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Bachelor Programme in Business and Economics  
Bachelor Thesis

**Teenage girls aged 13 to 15 and their impulse consumption of clothes**  
*“All my purchases are impulse purchases!”*



Bachelor Thesis

*Authors*

Sanna Britsman  
Kristina Sjölander

*Tutor*

Annika Hallberg

Business Administration/Marketing  
School of Business, Economics and Law at University of Gothenburg

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## Preface

This bachelor thesis in marketing with a focus on consumer behaviour is written at the School of Business, Economics and Law at Gothenburg University during the spring term of 2011. The subject of this thesis is the impulse consumption of clothes by girls aged 13 to 15.

We would like to thank our tutor, Annika Hallberg, who has helped us during our entire research process, and given us valuable advice and unconditional support.

We would also like to thank Lina Karnell and Sofia Larsson for sharing their knowledge and experiences of the retail environment.

Finally, we would like to thank all the teenage girls who took part in our study. Without their participation this thesis would not be what it is today. We thank them for answering our questions honestly and openly.

Gothenburg, 23 May 2011

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*Sanna Britsman*

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*Kristina Sjölander*

## Abstract

**Title:** Teenage girls aged 13 to 15 and their impulse consumption of clothes - *“All my purchases are impulse purchases!”*

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**Authors:** Sanna Britsman and Kristina Sjölander

**Tutor:** Annika Hallberg

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**Key words:** Impulse consumption, Shopping, Teenage girls, Clothes, Fashion, Influences, Behaviour, Reference groups, Store environment.

**Problem:** Teenagers today spend an increasing amount of time shopping. They have a great interest in fashion, and clothes have become a way for them to create their identity. Teenage girls make a great deal of impulse purchases. To understand teenage girls and their impulse consumption, companies have to know the demographic and understand what motivates and influences their shopping process as well as their final consumption choice.

**Purpose:** Our purpose with this thesis is to identify and gain a deep understanding of the factors that drive teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes. We aim to show how companies can use this information to satisfy the teenage girls' needs and make them make more purchases. The thesis focuses on teenage girls at the age of 13 to 15 years old.

**Research questions:** What influences teenage girls' thoughts on the impulse consumption of clothes? What factors lead to teenage girls' impulse purchasing of clothes and how do they feel after the purchases?

**Theoretical Framework:** Theories connected to impulse consumption and different types of impulse purchases are presented. Further, theories regarding teenage girls and what motivates and influences them are described. Finally, we discuss different aspects of the store environment, and what effect this has on teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes.

**Methodology:** This study has a hermeneutical approach. We have used an abductive approach and qualitative methods for data collection and analyses.

**Conclusions:** The main influences on teenage girls' clothing consumption are their friends, siblings and their school. The store environment and the staff are confirmed to be of great importance for their impulse consumption. Impulse purchases are most often a satisfying experience for the segment.

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## 1 Introduction

*This chapter provides a background as to why teenage girls' impulse consumption is important to study. Our purpose of the thesis is presented along with a problem analysis and the results of our pre-study. We then define our research questions and delimitations. The chapter ends with the structure of the thesis.*

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Teenagers have a great deal of money to spend, as well as strong opinions on how and on what they want to spend it (Zollo, 1995). A main interest for many teenage girls is fashion and following the right trends. Motives behind the purchases of clothing by teenagers tend to be, as much to have fun, to desire to be accepted and to be a part of a group. Impulse consumption is common among female consumers (Wood, 1998). For young girls, shopping is a way of socializing (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). This attitude towards shopping can easily lead to impulse consumption. We found it interesting to investigate the relation between teenage girls and the impulse consumption of clothes.

### 1.1 Background

In an article published by *Seventeen* magazine, statistics show that if a teenage girl was given the choice between \$1.000 to spend on clothes or to 'hang out' with the Jonas Brothers for one day, 94% of the girls asked in the study chose the money. This shows that clothes are of a higher interest for teenage girls than entertainment of other form. According to Packaged Facts, teen spending in 2006 was a remarkable \$189.7 billion and expected to reach \$208.7 billion by the end of this year (Marketingvox).

