on a greater level that the older generation.

### 5.2 Social Media influencers

According to Dizon (2015), an influencer can be identified as a person who has power over the purchasing decision of his/her network, known as followers. For the participants interviewed during the focus groups, both generation Y and Z defined an influencer as an individual who inspires and influence others in one way or another.

"An influencer is a person who inspires a consumer to either purchase a product or create a feeling" Y6

“It has to be someone who is recognized and who has a large number of followers” Z3.
“I would say that you are an influencer if you have a ‘K’ on your feed. Also, if you post pictures focusing on yourself and all the stuff you have, like showing off” Z10.

Even though both generations agree on the general definition of a social media influencer, some differences remain while analysing the primary data. Looking at the secondary data about influencers, four categories appeared to be relevant to the topic; celebrity; thought leaders; bloggers and micro influencers. However, during the primary data collection, only three categories out of four were brought up by the participants. Both generations agreed on saying that an influencer is a famous person who has a large number of followers on Instagram, which could be interpreted as celebrity influencer, according to Dizon (2015). Further into the discussion, most participants of generation Z characterized a “real” influencer as someone who runs a blog as their main occupation.

On the other side, generation Y expressed the importance of the need to connect, to be able to identify themselves with the influencer which, in the literature is defined as a micro influencer (Moss, 2018). Micro influencers are everyday people who, online, share their daily life (ibid). Generation Y prefer to be exposed to a more realistic environment, compared to generation Z. Females within generation Z expressed the importance of social media influencers in their daily lives. This generation seek to live a life similar to the influencers that they follow.

“They are all so good looking and they have everything. You kind of feel that you want to live their lives and have everything served, just like them” Z7.

In overall, participants from generations Z are more attached to influencers compared to generation Y. However, both generations admit following influencers, partly to be kept in the loop of fashion trends. From celebrities to micro influencers, the impact differs from one generation to the other. Also, the vision of an influencer is not pictured in the same within the two generations.

5.3 Decision-Making Model

The implementation of social media today has significantly impacted consumer behaviour, especially in the fast fashion industry. The field of consumer behaviour has and is still changing and forcing marketers to constantly adapt. Several models explaining the purchasing decision
process among consumers have been developed over the years, but the model applied to this research is the EKB-model, presented by Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (1978). The EKB model is a five-step model explaining consumers decision-making process when purchasing a product or service. The model is based on five different steps: need recognition, search, evaluate alternatives, purchase and outcomes. Further, the EKB model presents four different outcomes: cognitive dissonance, satisfied/dissatisfied, consumption and disinvestment (Darley, Blankson & Luethge, 2010).

Through interactions with the participants within the focus groups, the authors aim was to investigate if the EKB model was still relevant and could be applied to the research. Hence, if the model is applicable when reviewing the potential impact of social media influencers amongst generation Y and Z when purchasing fast fashion.

5.3.1 Decision-making model amongst generation Y

According to Biligihan (2016), females within generation Y, who are born between 1981 and 1995, seem to prefer online shopping rather than offline, but the money spent is less than previous generations. This statement is supported by findings obtained from primary research. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the authors thoroughly presented each step of the model to the participants in order for them to understand and comprehend the questions related to it. In the frame of reference, the five steps within the EKB model are presented, describing the decision-making when purchasing a product or service. Results derived from the focus groups showed a split opinion among the respondents, in regard to whether or not all the steps of the model were followed.

Most participants within generation Y share this idea, of skipping the search step when looking at cheap products. This opinion is emphasized by Y3 who explains the reason for this is due to the influencers constant update about the latest fashion trends.

“I feel like the whole search step disappears, because you do not have to look for the apparel. You can simply just click on the link or tag within the picture and you are redirected to the webpage and then you make a purchase” Y3.
However, if the individual is intending to buy high end products, all the participants agree that all steps are followed thoroughly, as more money is engaged in the process.

“If it is something expensive that I am going to buy, I would definitely go through all the steps. However, I would never care to do so, if it is t-shirt for 200 SEK that I am going to buy” Y6.

The second opinion expressed by Y2 is to say that the first step “need recognition” can be avoided due to the abundance of products, it is more about searching for different alternatives, models.

