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The Attitude of Children and Parents Towards Children Influencers

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of internet influencers is among the most discussed issues in marketing to children. The amount of time children spend on the internet increases every year, which increases the risk of becoming the target of influencer marketing. Studying the impact of influencers on children is of great importance not only for marketers, but also for parents responsible for upbringing their offspring. This article presents the results of a qualitative study aimed at describing three components of the attitude (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) of children and parents towards children influencers. The methods employed in this study are focus group interviews and individual in-depth interviews with 18 participants: children aged 8–11 and their parents. During the interviews, one sample YouTube video and two TikTok children influencer videos were presented. The analysis of cognitive aspects of attitude showed that children have a higher level of awareness of product placement in influencer video than their parents suspect. Many parents declare that they are against such content on social media, while children see nothing wrong with promotional content and believe that it is natural. As far as the emotional aspect of attitude is concerned, parents present a wider range of emotions than children, possibly because they are less familiar with such content. Being exposed to product placement in influencer videos also impacts the behavioural aspect of attitude. Children are eager to have the promoted products, but parents are sceptical about such products and declare that they buy them only for special occasions.

JEL classification: M31, M37

Keywords: Children influencers, consumer behaviour, tripartite model of attitude, product placement, YouTube, TikTok

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, consumers tend to shift more and more of their activity to the internet. In the virtual world, they make purchases, talk to friends (with whom they might have never had contact in real life), enjoy entertainment, work, and pursue their passions. As a consequence, marketers face the challenge of adapting marketing tools to be effective in the virtual world. A large portion

of marketing communication has been moved to social media. Official profiles are created, and the main goal of them is to gather a group of loyal recipients who, if necessary, would become brand advocates. Paid promotion is also present in the social media content of celebrities and influencers, usually in the form of product placement. On all social media platforms, we can observe a new phenomenon in the form of children influencers. What may seem to be at first glance an innocent video presenting other children playing might as well be a form of hidden promotion in the form of product placement directed to the young audience. Owing to the novelty of this issue, research on this subject is scarce (de Veirman et al., 2019). To deepen the existing knowledge on influencer marketing directed to children, this study will focus on the attitude of both children and parents towards children influencers. Based on the three-component attitude theory (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960), the detailed research questions are related to cognitive, emotional and behavioural attitude of children and parents towards children influencers:

- What do children and parents think of children influencers?
- What do children and parents feel about children influencers?
- How do children and parents act as a result of being exposed to children influencers?

This paper has been divided into the following parts: a literature review which shows the state of knowledge on influencers' marketing directed to children; a data and methods section; the presentation of research results; discussion and conclusions for theory and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media and Influencer Marketing

Kotler (2000, p. 4) defines marketing as *'a social process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging products and services of value freely with others'* As the world is constantly changing and each decade brings new technological solutions, or previously absent customer needs and desires, marketers need to keep track of the market and update their activities accordingly (Kotler, 1999, p. 2).

Today, we live in a digital age where the internet is an integral part of life for most of society. In 2020, 98% of Polish people aged 18–24 declared that they used the internet at least once a week and 100% of them connected wirelessly. As the age of consumers increases, the willingness to use the internet decreases, but still the vast majority of Poles are active on the internet (CBOS, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2019 has led us to spend even more time on the internet, both for business and private purposes (KRD, 2020). Not only adults but also children were forced to spend a lot of time on the internet due to online learning. Many of them also increased their screen time after school, as many parents treated mobile devices as babysitters that would help them reconcile working from home with taking care of children. According to Pew Internet (2021), 72% of parents declare that their children spend more time on the internet than before the pandemic outbreak. A large part of their screen time is connected to social media. Most children like to watch content on social networks, among which the most popular are Youtube and TikTok, which allow to watch short movies that are easy to understand and interesting even for toddlers. During the first year of the pandemic, children aged 4 to 15 spent on average 80 minutes a day on TikTok and 85 minutes a day on YouTube (Perez, 2020).

YouTube is the most popular free website for posting videos, reacting, and writing comments (Statista, 2021). The number of active users is over 2 billion and 500 hours of videos are published every minute (YouTube, 2021b). YouTube motivates its community members to create their own content by "sharing" the profits. The Google LLC, the owner of YouTube, allows creators to earn money on their films (Google Support, 2021). This phenomenon has led to the emergence of a new professional group of YouTubers – creators who professionally produce videos and make

them available on the platform (McCullough, 2021). YouTube has also created its own types of ads that are quite specific, often in the form of short videos or a combination of graphics and text. Product placement (promoting products in videos in return for compensation from sponsors) is also very popular there (Veneo Performance, 2020; Google Support, 2021).

TikTok is an application dedicated mainly to mobile devices, enabling the publication of short films (not longer than 60 seconds) with the use of music selected from a vast database. Designed practically only for entertainment, it is exceptionally easy to use. Due to these features, it has become popular among children, teenagers, and young adults around the world (Pallus, 2019). TikTok experiences constant growth and is currently available in 141 countries. Around the world, 689 million people use TikTok per month, not including Chinese users, because the application has a different name there (Douyin). According to Kennedy (2020), the significant increase in TikTok popularity could be due to the coronavirus pandemic, as the lockdown forced people to spend most of their time at home. Such circumstances made them feel bored and discouraged. TikTok videos, which are usually exaggerated and funny, have become a kind of antidote to these bad moods and the most popular entertainment for teenagers.

Social media contributed to the creation of a social group called “influencers”. This term is used to describe ‘*a person or thing that influences someone / something, especially a person with the ability to influence potential buyers of a product or service by recommending it on social media*’ (Oxford Dictionary, n.d). Influencers work with brands and, in return for remuneration, create and publish content recommending products and services. Influencer marketing is one of the word-of-mouth marketing strategies and can be defined as “identifying and targeting influential users and stimulate them to endorse a brand or specific products through their social media activities” (de Veirman et al., 2017). Influencer marketing occurs especially in the beauty, clothing, and lifestyle industries, but is not limited to these industries (Glucksman, 2017). Money is not the only type of reward that influencers can obtain. Some brands prefer to send creators their products for free in exchange for showing them on social media and issuing a positive opinion (de Veirman et al., 2019).

The audience of influencer marketing are not only adults, but also children. They spend a lot of time on the internet watching their favourite YouTubers and Tiktokers. Many of these creators are also underage. The number of children who are social media stars and have a large number of followers is also growing. For example, the most popular child influencer on Youtube, Ryan Kaji, has more than 30 million followers, and each of his movies achieves millions of views (YouTube, 2021a). Needless to say, his success, just as other juvenile influencers, is based on adults who plan, organize, coordinate, and control the filmmaking process. They also sign contracts with organizations that offer them remuneration in return for placing advertisements in their children’s films. Such activities have sparked much controversy (Veirman et al., 2019).

2.2. Influencer Marketing and Children

According to McGuire (1985, pp. 233–346), opinion leaders who are known, liked, or similar to the audience seem most attractive and, as a result, have the greatest impact on other consumers. Influencers might be called a new type of opinion leaders who, thanks to the internet, might reach a much bigger number of people than traditional, pre-internet opinion leaders. Nicoll and Nansen (2018) conducted a content analysis of 100 toys unboxing videos to compare the vlogs of children (53%) and adults (47%) in terms of expertise, professionalism, and promotion. Boys (52%) mostly unboxed and played with toy cars and Legos, while girls (36%) most often unpacked toys such as Shopkins (tiny collectible figurines). Children’s vlogs turned out to be more diverse and natural than professional or adult videos, despite the tendency to mimic their production and branding strategies. Furthermore, famous professional channels tend to create an impression of amateurishness and authenticity in their videos, by showing playful children.

Influencers are very important to producers as they place their ads in relevant and entertaining content. Influencers often do not disclose that the content they post on social media is commercial. For this reason, young audiences may find it difficult to critically evaluate such content. They may not perceive it as an advertisement but the influencer's good advice conveyed from genuine brand sympathy (Phelps et al., 2004; Cheung et al., 2009). Moreover, in this situation, a correspondence bias may appear, which consists in the tendency to explain human behaviour with internal causes and ignoring situational ones. Children have a particular tendency to display this bias, and as a result come to the conclusion that if an influencer did not like a brand, he or she would never agree to advertise it (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; O'Sullivan, 2003). In addition, children may have problems recognizing advertisements on the internet (Bijmolt, 1998).

Therefore, until the age of 7–8, children do not know the true purpose of advertising. In primary school, their logical thinking skills and understanding of processes develop, and only at the age of 11–12 are they able to fully comprehend the functions of advertising (Jasielska & Maksymiuk, 2010, pp. 32–34). This situation can have many negative consequences. Today, children are immersed in the digital world and have prolonged contact with the content of influencers. As a result, they are at risk of shaping a materialistic attitude, lowering their self-esteem, forced demand, conflicts with parents, unhealthy eating habits, feeling cheated, deprecating language, and perpetuating stereotypes (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, 2009; Starosta, 2012; Jasielska & Maksymiuk, 2010, pp. 102–113). Special attention should also be paid to the issue of using children as influencers by adults. Instead of enjoying the freedom to express themselves on the internet, these children often become a tool in the hands of corporations, used to influence the audience (Pedersen & Aspevig, 2018). Martínez and Olsson (2019), who conducted 12 focus groups with 46 children aged 9–12, show the importance of YouTubers as influencers and role models for children. Their group interviews were focused on makeup tutorials of a YouTube influencer called Misslisibell, which contain a lot of product placement. The conclusion of the study states that YouTubers have a great influence on the identity and consumption of adolescents. However, Marsh (2016), in his study of 4-year-old children, came to the opposite conclusion. He observed how preschoolers watch and react to YouTube videos. His study showed that these children enjoy the mere act of viewing, and influencers do not have an impact on their consumption. The contradictory results of this study might be connected to the young age of the study participants, so the hypothesis that the susceptibility to children influencers is related to the age of targeted children might be considered.

Several studies focused on the impact of influencers on children's eating habits. Coates (2019a) took a closer look at 380 videos posted on YouTube by influencers to find that only 27 of them did not contain food tips. Furthermore, the featured food was classified more often as unhealthy (49.4%) than healthy (34.5%). The analysis of the relationship between the frequency of watching vlogs by children and the consumption of unhealthy drinks and snacks was carried out by Smit et al. (2020). They found that the frequency of watching vlogs by children aged 8–12 increased their consumption of unhealthy food two years later. However, another study showed that the result of watching influencers could be immediate (Coates et al., 2019b). 176 children aged 9–11 were exposed to 2 mock Instagram profiles: the first promoted unhealthy food, and the second healthy. Although the latter did not have any impact on the viewers, the first immediately increased the consumption of unhealthy foods. Interestingly, in another study, the same researchers before showing the YouTube video alerted the group (151 children aged 9–11 years) about the advertisement included in it. As in the first study, exposure to influencer content featuring unhealthy food increased the consumption of unhealthy snacks. Interestingly, children who were aware of the promotion consumed 41% more of the advertised snack than children in the control group.

Studies focusing on the parents' perspective on the phenomenon of children influencers are scarce. Evans et al. (2018) examined 418 parents of young children in terms of understanding

and reacting to sponsored child influencer unboxing videos. Researchers evaluated the influence of sponsorship text disclosure, pre-movie information, and parental mediation on conceptual persuasion knowledge, perceptions of sponsorship transparency, and different outcome measures. They found that sponsorship information did not affect parents' conceptual persuasion knowledge of the unboxing video. However, those parents who saw a video with a pre-roll sponsor ad reported a higher level of sponsorship transparency. Parental mediation also conditionally influenced the perception of transparency and attitudes toward the sponsor. Parental mediation refers to strategies parents teach their children to cope with media influence and minimize negative consequences (Jiow, Lim, & Lin, 2017). However, existing studies show that parental mediation of advertising has little or no influence on children's identification of product placement in videos (Hudders & Cauberghe, 2018), but can moderate their brand attitude (Naderer et al., 2018).

2.3. Tripartite Model of Attitude

Attitude can be defined as a “learned predisposition to respond in a consistent evaluative manner to an object or class of objects” (Ostrom, 1969). The evaluation is usually perceived as a continuum ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative and is the result of the learning process connected with the object. In the case of this study, the objects are children influencers. The evaluative response may be divided into three classes: cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960). This structural model of attitude is also called the “ABC” tripartite model of attitudes (A-affect, B- behaviour, C-cognition).

The cognitive component of attitude is related to individual beliefs and knowledge about children influencers. These beliefs might not be objective or match the reality, but rather refer to how consumers perceived the object of evaluation. The emotional component refers to consumers' feelings about the object and the behavioural (or conative) component consists of a possible response to the object.

This structural approach is highly useful in consumer studies as it provides a framework to cover the attitude holistically: by discovering the beliefs towards an object, the nature of affect and behavioural intention (Evans, Jamal, & Foyal, 2006). In terms of children influencers, this approach is reflected in the three main research questions of this study, that is: what do the participants think and feel about children influencers and how do they intend to act as a result of being exposed to children influencers' marketing.

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Research Procedure

The research method used in this study was qualitative interviews in the form of individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group interviews (FGIs). The explorative qualitative field research enables us to understand in depth a topic that might otherwise be explored quite superficially (Gioia et al., 2013). In addition, the flexibility of this method allows us to modify the interview scenario in order to learn more about the topics that turned out to be extremely important to study participants (Babbie, 2009). In total, five IDIs and one FGI were conducted with children and two IDIs and three FGIs with parents. Two IDIs with children and two FGIs (one with four children and one with two parents) took place at the homes of the study participants, while the remaining ones were by teleconferences using the Zoom or Google Meet applications. The choice of the online or offline mode of conducting the study depended on the technical capabilities of the respondents and the existing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, every effort was made to ensure that the comfort of the conversation was the same for all participants.

The average interview time with children was 30 minutes and with parents 40 minutes. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then analysed. After the interview with children, a short presentation explaining product placement in a way appropriate for the age of the children was offered. It was a form of debriefing for the participants and an incentive for parents to agree for their offspring to participate in the study.

All collected data were analysed according to the procedure of inductive coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) by two researchers. The main themes that were identified for children and parents related to each of the three dimensions of attitude are presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

3.2. Research Tools

During the interviews, two separate interview scenarios were used. One of them was dedicated to children and the other to parents, as the language and manner of conducting the conversation were different in both cases. For example, questions to children were asked in a simple, understandable way, in a colloquial style and with the use of numerous simplifications, so that the interlocutors were able to answer them without causing unnecessary stress associated with a sense of confusion.

As far as the interview scenario for children is concerned, in the first step, participants were asked introductory questions on whether they used YouTube or have the TikTok app installed on their smartphone, what movies they watched most on these two platforms, and what YouTubers they knew. The last of warm-up questions were accompanied by the presentation of photos of children influencers with a request to identify those that children were familiar with.

The main questions were preceded by a five-minute fragment of a YouTube influencer movie. It depicts a situation where a mother enters her 10-year-old daughter's room during an online lesson. She complains that the girl's clothes are too modest and make her dress up in a more attractive outfit. After changing clothes, mom gives her daughter a few boxes – creative sets for creating bracelets, makeup kits, and a plastic heart opened with a key. The products and the logo of the store are presented. The girl plays with her mother and tests new gadgets on herself, her dad, and her younger brother, loudly and exaggeratingly admiring their properties. The questions asked after watching the video were related to the attitude of children towards the content they had watched. Then the children's attention was drawn to the products placed in the film and the issues of noticing the promotion and attitude towards it on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural levels.

In the next step, two TikTok influencer videos were presented to children. TikTok video 1¹ shows an amusing scene where the father is trying to work from home and gives his daughter a gift – a toy guitar, so that she would not be bored. The video features the box and the brand name. However, it turns out to be a loud toy and disturbs her father, so he gives her a second gift, a toy microphone, also displaying the logo. The girl begins to sing loudly, and the father raises his hands in despair because the child's singing is even more disruptive than playing the guitar. TikTok video 2² is a FunLockets diary presentation to the sounds of happy music. It is a view of women's hands that open all the lockers, drawers closed with a key, create tabs and present stickers included in the set.

The above-mentioned TikTok movies have been selected on the basis of the opposite – in the first, product placement is woven into the plot of the movie, and in the second, it is the only element of the video. Therefore, right after seeing them, the children were asked which one they liked more and why. Then questions about other dimensions of attitude towards the presented content were asked. The last part of the interview was related to other children influencers that interviewees were familiar with and their attitude towards them and their content.

¹ <https://linkd.pl/p7dfm>

² <https://linkd.pl/p7dfp>

The introduction of the interview scenario directed to parents included questions on participants' experiences with YouTube and TikTok films aimed at children and their children's activities on the internet. Next, similar to the children's interview scenario, a set of children influencers' photos was presented to be recognized. The main questions concerned the same three videos that the children watched. After watching the first one, the study participants were asked about their general impressions: whether they would allow their child to watch such movies and whether their child actually watched them. Then the products placed in this film, the message that this video brings, and how it can affect the young audience were discussed. After seeing two TikTok movies, the interviewees were asked to speculate which one the kids liked more and why. The conversation then moved to product placement and its consequences. In the last part of the interview, parents were asked if they knew about other sponsored films on social media aimed at children and what their attitude towards such content and its creators was.

3.3. Research Sample

The study covered children aged 8–11 years who attended grades II–V of primary school and their parents. Parents participated in two individual in-depth interviews (two mothers) and three focus groups, one consisting of a mother and a father and one of three mothers of related children. The data collection was ceased at the point of reaching data saturation (Saunders et al., 2017). The detailed characteristics of the study participants are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Study participants – children aged 8–11

Interview number	Interlocutor's code	Gender	Age	School Grade
1	R 1	girl	10	III
2	R 2	girl	9	III
3	R 3	boy	10	III
4	R 4	boy	10	III
5	R 5	girl	11	V
6	R 6.1	boy	8	II
	R 6.2	boy	11	V
	R 6.3	boy	10	IV
	R 6.4	girl	8	II

Source: Own study.

Table 2

Study participants – parents of children aged 8–11

Interview number	Interlocutor's code	Gender	Age	Occupation	Children's gender and age
7	R 7.1	woman	35	teacher	girl (8) and boy (10)
	R 7.2	woman	36	costume designer	girl (9)
	R 7.3	woman	33	translator	girl (10)
8	R 8.1	man	55	computer specialist	girl (11)
	R 8.2	woman	45	counter	
9	R 9	woman	32	marketer	boy (11) and boy (8)
10	R 10	woman	40	nurse	boy (10)
11	R 11.1	man	50	professional driver	boy (10)
	R 11.2	woman	47	nurse	

Source: Own study.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Cognitive Component of Attitude Towards Children Influencers

Surprisingly, the children who participated in the study are not uncritical about what they are watching. They do not like all the movies on YouTube and are not ashamed to express their opinions. They are also aware that these movies do not necessarily show the truth. Most of the kids noticed that in the first movie, both adults and children play roles. They also pointed out that the girl's reaction to the gifts is greatly exaggerated. Most young interviewees have no doubt that there are YouTubers who make films for fun and those who do it just for money.

