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Psychological factors impacting the consumer buying behavior

A study investigating how the psychological factors impact the cognitive decision-making process within the make-up industry

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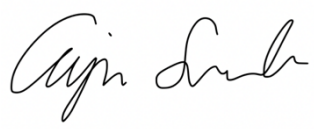

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Abstract

Background: The consumer-decision making process has shifted due to a more digitized and competitive environment. This has enabled consumers to compare prices, read customer reviews, and find the most appropriate deals. Therefore, marketers must implement appropriate strategies adapted to the psychological factors impacting consumer buying behavior. It is essential for firms to understand their consumers and grasp whether the market's demands are fully met.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to investigate what psychological factors that have an impact on consumer buying behavior. More specifically, the aim is to investigate how these various psychological motives impact the consumers' cognitive decision-making process within the make-up industry.

Method: An investigating research study conducted qualitatively using a literature research method combined with three focus groups of 12 Swedish females ranging from 18 to 25 years old.

Conclusion: Three major themes were identified to have an impact on consumer buying behavior; influences, changes in personality and lifestyle, and preferences. The authors have determined that social media, WOM, lifestyle, and personal preferences and characteristics are recurring factors based on these themes.

Online platforms give the consumers both a desire and function as guidance while searching for information. Other external influences, such as opinion leaders, WOM, and reviews, guide consumers in information and evaluation, impacting their motivation to purchase make-up. Further, all consumers differ in terms of personality characteristics and way of living in the context of their day-to-day activities, opinions, interest, and pattern of consumption. Due to these aspects, the cognitive decision-making process differs from consumer to consumer.

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1. Introduction

Businesses and their operations play a massive role in today's society as they foster the world economy by bringing innovation to the marketplace and generating employment (Fitzgerald & Cormack, n.d.). For businesses to strive and generate growth, they must attain consumers. Hence, it is clear that the consumer is an essential aspect of a company, regardless of what industry the company is operating in. It is important to get the consumer's attention as it entails the products and services that enable us to meet needs and desires (Hult, Morgeson, Morgan, Mithas & Fornell, 2017). Meeting the consumers' needs and gaining their attention in a competitive environment is not an easy task as they all differ in terms of emotions, personality, and attitudes. Thus, managers attempt to understand how consumers feel, think, and make decisions through the use of psychology. In recent years, psychology has been recognized as one of the most important aspects to consider when thinking strategically and planning marketing activities (Kimmel, 2013). Especially since the world is becoming more digitized, customers can be marketers themselves by posting reviews, comments, and likes on social media and other digital channels (Hagander & Runarsdottir, 2016).

According to Kimmel (2013), five key aspects of psychology impact marketing practices. These are; motivation, perception, decision making, personality and lifestyle, and social behavior. Furthermore, Solomon (2019) states that the consumer generally goes through five different steps when making a decision, including (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) evaluation of alternatives, (4) product choice, and (5) post-purchase evaluation. By carefully studying how Kimmel's psychological aspects impact these stages, managers might create a deeper understanding of why the consumer makes certain decisions during the purchasing process.

The implication of these frameworks will be investigated by studying the consumer within the make-up industry. The particular industry is relevant to explore as it plays a significant role in the economic and social contribution across the European Union (EU). Further, the industry offers intimate and high involvement products that evolve day by day (Cosmetics Europe, 2019). Hence, marketers within the make-up industry need to recognize the many psychological factors that might influence consumers' buying behavior (Kimmel, 2013).

1.1 Make-up Industry

With an annual growth rate of 4.75 percent worldwide and a market value increasing from $483B in 2020 to $511B in 2021, the cosmetic industry grows larger every day. Digitalization, influencers, and social media channels are some of the factors causing the industry's rapid growth (Roberts, 2022). Today, the cosmetic industry offers a wide range of products, including skincare and make-up, contributing to positive self-esteem and well-being (Cosmetics Europe, 2018). To narrow down the topic for this study, the researchers will be focusing on the make-up industry. The consumer's desire to touch, feel, and smell a product in person impedes the industry's progress. As a result, the make-up sector is deemed to have a high level of involvement. The buyer invests a significant amount of time and effort in information search, evaluating, and making the final purchase decision (Hsu & Lee, 2003).

1.1.1 Sustainability Aspect

In recent years, sustainability and raising awareness regarding the environment have become more crucial than ever. Therefore, the make-up industry must adapt its strategies to the emerging sustainable requirements. Previous research on natural and cruelty-free cosmetics containing natural components and processing has become a major trend in the last four years (Statista, 2019). This trend has arisen due to the emerging use of social media and internet, together with a growing concern for health and the environment (Matic & Puh, 2016).

Furthermore, the make-up industry has a poor reputation when it comes to sustainability. This is because the cosmetics business produces up to 120 billion plastic packaging units every year, resulting in the annual loss of 18 million acres of forest (Green Business, 2021). From a survey made, including 15,000 women, 36 percent said they exclusively buy cruelty-free cosmetics from cruelty-free businesses (Perfect365 inc, 2018). Min, Lee, & Zhao (2018) also point out that attitudes regarding animal testing among younger generations have shifted from 31 percent in 2001 to 54 percent in 2013 (Min et al., 2018). A "cruelty-free" product does not damage or kill animals (Cruelty-free International, 2019).

However, even though consumers have gotten more aware of sustainability, it is still a main issue within the make-up industry. Thousands of animal corpses are dumped every year in research facilities, tainted with harmful and dangerous compounds and destructive chemicals. According to a PETA analysis from 2016, more than 250 cosmetics manufacturers continue to abuse over 27,000 animals each year (Chitrakorn, 2016). Thus, it is evident that companies that

include sustainable strategies in their operations are more likely to accomplish a competitive market position, attract more consumers, and create a better reputation and high level of brand recognition (Bonn & Fisher, 2011).

1.2 Problem Discussion

In past years, the consumer decision-making process has shifted due to a more digitized and competitive environment. Consumers can compare prices, read customer reviews, and find the best deals, and they are continuously exposed to social contagion through social media and the use of the internet. Compared to traditional marketing and sales channels, digitalization has brought endless opportunities to find the optimal fit for the consumer. Thus, organizations and managers must prioritize and invest time and resources to gain an understanding of their consumers. Understanding the psychological factors essential to marketing and consumer buying behavior is critical to fully grasping how and whether the market demands are met and if a firm's marketing is performing well or poorly (Hagander & Runarsdottir, 2016).

Today, there is high competition among organizations to attract and retain consumers. It is estimated that many organizations use ineffective strategies to reach their audience, promote their products, and attract new consumers. One of the first and most essential steps in the planning process is to get to know and understand the consumers and their needs. It does not matter whether every other aspect of the marketing strategy is perfect if the organization fails to recognize the genuine interest of its consumers. Collecting data and information about a company’s consumers is complex and time-consuming for managers. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the underlying buying behavior of consumers can serve as a valuable guide for managers to identify and predict trends and social patterns as a foundation for effective marketing strategies (Davenport, DalleMule & Lucker, 2011).

In today’s society, teenagers and young women are more open-minded. They are growing up in a more digitized, economically and politically challenging world where there is tremendous pressure to be connected and expose their everyday life on the internet (Williamson, 2014). This has led to the influence of purchasing items that are currently trending and showing the self from the best possible point of view. Further, as individuals start graduating from school, there will, in most cases, be an increase in income. As the individuals start getting a discretionary income, i.e., the money left over after the disposable income, they can spend more and purchase products they enjoy (Epp & Price, 2008). Hence, it is interesting to investigate

the consumer buying behavior of women between the ages of 18 to 25 and the most prominent underlying psychological factors impacting it.

To narrow down the topic of the study, the chosen field within cosmetics is make-up, as it is a billion-dollar industry used worldwide (Britton, 2012). Make-up is an intimate product that women use during their entire lifecycle, as they are trained to experiment with cosmetics at an early age in order to boost their appearance. It works as a brief boost in their self-esteem and may be applied in various doses. Make-up appeals mostly to women since it may be a quick and straightforward method to fix beauty concerns temporarily (Britton, 2012). This in comparison to men who do not use make-up to the same extent (Infante, Calixto & Campos, 2016). Beausoleil states that *"many women report having different makeup routines depending on what they expect to do during the day."* (1992, p. 33). Hence, make-up is relevant for the topic at hand as it indicates that several psychological factors impact women's buying behavior (Korichi, Pelle-de-Queral, Gazano & Aubert, 2008).

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to investigate what psychological factors that have an impact on consumer buying behavior. More specifically, the aim is to explore how these various psychological motives impact the consumers' cognitive decision-making process within the make-up industry. This, by targeting a younger female Swedish crowd between the ages of 18 and 25. The two research questions for this study are the following:

- *What psychological factors have an impact on consumer buying behavior within the make-up industry?*
- *How are these psychological factors impacting the consumers' cognitive decision-making process?*

1.3 Definitions

The authors' definitions of the most important words and concepts are presented in this section for the reader to understand and limit the uncertainty of the key terms used within the study. The three key terms are further defined below.

Cognitive psychology entails the activation of prior knowledge while processing new information. More precisely, how the brain processes the data and stores it in long-term

memory (Anderson, Spiro & Montague, 2017). It is concerned with how the brain processes information rather than subjective experience (Barsalou, 2014).

Consumer buying behavior is important to illuminate the psychology of how consumers think, feel, argue, and choose among available options, how the environment impacts the consumer, and finally, how the consumers' motivation and decision strategies differ between products (Stankevich, 2017).

The make-up industry is one of the world's leading markets and grows larger every day. In 2020, makeup accounted for 16 percent of the global market cosmetics and was one of the most profitable product categories (Statista, 2022). Moreover, make-up is seen as an intimate product with a high level of involvement (Hsu & Lee, 2003).

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Research Methods

For this research, a literature research method was used, including physical books and e-books, websites, journals, and peer-reviewed articles. The research design was supported by a deductive approach where existing theories and scientific reports were examined. The two primary literature sources used are the "Psychological Foundations of Marketing" and "Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective." These books have provided the two theoretical frameworks that the researchers have used to conclude. Moreover, the electronic library Primo and Google Scholar have been used to access several peer-reviewed journals and articles, where keywords were used to find relevant information. These were; the decision-making process, consumer buying behavior, psychological factors influencing decision-making, make-up high involvement, cognitive psychology, and the make-up industry.