“I feel that, when following influencers and other individuals on Instagram and there is a lot of posts about fashion and trends, the step of problem recognition automatically disappears. Instead, you constantly searching for news, just by browsing you feed” Y2.

The last opinion expressed during the primary data collection from individuals within generation Y, which was shared by most of the participants, is the idea of going through each step of the process, even though purchasing a fast fashion apparel.

“I would never purchase an apparel right the way. I always think it through” Y1.

“I always search the whole web before I make a decision whether to buy an apparel or not. Even though I might have already decided to make a purchase, I tend to do some extra research before” Y4.

5.3.2 Outcomes of the Decision-making model

As mentioned above, the EKB model presents four different outcomes: cognitive dissonance, satisfied/dissatisfied, consumption and disinvestment. Therefore, the authors asked the participants if they used to experience these outcomes and whether or not they may or may not appear due to the impact of social media influencers.
An aspect that has been expressed within the focus groups of generation Y, was that the overload of information does not necessarily create an excitement to buy more fast fashion products. On the contrary, it rather dampens the want or need to make a purchase.

A majority of the participants from generation Y agree upon experiencing “cognitive dissonance” which is, according to Evans et al., (2009) one outcome that could be experiences after a purchase. This outcome is defined as a situation in which the individual’s feelings and thoughts are contradicting the behaviour he/she adopts (ibid).

The second outcome presented in the model is “satisfaction/dissatisfaction”. A general consent among both generations where that if the participants experienced satisfaction from the product purchased, it will lead to further consumption. If dissatisfaction was experienced, the participants within generation Z would continue to purchase from the company or brand. Whereas, participants within generation Y stated that they would engage in disinvestment, but only if they bought something from an online store. Otherwise they would continue to purchase as usual.

“I bought an apparel from NAKD.com, which I was really dissatisfied about. I have not made a purchase from that store since then. I can make an active choice not to go in to their web page. In contrast, it is so easy when passing an H&M store, to go in and “have a look”. So even though I make a dissatisfied purchase from H&M, I still continue to shop there because of the availability. It is easier to stop purchasing from online stores than from a physical store” Y1.

In general, according to the primary data collected, several individuals within generation Y tend to follow the steps presented in the EKB decision-making model. However, they are aware that influencers do have a certain impact on their purchases. Due to the constant update of new products, they will tend to buy more.

5.3.3 Potential outcome: Share
Throughout the interaction between the participants from generation Y, the authors have conducted questions orientated towards a potential outcome, that may be experienced due to the impact of social media influencers. With social media in mind, the authors decided to
develop a revised model of the decision-making process when purchasing fast fashion.

The proposed outcome to the revised model (Figure B) is “share”, which is one of the most important act that an influencer is willing to do. The job of an influencer is to share content with its network to develop intimacy and authenticity, and by doing so their network is likely to increase. When the authors discussed the outcome “share” with the participants from generation Y, Word of Mouth (WoM) seem to be the natural choice. According to Ismagilova et al., (2017), Word of Mouth is a form or oral interaction between a receiver and a communicator, about a commercial matter which can be a brand, product or service. The majority of the participants agree on using WoM to share their opinion of their purchases, especially if they have experienced dissatisfaction.

“I never post anything on social medias, I rather talk about my experiences face to face with my friends” Y2.

Overall, individuals within generation Y have noticed an impact of social media influencers on their behaviour. One of the impact is the idea of sharing their purchases more often, through WoM. A collected view among individuals within generation Y is that an influencer helps them to keep updated on new trends and where to buy it.

Figure B. A revised model of the decision-making process derived from empirical findings of generation Y.
5.3.4 Decision-making model among generation Z

The new generation, also known as Z refers to individuals born after 1996 and were highly exposed to the technology boom (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001). This generation is said to be born with internet and a smartphone in their hands according to Bernstein (2015).

Like in the previous section, the five steps were presented to the participants in order for them to grasp a better understanding of the model. Most participants, while looking at the model, clearly stated that if they see something they like on an influencers account, they directly click on the link and purchase it. For the majority of them, most steps in the model are irrelevant, as they tend to directly go to the purchasing section.

“If I see a product that an influencer is promoting and which I want, then I click the link and go directly to the product and buy it. I never check for other similar alternatives” Z3.

