



The Influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female
Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions.

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ABSTRACT

The small-scale study investigated the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female apparel purchasing decisions. The research specifically focused on South African female apparel purchasers and their purchasing journey, establishing whether a social movement, such as the Body Positivity Movement has the power to influence their buying journey and ultimately buying decisions.

The Body Positivity Movement is becoming more present through apparel advertising. Thus, the inclusion of all body shapes and sizes through apparel advertising, is becoming crucial for apparel organisations, in order to attract consumers to the brand initially and assist in creating healthy customer relationships.

This study reviewed various common themes surrounding Body Positivity and the influence of the social movement on the consumer buying process, by paying close attention to the process and the factors that influence a consumer to purchase from a given brand, taking into account their demographics.

Currently, there is minimal literature available on the influence of the Body Positivity movement on apparel purchasing decisions. As the social movement continues to bloom, the gap in literature should be addressed. If there is a positive relationship and correlation determined, it could change the way apparel brands advertise.

This study will assist in filling this gap by determining the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on apparel purchasing decisions, specifically amongst South African females that fall within the generation Z age group.

In conclusion, by understanding and gaining insights into the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on apparel purchasing decisions, and the importance for more body inclusive advertising for apparel brands, one can determine the influence of the movement on female Generation Z apparel purchasers and in turn, this study can act as a crucial insight to apparel brands.

Keywords: body positivity, Generation Z, apparel purchasers, Body Positivity Movement

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the article/ research report/ mini-dissertation/ dissertation/ thesis [choose the relevant research output] submitted for the **Bachelor of Commerce Honours in Strategic Brand Management** to The Independent Institute of Education (The IIE) is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for a postgraduate qualification.

Signature:



Date: 24 November 2021

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1. CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1. Contextualisation

The Body Positivity Movement is a social movement created to empower individuals regardless of their size, physical weight, or race, while further challenging the ways in which society presents and views the physical body (Cherry, 2020). With the rise in female empowerment and the focus surrounding inclusion of all physical body types, regardless of the colour, shape or size, it has become essential for apparel brands to incorporate this social movement into their catalogues by introducing plus size and petit ranges (Jess, 2021), as well as utilising mannequins and models of all shapes and races to remain relevant and invite females to feel welcomed and empowered by shopping with their brand (Jess, 2021).

The influence of the body positivity movement on consumers' decision making will be explored through the review of seven former studies conducted by Grant and Stephen; 2006; Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas and Williams, 2011; Oh and Petrie, 2011, Park and Ko, 2011; Alishah and Hunjra, 2012; Limatius, 2020; Niazi, Siddiqui, Grimsley, 2020). As well as looking at previous research, consumers' opinions, and Dewy's Consumer Buying Process Model as a theoretical concept (John Dewey, 1910).

This research aims to explore the influence that the body positivity movement has had on South African female Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions, particularly within the women's department. Moreover, the objective of this research is to collect accurate, qualitative data that represents the opinions of Generation Z's apparel purchasing consumers. The study further aims to make use of a qualitative questionnaire and in-depth interviews for the purpose of analysing the opinions of Generation Z apparel purchasing consumers and the influence the body positivity movement has on their purchasing decisions.

This research study will act as a contribution to the need for existing information and data within a South African context and could potentially add new insights into the study surrounding the influence of the body positivity movement on Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions.

1.2. Rationale

There is limited research available highlighting the influence of the body positivity movement on Generation Z consumers' apparel purchasing decisions (Byrne, 2021).

The current research available surrounds the influence of the body positivity movement on purchasing decisions is centred on consumers in general and not concentrated on South African Generation Z consumers, nor is it concentrated on South African brands (Luzon, 2019). Furthermore, understanding how a social movement can impact South African apparel stores, in relation to their sales, as a result of Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions being influenced by the inclusion of the body positivity movement, is relevant to and heightens the knowledge of the research in regards to strategic brand management.

1.3. Problem Statement

The body positivity movement is a social movement created to empower individuals regardless of their size, physical weight, or race, while further challenging the ways in which society presents and views the physical body (Cherry, 2020).

Many worldwide brands have seen the need to adapt their display of models to align with the body positivity movement (Luzon, 2019), to the extent where brands have used the movement as a tool to increase sales and publicity (Byrne, 2021). There is, however, limited research available regarding the influence that the body positivity movement has had on South African Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions, particularly within the women's department. More research, therefore, needs to be conducted to succinctly understand the influence the body positivity movement has on South African Generation Z's apparel purchasing decisions.

1.4. Research Questions

1.4.1. Primary Research Question:

RQ 1: Does the brand's inclusion of the body positivity movement influence Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions?

1.4.2. Secondary Research Questions:

RQ2: Do female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement, in order to initially attract them to the brand?

RQ3: Are Generation Z apparel consumers perceptions of an apparel brand influenced by the inclusion of the body positivity movement?

1.5. Research Objectives

1.5.1. Main Research Objective:

RO1: To investigate whether the body positivity movement can affect the consumer buying process.

1.5.2. Secondary Research Objective:

RO 2: Investigate whether female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement in order to initially attract them to the brand.

RO 3: Investigate the influence of the body positivity movement on South African female Generation Z consumers apparel buying decisions.

1.6. Proposed Journal

The proposed journal for this study is the Journal of Marketing. This would be suitable for this study to be published, as this journal sheds light on a diverse range of marketing topics. The topics within this journal deal with issues that involve strategic brand management.

1.7. Chapter Outline

Chapter One provided an overview of the research and outlined the purpose and objectives for the research.

Chapter Two reviewed the secondary data related to this study and provides a theoretical framework devised from core branding theories.

Chapter Three presents the research methodology and design for the research. This chapter also presents the population of the research and subsequently, the sample size, along with the sampling methods. Additionally, chapter three presents the data-collection method and data analysis methods to be used during the research.

Chapter Four presents the research findings of the data collected, as well as a discussion of these findings in relation to the research objectives.

Chapter Five provides a conclusion to the research and presents a summary of the findings from the literature and research in relation to the research objectives. Furthermore, the chapter presents a conclusion and makes recommendations, as well as concluding remarks.

1.8. Chapter One Summary

Chapter one introduced the field of study and sets the scene for the background of the brand. It provided key research questions and objectives for the study and specifies the rationale of the study.

2. CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This section consists of a literature review encompassing literature and theories collected from previous research studies that relate to the research topic. Through exploring and analysing current literature, a foundation for the research study will be provided. The aim behind this study is to determine the influence that the Body Positivity Movement has on South African female Generation Z purchasing decisions. Each theory will be broken down relating to the topic of research. Each research objective will then be addressed and broken down according to the literature collected and literature review conducted.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation presents the grounding behind the research, it presents and discusses the theory and framework which is to be applied throughout the research.

2.2.1. The Social comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954)

According to Festinger (1954), the social comparison theory suggests that individuals have an innate drive to evaluate themselves, most likely by comparing themselves to others. A core feature in how individuals evaluate themselves is through social comparison or in relation to others (Cherry, 2019).

The social comparison process involves individuals growing to know themselves through evaluation of their abilities, attitudes and traits in comparison with others around them (Cherry, 2020). There are two types of social comparison, namely: upwards social comparison and downward social comparison, where upwards social comparison takes place when one compares themselves with those who they believe are better than themselves, focusing on the desire to improve level of ability or current status (Cherry, 2020). On the contrary, downward social comparison involves one comparing themselves to others who are worse off than themselves, centred around making oneself feel better about their existing abilities (Cherry, 2020).

Festinger's (1954) theory explains that individuals will compare themselves to the models that brands use to advertise their garments, therefore influencing females' purchasing decisions, according to whether the brand supports the body positivity movement. This theory is relevant to the study as it points to one of the main influencing factors behind why the individual may be against purchasing from a store where the models do not represent body positivity. The

consumer may not relate to the models and as a result, the brand, thereby influencing the results of this study.

2.2.2. The Consumer Buying Process Model (Dewey, 1910)

A buying process refers to the sequence of steps that a consumer undertakes while making a purchasing decision (Grimsley, 2020). The standard consumer buying process model includes five stages, namely: recognition of needs and wants, information search, evaluation of choices, purchase and post-purchase evaluation (Grimsley, 2020).

