

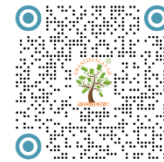
Original Article

THE EMOTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF FASHION: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF NEUROMARKETING AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Kiran Panjwani ^{1*}, Dr. Harish Sudhir Kulkarni ² 

¹ Research Scholar, Barkatullah University, Bhopal, India

² Professor and Head, MBA Department, IPER, Bhopal, India



ABSTRACT

Fashion consumption is no longer only motivated by functional needs but is also influenced by feelings, identity, aspirations and unconscious psychological reactions. In the new millennium, neuromarketing is becoming a significant area of research that enables marketers to gain insights about how consumers emotionally and cognitively react to fashion-based stimuli. This review systematically analyses the emerging research on neuromarketing and the psychology of fashion consumption in the areas of emotional decision making, impulse buying behavior, symbolic consumption, consumer identity and subconscious behavioural influence in the fashion retail environment.

The research derives from systematic literature review of the extant literature from academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science. Peer reviewed articles relevant to the topic, review papers and conceptual works published within the last 20 years were thematically analysed. The review also outlines key psychological factors affecting fashion consumerism and discusses the way in which neuromarketing tools (eye-tracking, EEG, Facial Coding and Biometric Analysis) have been utilized to investigate consumers' reactions in the fashion industry.

The results indicate that the consumption of fashion is driven more by emotional and hedonistic motives than by cognitive ones. Neuromarketing research indicates that self-expression, social identity, aspirational appeal, emotional branding, and subconscious sensory stimulation play a pivotal role in shaping consumers attitudes and purchasing decisions. The review also draws attention to ever-increasing ethical concerns with the psychological manipulation of consumers, consumer privacy and the growing use of subconscious persuasion techniques in the marketing of fashion. The study advances the body of knowledge by combining consumer psychology, fashion marketing, and neuromarketing perspectives into one review framework. Furthermore, the paper highlights significant gaps in the literature and provides direction for future research in the areas of consumer behaviour, emotional consumption and neuromarketing applications within fashion retail.

Keywords: Neuromarketing, Fashion Consumption, Consumer Psychology, Emotional Decision-Making, Impulse Buying Behavior

INTRODUCTION

FASHION CONSUMPTION PSYCHOLOGICALLY

The consumption of fashion has become more than just about the need for clothing and protection. Fashion is now associated with emotions, personality, life style, identity and social culture in modern society. Fashion is a form of self-expression and consumers use it to communicate their beliefs, social status and individuality. Fashion purchases are not like other purchases because

*Corresponding Author:

Email address: Kiran Panjwani (kiranpanjwani2703@gmail.com), Dr. Harish Sudhir Kulkarni (kulkarni.harish@iper.ac.in)

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decisions to buy fashion are typically subject to psychological and emotional influences, both conscious and unconscious. Therefore, the consumption of fashion is increasingly regarded not only as an economic act but also a psychological and symbolic process influenced by inner desire, emotional experience and social context.

The psychology of fashion consumption is closely linked with self-identity and with the extent to which people desire to be unique or similar to others. Clothing decisions can be influenced by self-image and confidence, as well as mood, an expression of belonging to a group, or an aspirational identity. Consumers can be emotionally attached to certain brands, styles, or fashion movements because these products allow them to express themselves or help them connect with particular social groups they wish to be part of. The point is further reinforced by recent studies reporting that fashion consumer behaviour is influenced by "a multifaceted combination of behavioural analytics, aspirational identity, and emotional branding" — and that having a grasp of these layers of psychology is an evolving requirement for marketers and consumer literacy advocates alike.

In general, the fashion retail purchase behaviour is more triggered by emotions such as excitement and pleasure, social approval, and psychological satisfaction rather than product need. The emotional side of fashion consumption makes the industry especially useful to examine the psychology of consumers and subconscious behavioral reactions.

In the last decade, the pace of transformation in consumer culture, digital influence, celebrity trend setting, and social media exposure has intensified the psychological aspects of fashion buying behaviour even further. Consumers are constantly bombarded with images, aspirational lifestyles, influencer marketing, and emotional branding that influence their preferences and purchase intentions. As a result, the psychological determinants of fashion consumption have attracted special attention from marketers, researchers, and fashion retailers who aim to grasp factors such why consumers buy, how emotional responses are formed and what shapes consumers' decision-making processes.

EMERGING NEUROMARKETING

Conventional consumer research methodologies have been predominantly reliant on surveys, interviews, focus groups, and self-reported behavioural data to understand buying behaviour. Even though these methodologies still yield useful information, they are frequently unable to uncover the emotional or cognitive unconscious processes driving consumer behaviour. Fashion consumption is an area where purchase decisions tend to be emotional, impulsive, and experiential and consumers themselves are not always fully cognisant of the reasons why they have particular preferences and make certain purchases. This constraint has prompted a number of scholars and marketers to investigate unconscious processes rather than conscious responses to the product, to the brand, and study psychological processes of the consumer behaviour.

Neuromarketing has emerged as one of such interdisciplinary fields, which integrates marketing, psychology and neuroscience to gain insight into emotional and cognitive responses of consumers to marketing stimuli. Using methods such as eye-tracking, electroencephalography (EEG), facial coding, respiratory and heart rate monitoring, and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), neuromarketing seeks to analyze attention, emotional engagement, memory encoding and subconscious reactions related to the consumer decision making process. Unlike conventional marketing research methods, neuromarketing provides deeper insights into how consumers actually experience brands, advertisements, products, and retail environments at a psychological level. A 2023 bibliometric review from the journal *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (part of the Nature portfolio) tracked 497 EEG-based neuromarketing articles from 2002–2022, demonstrating that EEG has solidified itself as one of the leading tools in consumer neuroscience and that the discipline is rapidly expanding into new fields including digital retail and emotional engagement.

Research [Ladkoo and Mohabir \(2024\)](#) outlines a crucial gap neuromarketing fills: traditional research methods fall short in closing the gap between what consumers say they want in fashion and what they actually buy, resulting in the increasing relevance of neuroscience based techniques in this field. Within the Fashion industry, the significance of neuromarketing has risen drastically since nature of fashion consumption has become both emotional and visual. Fashion labels are turning to emotional branding, celebrity endorsement, storytelling, symbolic imagery and sensory appeal to deepen psychological connections with consumers. Neuromarketing also explains why some fashion ads are more eye-catching, why buyers hold emotional attachments with certain labels, and how subconscious cues shape purchase intentions and spur on impulsive buying behaviour. Since fashion consumption is increasingly experience and psychologically driven, neuromarketing provides an essential lens to decipher not only current consumer trends, but the modern consumers themselves, going beyond the established rational-decision-making models.