2.2 Cognitive decision-making process

To fully understand the psychological factors affecting consumer buying behavior, managers must study the cognitive decision-making process. According to Solomon, this traditional process demonstrates that people:

> "*Calmly and carefully integrate as much information as possible with what they already know about a product, painstakingly with the pluses and minuses of each alternative and arrive at a satisfactory decision*." (2019, p. 296).

By understanding this, managers will be able to develop marketing strategies and products that are suitable for the consumers' needs, which in the long run will lead to brand loyalty and increased revenues. This approach mirrors that the customer goes through five different steps when making a decision. These steps can be described as (1) problem recognition; (2) information search; (3) evaluation of alternatives; (4) product choice; and (5) post-purchase evaluation (Solomon, 2019).

2.2.1 Problem Recognition

The first step of the cognitive decision-making process occurs when the consumers recognize that they have a problem needed to be solved. The problem at hand may be small or complex. Further, it can be noticed naturally by the consumer or through the marketer encouraging the consumer to purchase by creating a demand. When the problem recognition occurs naturally,

the consumer's actual state is impacted as they notice that they have a need to be met. In contrast, the consumer can recognize that there is an opportunity, moving their ideal state upward. Here, the consumer recognizes a product or service that they do not need but want or desire. This opportunity recognition can be discovered through marketing efforts, societal changes, social influences, or social media channels (Bruner & Pomazal, 1988).

2.2.2 Information Search

To solve the problem that has been recognized, the consumer needs to search for information. According to Solomon, "*information search is the process by which the consumer surveys their environment for the appropriate data to make a reasonable decision*" (2019, p. 299). Searching for information can be done internally or externally. When the consumer is searching for information internally, the individual is using existing and previous knowledge about a product or service to form a decision. In contrast, external information search entails that the consumer obtains information from other sources such as friends, social media, and other advertisement channels.

Consumers who buy something expensive that is of high importance to them and have a moderate amount of knowledge about a product tend to search for more information than those with a small or a significant amount of knowledge. When a consumer has limited expertise about a product, they tend to feel like they have no competence to search for information extensively. In contrast, those consumers having a significant amount of knowledge pay more focus on being efficient. Hence, they do not put as much effort into the information search process (Gobb & Hoyer, 2006).

2.2.3 Evaluation of Alternatives

When information has been found, the consumer will most likely have some alternatives to choose from. Choosing between different alternatives is not an easy task as there are many brands to choose from and different variations of the same product for different brands. With the rise of social media and online platforms, it has become increasingly difficult to sift between alternatives. Moreover, the consumers' evaluation is highly impacted by social media, reviews, attributes of the products, and the brand's reputation (Solomon, 2019).

In later years, managers have recognized the importance of understanding why consumers make certain choices and which criteria they are affected by when evaluating alternatives. These, called evaluation criteria, entail the most important factors that the consumer weighs in

a while differentiating between alternatives, i.e., judgments the consumers make about a brand or product. Furthermore, the determinant attributes are the product's features that the consumer uses in the differentiation (Solomon, 2019).

There are two rules upon which the evaluation criteria can be based. Primarily, the non-compensatory decision rules mean that the flaws of a product cannot be compensated with other positive attributes. In contrast, compensation rules allow the product to make up for its shortcomings. The consumers using the approach mentioned tend to be more involved in the purchase (Solomon, 2019).

2.2.4 Product Choice

When the alternatives have been evaluated, the consumer must decide between different brands and products. Information sources, including previous experience with the product or similar products, perceptions about brands established by advertising, and information available at the moment of purchase, can all affect the consumer's decision. Apart from deciding what to buy, the consumer will have to choose where and how to buy the product. Depending on the consumer and their involvement in the purchase, they might choose to buy it in-store or online (Solomon, 2019). Moreover, some consumers may visit the store to look at the product in person and then purchase it online at a lower or better price. A tendency that can be further explained as showrooming (Johansson, 2017).

2.2.5 Post-Purchase Behavior

After the customer has made their purchase, the marketer aims to evaluate their post-purchase behavior by measuring satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Customer satisfaction has a high impact on the brand as it sets out the customers' future behavior and the general profitability of the brand. It can be recognized as the customers' use and integration of the product into their daily life, reflecting if it meets their expectations. Surveys, reviews, and word-of-mouth (WOM) can be used to measure customer satisfaction (Solomon, 2019).

In contrast to the satisfied customer, some may also be dissatisfied with their product choice. The reasons why a customer may be dissatisfied are because of the product being unsafe, bad service, failed or long delivery, or lack of availability of information (European Communities, 2008). According to recent research, customers are more inclined to write negative reviews than positive ones. The psychological reasons behind this notion are mainly our brain. Negative emotions or experiences are processed more deeply than happy emotions. Hence, it is more

common for customers to express their negative emotions as they appear more dramatic and urgent (National Strategic, 2018).

2.3 Kimmel's Five Psychological Aspects Essential to Marketing

According to Kimmel (2013), the five psychological aspects essential to marketing are; motivation, perception, decision-making, personality and lifestyle, and social behavior. These are essential for practice and research in the marketplace and applied in the fields of marketing.

2.3.1 Motivation

Kimmel states that *"motivation concerns nothing less than why people behave as they do"* (2013, p. 23). Therefore, the motivational psychological process is considered to persuade an individual to behave in a certain way. Both personal and social dynamics drive and impact a purchase, i.e., the human wants and needs. As seen in Figure 1, motivation includes the emergence of consumer behavior, the direction the behavior proceeds, and how the behavior is maintained.

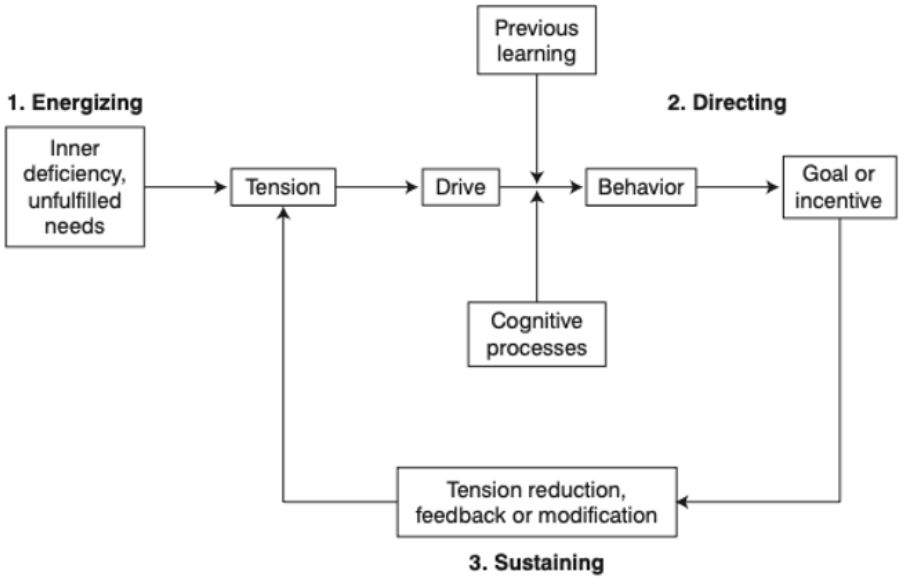

Figure 1. Model of the motivational process (Kimmel, 2013, p. 24)

Several types of situations are likely to get the consumer disturbance started, and these energizing deficiencies could either be physiological or psychological. An internal psychological factor could be an unfilled need that arises as a tension and drive for the individual to satisfy the need. This type of behavior is goal-oriented and impacted by previous learning and cognitive processes. To manifest a need that directly serves the consumer a goal,

the consumer is likely to be influenced by either social, personal, cultural factors, or hereditary influences. These serve the choice of what, where, and how an individual is impacted by these factors (Kimmel, 2013).

A clear goal must be articulated to explain the relationship between motivating behavior and what the market offers, in order to meet a consumer's wants or needs (Kimmel, 2013). According to Baumgartner & Pieters, a goal is an "*internal representation of desirable states that people try to attain and undesirable states that they try to avoid*" (2008, p. 368). Furthermore, Kimmel (2013) indicates that goals are concrete and more specific when fulfilling a need, and they usually have a substantial impact on consumer behavior. There are different types of goals attracting consumer behavior; these could either be so-called "positively valent," reflecting a desire to purchase an attractive good to feel more satisfied or "negatively valent," reflecting a repel and avoidant behavior. Lastly, Gross (1998) states that the motivational process is not completed without crucial factors such as emotions and moods, which is called "affect" in terms of psychology. Emotions and moods are defined as a balanced state with components of experiencing, expressive, and arousal.

The needs of an individual are intricately linked, and as a result, they can influence behavior simultaneously. Some needs are emotionally related, while some are status-related, mutually reinforcing a purchase (Kimmel, 2013). As a result, several needs may be met by acquiring and using the same product, which runs as opposed to Maslow's well-known motivational assumptions. Namely, a fixed set of requirements are placed hierarchically and impact behavior in a sequential pattern. More basic physiological needs, such as safety, and social ones, must be met before higher-order, secondary needs can activate a person's behavior (Maslow, 1943). Furthermore, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, such as achievement, status, and self-actualization, has been helpful for marketers to clarify various types of product benefits that claim to individuals consequent to environmental and developmental circumstances (Wahba & Bridwell, 1987). To conclude, both "primary" physiological needs, such as the need for hunger, pain, and body temperature, together with "secondary" psychological needs, such as the need for achievement, affiliation, and power, have an impact on consumer behavior (Kimmel, 2013).

Motivational impacts originating from prior experience and learning, expectancies, and personal participation are recognized by two cognitive approaches; the expectancy-valence theory and the involvement theory. The expectancy-valence theory holds that behavior is primarily motivated by a desire to achieve the most appealing outcomes, such as purchasing

highly praised products valued by society. Furthermore, it states that the more appealing a goal appears to a consumer, the more likely the person will choose and actively pursue it. The involvement theory is related to consumer decision-making, attitudes, and the importance of customer involvement. For example, it can reflect the consumers' desire to belong, such as being a part of a friend group or brand community (Kimmel, 2013).