For the participants, step 2 “search” and step 3 “evaluate alternatives” are not followed. The reason for this is that the constant update of clothes and trends by the influencers already provides them the given alternatives. One can see that social media influencers have a great impact on the majority of the participant within generation Z. Thus, the way this generation comes to a purchasing decision differs compared to generation Y.

5.3.5 Outcomes of the Decision-making model

As explained in the previous section with individuals from generation Y, the original EKB model is composed of four outcomes. Compared to the data collected in the previous section, generation Y express that the constantly updates often results in a negative outcome. On the contrary, respondents from generation Z seem to enjoy the information overload on Instagram, which pushes them to consume more.

“It is all about how the influencer is matching the clothes, the whole outfit and the surroundings, how she has done her hair and makeup” Z1.

Just as generation Y, generation Z have experienced “cognitive dissonance” through their decision-making process when purchasing fast fashion. When it comes to the outcomes of “Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction”, this generation put much emphasis in how the influencer manage
to promote and present an apparel. For this generation, experiencing dissatisfaction will not lead to a disinvestment. Instead they tend to continue purchasing from the company if the influencers manage to present an apparel in a “glamorous” way. In this sense, both satisfaction and dissatisfaction lead to consumption according to the data collected from the focus groups.

“I would definitely be disappointed at the company, but I would not stop making purchases from that store just because of that” Z3.

The outcomes experienced through the participants within generation Z demonstrates a strong impact of social media influencers on their decision-making and the outcomes when purchasing fast fashion. The generation still experience the outcomes of “cognitive dissonance”, “satisfaction/dissatisfaction” and “consumption”. However, they do not tend to experience the outcome of “disinvestment”, because even though they feel dissatisfied, they will still consume.

5.3.6 Potential outcome: Share
The data generated during the interaction in the focus groups of generation Z, has demonstrated a strong impact and importance of social media influencers on their decision-making when purchasing. Therefore, there was a real need for the authors to draw a revised model of the EKB, specifically for the generation Z. This revised model (Figure C) is illustrating the purpose of this paper which is to seek for potential impact of social media influencers on the decision making among Swedish females within generation Y and Z in the fast fashion industry.
Within this revised model, the authors have identified a potential outcome “share”, which has also been presented in the previous section discussing generation Y. In this section, this outcome is being perceived differently in comparison to generation Y. Generation Z do share their purchases as well. Partly through WoM (Word of Mouth), but also through eWoM (Electronic Word of Mouth), due to their high involvement online. According to Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan (2008), eWoM is defined as any informal communication directed at the consumer, through internet and social media communities. It allows individuals to publish and share information about products and services purchased with the option to remain anonymous while doing it (ibid).

In the primary data collection, several individuals within generation Z agree that eWoM is an outcome that they tend to engage in after making a purchase.

“I usually share what I have bought by uploading a picture. But rarely use hashtags or hyperlinks” Y7.

The authors dug deeper in order to understand where this extensive use of eWoM are stemming from. The majority expressed the reason as being a need for confirmation from their friends.
and/or followers. By uploading pictures of themselves wearing the apparel, they will receive the recognition they asked for.

“I would absolutely post a picture if I bought new clothes. I mean, if I feel beautiful in my new clothes, I take a selfie and upload it. You want to see what others think about it” Y4.

In conclusion, he authors have experiences a strong impact of social media influencers among the individuals within generation Z. It seems like this generation have a bigger desire and need to share and posts new purchases. For these participants, social media influencers have an impact on the decision-making process, by making sure consumer within this generation, goes straight to the purchasing step, instead of taking the time to evaluate all steps. As a result, these individuals tend to buy more frequently and to take faster purchasing decisions than generation Y.
6. Conclusion

In this section the reader will be presented the answers to the purpose and to the research questions of this paper.

In the early stage of this paper, the authors expressed the two main research questions which are stated as followed:

RQ (1)
In what ways do social media influencers play a role in the decision-making process for generation Y and Z female consumers, while purchasing fast fashion in Sweden?

RQ (2)
How do influencers impact the different outcomes that stem from the purchasing stage, within the decision-making model, for consumers in the fast fashion industry?