SUBCONSCIOUS CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The increasing adoption of neuroscience in marketing science has changed the consumer behaviour science lens, including how it now interprets consumers in retail and brand environments. Earlier theories of consumer behaviour mainly considered buying decisions as rational and driven by need. Yet modern literature is increasingly indicating that numerous purchasing decisions are not the result of rational thought but are driven by emotional, unconscious desires, mental shortcuts and Environmental cues. This has been especially evident in the fashion sector, where buyers are motivated by psychological satisfaction, symbolic significance and emotional involvement rather than by practical application.

Fashion products are often imbued with emotional and social value beyond utility. Shoppers may link fashion brands to confidence, prestige, attractiveness, belonging, or lifestyle goals. These associations affect product perceptions and ultimately influence buyers' behaviour. Psychological theories including hedonic motivation, emotional attachment, self-concept, and aspirational consumption are thus considered to be influential in explaining fashion purchasing behaviours. This is further reinforced by neuromarketing studies explaining how emotional stimuli and subconscious reactions could have a substantial influence on attention, formation of preference and purchase intention in the context of fashion. The ability of digital platforms to magnify subconscious purchase triggers is also well documented. Studies outline that online impulsive buying is significantly impacted by emotional and situational factors specially in fashion & apparel where urgency messaging, visual stimulation, and social proof combined influences consumers to buy on a whim.

Meanwhile, the growing use of emotionally-charged marketing techniques has led to significant academic and ethical debate. Fashion brands today compete in a very competitive environment with visual storytelling, influencer culture, personalized advertising, digitally mediated experiences that are constantly competing for consumer attention. Consequently consumers are subject to relentless psychological stimulation aimed at manipulating desire, urgency and emotional engagement. To that end, knowledge of such changing psychological dynamics is today claimed to be necessary, not only for marketers and retailers, but also for scholars interested in critically analysing how practices such as neuromarketing are influencing that of consumer perception and behaviour in the consumption of fashion today. These ethical concerns are not just academic. A 2024 review in *Cogent Business & Management* (Taylor & Francis) identified a clear conflict between the effectiveness of AI-based neuromarketing tools and the necessity to protect consumer privacy, mostly concerning GDPR adherence and the use of subconscious consumer weaknesses. In addition, studies cautions that the rapid commercialization of neuromarketing is outstripping related ethical guidelines, generating significant concerns about informed consent, consumer privacy, and the use of subconscious weaknesses.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The rising scholarly attention in the field of neuromarketing and consumer psychology has resulted in a myriad of literature across the areas of marketing, psychology, neuroscience, retail management and consumer behaviour. Previous research has shed light on different facets of fashion consumption such as emotional branding, impulse buying, symbolic consumption, sensory influence, consumer identity, and subconscious decisions making. Likewise, neuromarketing literature has investigated the responses of consumers to advertisements, visual stimuli, emotional scape, and brand experiences from both psychological and neuroscientific approaches, considering the effects that brands may have on the human brain.

Furthermore, much of the extant research focuses on applications in technology or retailing and has not fully explored the psychological mechanisms underpinning consumer response in the specific context of fashion. There has been scarce effort to integrate emotional, cognitive and unconscious processes as they shape consumption behaviours related to fashion with insights from neuromarketing. In this context, the present systematic review attempts to bring together existing research on neuromarketing and the psychology of fashion consumption within a unified framework. The study aims to examine how psychological drivers, emotional responses, subconscious influences, and neuromarketing practices shape consumer behaviour in fashion retail settings. By synthesizing findings from existing literature, the review seeks to provide a conceptual understanding of the relationship between consumer psychology and neuromarketing while also identifying key research gaps and future directions in this evolving field.

This review is restricted to peer reviewed journals in the areas of neuromarketing, consumer psychology, fashion consumption and consumer behaviour within the disciplines of marketing, retail, psychology and consumer research. The research focuses on consumers' psychological and behavioral engagement in fashion consumption rather than on more general operational or technical aspects of the fashion business. This review integrates findings from a variety of studies in a systematic manner to achieve a more coherent conceptualization of the contribution of neuromarketing to the investigation of fashion consumption and to highlight not only existent but also potential research avenues.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study employs a literature review methodology to examine, synthesise, and critically evaluate existing scholarly research pertaining to neuromarketing and the psychology of fashion consumption. Following the foundational principles of systematic review articulated by [Khan et al. \(2003\)](#), this approach involves the exhaustive collection, screening, and thematic analysis of relevant published literature, conducted with a pre-specified objective to ensure transparency, replicability, and scholarly rigour. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, the systematic approach adopted here imposes structured inclusion and exclusion criteria, explicit database coverage, and a documented screening procedure, thereby minimising selection bias and enhancing the credibility of the conclusions drawn.

This review is primarily conceptual and thematic in nature, and is informed by the empirical, theoretical, and applied literature within the disciplines of consumer psychology, marketing science, fashion retail and consumer neuroscience. The research is not

empirical; instead, it brings together secondary data to build a unified theoretical lens towards the mind and brain processes of the fashion consumer.

DATABASES USED

In order to provide a thorough and on a-p of date account of the existing literature, the search was carried out from the following five core peer-reviewed databases:

- Scopus
- Web of Science (WoS)
- Google Scholar
- ScienceDirect (Elsevier)
- SpringerLink

These databases were chosen for their reputability in the areas of marketing, consumer psychology, behavioural science and retail management and for the comprehensive coverage of high impact, peer reviewed journals. Collectively, these sources made certain that the literature from various disciplinary perspectives such as consumer neuroscience, fashion studies and behavioural economics was captured systematically.

SEARCH STRATEGY AND KEYWORDS

A systematic keyword search strategy was applied in five databases. Search term/keywords were used individually and combined with the Boolean operators implement AND and OR to optimize the search precision and recall. The following were the main search terms:

- "Neuromarketing" AND "Fashion Consumption"
- "Consumer Psychology" AND "Fashion Retail"
- "Emotional Branding" AND "Fashion"
- "Subconscious Consumer Behaviour" OR "Unconscious Decision-Making"
- "Impulse Buying" AND "Fashion"
- "Hedonic Consumption" AND "Apparel"
- "Consumer Decision-Making" AND "Neuromarketing"
- "Fashion Consumer Behaviour" AND "Emotion"
- "EEG" OR "Eye-Tracking" OR "Facial Coding" AND "Consumer Behaviour"
- "Sensory Marketing" AND "Fashion" OR "Retail"

Truncation symbols or wildcard operators were employed, where appropriate to account for alternative spellings and terminological variants (e.g., consumer, behaviour). The searches were organised iteratively by progressively applying filters to broad queries in order to identify literature with conceptual or empirical links to the purpose of this review.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

To preserve methodological integrity and maintain the academic rigor of the chosen corpus, an explicit set of inclusion/exclusion criteria was determined before the beginning of screening in line with conventional SLR protocols [Khan et al. \(2003\)](#).