Young teenagers strive to gain social approval and they want to have a feeling of belonging to a group. Teenage girls of today are well aware of fashion and trends, which is a way for them to be accepted. *Seventeen* magazine reported in 2009 that 75% of teens would choose a new pair of shoes over 50 new MP3 songs, and 63% would choose a new pair of jeans over tickets to a concert. These statistics show the importance clothes and fashion have in a teenager's life. They tend to seek approval from others by showing that they know what is in or out in the fashion world. Teenage girls are surrounded by fashion; in blogs, in magazines, in TV-programs and in commercials. They cannot avoid being exposed to fashion, which increases the pressure to follow trends.

In 1996, U.S adolescents spent \$36.7 billion on clothing, a number that has continued to grow throughout the years. As fashion changes so rapidly over time, consumers' wants and needs become more frequent and the impulse consumption increases. Beatty and Ferrell (1998) defined impulse consumption as a sudden and immediate purchase with no plans to buy. Nine out of 10 shoppers occasionally buy on impulse (Welles, 1986). Gunter and Furnham (1998) state that since teens live in a highly consumption-oriented society, they have become more aware of new products and they spend more and more hours shopping. Since 1998, teenagers' purchasing power has increased every year, according to a study done by Swedbank and Cosmos Communications in 2008. This increase of purchasing power increases impulse consumption.

To understand teenage girls and their impulse consumption, companies have to know the demographic and understand what motivates and influences their shopping process as well as their final consumption choice. It is important for companies to learn more and gain a deeper knowledge of the subject in order to satisfy the consumer's needs. This can help clothing retail companies to understand how they can attract teenage girls and understand how they can find a link between impulse consumers and satisfied consumers.

### **1.1.1 Impulse consumption**

An impulse purchase is often made quickly and spontaneously, by just grabbing a product instead of thinking about it (Rook, 1987). There is a difference between unplanned buying in general and certain types of impulse purchases. A widespread definition of *unplanned buying* is the one stated by Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1978) "a buying action undertaken without a problem having been previously recognized or a buying intention formed prior to entering the store". *Impulse buying* does not exactly equal *unplanned buying* according to Piron (1991), who states that *impulse buying* is a form of *unplanned buying* caused by a stimulus where decision is made on the spot. Rook defines impulse buying as "a consumer's tendency to buy spontaneously, unreflectively, immediately, and kinetically" (Rook and Fisher, 1995). Thus, impulse buying is a form of unplanned purchase of a product, which the consumer makes the decision to purchase suddenly while in the store. Impulse buying is not restricted to one type of goods, but can be made within all types of products. It can be perceived as something negative. Rook (1987) claims that impulse buying is linked to immaturity and lower intelligence. However, impulse buying has also been linked to momentary feelings of fulfilment and excitement (Kacen and Lee, 2002), a spontaneous act that makes the consumer happy.

### **1.1.2 Teenage girls**

Urban Dictionary defines teenage girls as: “possibly the absolute stupidest, most materialistic, and shallow kind of human being there is, and by definition, the easiest to make money of” (www.urbandictionary.com). Although this description seems harsh, it is partly true. Age has been shown to be an important factor when it comes to many aspects of teens’ consumption behaviour. The influence in purchase decisions change throughout the teenage years as well as the view of money (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Moschis and Churchill, 1978). Research has shown that middle adolescence, teenagers aged 13 to 15, are more likely to mimic their friends than teens of a higher or lower age. We found this interesting for our study since the fashion industry is all about influence (Brown, Clasen and Eicher, 1986).

### **1.1.3 Clothes**

Clothes are a way for young people to state their identity and create their “self” (Solomon, 2006). Teens want the clothes to match their self-image and their personal needs (Zollo, 1995). With today’s supply of “fast-fashion” clothing stores, trendy clothing is easily available and inexpensive. It is reported that teens spend over 72% of their yearly spending on clothing (Seventeen magazine, 2009). This shows that teenage girls want to look good no matter what. Clothing is the top spending category for teenage girls, and therefore is where they spend most of their money (Gunter and Furnham, 1998). It is important for clothing companies to have a good environment in their stores to enhance the shopper’s experience in order to increase sales (Evans, Foxall and Jamal, 2008). Since impulse purchases are characterized by being decisions made in the store, the store environment is of great importance. In today’s competitive retail environment, clothing companies need to know how to design their stores to attract teenage girls.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The purpose of our thesis is to identify and gain a deep understanding of the factors that drive the impulse consumption of clothes by teenage girls aged 13 to 15. We aim to show how companies can use this information to satisfy the teenage girls’ needs and make them make more purchases.