2.3.2 Perception

The psychological term ‘perception’ refers to the processes that enable individuals to experience and make sense and decisions based on their surroundings. In other words, it describes an individual’s awareness and perception of reality. The consumer's behavior is dependent on the interaction with the product or brand, which can be either positive or negative based on situations or events with that interaction. For example, consumers may respond negatively to a brand's change because that change alters what that brand subjectively means to them. Although change and innovation are required to create competitive advantages and newness, the vast majority of consumers are comfortable with the familiar (Kimmel, 2013).

Furthermore, consumers' perception encompasses the cognitive process of organizing, interpretation, and selection. The unprocessed information (e.g., sound, texture, light) provides the raw material for vision, taste, touch, and hearing. Once the raw material is perceived and interpreted, it gives the consumers meaning to its surrounding environment. Personal experiences and circumstances also influence consumer responses to brands and their offerings. People are usually more conscious of stimuli and informational signals personally relevant to them. Perceptual vigilance refers to people’s tendency to have heightened sensitivity to stimuli that can satisfy their motives. In contrast, perceptual defense refers to people’s tendency to screen out too threatening stimuli. Marketing research must be conducted to determine the best strategies for capturing attention and increasing recall, such as developing messages that contradict popular beliefs, using a lot of white space or vibrant colors in print ads, incorporating humor or sexual allusions throughout message content, and presenting inadequate stimuli that stimulate the target audience engagement in the message (Kimmel, 2013).

The receiver assigns meanings to the stimulus information that has been selected and structured as the final phase in the perceptual process. Because perception is subjective, individual interpretations may differ due to various influencing factors mentioned. The context has a substantial impact on how a stimulus is perceived and can help to explain why there are such disparate reactions to the same stimuli from a product or brand. Packages, brands, products,

and advertisements are all perceived concerning other products on the store shelf, print advertisements concerning others, etc. As a result, an individual's view of these things will differ, especially when expectations and other personal qualities are factored in (Kimmel, 2013).

2.3.3 Decision-making

Consumer decision-making represents the third psychological foundation covered by Kimmel. Being subject to irrational and rational forces, the consumer decision-making process can be complex. According to Kimmel, the reason for this complexity is dependent on a variety of factors, including:

> *"The context in which choices are made, the set of options available, the nature and amount of available information, the degree of uncertainty about attribute values, the difficulty of trade-offs involved, and the amount of time available to make a decision*" (2013, p. 113).

All individuals make numerous choices every day, and some choices are more difficult to make than others. Investigating what factors impact the consumer's decision is not easy as it depends on the problem solving being limited or extended. Limited problem solving refers to the customer purchasing the product or service occasionally, while extended problem solving reflects a customer purchasing an unfamiliar, expensive, or infrequently bought product or service or not (Kardes, Cline, & Cronley 2011). Having high levels of familiarity can be further explained by the concept of habitual decision-making, i.e., making a decision based on habit (Kimmel, 2013).

Regardless of the consumer having limited and extended problem-solving modes, they both involve some degree of information search. However, they vary in the amount of effort the consumer pays. The habitual purchases that a customer makes require minimal control, Information search, and planning (Joseph & Alba, 1988). Some customers tend to buy these products out of habit as it requires less effort from the customer, a psychological action that can be further explained as inertia. The concept of inertia also states that the customer may change their mind and switch to another product and change their habit if the purchase of the product requires less effort or is cheaper (Solomon, 2019). Another reason why consumers make relatively effortless decisions can be based on brand loyalty. This entails that the decision

is rather grounded on a strong commitment (i.e., loyalty) than on a regular habitual pattern (Kimmel, 2013).

Another essential aspect that has a significant impact on the decision to be made by the consumer is the socialization process. As stated by Kimmel, consumer socialization can be referred to as:

> "*The process by which children and adolescents acquire skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values that enable them to assume roles and effectively function as consumers in the marketplace*" (2013, p. 82).

It shows that socialization shapes human capabilities and decision-making through time, expressing that the older the individual gets, the more capable they are of forming decision strategies and searching for information. For example, 3-to 7-year-olds orient through decisions expediently, while 11-to 16-year-olds can think more strategically (John, 2008).

In contrast to the type of decision to be made, the consumer can also base their choice on emotions. The forces that drive a consumer to create emotional, non-rational decisions are visceral factors such as addictions, basic motivational drives, and moods. For example, if consumers have a positive attitude, they tend to be more open to different marketing activities such as price, retail setting, and products in general (Lorenzetti, 2002). Social issues are another factor that might influence the consumer. In later years, environmental concerns have come into force, making consumers feel obligated to "go green" by buying more environmentally friendly products. In some cases, consumers may decide not to buy a specific product because they realize that they do not need it and that the socio-economic costs are too high (Kimmel, 2013).

2.3.4 Personality and lifestyle

According to Kimmel, personality can be defined as "*a person's unique psychological make-up and how it consistently influences the way the person responds to his or her environment*" (2013, p. 183). Even though many individuals share the same traits, none of them share the same set of personality characteristics, which makes every individual unique. By investigating different personality characteristics, the marketer may explore how it impacts the consumer buying behavior as it is consistent with how an individual responds to different situations, products, or brands (Kimmel, 2013).

To study the impact that personality has on consumers' buying behavior, many marketers use the trait approach. The trait approach focuses on different consumer-related personality traits, as described in Figure 2. For example, materialistic consumers believe that happiness can be found through the goods consumed; hence, they believe that goods are essential to their lives. This is compared to the non-materialistic consumers who do not purchase as many goods as they value and experience more (Kimmel, 2013).

Trait	*Description (and sample scale item)*
Consumer innovativeness	Receptiveness to new products, experiences, and ideas ("I am continually seeking new product experiences.")
Materialism	Importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions ("It is important to me to have really nice things.")
Consumer ethnocentrism	Consumer beliefs about the appropriateness of purchasing foreign-made products ("Foreigners should not be allowed to put their products on our markets.")
Need for uniqueness	The personal goal to acquire and possess consumer goods services, and experiences that few others possess ("I enjoy having things that others do not.")
Coupon proneness	Tendency to purchase a product if the offer includes a coupon ("I enjoy using coupons, regardless of the amount I save by doing so.")
Value consciousness	Concern for the price paid relative to the need-satisfying qualities of the product ("I always check prices at the grocery store to be sure I get the best value for the money I spend.")
Need for cognition	Tendency for individuals to engage in and enjoy thinking ("I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with solutions to problems.")
Attention to social comparison information	Extent to which one is aware of the reactions of others to one's behavior and is concerned about or sensitive to the nature of those reactions ("I try to pay attention to the reactions of others to my behavior in order to avoid being out of place.")

Figure 2. Consumer-related personality traits (Kimmel, 2013, p. 189)

According to Kimmel, lifestyle can be defined as:

> "*A pattern of consumption that reflects a person's choices of how to spend time and money, and in that sense can be seen as functioning as an intermediary between who we are (i.e., lifestyle determinants, such as demographics, social class and culture, motives, and past experiences) and how and what we choose to consume*" (2013, p. 195).

Moreover, it can be viewed as the consumers' way of living in the context of their day-to-day activities, opinion, and interest, along with their pattern of consumption. Changes in lifestyle can happen rapidly, so marketers must always be prepared to arrange their strategies according to those changes (Wells & Prensky, 1996).

Besides personality and lifestyle, another important aspect reflecting how consumers behave in the market is the self-concept. This concept concerns who an individual is with others and with themselves, implying to answer the question "who am I?". To answer this question, the individual is required to have the ability to assimilate perceptions of what others think about them and recognize themselves as a distinct entity. The attitudes and beliefs that an individual hold toward themselves may be a complex construct as it is shaped over time. Two selves that tend to conflict the most are the actual and ideal selves. The actual self is referred to as how an individual perceives themselves. Meaning, that if the individual considers themselves kind, effective, social, etc. In comparison, the ideal self reflects the individual's image of how they would like to be perceived by others (Wells & Prensky, 1996).

There are many potential situations within the consumer decision-making process whereby the consumer must choose whether to act according to the ideal or actual self. Factors affecting which self they choose to act upon can be the witnesses to the decision, how visible the decision is, how important the action is to the consumers' self-image, the nature of the product that is to be bought, and the usage situation (Wells & Prensky, 1996). For example, a customer may choose to act according to their actual self when purchasing more functional products such as soap or a mixer. This is in comparison to when they buy a more expensive or social product such as beer or perfume. Here, it is more common for consumers to choose to base their decision on their ideal self, meaning how they would like to be perceived by others (Kardes et al., 2011).

2.3.5 Social behavior

The term WOM is a well-known and important mechanism used to rapidly spread social influence among consumers, especially through the use of technology (Kimmel, 2013). Whyte clearly states that "*consumers are influenced by a variety of other people in their lives—friends, neighbors, relatives, acquaintances, co-workers, non-marketing professionals, and trendsetters*" (1954, p. 216). This type of influence has an impact on the consumer in several ways, such as what products or services to buy, how to use them, where to shop, what brands to prefer, and which ones to avoid. WOM is a powerful strategy that can lead to either success

or failure for an organization and its marketing strategies, as it has a significant impact on consumers' consumption and behavior (Kimmel, 2013).

The foundation that builds up the importance of WOM and opinion leadership is trust and authority. Consumers are more likely to utilize a brand that a former user has suggested, and they place more trust in product endorsements from friends and acquaintances than in commercial advertising (Rusticus, 2006). The process of being influenced by friends, family, and other acquaintances and modifying actions according to their suggestions can be referred to as a social influence (Mcleod, 2021). WOM and opinion leaders are two major key concepts affecting social influence and its impact on consumer behavior. An opinion leader is an individual or former user that has the ability to influence and impact the opinion of others (Bamakan, Nurgaliev & Qu, 2019). They influence others as they share information or guidance regarding a specific product or brand. When a consumer lacks information or if they have a hard time making a decision, the input of an opinion leader can be a balancing factor for the consumer as they can be used as a credible source (Kimmel, 2013).

