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Social media insights for non-luxury fashion SMEs in emerging markets: evidence from young consumers

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Abstract

Purpose – The study investigates the factors that influence young consumers (*Gen Zs and Ys)* in emerging markets to engage fashion ads of non-luxury fashion retail small- to medium-size enterprises (SMEs) on social media. Through a desk assessment of practice and the phenomenon's available evidence in the extant literature, four main drivers were delineated, reviewed and subsequently tested to influence young consumers' behavioural engagements of emerging markets' fashion SMEs' social media contents.

Design/methodology/approach – A non-probability sample of 1,150 respondents *(Gen Y and Z combined)* in Ghana, an emerging market, formed the sample for the study. The respondents assessed four empirically identified antecedents (*sales campaigns, relevant sales-related information, catchy and inspiring product/brand photo/video and consumer-generated contents)* that are likely to influence their behavioural engagement on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter). SmartPLS (version 3.3.3) was employed to perform partial least square structural equation modelling.

Findings – The results showed that to engage fashion-related ads, particularly from non-luxury fashion SMEs, young consumers consider sales campaigns, cues from consumer-generated contents, as well as quality and inspiring videos and photos. Less attention is given to relevant sales-related information.

Practical implications – The three significant drivers of engagement found in the current study provide managerial knowledge for non-luxury fashion SMEs in emerging markets. Videos and still pictures must be of high definition and quality. Short and long promotional campaigns may drive positive behavioural engagements. Interactivity between fashion SMEs and young consumers is encouraged as it precipitates the positive engagement behaviours enabled by social media. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for the non-luxury fashion SME sector in emerging economies.

Originality/value – The study is the first of its kind to ascertain what drives young consumers' engagement with non-luxury fashion SMEs on social media. It provides managerial insights and guidance to SMEs in emerging markets on effective social media fashion retailing targeted mainly at digital natives, the dominant generational cohorts on social media in most emerging economies.

Keywords Young consumers, Social media insights, SMEs, Non-luxury fashion marketing, Emerging markets, Customer behavioural engagement

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Internet and communication technology have given tremendous support to retailing and entrepreneurial endeavouring. This development could be linked to the fact that today's consumers are increasingly reliant on technology due to rapid technological advances and information shifts (Zhitomirsky-Geffet and Blau, 2016; Ahearne *et al.*, 2022). As such, businesses are becoming aware of the disruptions caused by shifts in technology and innovation and are adopting these new advancements into their business models to achieve higher organisational successes by exceeding customer expectations and achieving competitive advantage (Halilovic and Cicic, 2013; Odoom *et al.*, 2017). Following these developments, consumers' shopping experiences and behaviours have changed dramatically. Due to the increased use of ubiquitous technologies such as smart devices, information exchange and communication among consumers have increased rapidly (Liu *et al.*, 2014). In the same strength, businesses, especially retailers, employ several innovative and intelligent technologies to engage consumers with the primary aim of enhancing their shopping experience (Priporas *et al.*, 2017). For instance, aside from traditional website stores, small, medium and big retail chains employ various social media (SM) marketing tools and platforms to attract consumers' attention to their virtual websites or online stores. In addition, large retail businesses have invested heavily in digital touchpoints and touch screen-embedded interactive displays in most developed economy contexts that enhance consumers' shopping experience.

Amidst these smart innovations and technological advancement, a rapidly growing and increasingly important aspect is the advent and growth of social networking sites (SNSs), which heavily influence consumer culture (Hollebeek and Belk, 2021). These include SM platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp and Snapchat, which enable interactivity and content generation (Molina-Prados *et al.*, 2021). SNSs allow individuals to present digitalised personifications through individualised handles and accounts, build their social networks and maintain and engage these networks (Aharony, 2016; Li *et al.*, 2021). Subscribers to these SNSs follow trends, interact and participate in various trending conversations and issues (Griffiths *et al.*, 2014). However, an integral phenomenon of the new digital culture is the differences in consumers' preferences and antecedents of use relative to their age (Janavi *et al.*, 2021). In 2018, 88 per cent of SNS users were between 19 and 23 years of age, with Millennials (Gen Y) and Generation Z cohorts being the most active on SM platforms (Fietkiewicz, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2018; Dimock, 2019). These generational cohorts are typically referred to as "digital natives," – a younger generation (e.g. teenagers and young adults), actively participating in social networking communities by giving (e.g. supporting worthy humanitarian causes), sharing (e.g. posting achievements) and searching for relevant information (Magno, 2017; Drouin *et al.*, 2020; Mirmehdi, 2021).

As the evidence suggests, young users in the Generation Y and Z categories are the primary users of these platforms. They spend a considerable amount of time on these sites, with the global average user spending about 145 min per day on SM sites (Fietkiewicz *et al.*, 2018; Statista, 2021). The convergence of consumers on SM platforms has necessitated businesses of all forms and sizes to follow suit, promoting and communicating their offerings there. Developing markets are also experiencing this revolution, with many companies, from small- to medium-size enterprises (SMEs) to large businesses opening and owning pages on SM platforms to advertise and promote their offerings and services (Odoom *et al.*, 2017). Many of these businesses are fashion companies, predominantly SMEs, that sell various fashion products, from accessories to shoes and clothes, mainly non-luxury, and fast fashion. Fashion brands are driven by the potential benefits of a store display, broad audience, engagement, interactivity and rapid identification of trends that

characterise SM marketing (Sun *et al.*, 2021). The underlying ideology behind SM is self-expression. The same applies to the fashion and style concept, representing style and display of possession (O'Cass, 2004; Ananda *et al.*, 2019). According to Statista (2019), fashion brands lead the trail pertaining to SM popularity. Thus, SM can be considered an appropriate tool for fashion brands to continue to engage with consumers online even though the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has impacted negatively on fashion retailing, particularly on SM (Arrigo, 2021; Molina-Prados *et al.*, 2021).