We will add our findings to existing theories, and hopefully come up with a model of factors that influence teenage girls’ impulse consumption behaviour. Companies then can use this information to increase their sales.

### **1.3 Problem analysis**

Nine out of 10 shoppers occasionally buy on impulse (Welles, 1986). Impulse is therefore a major part of a company's revenues. Clothing stores try to use various techniques to increase impulse consumption. Therefore, it is important for a company to know and understand what factors influence impulse consumption behaviour. They also need knowledge about the differences between *unplanned* and *pure impulse* purchases. As we previously stated, there is a difference between the two terms, in that *pure impulse buying* comes from a sudden powerful urge, while *unplanned buying* is simply any purchase not planned for (Rook, 1987; Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1995). *Pure impulse buying* is often a more emotional experience than *unplanned buying* (Welles, 1986).

Studies show that impulse shopping is more common among women (Wood, 1998). Teenage girls today tend to spend a lot of time in stores as a way of socializing (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). Teenage girls like to shop together (Tootelian and Gaedeke, 1992) Woodside and Sims (1976) found that consumers who shopped with a friend were more likely to purchase something than those who shopped alone. It is also proven that teens who shop in groups tend to spend more money and make more unplanned purchases (Granbois, 1968).

Teenage girls are an important group to study for many reasons; firstly, they are in a defining phase of their life, and starting to make more independent decisions. Girls aged 13 to 15 are at an age where they are old enough to control their free time to a certain extent. For many girls, this age range is when one becomes more aware of one's appearance, and following fashion trends is often a big part of this; and in order to follow new trends, one has to purchase new clothes. Secondly, since teenagers do not have any fixed expenses, they have more disposable income available for impulse consumption. This group also has a long life of shopping ahead of them, and the shopping behaviour they develop now may persist.

#### **1.3.1 Exploratory pre-study**

We conducted an exploratory pre-study consisting of an in depth interview with two girls aged 14. We asked questions about their shopping habits, economy, inspiration, and impulse consumption. The interview guide can be found in appendix 1.

##### **1.3.1.1 Results from our pre-study**

The pre-study indicates that teenage girls make a great deal of impulse purchases and that they are most often satisfied by them.

Nathalie, 14: *“All my purchases are impulse purchases!”*

Sofia, 14: *“My impulse purchases are those I’m most satisfied with”*

Nathalie, 14: *“Yes, they make me happy!”*

The teenage girls in our study were not very aware of the value of money. For example, we asked how much of their allowance they spend each month and this was difficult for them to answer:

Sofia, 14: *“500! Or a little more! Not more than 1000... I think?!”*

This was an important finding for our study since money and price are important factors in impulse consumption behaviour. The respondents stated that their parents pay for basically everything, including their clothes, which is probably the explanation for their lack of money awareness.

Sofia, 14: *“I don’t need to pay for anything”*

Our pre-study shows that the girls do not feel bad when spending money; they just feel good about purchasing something new. They expressed a feeling of joy when they left a store with a bag of purchases. In contrary to this, another study states that impulse consumption shows lack of self-esteem and financial self-control (Rook, 1987). This made us wonder if teenage girls impulse shop because it makes them happy or because they lack financial self-control.

Although the respondents said that they follow fashion blogs and fashion magazines, it was clear that this was not their main source of style and fashion inspiration. Instead, they said that older girls in their life, especially family members, are the main influence. They mentioned a sister, and a cousin, and that they listen to each other. Parents seem to have very little influence over their style, but during the interview, it was evident that the girls are affected by each other. When one girl said something, the other one often agreed or changed her answer to agree. Teenagers want to have a sense of belonging; thereby teenagers value their friend’s opinion more to establish an identity separate from their parents (Moschis and Churchill, 1978; Moschis and Moore, 1979).

The teenage girls also said that it is important for them to fit in at school and follow the trends there. These can be other trends than the trends shown in fashion magazines, blogs and in stores. One girl said that she adapts her style in order to fit in at school.