Some people have a desire to attain status by appearing to be informed or expert in front of their peers, as well as an altruistic disposition to help others, which are some of the underlying desires that lead a person to brag about a product or service. This explains why some people are more likely to express their opinions. However, social pressures may lead communicators to make recommendations based on what they believe others should do and what they want others to do, and what is done (East, Singh, Vanhuele & Wright, 2008).

A reference group is a specific group that influences the consumer's buying behavior in one way or another, which creates an opportunity for social connection and motivation for the self. Moreover, a reference group could either be formal or informal, for example, a membership, brand community, shopping group, or friend group. Further explained as a group of individuals to whom an individual relates and aspires on a psychological level. Thus, individuals use reference groups as a frame of reference and a source for organizing experiences, perceptions, cognition, and self-concepts themselves. It is crucial in determining an individual's self, attitudes, values, and social connections (Kimmel, 2013).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

To illustrate the expected outcomes of this study, Figure 3 represents an illustration of a conceptual framework created by the authors. The framework combines the psychological foundations essential to marketing and how they influence and fit into the cognitive decision-making process.

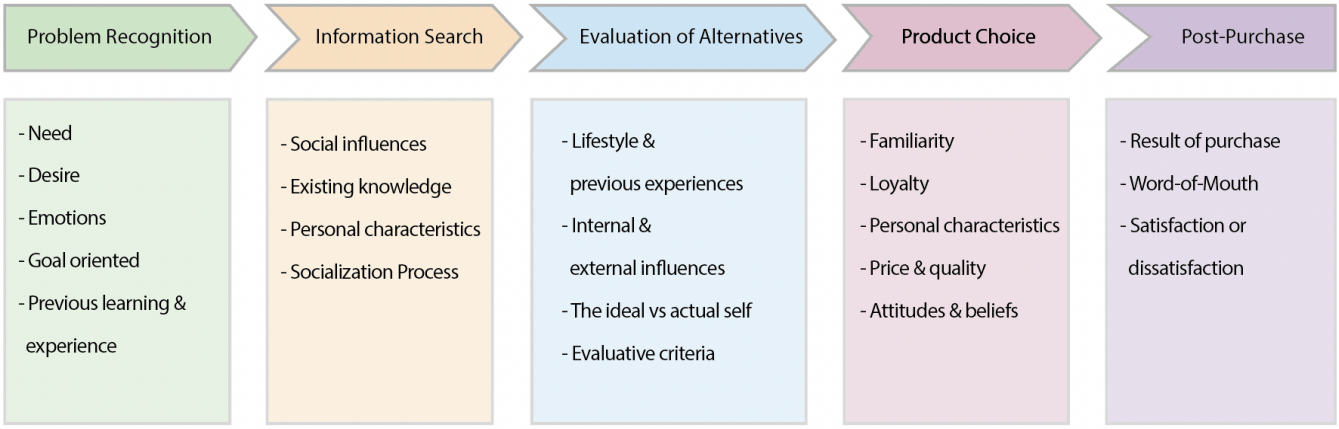

Figure 3. Illustration of Conceptual Framework

3. Method

The following section provides an overview of the study's research process, including the research approach, research paradigm, data collection, and data analysis. Moreover, ethical concerns and other methodological critiques are covered.

3.1 Research Approach

To explore the psychological factors that have an impact on consumer behavior, this study is conducted from a managerial perspective. Furthermore, it provides answers to the research questions using a qualitative research design. Compared to quantitative research, which is more appropriate when handling numbers and statistics, a qualitative method aims to explore a specific topic or experience through words and meaning (Streefkerk, 2022). Hence, the authors found a qualitative approach more applicable as it provided a more detailed description of human behavior when studying a real-world context (Geertz, 1973). The qualitative research design is further supported by the use of a deductive approach where existing academic literature is examined to provide a conclusion (Soiferman, 2010).

3.2 Research Paradigm

The chosen philosophy for this research is the interpretivism paradigm, which is a naturalistic and humanistic approach to data collection. Primary empirical data such as interviews and peer-reviewed journals and articles are common within this philosophy as interpretivism does not prefer using methods that offer objective or precise information. Further, the interpretivism philosophy may utilize several methods and focus on meaning to reflect the issue. The philosophy is helpful in getting insight and a deeper understanding of the particular information (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2019). Hence, the researchers argue that this paradigm is the most suitable for this study.

3.3 Data Collection

To uncover the psychological factors impacting consumer buying behavior, primary data, namely focus groups, and peer-reviewed articles, have been conducted and used. Empirical primary data refers to real-time data that the authors themselves have generated. It can be surveys, observations, in-depth interviews, or focus groups. In addition, primary data includes academic literature, such as peer-reviewed articles and journals, websites, and physical and electronic books. The authors collected the primary data through a literature research method

and semi-structured focus group interviews for this study. According to Lazar, Feng & Hochheiser (2017), a focus group involves a smaller group of participants who all explore a specific topic through discussions. Some researchers suggest that an ideal number of participants is between eight and twelve people. Thus, others suggest that four to seven people are ideal for conducting a more in-depth discussion (Lazar et al., 2017). There are many reasons why focus groups are used for this study. First off, they bring out more information than a one-to-one interview, creating more discussions. Moreover, using a focus group is less expensive than interviews in terms of time and cost (Wagh, 2022). For this study, three focus groups have been held, and they were formed as follows:

Focus group 1: Held March 21st, at 6-8 PM, including four participants

Focus group 2: Held March 27th, at 6-8 PM, inducing four participants

Focus group 3: Held April 5th, at 6-8 PM, including four participants

3.3.1 Sampling Approach

When identifying participants for each focus group, the researchers had to select a sample. A sample can be defined as a group of people that will be used to collect data for a study, and will be a good representation of the entire population. There are different techniques for identifying a sample, normally separated into non-probability and probability sampling. In contrast to the probability sampling technique, where the participants are chosen at random, the non-probability approach is more commonly used for focus groups as each individual is selected based on a specific purpose or goal. This technique can be further defined as purposive sampling (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016).

As this research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychological factors impacting consumer buying behavior, it was of high relevance to use purposive sampling as it creates the most rewarding discussions (Saunders et al., 2016). If the authors had chosen a probability sampling technique, where the participants had been chosen at random, it would not have served the desired purpose of the study. This is because the researchers had to select participants that had some relationship with make-up, were in the appropriate age range, and were females.

All chosen participants were females, ranging from the ages of 18 to 25, and they were selected as they were considered a good fit for the purpose of the study. Further, they represented

different viewpoints in terms of occupation, economic stability, interest, and knowledge. The reason why the researchers chose participants that differed in terms of these aspects lies in the fact that they wanted to gain more discussion and debates. The researchers found the participants by asking mutual acquaintances if they knew any appropriate candidates for the study. Once identified, the researchers received their contact information to reach out to the individuals via email, social media, or text message.

The table below provides a presentation of the respondents from all three focus groups, ranging from 1 to 12. In addition, their age and occupation, along with the date of the focus group, are presented.

	Age	**Occupation**	**Date of focus group**
Participant 1	22	Working	21/3-22
Participant 2	18	Student	21/3-22
Participant 3	22	Working	21/3-22
Participant 4	19	Student	21/3-22
Participant 5	24	Student	27/3-22
Participant 6	21	Student	27/3-22
Participant 7	25	Working	27/3-22
Participant 8	20	Working	27/3-22
Participant 9	25	Working	5/4-22
Participant 10	21	Working	5/4-22
Participant 11	24	Student	5/4-22

Participant 12	19	Student	5/4-22

3.3.2 Focus Group Interviews

When the participants had been selected using a purposive sampling technique, the researchers arrived at a series of open-ended questions that were derived prior to the focus groups. The questions were based on the theories, concepts and conceptual framework used in the study. All three focus groups were conducted in person, in a closed and supportive environment where no disturbance was possible. Conducting the focus groups in person allowed the researchers to observe and guide the participants more productively as they established a greater trust. Focus groups 1 and 2 were held at the end of March at an office called Werket in Ulricehamn, Sweden. The office was modernly decorated in earthy tones, providing a sense of warmth and safety for all participants. Focus group 3 was held in a group room at Jönköping International Business School at the beginning of April. The reason why there were different locations during the focus groups was based on where the participants could be present. All participants were given Swedish Fika in the form of carrot cake, cinnamon buns, and coffee. This gesture had two purposes; it allowed the authors to express their gratitude to the participants for taking the time to participate in the study, and it created a friendly atmosphere.

Before starting the discussion, the researchers gave a brief explanation of the study's objective and the topic that will be discussed. Further, they stressed the importance of not disclosing any information considered too personal and expressed their interest in the participants' opinions. All three focus groups were held in Swedish and lasted for approximately 1,5 hours. When the focus groups took place, all three researchers had different main responsibilities. As the data had to be analyzed, later on, one of the researchers had the responsibility of recording and dictating each discussion. The recording was done using the telephone app “voice memo,” which recorded all three discussions from beginning to end. To decrease the workload for the data analysis and transcription, Microsoft Word dictation was used. By using the computer's built-in microphone, the dictation was useful for the researchers as it translated what the participants said by creating drafts, outlines, and notes into a word document (Microsoft Support, n.d.).

The second researcher was responsible for taking notes and keeping track of time. Notes were taken to spot any necessary facial expressions or emotions and to act as a backup if there were

to be any disturbance in regards to the recording or dictation. The third researcher was acting as the main moderator, asking questions and guiding the conversation. Further, this researcher reassured that all participants were given the same opportunity to express their views. After each question was asked, the participants had the opportunity to respond individually. Here, room was given to create a discussion, and the researchers observed the ongoing conversation that was successfully conducted in each focus group. In cases where, for example, one respondent came with insightful answers that could be further developed, the researchers spanned on and asked further questions to get a more in-depth response. It was evident when the discussion of a particular question had been finalized, and the researcher could thereby proceed to ask a new question to the participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

When all three focus groups had been derived, the data had to be analyzed. As the design for this research is qualitative, no statistical procedures were needed. Instead, the researchers collected the participants' insights and opinions using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is useful for qualitative research as it explores different interpretations of a phenomenon through identifying themes and categories within a data set (Saunders et al., 2016).