In that general regard, several studies (e.g. McCormick and Livett, 2012; Escobar-Rodríguez and Bonsón-Fernández, 2017; Ananda *et al.*, 2019; Husnain and Toor, 2017; Akar and Dalgic, 2018; Florenthal, 2019; Testa *et al.*, 2021; Vazquez *et al.*, 2020) have been conducted to explore drivers of customer engagement (CE) with fashion brands on SM. However, no direct attempt has provided empirical insights into the practical drivers of CE in the context of SME fashion retailing on SM. Precisely, what drives young consumers in emerging markets to engage fashion SMEs on various SM platforms remains unknown in the extant literature. In addition, whereas evidence abounds on the subject in the luxury context (e.g. Kim and Ko, 2010; Nyadzayo *et al.*, 2020; Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020; Ye *et al.*, 2018), there is a yawning void in the non-luxury context. Given the higher cost of luxury goods over non-luxury products, customers generally engage with luxury brands more intensely through established engagement antecedents, whether online or offline (Prentice and Loureiro, 2018; Oliveira and Fernandes, 2020). Furthermore, research suggests that the branding of luxury fashion goods is more complicated than that of other sectors because of the rapid pace of change in the industry (Nyadzayo *et al.*, 2020). Ultimately, assuming that the drivers of fashion brand engagement on SM are the same for large and SME fashion retail businesses, across different contexts, age and generational cohorts, luxury versus fast or non-luxury fashion products, and offline versus online, might be fatally misleading.

Consequently, the current study is different from previous studies in many ways. Through practical lenses and a context-setting review of the extant literature, the study seeks to address the following research question: "which practical factors primarily drive young consumers to engage with non-luxury fashion retail SMEs on SM and in emerging markets? As SM marketing intensifies in today's challenging marketing communication environment, those antecedents that inform all behavioural tendencies demonstrated by online consumers must be understood and appreciated. In the fashion marketing context, decoupling online brand engagement drivers for non-luxury from luxury brands and specifying evidence of engagement for non-luxury SM fashion retailing is critical for successful fashion SME management. More so, the dynamics involved in marketing, particularly to young consumers for their computer and internet knowledgeability, require an in-depth understanding and appreciation of consumer behaviour that fall within the age brackets (Generations Y and Z). The foregoing gaps in the current literature are addressed by the current study as it offers empirical managerial insights into fashion retailing on SM, emphasising the contextual peculiarities of SMEs and digital natives in emerging economies. Ghana, a developing economy in sub–Saharan Africa, is selected for the current study as it typifies the discussed characteristics, and findings from this geographical context could assume some generalisations across similar developing economy contexts. The study is structured in six sections. The current section introduces it, followed by a review of relevant literature and the study's theoretical foundation in the second section. The third and fourth sections present the conceptual framework with discussions on the various hypotheses and the methodological choices employed, respectively. The study's results are presented in the fifth section while the discussion of results and the implications thereof are extensively discussed in the sixth section.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical foundation – Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R)

According to Jacoby (2002), the S-O-R framework says that researchers cannot simply explain consumer behaviour as a planned and rational process (i.e. an input–output process). Instead, consideration of internal organismic elements and external stimuli to explain consumer responses must be adequately examined. The S-O-R framework has been used in recent studies of online shopping and SM commerce to understand which features of the online shopping environment influence the psychological processes of cognition, affect and activation that leads to consumer responses (See: Jiang *et al.*, 2010; Animesh *et al.*, 2011; McCormick and Livett, 2012; Erdoğmuş and Tatar, 2015; Nash, 2018). In the same vein, the current study uses the S-O-R model to determine the fashion-related engagement drivers of young consumers according to the established theoretical foundation. Individuals' cognitive and emotional reactions are shaped by contextual and brand-related cues, influencing their responses (Erdoğmuş and Tatar, 2015; Arora *et al.*, 2020). Stimuli are marketing initiatives (such as product, advertising, salesperson attentiveness, retail atmospheres, etc.) offered to support a brand to influence positive responses from consumers. On the other hand, the consumer's emotional and cognitive state of mind, feelings and thoughts are considered organismic elements. Accordingly, the following reactions: trust, commitment, purchasing intention and loyalty are expected out of the application of stimuli (Jacoby, 2002). According to Erdoğmuş and Tatar (2015), generally, SM marketing is part of the stimuli for social commerce because of the business-initiated sales campaigns (SC), interactivity, customisation and consumer-generated information about a brand. The organismic aspects can be seen in many forms of the interactions between customers and the businesses' SM accounts (in this case, the fashion retail SMEs). Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) proposed a multidimensional construct of – cognitive, emotional and activation dimensions – to describe SM consumer brand engagements in a contemporary SM engagement conceptualisation, scale creation and validation. The authors and subsequent conceptualisations delineated trust, contentment, purchasing intention and loyalty as possible cognitive and behavioural outcomes of quality engagement. Dolan *et al.* (2016), drawing on the uses and gratifications theory which examines customers' motivation to engage with specific types of media content, delineated four main SM content (informational content, entertainment content, remunerative content and relational content) that trigger consumers' behavioural engagements.

Fashion marketing on SM and the contents fashion marketing businesses generate via their posts on their respective SM accounts qualify for either of the delineated contents by Dolan *et al.* (2016). However, the current study departs from the approach. Instead, it employs Erdoğmuş and Tatar's (2015) stimuli approach, including all fashion brands' social commerce stimuli such as SC, personalisation, interactivity and consumer-generated content (CGC). The justification for the choice is the quest for context-specific insights and precision that addresses the outlined gaps in the existing body of literature. Furthermore, the engagement delineations of Erdoğmuş and Tatar (2015) are best suitable to generate the likely behavioural engagement in fashion marketing as it supports the philosophical underpinnings of fashion marketing, thus, self-expression and democracy (Conlon, 2016), for which after all the S-O-R framework provides valid theoretical support.