Nathalie, 14: *“At school, there are trends I follow that are not real trends.”*

This is an important factor in our study because teenagers feel the need to fit in and the desire to be accepted, which seems highly correlated to impulse consumption. Thus, for teens, knowledge of material codes, subcultural trends and clothes is an important social capital (Waerdahl, 2003).

The respondents go shopping several times a week. They said that they never go shopping alone. Browsing in stores is a way for teens to socialize. As research made by Tootelian and Gaedeke (1992) states, teens primarily shop with friends and they like being with a group of friends while they shop. The girls explained shopping with friends helped them evaluate clothes and stores. The respondents also stated that clothes and trends are very important for them and that this occupies a huge part of their free time. This shows that our choice of studying clothing consumption is highly relevant.

The staff in a store has an obvious effect on the respondents' shopping behaviour. They seemed pretty hard in their judgment.

Nathalie, 14: *“If they are disgusting in a store I don't want shop there”*

Sofia, 14: *“If they are hot, I shop more!”*

Our pre-study indicates that teenage girls fall for the techniques stores use to increase impulse purchases. For example, they said that they often purchase cheap items placed close to the register. This confirms that the store environment as well as the staff have an effect on the respondents' consumption behaviour.

We will further develop the findings from our exploratory pre-study in our main study.

## 1.4 Research questions

Our background, exploratory pre-study and problem analysis have resulted in the following research questions that we need to answer to fulfil our study's purpose. Below are our research questions and information needs:

### 1. *What influences teenage girls' thoughts on the impulse consumption of clothes?*

- Who are their role models and where does their style inspiration come from and how is this related to trends and impulse consumption?
- How, if at all, do they plan their shopping and purchases?
- What is their view on spending money and how does this relate to their impulse purchasing of clothes?

### 2. *What factors lead to teenage girls' impulse purchasing of clothes and how do they feel after the purchases?*

- What influence do the store environment and staff have on impulse consumption?
- What feelings do teenage girls experience during an impulse purchase?
- What feelings do teenage girls experience after an impulse purchase?

## 1.5 Delimitations

The purpose of our thesis is to study teenage girls aged 13 to 15 years old. Throughout the thesis, when the terms 'teenage girls' or 'teenagers' are used, we refer to the age group 13 to 15 year olds. Girls in their mid-teens or early teens, aged 13 to 15, are more likely to receive allowances, while older teens tend to have jobs (Mangleburg and Brown, 1995). Our aim of this study is to see the impulse consumption of clothes by those teens that do not have their own income, those teenage girls who receive an allowance. Our study does not aim to describe the consumption behaviour of older teenagers nor boys of the same age.

We have delimited our study to one high school in the centre of Gothenburg. We wanted to study teenage girls who all go to the same school, so we could see the effects of school trends on the group. We also wanted to see the strength of the subculture within the high school environment, to understand the pressure teenage girls experience to follow a certain trend.

We delimited our study to Swedish consumers and the Swedish market. Because of time and resource issues, we limited our study further to the Gothenburg area. Because Gothenburg is a large and diverse area, where all major clothing retail chains are represented, this limitation should not make our results less valid.

### 1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter one provides our aim of this study, background, and a problem analysis. Our problem and purpose are discussed. In chapter two, we will present our theoretical framework, which provides an understanding and context for our further study. Chapter three states our chosen methods of study and how we conducted our research. The following chapter shows our empirical findings, and relates them to our theories presented in chapter two. Finally, in the fifth chapter, we present our conclusions and give recommendations for further research.