Recognition of needs and wants, presenting as the first stage of the consumer buying process model, refers to the fact that an individual will not initiate a purchase without the recognition of a need or want (Johnston, 2016). Needs arise as a result of a problem that needs solving, where wants arise as a result of being influenced by external factors (Johnston, 2016). In the first stage of the consumer buying process model, the marketer should identify the needs of their consumers and as a result, offer products or services best fitted to the desire identified (Johnston, 2016).

Information search involves consumers being aware of their need, however the consumer seeks to gain more information relevant to satisfy their need, resulting in the individual looking for information in internal and external business environments, which may involve the consumer looking at advertisements, online or print (Grimsley, 2020). The marketer needs to offer an abundance of information regarding the product or service necessary to the consumer (Grimsley, 2020).

Evaluation of alternatives involves the consumer having thoroughly researched the product or service that may satisfy their need or want, and thereafter evaluating alternative products or services based on durability, popularity, brand, price and social media reviews (Grimsley, 2020). At the end of this stage, the consumer will then rank their choices and select the product or service that best matches their need or want (Johnston, 2016).

The consumer then goes about selecting the product or service they are going to buy, this stage may be interrupted because of negative feedback or changes in business or financial plans (Johnston, 2016). The marketer needs to remind the consumer about their reason behind their decision to buy the product and further reiterate it being the best possible option for the consumer to fulfil their needs (Grimsley, 2020).

Post-purchase evaluation involves the consumer being satisfied or dissatisfied with the product or service. The consumer may share their post purchase evaluation in the form of customer reviews on social media, websites or word-of-mouth (Grimsley, 2020). The marketer therefore has to ensure that the consumer will experience satisfaction with the product or service (Johnston, 2016).

The first, second and third stage of Dewey' (1910) model, will allow for female Generation Z consumers to recognise their needs or wants associated with the desire to purchase apparel, this will be followed by the shopper looking at various shops from which to purchase their apparel. As a follower and being compliant with the body positivity movement, their second and third stage of the buying process may be influenced by the brands' compliance or failure to address the body positivity movement.



Figure 1.1: Dewey. 1910. *Consumer Decision Making Process Model*.

Source: Business Research Methodology, 2021.

2.3. The Theoretical Approach

The theoretical approach evaluates and determines how and why the body positivity movement has the power to influence South African female Generation Z apparel consumers purchasing decisions. The focus is on the impact that the body positivity movement has on the consumer buying process model. This aligns with the three research objectives:

- **RO1:** To investigate whether the body positivity movement can affect the consumer buying process.
- **RO2:** To Investigate the influence of the body positivity movement on South African female Generation Z consumers apparel buying decisions.
- **RO3:** To Investigate whether female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement in order to influence their buying process.

In order to succinctly investigate the above-mentioned research objectives, the social comparison theory and consumer buying process model have been applied, to establish the relative presence of the problem being studied (Festinger, 1954; Dewey, 1910). Given the nature of the problem, it is appropriate to review the relationship between the social comparison theory as well as the consumer buying process model and their impact on female Generation Z shoppers apparel purchasing decisions.

Research objective one evaluates how the body positivity movement influences the consumer buying decision process (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas and Williams, 2011). This evaluation considers the social comparison theory within the consumer buying decision process model and how the social comparison theory can be applied to influence the consumer buying decision process (Grant and Stephen, 2006).

Research objective two investigates whether South African female Generation Z consumers apparel buying decisions are influenced by the presence of the body positivity movement within the brand (Limatius, 2020). This investigation considers the social comparison theory in relation to the body positivity movement in apparel and further evaluates to what extent the social comparison will influence the consumer buying process (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra, 2012).

Research objective three determines whether female Generation Z consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement in order to influence their buying process (Grimsley, 2020). This is determined by evaluating each stage of the consumer buying process model to determine the necessity of an apparel brand to incorporate

the body positivity movement and furthermore how this necessity will impact the consumer final buying decision (Oh and Petrie, 2012).

Research Objective One: To investigate whether the body positivity movement can affect the consumer buying process.

The social comparison theory suggests that individuals have an innate drive to evaluate themselves, by comparing themselves to others (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas and Williams, 2011). One of the key ways that individuals evaluate themselves is through social comparison or in relation to others (Cherry, 2019). Females will compare themselves to other females in an attempt to look the best or smallest (Cherry, 2019).

In a study conducted by Heinberg and Thompson (1995), females experienced intense mood and body image disturbance when exposed to a series of media images, reflecting current societally sanctioned standards of attractiveness and thinness, compared to females who were exposed to neutral, nonappearance-related videos (Cattarin, Thompson, Thomas and Williams, 2011). Emphasising the effect of social comparison on self-esteem and body dysmorphia.

Through the rise of the body positivity movement, females no longer saw the need to compare themselves to unrealistic aspirations but rather to promote self-acceptance and build self-esteem (Grant and Stephen, 2006). The body positivity movement has continued to thrive over the years and gained a presence on social media. The goal of the body positivity movement is to address unrealistic ideals about beauty, to improve one's self-image and learning how to love oneself to the fullest (Limatius, 2020). The promotion of acceptance of all body shapes and differences, encourages one to now rather make comparisons to a more realistic body shape through the rise of the body positivity movement (Cherry, 2019).

The presence of the body positivity movement has increased in apparel stores (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra, 2012) through the use of imagery, front-of-store signage, mannequins and clothing displaying the size range available for purchase in store (Limatius, 2020). The store presence and window display are one of the first factors the consumer takes into account when shopping in a mall, influencing whether or not to enter the store and formulating their initial perceptions of the brand (Oh and Petrie, 2011). Forming part of stage two of the consumer buying process model (Grant and Stephen, 2006).

The consumer buying process model traditionally consists of five stages a consumer will go through when purchasing a product or service, namely: recognition of needs and wants, information search, evaluation of choices, purchase and post-purchase evaluation (Grimsley, 2020). There are a number of variables that can impact the consumer's process, especially within stage two and stage three, some of these variables include popularity, brand or social presence (Grimsley, 2020). According to Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra (2012), advertising (forming part of the social presence) is a way of communication utilised to convince an audience or consumer to purchase a given product or service (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra, 2012). Consumers make decisions and build perceptions of brands based on the brand to which they are emotionally attached (Oh and Petrie, 2011). If a brand does not support a movement a consumer is passionate about (such as the body positivity movement), this may impact the consumers perception of the brand. The consumer may then go about evaluating alternatives and possibly even selecting an alternate brand from which to satisfy their need or want (Grant and Stephen, 2006). This highlights the influence that a social movement can have on the consumer buying process.

Research Objective Two: To Investigate the influence of the body positivity movement on South African female Generation Z consumers apparel buying decisions.

In choosing which product or service to purchase, subconsciously the consumer moves through the buying process model (Grant & Stephen, 2006). Particularly within apparel purchasing, the main consideration factors the consumer will go through in stage two (information search) and stage three (evaluation of choices) refer to brand, visual display (initial attraction to the garments) and price (Oh and Petrie, 2012). This is particularly pertinent as the garment purchased is going to be worn and seen by others (Grant & Stephen, 2006).

As a result of consumers becoming more connected to brands and what brands stand for, an emotional connection between the brand and the consumer is built. The consumer builds various expectations for the brand (Grant and Stephen, 2006). The consumer then begins to relate to the brand on an emotional level, where certain movements or practices the consumer believes strongly in, they will then expect the brand to comply with. Moreover that the brand complies with their societal beliefs and values (Park and Ko, 2011), to the extent, whereby if the brand fails to support the movement or practice, the consumer will choose an alternative brand (in stage three), which the consumer connects with emotionally, in that the brand and consumer share similar societal values and beliefs (Oh and Petrie, 2011).

The study conducted by Grant and Stephen (2006), produces findings relating to the key decision factors when buying clothing, which point to peer group approval, the influence of the brand name and the brands' associations. Moreover, the findings revealed that respondents were prepared to pay more for a branded product that placed high emphasis on the product being 'cool' or following certain trends (social movements) (Grant and Stephen, 2006). This emphasises that societal trends or movements have the power to influence shoppers. Brands are making efforts to understand how societal ideals about the body affect a consumers' need and desires, which as a result affect consumer perception of the brand and the buying process (Park and Ko, 2011).

Research Objective Three: To Investigate whether female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement in order to influence their buying process.