2.2 The concept of social media customer engagement

The CE concept has recently received enormous attention in the literature (Brodie *et al.*, 2011; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Gómez *et al.*, 2019). Many of these studies have operationalised CE as a multidimensional construct predominantly along cognitive, behavioural and emotional dimensions (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). For example, Hollebeek *et al.* (2014) define customer brand engagement "as consumer's positively valence brand-related cognitive,

emotional and behavioural activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions". The authors argue that engagement is a promising notion that enhances focal consumer behaviour outcomes' predictive and explanatory value, like brand loyalty. In effect, engagement is essential for driving positive consumer outcomes. Chahal *et al.* (2020) also operationalised SM CE as a three-dimensional construct of utilitarian, hedonic and social dimensions. However, although very practical, Chahal *et al.*'s (2020) theoretically inspired constructs are not far-fetched as several previous drivers of engagement would fall within the hedonic, utilitarian or social motivations anyway. The current study does not seek to reconceptualise SM engagement as the evidence of its precision in meaning and operationalisation abounds. Instead, following a brief context-setting review of different perspectives on the concept, practical engagement constructs are conceptualised as antecedents to engagement subsequently. Customer purchasing behaviours relative to purchase, repeat or additional purchases, customer referrals, customer influencer behaviours and customer knowledge behaviours through feedback provided for innovation, and product or service development are conceptualised as manifestations of SM behavioural engagement (Kumar *et al.*, 2010; Kumar and Pansari, 2016).

2.3 Social media engagement and fashion retailing in emerging economies

The rise in the use and adoption of SNSs for marketing communications by SMEs, mainly in emerging economies, have seen a tremendous upsurge in recent times (Senanu and Anning-Dorson, 2022). Indeed, in terms of "place" relative to distribution and interactivity between SMEs and their target audience, SM has afforded both SMEs and large businesses a relatively effective and efficient "place", which is causing some theoretical disruption to the original meaning and operationalisation of "place" in terms of its geographical and place branding practicality (Warnaby and Medway, 2013; Appel *et al.*, 2020). Today, SM serves as a digital omnichannel for several marketing activities, including communication, advertising, customer care and addressing complaints, problems and questions (Appel *et al.*, 2020; Golmohammadi *et al.*, 2021). Fashion retailing in most emerging economies can be divided into four distinct segments: luxury versus non-luxury fashion items and brands and locally manufactured versus imported brands. However, relatively low purchasing power skews consumers in these contexts to non-luxury brands, which are mainly imported fashion products such as clothes, shoes and hair extentions. On the other hand, the locally manufactured and unbranded fashion brands primarily in the sewn fabrics and footwears categories utilise the masstige approaches to target high-, middle- and low-income customers, with several of these SMEs adopting and using SM retailing, targeting mainly young consumers.

2.4 Generation Y and Z social media engagement and fashion retailing

Populations can be split into generational segments based on age, and each segment consists of people who have a common life history due to having been born and raised around the same period (Nash, 2018). Generation Y belongs to the category of the population born between 1977 and 1994 (Bush *et al.*, 2004). On the other hand, young individuals born in 1995 and later are considered part of Generation Z (Sun *et al.*, 2021). This group is known for its superior education, technological proficiency, innovation and creativity (Priporas *et al.*, 2017). This is the first generation to grow up completely immersed in the digital realm, where they interact ubiquitously among themselves and preferred brands. Members of Generation Z are heavy consumers of technology because they regard it as a tool that they use in their daily lives (Priporas *et al.*, 2017), just as Generation Ys do (Nash, 2018). This generation was raised in an era when information and communication technologies were being commercialised and disseminated widely

throughout society. Priporas *et al.* (2017) assessed Generation Z consumers' interaction expectations in intelligent retailing. Similarly, Nadeem *et al.* (2015) considered how SM marketing affects Generation Y consumers' trust and attitudes toward online shopping. They recommended that further studies be carried out in other product categories and in different contexts. Djafarova and Bowes (2021) examined Generation Z's impulse purchasing behaviour of fashion items on Instagram and found that the platform indeed stimulated impulse buying behaviours among Generation Zs largely because of the inherent visual dimensions in promoting fashion. Additionally, fashion trends are now being shaped by Instagram users, and specifically, this generational cohorts prefer fashion brands that post creative and relevant content against those who overly advertise their products (Nash, 2018; Djafarova and Bowes, 2021). Both cohorts demonstrate higher levels of fashion consciousness and involvement and have higher levels of willingness to indulge in their appearance to look good (Nash, 2018). This predisposes them to engage fashion brands on SM platforms where they spend a lot of their time on a daily basis.

Young consumers are predominantly price-sensitive (Vicente-Molina *et al.*, 2013; Nguyen *et al.*, 2018). As such, low prices are one of the primary factors driving fast-fashion consumption (Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013; Cook and Yurchisin, 2017). Indeed, an antecedent to the ever-growing used fashion items markets across most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and developing countries, especially in sub–Saharan Africa, is affordability (Haggblade, 1990). Thus, by extension, price is a critical determinant of young consumers' choice of fashion products in most emerging economies, offline or online. However, other drivers exist aside from low prices. McCormick and Livett (2012) identified functional element viewing and aesthetic fashion information as two dominant online engagement antecedents among young consumers. SMEs in fashion marketing in most emerging economies make use of the advantages SM presents to sell a host of non-luxury fashion products, including affordable fashion accessories such as watches, spectacles, pieces of jewellery, clothing, fabrics, and among others, footwears.. They accomplish this by constantly uploading photos and videos of these trendy items to dominant SM platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp (status) and, more lately, TikTok. Meanwhile, strategies that engender consumers to engage with these contents, particularly non-luxury fashion products remain scarce in the extant fashion marketing and management literature. Notably, Instagram is considered an influential platform for fashion marketing (Testa *et al.*, 2021), whereas Facebook drives consumer fashion–related behaviour online (McCormick and Livett, 2012). To that end, globally, SM is noted for successful fashion retailing.