INCLUSION CRITERIA

- Peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and empirically grounded review papers.
- Studies published between 2000 and 2024
- Research directly related to neuromarketing, consumer psychology, or fashion consumer behaviour.
- Studies examining emotional, hedonic, identity-based, or subconscious dimensions of consumer decision-making.
- Literature published in the English language.
- Articles within the domains of marketing, retail management, consumer research, fashion studies, or consumer neuroscience.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA

- Non-academic sources, including journalistic articles, industry reports, editorial commentaries, and blog content.
- Duplicate records retrieved across multiple databases.
- Studies with no connection to fashion consumption, consumer psychology, or neuromarketing.
- Purely technical neuroscience publications
- Conference abstracts, book chapters, and unpublished working papers.
- Literature published prior to 2000, unless constituting a seminal theoretical contribution cited extensively in contemporary literature.

ARTICLE SCREENING AND SELECTION PROCESS

The article screening procedure was conducted in three sequential phases, as detailed below.

Phase 1: Initial Retrieval – A total of 264 studies were collected and merged from various academic databases, namely Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, Sage Journals, Wiley Online Library, and Emerald Insight, after performing the above mentioned keyword based searches. This was the initial set of studies that were deemed eligible for inclusion in the review.

Phase 2: Deduplication and Title/Abstract Screening – The records that were duplicated in multiple databases were detected and removed, resulting in 145 articles for screening. The titles and abstracts of these papers were subsequently screened according to the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Furthermore, articles that were not conceptually related to the aim of the review were excluded, and thus a smaller group of potential articles for in depth analysis were obtained.

Phase 3: Full-Text Review and Final Selection – The papers were then read in full to confirm thematic relevance and to assess the conceptual and methodological suitability. Special interest was on studies around emotional/hedonic consumption, symbolic and identity related fashion behaviour, sensory marketing, neuromarketing tools, emotional branding, impulse buying behaviour and subconscious consumer reactions in fashion-related environments. After the rigorous screening process, a final set of 65 articles was included for thematic integration and discussion. Table 1 shows the distribution of the articles by database and the total number of articles included in the review.

Table 1

Table 1 Databases and Article Selection Process			
Database	Initial Search Results	Screened Articles	Final Articles Selected
Scopus	48	31	18
Google Scholar	72	40	15
ScienceDirect	36	19	9
SpringerLink	29	15	6
Taylor & Francis	24	12	5
Sage Journals	18	9	4
Wiley Online Library	21	11	5
Emerald Insight	16	8	3
Total	264	145	65

DATA SYNTHESIS APPROACH

The 65 included studies were analyzed through a thematic narrative synthesis, a method that enables the description and interpretation of patterns, conceptual relationships and new areas of thinking across heterogeneous literature [Popay et al. \(2006\)](#). The synthesis consisted of iterated reading, sorting, and thematic coding of the chosen literature, to uncover significant conceptual axes related to neuromarketing and the psychology of fashion consumers. As a result of an inductive reviewing process, eight broad thematic categories were derived from the literature, as shown in Table 2.

For each thematic area, the selected studies were subjected to a critical analysis to highlight convergences and divergences, theoretical frameworks, methodological procedures and behavioural findings aligned with fashion consumer psychology and neuromarketing. Special emphasis was placed on previous research on emotional involvement, sensory stimulation, symbolic significance, identity development, unconscious processing, and experiential consumption in the context of modern fashion retailing environments.

Particular attention was given to research involving neuromarketing and neurophysiological methodologies (e.g., electroencephalography [EEG], eye-tracking, biometric analysis, galvanic skin response [GSR], facial coding, and other measures of subconscious consumer reactions). The scrutinised studies aimed to assess how neuroscientific and sensory science-based methodologies have facilitated the understanding of attentional, emotional, impulsive and subconscious processes in the fashion consumption context. Furthermore, recent literature on digital fashion engagement, augmented reality, artificial intelligence, influencer-led consumption, sustainable fashion behaviour, and ethical dilemmas in neuromarketing was also reviewed to identify emerging themes and prospective pathways for the field.

Table 2

Table 2 Studies Selected on the Major Dimensions of the Review		
Dimensions of the Review	Focus Area	Published Articles
i. Consumer psychology, emotions and mood in fashion consumption	Emotion, mood, self-perception, psychological response to clothing, emotional regulation	Oatley and Jenkins (1996), Crossley (1998), Lupton (1998), Illouz (2007), Laros and Steenkamp (2005), Colls (2004), Samadi (2019), Moody et al. (2009), Kwon (1991), Kwon (1994), Asare et al. (2016), Kodžoman (2019), An and Lee (2015), Raunio (1982), Tombs (2006), Ruggerone (2017)
ii. Hedonic, experiential and pleasurable consumption	Pleasure, fantasy, experience, emotional reward, consumer value, shopping experience	Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Jordan (2000), Demir et al. (2006), Schmitt (1999), Sheth et al. (1991), Maslow (1970), Kim et al. (2014), Fiore et al. (2005), Brakus et al. (2009), Morrison and Frederick (2007), Kim and Sullivan (2019), Akgun et al. (2013), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004)
iii. Symbolic consumption, identity and self-expression through fashion	Self-concept, authentic self, body image, gender expression, social identity, aspirational image	Tseelon (1995), Negrin (1999), Sayer (2005), Friese (2001), Woodward (2007), Colls (2004), Kodžoman (2019), An and Lee (2015), Kwon (1991), Kwon (1994), Asare et al. (2016), Branca et al. (2025), Kim et al. (2019), Thompson et al. (2006), Maslow (1970)
iv. Emotional branding and consumer-brand relationships	Brand attachment, emotional branding, loyalty, storytelling, consumer-brand bonds, co-creation	Kim and Sullivan (2019), Akgun et al. (2013), Fournier (1998), Brakus et al. (2009), Acharya (2018), Thompson et al. (2006), Rossiter and Bellman (2012), Morrison and Frederick (2007), Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Schmitt (1999), Kim et al. (2014), Al-Emadi et al. (2025), Ozturkcan and Bozdag (2025), Drzewiecka and Allan (2024)
v. Sensory marketing and neuromarketing stimuli in fashion consumption	Colour, scent, music, touch, sensory branding, visual attention, store/environmental cues	Mehrabian and Russell (1974), Mattila and Wirtz (2001), Krishna (2012), Lindstrom (2010), Douce and Janssens (2013), Kodžoman et al. (2021), Kodžoman (2019), Demir et al. (2006), Jordan (2000), Brakus et al. (2009), Schmitt (1999), Kim and Sullivan (2019), Tombs (2006), Ruggerone (2017)
vi. Neuromarketing techniques and subconscious consumer response	EEG, eye-tracking, biometric response, neuro-insights, subconscious processing, attention and decision-making	Pšurný et al. (2024), Verma et al. (2025), Ladkoo and Mohabir (2024), Ullah et al. (2024), Goncalves et al. (2024), Singh & Kumar (2026), Krishna (2012), Mehrabian and Russell (1974), Laros & Steenkamp (2005), Kim and Sullivan (2019)
vii. Impulse buying, FOMO and digital fashion behaviour	FOMO, impulse purchase, fast fashion, AR, AI, online purchase decision, social media and digital influence	Bläse et al. (2024), Oak & Markandeya (2025), Kaur (2024), Al-Emadi et al. (2025), Ozturkcan and Bozdag (2025), Pšurný et al. (2024), Drzewiecka and Allan (2024), Kim and Sullivan (2019), Mattila and Wirtz (2001), Schmitt (1999), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)
viii. Sustainability, ethics and responsible fashion consumption	Sustainable fashion, vintage fashion, ethical neuromarketing, privacy, consumer literacy, responsible consumption	Branca et al. (2025), Korsunova-Tsaruk et al. (2025), Ladkoo and Mohabir (2024), Ullah et al. (2024), Goncalves et al. (2024), Singh & Kumar (2026), Drzewiecka and Allan (2024), Ozturkcan and Bozdag (2025), Kim and Sullivan (2019), Thompson et al. (2006)