Empirical data have been collected through focus group discussions. In order for the researchers to gain a better understanding of the purpose, primary data have been cross-referenced with secondary data collected in the early stages of the paper elaboration. The authors have based their analysis on the decision-making model EKB (1978), as a starting point to analyse and compare the responses between generation Y and Z.

A general perception found among the respondents within generation Y and Z, was that both generations agreed upon being affected by social media influencer, in one way or another. However, the impacts of social medias influencers through Instagram, seem to differ depending on the age group of the females. The effect clearly seems to be greater among generation Z.

A common view shared among the females of generation Y is that, all the steps of the original decision-making model (EKB) are followed during a purchase decision of a product that is being promoted by an influencer. They do not seem to be as mentally affected by the overload of products shared by influencers, compared to the females of generation Z. One of the reasons why the female participants of generation Y seem to be more rational, might be, because they were not born during the upswing of Instagram, but rather they had to apprehend it over time. As depicted in Figure B, generation Y does not engage in “share”, as much as the other
generation. Nevertheless, if engaged in, it would be through physical interaction also explained as WoM.

On the contrary, social media influencers have a greater impact on generation Z decision-making process while purchasing. The majority of these participants agreed that social media influencers, are the primary reason for them to go straight to the purchase. One of the reason for these females being affected, could be due to the constant updates from influencers on Instagram, marketing different products. Most of the participants within generation Z, agreed that, they do not necessary need to recognize a specific need in order for a purchase to be done. Instead they explain that due to the constant updates from the influencers on Instagram, a desire for the products is simply created. Due to this, they are skipping steps in the decision-making process and directly pursue to the purchase step. Both female participants from generation Y and Z, agree that influencers do not live a life of a “normal” Swede. However, generation Z still feel stressed and often compare themselves with the lives of the influencers which often result in anxiety.

The authors can draw the conclusion that social media influencers impact both generation Y and Z in their decision-making while purchasing, however they have an immense impact on generation Z. The biggest impacts that social media influencers have on this generation is creating a faster purchase decision and to create a constant desire of purchasing new products. To finalize this paper, the authors draw the conclusion that Swedish females within generation Z are strongly impacted by social media influencers compared to generation Y.
7. Discussion

The last section provides the reader with an outline of limitations of the paper and provides suggestions for further research.

7.1 Limitations

The research paper presented has been conducted within an academic environment. Therefore, different limitations occurred in the early stages of the research process. The authors had to face a time limitation of approximately five months, which represents an important restriction for the investigation. By having a limited amount of time, the authors had to make some decisions regarding data collection, methods and frame of investigation. With a longer period of time for the research, difference in primary data collection could have been made such as having interviews with influencers for example, in order to have a deeper understanding of the problem expressed.

The choice of focus groups was made according to the time limitation because they have been conducted in Jönköping and Tibro for time convenience reasons. As expressed in the method section (chapter 3), conducting focus groups has risks, which can be found in the data collected with influenced answers because of “group pressure”, being afraid of saying something “wrong” and by appearing as a leader within the participants. It was the role of the moderator to restrain the risks as much as possible during the focus groups. The data collected throughout these focus groups helped the researchers to develop this paper, but with more time, more groups could have been interviewed and would have led to more extensive data collection. It is important to remember throughout the whole paper that these limitations were present, to be able to understand the development of it.

In the composition of focus groups, the authors encountered ethical limitations. To increase the data generated, the researchers were aiming for a significant gap in age between generation Y and Z, but for ethical reasons, it was not possible to conduct focus groups with people under 18 from generation Z. The reason for that was the need of parental agreements in regard to the potential interviewed under aged, which would have taken more time in the process. In consequence, the composition of the generation Z focus group was 18-19 years old, which, in a sense reduces the potential outcomes of the research.
The field investigated: the impact of social media influencers on the decision-making for Swedish female within generation Y and Z, while purchasing in the fast fashion remains a very modern topic. Numerous research papers can be found on the trend of social media, but the term Influencer has emerged within the past two years and presents some gaps in the literature. The problem and purpose of this paper is very specific, which had the authors rethink the frame of references many times in order to understand the potential outcomes, that could be interesting for the field, to explore. Investigation one part of the social media environment was tricky as it changes often, and evolves very fast, the authors had to question themselves a lot to be up to date on the research topic. Each section of the purpose had to be explored in order to combine the results of the data collection into a complete and meaningful research.