3. Conceptual framework: model and hypotheses

3.1 The drivers of social media fashion brand engagement

SM marketing behavioural engagement entails observing how customers or users react to a brand's content on various SM pages (Ananda *et al.*, 2019). Dolan *et al.* (2016) outlined and explicated seven distinct SM engagement types: co-creation, positive contribution, consumption, dormancy, detachment, negative contribution and co-destruction. From these delineations, co-creation, positive contribution, negative contribution and co-destruction represent active engagement behaviours that can potentially influence other userswhile consumption, dormancy and detachment are more passive and individualised forms of engagement. It is important to note that positively and negatively valenced engagements are critical insights for a successful SM marketing effort. Studies (e.g. Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Malthouse *et al.*, 2016) categorise engagement behaviours as high and low, indicating that brand engagements occur at different levels. Users create SM content through their contributions, comments and likes. Subsequently, their inputs

influence the engagement and interaction of other members. As a result, brands want to encourage their followers not to consume content passively but also actively animate and manifest engagement such that they comment and create new contents (Baird and Parasnis, 2011; Gummerus *et al.*, 2012), interact with the brand and among others purchase advertised products. From the fashion marketing perspective, young fashion consumers on SM may engage with fashion brands positively by co-creating content through positive contributions and consumption. Negatively, young consumers could engage fashion brands through dormancy, detachment, negative contributions and destruction. Together with the neutral perspective of dormancy, the two extremes bring to light a holistic view. The current study focuses on the positive behavioural and cognitive dimensions. It argues that stimuli comprising all non-luxury fashion-related posts and other contents (e.g. SC, and consumer-generated content) posted on the timelines of fashion SMEs in emerging markets are likely to influence positive behavioural engagements.

Additionally, drawing from Florenthal (2019) and McCormick and Livett (2012), while sufficiently considering the context of the current study, detailed fashion product information and catchy and inspiring product/brand photo/video (CIPV) are included as relevant drivers of non-luxury fashion engagement. Anecdotal evidence, textbooks and blogs discuss these additional drivers and present them as possible antecedents to SM CE. The current study takes it a step further by empirically testing them together with the other adapted drivers: first, in the non-luxury fashion context; second, in the young consumers' category and third, in the context of an emerging economy. Figure 1 depicts the conceptualisation and the hypothesised relationships.

3.2 Hypotheses

3.2.1 Sales campaigns and young consumers' social media engagements. With more than three billion active users, marketers have known for some time that SM may lead to fruitful marketing results like increased engagement and sales (Vieira *et al.*, 2022; Liadeli *et al.*, 2022). As such, most companies that use SM to promote their products or services anticipate

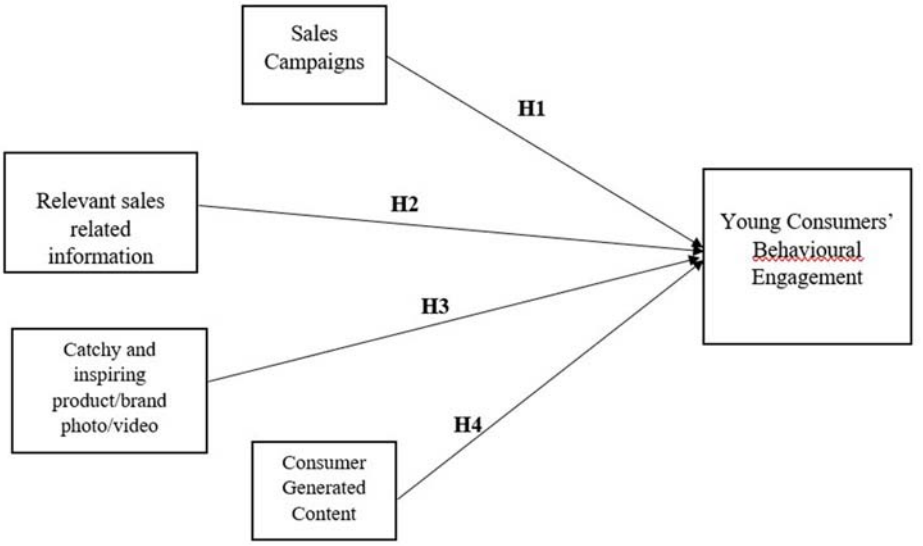


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework of the study

that their content will generate interactions with their followers (e.g. likes, comments or shares; De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Beckers *et al.*, 2018). Nonetheless, SM business-initiated CE, according to Beckers *et al.* (2018), takes place when brands use explicit strategies to increase CE, such as likes, without primarily intending to induce sales but rather to form strong and long-term relationships with customers. To this end, whereas the drivers of these business-initiated SM CE are well documented in the literature, marketing campaigns, specifically, sales-related campaigns as an antecedent to driving business value such as increased sales remain scanty (Beckers *et al.*, 2018; Dolega *et al.*, 2021; Liadeli *et al.*, 2022). In the fashion marketing context, however, Dawson and Kim (2010) found empirical insights supporting the influence of promotional activities (including free shipping, presents, contests, sweepstakes, etc.) on impulse buying on apparel brands' websites. Additionally, Ibrahim and Wang (2019) through sentiment and time series analyses identified SC that ranked high in the top 10 topics on Twitter during a given period and event. Notwithstanding, ther is limited evidence on the causal link between SC and CE, especially for SM SMEs in the non-luxury fashion sector. This study theorises that when non-luxury SMEs in emerging markets employ SC on SM with the aim of inducing sales, young consumers would form positive engagement behaviour like purchases. The submission of Djafarova and Bowes (2021) that Instagram is the most effective SM fashion marketing tool that induce impulse purchases among Gen Z inherently predisposes young consumers. Hassan (2014) also indicates that Instagram is particularly effective for sales-related communication with women, who are thought to be more deal-prone. In this regard, most of the time, these campaigns involve coupons and discounts. In this study, SC include gifts (e.g. buy one, get one free), discounts, coupons and gift cards, category flash sales (e.g. flash sales for shoes and handbags) and energising electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) through incentives (e.g. giving a 5 per cent off coupon if a customer leaves a review on brands owned SM page; giving a 10 per cent off coupon if a customer adds a photo wearing a product purchased from a non-luxury fashion SME and tags that SM page and giving a 15 per cent off voucher if a customer shares a non-luxury fashion SME post on their personal SM timelines). On the outcome variable, CE, Palmatier *et al.* (2017) define it as either the direct or indirect customer contributions which offer value to a business. These include actions such as customer purchases (direct contributions) and SM interactions (indirect contributions) which are discussed extensively in the CE literature (See: Hollebeek, 2011; Palmatier *et al.*, 2017; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2020; De Oliveira Santini *et al.*, 2020). The current study assumes the former conceptualisation, positing that SC by non-luxury SMEs on SM are likely to influence in-role CE behaviours like purchases.