Note: Dimensions were determined through an iterative process of thematic coding of the 65 included studies.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Several methodological limitations of this review are acknowledged. Firstly, the limitation of the search to the English language may have led to the omission of relevant studies published in other languages and a potential language bias. Second, although the five databases searched arguably cover the genesis of the literature, some relevant studies may lie outside these or in more discipline-specific databases such as JSTOR, PsycINFO (clinical consumer psychology). Third, as with all systematic reviews using thematic synthesis, coding and categorisation of literature is subject to interpretive judgement and may introduce subjectivity despite attempts to maintain rigour. Despite these limitations, the review's transparent methodology and systematic approach allow for the

findings to be considered a trustworthy and replicable addition to the body of knowledge in neuromarketing and fashion consumer psychology.

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY AND THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF FASHION CONSUMPTION

Fashion consumption has now been interpreted as a psychological and emotional process instead of just functional or economic activity. In contrast to utilitarian goods that are bought predominantly on the basis of practical needs, fashion goods have strong emotional, identity-related, social, and symbolic meanings. They contend that both clothing and fashion are inextricably linked to how people see themselves and how they want to be seen. Kodžoman et al. noted that clothing is a significant aspect of personality manifestation and has a direct impact on mood, feelings, self-confidence and the way one sees oneself. Also, [Entwistle \(2000\)](#) characterized clothing as a “fashioned body” where dress is socially and psychologically invested in beyond the physical protection it affords.

The emotional aspect of fashion consumption has been increasingly focused on in the literature of consumer psychology as emotion plays a role in influencing fashion consumption due to fashion decisions being made under subconscious physiological feelings, affective responses, and emotional motives. Holbrook and Hirschman’s concept of experiential consumption proposed that consumers experience fantasies, feelings, and emotional arousal in consuming activities and in the shopping process and are not motivated solely by cognitive assessment of utilitarian consequences of the consumption activity. This outlook proved to be very relevant in fashion retail since dress-products are inherently associated with visual appeal, identity and lifestyle projections, and symbolic communication. Thus, in fashion consumption, not only the logic is used, but also emotional feelings and psychological reward.

Multiple research studies support that emotions play a major part in clothing selection and fashion-related behaviour. Kwon found that clothing choices are closely associated with mood, self-consciousness, and emotional states, while Moody et al. found that mood impacts clothing choice more so than personality. This suggests that customers frequently employ fashion for emotional regulation, self-enhancement and as a means of psychological comfort. Favorite garments also aid people in managing their feelings and engagement with others, Raunio added, implying that they may hold emotional memories and provide a form of psychological reassurance. In the hands of fashion, ordinary products are turned into emotionally charged objects rather than mere commodities. [Bläse et al. \(2024\)](#) revealed FOMO as another psychological motive for fashion consumption, showing that social media exposure generates emotional pressure to keep up with the purchase behavior of peers, further reinforcing impulse buying beyond rational decision-making.

Another significant psychological factor related to fashion consumption is hedonic behaviour. Findings from prior studies indicate that the purchase of fashion is very much motivated by hedonistic motives, fun, excitement, and emotional pleasure. Holbrook and Hirschman highlighted that consumption experiences may be intrinsically satisfying when they engage the sensory and affective systems of consumers. Kim and Sullivan also stated that today’s consumers appear to be more emotionally rewarded, experience and sensory driven rather than product quality or price. This transition toward experiential, hedonic consumption has led to an increased emphasis on emotional branding and sensory marketing in the fashion retail environment.

Subconscious processes also influence when, where and how fashion is consumed. Neuromarketing findings indicate that a large part of consumer responses is generated at an unconscious level through sensory and emotional processing even before any conscious rational analysis is made. Mehrabian and Russell’s theory of environmental psychology argued that environmental stimuli produce affective states that changes on approach and avoidance behaviours. In a fashion store setting, sensory signals like lighting, color, scent, music, store design and visual merchandising can have subconscious effects on consumers’ emotions, focus and buying patterns. Mattila and Wirtz have shown that positive atmospheric stimulation enhances emotional pleasure of consumers and their impulse buying behaviour. Similarly, Krishna argued that sensory marketing involves consumers’ senses that affect how they see and feel emotions, as well as how they behave towards brands.

Fashion consumption is highly related to symbolic consumption, theory of identity and identity construction. Consumers have long used clothing and fashion labels as a means of communicating their social identity, lifestyle, personality and desired future self. Feinberg et al stated that dress and appearance were a key means by which individuals express their social identity and Woodward argued that as a consumer of fashion, one is engaged in a constant intellectual search for self-identity, one is perpetually asking oneself “who am I?” through dressing choices. Kim and Sullivan also explained that emotional branding are more powerful in today’s market given that consumers want to identify with brands that represent their true self and personal identity. The connection between fashion and identity is particularly significant in contemporary digital culture, in which self-presentation, visibility, and symbolic consumption have taken center stage in social interaction.