The consumer will begin the process of buying decision making, when a need or desire arises that needs to be fulfilled (Johnston, 2016). The first stage of the consumer realising the need or desire for a certain product or service requires little to no manipulation or intense thinking (Grimsley, 2020). However, the second stage of the consumer gathering information regarding the various product or service needed to fulfil the need or desire, may cause the consumer to think and act according to their personal beliefs and existing associations with brands or new perceptions of brands (Johnston, 2016).

When a consumer sets out to satisfy their need or want in a physical environment, the store displays play an important role in influencing shoppers store entry and their perceptions of the brand image, especially to consumers who are unfamiliar with the brand (Oh and Petrie, 2011). When a consumer is time constrained to find the particular item they are looking for, naturally, based off of store displays, a consumer will quickly make an assumption of whether or not the store will be able to provide them with what they are looking for (Grant and Stephen, 2006). Moreover, based off consumers previous perceptions of the brand, the consumer will perform the same action, whereby if the consumer knows the brand's offering, they will quickly eliminate that brand in their search if they believe the brand will not be compliant with what they are searching for (Grant and Stephen, 2006).

Thus, when a consumer is looking for a specific offering, certain brands may not even be considered an option, if they do not comply with the consumers standards, therefore resulting in immediate dismissal of the brand in the mind of the consumer (Grimsley, 2020). It is

essential for the marketer to ensure the brand complies with all necessary standards in order to be considered an option in the mind of the consumer in the necessary field, in order for the brand to move past stage three in the mind of the consumer and become the purchasing brand of choice for the consumer (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra, 2012). Therefore, what the brand offers and socially complies with, plays a vital role in where the brand will sit in the mind of the consumer during the consumer buying process (Niazi, Siddiqui, Alishah and Hunjra, 2012).

Through evaluation of both the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) as well as the consumer buying process model (Dewey, 1910), the conclusion presented highlighted the need for brands to adapt to and comply with social movements in order to create connection with consumers, which encourages the consumers' purchasing processes (Grant and Stephen, 2006). The argument created is thus in favour of the body positivity movement presence in apparel stores presenting as an influencing factor for the Generation Z female shoppers when making their purchasing decision.

2.4. Conceptualisation

The key terms that are significant in administering a total understanding of this research are as follows:

Body Positivity refers to the assertion that all individuals are worthy of a positive body image, regardless of how society view ideal size, appearance and shape (Cherry, 2020). Encouraging the inclusion of all body sizes and appearance through apparel marketing and in stores through the use of mannequins of all shapes and appearances.

The Body Positivity Movement is a social movement that challenges how society views the body, promotes acceptance of all bodies, addresses unrealistic body standards and helps individuals build confidence and acceptance of their own bodies (Cherry, 2020).

South African Apparel Stores refers to the clothing shops present within South Africa from which consumers can purchase clothing (Nicasio, 2021).

Generation Z consumers refer to the generation reaching adulthood in the second decade of the 21st century, perceived as being familiar with technology from a young age (Dimock, 2019). Generation Z consumers are also more familiar and involved in social movements they have rooted beliefs in (Dimock, 2019)

Body Image refers to how an individual sees their own body and how attractive they feel themselves to be (Brazier, 2020). Body Image can influence consumer purchasing decisions, based on how the brand encourages positive body image, being inclusive of all body shapes and appearance.

2.5. Chapter Two summary

Chapter two addresses the research objectives in terms of the literature collected and analysed in the form of a literature review that was conducted. Each objective is unpacked and addressed according to all secondary research that is available in the form of literature sources, which aids the researcher in gaining insight into the influence of the Body Positivity movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions based off all secondary research made available to the researcher.

3. CHAPETR THREE – METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter three presents the adopted research paradigm and design for the research. Additionally, this chapter identifies and presents the unit of analysis, population and population parameters for the research. This, along with the sample size and sampling methods considered and implemented during data-collection. As such, this chapter presents the data collection method and data analysis methods implemented during the research.

3.2. Research Paradigm

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of the Body Positivity movement on South Africa female Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions. Interpretivism will be employed in conducting this research (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Interpretivism considers the various environments that humans find themselves in, describing, how these environments influence social actions and decisions (du Plooy-Cillers *et al.*, 2014). Interpretivism has been influenced by three traditions including: hermeneutics, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism (Mittwede, 2012). The interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding purpose and meaning that is attached to individuals' personal experiences and actions associated with the influence that the body positivity movement has on their apparel purchasing decisions and how this social movement affected the participants perceptions and purchasing decisions in the apparel department when shopping (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Given the above, the axiological positions of this research are grounded in interpretivism. This study follows a qualitative research design (Mittwede, 2021), assessing and understanding whether the body positivity movement influences female Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions.

The use of the interpretivist paradigm further enables knowledge derived, to be personally experienced rather than acquired from outside sources (iNtgrty, 2016). This is in keeping with the subjective information that needs to be derived, focusing on the experiences and opinions of the participants with regards to the influence of the body positivity movement on their purchasing decisions as female Generation Z apparel shoppers.

Given that the nature of this research is strongly rooted in opinions and perceptions of female Generation Z shoppers, the interpretivist paradigm, which is guided by opinions and perceptions of individuals (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014), is the best fit to guide the qualitative nature of the research.

3.3. Research approach and design

Qualitative data was collected and further analysed for the purpose of this research. The research is based upon an individual's opinion, making the research subjective in nature (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). A qualitative approach was selected due to the nature of the problem statement surrounding there being limited research available regarding the influence that the body positivity movement has had on South African Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions, particularly within the women's department.

This research incorporates an exploratory research design. It makes use of research to explore the influence of the body positivity movement on South African female Generation Z purchases, particularly within the women's department. A small sample size was used to allow the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of each individuals' answers and further allow for the aligning of opinions, factors and beliefs amongst the participants with regard to the influence of the body positivity movement on South African female Generation Z purchases (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

3.4. Population and Sampling

The research parameters for this study included female apparel shoppers, who shop in the women's apparel department in Durban, aged 18-24 years. As individuals aged between 18-24 are more influenced by social movements, such as the Body Positivity Movement than the older individuals (Amenta, 2016). These women fall into the Generation Z group of individuals.

The study made use of non-probability, purposive and convenience sampling while researching the purpose of this study. A total of two sample sizes were selected based on the relevance of the individuals with focus on the population and research questions characteristics. The first sample included 32 female participants between the ages of 18 and 24, who are active apparel purchasers. The second sample group included 8 females, aged between 18 to 24, who are active apparel purchasers.

Purposive sampling was utilised, in line with the qualitative nature of this research to use the research question to determine which characteristics were most important to this study. The characteristics of this study, therefore fit the profile of young female active apparel shoppers within Durban. Non-probability sampling is a method utilised when it is difficult to determine an entire population, further due to this particular study being small-scale in nature, the selected population could not be accurately defined (Bala, 2017). While the sample utilised in the study represents population parameters, the sample groups were selected based on the researcher's judgement, as a result of the entire female apparel shopping population not being accessible (Bala, 2017). In addition to the above-mentioned sampling methods, convenience sampling was also used, as a result of the researcher choosing the population elements that were easily available and deemed convenient at the time of population selection (Elfil and Negida, 2017). This was an inexpensive and easy way to gain insight into the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions.

3.5. Data Collection methods

As the research is based on a qualitative approach, the following data collection methods selected for this study were:

- Online qualitative questionnaire conducted through Google Docs.
- Interviews conducted through Zoom.

The research was conducted over a set period of time. This was in order to give the participants time to answer the online qualitative questionnaire before arranging a Zoom meeting to carry out the interviews. This acted as a tool to bring about increased attention during the data collection, making the findings more accurate. In this, the trustworthiness of the data collection within the research process was ensured.