“It's like... that I see some YouTubers making videos, because they like to and others, because they want to earn a lot of money. Because you can make money from it. I saw a video some time ago, where some people had a challenge to put on weight the fastest. And they were just going to McDonald's, but they were saying all the time that it's not McDonald's ad.” (R3)

Children are aware of the importance of views, subscriptions, and likes under the videos. They understand the entire system of recording and watching films on this platform, because sometimes even influencers explain how these social networks work.

The interviews show that the children notice product placement in YouTube and TikTok videos. They also pay attention to what is in the movie. They see the products that are placed in the film, but not all children understand that it is a promotion in the strict sense of the word. However, all of them admitted that these videos are made “for something”. After watching the YouTube video, some of the children were convinced that they had seen an advertisement for products and even tried to explain what such activities were about. The other part of the interviewees admitted that they did not know if it was an ad. The children also gave other responses, e.g. that it was a review or simply a gift that a mother gives her daughter.

Even without being sure whether it was an advertisement or not, the children could guess why the woman in the film presented the products. According to most of the kids, the creators of the video did this primarily for money and to increase the number of views, subscriptions, and likes. Furthermore, such activities were aimed at increasing the sale of products.

“I once watched on YouTube somebody advertising something and saying what he can do with this thing. For example, [creators] show a keyboard and say a name of a brand... And they say the brand, for example SteelSeries, this brand was last time, when I watched such a video. And they say: come there, because there are cool chairs and other stuff there. (...) [Sponsored video] means that simply somebody asks somebody else to make an ad in a video. And that person gives money for it.” (R3)

“For those who own this store, it's okay, but for those who have to place the product on a video, it's not okay. Because they'll get money from it, but they must show how they use it and this counts as an advertisement.” (R1)

The young interlocutors easily name many other examples of product placement they have seen on YouTube and TikTok, such as keyboards, chairs, headphones, computer mice, laptops, pens, clothes, gadgets, food, mugs, pillows, key rings, sweatshirts, bracelets, and toys.

“The most often, when I watched some videos, people were recommending gaming equipment, some headphones, laptops of some brand. For example, pens for cheating at school, clothes from their shops, and some gadgets. I think, that it's alright, but they shouldn't talk about it for 5 minutes straight, they should talk briefly. The entire video should not consist only of advertising.” (R4)

“For example, when I watch a video where somebody is painting, they usually recommend some crayons or paints.” (R5)

“Well, they don't say: This is great, buy it. They say: you have the link in a description box. (...) It's boring to me.” (R2)

The children also pointed out that many influencers have their own store where they sell gadgets related to their channel to their fans. In their films, the creators very often display these products to encourage recipients to buy. My interlocutors see nothing wrong with such actions. They accept uncritically that this is just the way social media are constructed and do not reflect on it. If the advertisement is long, children declared that they were bothered or bored by it. However, they have nothing against short sponsored material woven into the plot of the film.

Among parents, mixed opinions on the presented content were observed. On the one hand, the videos were perceived as artificial, dishonest, and exaggerated. Lots of negative consequences of watching such content were enumerated, such as: exposing children to distorted family image and very traditional gender stereotypes. Many people have noticed that watching a mother walk around the house smartly dressed wearing high heels all the time and requiring nothing from her daughter except a nice appearance can have a detrimental effect on the audience. In addition, the scene of luring a girl away from online lessons to dress up, make jewellery together, and do makeup sparked outrage among many parents. They speculated that the child, after watching such a production, may start to blame his or her mother for not caring enough about him or her because she forces them to study and do homework instead of buying new toys.

“And another question is if the kid would be jealous of the super mum who doesn't require any homework, there is no discipline. She brings cool things and sits with her doing bracelets, she doesn't bother her by school, she just lets her fulfil her desires (...) The message of this video is that the parent is a cool buddy and in real life, in my opinion, it is impossible. (...) And here I saw a message that the mother ignores everything: school and everything, here only the appearance is important and a good presentation. But I believe that she does it only to make money. She sees some marketing purpose in it.” (R14)

“By the way, this daddy has two left hands, because he can't cook anything (laugh). He prefers to wear makeup than to be hungry.” (R 8.1)

“(...) there's something in it, even though this video was okay, and this dad was involved, but everything was based on such stereotypes: mother, father, daughter and son. And when a little kid watches such a video, it can really tell them that's a real life.” (R 7.2)

According to some parents, the products advertised in these types of videos are not suitable for the age of children, which can have negative consequences for them. Some adults criticised children's makeup products, as they believed that children of this age should not be allowed to do makeup and such products should not be advertised. This opinion was caused by the fear that children would enter adulthood too quickly.

“And I believe that's an ad and such things, such toys, have existed for many, many years. When I was a child, such things existed. But there were no such information carriers to advertise the products. People were making bracelets and there were products for kids referring to adulthood. (...) There were 'little beauticians', 'little doctors', 'little kitchens and beads', but there weren't such ads. (...) I mean, the message itself, without any setting, would be just an ad, and here they create some behaviour, some fashion and model that I don't like.” (R 11.2)

On the other hand, some parent interviewees appreciate the promotion of spending family time together. According to them, it was not a production created only for profit. They believed that the parents of the main character create films most of all for fun and spending time with their children, treating it as their hobby and not as the source of income. In addition, making bracelets together seemed to be a very positive aspect of the film, as it is a useful and developing activity for girls aged 8-11.

“I had such kit when I was a kid and I really liked it. So, it's nice that the kid can create the bracelet, choose some beads, here she improves her motor skills. (...) to me, it's quite positive. For example, I like that the whole family is involved and that they are doing this together. (...) In my opinion, if something is good, why not promote it. If something is nice, if something is interesting.” (R 7.1)

According to parents, children might be unaware of promotional messages in the presented videos. They believe that adults notice many potentially harmful elements in videos, but children are probably unaware of them. In their opinion, children simply watch a girl playing with her toys and do not notice all the rest that adults find so blatant. However, they believe that they can protect their children against such content by proper upbringing. For example, children who have other hobbies than the internet would not be so vulnerable to what the influencers say and do.

“I think that some part of children won’t see it. It depends on how the child is raised. Because sometimes kids are so... parents raise them in such a way that they are keen on... I don’t know... sport, travel or something like that, not the appearance and the toys strictly like My Little Pony.” (R 8.2)

Some parents do not really know what TikTok is and honestly admit that they do not even care. Some of them said that they saw only a few videos from this application and they did not like the ones presented to them. They do not agree with the TikTok convention and do not want to participate in the creation and viewing of such content. However, some parents admitted that they have this application for two reasons. First, to know what movies are there. On the other hand, they watch the videos for themselves because they find them funny and entertaining.

“TikTok is interesting, we can find a lot of funny and valuable things there, however there are lots of bad things too, demoralizing things. I don’t like that it works in such a random way, it’s not personalised, nobody knows what you’ll get. So, when it comes to children, it could be dangerous. Nobody knows what may be displayed to a child and it could be inappropriate.” (R 7.1)

Many parents were surprised to find that there are product placements in short videos posted on TikTok. They recognized that these films were designed solely and exclusively to advertise products. Even the presence of a fictional outline did not make their impression wane, as they rightly noticed that TV commercials also had a storyline and were similarly short as TikToks.

“I think both TikToks contained product placement. I mean, the second one was slightly shorter and maybe more people would see it, because that is the advantage of TokTok that there are shorter videos there, because longer ones are watched less often. In the first TikTok I don’t like that this girl gets new gifts every now and then. The second video has nice music.” (R 9)

The comparison of what parents and children think of children influencers is presented in Table 3. Undoubtedly, parents have noticed a larger number of negative consequences of being exposed to children influencers than kids, but still some interviewees perceived the watched videos as harmless or even positive (promoting family time together). Surprisingly, the children showed a high level of awareness of product placement in YouTube and TikTok videos. Moreover, they know that creators look for profits on social media, but they also accept this fact as something natural and normal.

Table 3

Comparison of children’s and parents’ cognitive attitude towards children influencers

Children	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice that the characters in videos are insincere and the reality presented is not true • Are aware of the importance of views, subscriptions, and likes under the videos • Most of the children were able to notice product placement in presented videos • Believe that product placement in videos is normal practice, necessary for creators to earn money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point out negative consequences of being exposed to videos of children influencers such as presenting distorted family image, traditional gender stereotypes, advertising products not suited to the age of children • Some interviewees appreciate the promotion of spending family time together • Believe that by proper upbringing they can protect children from the influencers’ negative impact • Think that children are unaware of product placement in influencers’ videos • Some interviewees were unaware of product placement in videos their children were watching on TikTok

4.2. Emotional Component of the Attitude Towards Children Influencers

The topic of children influencers, as well as the videos presented, raised mostly negative emotions among both children and parents. The highest level of emotion among the study participants was associated with blackmailing other characters to make them test the products presented in the YouTube video.

Although children participants (especially girls) declared that they liked the videos and found them interesting, negative emotions also appeared. After watching the YouTube film, many children expressed negative feelings about the behaviour of the main character and her mother towards the girl's father and younger brother. The children did not like the fact that the products placed in this film had been tested on them. Children said that the men had become victims of blackmail (mother gave an ultimatum: either they let women do their makeup or she would not cook dinner tomorrow). Many children said that this behaviour was "unfair".

"I liked this video, but she seems to be bragging, like: woow, how amazing! She wants everybody to pay attention to her, how cool, I want to have the same stuff too. (...) Besides, everybody can see that they are rich, because I watched an episode, where they showed what they got for Santa Claus Day and she got a doll and when I checked it on Allegro it cost 200 zlotys. And she got something else too." (R 2)

The scene of putting makeup on the father's face, because otherwise he would not eat dinner, was controversial also for parents. There were voices that this was blackmail and the use of other people for their own purposes. Many parents were also outraged by the stereotypes on which this film is based. The mother looks nice and prepares meals, and the father goes to work, earns a living, and cannot cook.

"Nobody can treat another person like that, it doesn't matter who it is, a spouse, a child, or a stranger. Blackmail is blackmail. It doesn't matter whether it is emotional or physical, it is always manipulating another person, and that's wrong." (R 8.2)

Another thing that raised a high level of emotions among parents was the fact of giving children presents without any occasion. Some of the study participants felt that it is improper, while others disagreed with this opinion. Parents pointed out that the girl received several gifts at once without any occasion, which may arouse viewers' envy and a sense of inferiority. Some parents said that they did not mind the products themselves but found the form of advertising outrageous.

Adults noticed that children of poorer families may feel humiliated and sad after watching such a video because their parents cannot afford this kind of entertainment. On the other hand, they know that watching another child play with toys is often a substitute for actual possession of these products. Usually, just looking is enough and gives the child a sense of satisfaction.

"(...) The child of a poorer family, watching this video, may feel jealous, inferior, undervalued when parents cannot afford entertainment on the same level as the child in the movie. It could be wrong, in my opinion." (R 8.1)

"I will compare it with my memories. When I was a little girl, I used to stop by a shop in front of the railway station. It was a toy store and I always stopped when I was going somewhere with my mother, because there were toys and dolls. I loved all the dolls and I always wanted to own them. For me, the same thing happens on YouTube and TikTok. Watching toys online may be as attractive as that storefront when I was a kid. Because now we live in a different world, more virtual." (R 10)

Another topic that seemed to be very controversial – dressing the daughter to look better in online lessons – among permissive parents was not so problematic. They believed that the mother had good intentions and wanted her daughter to do well. They also argued that there is nothing wrong with giving children gifts without occasion, because childhood is the time to pamper children and give them the best. They also see nothing wrong with their children seeing such

productions. They expressed opinions that this kind of videos is always better than playing games or watching influencers promoting pathology or other content definitely unsuitable for children.

“It depends on whether I show this video to my child or if she finds it herself and wants to watch it. I would prefer her to watch this video rather than a gamer who curses all the time. I think this content is a bit better and more appropriate.” (R 7.1)

“This video did not arouse my outrage, because I take into account that people have fun making these videos. They want to show a part of their world, influence somebody. (...) This is the way the world is now, and I know how it is. People will do it. I think there are worse things online than ‘Hejka tu Lenka’.” (R 10)

Permissive parents liked that the main character’s mother emphasized impropriety of her cosmetics for the girl and that she bought her cosmetics that were suitable for her. They do not mind placing such products, as they are not harmful. The same parents also shared a positive opinion about TikTok, believing it to be an innocent pastime for their children and seeing no reason to forbid it. They believed that this is the world and they cannot change it, they can only control their children as much as they can.

The vast majority of adult interviewees expressed a negative opinion on product placement in YouTube and TikTok films aimed at children. According to many of them, it is even immoral and should not occur at all. There were arguments that this is cheating children, for example, about the advantages of the product and taking advantage of the naivety of young people. The interviewees also pointed out that many adults fall for this type of advertising, let alone children who are not fully aware of what they are watching. They are outraged that the authors of such advertisements do not think in any way about the child’s welfare, but about how to sell the product and earn as much money as possible. Some parents think it is heartless. They especially disliked putting toys in the hands of other children, as they think their offspring may feel jealous.

“To my mind, it is taking advantage of children and their naivety. Because everybody knows that the kid sees something and goes crazy because he wants it. And when somebody puts those toys in other kids’ hands, the kid wants it more. That’s why, to my mind, it is taking advantage of children.” (R 7.3)

“The kids will start to act like a robot, they won’t analyse any information from the ads. Advertising is the leverage of trade, but now it went too far, and ad producers and sponsored links crossed the moral line.” (R 8.2)

Also, some people were against creating YouTube channels with children at all. They believe that young people are used by their parents to advertise products and obtain material benefits from it. Adults noticed many dangers that come from this, for example, what if the existence of the whole family depends on YouTube income, or what will happen in the future to a person who has gained popularity at a young age and is unable or unwilling to continue this business on social media afterwards.

“(...) I feel doubled. First, I said that people have fun and this is their idea for life, but when there’s too much and the kid is, I’ll say it in bad words, exploited, and when the products are placed over and over again to my mind it’s immoral.” (R 10)

On the other hand, there were voices that it was a phenomenon that could not be escaped. One mother admitted that the Walt Disney Company had been doing it for years, e.g., by building Disneyland. Some parents think that it is inevitable to see ads, because that is just the way the world is now, thus, there is nothing wrong with advertising products for children. There was also the opinion that there is nothing wrong with product placement in films aimed at children, because children do not have their own money and the decision to buy the products is up to the parents. Their statements showed that what the children watch does not influence reality, and even if there were no advertisements aimed at children, the offspring would still ask their mother or father to buy selected products because of, for example, fashion.

“And here’s the problem that children, I’m not saying that adults are super aware, but children are usually less aware what they are looking at. They do not always know that they see an ad and that it exists only to spend money and buy things. On the other hand, I have a feeling that Disney has done it in a similar way since it was founded. Even the existence of Disneyland, I think that’s an ad.” (R 7.2)

“I wonder if product placement did not exist, some brands would still appear; it would be just more natural, not bought, and it would still influence children. Children don’t buy things by themselves, but they press their parents to do so. Finally, it is the parents who make the decision. All in all, I think, it’s probably moral.” (R 9)

Some parents admitted that some products could be placed in films aimed at children. In their opinion, toys aimed at child development, requiring logical thinking and planning, could be advertised in this way. There was also an interesting idea that influencers could advertise garlic lozenges, fish oil, or other healthy products for children that they do not want to take voluntarily. A child, observing his or her favourite influencer, could learn healthy habits and appropriate attitudes.

“Garlic lozenges and cod liver oil should be advertised in such a way, because they are healthy for children and these products that are very good and healthy should be communicated in an interesting way. (...) Good and safe products should be advertised in such a way, I agree, but products that fool the kids, not really.” (R 11.1)

“In my opinion, when there are products that develop some skills, are for some kind of development, for example: some creative sets, and Lego sets for boys. Something constructive, where kid improves his or her motor skills and some logical thinking skills, to mull something over, to plan or build something. Something like that.” (R10)

YouTubers’ shops where they sell products related to their channel turned out to be a very controversial topic. The subject divided the parents and made them feel torn. They understood that everyone wants to earn and has the right to open their own online business; however, they felt that their children, who are passionate about their favourite YouTubers, would like to have whatever they put in their shops. They also said with some regret that their children considered influencers their idols, their authority. In their opinion, someone who plays games all the time should not be an authority figure and, in a way, they do not understand why their kids like it so much. They know that many people (adults as well) like to buy gadgets with their favourite characters, but the purchase decision depends primarily on who the idol is, whether he or she is not, for example, a “patho-influencer”.

As can be seen in Table 3, the range of emotions was wider in the case of parents than in the case of children. In addition, extreme emotions such as rage were reported by parents and not children. It could be the result of the fact that young people are more familiar with this type of content and it does not raise many emotions among them. On the contrary, some parents were not familiar with such videos and also were more preoccupied with possible negative consequences for their children. However, it should be noticed that even among parents some positive emotions have appeared, especially among those who believe that there is nothing wrong with pampering their children.

Table 4

Comparison of children's and parents' emotional attitude towards children influencers

Children	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls liked the videos more than boys, who described them as “girlish” • They do not like blackmailing in YouTube videos, because it seems unfair to them • They notice that the girl in the video is rifling with toys • The girls are jealous of the gifts the main character receives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not like blackmailing in YouTube videos • They feel outraged by references to very traditional gender stereotypes • Mixed feelings about giving gifts to children without any occasion and growing up too early: some parents were strongly against, while others did not see anything wrong with unexpected presents and children using adult-like products • They describe product placement as immoral, because producers take advantage of children's naivety • Some parents' negative feelings towards children influencers were so negative that they postulated banning such an activity on social media • The others declare positive feelings towards the idea of advertising healthy and educative products in such a way

4.3. Behavioural Component of the Attitude Towards Children Influencers

The children interviewed often admitted that after watching YouTube and TikTok videos with product placements, they would like to own the products that the influencers presented. One part of the interviewees said that they used to ask their parents to buy such products, and the other said that they did not even dare to do so, because they knew that their parents would never buy them. Those who knew that they would not receive products recommended by influencers said that if they told their parents that they had seen this product on the internet, they would have no chance of receiving it.

“I am 100% sure that my mum wouldn't like to buy it.” (R 6.2)

Those children who know that adults would be able to give them such a thing turn to their parents with a request and sometimes receive it, but usually for special occasions such as birthdays or Christmas.

“(Would you like to buy something from a YouTuber?) Yes. I've actually bought some. For example, I have a calendar and some other things. (...) I often get them, but especially for birthday or name day. (...) And then they buy me things that I want the most.” (R1)

Children playing games and watching YouTubers who play declare that they do not blindly follow what the influencer has. If a YouTuber in the virtual world has good equipment or the special appearance of the character, children do not feel the need to have identical items. One of the interviewees admitted that he bought what he liked, only sometimes being inspired by what he had seen on YouTube. However, there are items that all players want to have, and then they also aim to get them.