As mentioned, the data for this study was collected through the use of focus groups, where the discussions were recorded and dictated. First, the researchers began to familiarize themselves with the data by reading the dictations and re-listening to the recordings. After that, the researcher began to transcribe, analyze and code the data. According to Soanes & Stevenson, a transcript is a *"written or printed version of material originally presented in another medium"* (2005, p. 187). In conjunction with the transcribing, (color) coding was done to organize and group similar data within the transcript. Organizing the data in this way, made it easier for the researchers to perform a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis, or thematization, involves categorizing specific perceptions and opinions of the participants that the researchers see as relevant to answering the research questions (DeCarlo, 2018). From this, the researchers could identify the major themes arising from the discussion in accordance with the conceptual framework. When the three themes had been identified, supplementary categories were derived from each theme. Since it provides a more detailed explanation of the broader identified themes.

This technique helped the researchers to make sense of all data gathered by identifying patterns and relations and drawing a meaningful comparison and parallels between the empirical data

and the existing literature and theoretical frameworks (DeCarlo, 2018). This type of data analysis has recently been described by Braun & Clarke as a *"distinctive method with a clearly outlined set of procedures in social science"* (2013, p. 178), and is highly relevant in qualitative research.

3.5 Validity

When defining the quality of the research, it is of high importance that the authors consider that the data is validated and consistent. In essence, validity refers to the accuracy of the results, how well the results correspond to the theories and measures, and if the measurements are generally reliable (Saunders et al., 2016). For a qualitative study to be considered valid, certain criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, must be met (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Whether the research can be considered credible or not reflects how trustworthy the participants are. Hence, the credibility of this study is entirely dependent on the participants as the purpose of this research is to explore a phenomenon that is retrieved from their perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The authors gathered a significant amount of knowledge regarding psychological factors impacting consumer buying behavior prior to the focus groups to ensure credibility. This is to be prepared and be able to determine the credibility and valueness of the participants' answers to each question. Further, the researcher accounted for personal biases that might have influenced the findings, such as emotions and moods (Noble & Smith, 2015).

The second criterion, transferability, *"is concerned with whether the findings can be applied to another situation that is sufficiently similar to permit generalization"* (Collins & Hussey, 2014, p.172). Meaning, if the content of this study is credible enough to be transferred to other contexts or settings. Using small samples for a study such as this one, where a specific phenomenon is contextualized, makes it almost impossible to transfer content applicable in all settings (Shenton, 2004). However, the authors described the context and assumptions of the research to enhance this criterion to the greatest extent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Whether the research process is rigorous, well-documented, and systems can be evaluated through dependability criteria (Collins & Hussey, 2014). The researchers have stressed the importance of considering that inconsistencies can arise during the data collection and coding process to enhance this criterion. Hence, the researchers ensured to increase the level of reliability through the use of triangulation (DeCarlo, 2018). According to Collins & Hussey,

triangulation can be defined as *"the use of multiple sources of data, different research methods and/or more than one researcher to investigate the same phenomena in a study"* (2014, p. 344). Hence, the researchers used multiple sources, including the focus groups and other peer-reviewed sources, to support the conclusion. Further, all three researchers helped thematize and code the same data set. By coding the same data set, one researcher might have discovered something that another one missed out on, which ensured the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research (DeCarlo, 2018).

Confirmability is the fourth and final criterion that must be met for the research to be considered valid. Collins & Hussey refers to confirmability as *"whether the research process has been described fully and it is possible to assess whether the findings flow from the data"* (2014, p. 172). The researchers used two strategies to enhance the confirmability of the study. First, procedures, including checking and rechecking the data, were documented. Secondly, data auditing was conducted in which the authors evaluated the performance of the data and addressed any issues that had been defined (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.6 Limitations

When collecting data for the underlying motives that cause the participants to behave in certain ways, there are some limitations to consider. Collins & Hussey define a limitation as *"a weakness or deficiency in the research"* (2014, p. 110). The researchers had to acknowledge that the participants' motives are usually linked to their unconscious needs to identify and reduce any potential deficiencies. Hence, their motives might not be accessible to them as they may be unaware of the actual needs that drive their purchasing decisions and actions. One reason for this could be that the participants have convinced themselves that more socially acceptable factors are influencing them or because they do not want to confront the truth (Kimmel, 2013). Hence, the participants might provide incorrect responses as they want to "fit in" with the other participants (Hoffman, 2015). As previously mentioned, the authors wanted to establish trust by conducting the focus groups in person. Doing this can make the participants feel safe, making them more comfortable and more likely to express their real thoughts (Saunders et al., 2016).

Another limitation that had to be considered during the focus groups was the impact of emotions. If the participant were under emotional strain, it might have impacted the interpretation of their motives, changing the pattern of their responses. For example, more negative emotions such as pressure, stress, distraction, or discomfort might hijack their

responses as it strains their motivation to answer the questions asked by the moderators. Participants' emotions are not considered something the researchers can easily control (Hoffman, 2015). Thus, the researchers tried to decrease any pressure or stress that might arise during the discussion. This was done by giving the participants time to think and not forcing any answers.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

During the process of this study, ethical concerns emerged as the researchers were seeking access to individuals through focus groups to collect, analyze, manage and conclude data. In relation to the participants and others who have become the subject of this study, ethics concerns the standards of behavior that guide the conduct concerning those subjects. (Saunders et al., 2016). Several ethical dilemmas can occur during a research process. According to Collins & Hussey (2014), the main difficulties are concerned with voluntary participation, along with anonymity and confidentiality.

Since focus groups invariably involve the exchange of information among participants, the majority of ethical difficulties arise from interpersonal connections. Hence, anonymity and confidentiality should be offered to all participants taking part in a study. Prior to focus groups, the participants were informed of the purpose, benefits, risks, and the way the data was to be handled. Further, they were told that the data collected would be hidden from the public as the researchers anonymized anything that could identify or link them to other data, including their names and different personal opinions (Collins & Hussey, 2014).

Voluntary participation considers the importance of not forcing any participants to take part in the study. To address this dilemma, the participants were informed that they were free to opt-out or in at any point of time during the discussions and that they were allowed to offer information freely without any coercion or disturbance (Collins & Hussey, 2014). As the researchers began to communicate and draw results from the focus groups, the objective was to make the conclusions transparent and ethical. That is, avoiding research misconduct and plagiarism. Bhandari (2021) noted that research misconduct occurs as the data is made up or false, whereas plagiarism refers to submitting others' work as your own.

4. Findings and Analysis

The following chapter presents the findings based on the data collected through the focus groups. To investigate how these findings correlate to the theoretical frameworks, the authors will provide an analysis where both frameworks together with the conceptual model will be combined, to answer the two research questions. Kimmel's theories have provided an understanding of the psychological foundations essential to marketing, whereas the cognitive decision-making process has provided an interpretation of how consumers behave in the market. The main themes identified for this research are influences, changes in lifestyle and personality, and preferences. Through these themes, several categories have been derived. The authors have acknowledged the fact that the process can be seen as continuous, where each step interacts with one another. It is thus not as linear as it may be seen in literature, and underlying psychological factors may have an impact on several steps of the process.

4.1. Influences

The first central theme identified through the focus groups is influences. Through the discussions with each focus group, a common topic has been that the participants are influenced by different factors while making decisions. The categories defined to be the most influential are related to external and internal factors. Here, the researchers have acknowledged that social media, interest, trends, WOM, and other internal motivational drivers are the major factors impacting the participant's decision-making process. Both categories are further discussed and substantiated with quotes below.

4.1.1. External Influences

External influences were considered the most recurring category identified during the three focus groups. Several participants stated that social media channels such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube were the most significant external motivators when it comes to making decisions as it grants them inspiration, interest, and knowledge regarding the make-up industry. In addition, it was found that participants are influenced by other external factors such as trends, opinion leaders, and WOM.

Through the discussions, it was evident that the psychological aspect of motivation had a significant impact on the participant. As previously mentioned by Kimmel (2013), motivation concerns why people behave as they do, which is dependent on different desires and needs. The researchers noted that a desire is more likely to arise due to the easy accessibility of social

media. When scrolling through various social media platforms such as TikTok or Instagram, the consumer might see an opinion leader, which, according to Bamakan et al. (2019), is an individual who can influence and impact the opinion of others. Based on the answers retrieved from the focus groups, it became clear that an opinion leader, in this case, was an influencer who recommended a product on their social media channels. This created a desire for the consumer to purchase that product, as they recognized an opportunity, moving their ideal state upward. This action can be further related to the first step of the cognitive decision-making process, namely problem recognition (Bruner & Pomazal, 1988). The tendency to be influenced by social media was identified by participants 4 and 5, who purchased products as they saw a social media influencer promoting them on TikTok and Instagram. This awakened a desire for the participants to buy those products.

Participant 4 stated that:

> *”I think that I mainly get influenced by social media influencers, both on YouTube, but also on TikTok and Instagram. The latest foundation I bought was one that was trending on TikTok that everyone tried. However, as no one in my closest circle of friends is interested in make-up, I always tend to research the product online before buying it.”*

Participant 5 added:

> *"I bought Caia's glow primer about two months ago. I bought it because I saw that someone was testing and promoting it on TikTok. I guess it is mainly through social media channels such as YouTube and Instagram that you become interested in buying certain products.”*

Regardless of whether the consumer has a need or desire for the intended purchase, there is always an ultimate goal to achieve. This study showed that most customers buy a product out of desire and not necessarily because they need that product. Further, it was noted that social media does not only create a desire, but it is also useful when the participant wishes to search for information. Obtaining information through social media can be further related to the concept of external information search, which entails that the consumer receives information from other sources such as social media and other advertisements (Solomon, 2019).

Even though some of the participants highlighted that they feel inspired and motivated to purchase a product due to social media influencers, all participants do not agree that they are

credible sources of information. The participants' response to an influencer and their promotions may be influenced by personal experiences and opinions.