Moreover, a consent form to conduct the online interviews over Zoom was sent to each participant to confirm their participation and ensure their anonymity. The researcher had originally hoped to conduct face-to-face interviews, however as a result of the global Covid-19 pandemic, this type of data collection was no longer possible for methodological reasons. A copy of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

The questions for the qualitative questionnaire, as well as the interview consisted of both closed ended questions, as well as open-ended questions, seeing as this research was

qualitative. These questions were in the form of questions with a textbox for the participants to type their responses or select options that have been provided, in the qualitative questionnaire and the questions for the interviews were typed out and the responses of the individuals were recorded with consent through the use of a recording device on a cellphone. The data collection process occurred over the period of a month. Data set 1 was distributed and completed by the participants within a set period of time. Data set 2 was then carried out via Zoom over two weeks. The first data set consisted of 7 open-ended and closed-ended questions, for the purpose of understanding and analysing the influence of the Body Positivity movement on apparel purchasing decisions amongst South African female Generation Z shoppers, though the use of logical sequences and easy flow (du Plooy-Cillies *et al.*,2014). Further, obtaining background to the respondents to ensure data that is specific to the interests of the researcher. The second data set was made up of 5 open-ended questions, which are posed to the participants in the form of an interview, to draw upon the respondent's feelings, experiences and beliefs surrounding the influence of the Body Positivity movement on apparel purchasing decisions amongst South African female Generation Z shoppers (du Plooy-Cillies *et al.*,2014). Further, encouraging the participants to express their opinions of the influence of the social movement on their apparel purchasing decisions.

The qualitative questionnaires provided concise and anonymous opinions of individuals allowing them to share more as their answers are confidential, providing more in-depth answers and insight. Whereas an interview allowed for the participants to share ideas and opinions, that allowed the researcher to engage and ask questions which may involve conversation about a particular topic.

3.6. Application of data collection methods

Apart from secondary data, the collection of primary data in this study considered the research questions, with the pure intention to help answer them. With focus on keeping this study ethical and further protecting the identity of each respondent, all research respondents were informed that their responses were confidential.

3.6.1. Online Qualitative Questionnaire

To begin the process of online primary data collection, through the use of qualitative questionnaires, it was essential to have a clear research question, which defined exactly what the researcher wanted to discover. Based on this question, it was essential to determine who the exact target population would be to participate in the questionnaire. Once the sample group had been identified, the researcher designed the questionnaire questions based off of

the primary research question. The researcher further considered what type of questions were going to be asked, including both a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions, the structuring, content, ordering and layout of the qualitative questionnaire questions. The questionnaire was designed using the online platform; Google Docs, and thereafter it was sent to the sample group using WhatsApp. The researcher determined in advance how many responses would be required to represent an accurate sample, being a total of 32 responses, allowing each respondent a total of two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the online qualitative questionnaire questions.

3.6.2. Online Interviews

To understand research participants' opinions on the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions, one-on-one zoom interviews were deemed appropriate for the collection of primary, qualitative research. Active female apparel purchasers between the ages of 18-24, who reside in Durban, were the best choice for the collection of experiential research. This process began with the researcher identifying what the objectives were of collecting the respective primary research, and the information which was needed in order to contribute towards the accuracy of this respective research study. The choice of conducting semi-structured interviews was best suited for this study, seeing as the researcher used a set of predetermined questions which the research participants could respond to in their own words. The researcher asked a total of 5 questions and chose to conduct the interviews over the computer, using Zoom to communicate.

3.7. Data Analysis Methods

The researcher made use of qualitative content analysis, which is used to describe a phenomenon on a conceptual form (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). Content analysis is a form of analysing written, verbal or visual forms of communication messages, which therefore made it appropriate to the purpose and nature of this research study (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). Thematic coding was further used to categorize answers, in order to facilitate the analysis process. Where that process of data analysis was used to decrease the volume of text collected, the process then identified and further grouped categories together in order to seek a deeper understanding of the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The research follows an interpretivist paradigm; therefore the use of qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to provide a rich description of the influence of the Body Positivity movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of the Body

Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions, therefore qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis is only fitting to this research as it enables the researcher to identify patterns of similar opinions and thoughts held by the respondents.

Moreover, thematic analysis was used to identify trends, patterns of meaning, ideas or common themes that occur repeatedly (Schellekens, 2020). The researcher made use of thematic analysis, seeing as it is useful in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the opinions and feeling of the respective students involved. Thematic analysis further assists the researcher in identifying similarities or differences to the themes previously identified in the study, which is beneficial, as the previous research aimed at determining the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions. This analysis allows the researcher to reduce a large amount of data, in order to identify the most important categories and themes, thereby assisting the researcher in answering the primary research question (Schellekens, 2020).

The use of qualitative content analysis allowed the researcher to stay true to the text from the qualitative questionnaires and to achieve and enhance trustworthiness (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

3.8. Application of Data analysis methods

The respondents who provided the data in the qualitative questionnaire and the interviews consisted of female apparel purchasers, between the ages of 18 to 24, the researcher analysed their subjective experiences, feelings and opinions, based on their answers to the questions in the questionnaire and interview. The researcher ensured anonymity of the respondents. The researcher gave each respondent a number and saved their interviews separately on Word. The open-ended questions were analysed by making use of thematic analysis and were presented through the use of a coding scheme. The multiple-choice and closed-ended questions in the questionnaire were analysed through the use of the pie charts and bar graphs, in keeping with the interpretivist paradigm.

First, the researcher familiarised themselves with the data collected by reading and re-reading the data collected from each qualitative questionnaire and interview, in order to become immersed and familiar with the content that was provided by the respondents. The researcher carefully went through all of the data from the qualitative questionnaires and interviews and

began making notes to mark preliminary ideas for codes that would describe the present study content.

Secondly, the researcher began to generate succinct codes that identify important features of the data that may be relevant to answering the primary research question. Once coding the data, the researcher began looking for initial themes, by examining the codes and data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Thirdly, the researcher checked the candidate themes against the dataset, to ensure that they told a convincing story of the data and that the primary research question was being answered. Resulting in the identified themes being combined, discarded or split. The researcher began to describe each theme, to ensure that each theme has an accurate description from the various concepts.

Moreover, the researcher relates the story of each theme to the other themes, the literature review, as well as the research objectives and questions, essentially allowing the researcher to write a coherent analysis of each theme.

Lastly, the report is comprised by the researcher. The researcher achieves this by writing out all of the results on Word. A clear account of the data collection process, as well as the content analysis and thematic analysis are typed out by the researcher. The description of the themes and trends will be utilised as the bases for the final report and the themes will be presented in the form of word-clouds to demonstrate research findings.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

The purpose of this research is for each research participant to be fully informed regarding exactly what the research entails. It is essential that prior to the data collection process, that each participant completes and signs the consent form. A proposed consent form is attached as Annexure C, where in, it contains: the researcher's details, purpose of the research, data collection process and methods, the utilisation of the data, the risks of taking part in the research and lastly, the participants right to confidentiality, ownership of their data, right to additional information and the right to withdraw at any given stage within the research process (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to the consent form signed by the participants, there are however ethical considerations that are essential for the researcher to be aware of throughout the data

collection and analysis processes (du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The main elements to remain aware of during the research process include:

- The researcher will ensure confidentiality of participants.
- The researcher will ensure credible sources are obtained and further ensure that no information is falsified.
- The researcher will take into consideration that not every participant is aware of the impact of the Body Positivity Movement due to their lifestyle or cultural factors, therefore, to recue harm to the surrounding population, the participants will be asked to partake respectfully.
- The researcher will provide in-depth instructions of what the purpose, background and processes of the study are, reinforcing that they may answer the questionnaire freely.
- All sources will be referenced correctly.
- The participants will not be emotionally or physically harmed.
- The data collected from participants is solely for the purpose of the research, however if the research should develop further, consent from participants will be required prior to any data being released.
- The participants will only be from the ages of 18 to 24 years.

3.10. Limitations

It has been mentioned previously in anticipated contribution that the lack of research surrounding the topic of this research provides an opportunity to contribute to academia. Regardless of the lack of research prior to this study and the lack of data collected by previous researchers points to a significant limitation to this body of research. The lack of information suggests a limited scope of the topic which implies that it is essential for this research to dedicate further efforts to address the present gaps in knowledge. While this presents itself as a limitation, this will be dealt with as per additional hours of independent research.

Moreover, the small sample size and specific target market limit the generalisation of results to represent the broader population of all millennials residing in Durban. A consumer's ethical decision-making may differ according to gender, age and purchasing patterns.

Secondly, the used methodology is a qualitative method, which offers a good and deep understanding into participants behaviour. Moreover, as a result of time and financial constraints, there was a limitation involved in accessing respondents across Durban as a whole. Future research should collect data from all over the country to draw generalised

findings to identify the impact of the Body Positivity Movement on female Generation Z consumers buying behaviours.