There seems to be a growing focus on emotional attachment to fashion brands in recent research. Consumer–brand relationships, as proposed by Fournier, are emotionally charged interactions that can potentially lead to long-term loyalty. In the fashion domain, brands are increasingly striving to develop such emotional connections by means of storytelling, sensory branding, celebrity endorsement and immersive brand experiences. Kim and Sullivan also claimed that consumers tend to forget product

knowledge, but not their feelings relating to brands. This result demonstrates that this emotional connection can enhance attachment, commitment, and loyalty toward fashion brands, especially in the case of fashion consumers who intrinsically value symbolic meanings and emotional experiences in their consumption.

The concept of fashion desire further explains why consumption in the fashion industry often surpasses the rational functionality of needs fulfillment. Desire in fashion markets can be constructed by aspiration, exclusivity, visual imagery, trend culture, as well as idealized lifestyles through corporate and media communication. Consumers are constantly exposed to emotionally appealing fashion narratives that encourage longing, aspiration, and emotional imagination. With emotional branding and sensory marketing becoming more sophisticated, the mode of consumption of fashion is more and more through the unconscious formation of desires not simply by the rational evaluation. Therefore, the connection between neuromarketing and consumer psychology is the key to modern fashion consumption behavior that describes the emotional processes underlying consumer decision.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DRIVERS OF FASHION CONSUMPTION

Psychological motivations, beyond the immediate utilitarian clothing needs of consumers, have a strong impact on fashion consumption. Previous research indicates that consumers engage with fashion related products due to the emotional connotations, the lifestyle they convey and the social experiences of using those clothes, rather than simply seeing them as functional products. Increasingly researchers are suggesting that fashion purchase behaviour is more closely related to emotional satisfaction, self-image, emotional elevation and unconscious consumer reactions [Holbrook and Hirschman \(1982\)](#). As part of this, neuromarketing has been touted as a key tool to help reveal the ways consumers emotionally respond to fashion stimuli and how those emotional responses will impact attitudes, preferences, and purchase behaviour.

Hedonic motivation is one of the most investigated psychological factors in the literature of fashion consumption. Hedonic consumption is the multi-sensory, experiential and emotional aspects associated with consumer behaviour [Holbrook and Hirschman \(1982\)](#). Excitement, pleasure, fun, and emotional pleasure are the reasons why people purchase fashion products. [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) have made a similar observation and mentioned that contemporary shoppers are more interested in emotional gains and unforgettable experiences while engaging with fashion brands. In addition, [FIORE et al](#) pointed out that experiential and sensory consumption plays a vital role in the emotional connection between the consumer and fashion products, and the retail environment. Therefore, shopping for fashion is often regarded as an emotional and pleasurable activity rather than a solely rational purchasing process. Expanding on this, [Oak and Markandeya \(2025\)](#) discovered Gen Z consumers (who were raised in an entirely digital environment) are highly vulnerable to the FOMO induced impulse purchasing in fashion, as flash sales, limited time offers and influencer-led content leverage the psychological principle of loss aversion to initiate swift, emotionally charged purchase decisions.

The influence of emotions and mood on fashion consumption behaviour has also been emphasised in various studies. [Kodžoman et al.](#) found that clothing has a significant impact on human emotions, self-confidence and psychological comfort and [Kwon](#) suggested that clothing choices are influenced by mood-related reactions and emotional feelings. The study of [Raunio](#) also suggests that customers consume fashion products to boost their mood, to reduce stress, to enhance their confidence or even to find emotional comfort. These findings support the idea that fashion consumption operates as a form of emotional regulation where purchasing behaviour is connected with internal psychological experiences rather than simple utility maximization.

Another major psychological determinant of fashion consumption is symbolic consumption. Fashion products are often used as social and psychological symbols, which can be used to express identity, social class, values, and lifestyles. [Feinberg et al.](#) suggested that clothing is a medium through which people express and communicate their social identities and [Woodward](#) viewed selection of fashion as a continuous process of self-construction and identity communication. Thus, consumers do not buy physical products (clothing), for physical use; rather, they consume the symbolic meanings related to brands, trends, and styles. For example, luxury fashion brands may represent prestige, exclusivity, beauty or desirable lifestyle which could contribute to an emotional attachment to such products.

Identity and self-expression have consequently become central themes within fashion psychology literature. Researchers have consistently found that consumers prefer brands that align with their self-concept and personal identity ([Park et al., 2010](#)). [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) explained that emotional branding strategies become effective when consumers perceive that a brand reflects their authentic self rather than only an idealized image. This psychological alignment between brand image and self-identity creates stronger emotional engagement and long-term consumer attachment. The increasing popularity of personalized fashion, influencer culture, and lifestyle branding further demonstrates how fashion consumption has become closely connected with identity performance and self-presentation in contemporary society. [Branca et al. \(2025\)](#) also revealed that Gen Z's fashion selections are less influenced by sustainability motives and more influenced by self-expression, emotional pleasure and experiential value especially in vintage and second hand markets suggesting that identity based consumption is extending along the lines of both new and used clothing markets.

The subconscious mind also makes a significant impact on fashion consumption behaviour. Neuromarketing research implies that a significant portion of consumer decisions are made unconsciously at the emotional, sensory level of the brain, before higher

order processing such as cognitive reasoning is involved Krishna (2012). In fashion retailing, sensory elements (colour, lighting, smell, music, visual merchandising, store atmosphere) have subconscious influence on consumers' attention, emotional reactions, and intention to buy Baker et al. (1992), Chebat and Michon (2003). Mehrabian and Russell's environmental-behavioural model of environmental psychology stated that environmental stimuli elicit emotional reactions, which in turn affect behavioural responses such as approach, engagement or avoidance. Consistent with this view, Mattila and Wirtz (2001) demonstrated a positive effect of favourable sensory stimulation in store on consumer mood and on impulse buying behaviour.

Sensory experiences have therefore become an essential psychological tool in the lens of fashion marketing and neuromarketing studies. According to Krishna (2012), sensory marketing is based on the principles that marketing stimuli engage consumer's senses and that engagement influences consumer perception, affect, cognition, and behavior. Like emotional branding, branding through scent, sound, or taste is increasingly becoming dependent on sensory stimulation to foster deeper emotional links between consumers and brands Kim and Sullivan (2019). Today, fashion retailers engage consumers emotionally and build brand loyalty by utilizing music, scent, store design, digital displays, visual storytelling, and immersive experiences. These approaches illustrate how psychological and sensory factors combine to influence consumer behaviour in contemporary fashion retail environments.

Another important psychological driver identified in literature is emotional attachment toward brands. Fournier (1998) defined consumer-brand relationships as emotional bonds that consumers and brands form, that results in loyalty, trust, and commitment overtime. Fashion labels repeatedly seek to establish such emotional bonds through storytelling, celebrity tie-ins, symbolic and highly emotional communications strategies. While consumers may forget individual product features Kim and Sullivan (2019), they tend to remember their emotional experiences with a brand. Emotional branding allows fashion retailers to build the stronger psychological links with consumers by connecting with aspirations, emotions, and identity needs of consumers.