“I mean, when they're advertising a ball, it occurs to me that I could have a new ball. But then I buy myself some other ball which I like.” (R3)

Some children said that in the past they asked their parents to buy such products more often because when they were younger, they watched a lot of videos showing and reviewing toys (e.g., the unboxing channels). Now they have started watching films on a different subject and they sometimes ask their parents to buy some items, but less frequently. The products that the children mentioned are: dolls, a diary, crayons, slime that can be eaten, gaming equipment and gadgets related to YouTubers' channels.

“It was a fact when I was watching the Martyna Zabawa channel [unboxing channel]. She was opening mystery boxes. There's a shop called Flying Tiger and she was opening mystery

boxes from this shop. I really wanted to get them, but when we went to the store, there were no mystery boxes. (...) Now, I sometimes get some products, but when I give back money to my parents. Sometimes they just buy it, but sometimes they disagree.” (R2)

“Hmm, I don’t really remember. When I was little, they bought me some things, but now I watch fewer of these videos and they don’t recommend any equipment.” (R4)

“Some time ago, yes, but now no. (...) I don’t know if they would let me buy something, I haven’t asked.” (R5)

As far as parents are concerned, it turned out that they are rather sceptical about the products advertised by influencers. They believe that these products are of low quality and definitely not worth the price. Some parents admitted that they preferred to take their children to a toy shop and let them choose something rather than buy them products advertised on the internet. In addition, they declared that if a child asked for a product recommended by the influencer, they would show him or her other similar products, so that the child could decide whether the one recommended by the influencer was definitely the best.

“I would go with my daughter to the shop to let her see what other products look like. For example, if she wanted a diary, I would go to the shop to look how other diaries look. She would evaluate if other diaries aren’t better than this.” (R 8.2)

Parents clearly emphasized that they would be willing to buy their child a product advertised by the influencers only if they really thought that it would be useful, of good quality, and if a special occasion connected with gift giving was coming.

“I think that, okay, my child wants this, but children usually want a lot of things in a short period of time. So, I look at products that would really work and that we could buy for birthday in half a year.” (R 7.2)

“If my daughter came to me twice a day and asked for two presents a day, obviously I would refuse. However, if my daughter came to me from time to time and showed me something that she really liked, and she made it clear that this product is cool, and she would use it, then I would agree.” (R 8.1)

Adults admit that if a birthday, name day, or Christmas is coming, they are more likely to decide on such a purchase. They believe that children, if they could, would like to have everything, and they do not want to teach them that all their desires can be fulfilled.

“I think that’s very easy to ask for something when Christmas is coming, because everybody gets presents then. (...) I think that we are willing to buy such products, but certainly for some occasion, not just like Lenka got.” (R 9)

“It can be different, because it depends on the financial situation and the approach to children, but some parents definitely buy their children products, at least because they want peace of mind. And children, of course, have their own ways to manipulate their parents. (...) To my mind, maybe I wouldn’t buy such a product, but for some occasion if my kid would really want it etc. and it would be his dream gift, then for birthday, name day or another occasion I would buy it.” (R 11.1)

The comparison of intended behaviour after watching influencer videos of children and parents is presented in Table 5. The children declared that they would like to have the products placed in influencer videos. However, many young interviewees do not even try to ask their parents to buy them, because they know that their requests would be rejected. These answers are consistent with those of parents, who admitted that children often asked for the products seen on the internet, but intended to buy them only on special occasions and when they proved to be really useful and of good quality.

Table 5

Comparison of children's and parents' behavioural attitude towards children influencers

Children	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children want to possess the same or similar products that were placed in the video • Children who know that parents are willing to buy placed products ask them to do so • Children whose parents are willing to buy the featured products get them as presents for a special occasion • Some children do not ask for products from the internet because they know that their parents are not willing to buy them • Children declare that when they were younger, they used to watch more toys unboxing videos and ask for such products more frequently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are sceptical of the quality of products promoted by children influencers. • They would prefer to show their children other products with similar properties and let them choose between brands • They are willing to buy such products only if children prove that they are useful and of good quality • They are more willing to buy products that children want for special occasions, such as birthdays.

5. DISCUSSION

As shown in previous studies (Phelps et al., 2004; Cheung et al., 2009), at least some children are not aware of product placement in influencers' videos and rather treat this type of content in terms of good advice from older colleagues. However, it should be noted that the general level of awareness of advertising in social media videos among children was higher than their parents suspected.

This study supports the findings of Folvord et al. (2019) and Martinez and Olson (2019) as interviewed children were eager to buy products presented in influencers' videos. Still, this desire does not translate into their buying behaviour directly as they do not have their own money. Parents play the role of guardians of children's shopping decision, and according to our young interviewees, deny to buy products recommended by influencers. Interestingly, parents declared that they were eager to succumb to the pester power of their offspring on special occasions such as birthday or Christmas.

As Coates et al.'s (2019) study indicated, awareness of watching a promotional content is not enough to deter children from behaving in accordance with the influencers' intentions. Our study may shed some light on these surprising results. Even children who were perfectly aware that influencers were featuring certain products in their movies for money declared that they would like to possess these products. This could be explained by the fact that children interviewees see product placement on social networks as something natural and normal and do not feel like they are being deceived or manipulated.

According to existing studies, parents play a role in influencing the perception of product placement in videos and attitudes toward the sponsor (Hudders & Cauberghe, 2018; Naderer et al., 2018). Parental mediation refers to the strategies parents use to minimize the negative influence of social media content on their offspring (Jiow, Lim, & Lin, 2017). The collected data can broaden our understanding of parental mediation, which in existing studies was conceptualized as overseeing what children do on the internet or talking about it. The conducted interviews suggest that parental mediation might also take the form of showing children how interesting the world outside the internet might be and helping them to find offline hobbies.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate three components of attitude of children and parents towards children influencers and the content they present on social media. After conducting a series of individual and focus group interviews with 18 participants who were exposed to one Youtube and two TikTok videos of chosen children influencers, many conclusions can be drawn that can broaden our understanding of attitude towards such social media content.

As far as the **cognitive component of attitude** is concerned, the study showed that children are quite critical of the movies they watch. They choose the creators they want to follow and are able to judge their behaviour. As it turned out, not all children noticed the ads on YouTube and TikTok videos. They are aware of the products they are viewing but are not able to determine whether it is a paid promotion or good advice from an influencer. Interestingly, even children who are aware of product placement in influencers' videos, seem not to see anything wrong with this practice and perceive it as a natural part of social media content. Some parents enumerated a long list of possible negative consequences of watching influencer content by youngsters, while others believe that proper upbringing can limit them.

Referring to the **emotional component of attitude**, it should be stressed that the observed level of emotions was higher among parents than among children. Many parents initially declared not to see anything wrong with the videos their children watch, but after getting acquainted with sample videos, they started to feel surprised and disgusted by the conveyed message. Some YouTubers become children's idols and that could cause many problems.

While focusing on the **behavioural component**, it appears that many children deny asking their parents to buy them products recommended by the influencer. This is happening mostly because they do not believe that parents will fulfil their requests. At the same time, parents seem to challenge this belief, at least to some extent, by admitting that they are willing to buy products advertised on social media for their children for special occasions like birthdays.

In terms of managerial implications, it should be noted that using children influencers to advertise products is effective because even if it does not lead to a purchase, it builds brand awareness in young people. It is possible that as soon as they start having their own money, they will become consumers of the brands they associate with their favourite influencers. Children remember products placed in videos and are eager to have them. However, parents who are not willing to buy such products, except for special occasions, stand in the way of buying. Nevertheless, product placement makes children aware of the brand and perhaps these young people will become consumers in the future.

Some limitations of this study should be considered. First, the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures led to the situation in which some of the interviews were held face-to-face, while others were conducted online. During teleconferences, there were technical problems that were stressful for some people and could have influenced their responses. Secondly, it was sometimes hard to obtain rich narratives from young children, which makes the collected material from children limited compared to the data obtained from parents.

Further research in this field should focus on determining what content attracts young people and why; what forms of advertising on the internet are most effective; how to include products in videos for the best results; and what are the factors that influence the effectiveness of product placement for children. By means of quantitative research, it would be possible to study a large population and define consumer trends among children.

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Consumer Behavior on the Organic Fruit and Vegetable Market: The Evidence from Poland

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ABSTRACT

Consumer opinion and behavior research plays an important role in the development of the market of specific products. Currently, research in the field of consumer behavior towards organic food, which is gaining popularity on the Polish market whose production is in line with the concept of sustainable development and the European Green Deal related to it, is of particular importance. The aim of the study was to analyze the opinion and behaviors of consumers as regards organic fruit and vegetables and the promotion of these products as a determinant of them.

The data for the analyzes came from empirical research conducted in Lublin at the turn of 2019 and 2020 by means of a proprietary questionnaire. The research was carried out on a sample of 534 respondents aged over 18. The scope of the research covered the opinions and behaviors of consumers towards organic fruit and vegetables as well as the factors determining the commencement of making or increasing the frequency of purchases of these products. An attempt was also made to define the relationship between the opinions and behaviors presented by consumers and their demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

The results of the research show that half of the respondents purchased organic fruit and vegetables, of which only 1/4 claimed to do so regularly and quite often (several times a week). The respondents most often purchased these products in specialized stores – with organic food. According to the surveyed consumers, organic fruit and vegetables are rich in nutrients, healthy and safe, and produced using environmentally friendly methods. The most important factors influencing the increase in purchases and consumption and thus the development of the market for organic products were the increase in the availability of this product category in the places of everyday shopping and the reduction of their prices as the most important factors. The conducted research showed that for the respondents, promotional campaigns aimed at popularizing organic food, its values and impact on human health are not without significance.

JEL classification: Q1, Q13, Q18

Keywords: consumer behavior, organic fruit and vegetables, promotion, organic farming

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the Communication from the European Commission on the European Green Deal¹, European food is famous for being safe, high-quality, and nutritious. Despite the ongoing transition to more sustainable systems, food production still results in air, water, and soil pollution, contributes to the loss of biodiversity and climate change, and consumes excessive amounts of natural resources. Therefore, according to the document, all entities operating in the food value chain face new challenges and opportunities. New technologies and scientific discoveries combined with growing consumer awareness and the demand for sustainable food will benefit all stakeholders. Hence, research into the opinion and behavior of Polish consumers as regards organic food seems to be very important. It is produced in the farm management system and food production, combining the best practices for the environment, a high degree of biodiversity and the protection of natural resources (Brzezina et al., 2017; Council Regulation (EC) No 834/2007). It is produced in a system where the use of chemical plant protection products, artificial fertilizers, growth regulators, feed additives, antibiotics, growth hormones, ionizing radiation and the use of genetically modified organisms is limited or even avoided (Das, Chatterjee, & Kumar Pal, 2020; Kirdar, 2018; Nguyen, Wysocki, Treadwell, Farnsworth, & Clark, 2008).

Consumer behaviors are a very complex category and their multidimensional nature means that the issue may be analyzed in various ways. From a practical point of view, consumer behavior plays an important role in the development of the market for specific products (Szul, 2016), may translate into the state of the natural environment (Mańkowska-Wróbel, 2015), and also knowing them allows companies to adapt their marketing communication methods to customer needs (Hoyer, MacInnis, & Pieters, 2013; Oszust & Stecko, 2020). A detailed analysis of opinions, consumer behavior or factors influencing consumer choices constitute the basis for strategic decisions, becoming the foundation for adjusting the offer to the needs and expectations of customers (Liczmańska, 2015). Consumer behavior and the factors determining it have also been an important stream of research in economic sciences for many years (Cornescu & Adam, 2015; Malter, Holbrook, Kahn, Parker, & Lehmann, 2020). A special place in the literature on the subject is occupied by studies and research on consumer opinions and behavior, as well as the consumption and popularization of organic food. Research in this area has been conducted for many years both in Poland (including Bryła, 2016; Cichocka & Grabiński, 2009; Hermaniuk 2018; Łuczka-Bakuła & Smoluk-Sikorska, 2010; Witek, 2014; Żakowska-Biemans, 2011b) and abroad (e.g. Ertz, Karakas, & Sarigollu, 2016; Oraman & Unakitan, 2010; Radojević, Tomaš Simin, Glavaš Trbić, & Milić, 2020; Rana & Paul, 2017; Tandon, Dhir, Kaur, Kushwah, & Salo, 2020). The review of the state of research on the demand factors for the development of the organic food market in Poland was carried out, among others, by Łuczka (2019). However, there is little research into consumer perceptions and behavior (specifically) as regards organic fruit and vegetables. Therefore, an attempt was made to analyze the opinions and behaviors of consumers towards organic fruit and vegetables and the promotion of these products as a factor determining the increase in demand for them. An attempt was also made to define the relationship between the opinions and behaviors presented by consumers and their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. To this end, the following research questions were defined for the purpose of the research: 1) Do Polish consumers buy organic fruit and vegetables and where? 2) What are the opinions of consumers about organic fruit and vegetables? 3) What are the most important factors influencing the purchasing decisions of the respondents? 4) What are the respondents' most important opinions regarding the selected promotion forms of organic fruit and vegetables?

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – The European Green Deal COM/2019/640 final.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The data for the analyses came from empirical research conducted in Lublin at the turn of 2019 and 2020 by means of a proprietary questionnaire containing 8 closed-type questions. The research was carried out on a sample of 534 respondents aged over 18. The selection of the place was not accidental, as Lublin is the capital of Province with one of the highest positions in Poland in terms of the cultivation area devoted to, and the production of, organic fruit and vegetables. The quota-sampling method was applied to select the participants in the survey. The sample reflected the age structure of the city's residents, with women accounting for 55.4% of all respondents, and men for 44.6%. The division into four age groups was applied: people aged 18-29, 30-49, 50-65, and over 65 years old, who accounted for 15.0%, 41.6%, 24.7%, and 18.7% of all respondents, respectively. The data analysis took into account gender, age, the educational level (vocational, secondary, and tertiary education levels were listed), the level of disposable income (ranges: under PLN 500, PLN 501–1,000, PLN 1,001–1,500, PLN 1,501–2,000, and over PLN 2,000), and the respondents' declaration on buying organic products. The opinions and behaviors of consumers as regards organic fruit and vegetables, and the factors affecting the respondents' purchasing decisions, were also analyzed. In addition, in order to fully identify purchasing determinants and the increased frequency of buying organic fruit and vegetables, the opinions of the respondents about selected forms of promotion of the said products were examined. These forms of promotion were divided into two spheres of measures. The first group involved "Publicity" measures addressed to a wide group of recipients, entailing communication with various groups with a view to creating and maintaining a positive product image among potential clients/consumers. The second group took into account various forms of supplementary promotion addressed to specific clients, with the possibility to undertake such promotional measures at points of sale. The questionnaire included closed-ended – single-choice and multiple-choice questions, as well as numerical scales. As regards the assessment of statements, the 5-point variant (the Likert scale) was selected including the so-called neutral option: "I neither agree nor disagree". To find statistically significant differences between the characteristics describing consumers and the behavior and opinions of consumers as regards organic fruit and vegetables and their promotion, the Chi² test (χ^2) was used with a significance level below 0.05, and the Cramer's V (V_c) coefficient was used to find out the strength of the interaction between the analyzed variables². The study also provides insight into the state of organic farming and the organic product market in Poland against the backdrop of selected European countries.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Organic Farming and the Organic Product Market in Poland and in Europe

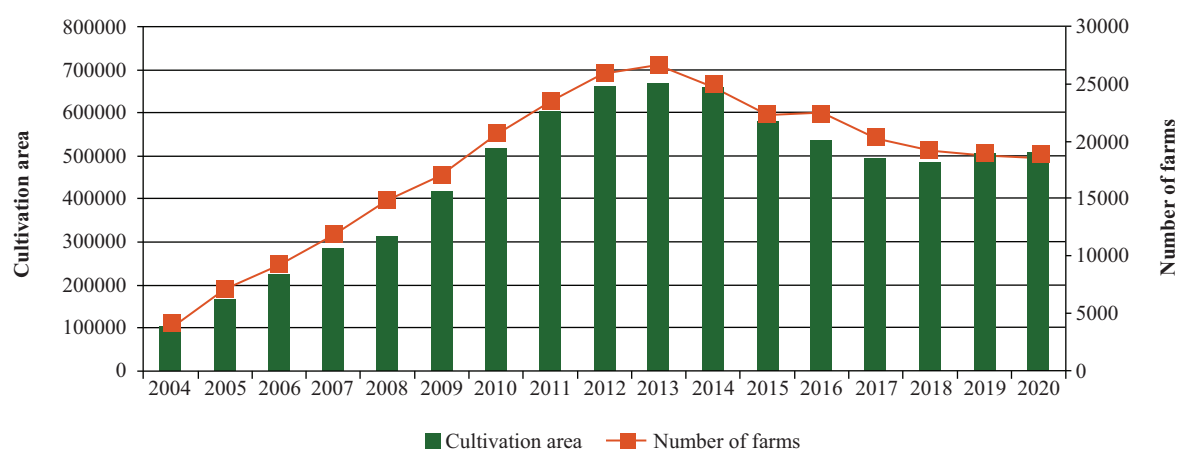
Since 2004, Poland has been experiencing fairly rapid growth in terms of land intended for organic farming, and in the number of organic farms. As per data from the Agricultural and Food Quality Inspection (IJHAR-S), in 2020, the total agricultural area cultivated in line with the organic farming system in Poland amounted to 509,300 ha, while the number of organic farms was 18,575 (Figure 1). In comparison to 2004, the area of such agricultural land increased 4.6 times, and the number of farms saw an over five-fold increase. This trend was much higher in respect of organic fruit and vegetables. In 2004, these crops covered an area of 2040.7 ha, and in 2018 an increase of over 20 times was recorded, to the level of 42,862.5 ha. Furthermore, according to the most recent report by the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture FiBL and IFOAM Organics Europe,

² In the case of this coefficient, according to Pułaska-Turyńska (2008) and Rószkiewicz (2002), it is not required that any of the features / data should be quantitative.