**Fig1: Structure of the thesis.**

### 1.6.1 Illustration of the information needed to fulfil our aim of the study

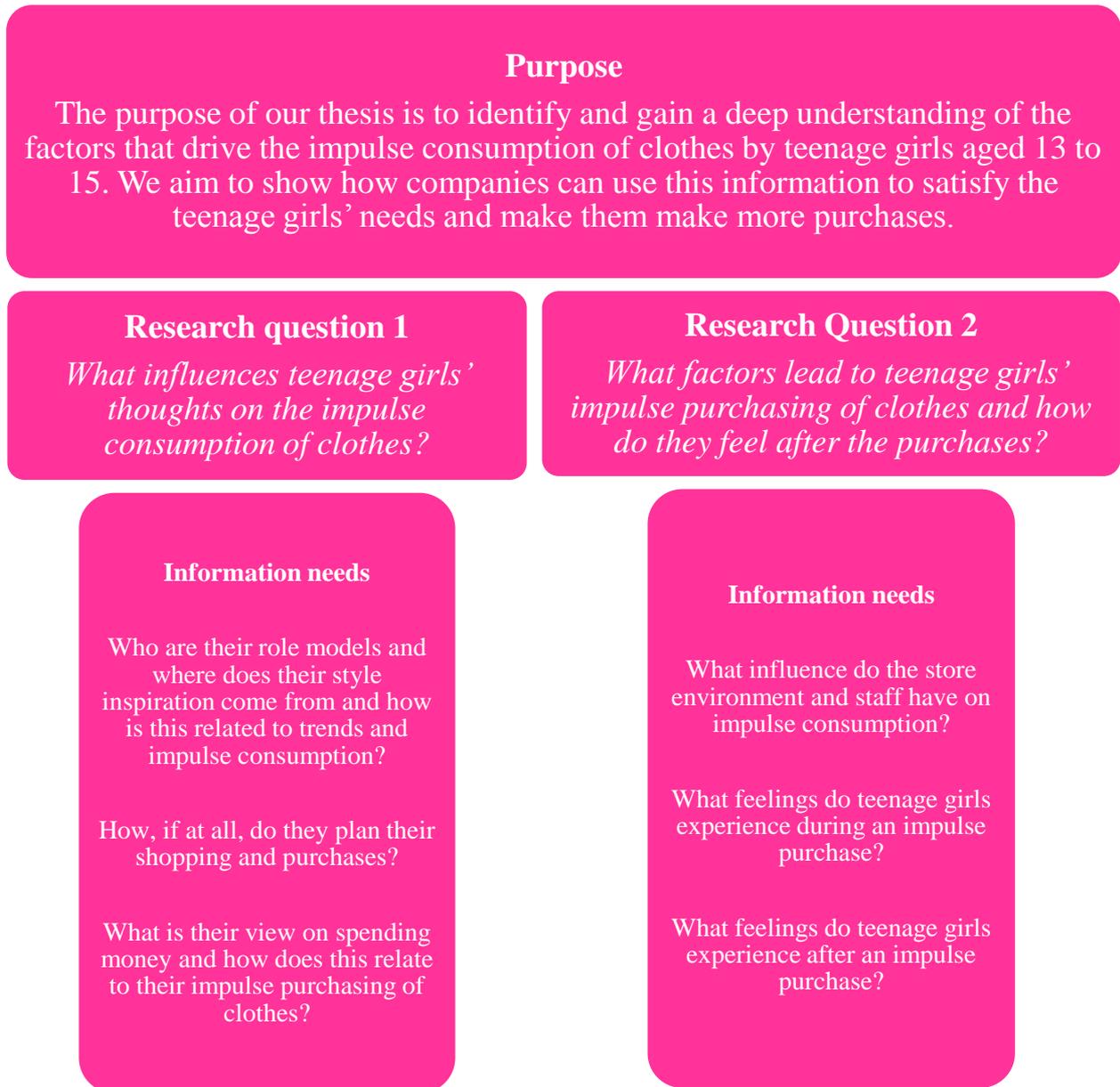


Figure 1.2 The purpose of our study has led to our research questions and their information needs

## 2 Theoretical Framework

*In this chapter, theories connected to teenage girls' impulse consumption are presented and motivated. We present theories about unplanned and impulse buying. Furthermore, theories about identity and influences from different reference groups are described. We explain theories regarding consumers' motives and the decision-making process. We describe theories about what stores can do to affect impulse consumption. The chapter ends with a summary of the presented theories.*

---

### 2.1 Motivation for the theories

We have chosen the theories we expected to be the most relevant and important for our study. These are the theories we assumed to become the most defining factors in our empirical study. The theories discussed below helped us develop an understanding of the factors behind impulse clothing consumption by teenage girls. We will start by presenting impulse consumption theories, defining impulse buying and its parts. We will discuss the difference between *unplanned buying* and *impulse buying* as stated by Engel, Kollat and Blackwell (1978) and others. This is important to our thesis since our pre-study indicates that many purchases that teens consider planned purchases could actually be classified as *unplanned buying* according to Engel, Kollat and Blackwell's (1978) definition. Furthermore, we will discuss what motives lay behind these purchases. We also present the consumer decision-making process, since we want to show how it differs when making impulse instead of planned purchases.