The literature also points out the increasing role of aspiration and fashion desire as drivers of consumer behavior. Desire in fashion markets is created by exclusivity, social comparison, idealized lifestyles, influencer marketing and visually persuasive branding strategies. Consumers are constantly being exposed with aspirational visuals and symbols that shape their subconscious wishes and emotional draws to fashion products. Neuromarketing studies have found that emotionally driven stimuli might trigger reward related psychological activity and could enhance purchase intention. Therefore, emotional aspirations, expression of identity and sub conscious psychological needs rather than purely cognitive consumption behaviours are shaping the consumption of fashion.

ETHICAL CONCERNS IN NEUROMARKETING

The increasing use of neuromarketing in the fashion and consumer research context has attracted much attention from academia, but at the same time, it also raised a number of ethical issues and criticisms. Although neuromarketing enables more detailed understanding of consumers' emotions, attention, and unconscious processing of decision making than traditional marketing, there are concerns about its ethics and about using psychology and neuroscience to directly influence consumers. With the rise of fashion brands focusing on emotional branding, sensory stimulation and subconscious persuasion techniques, concerns regarding manipulation, consumer autonomy, privacy, and emotional exploitation, have taken centre stage in contemporary consumer culture.

One of the main ethical issues surrounding neuromarketing is that consumers may be unknowingly manipulated. Traditional marketing techniques generally seek to influence consumers with visible and conscious communication tools, such as advertisements, promotions, and product labels. Yet neuromarketing seeks to decode (and manipulate) emotional and cognitive processes that the consumers themselves are unaware of Ariely and Berns (2010). Critics say such tactics potentially reduce consumers' capacity to make fully independent and rational decisions in the marketplace by appealing to subconscious desires, emotional vulnerabilities and impulsive behavior. This worry is especially pertinent in fashion consumption where the product is already intimately linked with aspiration, identity construction, attractiveness and emotional gratification.

Fashion marketing often relies on emotional persuasion, such as through the use of celebrity endorsements, influencer culture, aspirational lifestyles, and sensory stimulation, to foster desire and emotional engagement among consumers. Emotional branding strategies aim to connect with people's emotions, aspirations, dreams and identity, rather than the product's functionality as such Kim and Sullivan (2019). Such tactics do enhance emotion engagement and loyalty to the brand but can, according to critics, reinforce compulsive buying patterns and emotional unhealthy dependence on brands. Emotional Bonds to Fashion Brands and Related Psychological Impact Among Fashion consumers, emotional attachment to fashion brands can encourage them to tie their self-worth, confidence, or social acceptance to buying, which leads to psychological strain and overconsumption Kim and Sullivan (2019).

Another key issue raised in the literature is that of unreal beauty standards and aspirational identity formation in fashion marketing. Fashion advertising and branding can frequently feature idealized body types, luxurious lifestyles and socially coveted roles that have the potential to harm consumers' self-esteem and mental health. Scholars have suggested that consumers, particularly young consumers, can feel pressure, anxiety, and dissatisfaction as a result of this consumption of idealized fashion imagery on digital and social media platforms. While there are a few brands, like Dove and Aerie, who have taken steps towards

promoting authenticity and body positivity through messaging-driven branding [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#), the fashion industry-at-large still heavily leans on aspirational visuals and emotionally compelling messaging.

Privacy and consumer consent have also emerged as ethical concerns in neuromarketing research. Methods including EEG, eye-tracking, facial coding, and biometric analysis gather personal behaviour and physiological data that are associated with emotional reactions and cognitive processing. A number of academics have also suggested that consumers do not necessarily have a complete understanding of the way in which such information is gathered, analysed or exploited for commercial ends (Murphy et al., 2008). Consequently, concerns are raised about transparency, informed consent, and the abuse of psychological and biometric data through extremely targeted marketing techniques. As digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) and personalized advertising tools continue to evolve further, it is anticipated that these privacy-related ethical issues will take center stage in next-generation neuromarketing practices. Supporting these concerns, Ullah et al. (2024) carried out an empirical investigation (framed by rule utilitarianism) on AI and machine learning applications used in computing in the US and Spain, finding a near universal perception that these types of computing practices were unethical in nature.

In addition, there are some notable issues with methodology and conceptualization in neuromarketing studies. Although neuromarketing techniques are often presented as advanced scientific tools capable of revealing subconscious consumer behaviour, several researchers caution against overinterpreting neuroscientific findings. (Ariely and Berns, 2010) criticised that many neuromarketing studies are based on small sample sizes and are expensive to conduct, hence they may have limited ecological validity since interpreting neural responses is a complex task. Emotional and cognitive responses to stimuli are prone to be very different between individuals, cultures, ages, and other social contexts, so although results may eventually be generalized, it is difficult to assure such generalization. Thus, neuromarketing should not be conflated with an completely objective or infallible estimator of consumer behaviour.

Another drawback identified in the literature was a predominant concentration on sensory stimulation and emotional involvement, at the expense of the considerations of social-cultural and contextual conditions shaping fashion consumer. Many of the research are focusing on visual attention, emotional reaction and impact of atmospherics in retail environment, however they do not delve deep into cultural identity, economic situation, sustainability issue or ethical consumerism. Likewise, a large part of the existing neuromarketing literature has been derived from Western studies, thereby constraining the understanding of how emotional branding and subconscious consumer reactions manifest themselves in emerging markets and culturally plural countries in general. This signals the need for future research that are more context-specific and culture-crossing.

In addition, scholars have also suggested that emotional branding can backfire if consumers feel the marketing communication to be fake, manipulative, or disingenuous. Emotional branding tactics have been found to work best when they are perceived by consumers as authentic and emotionally meaningful rather than as commercially exploitative (Kim and Sullivan 2019). When consumers are skeptical that brands are only cashing in on an emotional story to drive more sales, without truly being socially or emotionally engaged, efforts at emotional branding can damage trust and the brand. This emphasizes the need for authenticity and ethical accountability in emotionally charged marketing within the fashion industry. In connection, the latest study on AI-generated fashion advertising was able to raise additional ethical questions, revealing how the use of AI models by brands including H&M has prompted consumer skepticism and brand backlash labeled as “AI boeing” when used in luxury brand environments, where the expectations of authenticity are greater [Ozturkcan and Bozdog \(2025\)](#).

Despite these issues, the current literature does not completely discard the possibility of using neuromarketing techniques in fashion research and retailing. Rather, most scholars emphasize the importance of balancing commercial objectives with ethical responsibility, consumer well-being, transparency, and responsible marketing practices. When they are used in an ethical and responsible way, neuromarketing methods can offer useful information about the psychology of consumers and how they emotionally react. Nevertheless, with the convergence of neuroscience, digital technology and emotionally persuasive tactics in fashion marketing, its ethical considerations in shaping unconscious consumer behaviours will continue to be a significant area for scholarly interrogation and critique.