Poland is currently ranked fifth in terms of the largest areas of temperate-zone organic orchards and fruit-shrub plantations, and eleventh in terms of organic vegetable cultivation in the world (Willer, Schlatter, Trávníček, Kemper, & Lernoud, 2020). Despite the rapid growth in the organic production system, the share of organic products in general food retail, the value of the organic food market, and per capita consumption in Poland remain at a very low level (Bryła, 2015; Łuczka, 2019; Żakowska-Biemans, 2011a). This also refers to the fruit and vegetable market (Pawlak, Paszko, & Wróblewska, 2016). According to data from 2019 concerning the organic food market in Europe, the share of organic products in the overall food market in Poland is only 0.6%, while in Sweden and Switzerland it is around 10%, and in Denmark 11.5%. In addition, the value of organic retail sales in Poland is only EUR 250 m per year, while in Germany it amounts to nearly 11 bn, in France to 9.2 bn, and in Switzerland and the United Kingdom to over 2.5 bn per year. In this respect, Poland is ranked fourteenth in Europe, which is relatively low given the size of the population (Willer et al., 2020). As regards per capita values, the average Pole spends only 7 euros per year on organic food, compared to the Swiss and Danes with 312 euros each, Swedes – 231 euros, Luxembourgers – 221 euros, Austrians – 205 euros, Germans – 116 euros, and the French – 136 euros per year. The European average is 60 euros, and the European Union average is 40 euros (Willer et al., 2020). The above data demonstrate the fairly low position of Poland in the sales and consumption of organic food in relation to other European countries. At the same time, they reflect the considerable growth potential of this market sector in the years to come. All the more so as per the results of the studies carried out to date (i.a. Hermaniuk, 2018; Witek, 2014), the demand for organic products is growing in Poland. This is due to the change in consumers' attitudes to healthy nutrition, and the raised awareness of the environmental impact of food production (Cichočka & Garbiński, 2009; Kieźel, Piotrowski, & Wiechoczek, 2019). In turn, the experience of other countries, e.g. Austria, Germany, and Denmark, shows that consumers' increased interest in organic food has become one of the factors contributing to the growth of this food sector (Klinbacher & Pohl, 2004; Michelsen, Hamm, Wynen, & Roth, 1999). Nonetheless, it is necessary to continuously promote the consumption of organic products and organic farming, using various means of communication, in order to reach growing numbers of recipients, and to raise their awareness in this sphere. It is possible to read about it in the publication of Kuhan and Juvanic (2010).

Figure 1

The area of organic agricultural lands and the number of organic farms in Poland from 2004 to 2020



Source: own study based on IJHARS data.

3.2. Selected consumer opinions and behavior towards organic fruit and vegetables

Environmentally friendly (“green”) consumer behavior is a multidimensional category, and, according to Ertz, Karakas and Sarigollu (2016), it can be exhibited in both the private and public spheres. Behavior in the private sphere has direct consequences for the environment, and is related to, i.a., eco-friendly purchases.

The results of the conducted survey show that 50.4% of the respondents purchased organic fruit and vegetables, although 35.1% of the group stated that they did so only occasionally (qu. 1). Just slightly over a quarter of the survey participants declaring the purchasing of the aforementioned products claimed that they did so frequently – as much as several times a week. Specialized shops (organic food shops) were the most frequently mentioned places for shopping for organic products, to which on average 43.2% of the respondents declaring the purchasing of organic products turned for their supplies. Nearly a third of this respondent group purchased fruit and vegetables at weekly organic food markets, and 9% were supplied with such food directly by producers. A quarter of the respondents who did not declare buying organic fruit and vegetables stated that they were not able to identify organic products or notice the difference between them and those produced using conventional methods, while approx. 20% of the group stated that they were unable to provide any reason for not buying such products. That is why, it is essential to undertake promotional activities in order to attract potential buyers and inform them about assets of organic products, the location and conditions of purchase, as well as the advantages of buying them.

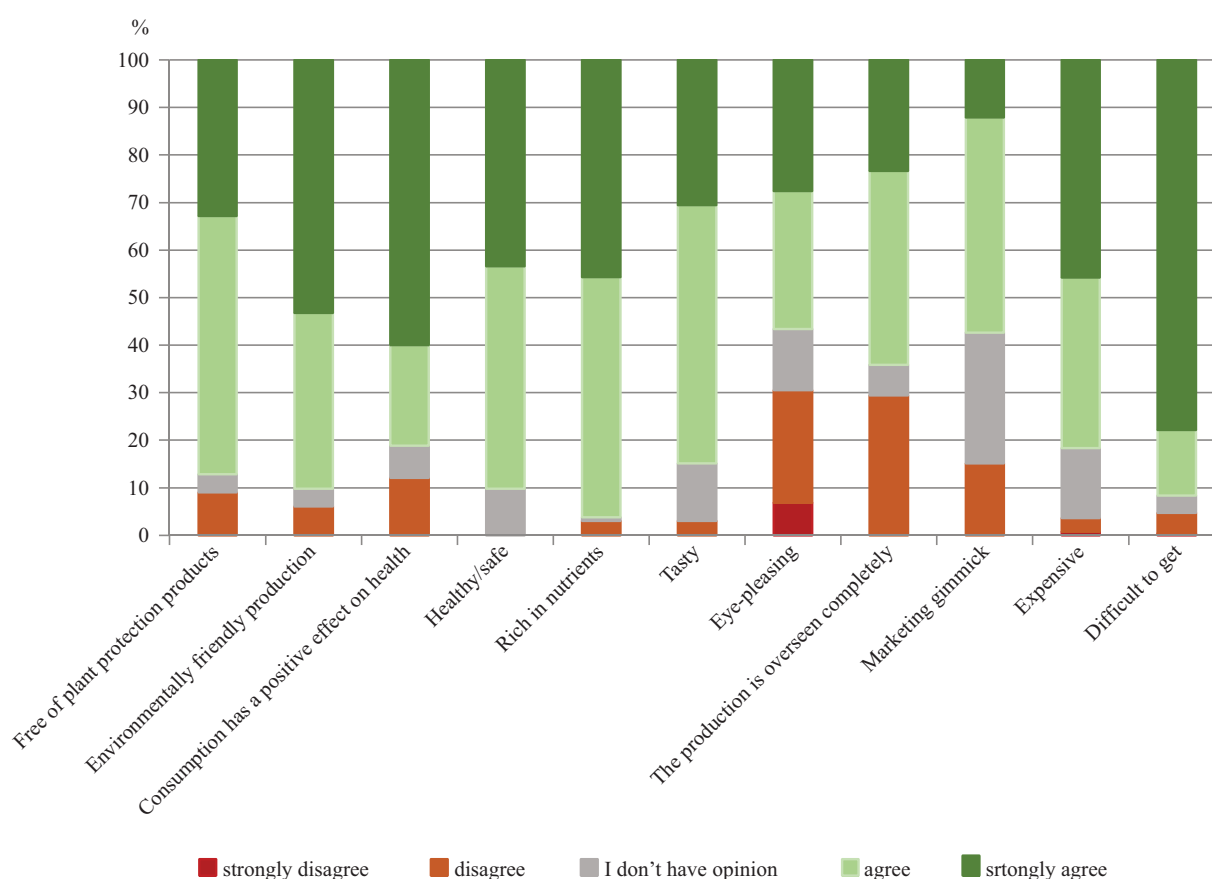
Despite the fact that the consumption of organic food is still at a relatively low level in Poland, consumers have expressed interest in these products (Grzybowska-Brzezińska, 2013; Hermaniuk, 2018; Kieźel et al., 2019). This is confirmed by the results of the studies on the behavior of consumers from Lublin as regards organic fruit and vegetables. They show that consumers perceive this category of food positively. Over 90% of the respondents stated that they strongly agreed, or agreed, with the view that organic products were rich in nutrients (96.2%), produced using environmentally friendly methods³, and healthy and safe (90.2% each) (Figure 2). In addition, 87.2% and 84.9% of the survey participants, respectively, stated that organic fruit and vegetables were free of plant protection products and tasty. In contrast, 91.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, or agreed, with the view that organic fruit and vegetables were difficult to get, with 81.7% sharing the view that the products were relatively expensive⁴. The verification with the χ^2 test and the Cramer’s V coefficient showed a significant relationship and a moderate relationship between the last opinion expressed and the characteristic related to the declaration of organic fruit and vegetables purchase by the surveyed consumers (Table 1). In the case of the remaining opinions and behaviors of the respondents as regards organic fruit and vegetables, a statistically significant correlation was observed, but a weak relationship depending on selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics of consumers.

³ The above opinion was placed at the top of the ranking among women, people declaring that they purchased organic fruit and vegetables, people with the highest income levels, and people with tertiary education – 86.5%, 90.2%, 89.1%, and 100%, respectively, of the respondents belonging to the aforementioned groups agreed with this statement. In addition to stating that organic fruit and vegetables were produced using environmentally friendly methods, all respondents with the highest income shared the view that those products were rich in nutrients, healthy, and safe.

⁴ Referring to the latter opinion, women, people who do not purchase organic fruit and vegetables, and young people stated much more often that these products were expensive, compared to the representatives of other groups.

Figure 2

Opinions of consumers from Lublin about organic fruit and vegetables (% of indications)



Source: own study based on surveys.

Based on the analysis of answers provided by individual groups of respondents, it can be stated that, irrespective of gender, the conviction that consuming organic fruit and vegetables has a positive impact on health was at the top of the ranking in respect of 86.5% of women, 86.6% of men, and 89.6% of people aged over 65 (qu. 2). As regards people belonging to the youngest group of respondents, most people (86.3%) stated that organic fruit and vegetables were difficult to find, but nevertheless were rich in nutrients⁵. In contrast, only 66.3% of the respondents belonging to this group shared the view that the consumption of organic fruit and vegetables had a positive effect on health.

⁵ With a significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$, no statistically significant correlation was found between the expressed opinion and the gender, age and education of the respondents.

Table 1

Influence of selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics on the opinions and behavior of consumers as regards organic fruit and vegetables

Specification	Gender		Age		Education		Income		Purchase declaration	
	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c
Free of plant protection products	32.54*	0.24	27.61*	0.13	18.18*	0.13	123.18*	0.24	61.13*	0.34
Environmentally friendly production	14.83*	0.17	33.48*	0.14	10.90	0.10	78.23*	0.22	33.93*	0.25
Consumption has a positive effect on health	50.99*	0.31	40.13*	0.16	28.77*	0.16	206.25*	0.31	15.67*	0.17
Healthy/safe	12.80*	0.16	19.22	0.11	29.80*	0.17	75.53*	0.22	69.26*	0.36
Rich in nutrients	6.23	0.11	13.18	0.09	14.54	0.12	59.25*	0.19	54.95*	0.32
Tasty	41.83*	0.28	32.90*	0.14	19.07*	0.13	119.75*	0.27	23.45*	0.21
Eye-pleasing	47.59*	0.30	83.28*	0.23	30.03*	0.17	31.29*	0.12	29.25*	0.23
The production is overseen completely	13.11*	0.16	122.07*	0.28	22.82*	0.15	91.80*	0.24	27.44*	0.23
Marketing gimmick	43.47*	0.29	57.23*	0.19	36.71*	0.19	123.94*	0.24	32.99*	0.25
Expensive	22.18*	0.20	95.24*	0.24	17.98*	0.13	194.81*	0.30	92.33*	0.42
Difficult to get	10.73*	0.14	24.07*	0.12	19.39*	0.13	34.05*	0.13	5.45	0.10

* significance at significant level $\alpha < 0.05$

Source: own study based on surveys.

Consumer behavior towards organic products depends on various factors (Aschemann-Witzel & Zielke, 2015; Salleh, Ali, Harun, Jalil, & Shaharudin, 2010). It is determined by, e.g., income levels, knowledge and awareness of ecology, and marketing activities. The latter include promotional measures which turn buyers' attention to a given product and facilitate access to information on the benefits which might be derived from its purchase.

According to Bryła (2016), Łuczka-Bakula and Smoluk-Sikorska (2010) and Żakowska-Biemans (2011a), high prices and low availability act as principal barriers to organic food consumption in Poland. This was confirmed by the conducted research. The consumers taking part in the survey found that the most important factors which determined their decision to buy organic fruit and vegetables or to increase the frequency of such purchases included their availability in retail outlets where they regularly do shopping⁶ (average grade on a five-point scale: 4.6)⁷, provision with the package information on the absence of pesticide residue ($\bar{x} = 4.5$)⁸, and price reduction ($\bar{x} = 4.4$) (Figure 3). The statistical analysis shows that consumers, regardless of their age, similarly perceived the reduction in prices of organic fruit and vegetables as a factor determining the purchase of these products. In the case of other factors (gender, education, income earned and declarations of purchase of organic products), a statistically significant correlation was observed, which was however very weak (low values of the Cramer's V coefficient) (Table 2).

⁶ Compared to Kuhan and Juvanic (2010).

⁷ This was the most important factor for women and elderly people aged over 65 (96.5% and 94.5% of indications, respectively).

⁸ This factor was considered as the most important during the purchasing of organic fruit and vegetables by people with the highest disposable income per capita (100% indications).

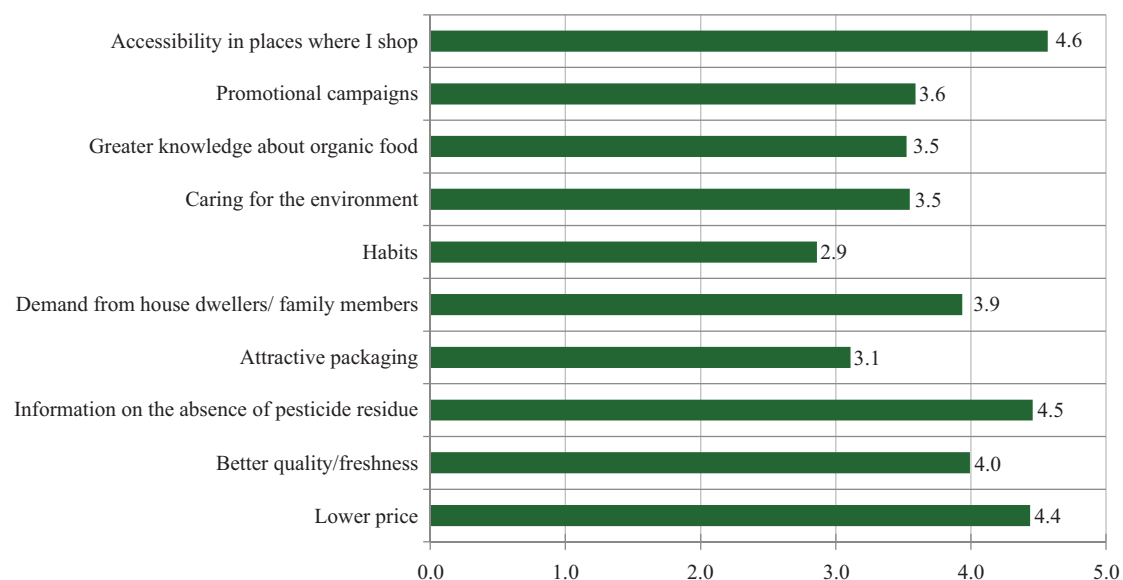
The fact that the respondents chose two of the above-mentioned statements, as in Ran and Paul's (2017) study on lowering the prices of organic fruit and vegetables as well as their availability in retail outlets of everyday shopping, raises some particular and quite rhetorical questions. The first question is "Is it possible to reduce the price of organic fruit and vegetables?". And the second one is "Is it possible for organic fruit and vegetables to be available in every shop where consumers shop?"

The survey also showed that while selecting organic fruit and vegetables, better quality/freshness of products, and internal home/family conditions – i.e. demand from household members – were (would be) important for the respondents (Figure 3). The above factors were considered important by 82.6% and 72.1% of the analyzed groups, respectively⁹. The interest in the quality and freshness of organic fruit and vegetables was higher among men and people who buy these products (Table 2). Moreover, similarly to the preceding factor, men (86.6%) and people declaring the purchasing of organic fruit and vegetables (84.8%) believed that the demand from household members was a vital factor determining their purchasing decisions more frequently than women (60.8%) and people who did not buy such products (60.2%).

It is also worth noting that 60.9% of the respondents exhibited a positive attitude towards promotional campaigns on organic fruit and vegetables ($\bar{x} = 3.6$) (Figure 3). The declaration of the purchasing of organic products did not significantly differentiate this attitude. In addition, it can be stated that over 55% of the survey participants were interested in expanding their knowledge of organic food (56.5% of the respondents considered this factor to be important or very important). The data in Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between gender, age, education, income, and the declaration of purchase of organic products, and the opinion expressed. However, a value of the Cramer's V index between 0.20 and 0.31 indicates a low relationship. The least significant factors affecting consumer decisions included habits ($\bar{x} = 2.9$) and attractive product packaging ($\bar{x} = 3.1$).

Figure 3

Purchase determinants and increasing frequency of purchase of organic fruit and vegetables according to examined consumers' opinions (average on the scale of 1–5)



Source: own study based on surveys.

⁹ The statistical dependence, with these two factors, was at the moderate level (depending on the feature, the Cramer's V coefficient ranged from 0.35 to 0.42; $p < 0.05$).

Table 2

Influence of selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics on the decisions to purchase organic fruit and vegetables by the surveyed consumers

Specification	Gender		Age		Education		Income		Purchase declaration	
	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c
Lower price	33.09*	0.25	16.79	0.10	33.09*	0.18	67.01*	0.18	39.39*	0.27
Better quality/ freshness	63.51*	0.35	74.47*	0.21	18.54*	0.13	27.29*	0.11	96.05*	0.42
Information about absence of pesticide residue	24.65*	0.22	19.17	0.11	17.19*	0.13	43.99*	0.17	14.91*	0.17
Attractive packaging	70.75*	0.37	73.35*	0.21	47.69*	0.21	62.56*	0.17	60.41*	0.34
Demand from house dwellers/family members	93.93*	0.42	64.33*	0.20	25.16*	0.15	146.94*	0.26	92.13*	0.42
Habits	81.78*	0.39	38.24*	0.15	49.29*	0.21	134.68*	0.25	19.25*	0.19
Caring for the environment	22.03*	0.20	125.90*	0.28	19.39*	0.13	61.72*	0.20	96.27*	0.43
Greater knowledge about organic food	32.53*	0.25	150.21*	0.31	43.56*	0.20	127.25*	0.24	25.16*	0.22
Promotional campaigns	27.51*	0.23	141.17*	0.30	40.91*	0.20	128.38*	0.25	9.26	0.13
Accessibility in places where I shop	28.43*	0.23	55.16*	0.19	33.33*	0.18	108.73*	0.23	25.09*	0.22

* significance at significant level $\alpha < 0.05$

Source: own study based on surveys.

3.3. Selected Forms of Promotion of Organic Fruit and Vegetables in the Views of Consumers

Today, given the free market economy and the overproduction of food, it is not enough to merely produce particular goods to be successful on the market. It is important to intensify a range of sales efforts (Al-Noorachi, 2014) or select new distribution channels (Grzybowska-Brzezińska, 2013; Sonneck & Ott, 2010). Moreover, it is crucial to create and intensify communication measures which provide information on the advantages and benefits of the purchasing of organic products, vital for both consumers and producers.