Last but not least, writing a research paper was for the three authors a first time. This is an important limitation, because they had to learn about the process, the regulations and to understand that everything could not be investigated. Uncertainty was felt throughout the whole process as it was the first time. Nevertheless, it gave the authors the opportunity to develop academic skills and gain confidence in the work produced.

### 7.2 Suggestions for further research

One may argue that the decision-making process while purchasing may be adapted differently depending on different factors. Due to the limitations mentioned above, the authors consider that, further research could shed light on factors such as economic well-being, affectual value, geographical and gender differences.

From the empirical findings, the authors conclude that individuals of generation Y possess a set of fundamental values, which may have been established before the boom of social media. These values may be the underlying reason for why this generation do not seem to be as affected by social media and influencers (physically and emotionally), as generation Z. Thus, more interesting result may appear if research were conducted amongst the oldest individuals in generation Y and youngest in generation Z, since this may provide a more differentiated answer.

An interesting observation during the focus group discussions with generation Z, was that the majority of the participants implied that their younger siblings were even more affected by social media and influencers, compared to themselves. Similar statements were brought to
discussion within the focus groups of generation Y. Therefore, the most interesting implication to consider is how teenagers today are affected by social media and influencers and further how this could have an impact on stress related mass consumption. Following research questions are suggested by the authors:

\textit{RQ: In what ways do social media and social media influencers have an impact on stress related mass consumption among teenagers?}
8. References


Branigan, E. and Mitsis, A. (2014). Reach for Generation Y: using celebrity endorsement to


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Appendix 1: English Questionnaire

Which generation do you belong to?
- Generation Z (born after 1995)

How much time do you spend on Instagram each day?
- <1 hour/day
- 1–2 hours/day
- >2 hours/day

Do you follow any influencers on Instagram?
- Yes, one or a few
- Yes, many actually
- No

If yes, how many approximately?
Answer:

If yes, what is the reason?
- For inspiration, I like the style of the influencer
- I know the person
- It’s fun

If no, what is the reason?
- I'm not interested of people I do not know
- I'm not interested in fashion (fast fashion)
- I only follow people on Instagram that I know
- It is just a bunch of luxury holiday photos, normal people do not live like that…

Where do you prefer to buy fast fashion?
- Via online stores (ex. nelly.com, nakd.com, ginatricot.se)
- Via physical stores

Online – what is the reason for this?
- Easy and comfortable
- It is boring to visit physical stores
- It is cheaper
- All the above

Physical stores – what is the reason for this?
- It is easier since I can try the clothes on at the same time
- To visit physical stores is a part of the shopping experience
- I do not know, I just prefer physical stores
Appendix 2: Swedish Questionnaire

Vilken generation tillhör du?
- Generation Z (född efter 1995)

Hur mycket tid spenderar du på Instagram?
- <1 timmar/dag
- 1–2 timmar/dag
- >2 timmar/dag

Följer du några Influencers på Instagram?
- Ja, en eller några få
- Ja, rätt många faktiskt
- Nej

Om ja, ungefär hur många?
Svar:

Om ja, vad är anledningen?
- För inspiration, jag gillar hans/hennes stil
- Jag känner personen
- Mest för att det är kul

Om nej, vad är anledningen?
- Inte intresserad av folk jag inte känner
- Inte särskilt intresserad av mode (fast fashion)
- Följer bara folk som jag känner
- Det är ju bara massa lyxig semesterbilder, ingen normal människa lever så…

Vart föredrar du att shoppa fast fashion?
- Via online-butiker (ex. nelly.com, nakd.com, ginatricot.se)
- Via fysiska butiker

Online - vad är anledningen till detta?
- Snabbt och smidigt
- Tråkigt att gå i butiker
- Billigare
- Allt ovan

Fysiska butiker - vad är anledningen till detta?
- Enklare att handla då jag kan testa kläderna direkt
- Att gå i butiker är en del av handlandet
- Vet inte, föredrar det bara
Appendix 3: Participation Agreement