EMERGING TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN NEUROMARKETING

The existing studies about neuromarketing and fashion consumption result in a new paradigm in the understanding of consumer behavior in modern marketing and retailing research. An ever-increasing literature stream of studies have highlighted in the last two decades that one cannot understand fashion consumption simply via rational or economic outlooks. Rather, emotions, subconscious processing, identity construction, sensory experience, and psychological reward are incessantly emphasized by scholars as contributors to consumer behaviour within fashion contexts. The rise of emotional branding, experiential retailing, sensory marketing, and identity consumption also demonstrates a shift in fashion consumption perspective toward a more psychological understanding of fashion consumption [Skov et al. \(2009\)](#).

A greater amount of the literature addresses emotional and hedonic aspects of consumers and consumption. Research by [Holbrook and Hirschman \(1982\)](#) and [Fiore et al. \(2005\)](#) and the literature on emotional and experiential shopping [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#), [Kodžoman et al. \(2022\)](#) support the notion that fashion items are connected to enjoyment, excitement, fantasy, emotional

arousal, and experiences of shopping value. A number of academics have suggested that fashion consumers are increasingly desiring emotional gratification and memorable experiences from fashion brands as opposed to purely functional utility. This trend can be observed especially in research on the development of experiential retailing. Thus, emotional consumption has become one of the most prominent themes in recent literature on fashion and neuromarketing.

Similarly, a majority of the research on fashion behaviour identifies identity, self-expression and symbolic consumption as key factors. Studies by [Woodward \(2007\)](#), [Park et al. \(2010\)](#), [Entwistle \(2000\)](#), and [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) suggest that consumers tend to express their personality, lifestyle, social identity, and possible future identity through fashion products and brands. Prior research has consistently shown that the self-concept related brand is more likely to evoke strong emotional attachment from consumers. This is why modern-day fashion marketing is more about storytelling, influencer culture, lifestyle communication and emotional brand narratives. The literature related to symbolic consumption also illustrates that fashion products represent cultural and social symbols as opposed to merely being products of material consumption.

Another major trend visible within existing research is the increased relevance of sensory and unconscious factors in customer choice. Environmental and sensory inputs, including colour, scent, lighting, music, touch, visual merchandising and store environment have been found to affect emotions and purchasing behaviour by number of scholars. In the literature [Krishna \(2012\)](#) discussed at length the extent to which sensory marketing influences perceptions, memory, judgements and behavioural responses and [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) detailed several cases of fashion labels embracing sensory branding to connect emotionally with consumers. Meanwhile, research from environmental psychology as well as the experiential marketing perspective also indicate that subconscious sensory stimulation has a strong impact on emotional involvement as well as impulse buying within the context of fashion retail environments.

The literature shows an increasing attention of scholars about emotional branding and consumer-brand relationship. Many studies highlight that emotion-based differentiation and emotional consumption is gaining more importance than traditional product-based differentiation in highly competitive fashion markets. [Kim and Sullivan \(2019\)](#) made a strong claim that consumers tend to recall emotional experiences related to brands more than technical aspects of products. Studies on storytelling [Lundqvist et al. \(2013\)](#), empowerment branding [Campbell et al. \(2013\)](#), cause branding [Nan and Heo \(2007\)](#), and experiential retailing [Brakus et al. \(2009\)](#) also suggest that fashion brands are increasingly seeking to form long-term emotional connections with consumers by addressing their emotions, values, aspirations and identity related needs. This increasing focus on emotional ties highlights the greater psychological complexity of contemporary fashion marketing techniques.

The recent literature also underlines the swift penetration of digital technologies and social media within neuromarketing and the fashion consumption. Some recent research discusses the transformation of consumer psychology and behaviour related to fashion through influencer marketing, visual social media platforms, targeted digital advertising, and immersive online experiences. Consumers are constantly exposed in digital environments to aspirational lifestyles, trend culture, symbolic images, and emotionally charged messaging that taps into subconscious wants and desires for fashion. It is increasingly being acknowledged by scholars that digital platforms have served to amplify emotional investment, visual consumption and identity enactment within fashion culture, particularly for younger consumers. A similar trend is the growth in use of Augmented Reality (AR) virtual try-on solutions in fashion retailing. [Al-Emadi et al. \(2025\)](#) in their research on 855 consumers in the Middle East revealed that AR has a positive impact on buying decisions, it significantly raises consumer engagement, and strengthens brand loyalty, suggesting that immersive digital technologies are creating new psychological avenues for emotional consumer-brand connection.

Despite considerable growth of literature in this domain, some key patterns can be identified in relation to the limitations and the gaps in the existing line of research. Still a large amount of studies are quite Western focussed and exploring on/within Western developed states, and to a less extent within developing countries or culturally diverse fashion nation-states. The majority of research on emotional branding, sensory marketing and brain-related marketing strategies are focused on consumers in Europe and North America. As a result, the effect of cultural values, social norms, economic situation, and regional consumption patterns on emotional and subconscious consumer behavior in contextual emerging fashion markets, such as India and other developing economies, is not well understood.

One more visible pattern in the literature is a predominant focus on physical retailing experiences, with a smaller number of studies providing an integrative analysis of the psychological processes in online and mixed mode fashion retailing environments. Whilst some recent studies have begun to address digital storytelling, social media participation and virtual consumer experiences, the evolution of fashion retail in the digital age through artificial intelligence, augmented reality, personalised algorithms and immersive digital experiences is still in its infancy when considering the psychological and neuromarketing potential. Since fashion consumption is increasingly being made in and around digital platforms, it is suggested that upcoming research might also address how subconscious emotional responses manifest differently in physical compared to virtual retail environments.

The literature review also reveals that emotional and sensory dimensions are well researched; yet few inquiries critically explore the sustained psychological and social effects of emotionally persuasive fashion marketing. Prior studies largely focus on reporting the efficacy of emotional branding and sensory marketing to enhancing levels of engagement and purchase intention. Research may need to lean towards a more explicit rather than implied conclusion on a good or bad psychological effect of neuromarketing application in fashion consumption.