3.11. Chapter Three summary

Chapter three presented the research paradigm and design for the research. Additionally, this chapter identified and presented the various elements of population and sampling. Finally, this chapter presented the data-collection method and data analysis methods implemented during the research as well as the necessary ethical considerations. The findings from the data-collected are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

4. CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS/FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. Introduction

The research questions formed in this study were constructed upon the existing theories identified in assignment five and suitable data was collected and analysed using these theories. Data has been analysed and interpreted in word-clouds and figures to enhance the understanding of the data. This is a small-scale qualitative study; therefore, findings are not generalised to the population. This research obtains valuable information relating to the impact of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions.

4.2. Presentation and Interpretation of findings

As the research is based on a qualitative approach, the following data collection methods selected for this study were:

Online qualitative questionnaire conducted through Google Docs.

Interviews conducted through Zoom.

Objective 1 - To investigate whether the Body Positivity Movement can affect the consumer buying process.

The two main themes that fall under this objective are: 'the effect of the Body Positivity Movement and 'consumer buying process'.

4.1.1. The effect of the Body Positivity Movement

Figure 4.1. shows the participants responses to question 2 of the qualitative questionnaire: Are your purchasing decisions affected by a brand's reputation?

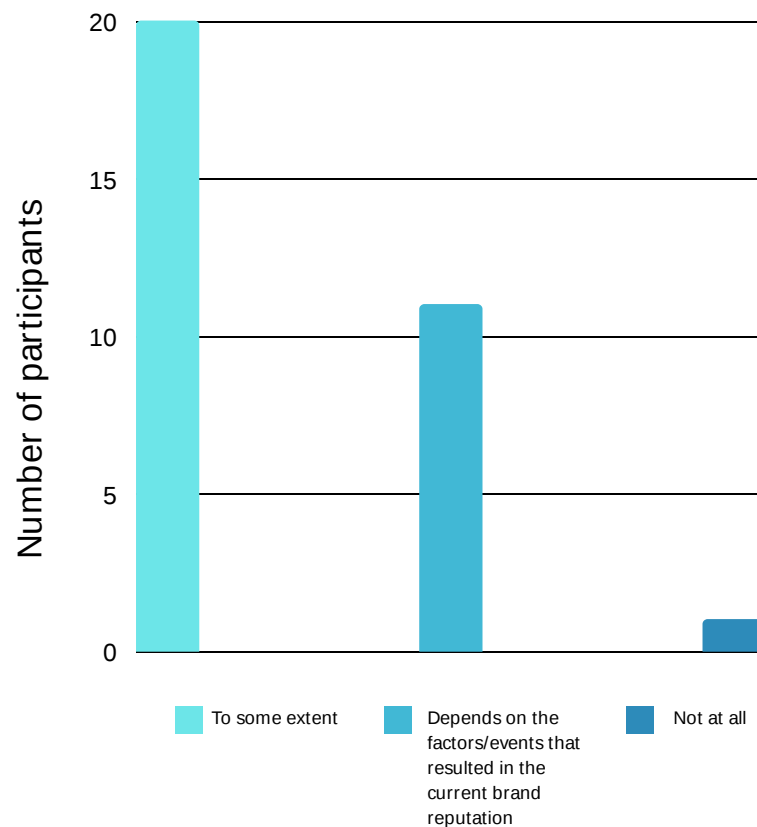


Figure 4.1: Bar graph representing the responses from question 2 qualitative questionnaire
Source: Developed for the study

According to Jess (2021), With the rise in female empowerment and the focus surrounding inclusion of all physical body types, regardless of the colour, shape or size, it has become essential for apparel brands to incorporate the Body Positivity Movement into their catalogues by introducing plus size and petit ranges, as well as utilising mannequins and models of all shapes and races to remain relevant and invite females to feel welcomed and empowered by shopping with their brand. The responses to question 1 of the qualitative questionnaire mirror those findings by Jess (2021). Majority of the respondents understood the Body Positivity Movement to be an important movement.

From the research conducted, it was found that majority of the participants do feel that their purchasing decisions are affected by a brand's reputation, to some extent, whilst eleven participants said it depends on the factors/events that resulted in the current brand reputation (political, environmental). There is however, one participant, whose purchasing decisions are not at all affected by a brand's reputation. This shows that the viewer's opinions of the brand

are not influenced by the previous brand reputation, this is a finding that the literature and researcher did not think of.

Findings from the literature reveal that as a result of consumers becoming more connected to brands and what brands stand for, an emotional connection between the brand and the consumer has been built, thus the consumer holds various expectations for the brand, according to their reputation (Grant and Stephen, 2006). Therefore, the strong relationship built between the brand the consumer influence the consumers purchasing decision. With that being said, it is clear that the findings from the conducted research support the findings from the literature, majority of the participants purchasing decisions are affected by the brand's reputation.

Consumer buying process

Figure 4.1.2 illustrates the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to question 3 of the interview.



Figure 4.2: Question 3 of the interview response word-cloud

Source: Developed for the research

According to Grimsley (2020), the consumer buying process model traditionally consists of five stages a consumer will go through when purchasing a product or service, namely: recognition of needs and wants, information search, evaluation of choices, purchase and post-purchase evaluation. When looking at figure 4.1.2. it is evident that Generation Z female apparel purchasers do believe it is important for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement but would not disregard them if they did not comply with the movement.

From the research conducted, it was found that majority of the respondents do believe the movement is important, however, they would not disregard the brand should they not comply with the Body Positivity Movement.

Objective 2 – To investigate whether female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand.

The main themes that fall under this objective are: ‘Importance of the Body Positivity Movement’ and ‘ Brand attraction factors’.

4.2.1. Importance of the Body Positivity Movement

Figure 4.3 shows the participants responses to question 3 of the qualitative questionnaire: Do you believe apparel brands should comply with the Body Positivity Movement?

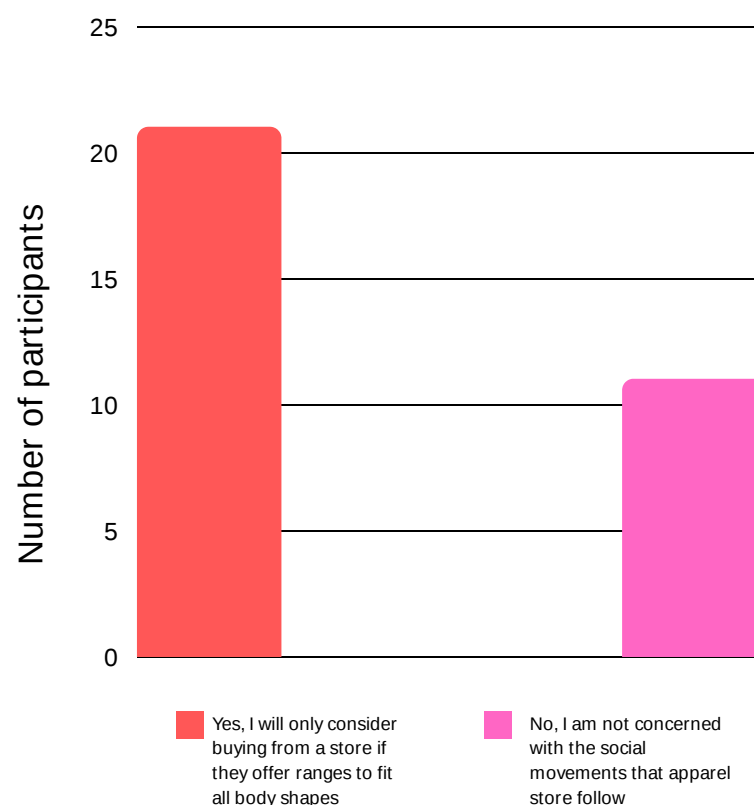


Figure 4.3: Bar graph showing the responses from question 3 qualitative questionnaire
Source: Developed for the research

According to Grant and Stephen (2006), respondents are prepared to pay more for a branded product that places high emphasis on the product being ‘cool’ or following certain trends (social movements), this emphasises that societal trends or movements have the power to influence

shoppers. Majority of the respondents believe it is necessary for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement. Those findings suggest that it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement in order to attract consumers to the brand. The conducted research does support the literature for the most part, however the findings from the conducted research did not represent by show of a very strong percentage, despite the majority, that consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand.