As Beatty and Ferrell (1998) state, the variables behind why a consumer purchases on impulse are factors within the store environment, the time spent in stores, the economic situation of the consumer, the consumer's personality as well as other emotional aspects such as influential groups. We will present theories regarding all these factors.

In order to understand teenage girls' consumption behaviour, it is important to study their reference groups and opinion leaders. To answer our research questions we need to discover how others affect teenage girls' purchases and who influences them the most. Moschis and Moore (1979) state that the most important reference groups for a teen are family, friends and the media. Depending on one's persona and the development of the "self" (Solomon, 2006), the motive for a teen's consumption and the way they choose fashion will differ. This also determines how much one listens to the opinions of others.

We discuss theories regarding the factors that we assume cause impulse consumption by teenagers. Stern (1962) as well as our pre-study indicates that impulse purchasing is strongly related to the price level. The Mehrabian-Russell model (1974) helps us understand the effect the in-store experience has on the consumer's purchasing behaviour. With this model we see how store environment can lead to impulse purchases. We also discuss post-purchase feelings, to determine whether impulse consumers are satisfied or not.

We also discuss theories relating to clothes and fashion to see how important these topics are to teenage girls. With this information we aim to see to what extent teenage girls are affected by fashion and trends, and what other theories have stated about teenage impulse clothing consumption.

## **2.2 Impulse consumption**

*Impulse buying* is defined by Beatty and Ferrell (1998) as “a sudden and immediate purchase with no pre-shopping plans either to buy in the specific product category, or to fulfill a specific buying task.” Between 27% and 62% of all department store purchases are impulse purchases, according to a study by Bellenger, Robertson and Hirschman (1978).

Impulse purchases can be categorized into four different types of impulse purchases (Stern, 1962).

1. “*Pure impulse buying*” – a true impulse purchase different from the consumer's normal shopping behaviour.
2. “*Reminder impulse buying*” – when a shopper is reminded upon seeing a certain item that he/she is running low on it and needs to replace it, or recalls other previously learned facts or experiences with the product and a previously made decision to buy.
3. “*Suggestion impulse buying*” – when a consumer sees a product that is brand new to them but appealing enough to result in a purchase. This type of purchase is often more rational than pure impulse buying, which appeals more to the emotional than the rational side of the consumer.

4. “*Planned impulse buying*” – when the consumer has before entering a store decided to buy certain products and also additional products depending on price reductions etc. This means a general intention to purchase but not exact products (Stern 1962; 59-60).

Evans, Foxall and Jamal (2008) identifies the four types mentioned above and one additional – impulse buying as *an act of freedom*, which means that the consumer purchases something just because they can, thereby taking control of their life.

Just because a purchase happens quickly in the store does not mean it is an impulse purchase (Rook, 1987). Habitual purchases are often easier for the consumer to make, and can therefore seem impulsive to an outsider when they are not to the consumer.

The motives behind impulse purchases have been further described by Bayley and Nancarrow (1998, through Nordfält, 2008). They divide them into 4 urges. The *accelerator impulse* is purchases made earlier than planned; the *compensation impulse* is when a purchase is made as a reward or to compensate for a failure; the *breakthrough impulse* is a purchase that may seem crazy or illogical, but is in fact the beginning of a series of purchases that will follow the consumer for a long time; and the *blind impulse* is a purchase made simply because the consumer just had to have the product right in that instant.

According to Wood (1998), women are more prone to impulse purchasing than men, and younger people are more likely to impulse purchase than older people. Personality traits can also affect how likely a person is to impulse shop. If one never plans one’s everyday life or one’s shopping one will be more likely to buy on impulse (Verplanken, Herabadi and Knippenberg, 2009). Some studies also show that adolescents are more likely to act on impulse because they do not have a correct comprehension of the concept of future time (Rook, 1987). This means that they do not understand the need of financial savings for future needs. The likeliness of impulse purchasing also depends on one’s mood, one’s personality, and one’s needs (Dittmar, 2005).