H1. SC on SM accounts of non-luxury fashion SMEs influence young consumers' SM engagements.

3.2.2 Relevant sales-related information and young consumers' social media engagements. Product information gathering is a fundamental part of interactivity between brands and consumers, and the lack of fashion information has been noted as a significant concern for consumers (Cyr *et al.*, 2009; Rowley, 2009; McCormick and Livett, 2012). Research indicates that SM sites like Facebook enable customers to access relevant information and make critical observations about fashion products and trends (Escobar-Rodríguez and Bonsón-Fernández, 2017). Information about an SME brand and its products in terms of utilitarian and hedonic values can ignite an engagement online. The study posits that once posts on fashion SMEs SM accounts carry the relevant product information that satisfies consumers' pre-purchase assessments, it shall result in one or several of the behavioural outcomes delineated. According to the findings of Brodie *et al.* (2013) and Zaglia (2013), many consumers join brand

communities for the sole purpose of obtaining knowledge. Moreover, customers' belief in the affordability of fast-fashion items is a significant motivator for the industry's growth (Byun and Sternquist, 2008; Gabrielli *et al.*, 2013; Cook and Yurchisin, 2017). This evidence makes fashion information such as price a piece of relevant sales-related information (RSRI) in SM fashion marketing. Unfortunately, the observed pervasive practice among SMEs in emerging markets is the non-addition of price, design, delivery mode and charges, among other sales-driven fashion information – a dichotomy between the literature (McCormick and Livett, 2012) and a pervasive contextual practice. The study argues that relevant information such as the price of advertised fashion products is critical to driving the intended SM engagement for fashion retail SMEs in emerging markets. Specifically,

H2. RSRI on SM accounts of non-luxury fashion SMEs influences young consumers' behavioural engagements.

3.2.3 Catchy and inspiring product/brand photos/videos and young consumers' social media engagements. According to the axiom that "a picture is worth a thousand words", a compelling visual presentation of content such as one in the form of an infographic or a beautiful picture may be able to bolster consumer confidence in a non-luxury SME fashion brand. Marketers frequently exploit the power of pictures, graphics and presentations to increase perceptions of quality especially in SM marketing (Gartner *et al.*, 2021). The visual emphasis of SM makes it seem particularly suited for the use of pictures and videos to convey SM brand communications or posts, which are the ultimate contents that signify value to customers. Accordingly, the brand's goal for SM content creation is to provide consumers with useful and interesting information (Demmers *et al.*, 2020). According to Li and Xie (2020) *and* Onofrei *et al.* (2022), brands must create high-quality content on different platforms suitable for their target audience. Typically, large businesses and SMEs have accounts across various SM platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.). As a result, they are involved in content marketing focusing on distributing consistent content across various channels (Stampler, 2013; Holliman and Rowley, 2014). For fashion retail SMEs, videos and pictures of fashion products posted on SM must be attractive and appealing to trigger profitable behaviours. Indeed, according to Escobar-Rodríguez and Bonsón-Fernández (2017), fashion retailers can increase consumer engagement by using photo albums and videos. Specifically, reels, still images and infographics together with captions are the main form of visual content used generally by fashion retail brands. On Instagram and Facebook, reels, stories and posts are the primary features that fashion retail brands employ. Reels are short video features that enable the editing of videos with overlay music (for audio effects) and among other features, increased or slowed speed, that could be shared on Facebook via Instagram. It is particularly used to display catalogues and collections of fashion items by SMEs. What is important, however, is the quality of these videos and pictures and the level of professional touch they require to stimulate profitable responses given platform-specific user cultures. In addition to stimulating the senses, video posts increase interaction and participation while photo posts are increasingly becoming popular among young consumers, the dominant population of SM users (De Vries *et al.*, 2012; Kwok and Yu, 2013; Escobar-Rodríguez and Bonsón-Fernández, 2017). Ultimately, quality and catchy pictures and videos in which fashion product samples are displayed in detail may inspire more likes, are likely to show up on explore pages and are likely to trigger more profitable reactions when SM platform tools like shopping tags are used. The following hypothesis is thus, suggested.

H3. CIPVs displayed on SM accounts of non-luxury fashion SMEs influence young consumers' SM engagements.

3.2.4 Consumer-generated content and fashion retail SME social media engagements. Literature indicates that the innovation process of SMEs should be focussed on CE and that interaction is crucial in this regard (Molina-Prados *et al.*, 2021). A key and critical driver of SM engagement in the fashion industry is CGC (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014). Babić Rosario *et al.* (2016) and Ananda *et al.* (2019) suggest that the value of e-WoM as an engagement metric and an SM performance indicator is widely appreciated by marketing scholars and practitioners. CGCs such as reviews are helpful to customers, especially prospects in the online purchasing process such that prospects can discover a great deal of information about a brand's offerings (Ahearne and Rapp, 2010; Barnes, 2014). Furthermore, consumers can contribute to conversations that enhance fashion SMEs' image by sharing and generating positive and effective e-WOM through participatory comments and reviews. Participation in CGC can also be in reading, listening and watching content from other consumers. However, a fashion business must provide the enabling factors and infleunces that encourage consumer participation in CGC of any kind. Drawing from the consumer socialisation theory (Ward, 1974), which refers to how individual consumers gain skills, information and attitude from others through communication, it may be hypothesised that communication among consumers impacts each other's cognition, affection and behaviours. Consumers learn about consumption-related attitudes and behaviours by monitoring and communicating with their peers online (Ananda *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it may be claimed that an enabling SM marketing strategy that facilitates CGC (such as referrals, reviews, ratings, questions and answers) from fashion SME brands is likely to influence positive behavioural responses:

H4. CCGs on non-luxury fashion SMEs influence young consumers' SM engagement with these brands.