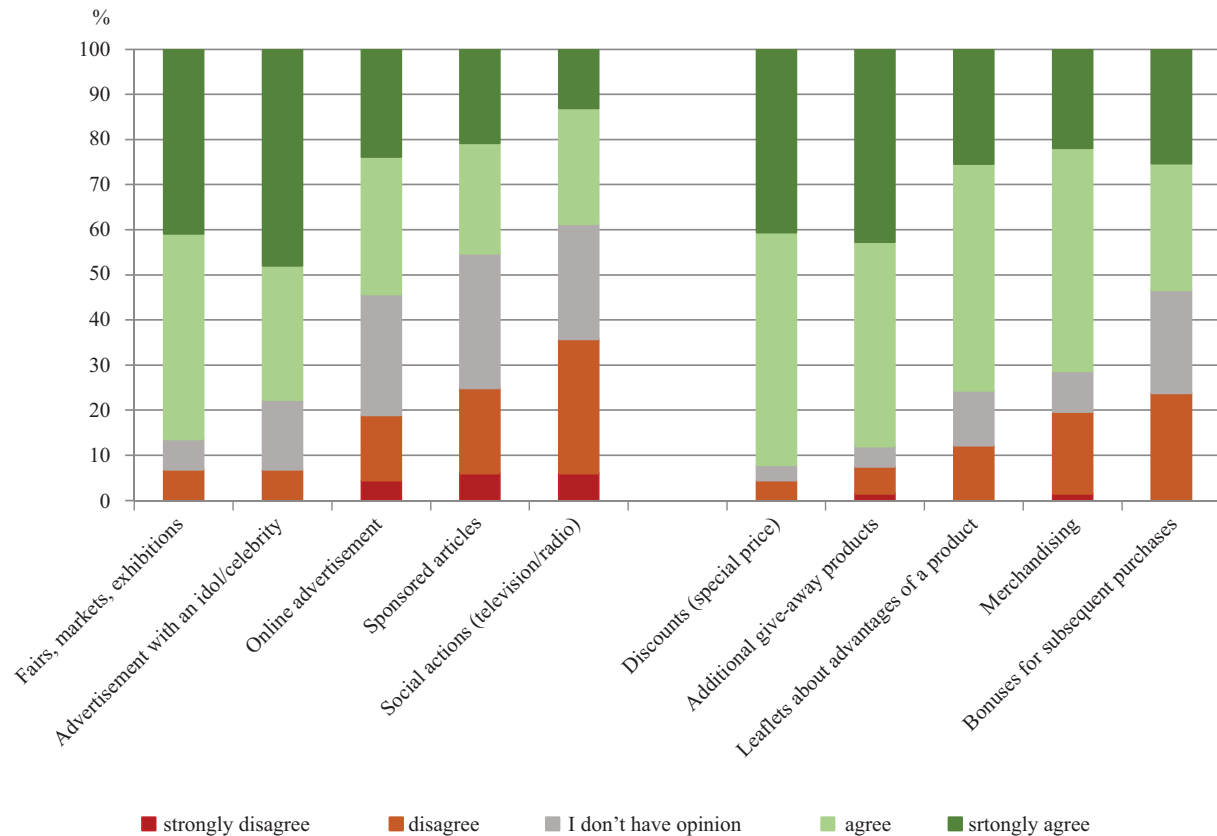
In the opinion of the survey participants, the most important forms of promotion aimed at encouraging consumers to buy organic fruit and vegetables included special price offers (92.1% of the respondents agreed with this answer option), participation in regularly organized fairs or exhibitions where they could buy the products concerned (86.3%), and additional give-away products (88.0%)¹⁰ (Figure 4). During the interviews, the respondents also provided their suggestions for promotional measures which would convince them and other consumers to purchase organic products. The suggestions included various forms of promotion in the so-called “whisper marketing” category, for instance, providing a given product to opinion leaders on

¹⁰ In general, the respondents found forms of supplementary promotion available at points of sale to be more persuasive in the context of the purchasing of organic fruit and vegetables than the forms referred to as “publicity”. As regards the former form of promotion, between 54.3% and 92.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, or rather agreed, with the statement that a given form of promotion would encourage them to buy organic fruit and vegetables or reach for them more frequently. As for the latter set of forms of promotion, such an opinion was shared by a maximum of 83.3% of the respondents.

the internet (influencers) who would initiate a trend by posting a review of the product. The least appealing forms of promotion for the respondents were sponsored articles (45.3%) and advertisements broadcast on television and radio as part of public awareness campaigns (38.8%).

Figure 4

The respondents' susceptibility to promotional measures related to organic fruit and vegetables (% of indications)



Source: own study based on surveys.

At a significance level of $\alpha < 0.05$, no significant correlation was found between the opinions of the respondents on advertising with famous people and the age of respondents. Moreover, the statistical investigation showed that the effectiveness of internet advertising and the level of education of the respondents are not significantly correlated (Table 3). In the case of the remaining opinions and variables determining the characteristics of consumers, a statistically significant correlation was found (the majority was the basis for rejecting the null hypothesis). Chi-square statistics calculated for the null hypothesis about the independence of two variables, assuming the critical significance level of $p < 0.05$, showed values that allowed for rejecting the null hypothesis. When analyzing the results of the Cramer's V statistics as a measure of the dependence of variables, it should be remembered that the closer the value of the coefficient is to one, the stronger the relationship between the variables. In the case of the above-mentioned variables, the value of this statistic ranged from 0.12 to 0.44, respectively.

Table 3

Influence of selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics on the opinions and behavior of consumers as regards the promotion of organic fruit and vegetables

	Specification	Gender		Age		Education		Income		Purchase declaration	
		χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c	χ^2	V_c
‘Publicity’ forms of promotion	Fairs, markets, exhibitions	43.40*	0.29	32.00*	0.14	21.32*	0.14	93.34*	0.24	60.27*	0.34
	Advertisement with an idol/celebrity	43.40*	0.29	12.76	0.09	9.29	0.09	86.16*	0.23	60.66*	0.34
	Online advertisement	74.09*	0.37	24.17*	0.12	14.71	0.12	193.70*	0.30	128.98*	0.49
	Sponsored articles	81.93*	0.39	40.78*	0.16	28.89*	0.16	297.37*	0.37	87.71*	0.41
	Social actions (television/radio)	26.12*	0.22	69.51*	0.21	20.48*	0.13	144.18*	0.26	34.70*	0.25
Consumer forms of promotion	Discounts (special price)	26.93*	0.22	56.64*	0.19	24.27*	0.15	80.97*	0.23	102.53*	0.44
	Additional give-away products	27.72*	0.23	39.63*	0.18	26.33*	0.15	68.68*	0.18	25.32*	0.22
	Leaflets about advantages of a product	52.76*	0.31	27.10*	0.13	19.51*	0.14	74.78*	0.22	82.28*	0.39
	Merchandising	22.40*	0.21	49.35*	0.18	25.94*	0.16	162.67*	0.28	93.68*	0.42
	Bonuses for subsequent purchases	20.92*	0.20	104.51*	0.26	27.51*	0.16	54.00*	0.18	83.30*	0.40

* significance at significant level $\alpha < 0.05$

Source: own study based on surveys.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Research into consumer behavior plays a vital role in the development of the markets for specific products or product groups. Knowledge of consumer views and preferences facilitates the alignment of the proposed product portfolios with their expectations. Research into the consumption and popularization of organic food, whose production is consistent with the concept of sustainable development and the European Green Deal referring to this idea, is currently gaining special significance.

A very intense growth in the acreage of organic crops can be currently observed in Poland. However, it is not closely correlated with the development of the organic product market, including fruit and vegetables. Taking into account the amount of spending on organic food or the value of organic food sales in Europe and in Poland it can be stated that the domestic organic product market, including horticultural products, is still at the initial stage in its development. This situation can be attributed to a still low share of organic products in domestic sales volumes on the food market. Nevertheless, the interest in organic food, which has been growing in recent years in Poland, might become an opportunity for the growth in the market for these products. The more so as Polish consumers perceive this food category rather positively. The respondents considered organic fruit and vegetables to be nutrient-rich, healthy and safe products, and in their opinion, are produced using environmentally friendly methods. Unfortunately, at the same time, many people considered these products difficult to obtain and relatively expensive. Therefore, according to the research, it is necessary to increase the supply of this type of products, especially in places

of everyday shopping, to reduce their prices¹¹, to provide a range of information on the products being sold (e.g. information on the lack of pesticide residue or on the advantages and beneficial effects on human health), and to introduce other forms of promotion. The respondents could also be encouraged to purchase and consume organic fruit and vegetables by their participation in fairs and exhibitions organized on a regular basis where they could buy organic products and expand their knowledge of the subject. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that socio-economic and demographic criteria relatively weakly differentiate consumer opinions and behavior in respect of organic fruit and vegetables.

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¹¹ Prescinding from the answer – it may be extremely hard.

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Self-Perceived Job Performance as a Mediator of the Effects of Academic Satisfaction and Quality on Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Globally, there is increased customer mobility and competition within the higher education sector. As such, university management and administration practices should consider academic satisfaction, quality and loyalty as important factors to influence graduate job performance. The study was conducted to see if self-perceived job performance had a role in mediating the effect of academic satisfaction and perceived academic quality on academic loyalty. Data was collected from 714 respondents using a cross-sectional survey. The covariance-based structural equation modelling was used to test the hypotheses. According to the study results, self-perceived job performance partially mediates the effect of both academic satisfaction and academic quality on academic loyalty. The study findings emphasise the importance of graduate quality and satisfaction in influencing loyalty. Thus, the higher education sector should take cognisance of self-perceived job performance as this also influences academic loyalty.

JEL classification: M10, M30, M31

Keywords: academic loyalty, academic quality, academic satisfaction, self-perceived job performance, Zimbabwe

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic loyalty has become a primary focus for university management and administration practices as a result of increased customer mobility and global competition within the higher education sector (Mulyono et al., 2020; Uddin et al., 2018). Academic loyalty is determined by repeat patronage and recommendations by the institution's graduates and employers of its graduates (Ali et al., 2016). Additionally, university graduates become loyal to their training institutions after they have acquired the expected skills (Boileau et al., 2021; Navani, 2020). Also, the consistency of academic quality determines the performance of the training institution (Mayombe, 2017; Trinidad, 2020). Academic satisfaction is also considered as one of the

major factors influencing academic loyalty (Belwal et al., 2017; Taskoh, 2020). It involves a psychological state that results from the confirmation, or not, of the expectations regarding the institution's academic reality (Helfenstein et al., 2020). Feedback from graduates plays an important role in the management of a university. One critical aspect of the feedback from a university's graduates is self-perceived job performance (Mwiya et al., 2017; Tilak, 2020). Self-perceived job performance feedback enables higher education institutions to prioritise activities that are crucial in imparting to students those skills that are relevant in the workplace.

Much scholarly attention has been accorded to loyalty, quality, satisfaction and job performance constructs in higher education (Ali et al., 2016; Abas & Imam, 2016; Gallagher & Stephens, 2020; Manik & Sidharta, 2017; Plantilla, 2017; Shea & Parayitam, 2019; Zaini et al., 2020). However, few researchers have looked at the role of self-perceived job performance in mediating the effect of academic satisfaction and perceived academic quality on academic loyalty. Thus, by examining the mediating effect of self-perceived job performance on the effect of academic satisfaction and self-perceived academic quality on academic loyalty, the current study contributes to the literature in the services marketing industry, particularly the industry and higher education within emerging markets. Therefore, the research questions (RQ) to be addressed by this study are:

RQ1: Does self-perceived job performance mediate the effect of academic satisfaction on academic loyalty?

RQ2: Does self-perceived job performance mediate the effect of perceived academic quality on academic loyalty?

In this study, a short literature review on academic loyalty, academic satisfaction, perceived academic quality and self-perceived job performance is presented. Also, the study looked at the development of research hypotheses, materials and methods, presentation of results, discussion on theoretical and practical implications and future research implications.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH MODEL

2.1. Academic loyalty

“Academic loyalty is defined as a graduate's psychological attachment to their university, which is based on feelings of belonging and identity that manifest in behaviour and attitudes” (Guilbault, 2016; Shea & Parayitam, 2019). Academic loyalty is understood in this study as graduates' psychological connection to their universities based on their identification and association feelings that are expressed as behavioural and attitudinal allegiance to the institution.

Muslim (2016) asserts that academic loyalty is a source of competitive advantage. Through academic loyalty, universities can increase their customer base through repeat transactions and patronising by satisfied graduates (Gurukkal, 2020; Thevaranjan & Ragel, 2016). Also, academic loyalty results from academic quality and academic satisfaction (Belwal et al., 2017; Tight, 2020). As a result, if an institution's academic quality is strong, students, graduates, and employers become loyal to it and continue to do business with it (Ali et al., 2016; Gbadamosi, 2018).

2.2. Academic satisfaction

“Academic satisfaction is a measure of how happy a graduate feels regarding success in educational training” (Belwal et al., 2017; Oliver & Jorre de St Jorre, 2018). Mwiya et al. (2017) expound academic satisfaction as the match between the experience of the provided academic service with that expected. This study understands academic satisfaction as a measure of how

successful a graduate becomes regarding skills and knowledge acquired during university education.

Academic satisfaction influences academic loyalty in a favourable way (LeMahieu et al., 2017; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). As a result, institutions should focus on enhancing educational quality because it affects academic satisfaction and loyalty (Rajic et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2020). Academic satisfaction helps to minimise the university's rate of dropout (Plantilla, 2017; Santini et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction is also linked to people's perceptions of how well they are performing their jobs (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018; Zaini et al., 2020). As a result, graduates who perform well at work are content with the abilities and information they gained from their university education (Moran, 2019; Zepke, 2018).

2.3. Perceived academic quality

Academic quality is described as the university's provision of learning opportunities, support, as well as appropriate and effective training to students (Espinoza et al., 2019; Moran, 2019). Similarly, academic quality involves taking careful steps to improve the performance of the student learning experience (Newman et al., 2019; Nugrahaa & Jabeenb, 2020). Academic quality influences customer loyalty especially when actual service performance is above customer expectations (Iskhakova, 2020). Besides influencing customer loyalty, academic quality impacts positively on job performance (Fullwood et al., 2019; Manik & Sidharta, 2017). Thus, graduates become loyal to universities that exhibit superior academic loyalty (Chikazhe et al., 2020; Khairiah & Sirajuddin, 2019; Pekkaya et al., 2019). In this study, perceived academic quality is understood as the graduates' perceptions of the superiority of academic services offered by universities from which they obtained their qualifications.

2.4. Self-perceived job performance

Job performance is described as the measurement of how assigned tasks are accomplished by an employee at the workplace (Belwal et al., 2017; Jalagat, 2016). Job performance also refers to the efficiency with which an individual's activities contribute to the attainment of an organisation's objectives (Kovari, 2018; Plantilla, 2017). Self-perceived job performance is defined in this study as an employee's assessment of his or her performance on given activities that lead to the achievement of the organisation's objectives.

Equipping graduates with the necessary skills provides a competitive advantage and higher efficiency to organisations (Lobo, 2017; Jalagat, 2016; Wohlfart & Hovemann, 2019). Thus, university graduates should possess relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities to fulfil task-related responsibilities (Sabah & Du, 2018; Guilbault, 2016). Moreover, equipping university students with relevant skills increases graduates' loyalty to their training institutions (Crawford et al., 2020; Heringer, 2020). Academic quality is positively related to high performing graduates who are loyal to universities from which they obtained their qualifications (Lakshminarayanan et al., 2021; Thevaranjan & Ragel, 2016).

2.5. Development of research hypotheses and research model

Earlier studies have tested and confirmed positive relationships among customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, service quality and perceived job performance (Ali et al., 2016; Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Onditi & Wechuli, 2017; Mulyono et al., 2020; Plantilla, 2017; Zaini et al., 2020). Ali et al. (2016) studied the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty and concluded that customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty. Also, studies by Amin (2016) and Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) concur that there is a positive relationship between

customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, the current study was carried out in a different setting which is the higher education sector and it also focused on academic satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

H₁: Academic satisfaction has a positive effect on academic loyalty

In a related study, Yee (2018) investigated the relationship between job performance and satisfaction. The study results indicate a positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance. Likewise, studies by Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) and Nazeer et al. (2014) settled for almost similar results. Hence it can be proposed that:

H₂: Academic satisfaction positively influences self-perceived job performance

Budur and Poturak (2021) investigated the relationship between overall employee performance and customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study findings established direct relationships among employee performance, customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that:

H₃: Self-perceived job performance has a positive effect on academic loyalty

Prior studies confirm a positive relationship that exists between service quality and customer loyalty (Kuo & Ye, 2009; Mulyono, et al., 2020; Muslim, 2016; Rostami et al., 2019; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). However, the current study looked at the relationship between academic quality and academic loyalty. Hence, it can be hypothesised that:

H₄: Perceived academic quality positively influences academic loyalty

Earlier studies have investigated how the quality of training influences trainee's job performance (Mayombe, 2017; Mulyono et al., 2020; Oliver and Jorre de St Jorre, 2018; Plantilla, 2017; Sutoro, 2021). Equally, Odigwe et al. (2018) studied how long vocational training programmes affect university graduates' employment performance in, respectively, the baking and computing industries. The findings show that, in the case of graduates from universities working in the computer and baking industries, respectively, the length of vocational training has an impact on job performance. Thus, it can be proposed that:

H₅: Perceived academic quality has a positive influence on self-perceived job performance

Customer satisfaction and loyalty have a positive association, according to research (Ali et al., 2016; Muslim, 2016; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018; Zaini et al., 2020). Customer satisfaction has a beneficial impact on customer loyalty, according to a study by De Matos Pedro et al. (2018). Similarly, Rostami et al. (2019) discovered a link between customer pleasure and loyalty.

Customer satisfaction, according to Saba (2011), has a positive impact on job performance. There is a correlation between customer satisfaction and job performance, according to the findings of a study by Lim et al. (2013). Similarly, Yee (2018) found a correlation between customer satisfaction and job performance in a related study. Yuen et al. (2018) investigated the impact of job performance on academic loyalty and discovered that job performance has an impact on loyalty. Similarly, Erdogmuş and Ergun (2016) found that employment performance affects academic loyalty in a beneficial way. However, there is a scarcity of research on the role of perceived work performance in mediating the impact of customer satisfaction on loyalty.