4.2.2. Brand attraction factors

Figure 4.4 illustrates the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to question 4 of the qualitative questionnaire and question 2 of the interview.



Figure 4.4: Question 4 qualitative questionnaire response and question 2 interview response word-cloud

Source: Developed for the research

According to Oh and Petrie (2021), In choosing which product or service to purchase, subconsciously the consumer moves through the buying process model. Particularly within apparel purchasing, the main consideration factors the consumer will go through in stage two (information search) and stage three (evaluation of choices) refer to brand, visual display (initial attraction to the garments) and price. Therefore, the factors that attract the consumer

to the brand arise in stage two and stage three of the buying process. It was found in both the conducted research and the literature that style, price and quality were the main three factors that attract a consumer to an apparel brand. With thirty one participants selecting style as one of the four factors that initially attract them to an apparel brand and thirty respondents both selected price and quality as two other factors that attracted them to an apparel brand. Whilst, the fourth most popular brand attraction factor was fashion influences, where eighteen respondents selected fashion influences as a factor that attracts them to an apparel brand.

In the interviews, price and quality were the two main factors that most of the interviewees spoke about with regards to factors that initially attract them to a brand and fit and style were other factors that were mentioned. However, looking at both the qualitative questionnaires and interview responses, it is abundantly clear that the strongest factors that initially attract Generation Z females to apparel brands are: price, quality and style or fit.

4.3. Objective 3 – To investigate the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z consumers apparel buying decisions.

The predominant themes that fall under this objective are: 'influence of the Body Positivity Movement' and 'Buying decisions'.

4.3.1. Influence of the Body Positivity Movement

Figure 4.5 shows the participants responses to question 6 of the qualitative questionnaire: Does your favourite apparel brand have plus-size ranges and promote body positivity?

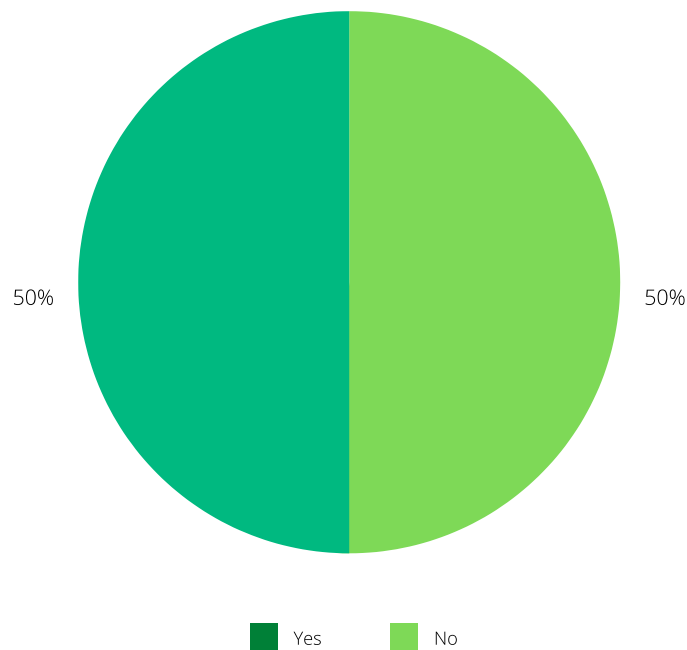


Figure 4.5: Pie chart representing the responses from question 6 of the qualitative questionnaire

Source: Developed for the research

The conducted findings represent that exactly half of the respondents' favourite apparel brands promote Body Positivity, whilst the other half of the respondents favourite apparel brands do not promote Body Positivity and have plus-size ranges, therefore emphasizing that the influence of the movement as a factor encouraging the consumer to like the brand is only influencing the consumer to a certain degree. Half of the sample will still consider the apparel brand to be their favourite regardless of the fact that the brand does not promote Body Positivity.

4.3.2. Buying decisions

Figure 4.6 illustrates the codes established from the key phrases and trends from the responses to question 7 of the qualitative questionnaire and question 5 of the interview.



Figure 4.6. Question 7 qualitative questionnaire response and question 5 interview response word-cloud

Source: Developed for the research

Majority of the respondents who answered 'no' to their favourite apparel brand promoting body positivity, are not affected by this exclusion and it does not affect their perception of the brand. The participants are more focused on how the clothes fit them and the quality of the clothing. Whilst four respondents stated that the exclusion of the body positivity movement does affect their perception of their favourite brand, however did not explain to what extent the exclusion would affect their relationship with the brand.

Majority of the questioned interviewees said 'no', they are not affected or do not perceive their favourite apparel brand differently regardless of the exclusion of body positivity and mentioned that factors such as 'price', 'style' and 'convenience', that were more important in shaping their perception of the brands they purchase apparel from. There is, therefore, a slight disconnect between the conducted findings and the literature, as Grimsley (2020) stated that when a consumer is looking for a specific offering, certain brands may not even be considered an option, if they do not comply with certain social movements, therefore resulting in immediate dismissal of the brand in the mind of the consumer. Whereas majority of the respondents in the qualitative questionnaire as well as in the interview stated that the exclusion of body positivity and inclusion of plus-size ranges within their favourite brand would not affect their perception or purchasing decisions.

4.3. Findings in context

Research Question 1: Does the brand's inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement Influence Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions?

Overall, it was found that the conducted research did not support the literature when it comes to the first research question: Does the brand's inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement influence Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions? The literature indicated that female Generation Z apparel purchasers buying decisions are influenced by the social movement, whereas the conducted research indicated otherwise, that whilst their perception of the brand is altered through the inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement, this would not go as far as to influence their buying decision. One of the most important findings from the primary research is that consumers are more concerned with price and quality of apparel products than they are concerned with what the brand stands for and empowers.

While consumers perceptions of an apparel brand may be shaped by social factors, such as whether or not the brand supports the Body Positivity Movement, the consumer is more concerned with the primary function of what an apparel brand offers: clothing items and therefore, are more concerned with the physical clothing itself that the brand offers, rather than what the brand stands for and will purchase from a brand if they offer a convenient, well priced and quality garment regardless of whether or not the brand supports the Body Positivity Movement. Therefore, the brand's inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement does not influence that actual purchasing decision of Generation Z consumers.

Research Question 2: Do female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand?

From the literature and conducted research, it is clear that it is necessary for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand. According to Grant and Stephen (2006), respondents are prepared to pay more for a branded product that places high emphasis on the product being 'cool' or following certain trends (social movements) This emphasises that societal trends or movements have the power to influence shoppers, this links to the primary research finding that majority of the respondents believe it is necessary for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement. This is a crucial insight that brands can use to increase the appeal and awareness of their products and services by insuring the brand promotes body positivity.

Oh and Petrie (2021) mirror the findings from the primary research, as they add that in choosing which product or service to purchase, subconsciously the consumer moves through the buying process model. Particularly within apparel purchasing, the main consideration factors the consumer will go through in stage two (information search) and stage three (evaluation of choices) refer to brand, visual display (initial attraction to the garments) and price. Therefore, the factors that attract the consumer to the brand arise in stage two and stage three of the buying process.

Research Question 3: Are Generation Z apparel consumers perceptions of an apparel brand influenced by the inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement?

Overall, it was found that the conducted research did support the literature, when it comes to the third question: Are Generation Z apparel consumers perception of an apparel brand influenced by the inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement? Majority of the questionnaire respondents believe that apparel brands should comply with the Body Positivity Movement. They believe it is necessary for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement, as it acts as a tool to attract them to the brand and reinforce the brand's inclusion of all individuals, serving their target market's needs.

It was found in both the conducted research and the literature that consumers do perceive brands differently if they do not support the Body Positivity Movement, however, the perception does not go as far as to oppose the consumer from the brand and no longer purchase from the apparel brand, seeing as the consumer is more focused on other factors the brand offers, such as price, quality and style. However, to some extent the consumer will still view the brand negatively should they not support the Body Positivity Movement.