4. Methods

4.1 Measurement

The study's constructs were adopted from prior literature with extensive modifications. The delineated drivers of SM behavioural engagements are conceptualised as the exogenous variables and the possible behavioural outcome, the endogenous variables. Using scales adapted from the literature (Erdoğmuş and Tatar, 2015; Florenthal, 2019; Brodie *et al.*, 2013; McCormick and Livett, 2012; Zaglia, 2013), self-administered survey questionnaires were employed to collect data from the study sample. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) to measure the various research variables. Demographic variables (age, gender, education and earnings) and SM platform accounts were included in the initial section of the questionnaire, significantly as a criteria for sample selection and filtering.

4.2 Population, sample and data collection

The burgeoning young populace of the African continent and, specifically, the Ghanaian context with a median age of 21.6, half of the Ghanaian population (16.99 million) actively using the internet , the growing number of SMEs and the strategic attempts by the Ghanaian government through public policies, regulations, funding and institutional establishments to encourage youth entrepreneurship makes Ghana a contextually ideal environment for the current study. Additionally, according to Statista (2021), WhatsApp was utilised by 89.9 per cent of Ghanaians who had internet access in the third quarter of 2021, while an estimated 74 per cent of internet users referred to Facebook as a prominent SM platform in their responses. Furthermore, Instagram and Twitter accounted for about 62 and 45 per cent, respectively, of all internet usage in the nation. The use of SM is on the

rise in this West African country, mirroring trends seen in other emerging markets characterised by a large young adult population. The present study's target population includes all young consumers (Generation *Y* and *Z*) in Ghana who have and operate active SM accounts, specifically on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. Out of the defined population, a purposive sample of 1,281 digital natives (Magno, 2017; Chetioui *et al.*, 2020) responded to the study's questions. Both cohorts are active internet and SM users whose purchase behaviour is influenced by SM usage (Goldring and Azab, 2021; Sun *et al.*, 2021). Before administering the questionnaires, a test pilot was conducted to determine their suitability of eliciting correct responses. Having obtained feedback on the pilot testing, amendments were made before the final questionnaires were administered to the target population. An electronic questionnaire administration approach was employed using Google Forms with the questionnaire designed on the Internet-enabled platform and distributed among the sample mainly through the SM platforms in focus (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) between August and November 2021. The sample comprised Ghanaians on the delineated SM platforms, the reason why a filtering question was posed to exclude respondents without SM accounts on these platforms. To complement the online efforts, the researchers purposively selected the youth ministries of three large Ghanaian churches and visited two major mosques within the country's capital, Accra. The questionnaires were administered to the available youths on two Fridays and Sundays between September and November 2021. Due to the high level of religious consumption in Ghana (Bonsu and Belk, 2010; Auriol *et al.*, 2020), and for the purpose of accessibility, the researchers distributed the study questionnaires at the conveniently selected churches and mosques to improve the chances of engaging with young consumers. Participants of the study were informed and assured of their anonymity and the purposeful usage of the data for research and knowledge advancement only. Throughout the 5 months of data collection, a total number of 1,281 respondents successfully completed the questionnaire. About 1,150 valid responses were maintained, while 131 were rejected because they did not meet the specified criteria of age and ownership of an active SM account and profile.

4.3 Data analysis

The data collected were analysed using SmartPLS (version 3.3.3) to perform partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). This variance method of structural equation modelling is currently driving a lot of management, marketing and behavioural studies (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2022). Using PLS-SEM, the first step involves the assessment of the measurement model and next evaluating the structural model. The results are presented and discussed in that order, subsequently.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement model

5.1.1 Internal consistency reliability. This type of reliability assessment examines the consistency of results across items of the same variable (Hair *et al.*, 2021). In addition, it determines if the scores of items measuring a variable are consistent (Hair *et al.*, 2016). In the current study, internal consistency reliability is assessed using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. Table I shows the CR and Cronbach's alpha values of all the latent variables used in this study. These values were found to be between the recommended 0.6–0.9 value (Hair *et al.*, 2016), which establishes internal consistency.

5.1.2 Convergent validity. This is the correlation coefficient when a measure favourably correlates with alternative measurements of the same variable (Hair *et al.*, 2021). The average variance extracted (AVE) was determined to establish convergent validity. The

AVE values for all the latent variables utilised in this investigation are listed in Table I. As a result, convergent validity was proven because these values were more than the specified value of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2021).

5.1.3 Discriminant validity. This measure refers to how distinct a variable is from other variables regarding how much it correlates with different variables and how many indicators represent only one variable (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The current study employed Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion and cross-loading scores to establish discriminant validity. Table II shows that the square root of AVE for all latent variables was higher than inter-construct correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). This implies that discriminant validity was confirmed. Furthermore, individual loadings for all indicators were larger than cross loadings (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The result adds to the evidence that discriminant validity is confirmed.

5.1.4 Indicator reliability. This measure indicates how much of a variable's variance in an item can be explained (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The outer loadings were used to measure indicator reliability. Higher outer loading on a variable suggests that the associated measure and the variable have a lot in common (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, items with a loading >0.70 should be kept, items with an outer loading value of >0.40 should be

Table I.
Measurement model

Latent variables	AVE	CR	CA	CBE	CGC	CIPV	RSRI	SC
CBE	0.50	0.85	0.79	0.71				
CGC	0.50	0.79	0.70	0.70	0.71			
CIPV	0.76	0.93	0.89	0.68	0.62	0.87		
RSRI	0.65	0.88	0.82	0.68	0.59	0.76	0.80	
SC	0.60	0.85	0.78	0.66	0.65	0.70	0.71	0.77