As a result, it is logical to assume that self-perceived job success plays a role in the academic satisfaction-loyalty link. It is therefore hypothesised that:

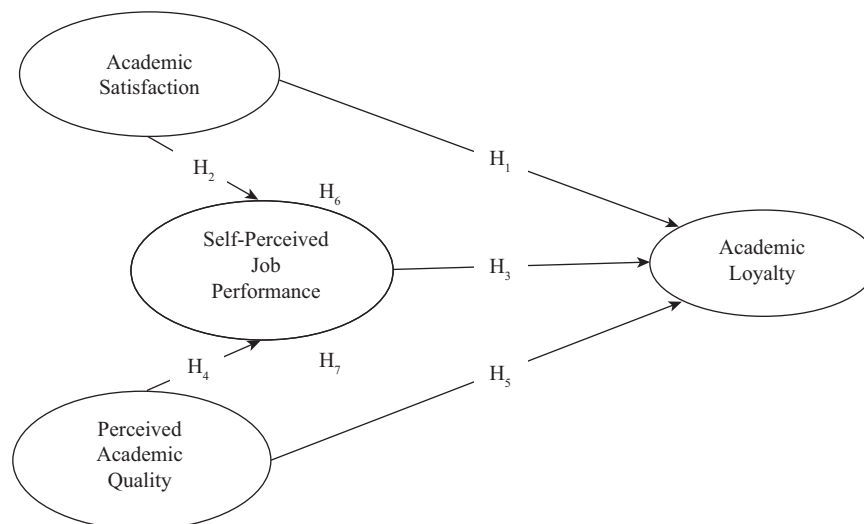
H₆: Self-perceived job performance mediates the effect of academic satisfaction on academic loyalty

Customer loyalty is influenced by perceived service quality, according to previous research (Chikazhe et al., 2020; De Matos Pedro et al., 2018; Jan et al., 2020; Muljono & Setiyawati, 2019; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018). The influence of service quality on job performance was researched by Nazeer et al. (2014). The findings suggest that job performance is positively influenced by perceived service quality. Similarly, Singh (2016) looked at how perceived service quality affects job performance. According to the findings, there is an association between perceived service quality and job performance. Likewise, Okabe (2017) conducted research to see if good job performance is linked to customer loyalty. It was discovered that job performance and customer loyalty had a positive link. According to previous studies, there is a paucity of empirical evidence on perceived job performance mediating the influence of perceived academic quality on academic loyalty. However, it can be concluded from the debate that perceived academic quality and self-perceived job performance both have favourable effects on academic loyalty. As a result, it is reasonable to assume that self-perceived job performance mediates the academic quality-academic loyalty link. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H₇: Self-perceived job performance mediates the effect of perceived academic quality on academic loyalty

Based on the foregoing posited relationships, the following research model is proposed:

Figure 1
Research model



Source: Authors' own work (2022).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted a quantitative study because it generates objective data that can be communicated clearly using statistics and numbers. The objectivity of quantitative data is

a significant advantage and this can help to remove biases from the research and improve the accuracy of the findings.

The research methodology further looks at the questionnaire design and measures, sampling and data collection methods.

3.1. Questionnaire design and measures

Data was gathered using a structured questionnaire. There were five sections of the questionnaire: perceived academic quality (PAQ), academic loyalty (ACL), academic satisfaction (ACS), self-perceived job performance (SPJP) and demographics. On a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), all questions used to assess each component were rated. All of the measurement items were developed from previous studies and altered to match the objectives of this investigation. The items for perceived service quality dimensions (reliability, assurance, tangibles and responsiveness) were borrowed from Green (2014), Cronin and Taylor (1992), Prasad and Jha (2013), Chikazhe et al. (2020) and Parasuraman et al. (1985). The items for perceived academic loyalty were derived from Abas and Imam (2016) and Cronin and Taylor (1992). As for academic satisfaction, the items used were from studies by Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) and Parasuraman et al. (1985). Finally, the items for self-perceived job performance were derived from Ng and Priyono (2018), Onditi and Wechuli (2017) and Plantilla (2017) and they were also modified to align with the current study.

3.2. Sampling and data collection

University graduates working in Harare, Zimbabwe were the study's target population. From August to December 2021, the study sample was chosen from Harare. The purposive sampling method was employed as the study required specific information from a particular subset of our population of interest, i.e. university graduates. Harare was chosen since it is Zimbabwe's capital and home to a high number of businesses that employ university graduates from all over the country (ZimStat, 2018). Because of their experience with university education and work success, university graduates were chosen as the target demographic. Before sending the questionnaires to the targeted employees, managers in these companies were approached to explain the study goal. Respondents came from a variety of companies in a variety of industries, representing graduates from a variety of fields of study. 800 questionnaires were distributed in person to the respondents with the help of managers from randomly selected organisations. Respondents had a maximum of five days to respond. Only 714 of the 800 questionnaires were returned and usable. To ensure that the sample adequately represented the population, a wide number of respondents were considered to include graduates from all Zimbabwean universities. Respondents' profile is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Profile

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age of respondents	Below 30	71	10
	30–39	185	26
	40–49	321	45
	50–59	79	11
	60+	29	4
Gender	Male	564	71
	Female	150	29
Type of enrolment at the university	Part-time students	100	14
	Conventional students	364	51
	Block-release students	250	35
Year of completion	2000–2005	63	9
	2006–2010	100	14
	2011–2015	329	46
	2016–2019	222	31
Employment type	Contract	150	21
	Casual	14	2
	Permanent	550	77
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	236	33
	5–10 years	307	43
	11–15 years	114	16
	16–20 years	36	5
	Over 21 years	21	3
Highest level of qualification	Bachelor's degree	371	52
	Master's degree	286	40
	Doctoral degree	57	8

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of respondents (71 per cent) were between the ages of 30 and 49. Male respondents made up the majority (71 per cent) of those who took part in the survey. As regards the type of enrolment at the university, conventional students dominated the study (51 per cent) followed by block-release students (35 per cent). Graduates who completed studies between the year 2011 and 2019 represented the majority (46 per cent) of the respondents. Similarly, the majority (77 per cent) of respondents were permanently employed. Most (76 per cent) of the respondents vast working experience of not more than 10 years. In terms of the highest level of education, respondents with Bachelor's degrees (52 per cent) slightly higher (40 per cent) than those with Master's degrees.

3.3. Scale validation

Before completing structural equation modelling, scale validation was done in SPSS V21 and AMOS V21 utilising the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), convergent validity, and discriminant validity. To determine sample adequacy, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used. Table 2 shows the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

Table 2

Exploratory factor analysis

Kaiser Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy		.921
	Approx. Chi-Square	20076.921
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	588
	Sig.	.000

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

For sample adequacy, Field et al. (2012) recommended that KMO be more than 0.5 and that Bartlett's Test of Sphericity be significant at $p < 0.05$. These prerequisites were met by the results of the exploratory factor analysis. Because it maximises the total number of variables in the squared loading, i.e. squared correlations between variables and factors, the Varimax Rotation method was chosen for factor analysis. The rotation converged after 32 iterations, and the total variation explained by the data was 69.891%. Tangibility (TAN), reliability (REL), academic satisfaction (ACS), assurance (ASS), empathy (EMP), responsiveness (RESP), academic loyalty (ACL), and self-perceived work performance (SPJP) were all provided in the solution. As expected, the REL, ASS, TAN, EMP, and RESP dimensions were shown to be multi-dimensional in terms of perceived academic quality (PAQ). Items REL3, RES3, and RES4 were eliminated as indicated by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) due to low factor loadings of less than 0.6.

When determining convergent validity, the following factors were considered: measurement model fit indices, reliability, standardised factor loadings, crucial ratios, and average variance extracted (AVE). Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) was used to create the measurement model (Field, 2009). The results in Table 3 show that the measurement model fit indices met the minimum convergent validity criterion.

Table 3

Measurement model fit indices

Item	Actual	Recommended	Source
CMIN/DF	2.012	Between 0–5	
GFI	.905	>0.900	
AGFI	.910	>0.900	Field, 2012;
NFI	.908	>0.900	Hooper et al., 2008;
TLI	.914	>0.900	Reisinger and Mavondo, 2007
CFI	.933	>0.900	
RMSEA	.051	Between 0.05 and 0.10	

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

The measurement model shows a good fit as the value for χ^2/DF fell between 0 and 5 (Field, 2012). Furthermore, the GFI, AGFI, NFI, TLI, and CFI values were all greater than 0.9, despite

the fact that a good fit should be closer to 1. (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2007). Additionally, RMSEA results were between the recommended range 0.05 and 0.10 (Hooper et al., 2008).

Table 4 presents results for Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliabilities (CRel), standardised factor loadings (λ), critical ratios (CRs) and individual item reliabilities (IIRs) obtained when measuring convergent validity.

Table 4
 λ , IIR, CR, α and CRel

Constructs	Items	λ	IIR	CR	α	CRel
Reliability	REL1. The university provides the right service	.715	.612	–	.824	.836
	REL2. The same level of service is always provided	.769	.587	18.514***		
	REL4. The university keeps customer promises	.721	.504	15.362***		
Assurance	ASS1. Academic staff is knowledgeable	.738	.556	–	.811	.852
	ASS2. Academic staff has required experience	.759	.578	14.587***		
	ASS3. The university has modern education material	.818	.810	13.852***		
	ASS4. University has the right education material	.757	.619	10.158***		
Tangibility	TAN1. The university has modern learning materials	.788	.632	–	.823	.897
	TAN2. The university premise is clean	.875	.688	16.325***		
	TAN3. The university staff is always smartly dressed	.841	.678	17.001***		
	TAN4. The university infrastructure is good-looking	.795	.578	13.485***		
Empathy	EMP1. Management staff is considerate	.693	.493	–	.815	.846
	EMP2. Management understands customer needs	.784	.683	16.822***		
	EMP3. The university's level of service is consistent	.872	.778	14.354***		
	EMP4. University staff attend to customer problems	.753	.678	12.897***		
Responsiveness	RES1. Management is quick to respond to client enquiries	.856	.692	–	.845	.898
	RES2. The university staff is approachable	.978	.978	16.873		
Academic Satisfaction	ACS1. The university's service performance is beyond expectations	.901	.601	–	.905	.922
	ACS 2. The university live up to promises	.856	.754	20.978**		
	ACS 3. Compared to other universities, I am contented	.814	.777	21.526***		
	ACS 4. The university management delivers satisfactory service	.987	.834	20.810***		
	ACS 5. The university offers outstanding programmes	.797	.578	16.196***		
Academic Loyalty	ACL1. If I were faced with the same choice again, I would still choose the same university	.879	.707	–	.924	.966
	ACL2. I talk positive things about my institution	.867	.708	27.139***		
	ACL3. I prefer my institution of higher education to any other university	.922	.798	28.783***		
	ACL4. I inspire others to enrol with my institution	.974	.871	28.322***		
	ACL5. I am contented to be a patron of my institution	.893	.871	24.728***		
Self-Perceived Job Performance	SPJP1. My employer is contented about my performance at work	.877	.798	–	.902	.933
	SPJP2. My employer is pleased with my practical performance	.911	.854	26.953***		
	SPJP3. My employer is happy about my being able to work with minimum supervision	.892	.778	23.876***		
	SPJP4. My employer is happy with my knowledge	.903	.814	28.086***		
	SPJP5. My employer relies on me as a mentor for other employees	.908	.824	26.822***		

Note: – CR is fixed; *** $p < 0.001$

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

Table 4 shows that, as proposed by Monteiro and Soares (2017), all structures had CRel with a cut-off point above 0.6. All of the elements were likewise over Bagozzi and Yi (1988)'s recommended cut-off point of 0.6. At $p < 0.001$, the CRs were sufficiently large and noteworthy. IIRs were all at least 0.5 (Kuo et al., 2009).

To ensure discriminant validity, the average variance extracted (AVEs) was compared to squared inter-construct correlations (SICCs) (Henseler et al., 2014).

Table 5
AVEs and SICCs

Construct	MEAN	SD	REL	ASS	TAN	EMP	RES	ACS	ACL	SPJP
Reliability (REL)	3.751	1.155	.758							
Assurance (ASS)	4.120	.979	.395	.674						
Tangibility (TAN)	4.365	.967	.485	.355	.701					
Empathy (EMP)	3.924	.903	.304	.400	.401	.682				
Responsiveness (RES)	3.598	1.002	.417	.397	.120	.401	.578			
Academic Satisfaction (ACS)	3.936	.991	.448	.391	.211	.306	.321	.613		
Academic Loyalty (ACL)	3.899	.957	.496	.303	.299	.291	.275	.418	.609	
Self-Perceived Job Performance (SPJP)	4.150	.905	.398	.442	.173	.199	.157	.402	.378	.605

Note: Diagonal elements in bold represent AVEs

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

As shown in Table 5, all constructs had AVEs greater than 0.5 and this indicates that conditions necessary for satisfying discriminant validity were achieved (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4. RESULTS

AMOS 21 was used to test hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , H_5 , H_6 and H_7 . The bootstrapping method with bias correlated intervals was used to test the mediation analysis. PAQ was modelled as a second-order construct with dimensions REL, ASS, TAN, EMP, and RESP. The structural model was estimated using MLE (Henseler et al., 2014).

Before testing for mediation, direct relationships (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5) were tested using structural equation modelling in AMOS V21. The structural model showed acceptable model fit indices (CMIN//DF = 2.008; GFI = .919; AGFI = .907; NFI = .917; TLI = .939; CFI = .964; RMSEA = .068). Table 6 shows the hypothesis test results for H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 .

Table 6
Results of hypotheses testing ($H_1 - H_5$)

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H1	Academic Satisfaction → Academic Loyalty	.221	9.784***	Supported
H2	Academic Satisfaction → Self-Perceived Job Performance	.295	11.014***	Supported
H3	Self-perceived Job Performance → Academic Loyalty	.305	8724***	Supported
H4	Perceived Academic Quality → Academic Loyalty	.270	13.974***	Supported
H5	Perceived Academic Quality → Self-Perceived Job Performance	.309	19.036***	Supported

Notes: SRW standardised regression weight, CR critical ratio, *** significant at $p < 0.001$, ns not significant

The results shown in Table 6 demonstrate that all research hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5) were supported. This indicates that there are positive relationships among: academic satisfaction – academic loyalty, academic satisfaction – self-perceived job performance, self-perceived job performance – academic loyalty and perceived academic quality – self-perceived job performance.

The effect of self-perceived job performance on the effect of academic satisfaction on academic loyalty was also tested using structural equation modelling in AMOS V21. Table 7 shows the results of the tests of hypotheses H₆ and H₇.

Table 7
Results of hypotheses testing (H₆ and H₇)

Hypotheses	Path	Description	Path Coefficient	Comments
H ₁	ACS → SPJP → ACL	SPJP mediates the effect of ACS on ACL	.415***	Partial mediation
H ₂	PAQ → SPJP → ACL	SPJP mediates the effect of PAQ on ACL	.529***	Partial mediation

Source: Authors' own work (2022).

The results shown in Table 7 illustrate that the path ACS – SPJP – ACL was significant (path coefficient = 0.415; $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the influence of academic satisfaction on academic loyalty is somewhat mediated by self-perceived job performance. Thus, H₆ was supported.

In AMOS V21, structural equation modelling was used to investigate the role of self-reported work performance in mediating the effect of perceived academic quality on academic loyalty. The structural model had satisfactory fit indices (CMIN//DF = 2.691, GFI = 0.933, TLI = 0.909, CFI = 0.977 and RMSEA = 0.059).

The results displayed in Table 7 illustrate that the path PAQ – SPJP – ACL was significant (path coefficient = 0.529; $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that self-perceived job performance partially mediates the effect of perceived academic quality on academic loyalty. Therefore, H₇ was supported.

5. DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Theoretical implications

Literature confirms direct and positive relationships that exist among customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, service quality and perceived job performance (Ali et al., 2016; Annamdevula & Bellamkonda, 2016; Onditi & Wechuli, 2017; Mulyono et al., 2020; Plantilla, 2017; Zaini et al., 2020). However, few studies have looked at the role of self-perceived job performance in mediating the effect of academic satisfaction and perceived academic quality on academic loyalty in the services marketing business, notably in the industry and education domain within emerging markets. The purpose of the current study was to fill this information gap. According to the findings, the effect of academic satisfaction and perceived academic quality on academic loyalty was, to a degree, mediated by self-perceived work performance.

By concentrating on the mediation role of self-perceived job performance on the effects of academic satisfaction and perceived academic quality on academic loyalty in the higher education sector, the current study is a pioneer in the services marketing body of knowledge. As a result, the findings of the study support previous empirical research on the links between service quality,

employee performance, customer satisfaction, and loyalty (Plantilla, 2017; De Matos Pedro et al., 2018; Solimun & Fernandes, 2018; Yee, 2018; Rostami et al., 2019; Chikazhe et al., 2020;). According to the findings of the study, university graduates become loyal to training institutions that provide good and exceptional service quality. The claim supports previous evidence (Ali et al., 2016) that customer satisfaction and loyalty are influenced by service quality. Furthermore, the findings of the study suggest that university graduates become loyal to their training institutions if they are content with the skills they have learned, or if they are performing well at work.

The finding is corroborated by studies by Annamdevula and Bellamkonda (2016), Espinoza et al. (2019) and Iskhakova et al. (2020) in which they contend that graduates' performance at the workplace has long been established to influence graduate loyalty to training institutions.

5.2. Practical implications

The results of the study underscore the importance of academic loyalty in order to promote management and administration within the higher education sector in emerging markets. The higher education sector should take cognisance of the factors that influence academic loyalty. Thus, universities within emerging markets should focus on matters to do with academic satisfaction and quality. Academic quality should be improved by ensuring that tangibility, reliability, assurance, empathy and responsiveness are given priority as they determine superior service within the higher education sector (Plantilla, 2017). If universities raise the level of academic quality, academic loyalty is achieved. Also, universities should pay more attention to academic satisfaction to achieve academic loyalty. This can be accomplished by providing good programmes, ensuring that the level of service meets the needs of clients, and giving up-to-date learning materials and the correct service the first time around. Universities should ensure that they employ qualified and knowledgeable staff that equip graduates with specific skills/competencies required for the job. In practice, graduates must be able to apply expertise and also be able to work with minimal supervision. This can be addressed by universities through maintaining a constant evaluation of programs to meet evolving business demands. This is crucial because continuous programme reviews assist colleges in providing graduates with marketable capabilities. It also aids in the production of qualified graduates who are ready to work anywhere in the world. The findings of the study could be used to improve higher education policies within related emerging markets like Zimbabwe. Thus, universities may institute regular audits on academic service delivery levels as this could assist the production of competent graduates.

5.3. Limitations of the study

There are some flaws in this study that need to be addressed in future research. To begin, data was gathered from only one city, Harare. Also, the current study focused solely on the perspectives of university graduates. This makes it harder to extrapolate the findings.

5.4. Future research suggestions

Future research could benefit from being expanded to include more cities in Zimbabwe and abroad. Future research could improve the findings by taking into account the perspectives of students and employers. Third, comparative studies are encouraged in industries other than higher education because they can contribute significantly to the research.