Med min signatur accepterar jag nedan punkter

- Att mina svar och diskussionen som jag medverkar i får spelar in (ljudinspelning) och antecknas av ansvariga för fokusgruppen
- Att mina svar och diskussionen som jag medverkar i får redovisas och publiceras i form utav ett skriftligt arbete
- Uppgifter kommer endast användas i utbildningssyfte, därmed kommer inga personuppgifter att delas vidare.
- Om personuppgifter eller känsliga uppgifter delas i fokusgruppen så får jag inte dela vidare detta
- Genom medverkan i fokusgruppen så har jag tystnadsplikt utanför gruppen, utav respekt för de andra deltagarna
- Att medverkan i denna fokusgrupp är frivillig och ingen kompensation för detta är berättigad

Ort/Datum: _______________  Signatur: ____________________

Namnförtydligande ______________________
Appendix 5: Focus Groups Guidelines

Schedule and Guidelines for the focus groups

Section 1 - Introduction
- Welcoming the participant and thanking them to be part of this focus group
- Offering the participants some fika and simultaneously briefly explain the subject of matter
- Defining words such as: influencers, fast fashion and explains the general purchasing model which will be used in the thesis
- Reminding the participants that there are no right or wrong answers, that they will be recorded but their names and answers will remain anonymous
- Asking the participants to fill in the questionnaire and participation form
- Reminding the participants to speak out loud and clear, and to always say their name before sharing their personal experience.

Section 2 - General Questions

Social media influencers
- Asks the participants to characterize what an influencer is according to them.
Additional questions for this section
- Why do you think influencers on Instagram have become so popular lately?
- What positive and negative aspects can an influencer contribute with?
  - for the company point of view
  - potential customers (girls on Instagram)
- Do you ever reflect on the fact that influencers are paid to market products?
  - With that in mind, does it affect you and your view of the influencer?
- How do you perceive influencers who very often post collaborations with different stores and brands (where they issue discount codes)? Positively? Negative? Why?

Fast fashion
- What would you say influences and inspires you when buying fast fashion?
- Have you ever bought a product that an influencer has marketed?
  - If yes, what? Did you buy the apparel because of the influencers as a person or because he / she managed to draw your attention to the clothe? Both?
  - If no, is there any reason?
- When shopping fast fashion, how often do you buy because have a need (you have NO pants in your wardrobe) or would you say that you often buy to satisfy a craving (you just "MUST" have the red hoodie from NAKD).

Questions related to the decision-making model
When you look at the five steps of the decision process, do you think these are the steps you go through when you buy fast fashion? Why? Why not?

- Would you say that most of your fast fashion purchases are planned purchases (where you are actively looking for a specific item that you actually need), or more spontaneous purchases (you see the product and you like it, so you buy it without any great thought)?
- Do you think consumers shopping behavior has changed due to social media in general?
- Do you think influencers affect your purchase decisions? (make you skip steps in the decision-making process while purchasing).
- When an influencer markets a product that you really like and want to buy, how long does it take for you to buy it? Do you make any comparisons between different items or brands before you buy it?
- Cognitive dissonance: have you ever experienced it? What was the reason? (Ex: You have decided not to shop for a month, but then you see that an influencer is marketing a really nice sweater on Instagram that you really want so you choose to buy this sweater).
- A scenario (the participants were asked to decide which scenario they best could relate to)

>“An influencer markets a shirt that you like and therefore you buy it. When the shirt arrives, you are in love!”

- You give all the cred to the influencer and the products that he/she is marketing play a big role to you (loyal to the influencers).
- You give all the cred to the company and place a great emphasis on what the company offers its customers (loyal to the company).

The same scenario was asked again, but this time the shirt that they had bought did not match their expectations, it was ugly and did not look as pretty on you. Who do you blame?

- The influencer for marketing this shirt. I unfollow the influencer on Instagram but keep buying from the brand.
- The company. I would still follow the influencer but I would stop shopping from this brand.

- Those times that you have purchased products that has been marketed through an influencer, would you say you were mostly satisfied or dissatisfied with your purchase? Why, why not?
- Is it important for you to post / share your purchases on social media? Is that something you often do? Or do you tend to share your newly purchased products face to face? Both?
- Do you think it is more common today to share newly purchased products (both eWOM and WOM) compared to how it was before? What do you think this is due to?