Table II.
Cross loadings

	CBE	CGC	CIPV	RSRI	SC
SC1	0.41	0.35	0.42	0.49	0.66
SC2	0.49	0.46	0.48	0.59	0.72
SC4	0.47	0.40	0.47	0.73	0.47
SC5	0.48	0.44	0.52	0.78	0.54
RSRI1	0.60	0.52	0.66	0.84	0.63
RSRI2	0.61	0.52	0.76	0.85	0.63
RSRI3	0.63	0.49	0.86	0.68	0.61
RSRI4	0.67	0.57	0.88	0.67	0.63
CIPV1	0.64	0.57	0.87	0.66	0.62
CIPV2	0.65	0.53	0.87	0.64	0.59
CIPV3	0.76	0.84	0.61	0.57	0.73
CIPV4	0.69	0.82	0.56	0.57	0.69
CGC1	0.32	0.53	0.14	0.13	0.19
CGC2	0.38	0.58	0.25	0.22	0.28
CGC3	0.69	0.71	0.65	0.58	0.86
CGC4	0.67	0.70	0.59	0.56	0.84
CBE1	0.54	0.40	0.39	0.34	0.31
CBE2	0.78	0.68	0.59	0.51	0.64
CBE3	0.35	0.31	0.23	0.29	0.21
CBE4	0.77	0.63	0.52	0.48	0.58
CBE5	0.84	0.68	0.62	0.60	0.65
CBE6	0.82	0.64	0.68	0.57	0.62

omitted, and their impact on the variable's AVE, CA and CR should be examined, according to Hair *et al.* (2013). Essentially, if the AVE, CA and CR of the variable exceed the threshold value, the item should be deleted; otherwise, it should be kept. The model had one measure removed (SC3 – I partake in fashion promotional campaigns on SM on the construct – SC). The deletion of this scale item improved the CA, CR and AVE, respectively (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Tables I and II show the results.

5.2 Structural model

5.2.1 Assessing predictive accuracy and predictive relevance – R square (R^2) and Q square (Q^2). The R^2 value, or the coefficient of determination (*R square*), is used to assess the structural model's predictive accuracy. It measures the squared correlation between an endogenous construct's actual and predicted values. The R^2 values show the combined influence of the exogenous variables on the endogenous latent variables. It also indicates the proportion of endogenous construct variance explained by all exogenous constructs related to it (Hair *et al.*, 2013). For example, CE is an endogenous variable in this study, with an R^2 value of 0.76. This measure indicates a high level of predictability. Table III demonstrates this.

Blindfolding was used to test the model's predictive relevance or Q^2. The Stone–Geisser Q^2 value was used to cross-validate the model's predictive significance for each endogenous variable (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). Cross-validated redundancy Q^2 values of all endogenous variables were obtained using the blindfolding procedure (Hair *et al.*, 2013) with an omission distance of 9. Consequently, CE had a Q^2 value of 0.37 in this study. The study's model, therefore, has a robust predictive relevance (see Table III).

5.2.2 Assessment of effect sizes (f^2). f^2 effect size is the measure to evaluate the change in R^2 value when a specified exogenous variable is omitted from the model. As seen from Table IV, SC and RSRI had no effects on the dependent variable. CIPV and CGC had small and large effect sizes, respectively.

5.2.3 Path significance and hypothesis testing. The current study's path coefficient model was assessed for the relationship between the four constructs and young consumers' behavioural engagement. Path coefficients show the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, while the p values show the statistical significance of the relationship in question. The nonparametric bootstrapping routine advocated by Vinzi *et al.* (2010) was used on 1,500 data points and 5,000 subsamples. "Bootstrapping is a re-sampling approach that draws random samples (with replacements) from the data and uses these samples to estimate the path model multiple times under slightly changed data constellations" (Hair *et al.*, 2013, p. 162). The primary purpose of

Table III. Predictive accuracy and relevance (R^2 and Q^2)

Endogenous variables	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2	Effect size
Young consumers' behavioural engagement	0.76	0.76	0.37	Large effect size

Table IV. Effect sizes (f^2)

	Young consumers' behavioural engagements
CGC	0.44
CIPV	0.13
RSRI	0.01
SC	0.02

bootstrapping is to calculate the standard error of coefficient estimates to examine the coefficient's statistical significance (Vinzi *et al.*, 2010). From the current study, four research hypotheses had been proposed, *H1–H4*, addressing the relationship between SC, RSRI, CIPV, CGC and their influence on customer behavioural engagements. As seen in Table V, out of the four direct relationships, the relationships between SC (0.12), CIPV (0.30) and CGCs (0.50) were statistically significant with the dependent variable. This implies that the stated hypotheses *H1, H3*, and *H4* have been confirmed while evidence was not obtained for *H2*. Thus, the only statistically insignificant relationship was between RSRI and CE.

6. Discussions and implications

The study examined what drives young consumers to engage with non-luxury fashion SMEs' SM contents. Four categorical constructs were selected from reviewing extant literature and the observation of trends as the most likely to measure young consumers' behavioural engagements effectively. The findings indicate that fashion SMEs' SC, CIPV and CGCs are likely to influence specific consumer behavioural outcomes relative to purchase, repeat purchase, referral behaviours, influencer behaviours and knowledge behaviours through interactivity. On the other hand, the measurement construct, "Relevant sales-related information" (RSRI), failed to influence consumers' behavioural engagements, and attributable reasons for the finding are subsequently discussed. The study provides valuable insights for non-luxury and fast-fashion businesses, specifically fashion SMEs in emerging economies. From consumers' standpoint, what drives them to engage in fashion-related ads on the various SM platforms was interrogated to provide practical guidelines. The study's findings agree with earlier studies like Chahal *et al.* (2020).

6.1 Theoretical implications

The study dwelled on the S-O-R framework to offer an explanation and an underpinning to the phenomenon studied. Considering the study's findings, the significant drivers (CGC, SC, CIPV) of young consumers' engagement of non-luxury fashion ads by SMEs pass as a stimuli. The findings confirm the theorisation in the S-O-R model to the extent that brand-related cues or ads inspire engagement or behavioural responses. However, the model's postulation that consumers' organismic elements (cognition, feeling, emotions – pleasure, arousal, etc.) mediate between marketing stimuli, and positive engagement outcomes was not included in the current study. This theorisation and consequent findings imply that consumers' internal organismic elements must not always be present for marketing stimuli to engender positive engagement behaviours at least in the non-luxury SM fashion marketing context. Consumers may engage in positive behaviours with a non-luxury fashion marketing SME SM ad without necessarily considering their internal emotions but rather focusing on external brand-related cues such as CIPVs, CGCs and SCs.