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Factors Influencing Young Consumers' Impulse Intentions Toward Visiting Pop-Up Stores in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Consumers are constantly seeking out new and memorable experiences. This study empirically examines how external factors, such as the characteristics of innovation (relative advantage, trialability, observability, low complexity, compatibility) and exterior store design, and internal factors (positive mood, hedonic motivations, consumer innovativeness) affect young consumers' impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores in the South African context. Survey data was collected from a convenient sample of 461 students from two universities in South Africa via a self-administered questionnaire. Multiple regression analysis revealed that (a) external factors related to the characteristics of innovation (i.e., compatibility and low complexity), (b) exterior store design, and (c) the internal factor, consumer innovativeness, had a significant influence on consumers' impulse intentions to visit pop-up shops. The study examined pop-up retail through the lens of impulse behaviour in an emerging market. The study contributes to the understanding of factors influencing the success of pop-up stores in emerging markets. In particular, the understanding of the factors that lead to impulse intentions towards pop-up retail, which has been overlooked in research.

JEL classification: M30, M31, O30

Keywords: pop-up stores, impulse intention, innovation characteristics, exterior design, positive mood, hedonic motivations, consumer innovativeness

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pop-up stores have been used widely around the world to do more than to sell products. A pop-up store is an experiential retail format focused on “consumer-brand interaction” within a temporary setting (Warnaby et al., 2015, p. 303). These innovative stores rely on unconventional retail approaches and strategies (Zogaji et al., 2019), such as unusual spaces or vacant venues (e.g., transformed busses, boats, vending machines or converted cargo containers), together with the intentional strategy to only stay open for a limited period to fuel consumer interest and excitement (Niehm et al., 2007; Warnaby et al., 2015).

Pop-up retail has become a staple marketing strategy for retailers across different product categories, retail channels, and locations (Alexander et al., 2018). The experiential nature of a pop-up store makes it a versatile retail format. For example, online retailers use it to experiment with physical stores, build relationships with consumers, and create excitement around their brands, products, and services (Zogaji et al., 2019). Additionally, pop-up stores have become an important tool for retailers to accomplish their marketing and branding objectives (Pomodoro, 2013; Taube & Warnaby, 2017). International (i.e., France, Italy, South Korea, UK, and the USA) retailers have successfully used pop-up stores in developed economies for communicating brand image, creating brand awareness and engagement, promoting limited collections, introducing new products, gathering customer insight, and testing market concepts (Alexander et al., 2018; Chen & Fiore, 2017; De Lassus & Anido Freire, 2014; Pomodoro, 2013; Ryu 2011; Surchi, 2011; Warnaby et al., 2015). Similarly, various international retailers (e.g., Nike, Puma and TopShop) have used this retail format to launch their brands and promote the opening of new stores in South Africa (Cherryflava, 2008; “Topshop comes to South Africa!”, 2012). Even though pop-up stores were introduced into South Africa over ten years ago, limited research exists related to consumer behaviour toward these stores. The South African retail landscape is an economic driver for growth and vastly differs from developed economies (W&RSETA, 2020). It consists of various upcoming consumer markets spread between urban and rural areas, organised by informal and formal retailers with varied retail formats, assortment offerings, and price and brand strategies (Hugo et al., 2016). Therefore, the level of participation by South African consumers in pop-up retail may differ extensively from consumers in developed countries, where pop-up retail has taken hold. The increased use of pop-up retail globally coupled with the numerous benefits offered by this experiential format stresses the need to explore the consumer response to the pop-up phenomenon in an emerging market context such as South Africa.

Pop-up stores’ temporary and surprising nature often requires that consumers act without prior planning and make quick or impulsive decisions to participate in the pop-up experience (Retief et al., 2018). A deliberate “hype” is created around the opening of pop-up stores and the fleeting nature of the store creates a sense of urgency among consumers to visit it while they still can (Bahadur, 2010; De Lassus & Anido Freire, 2014; Henkel & Toporowski, 2021; Marciniak & Budnarowska, 2009). While impulse behaviour occurs quickly without earlier planning (Virvilaite et al., 2011), certain external factors or retail settings controlled by the retailer and internal factors related to aspects of the consumer trigger impulse behaviour (Kim, 2003). Due to its relative newness, the characteristics of innovation (i.e., relative advantage, trialability, observability, low complexity, and compatibility) might influence a consumer’s intention to visit a pop-up store (Rogers, 2003). As pop-up stores depend on unique and novel designs to attract the consumer (De Lassus & Anido Freire, 2014; Pomodoro, 2013), the store’s exterior design might play a vital role in enticing a consumer to visit it on impulse. Pop-up stores are also rich in sensory stimulation and consist of interactive elements that satisfy a consumer’s desire for memorable shopping experiences (Niehm et al., 2007). The need to experience what pop-up stores offer may be motivated by internal consumer factors such as positive mood, hedonic motivation, and consumer innovativeness (Kim et al., 2010; Retief et al., 2018).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of the external factors, comprised of the characteristics of innovation (relative advantage, trialability, observability, low complexity, and compatibility) and exterior store design; along with internal factors, specifically positive mood, hedonic motivations, and consumer innovativeness, on a South African consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. Although consumers in an emerging market context, such as South Africa, might find this novel retail medium interesting, their level of participation in this innovative format may differ extensively from consumers in developed countries, where pop-up retail is well established. A better understanding of impulse behaviour toward pop-up stores will give retailers and marketers guidelines on how to take advantage of this innovative retail format in South Africa. Understanding how internal and external factors influence impulse intentions may support the development of pop-up store strategies, including store location and design, and target market identification to attract consumers to pop-up stores and engage with brands on a more permanent basis.

First, this paper presents the theoretical framework and relevant literature to conceptualise this research. Second, the research methodology employed is discussed. Third, the preliminary data analysis results and hypothesis testing through multiple regression analysis are presented. The paper concludes with a discussion and implications for retailers considering an experiential retailing approach, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Impulse behaviour model

Consumer decision-making is usually considered a rational process to solve a problem (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010), as opposed to impulse behaviour, which is unplanned and entails a rapid decision-making process aimed at getting things done quickly (Park, 2002; Rook & Gardner, 1993). Kim's (2003) impulse behaviour model, based on Churchill and Peter's (1998) model of planned consumer buying behaviour, was used as a theoretical framework in the present study. The impulse behaviour model proposes that external factors outside the consumer and controlled by the retailer (i.e., marketing cues, retail setting) and internal states within the consumer (i.e., mood, hedonic goals) (Silvera et al., 2008; Rook, 1987) initiate impulse behaviour (Dawson & Kim, 2009; Kim, 2003). By using Kim's (2003) impulse behaviour model and acknowledging pop-up stores as an innovation, the authors proposed two sets of factors that may affect a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores:

- (a) external factors such as the characteristics of innovation and exterior store design, (Dawson & Kim, 2009; Rogers 2003), and
- (b) internal factors within the consumer, such as positive mood, hedonic motivations, and consumer innovativeness (Kim et al., 2010; Silvera et al., 2008; Rook, 1987).

This framework was used to explore the factors affecting consumers' impulse intention to visit pop-up stores in South Africa. Figure 1 denotes the proposed conceptual model for the study.

2.2. External factors affecting impulse behaviour

2.2.1. Characteristics of the innovation

The innovative and novel nature of pop-up retail was supported by the diffusion of innovation theory of Rogers (2003). An innovation is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual (Rogers, 2003). This theory suggests that the characteristic of the innovation will influence a consumer's intention to adopt the innovation as well as behaviour towards it (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). According to Rogers (2003), these characteristics are relative advantage,

trialability, observability, complexity and compatibility. All five characteristics may affect a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.

Relative advantage refers to the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than existing alternatives (Shimp, 2003). Key benefits (e.g., hedonic and utilitarian) of the pop-up store experience have been found to affect a consumer's intention to patronage these stores (Chen & Fiore, 2017; Kim et al., 2010; Niehm et al., 2007). While they last, the exciting and entertaining nature of pop-up stores as well as the social prestige that can be gained (Chen & Fiore, 2017) through visiting the store and purchasing products (Keller, 2011) give pop-up stores a relative advantage over other stores.

Trialability is the extent to which consumers can test an innovation on a limited basis before committing to it (Shimp, 2003). The trialability of an innovation is positively related to its acceptance rate, as it serves as an intermediated trial for innovators in their decision to adopt the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Retailers rely on pop-up stores as a medium to experiment with a store, test a market and provide consumers with an opportunity to test the products or interact with knowledgeable brand experts (Niehm et al., 2007; Warnaby et al., 2015). These trial opportunities reduce the perceived risk and enhance consumer decisions (Kim et al., 2007). This limited trial period of pop-ups may motivate consumers to act immediately because they know the same experience may not reoccur.

Observability is the degree to which the positive aspects of pop-up retail (e.g. exclusive brands, limited edition products, or sneak previews) are visible to other people (Shimp, 2003). Pop-up retail depends routinely on visitors' social media postings of their pleasurable experiences in the store (Sheehan, 2019), which enhances observability. Park (2002) found that when the reward of an object is more visible, consumers tend to feel the urge to accept it instantly rather than delay it.

Complexity is the perceived difficulty associated with innovation (Shimp, 2003). The lower the complexity, the higher the adoption rate (Rogers, 2003). Pop-up stores commonly employ knowledgeable brand representatives who communicate information to consumers and highlight the "core brand attributes" (Surchi, 2010). In doing so, they aim to make the shopping experience more enjoyable while interacting with consumers (Rudkowski et al., 2020) and thus also succeed in diminishing complexity. Virvilaite et al. (2011) found that shop assistants who provide information, show different alternatives, and interact with consumers stimulate their impulse behaviour.

Compatibility refers to the extent to which an innovation fits into a person's way of doing things (Rogers, 2003). A new product or service will be more compatible or readily adopted if it matches the past consumption practice of consumers (Moore & Benbasat, 1991; Shimp, 2003). Previous practice provides a standard against which an innovation can be measured to increase compatibility (Rogers, 2003). Pop-up stores also contain elements found in traditional stores, such as product displays, fitting rooms, and branded signage. Furthermore, the location is selectively chosen in high foot traffic areas to intercept consumers (Moore, n.d.).

Based on the discussion, it is hypothesised that impulse intentions toward visiting pop-up stores will be positively affected by each of these five characteristics of innovation:

- H1a: Relative advantage is positively related to a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.
- H1b: Trialability is positively related to a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.
- H1c: Observability is positively related to a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.
- H1d: Low complexity is positively related to a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.
- H1e: Compatibility is positively related to a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores.

2.2.2. Exterior store design

A unique shopping environment has been found to be influential in consumers' store selection (Hines & Bruce, 2007). According to Summers and Herbert (2001), the store environment might be more influential in triggering impulse intentions than the products offered. Retailers, for this reason, sometimes open pop-up stores in unconventional structures, such as transformed shipping containers, vending machines, tour buses, riverboats, and other innovative venues to surprise consumers (Surchi, 2010). These stores are mostly mobile, and retailers often relocate them to guarantee consistent innovation (Niehm et al., 2007; Ryu, 2011). Pop-up stores have been recognised as retail environments that are innovative and stimulating because of their design (Bahadur, 2010; Vervilaite et al., 2011). Novel exteriors, unconventional venues, and locations of pop-up stores may pique curiosity and increase the urge to visit the store on impulse. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H2: The exterior store design of a pop-up store will be positively related to a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores.

2.3. Internal factors affecting impulse behaviour

2.3.1. Positive mood

Mood can be defined as a long-lived, stable emotional state that influences consumers' cognitive strategies and processing (Zhang et al., 2016). Mood is often influenced or caused by specific emotions that are object-driven (Zhang et al., 2016). Ozer and Gultekin (2015) identified that pre-purchase mood positively impacts a consumer's impulse behaviour. A positive mood can diminish the need to seek additional information and evaluate alternatives during the decision-making process before making a decision (Park, 2002). Therefore, a consumer's positive mood is likely to drive their impulse intentions (Ahmad et al., 2020), and it is expected that:

H3a: Positive mood will be positively related to a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores.

2.3.2. Hedonic motivations

Hedonic motivations relate to multi-sensory, fantasy and emotional aspects of consumption, "where consumers are motivated by the shopping experience itself as fun, enjoyable, and entertaining, regardless of whether a purchase is planned or made" (Workman, 2010). Consumers shop for a variety of non-economic reasons, such as "retail therapy" (Hausman, 2000), entertainment, fantasy, social interaction, and emotional pleasure (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). Pop-up retail offers hedonic benefits by providing products, services, and experiences that evoke fun and reflect a specific lifestyle and individuality (Kim et al., 2007). Arnold and Reynolds (2003) identified six hedonic motivations related to shopping: adventure, social, gratification, idea, role, and value shopping. Pop-up stores provide highly innovative environments with the latest trends, a feeling of shopping in another universe, distraction from everyday activities and stress, as well as opportunities where consumers can engage in activities with other consumers or friends (Niehm, et al., 2007; Pomodoro, 2013). Kim (2003) found that impulse behaviour is frequently motivated by hedonic motivations such as fun, novelty and surprise. Other studies have found that hedonic consumption positively affects impulse behaviour (Hausman, 2000; Silvera et al., 2008). Because hedonic motivations serve as drivers for a consumer's impulse behaviour, and pop-up stores may provide desired hedonic experiences, it is proposed that:

H3b: Hedonic motivations will be positively related to a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores.

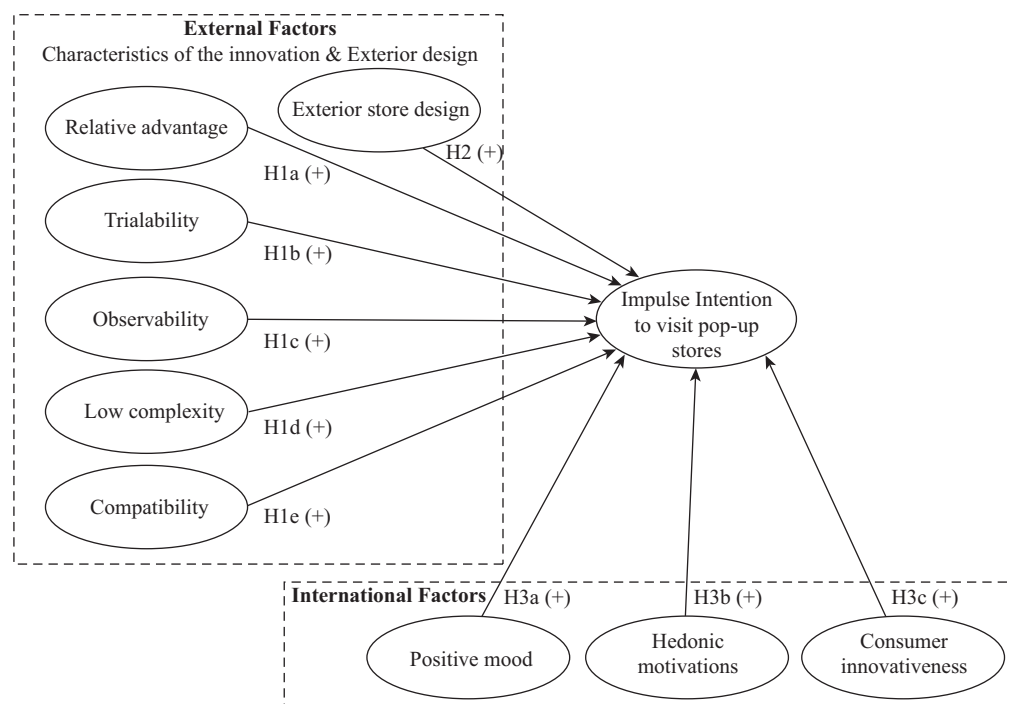
2.3.3. Consumer innovativeness

Consumer innovativeness is a tendency to seek out and buy new products or services earlier than most other consumers (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). Consumers with high innovativeness predispositions act differently than other consumers; they are more likely to search for novel situations, have a positive attitude towards change (Shimp, 2003), are more venturesome, and have the capacity to cope with high levels of risk and uncertainty (Park & Stoel, 2002; Rogers, 2003). In addition, consumers with a high level of innovativeness prefer complex, intricate, and information-rich environments (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). Because they are easily bored in environments that do not supply a certain level of arousal, they are constantly looking for new and exciting shopping experiences that can stimulate their hedonic desires (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994; Kim et al., 2010; Shimp, 2003). The novel store format offered by pop-up stores may attract consumers with high consumer innovativeness because it appeals to their need for uniqueness, risk propensity, and the need to be the first to try new products and services. Therefore, this study hypothesised that:

H3c: Consumer innovativeness will be positively related to a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores

Figure 1

Conceptual model of proposed relationships for consumers' impulse intention to visit pop-up stores



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample

A non-probability sampling procedure was used for data collection. Consumer innovators are more educated, higher in social status and younger than later adopters (Shimp, 2003). Therefore, a convenience sample of college students was deemed suitable for the study. A total of 461 usable, self-administered paper-based questionnaires were completed by students enrolled in economic and business management programmes at two universities in Pretoria, South Africa. These

universities attract students from across South Africa. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the sample. The sample comprised 75% of female students and 25% of male students. Their ages ranged between 17 and 31 years.

Table 1

Demographic profile of the sample

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	346	75
Male	115	25
<i>Age</i>		
17–20	246	54
21–25	198	43
>25	15	3
*n = 459		

3.2. Survey instrument and procedure

An exploratory survey research design was followed to investigate consumers' impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. The survey design provided a quantitative approach to test the hypotheses developed for this study. The biggest advantage the quantitative approach provided was the great amount of data that could be collected followed by measurement procedures, which resulted in numerical data that could be statistically analysed to test the hypotheses (Creswell, 2003).

The survey consisted of a PowerPoint presentation and a questionnaire. First, the PowerPoint presentation was presented to the students to familiarise them with the pop-up retail concept as well as the immersive and novel nature of store formats. The PowerPoint included a definition of pop-up retail and an explanation of why pop-up retail is used. Visual examples of different pop-up store formats (e.g., busses, vacant store spaces, vending machines and shipping containers) were presented in the presentation (Appendix A). Students were then asked to complete the questionnaire that consisted of two sections of questions. An expert panel consisting of eight faculty members in the field of apparel, merchandising, and retail established that the images of pop-up stores to be included in the measurement instrument were representative of pop-up retail. The panel members used the provided definitions and descriptions of pop-up retail to select the images most representative of pop-up stores. The first section of questions tapped on demographic information pertaining to age, gender and population group. The second section contained reliable scales that were adapted to measure the constructs in the conceptual model (see Figure 1). For the external factors, Moore and Benbasat's (1991) scales were adapted to measure the characteristics of the innovation (relative advantage, trialability, observability, low complexity, and compatibility) related to pop-up stores; and scale items from Niehm et al. (2010) and Kim (2003) were adapted to tap on the response to exterior store design of pop-up stores. The internal factor, positive mood, was measured with adapted scale items from Kim (2003). Arnold and Reynolds' (2003) hedonic motivations scale was used to measure hedonic motivations, and items from Manning et al.'s (1995) consumer innovativeness scale were adapted to measure consumer innovativeness. At least three items for each of the nine variables were included, resulting in a total of 59 items in section 2. A seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, was used for all items in the second section. The instrument, consisting of the PowerPoint

and survey items, was pilot tested by 29 students to ensure the understandability and clarity of all items. The final questionnaire was then administered in university classes to the selected sample.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to reduce the number of items, assess the construct validity, and explore the underlying factors affecting impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. The statistical software package IBM®SPSS®26 was deployed to conduct the EFA using principal axis factoring with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) as the extraction method and varimax rotation. Item analysis was done to verify whether items correlated significantly to continue the factor analysis process (KMO acceptable between 0.5 and 1.0; Bartlett's test of sphericity, significant at a level $p < 0.5$) (Malhotra, 2010). Factors with an Eigenvalue ≥ 1 , a factor loading of >0.3 , and with no cross-loadings were included (Zeynivandnezhad et al., 2019). As factor loadings are sensitive to the sample size and samples over 300 can use a smaller factor loading threshold (Mazzocchi, 2008:219), a cut-off point of 0.30 was deemed suitable as the sample size was 461 (Yong & Pearce, 2013). From the initial 59 items, 33 items were retained.