Research Problem

Many worldwide brands have seen the need to adapt their display of models to align with the body positivity movement (Luzon, 2019), to the extent where brands have used the movement as a tool to increase sales and publicity (Byrne, 2021). There is, however, limited research available regarding the influence that the body positivity movement has had on South African Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions, particularly within the women's department. More research, therefore, needs to be conducted to succinctly understand the influence the body positivity movement has on South African Generation Z's apparel purchasing decisions.

Grant and Stephen (2006) suggest that there is a need for brands to adapt to and comply with social movements, such as the Body Positivity Movement, in order to create connection with consumers, which encourages the consumers' purchasing processes and creates a positive

perception of the brand in the mind of the consumer. However, should the brand not comply with the Body Positivity Movement, the consumer does not disregard the brand's offering, as the consumer is focused on what the apparel brand offers rather than what the brand stands for. The literature and findings have revealed that the Body Positivity Movement can affect the consumer buying process. From the interpretations and answers to the research questions and objectives, it can be concluded that female consumers do believe it is essential for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand and the Body Positivity Movement does not influence South African female Generation Z consumer apparel buying decisions.

4.4. Trustworthiness

This study follows a qualitative approach, therefore it is essential to test the trustworthiness of the findings. Trustworthiness will be ensured by testing the four criteria that it consists of, namely: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al*, 2014).

Credibility refers to the amount of time the researcher spends with the participants and how accurately the researcher will interpret collected data from participants (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al*, 2014). The credibility of this study cannot be questioned, seeing as more than one research method is being utilised for data collection; online qualitative questionnaires and focus groups. This results in sufficient time being spent with the participants and in-depth insight will be gained of the participants lives. Moreover, the participants will provide honest and true answers to the questions and further pay complete attention to the purpose of the study as it is a topic of interest to the sample population selected.

Transferability refers to the use of the results utilised for generalisation in terms of applying the research findings to relatable products or situations (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al*, 2014). Within the qualitative questionnaire, majority of the questions will be open-ended in nature with regard to the impact of the Body Positivity Movement. Therefore, the findings can be applied to similar situations relating to the impact of the Body Positivity Movement on apparel purchasing decisions. The information gathered can therefore be used by businesses to gain insight into consumer behaviours and attitudes with regards to their purchasing decisions and how the movement will influence their decisions. The final results are not affected by the researcher, therefore it can be further justified that similar results will be gained from other researchers.

Dependability refers to the generated flow of quality through integrating the data collection method, the theory and data analysis (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.*, 2014). This research study depicts well-integrated consistency and quality between the three factors mentioned above, therefore making the research dependable. Moreover, the researcher has provided clear intention accompanied with full explanations throughout the study and detailed insight into how tasks will be performed.

Confirmability refers to how successfully the researcher interpretations support the collected data in which similar conclusions can be drawn when others examine the findings (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.*, 2014). The researcher provides an in-depth research process to assist other researchers with similar interest in the field of study to assess the research design, hoping that the same conclusions will be drawn.

4.5. Chapter Four summary

In Chapter four, the data being collected provided sufficient and detailed insight into the research objectives and subsequently the research problem of the study.

The literature was critically reviewed, the qualitative data was thematically coded. This allowed for findings to be drawn from said data. Those findings were then analysed in order to discover the apparent truth. Thereafter, these findings were presented and critically and critically discussed.

Objective One – In order to effectively analyse this objective, various literature and findings were intensely analysed and through this, two themes were identified and critically discussed in this chapter.

Objective Two – when looking at whether it is necessary for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement, it immediately became clear that in order to initially attract consumers to the brand it is necessary for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement . This was critically analysed and discussed in this chapter.

Objective Three - When addressing objective three, focus was placed on analysing consumers perceptions of an apparel brand based on their inclusion or exclusion of the Body Positivity Movement. After analysing the data, it was clear that two themes emerged. These themes were discussed in this chapter.

As such, **chapter five** summarises all findings of the research and addresses these findings in relation to the research objectives within the context of the applied research methodology.

5. CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

After a thorough analysis of both primary and secondary data associated with answering the research questions and objectives, it can be concluded that whilst the Body Positivity movement is considered important and a necessary movement for apparel brands to follow, to attract Generation Z apparel purchasers, the absence of the Body Positivity movement does not have the power to influence the actual buying decisions of the female apparel consumers but merely influences their perception of the brand.

5.2. Findings and Recommendations

The findings presented and discussed in Chapter Four have been clearly presented with reference to each objective of the study. For ease of reference these findings have been presented according to findings from the literature, then findings from the research and finally conclusions.

Once conclusions for each research objective have been presented and stated recommendations have been made in relation to each objective. Objective one, two and three have all been critically discussed in terms of a literature review and questionnaire.

Objective one is presented as an overview to the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female generation Z apparel purchasing decisions> thereafter, objective two is presented as a determination of whether it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement. Finally, objective three presents an investigation into whether the Body Positivity Movement has the power to influence the final buying decision of the consumer.

5.3. Objective One: To investigate whether the Body Positivity Movement can affect the consumer buying process.

5.3.1. Findings from Literature

As discussed in Chapter Two, should a brand not support a movement a consumer is passionate about, this may impact the consumers perception of the brand. The consumer may then go about evaluating alternatives and possibly even selecting an alternate brand from which to satisfy their need or want (Grant and Stephen, 2006). This highlights the influence that a social movement can have on the consumer buying process.

5.3.2. Findings from Research

Question 2 of the qualitative questionnaire and question 5 of the interview addressed research objective one. Respondents supported the literature acknowledging that the Body Positivity Movement does influence the consumer buying process.

5.3.3. Conclusion

As the fieldwork is supported by the literature and the literature supports the field work, it is fair to say that the Body Positivity Movement does affect the consumer buying process. The presence of the Body Positivity Movement acts as a factor that attracts the consumer to the brand initially, forming part of the buying process.

Thus, in order for brands to attract consumers to their brand in the buying process, they will need to engage in the Body Positivity Movement.

5.3.4. Recommendations

Given that the Body Positivity Movement is becoming more present in today's market, specifically within the apparel department. It is recommended that all organisations, apparel or not, effectively implement the Body Positivity Movement. It is recommended that all organisations fully understand the nuances of the Body Positivity Movement before attempting to implement it across their operations.

5.4. Objective Two: To investigate whether female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand.

5.4.1. Findings from Literature

The findings revealed that respondents were prepared to pay more for a branded product that placed high emphasis on the product being 'cool' or following certain trends (social movements) (Grant and Stephen, 2006). This emphasises that societal trends or movements have the power to influence shoppers. Brands are making efforts to understand how societal ideals about the body affect a consumers' need and desires, which as a result affect consumer perception of the brand and the buying process (Park and Ko, 2011).

5.4.2. Findings from Research

Question 3 and question 4 of the qualitative questionnaire and question 2 of the interview addressed research objective two. Respondents supported the literature, acknowledging that female consumers do believe it is essential for brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract them to the brand.

5.4.3. Conclusion

Through the research gathered for this research objective, it is clear that whilst consumers are influenced by a variety of factors that attract them to an apparel brand, it is essential for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract Generation Z females to an apparel brand.

5.4.4. Recommendations

It is recommended that all apparel brands reassess the factors they believe attract consumers to their apparel brands and consider including more social factors such as the inclusion of the Body Positivity movement, which will act as an attraction tool to initially attract females to the apparel brand.

5.5. Objective Three: Are Generation Z apparel consumers perceptions of an apparel brand influenced by the inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement?

5.5.1. Findings from Literature

Through evaluation of both the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) as well as the consumer buying process model (Dewey, 1910), the conclusion presented highlighted the need for brands to adapt to and comply with social movements in order to create connection with consumers, which encourages the consumers' purchasing processes (Grant and Stephen, 2006).

5.5.2. Findings from Research

Question 3 and question 5 of the qualitative questionnaire and question 5 of the interview addressed research objective three. Respondents do perceive brands differently if they do not support the Body Positivity Movement, however, the perception does not go as far as to oppose the consumer from the brand and no longer purchase from the apparel brand.

5.5.3. Conclusion

It is apparent that, whilst some consumers may still purchase from apparel brands that do not follow the Body Positivity Movement and will rather purchase from the brand as a result of other attraction factors, the inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement is an integral tool that is growing in popularity with regards to attracting female Generation Z apparel purchasers to brands.