Table V.
Hypothesis testing

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	*t* statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*p* values
H1 – SC → CBE	0.12	0.12	0.06	2.04	0.04
H2 – RSRI → CBE	0.07	0.08	0.05	1.59	0.11
H3 – CIPV → CBE	0.30	0.29	0.05	6.11	0.00
H4 – CGC → CBE	0.50	0.50	0.04	11.97	0.00

6.2 Managerial implications

For the growing SMEs in fashion retailing predominantly on SM in emerging economies, getting the basics right from the start is likely to propel their growth into non-luxury fashion retail behemoths. Research (e.g. Sandberg and Hofer, 1987; Starr and MacMillan, 1990; Wu, 2007) points to the critical relevance of the work history and experiences of the entrepreneur as a crucial determinant of entrepreneurial success. Meanwhile, dire youth unemployment in most emerging economies leads the youths into entrepreneurship without prior entrepreneurial experiences and a host of dynamic capabilities required for entrepreneurial success. Thus, practical managerial insights from empirical studies like this are needed to guide the teaming youth in emerging economies that have smartly resorted to entrepreneurial ventures mainly through retailing on SM, probably due to its cost-effectiveness, interactivity and compatibility (Odoom *et al.*, 2017). Notably, many of these entrepreneurs are into non-luxury fashion marketing, plying non-luxury or fast-fashion retail trade through SM marketing facilitated by owned or outsourced fast delivery services. Thus, SM has occasioned a massive entrepreneurial venturing mostly because the cost associated with the traditional "place" to the entrepreneur is lessened if not avoided. Nonetheless, managerial insights on what it takes to effectively manage the new "place" where the other P's converge is scarce, especially in non-luxury SME fashion marketing, a bourgeoning business sector in most emerging economies. This study provides primary, yet significant empirical fashion marketing insights for non-luxury or fast-fashion SMEs in emerging markets to ply their SM retailing effectively. Thus, away from the anecdotal discussions and the scarce evidence on SME non-luxury fashion retailing towards the empirics, significant managerial insights could be drawn from the current study. First, to influence positive behavioural outcomes on SM, product information such as reviews, discounts, promotions, sizes, delivery mode and cost, depth, variety and richness of catalogue among others must be prioritised. In that sense, owners, and managers of SMEs in emerging markets must consider utilitarian and aesthetical cues in posting non-luxury fashion products on SM. They matter to young consumers and form part of their considerations in engaging positively, SME non-luxury fashion ads on SM. Second, the study added an engagement antecedent to the current literature – CIPV. SMEs in non-luxury fashion retailing, mainly through SM in emerging markets, must prioritise the quality of still photographs and videos that portray the attributes of the fashion product they advertise on such applications. Cisco expects that by 2022, videos will account for 82 per cent of all internet traffic (Cisco Annual Internet Report, 2020). To attract desired consumer behaviour from young consumers, Cisco's extrapolation in the context of the current discussions implies that fashion SMEs must move beyond images to demonstrate high-definition videos such as reels on Instagram to showcase fashion product features like quality, style, sizes colours, varieties and trends to attract desired consumer behaviours. Also, the results offer a more factual stance on discussions around a marketing mix variable, "place". The act of physically inspecting a fashion product before purchase is being replaced by online evaluations based on videos, pictures and other relevant information. Therefore, more explicit, and high-resolution photos and videos are required to pique consumers' interests. The study further confirms that CGCs are likely to cause customers to engage with non-luxury SME fashion brands on SM. The findings direct non-luxury SME owners/managers or entrepreneurs to put some thought into the business-generated content they post on their SM pages to encourage and attract CGC, which in turn may influence the engagement of young fashion consumers. Indirectly, perceived credibility, an antecedent to engaging business-generated content, must equally be prioritised. Thus, to attract the needed CGC, SMEs into fashion retailing must enhance consumers' perceived credibility by empowering them to exert influence and enforce excellence

through honest and open conversations with non-luxury fashion SME brands through their SM pages. The implication is critical as young consumers resort to SM for brand complaints, information and evaluation. The more complaints, queries and issues voiced through reviews and other engagements such as comments under brand posts and direct messaging on SM are sufficiently addressed, the better business-generated content and their resultant CGC influence positive engagement behaviours. The study did not submit evidence to support the postulation that RSRI influenced young consumers' behavioural engagements. Possible reasons for the finding could be attributed to the recent phenomenon of fashion marketing SMEs on SM, adding product details and information to photos and videos and not separate captions per se. In other words, SME brands lately use more infographic videos and pictures in uploading their ads through SM functionalities such as reels, stories and posts without necessarily captioning them separately as often done in posts. In effect, to young consumers, captions carrying RSRI may not engender engagement; instead, the current trend of SMEs adopting more infographics than separate captions, especially in posts, may get them to engage SM ads of non-luxury SMEs.

7. Conclusion

Dire youth unemployment in most emerging economies leads youth into entrepreneurship without prior entrepreneurial experiences and a host of dynamic capabilities required for entrepreneurial success. Thus, practical and managerial insights from empirical studies like this are needed to guide the teaming youth in emerging economies that have smartly resorted to entrepreneurial ventures mainly through retailing on SM, probably due to its cost-effectiveness, interactivity and compatibility (Odoom *et al.*, 2017). Notably, many of these young entrepreneurs are into non-luxury fashion marketing, plying non-luxury or fast-fashion retail trade through SM marketing facilitated by owned or outsourced fast delivery services. The local business press, researchers' own SM and professional platforms, free and collaborative consultation and training services among other effective and efficient means are employed by the researchers to disseminate complete and summarised versions of these valuable findings to these young fashion entrepreneurs. Beneficiaries are also encouraged to share this knowledge.

8. Directions for future studies

Despite the immense contributions of the study, it has has certain limitations. Cross-sectional data impede further behavioural engagements outside this study's operationalised scope. Hence, future studies can consider a longitudinal survey that will collect detailed data exhibiting all possible behaviours conditioned by these and other delineated drivers of non-luxury fashion SME SM engagement. Additionally, the study assumed baseline relationships that could be conditioned by other factors that future studies can consider to further enhance theorisations around SME fashion marketing, especially in the non-luxury context. Finally, we believe the conceptualisation and subsequent operationalisation of the construct, RSRI, were problematic in the current study and could not elicit the correct responses. Future studies can reconsider the construct's relevance.

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