Participant 12 mentioned:

> *"I think one should be quite critical when an influencer reviews a product that has been released. Because regardless, they will say that the product is 'the best' because they get paid and put so much time and effort into promoting it."*

Participant 10 filled in by stating:

> *"I also get influenced to buy new make-up by influencers since they are very powerful today regarding marketing. However, they are not always trustworthy since they get paid, and all skin types are different, a product can look flawless on another person but maybe not on myself. Nonetheless, this has not stopped me from buying promoted products."*

This notion can be further related to the concept of perception and perceptual defense, which according to Kimmel (2013), indicates that the general customer might "screen out" the fact that the influencer gets paid for promoting a particular product, buying the product anyway. This is because the customer considers the influencer an opinion leader, i.e., someone the customer perceives to be a credible source of information.

An influencer is not the only opinion leader that impacts the consumers' buying behavior. While discussing social media and influencers, it became clear that most participants were more likely to utilize a brand suggested by friends, family, and other acquaintances than social media. This tendency is acknowledged by Kimmel (2013), as he stated that consumers are more likely to place trust in product endorsements from friends and acquaintances than in commercial advertising. This indicates that opinion leadership and WOM are two major key concepts affecting consumer buying behavior. Participant 11 confirms this by explaining:

> *"My biggest influence and the people I trust when it comes to make-up are my close friends, and my family, whom I know have an interest in make-up. It feels like their opinions are more personal and genuine compared to influencers that got paid for recommending a specific product or other commercial advertisements."*

Friends, family, and other acquaintances do not only impact the participants as they create an interest and desire and further enable information search. Customers may also buy a specific

product that a friend has suggested as they have a desire to fit in. This can be further related to social behavior and reference groups, which according to Kimmel (2013), are a specific group that creates an opportunity for social connection and motivation. The discussion made it clear that the participants wanted to fit in, in a friend or shopping group and thus buy similar products. Participant 9, who works in a make-up store, concluded:

> *"When observing customers in the store, there are different types of customers, some of them do not have any knowledge about make-up and want advice, others are following a habitual behavior buying the same products, some purchase the same products as their friends to fit in, while the major customers are young women and have seen a product on social media, most likely on Tiktok."*

This indicates that consumers are not only influenced by social media, friends, and family but also by other internal factors such as existing knowledge and habits. The internal influences are further discussed in section 4.1.2.

Another external influence impacting consumer buying behavior is reviews, which according to Hagander & Runarsdottir (2016), can appear in the form of comments, likes, or videos. Depending on the type of review and the individual or company providing it, the participants are more or less entitled to hold trust in that review. Participant 6 highlighted her experience with reviews by stating:

> *"I buy most of my make-up online. Hence, I tend to google a lot and read many reviews before deciding on what product I wish to purchase. I love to scroll through different websites and read about make-up. However, I would never give a review online myself as I do not have the energy or the intention to brag or to influence others' decisions."*

Participant 9 filled in by explaining that:

> *"I never write reviews online. However, I give reviews by talking to my customers, friends, and family. I believe that word of mouth is the best and strongest type of marketing but could both have a positive and negative impact. Most of the reviews have been negative as I believe it is more important to let the company and consumers know when the product is bad or what is bad about it. Especially if the product is costly."*

This indicates that the participants are more likely to read online reviews rather than post reviews themselves. If spreading their opinions, there is a greater possibility that they will do it offline, to friends and family through WOM. East et al. (2008) indicated that people desire to spread reviews as they want to attain status by appearing to be informed or expert in front of their peers. Further, recent research has shown that customers are more inclined to write negative reviews than positive ones (National Strategic, 2018). However, this study contradicts this, indicating that the participants spread their opinions due to other reasons. The vast majority of customers engage in reviews and WOM intending to spread positive or constructive recommendations regarding the product.

Another external influence that significantly impacts consumers' purchasing process is trends. Whyte (1954) noted that trendsetters are one of the most influential sources affecting what products the customers' purchase, how they buy them, where they shop, what brands to prefer, and which ones to avoid. Trends and trendsetters are factors that impact the psychological foundation that Kimmel (2013) describes as social behavior. Participant 1 explains the impact of trends as she stated:

> *"Since I am very interested in make-up in general, it happens very often that I try out new trends. Even though it is easy for people to use the same products as they always do, they will never know if there are even better products out there if they never try something new. Trends become trends for the reason that the product is probably good."*

Participant 2 agreed with participant 1, adding that:

> *"I think trends are something that has changed over time. Take blush, for example. Five years ago, you thought to yourself, 'who uses blush?' but now that it has become a trend, everyone has it, including me. I guess it is because I want to fit in and have what others are using."*

4.1.2. Internal Influences

The second category identified by the researchers is the internal influences that impact the participants' cognitive decision-making process. Here, personality and lifestyle, existing knowledge, and interest have been stated as the most influential as they affect how the participants respond to products, brands, or situations.

Kimmel (2013) explains that lifestyle reflects an individual's choice of how to spend time and money and can be seen as functioning as an intermediary between who we are. Further, lifestyle indicates that consumers differ in the context of their day-to-day activities, opinions, and interests. During the discussions, it was evident that the participants differed in terms of the relationship they have to make-up. Thus, so does the problem recognition and frequency of purchase. For example, participant 5 defined her relationship:

> *"My biggest motivation when it comes to make-up is my interest. I have always been very interested in buying new make-up since I have watched hundreds of make-up videos on YouTube since I was young."*

In contrast, participant 10 explained:

> "*Right now, due to Covid-19, I have to study from home. Hence, I only do my make-up on the weekend when I have something planned. Because of that, I do not buy make-up very often. Only when the product is empty, and I need a new one."*

The latter quote exemplifies a rapid and unexpected change in lifestyle (Covid-19) that affects the individual's make-up consumption. Marketers and companies need to be prepared for those changes to adapt their strategies to the environment (Wells & Prensky, 1996).

As previously mentioned, all consumers differ in terms of their day-to-day activities. For example, Participant 8 does her make-up every day and does not have much spare time. This indicates that when there is a lack of time and interest, the purchase tends to be based on a habitual pattern, as the need is mainly related to the reinforcement of a purchase (Kimmel, 2013). Reinforcing a purchase runs by Maslow's motivational assumption, stating the customers may purchase the same products from the same brand due to safety reasons, meeting a secondary need (Maslow, 1943). This tendency was explained by the participant:

> *"I do my make-up every day as I go to the office and I do a lot of activities on the weekends as well. Therefore, my make-up products tend to run out quickly, so I have to buy new stuff frequently. Since I am swamped, I do not have the time, interest, or energy to look for new products. I always buy the same stuff."*

Furthermore, when discussing the main goal behind the participants' purchase of make-up, it was evident that the majority purchase and use it for themselves and their self-confidence. It was found that all participants' desired outcome is to achieve satisfaction and pleasure, which

according to Kimmel (2013), can be seen as a "positively valent" goal. For example, participant 7 stated:

> *"I purchase and use make-up to look more awake and fresh. Hence, I would say that the reason for my purchases lies in that I want to look better and boost my self-esteem."*

Satisfaction and pleasure can be further connected to the self-concept, reflecting an individual's attitudes and beliefs toward themselves. This concept is relevant to consider when reflecting upon consumer buying behavior. The results retrieved from the focus groups showed that the majority of participants intended to strive for their ideal selves, reflecting how they want to be perceived by others (Wells & Prensky 1996). All participants argued that make-up made them appear in their best manner. Hence, they not only purchase make-up to strive for their ideal self but also to boost their self-esteem and reach their internal needs, such as self-actualization. This behavioral pattern can be further connected to Maslow's hierarchy of needs as achievement, status, and self-actualization are motivational drivers to meet an individual's ideal self (Kimmel, 2013).

Participant 11 strengthened the tendency explained by stating:

> *"I use make-up to achieve a purpose for myself, and I do not care too much about what others think. I would say the purpose is more for my self-esteem and less about status and other people's opinions."*

Personality is another internal influence having a significant impact on consumer buying behavior. Kimmel (2013) noted that even though many individuals share the same traits, none of them share the same set of personality characteristics, which makes every individual unique. Thus, individuals' different personality traits impacted their evaluation of alternatives and product choices. Participant 7 indicated that it is important for her to have unique luxury make-up products that grant her happiness and status. This can be further connected to the two personality traits; consumer innovativeness and materialism, where the need for uniqueness and ownership of worthy possessions are recognized (Kimmel, 2013).

The participant explained this by saying:

"The reason I am buying more expensive and luxury make-up from Chanel or Dior is because I like to have nice things that provide some kind of status. I also feel more unique, as I feel like people do not buy from these brands as much."

Moreover, during the discussions, it was evident that the majority of participants were impacted by emotions when making decisions. Lorenzetti (2002) found that if individuals are in a positive mood, they tend to be more open to different marketing activities and to try out new products in general. This tendency was confirmed by participant 5, who stated:

"What product or brand I buy depends a little bit on the mood I am in. If I am in a bad mood, I can be less motivated to search for new information and try new products, I might just choose to buy the same mascara as I always do. But if I am in a positive mood, I am more likely to try out a new mascara."

When a consumer searches for information internally, Solomon (2019) indicates that the individual uses existing and previous knowledge to form a decision. This indication was strengthened during the discussions as the majority of participants explained that they started to purchase make-up from the same brand as their mothers at an early age. This tendency generally arises due to the trust that the participants placed in their mothers. Thus, it provided some existing knowledge about the brand (Rusticus, 2006). Participant 11 highlighted this by explaining:

"I believe that my mother influenced me when I was younger. She was, in some way, an opinion leader for me. When I started to use make-up, I bought the same products and brands as my mother. Today I like to try out new make-up, but sometimes I fall back and buy the same brand I did when I was a child. For example, I bought the same mascara from Isadora in sixth grade."

Participant 10 agreed with participant 11:

"I am also more likely to fall back on old products from my childhood that I know I like because I am too lazy to try out new products, and I do not want to be disappointed and waste money on products I do not like."

4.2. Changes in personality and lifestyle

The second theme identified was the changes participants had experienced in their lifestyle and personality, ultimately impacting their buying behavior. During the discussions, the

participants were asked whether their behavior and interest in make-up had changed since they first began using it and the most prominent reasons why it had or had not changed. Questions regarding effort, time, and money were asked to obtain an understanding of the underlying changes.