Nine factors were retained through the EFA. From the characteristics of the innovation constructs, Factor 1: Compatibility and Factor 2: Low complexity remained. Trialability was divided into two factors, Factor 3: Trialability of products and Factor 4: Trialability of pop-up stores. The remaining factors (Factor 5: Exterior of store design, Factor 6: Positive mood, Factor 7: Hedonic motivations, Factor 8: Consumer innovativeness, and Factor 9: Impulse intention) followed the structure proposed by the original scales/items. The nine factors explained 59.30% of the total variance. Descriptive statistics varied: mean scores ranged from 3.61 (Trialability of pop-up stores) to 6.30 (Exterior store design), and the standard deviation ranged between 0.80 (Exterior store design) and 1.73 (Trialability of pop-up stores). Cronbach's α confirmed the internal consistency of the constructs that emerged through the EFA. The Cronbach's α values for all constructs exceeded the recommended ≥ 0.70 threshold (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 presents the nine factors with their factor loadings, eigenvalues, variance explained, Cronbach's α values, and descriptive statistics.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was subsequently performed using IBM®AMOS®26 to establish whether the data fitted the proposed measurement model. CFA, using a maximum likelihood estimation procedure, was utilised to test and validate the factor structure of the set of factors (Mazzocchi, 2008). The measurement model had a model fit of CMIN = 881,76, $df = 43$, CMIN/DF = 2.06, $p < 0.0001$, NFI = 0.87, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.05. Compared to the suggested goodness-of-fit cut-off values (i.e., CMIN/DF < 2 (very good)/ < 5 (acceptable), $p < 0.0001$; NFI > 0.90 (acceptable); CFI > 0.90 (acceptable); TLI > 0.90 (acceptable); RMSEA < 0.08 (acceptable)), the measurement model produced an acceptable model fit (Hair et al., 2014). CFA confirmed the factor structure from the EFA for the model.

Table 2
Exploratory factor analysis and descriptive statistics

Factor structure	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Variance explained	<i>a</i>	Mean	Std. dev.
Factor 1: Compatibility						
<i>Pop-up retail...</i>						
fits into my lifestyle	0.68	32.24	8.72	0.92	5.07	1.45
is compatible with all aspects of the way I like to shop	0.77					
is compatible with my current life situation	0.78					
fits well with the way I like to shop	0.74					
Factor 2: Low complexity						
<i>Pop-up stores provide...</i>						
locations that are easily found	0.88	3.78	5.81	0.80	5.21	1.27
accessible locations	0.86					
signage that clearly tells you what brands are offered	0.36					
Factor 3: Trialability of products						
<i>Pop-up stores...</i>						
would not take much effort to try out	0.39	4.34	6.23	0.76	5.48	1.08
would allow consumers to spend time just looking without having to buy	0.74					
would allow consumers to just see what they are all about	0.67					
offer an opportunity to test products before committing to buying them	0.57					
Factor 4: Trialability of pop-up stores						
<i>I have...</i>						
the opportunity to try out pop-up stores	0.67	3.19	5.27	0.75	3.61	1.73
an idea where I can go to try out pop-up retail in future	0.81					
no difficulty visiting pop-up stores since they are similar to regular stores	0.60					
Factor 5: Exterior store design						
<i>I would visit a pop-up store because it...</i>						
looks interesting	0.76	7.32	7.71	0.80	6.30	0.80
is eye-catching	0.74					
is in interesting locations or venues	0.52					
has unusual exterior looks	0.52					
Factor 6: Positive mood						
<i>Visiting a pop-up store would...</i>						
lift my mood.	0.71	4.10	6.18	0.85	5.29	1.22
excite and thrill me.	0.68					
make me feel happy and cheerful.	0.69					
Factor 7: Hedonic motivations						
<i>I would visit a pop-up store because it...</i>						
is an experience that is an experience I don't want to miss	0.45	4.81	6.41	0.75	5.09	1.11
is somewhere I can shop with my friends and family to socialise	0.71					
is something to experience with my friends	0.64					
is an escape from reality	0.32					
is somewhere I could go to spoil myself	0.45					
Factor 8: Consumer innovativeness						
<i>I like to...</i>						
visit stores with new and exciting products and services	0.69	6.04	7.46	0.82	5.81	1.02
visit stores that give a lot of new information about products or services	0.62					
seek out new product experiences	0.83					
look for stores that are different and unusual when I hear about them	0.53					
Factor 9: Impulse intention						
<i>I might...</i>						
spontaneously visit pop-up stores	0.80	3.55	5.52	0.85	5.68	1.13
without planning feel like experiencing a pop-up store	0.57					
have difficulty controlling my willingness to visit a pop-store when I spot one	0.59					

Note: N = 461

4.2. Hypothesis testing through multiple regression model

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesised relationships. The regression model also established the antecedents most predictive of impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. Impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores was entered as the dependent variable and the independent variables were compatibility, low complexity, trialability of products, trialability of pop-up stores, exterior store design, positive mood, hedonic motivations, and consumer innovativeness. Theoretically, all the independent variables were assumed to positively impact impulse intention toward visiting a pop-up store. The R^2 of 0.45 indicated that about 44.5% of the dependent variable (impulse intention toward visiting a pop-up store) could be explained by using the combination of the independent variables as predictors. The associated F -test ($F = 45.30, p < 0.001$) confirmed that the model is appropriate and fits the collected data well.

The variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values were checked in the predictor variables to eliminate the possibility of multicollinearity between factors ensuring that the independent variables are not highly correlated with one another (Mazzocchi, 2008). Tolerance values above 0.1 for all the independent variables (ranging between 0.55 and 0.86) indicated low multicollinearity and confirmed that there were no multicollinearity problems among the independent variables (O'Brien, 2007). The VIF values of the independent variables ranged between 1.34 and 1.81, which is below the threshold (<4), confirming that high multiple correlations exist, and the likelihood of multicollinearity is low (O'Brien, 2007).

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis

Coefficients ^a	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i> -value	Sig. <i>p</i> -value	Collinearity Statistics	
	β	Std. Error	β eta			Tolerance	VIF
Compatibility	0.20	0.03	0.26**	5.54	0.000	0.55	1.81
Low complexity	0.10	0.03	0.11*	2.93	0.003	0.74	1.34
Trialability of products	0.05	0.04	0.05	1.20	0.230	0.61	1.63
Trialability of pop-up stores	-0.03	0.02	-0.04	-1.26	0.206	0.86	1.16
Exterior store design	0.24	0.06	0.17**	3.97	0.000	0.65	1.52
Positive mood	0.07	0.04	0.07	1.72	0.086	0.58	1.71
Hedonic motivations	0.08	0.04	0.08	1.84	0.065	0.55	1.81
Consumer innovativeness	0.18	0.04	0.17**	3.93	0.000	0.65	1.52

Notes: ^aDependent Variable: Impulse intention to visit; Significant at ** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.01$

The effects of the external and internal factors were examined with standardised regression coefficients (b -values), t -values, and p -values from the multiple regression analysis (Table 3). The regression results indicated that the external factors compatibility ($b = 0.26, t = 5.54, p < 0.001$) and exterior store design ($b = 0.17, t = 3.97, p < 0.001$) are significant predictors of impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. $H1e$ -compatibility and $H2$ -exterior store design were supported at $p < 0.001$. $H1d$ posited that low complexity would have a positive effect on a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. Results were $b = 0.11, t = 2.93, p = 0.003$ and provided support for $H1d$ at $p < 0.01$. Regarding internal factors, $H3c$ postulated that consumer innovativeness would affect a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. Results were significant for $H3c$ -consumer innovativeness ($b = 0.17, t = 3.93, p < 0.001$),

confirming the positive effect of this internal factor on impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. The remaining external factors related to the characteristics of innovation (i.e., trialability of products and trialability of pop-up stores) and internal factors (i.e., positive mood and hedonic motivations) were not statistically significant in predicting a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting a pop-up store.

5. DISCUSSION

This study confirmed that young South African consumers perceived pop-up stores as a retail format that offers a shopping experience they would enjoy and remember and may visit impulsively. Because of the temporary nature of pop-up retail, it requires an instantaneous reaction from consumers. Previous studies on impulse behaviour (Iram & Chacharkar, 2017; Kim, 2003) have found that a memorable experience encourages consumers to bypass the search and evaluation phases of the decision-making process resulting directly in the decision phase.

The findings confirmed that particular external factors related to the characteristics of the innovation and the exterior store design and internal factors related to consumer innovativeness influence a consumer's impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. In terms of external factors, only two characteristics of the innovation (e.g., compatibility and low complexity) positively affected impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. The statistical significance of compatibility in the present study supports Shimp's (2003) perspective that acceptance of an innovation is positively affected if it matches a consumer's consumption practices. Moreover, Gilboa and Rafaeli (2003) identified that the more complex a retail setting is, the less likely it is that approach tendencies might occur. Complex retail environments can even result in creating unpleasant feelings among consumers (Gilboa & Rafaeli, 2003). Retailers should thus ensure that the pop-up store environment contains enough familiar elements and maintain a low level of complexity to increase impulse intentions and create a pleasant experience.

Exterior store design was found to be predictive of a consumer's impulse intention to visit pop-up stores. This finding supports Underhill's (1999) suggestion that nearly all unplanned behaviour is because consumers see something that promises an enjoyable experience; this includes observable features such as store location, exterior design and store environment. Something that one finds interesting usually leads to curiosity and an intention to find out what it is all about (Erdis & Cant, 2015). These findings also validate other studies done by Gilmore et al. (2001) and Hines and Bruce (2007), who determined that the look and feel of a store are important in store choice and that an unusual exterior look of a store is influential in a consumer's decision to visit a store. This is especially true for younger consumers as Bäckström and Johansson (2006) found that the exterior store design is of amplified importance in a retail setting among younger consumers. Store designs should be eye-catching, aesthetically pleasing, and explorative with moderate complexity to attract innovative consumers. However, unique venues should be compatible with the shopping habits of consumers while giving them a memorable experience that distinctively sets them apart from their traditional shopping trips.

Regarding internal factors, consumer innovativeness was the only significant factor in predicting consumers' impulse intention toward visiting pop-up stores. This aligns with Kim et al.'s (2010) and Niehm et al.'s (2007) studies that found high consumer innovativeness to have a direct effect on a consumer's attraction to and acceptance of pop-up retail. These consumers relish the hedonic contributions pop-up retail offer in terms of introducing new/unique products and stimulating shopping experiences. Consumers with high consumer innovativeness tendencies are more prone to be venturesome (Rogers, 2003) and can cope with intricate and multifaceted environments (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994). Therefore, they may make spur of the moment decisions to visit pop-up stores when encountered.

In conclusion, the findings provide support for the effectiveness of pop-up retail as an experiential marketing strategy in an emerging market context. Pop-up retail may play a decisive role in the marketing environment and impulse intention of young consumers. Taking into consideration that South Africa has a relatively young population with a median age of only 26, in comparison to that of other countries (Egan, 2021), pop-up retail as an innovative marketing strategy may involve great benefits for the South African retail industry in terms of creating brand awareness and communicating with potential customers. It will be most effective for consumers with high levels of consumer innovativeness who are constantly seeking out new products, ideas, experiences, and information and who are more likely to engage in impulse behaviour aiming to satisfy these needs. Although the impact of positive mood and hedonic motivations were not significant predictors of impulse intention, pop-up retail might change (lift) negative moods and provide pleasurable experiences (Pomodoro, 2013) that could lead to a positive assessment of the brand or store. Retailers should further stress the non-economic rewards of pop-up retail and make shopping fun by using elements such as music, interactivity, unique scenery, styling tips, and in-store advice. According to a Global Consumer Sentiment survey conducted during 2022, South African consumers are more pessimistic about personal finances than consumers in other emerging economies (Hattingh & Ramlakan, 2022), which suggests the importance of touting non-economic rewards of pop-up retail as these consumers might be more reluctant to spend money. Their pop-up retail experience may enhance the image of and trust in the brands which will make reluctant consumers more willing to purchase from the brand in the long run.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

If retailers employing pop-up store strategies want to increase traffic to their temporary stores, they should focus on: (a) compatibility, (b) low complexity, (c) store exterior design, and (d) consumer innovativeness, as these factors positively affect impulsive intention. Placing pop-up stores in high traffic areas to reach large numbers of passers-by (Surchi, 2011) is a sound strategy related to observability. Central or trendy locations (Russo Spena et al., 2011) are important, as are placements that are convenient and unexpected, surprising consumers at the same time (Surchi, 2011). More importantly, retailers should incorporate interactive and visible social elements to attract consumers into their stores. For instance, many pop-up stores include interactive spaces found to enhance shared experiences and socialisation (Russo Spena et al., 2012), including online postings that increase observability to a wider audience. Retailers who incorporate elements that match a consumer's lifestyle and taste or include traditional retail elements but with an unconventional twist (e.g., virtual fitting rooms, interactive sales points or celebrity brand ambassadors) may be more successful in attracting customers to their pop-up stores. Another dimension of compatibility is the degree to which it meets a need (Rogers, 2003). To attract consumers to pop-up stores, retailers should pay attention to aspects that satisfy a consumer's need for new and unusual shopping experiences. Employing retailtainment (simultaneously offering retail and entertainment elements) may be an effective means of building a sense of compatibility. In support, Pomodoro (2013) suggested combining social or community events (e.g., jazz concerts or art exhibitions) with brand experiences in a pop-up space as a potentially effective element of a pop-up retail strategy.

As such, pop-up retailers should ensure that the store is inventive and offers an information-rich shopping environment that will fascinate consumers with high levels of consumer innovativeness. Incorporating technology to enhance the pop-up experience (e.g., artificial intelligence, augmented reality and retail apps) is a concept likely to appeal to consumer innovators because of its novel and unique nature.

This study identified factors that retailers need to consider increasing impulse intentions in pop-up stores and provided guidelines for retailers to successfully implement the factors, thereby contributing managerially. From a theoretical perspective, the study adds value to the existing body of knowledge based on consumer decision-making and in particular, impulse intentions towards novel retail formats.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study focused on college-aged consumers who were currently residing in Pretoria, but who originated from all parts of South Africa. Whereas the sample was appropriate because of the likelihood of including respondents representing the full range of consumer innovativeness and good fit with the age of consumers frequently targeted for pop-up stores, it is not representative of all South African consumers. Further studies should examine the moderating effect of age and consumer innovativeness to determine if one or both affect impulse intentions toward visiting pop-up stores. Moreover, because consumer innovativeness may vary by product category (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010), future studies should examine the impact of product-specific innovativeness on impulse intentions toward relevant pop-up stores. Regional cultural differences within South Africa (Jacobs & Maree, 2018) also suggest that the studies within the South African context should use a representative sample of the country to account for cultural and population differences. The present study focused on impulse intentions towards pop-up stores, represented by images and a description of the venue. Surveying actual visitors to real pop-up stores may yield different results. Results would allow the development of a more realistic model based on behaviour instead of intentions. Finally, future studies could focus on different forms of pop-up retail (e.g., converted buses, cargo containers, vacant storefronts) and locations (e.g., busy downtown areas, tourist locations) in the South African market to determine the most effective formats to use locally.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Description of the PowerPoint slide show

Slide 1	Title of the presentation: Young consumers' impulse intentions towards apparel pop-up retailers	
	<p>What is pop-up retail?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First introduced in 2003 and only moved to South Africa in 2007. • It entails the opening of a store which is located in a unique venue (tour bus, shipping container, riverboat, vending machine, etc.) and situated in a specific targeted area. • These stores have a limited lifespan and are known to be open for a few days to months before they disappear. 	
Slide 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The opening is mostly unannounced and retailers depend on other consumers to spread the information through word-of-mouth messages. • These stores do not necessarily sell products but offer the customers the opportunity to fit and order products they are interested in or only take part in exciting shopping experiences. • The products offered in these stores differ from those in the traditional branches – offering consumers exclusive products and experiences. 	
Slides 3-10	Images that represent examples of different types of pop-up stores. A short caption was provided with each image to explain the format of the pop-up store.	
	Description of the image presented on the slide	Descriptive caption
Slide 3	A well-known sports brand launching new skating gear to loyal customers in a converted old minibus. The outside is branded with prints and an interesting merchandise display replaces the inside of the minibus.	A sports brand promoting its new skateboard clothing range via an old minibus that has been customised with prints inspired by a skating legend.
Slide 4	A triple-level pop-up city made out of various shipping containers painted and branded in the colours of a well-known sports brand.	A pop-up city.
Slide 5	A pop-up store hosted in a single-level shipping container with graffiti on the outside and silver helium balloons floating on the rooftop.	A transportable pop-up store, located in a shipping container where people could buy items through vending machines, interact with celebrities and bid on limited-edition charity bears designed by a famous fashion designer.
Slide 6	Pop-up store space advertised on the display window at a vacant store location in a shopping mall.	Pop-up stores in vacant spaces in shopping malls.
Slide 7	A pop-up store that looks like an iceberg.	This is a pop-up store that looks like an iceberg. Retailers use it as a temporary store to preview new collections and increase sales by offering limited edition stock to its customers during winter. The store has a solar H2O heating system, is lit well and has projectors surrounding the inside walls, also showing off merchandise.
Slide 8	A modified shipping container that has movable parts fitted with chandeliers, technology and modern furniture.	A convertible pop-up store that opens up and folds back up into a container by the press of a button.
Slide 9	A popular shoe brand hosting a pop-up store where people are busy creating their own flip-flops.	A pop-up kiosk where people could design their own flip-flops.
Slide 10	Excited consumers lining up in front of a vending machine with sneakers in it.	A vending machine in the middle of a busy sidewalk where people could buy clearly branded sports sneakers in a matter of minutes.
Slide 11	Thank you for participating note: Your participation will enable me to do this study. I truly appreciate your time and effort.	