Many parts of human behaviour are controlled by different impulses, both psychological and biochemical. A *psychological impulse* can be a “strong, sometimes irresistible urge” (Goldenson, 1984; 37). A *biochemical impulse* is when our nerves react and give a specific response (Rook, 1987). This means that the impulse to purchase can have both psychological and neurological origins. Marketers and stores need to know how to make these impulses occur.

Impulse consumption behaviour is generally considered as a negative act. It is associated with lower intelligence, immaturity and poor values (Rook, 1987). Rook (1987) claims that the outcome of impulsive behaviour is financial problems and lower self-esteem. Some studies claim that impulse consumption behaviour is a sign of lack of control (Rook and Fisher, 1995). However, impulse consumption is very common, and in contrary to the previous theories, Hausman (2002) states that consumers need to feel good about their impulse purchases because they can fulfil hedonic needs. A hedonic need is the need to achieve pleasure from a product. This need is most likely related to emotions or fantasies from consuming the product. Kacen and Lee (2002) agree that impulse consumption can be a pleasurable experience and that it can make the consumer happy and satisfied. Later studies by Rook and Fisher (1995) also state the positive aspects of impulse consumption.

### **2.2.1 Consumer decision-making process**

To affect a consumer, it is important to know how they make their decisions. A model of the consumers decision-making process has been developed by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995) and states that the consumer goes through five stages; *experiencing a need, information-seeking, evaluating options, purchase and consequences*. The process is a way to solve a problem, the problem of the experienced need. Applying this to clothes; the problem can be that you need something to wear for a party, the need can be of a fancy dress, and the goal of the process is then to find a party dress that you like, that fits you, within your price range.

Nordfält (2008) argues that this process is not always true. It does not take into consideration consumer's experience and the fact that when we enter a store, the things we purchase are not always the things we need the most, but the things we are reminded of because we spot them in the store. An impulse purchase is likely to be something that breaks the consumer's normal shopping routine, compared to a purchase they have considered for some time (Rook 1987).

The evaluation process is also tainted by influences and personal beliefs, and by the goal of one's purchase, whether one desires something cheap or exclusive. This can correlate to one's involvement level for the product. The criteria on which one makes one's decision differ between different products (Peter and Olson, 2005).

The consumer's decision-making process is integration between comparing different options and choosing one (Peter and Olson, 2005). It can also be integration between the consumer's

knowledge of a product and their observations of others people's opinion about it (Peter and Olson, 2005). Therefore, a person may be more likely to purchase a dress if her friends like it. Since teenage girls often shop in groups, a friend's opinion may be the deciding factor. Even if a consumer goes through the whole decision-making process and makes a decision plan (Peter and Olson, 2005) about what they are going to purchase and where they are going to purchase it, their decision may change in the store due to situational or environmental factors. Therefore, these factors are important for companies to study if they wish to increase impulse purchases.

### **2.2.2 Clothing is a high-involvement product category for most teenage girls**

To be involved in a product means to believe that using it has personally relevant consequences, and to have a relationship with it (Peter and Olson, 2005). One's involvement controls one's motivation. Different categories of goods can be high or low involvement products for different people and in different situations (Mårtenson, 2009). A low involvement purchase is when one does not have strong feelings for the product one is purchasing and thus does not put in a great deal of effort when choosing exactly which brand or style within the product category one is going to purchase. High involvement is a purchase where one puts a great deal of effort and thought into one's decision process. One considers the alternatives on the market and does a great deal of research and comparisons about what is available before one makes one's purchase. Typically low involvement products are seen as cheap and common everyday products like toothpaste or soap, whereas high involvement products are expensive and rarer purchases like a car. But high involvement can also be something one feels strongly about, regardless of the price. Whether a product is high or low involvement can also depend on the perceived risk of the product. According to our pre-study, clothes and fashion are very important for many teenage girls, which has lead us to conclude that clothes are high-involvement purchases for them.

Shopping for clothes is a fun and enjoyable as well as an important task for teenage girls. Having fun is an important motivation in shopping for clothes (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). Clothes are a way of making a statement of who you are and what you stand for. Another reason why clothes are a high-involvement category for teenage girls is the need to be accepted and fit in. Wearing the right clothes is one of the most recognized ways for a teenager to be accepted and popular. Therefore, they automatically become accepted by the group (Waerdahl, 2003). Purchases of clothes are important for most girls during their early teen years and they concentrate their wish

for consumption around clothes (Brusdal, 2001). The power of clothes is evident in the life of a teenage girl.