Through the focus groups, it was evident that the majority of participants had seen changes in their buying behavior during the past years. The changes identified can be further connected to the consumer socialization process by Kimmel (2013), expressing that the older the individual gets, the more capable they are of searching for information and forming decisions. Participant 2 stated:

> *”Now I look for more information and I think longer about my purchases, probably because I am older and wiser.”*

Participant 6 agreed with participant 2 as she stated:

> *“When I started using make-up at age 15, I did not really think about what I bought, how much I bought, or what it cost. I just bought what everyone else had. But nowadays, I am more considerate and do not buy many unnecessary things.”*

Hence, as the consumers get older, they are more capable of making more thorough decisions with higher involvement. Thus, searching for more information before deciding on the purchase. Reasons for this might be that the brain is more developed than earlier or that the consumer has learned from previous experiences or cognitive processes. Not only did the participants feel as if their age reflected their decision pattern, but they also indicated that the change in interest and responsibilities reflected their behavior and priorities (Kimmel, 2013).

Depending on lifestyle changes, the participants' needs or wants serve them a specific goal, which is most likely influenced by personal and social factors. As a result from the focus groups, it was stated that the motivation and interest had either increased or decreased depending on the changes in lifestyle. This can further be aligned with the Model of the motivational process created by Kimmel (2013).

Participant 1 explained:

> *”My journey with make-up started in eighth grade. I sat for hours looking at videos on YouTube, and at that time, I had the time to sit on evenings and weekends to*

look at them. Now when I do not have the same amount of time, my interest has decreased, and I do not purchase or look as much."

Participant 1 elaborated on this matter, explaining:

"I would say that previously I bought make-up that was trending or if there was something new on the market I wanted to try. Nowadays, it is more out of necessity when something runs out, so I must refill."

Participant 7 explained how a change in her lifestyle has affected how she wishes to be perceived by others, stating:

"Nowadays I value more high-end branded and expensive make-up than before. Probably because I believe that my appearance is more important for my new job."

Thus, this entails that lifestyle changes have an impact on how an individual responds to the environment as they might feel obligated to align their buying behavior according to that change. Here, the self-image and ideal self matter since it refers to how important a specific purchase can be for a consumer's self-image (Wells & Prensky, 1996). Moreover, the researchers found that age and amount of discretionary income also impacted the evaluation of alternatives and product choices. In line with the socialization process, the participants had become more considerate in terms of quality and price. This is a common tendency that can be connected to the personality trait called value consciousness. Since, most participants stated that they wish to receive the best possible quality for the price paid for a product (Kimmel, 2013). This is in line with participant 8, who mentioned:

"I would say that I spend more money on fewer products nowadays compared to when I was younger. It feels more worthwhile to spend more money on products that I like and that I know suits me."

In contrast to participant 8, some participants stated the opposite. As their income had increased, the opportunity to try more new products and spend more money on make-up increased. Epp & Price (2008) indicated that when individuals are starting to get a higher discretionary income, they tend to spend more money on products that provide them with joy and satisfaction. This was further acknowledged by participant 10, as she stated:

"Income plays a large role, today I have more money to spend on new make-up compared to when I was in High School. When I was younger and looking for new

make-up, the crucial factor was the price, which is not the actual case today. Now I am buying make-up because it gives me satisfaction."

Further, participant 6 highlights the fact that as the technology has become more developed, and that the daily social media usage has increased, people have more knowledge regarding make-up, and it is more easily accessible to search for information. Since the knowledge is greater today, consumers are also more likely to pay more focus on being efficient when searching for information (Gobb & Hoyer, 2006). Thus, digitalization has affected the participants as they have more knowledge about make-up, and are more inclined to be influenced by others, especially through social media. Participant 6 stated:

"Nowadays, it feels like you are constantly fed by information regarding new make-up trends through different social media channels, such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. When we were younger, it was not the same thing as social media, and technology, in general, was not as developed today. So it feels like people in general, thanks to this development, have more knowledge about make-up nowadays."

4.3 Preferences

The third theme identified was preferences, more specifically, factors influencing why the participant chose a particular brand or product. The product choice was acknowledged to be based on several reasons, such as inertia, brand familiarity, brand loyalty, or sustainability. The participants were asked questions related to these factors and how they have impacted their decisions when buying make-up. As stated by Kimmel (2013), the purchase decision is also dependent on if the individual wants to serve their actual or ideal self. Thus, their choice depends on personal characteristics and preferences.

4.3.1. Brand Loyalty and Familiarity

Brand recognition and the perception that the individual has towards the brand are two factors impacting all steps within the cognitive decision-making process. During the discussion, it was clear that all participants had found products or brands that they felt familiar with. In most cases, the participants had been purchasing the identical make-up since they started using it, or had preferences that they constantly returned to. This aligns with what Kimmel states, namely that consumers tend to be comfortable with the familiar (2013). Participant 11 explained:

"Brand recognition is an important factor when evaluating alternatives. I am more likely to buy a new product from a brand that I recognize or have other products from."

Participant 6 agreed by stating:

"When I started using make-up at the age of 15, my mother always used the brand Mac. So it was quite natural that I used the same. Since then, I have been a bit back and forth between different brands, but it often ends up that I return to Mac, as it is a brand that I trust and know works for me."

Being comfortable with the familiar can further be connected to limited problem solving and the concept of habitual decision-making. Most participants tend to purchase the same products occasionally, by habit, as they experience high levels of familiarity. This is because a habitual purchase does not require as much information search or planning compared to a product that is bought occasionally by the participant. Making decisions based on these aspects can be further related to the concept of inertia, explaining that some participants make purchase decisions that require minimal effort (Kimmel, 2013).

Even though most participants were skeptical of social media influencers, the brand Caia was brought up occasionally in all focus groups. The participants hold a lot of trust in Bianca Ingrosso, a famous Swedish profile and founder of the make-up company Caia. Thus, the participants are therefore loyal to her brand. According to Kimmel (2013), brand loyalty is a relatively effortless behavior based on a strong commitment to a product, brand, or person. The behavior was strengthened by participant 2, who explained:

"I have followed Bianca on social media for several years now, and I put a lot of trust in her and her opinions. Therefore, it is a natural choice for me to support her brand."

4.3.2. Product and Brand Characteristics

During the discussion, the researchers acknowledged that different product and brand characteristics, including packaging and price of a product, the environment in-store, the service, and the layout of a web page, can have a considerable impact on consumers' buying behavior. Furthermore, personal characteristics and lifestyles influence the preferences that the participants hold. Depending on individual preferences, consumers make a decision that is best

suitable for themselves. Therefore, the choice might also depend on the correspondence between the consumers' values and beliefs with a particular brand. This indicates that brands that are communicating emotions or values similar to the consumers tend to be more attractive (Kimmel, 2013).

The researchers have identified the most prominent evaluative criteria for the consumers in the given target group through the focus groups. As Solomon (2019) describes, these are judgments that the consumer holds towards brands and products.

For example, participant 7 expressed her opinion:

> *"I prefer to shop in a more luxurious store with different and more expensive brands where the staff are professionals. Mostly because make-up is an intimate luxury product for me, it is a completely different feeling for me to shop from, e.g., Chanel rather than Maybelline, mostly because Channel's packaging is very luxurious and gives me more material happiness. But also because the service and the overall environment in such a store are very good."*

Having a desire to choose highly-priced products with appealing outcomes can be further related to materialism, motivation, and the expectancy-valence theory (Kimmel, 2013). Individuals, such as participant 7, are more likely to purchase a luxury and expensive product due to material happiness and social influences. This, according to Maslow's hierarchy, is a "secondary" psychological need, reflecting the need for achievement, power, and status (Maslow, 1943).

The majority of participants believe that the service and layout of a store or website is an essential evaluative criterion. In cases where there has been dissatisfaction with any of these criteria, it has led to the participants not conducting a purchase. Thus, as Kimmel (2013) states, interaction with a brand or product can be either positive or negative. This will further lead to the subjective meaning of a brand for the consumer, and alterations of that meaning can impact future purchases. Participant 9 stated:

> *"Another important factor when I shop in a store is the environment, structure, and the service. If the service staff is rude and does not pay attention to me, I will most likely leave the store and go to another one or order online."*

Besides service and layout, the price has also been considered one of the participants' most critical evaluative criteria. Participant 5 indicated this by stating:

> *"For me, paying a reasonable price is more important than the brand itself. I always check for discounts before making a purchase. I guess it is because of my lack of interest in make-up and the fact that I am a student, not having enough money to spend on high-end brands such as Chanel or Dior. However, I always consider the quality and appearance of the product as well."*

The tendency to purchase a product if it offers a discount or coupon can be further related to the personality trait called coupon proneness, which is part of the trait approach suggested by Kimmel (2013). Participant 9 disagreed with participant 5, stating that she finds it more valuable to spend more money on a better formula and brand, especially when purchasing more intimate products. As previously mentioned, these consumers can be seen as value-conscious, meaning that they are more interested in getting the most value for the price paid (Kimmel, 2013). The participant said:

> *"What is most important for me is the result the products give. Hence, it is more valuable for me to spend more money and effort on the more intimate products, such as foundation and concealer, and less effort on mascara since I believe the result is more likely the same even if it is a mascara from L'oreal or Dior."*

Even though most participants prefer purchasing make-up at a reasonable price or with high quality, other factors impacting the purchase decision are packaging and branding. For example, a product with appealing packaging from a more expensive brand can be a crucial factor in product choice. Further, most participants consider themselves satisfied with a product even if the packaging is terrible, but the formula is good. The compensation rule can explain this behavior in the evaluation of alternatives, which entails that the product can make up for its shortcomings (Solomon, 2019). This was noted by participant 10 as she stated:

> *"For me, it does not matter if the packaging is not exactly what I want if the formula is really good. I will continue repurchasing it since I do not care what it looks like in my make-up bag or how the applicator works, as long as it suits me."*

Furthermore, regarding the packaging and marketing of the product, it is found that the participants value the aesthetics and how it is perceived. This can be connected to the perception the participants have of a product or brand, and it is most crucial in the first steps of

the cognitive decision-making process, which means that the design of a product can influence both the product recognition, the information search, and the evaluation of alternatives. According to Kimmel (2013), vision, taste, touch, and hearing give consumers meaning to the surrounding environment. Thus, consumers can create a response and sift out what is personally relevant to them. Participant 1 mentioned:

> *"It is the first glimpse of the eye that determines how I perceive a product or brand. If it looks cheap, I might not buy it even though it is from a really good brand, but then again, it is hard to say what a good brand is. I usually think that the more expensive brands are the better ones."*

Finally, the participants were asked whether they preferred to purchase make-up online or in-store. Whether the purchase has been made online or offline depends on how involved the participant is and their preferences and lifestyles. Buying make-up is generally considered a high involvement purchase (Hsu & Lee, 2003) as the consumer desires to touch, feel, and smell the product in person (Kimmel, 2013). This statement is strengthened through the focus groups, as most participants tend to make in-store purchases, which is of high importance to them. This was highlighted by participant 9 as she explained:

> *"I prefer to buy new make-up in store since I am working in a make-up store and also because it is important to support the stores these days. Also, because it is more fun to try out and see the formula and packaging in reality."*

In contrast to participant 9, participant 10 mentioned:

> *"I am more likely to buy make-up online since it is more convenient and I can find better prices. But it also depends on the product I am looking for. I rather purchase base products in the store since I want to try out the color and formula. Sometimes it happens that I try out the products in-store, and then I order it online because it is often cheaper."*

This tendency is explained as showrooming, meaning that a consumer visits the actual store in person, and thereafter the consumers find the same products online and order it for a cheaper price (Johansson, 2017).