5.5.4. Recommendations

It is recommended that apparel stores acknowledge the findings above and start focusing on social aspects of their brand to create larger consumer attraction as competition in the apparel department continues to grow. Apparel brands need to ensure that all areas of their offering are seamlessly integrated and connected, offering quality products, and supporting quality social movements.

5.6. Anticipated contribution

The anticipated finding of this research is that the Body Positivity Movement does influence South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions (du Plooy-Cilliers, *et al.* , 2014). This research is aimed at discovering whether this is a viable statement. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge focusing on the impact of the Body Positivity Movement on society, in general. The study will provide new emerging explanations and in-depth insight into the impact that the social movement can have on apparel purchasing decisions amongst Generation Z consumers.

The findings of the research can be of potential interest to South African apparel brands and retailers, who need to take the impact of the Body Positivity movement into account when trying to turn the intention of consumers into actual buying behaviour. The research findings will provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact that the Body Positivity Movement has on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasers and how the presence or absence of the movement within a brand may affect their purchasing decisions. This will assist the apparel brands within South Africa, to develop relevant strategies to incorporate elements of the Body Positivity movement into their brand to encourage purchasing behaviour from South African Generation Z apparel shoppers. Moreover, these contributions will make valuable insights that can be published in a selected academic journal.

5.7. Concluding remarks

This study explored the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions. The study investigated the influence that the Body Positivity Movement has on apparel purchasers and whether the social movement has the power to influence the consumer to make their purchasing decisions based on the inclusion of the movement for the given apparel brand.

Interpretivism was employed during the study through a qualitative methodology research design. Qualitative data was collected through a qualitative questionnaire and interview to

provide sufficient qualitative data. A literature review was conducted to provide academic and theoretical grounding to the study.

The study allowed for a clearer picture of the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African Generation Z female apparel purchasing decisions. Through this it was identified that whilst the social movement plays an integral part in attracting Generation Z female apparel shoppers, particularly South African to the apparel brand, there are other factors such as the price or quality of the garments that may be more important to the consumer, therefore the Body Positivity Movement does not have the power to completely influence the consumer's purchasing decision.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

1. What is your understanding of the Body Positivity Movement?
 - It is an important movement
 - I have briefly heard about it before
 - I have never heard of it
2. Are your purchasing decisions affected by a brand's reputation?
 - To some extent
 - Depends on the factors/events that resulted in the current brand reputation (political, environmental)
 - Not at all
3. Do you believe apparel brands should comply with the Body Positivity Movement?
 - Yes, I will only consider buying from a store if they offer ranges to fit all body shapes
 - No, I am not concerned with the social movements that apparel stores follow
4. What 4 factors initially attract you to a brand?
 - Price
 - Style
 - Quality
 - Advertising
 - Convenience
 - Fashion influences
5. What is your favourite apparel brand?
6. Does your favourite apparel brand have plus-size ranges and promote body positivity?
 - Yes
 - No
7. If you answered no to Question 6, does this exclusion of body positivity affect your purchasing decision or perception of the brand?

APPENDIX B

Question One:

What is your understanding of the Body Positivity Movement, and can you think of apparel brands that follow the movement closely?

Question Two:

When you select an apparel brand to purchase from, what are some of the initial factors that first attract you to your brand of choice?

Question Three:

Do you believe it is important for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement and do you view them negatively if they don't comply with the movement?

Question Four:

What is your favorite apparel brand?

Question Five:

Does your favorite apparel brand have plus-size ranges and promote body positivity? If not, does this exclusion of body positivity affect your purchasing decision or perception of the brand?

APPENDIX C

EXPLANATORY INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

To whom it may concern,

My name is **Georgia Lee Rodger** and I am a student at **Vega Durban**. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of **Cameron Belling** about **the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions**. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of **The Body Positivity Movement and the influence of the movement on purchasing decisions**.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because **I would like to gain a better understanding of the influence of the Body Positivity Movement on apparel purchasing decisions**. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to **conduct a questionnaire into your experience and engagement with the body positivity movement and its impact on your apparel purchasing decisions**.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your **experience and engagement with the Body Positivity Movement and its impact on apparel purchasing decisions**. If you

find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;

Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at **Vega Durban** will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my **BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management**. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Georgia Lee Rodger

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Cameron Belling

[REDACTED]

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by **Georgia Lee Rodger** about **The Influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions**.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature	Date
------------------	-------------

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I, _____, agree to allow **Georgia Lee Rodger** to audio record my interviews as part of the research about **The Influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions**.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private;
- The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and

Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.

Signature	Date
------------------	-------------

APPENDIX E

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Date 4 July 2021

Student name: GEORGIA RODGER

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

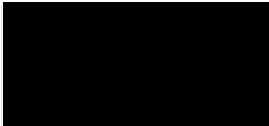
Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor: Cameron Belling



Signature:

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC):



Signature:

7 July 2021

APPENDIX F

SUMMARY DOCUMENT TABLE

Title: The Influence of the Body Positivity Movement on South African female Generation Z apparel purchasing decisions.

Research Purpose/Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors / Sources	Lit Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
This research aims to explore the influence that the body positivity movement has had on South African female Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions, particularly within the women's department. Moreover, the objective of this research is to collect accurate, qualitative data that represents the opinions of Generation Z's apparel purchasing consumers.	Does the brand's inclusion of the body positivity movement influence Generation Z consumers apparel purchasing decisions?	There is limited research available highlighting the influence of the body positivity movement on Generation Z consumers' apparel purchasing decisions (Byrne, 2021). Furthermore, understanding how a social movement can impact South African apparel stores, in relation to their sales, as a result of Generation Z consumers purchasing decisions being influenced by the inclusion of the body positivity movement, is relevant to and heightens the knowledge of the research in regards to	Leon Festinger, 1954 John Dewey, 1910	Theme 1: Body Positivity Theme 2: Body Positivity Movement Theme 3: South African apparel stores Theme 4: Generation Z consumers	Paradigm: Interpretivism Epistemology: Insight into the effect of the social movement on South African Generation Z female purchasing decisions Ontology: Reality is fluid subjective and is created through the researcher's interaction.	Qualitative	Online Qualitative Questionnaire	Confidentiality & anonymity	The presence of the Body Positivity Movement acts as a factor that attracts the consumer to the brand initially, forming part of the buying process. It is essential for apparel brands to comply with the Body Positivity Movement in order to initially attract Generation Z females to an apparel brand. The inclusion of the Body Positivity Movement is an integral tool that is growing in popularity with regards to attracting female Generation Z apparel purchasers to brands	It is recommended that all organisations fully understand the nuances of the Body Positivity Movement before attempting to implement it across their operations. It is recommended that all apparel brands reassess the factors they believe attract consumers to their apparel brands and consider including more social factors such as the inclusion of the Body Positivity movement. Apparel brands need to ensure that all areas of their offering are seamlessly integrated and connected, offering quality products,
						Population	Interview	Informed consent		
						Population Parameters Females aged between 18-24, who are active shoppers		No Under 18s Misuse of information		

		strategic brand management.								and supporting quality social movements
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories			Sampling	Data Analysis Methods	Limitations	Key Contribution	
More research needs to be conducted to succinctly understand the influence the body positivity movement has on South African Generation Z's apparel purchasing decisions, as there is currently a lack of existing information available.	RQ2: Do female consumers believe it is essential for brands to comply with the body positivity movement, in order to initially attract them to the brand? RQ3: Are Generation Z apparel consumers perceptions of an apparel brand influenced by the inclusion of the body positivity movement?	Body Positivity Body Positivity Movement South African apparel stores Generation Z consumers	Social comparison theory The Consumer Buying Process Model			Probability or non-probability Non-probability Sampling method Purposive & convenience Size 32 individuals	Unit of Analysis Female apparel shoppers between the ages of 18-24. Data Analysis Method(s) Qualitative content analysis	The small sample size and specific target market limit the generalisation of results to represent the broader population of all millennials residing in Durban. A consumer's ethical decision-making may differ according to gender, age and purchasing patterns. As a result of time and financial constraints, there was a limitation involved in accessing respondents across Durban as a whole.	The findings of the research can be of potential interest to South African apparel brands and retailers, who need to take the impact of the Body Positivity movement into account when trying to turn the intention of consumers into actual buying behaviour.	

APPENDIX G

ORIGINALITY REPORT