Another trend on the rise within the recent literature is the growing convergence of sustainability, ethics, and consumer psychology. Modern buyers specifically younger age groups are more informed about the ethical sourcing, sustainable fashion, environmental care and socially responsible brand etiquettes. Emotional branding is also slowly shifting from luxury and aspiration to values such as authenticity, transparency, inclusiveness and ethical identities. Scholars have started to explore the impact of emotional attachment, moral values and self-identity in sustainable fashion consumption; nonetheless, this stream of research is still in need of expansion both theoretically as well as empirically within the neuromarketing body of literature. Filling this gap, [Korsunova-Tsaruk et al. \(2025\)](#) showed in an experimental setting that nudge communications (visual and verbal) can promote sustainable fashion consumption in Gen Z by addressing emotional and cognitive psychological drivers and, thus, neuro-marketing based messaging strategies may be especially effective in influencing sustainability-purchase behaviour of younger demographic groups.

The review of the literature also indicates that future investigations could be more interdisciplinary, combining, for example, neuroscience, psychology, behavioural economics, digital marketing and cultural studies in interpreting multifaceted fashion consumption. In contrast to the present neuromarketing research which predominantly investigates isolated emotional and sensory responses, future studies can advance models that explain psychological, cultural, technological and social levels of influence as a constellation of simultaneous sources of consumer behaviour. These transdisciplinary viewpoints, will help us to question and understand contemporary fashion consumption and the changing relationship between consumer psychology and brain related marketing in the context of high paced digitized increasingly emotional retailing and service environments. Moreover, a study [Verma et al. \(2025\)](#) noted that the combination of multimodal neuromarketing techniques including EEG, eye-tracking, and facial expressions data, with deep learning analyses provides a more holistic view of consumer cognition and affect, allowing for more accurate forecasts of consumer preferences and facilitating the development of personalised marketing strategies in fashion.

CONCLUSION

This review highlights that fashion consumption is not just a functional or utilitarian buying act, influenced by needs or by economic rationale. Fashion consumption is tightly linked to feelings, mind states, identity construction, symbolisms and the reaction of the subconscious mind, it is quite well-established in the existing literature that consumers of fashion are affective rather than cognitive consumers. The portrayal of consumer behaviour in fashion studies has slowly moved away from conventional rational models and onto emotive, psychological models. This shift is attributed to the growing significance of neuromarketing in the study of fashion and consumer behaviour.

The results may imply that consumers want emotional satisfaction, sensory enjoyment, self-expressions and ideal experiences when consuming fashion. The global neuromarketing industry is estimated to be worth around USD 1.44 billion in 2023 and expected to grow to approximately USD 3.11 billion by 2032, evolving in the academic and business fields as an area that seeks to understand the psychological bases of consumption. Studies in hedonic consumption, emotional branding, symbolic interaction, and experiential retailing have found that consumers do develop emotional connections with fashion products and brands beyond utilitarian functionality. Hence, emotional bonding, identity fit, sensory stimulation and unconscious emotional processing continue to be the core aspects in shaping consumer behaviour in fashion.

The results further suggest that neuromarketing information provided additional information with regard to emotional and cognitive reactions to fashion-related stimuli. Research confirmed the temporal patterns in neuromarketing research and revealed additional areas of practical application, highlighting the field's emerging bright future. Important methodologies like eye-tracking, EEG, facial coding, biometric analysis, as well as sensory marketing techniques evaluating subconscious consumer responses go beyond the full capture of traditional methods capabilities. Advances in neuroscience technologies have enabled the definition of novel methods for analyzing and forecasting human behavior in marketing (fashion) leading to the new term "neurofashion".

Another key takeaway from the review is that emotional branding is ever more critical in current fashion marketing, now largely influenced by digital and AI-based platform players. Today fashion brands are competing not only on product innovation, but also on how well they can build sticky consumer communities with intelligent marketing strategies that keep customers engaged. Shoppers appear to form attachments to brand spokespeople — such as AI-driven virtual influencers — that match their self-image and values, increasing emotional ties, brand loyalty, and a sense of community. As a result, emotional connection is now one of the greatest enablers of consumer engagement and long-term brand loyalty in contemporary fashion markets.

Sustainability has also become a more important emotional and psychological influencer in modern fashion consumption. The emergence of social commerce platforms such as Instagram and TikTok has revolutionized the way sustainable fashion stories are told with brands taking the stage to demonstrate their commitment to environmental impact through visually compelling narratives. Environmental cognition (i.e. environmental awareness and perceived consumer effectiveness) provides a rational basis for sustainable behavior, but emotional and contextual factors have a great influence on the actual purchase and interventions oriented only to the rational aspects might not be the most effective ones as these factors tend to interact in very complex ways. Moreover, empirical evidence on virtual fashion consumption of Generation Z participants notes that perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, and ease of use have a strong positive impact on the adoption intention towards digital and sustainable fashion options.

The review similarly points out a number of ethical and critiques issues related to neuromarketing and emotionally persuasive fashion marketing. Studies on the ethical and privacy implications of AI and ML in neuromarketing suggest an emerging dissonance between the effectiveness of neuromarketing tools and the need to protect consumer privacy, especially under the influence of GDPR across the globe. While AI-led personalisation does raise interesting possibilities for driving engagement and loyalty, the privacy, bias, manipulation and societal implications angles are certainly worth considering. The use of AI models in fashion advertising has raised ethical considerations, as well as questions from consumers about the credibility of the images and the proper place for AI in brand messaging. These conversations suggest that although neuromarketing can provide interesting insights into consumer psychology, its use must be considered responsibly and ethically.

Regulations on neuromarketing are still being developed, and there are major questions about whether influencing decisions made in one's unconscious mind is unethical and whether brands have to inform consumers that they are using neuromarketing insights. Connecting neuromarketing concepts such as the Brain Reward System, Emotional Valence or Mirror Neuron System with tactics like hyper-personalisation, social commerce or AR/VR experiences provides for new avenues for emotionally connected and brain-friendly digital experiences. It also strengthens ethical conversations in the post-pandemic world of evolving digital interaction.

The review also points to the fact that although the extant literature has advanced so far, there are still gaps. Research is still primarily focused on Western consumer markets, with relatively little research on culturally diverse or emergent markets of fashion like India. Cultural influences determine the way consumers' brains respond to brand signals like North American consumers are novelty-seeking and personally empowered, Europeans are more responsive to sustainability and ethical issues, and Asians engage in higher emotional arousal in community and harmonious based stories. Future research might increasingly be directed toward cross cultural relevant approaches to better understand evolving consumer behaviour in digital, emotional, and experience-driven fashion environments.

All the reviewed studies illustrate neuromarketing has become a must-have tool for exploring the emotional and mental core of fashion consumer. The convergence of consumer psychology, sensory experience, emotional branding, AI-enabled personalization solutions, sustainability, and subconscious decision making continue to redefine how fashion consuming is conceptualised in modern consumer study. Thus, as fashion markets evolve to be more competitive, more technology-enabled and more emotionally charged, knowledge of the psychological processes that drive consumers will continue to be of great importance both in terms of theory development and marketing practice.

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