4.3.3. Sustainability

When discussing sustainability, all participants were fully aware of the fact that there is an ongoing global issue regarding the environment. The majority of the participants claimed that they generally are environmentally friendly. Even though light has been shed on the critique of the make-up industry and its sustainable efforts (Power, 2021), the participants tend not to be as considerate of sustainable make-up compared to other industries.

Participant 11 explained her knowledge by stating:

> *"I am very unaware of the make-up industry from a sustainability perspective. To be honest, I do not check where the products are produced, if it is cruelty-free or animal tested, I just assume that it is."*

The findings suggest that by "assuming" that all make-up products are cruelty-free or animal tested, the participant's behavior can be related to laziness and less effort-taking. Hence, the pattern of inertia can be considered to impact the decision-making process, as it requires less effort to just "assume" that the product is sustainable and not check that it is (Solomon, 2019). In contrast to participant 11, participant 5 had more knowledge about the area, stating:

> *"Correct me if I am wrong, but does the skincare and make-up industry not have stricter rules and requirements than, for example, the textile industry? If that is the case, you do not have to do the work to 'find' sustainable products yourself. The make-up products have already met the requirements as they cannot be tested on animals, etc."*

Furthermore, participant 9 mentioned:

> *"I am more aware of, and value sustainability more today than a few years ago, mainly because of social media that makes people more aware of the environment, but also today, I tend to shop fewer products with higher quality, since they last longer. Today, it has become more trendy to be vegan, and the make-up companies are also approaching greener alternatives when it comes to make-up."*

As previously mentioned, trends significantly impact the participants since the desire to belong and achieve the fullest potential ideal self is essential for the individual. From the discussions, it was found out that nowadays, it has become more trendy to think and act more "green" compared to a few years ago. This is in line with the fact that natural and cruelty-free make-up

has become increasingly trending (Statista, 2019). The participants are also more likely to purchase fewer products with better quality today, benefiting the environment.

Through the focus groups, it was evident that the participants tended to act defensively, not prioritizing sustainability when it comes to purchasing make-up. Even though the participants were aware of climate changes, they tended to ignore the fact that, for example, shipping and production are a part of it. The behavior identified through the focus groups can be connected to perceptual defense, a concept described by Kimmel (2013), which entails that people tend to screen out too threatening stimuli. It was strengthened by participant 8, who stated:

> *"It seems like people, in general, look less at where make-up is produced or what ingredients it contains compared to, for example, clothes. I honestly do not know why, but it seems like, within the make-up industry, people tend to look the other way and ignore if the process and products are sustainable or not."*

5. Conclusions

To meet the needs and requirements of consumers, it is crucial to understand the psychological factors that impact their buying behavior. To answer the research questions of this study, a conceptual framework was developed to combine the psychological foundations essential to marketing and the cognitive decision-making process. From the data collection and analysis, three major themes were identified to impact consumer buying behavior; influences, changes in personality and lifestyle, and preferences. The authors have determined that social media, WOM, lifestyle, and personal preferences and characteristics are recurring factors based on these themes. It is determined that the cognitive decision-making process is a more complex and continuous process than the rather linear path derived from literature.

When exploring the first step in which the consumer recognizes a problem or an opportunity, it is clear that their behavior is mainly driven by motivation. The motivational process is considered to induce the consumer to behave in a certain way and is reflected upon a specific need or desire that the consumer has. Generally, when the purchase is based on a need, it tends to be habitual. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that social media can create both a desire and function as guidance while searching for information. Consumers can gain inspiration and information from different social media channels through opinion leaders and the perception of content posted.

It is found that WOM impacts all steps in the cognitive decision-making process. Primarily, family and friends guide the consumer in information and evaluation because they are personally trusted. In contrast, consumers tend not to trust those influencers and opinion leaders that receive monetary compensation to promote products. Depending on the individual, reviews have more or less impact on the consumer's post-purchase behavior and evaluation of alternatives. However, even though many customers do not write their own online reviews, they are highly appreciated in the process of information search and evaluation of alternatives.

Further, all consumers differ in terms of personality characteristics and way of living in the context of their day-to-day activities, opinions, interest, preferences, and patterns of consumption. When searching for information and evaluating the alternatives, it has been clear that the socialization process, interest, and existing knowledge, significantly impact consumer buying behavior. The older a consumer is, the more they seem to search for information and value the quality of the product. As all consumers have different personalities and lifestyles, they also differ in terms of their preferences. When evaluating alternatives, most consumers

consider the familiarity and loyalty they have towards a brand or product before making a purchase. Further, they reflect upon whether they want to act upon their ideal or actual self and which product characteristics best fit their lifestyle. In terms of product characteristics and preferences, consumers tend not to prioritize sustainability in the make-up industry in contrast to others, because of the assumption that it is sustainable and cruelty-free.

6. Discussion

6.1 Contributions and Practical Implications

This study aims to develop an in-depth understanding of what psychological factors impact consumer buying behavior. To narrow the topic down, the authors have chosen to solely focus on the make-up industry, and what factors have an impact on the cognitive decision-making process. From the results, different implications can be drawn for the managers who have some interest in the problem that has been investigated. As the study is based on higher involvement products, the research may not apply to all industries. Thus, the managers that would find this research useful are the companies that operate in marketing within the make-up industry. The marketers can make use of the results to understand the behavior of their consumers and develop marketing strategies accordingly. As this study found that social media, WOM, lifestyle and personal preferences and characteristics are the most influential factors, the marketer might consider focusing less on other advertising methods and pay more resources and efforts into strategies that impact these factors.

6.2 Limitations and Considerations

A limitation that needs to be considered for this study is that one single behavior may represent different motives. As described by an example noted by Hoffman (2015), one person who enrolls in an educational program might do that to learn, to demonstrate their capability, or for social reasons such as finding new friends. Thus, some goals that the participants have might be subordinate to others, and there may be simultaneous and multiple motives affecting their choices. Since the authors are not majoring in psychology, or have relevant education for this, it might be difficult to discover these subordinative goals. The participants might have a hard time understanding which motive has the most significant impact on their decisions, a bias that has to be considered (Hoffman, 2015). Hence, assumptions are made that the participants' underlying objectives are in line with the theories provided.

6.3 Sustainable Implications

From a sustainable perspective, the possibilities for improvement within the make-up industry are enormous since sustainability is a crucial ongoing topic today. However, from the interviews, it was found that the participants are not that involved and aware of sustainability when purchasing make-up. This creates a significant opportunity for make-up manufacturers to put more effort and focus on sustainability, and improve their business to cherish the planet.

There is an increase in demand for more natural, cruelty-free, and vegan supplies since consumers today are more aware of their health and environment, mainly because of social media. However, there is a lot that can be improved to increase the awareness among the consumers and make them act and think more "green" when purchasing make-up.

6.4 Future Research

This study has provided results and answered the two research questions. Nonetheless, room for future research and inquiries have been identified during the process of conducting the thesis. The environment in which the study is conducted is rapidly changing and there is an increase in awareness of sustainable efforts. Therefore, future marketing might severely differ from how it is executed now. Hence, the study might not hold if the environment alters.

The possibilities for future research within the subject area are endless. The primary focus has been on Swedish young females from 18-to 25 years old. However, future research might investigate a broader age range, to examine how the consumers behave in countries other than Sweden, use males as a primary focus, or take them into account. The question remains of what results could be potentially uncovered if future studies modify the age and demographics of the participants.

Furthermore, the study could be applied to other industries and categories to investigate if the same results apply to other criteria. This means, investigating if the psychological factors influencing the consumer decision-making process in the industry, influence the process in an equal manner in industry x. New ideas for further exploration could be to make use of and implement other theories other than those in the theoretical framework, and thus, also modify the conceptual framework provided.

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8. Appendix

8.1 Interview Questions

1. What is your relationship to make-up?
2. What is the primary reason why you use make-up?
3. How often do you purchase make-up?
    - Do you prefer to buy make-up online or in-store? Why?
    - Do you look for make-up in-store but then choose to purchase it online/vice versa?
4. What is the main reason why you purchase new make-up?
    - What are the driving factors/goals?
5. Please describe the buying process you go through when purchasing make-up.
6. What is your greatest source of influence when it comes to make-up?
7. In cases where you want to test new products, what factors determine what product/brand you choose to purchase?
8. How has your usage/purchases of make-up changed over the past years since the start of usage?
    - Are you putting in more effort or more money than before?
    - How has previous learning and experience of make-up affected you today?
9. After you have made a purchase, how often and how do you give the product a review?
    - Where? Online or offline?
    - Are you more likely to post a negative or a positive review?
    - Would you purchase a product even though the reviews are negative?
10. How much do you value sustainability in the purchasing of make-up?
11. Are you impacted by status and trends when purchasing make-up?
12. Have you ever paid any attention to understanding the reasons why you are making the decisions you do (i.e. this topic)?