### **2.3 Motives for impulse consumption**

Mahatoo (1989) explains motivations and the relation between motive and consumption behaviour with an information process that starts with a stimuli that awakes a need. A need becomes a motive when it reaches a certain level of intensity (Kotler et al., 2008; 256). Later, depending on how strong the need is, a drive to fulfil this need starts. This is directly connected to the motive (Mahatoo, 1989). Among younger consumers, such as teenagers, the drive can be their willingness to have something new or the seeking of acceptance by a group (Beaudoin et al., 2003).

Behind every purchase that a consumer makes lies a motive (Hanna and Wozniak, 2001). Consumers purchase products for many different reasons, and not all purchases are strictly necessary. They can be motivated by an emotion, such as sadness, or the drive to fulfil a biological or psychological need. They can be made to express an identity or just for the simple fact that it is fun (Dittmar and Drury, 2000).

Motives can be described with a more classical approach, the *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* effects. The *intrinsic effect* is derived from one's persona, one's "self". These motives are based on the willingness to satisfy one. The consumption motives of an individual are often influenced by the beliefs of those in their social environment (Ratneshwar, Mick and Huffman, 2000; 283). The *extrinsic effect* derives from one's opinion leaders and reference groups. It means that people are motivated to take after these groups and act the way they do, even though the actions do not come from themselves (Ryan and Deci, 2000, through Mårtenson, 2009; 92). This means that a teenage girl might impulse shop just because her friends do.

#### **2.3.1 The "self" and identity**

Solomon (2002) has developed many theories regarding the concept of the "self". According to him, the self includes the concept of *self-esteem*, *ideal self* and *multiple selves*. A person's *self-esteem* depends on how positive a person is about their self-concept. People with low self-esteem often expect themselves to perform badly in situations. They want to avoid failure and embarrassment, often saying they lacked self-control. A person with high self-esteem sees himself or herself as successful, because they take more risk and are more eager to be in the

centre of attention. Most people have an *ideal self*, a conception of how he or she would like to be, as well as an appreciation of an actual self, which is a more realistic view of the qualities we have. Most people feel there is a discrepancy between their ideal self and the actual self. Each person is actually built up of *multiple selves*, one for every social role. Depending on whom we are with and what kind of situation we are in, a person acts differently. People are very aware of how other people perceive them. They tend to shape the way they act depending on the perceived expectations of others (Solomon, 2002). Identity is often shaped by reading other peoples signals and trying to project the impression they have of us, adjusting if necessary in order to belong (Solomon, 2002; 193). Teenagers want to know how other people perceive them. Clothes are a product that can help to place them in a social role (Solomon, 2002; 190). Clothes are also a product that teenagers purchase to help determine who they are. Clothes help create the right you (Solomon, 2002; 193). Once again, the desire to fit in is clear and affects teenagers' consumption behaviour, and may lead to impulse consumption.

#### **2.4 Impulse consumption and teenager's economy**

Teens have more money nowadays. As mentioned above, teenagers' purchasing power has increased every year since 1998 according to a study by Swedbank and Cosmos Communications in 2008. The study also states that 80% of Swedish teenagers receive allowances from their parents, and that 14- year olds receive on average 400 Swedish kronor a month. Brusdal (2001) states in a study that teens 13 to 15 years old thought it would be problematic for them to be without money for a week.

Parents nowadays work more and longer hours which leaves less time to spend with their children. According to Sonesson (1999; 69), this often leaves parents feeling guilty, and they compensate for this by giving their children money; "*love goes through the wallet without anyone really wanting it*". Teenagers' income is controlled by their parents through the allowance they receive. They are too young to earn their own money, and thus, rely on their parents to provide for them. There can be a disagreement between what the teens want and what their parents can afford. What the teens consider to be a reasonable impulse purchase may seem unnecessary and expensive to their parents.

Impulse consumption is more likely when the price of a product is low. Stern (1962; 61) identifies price as a factor with major influence on impulse consumption behaviour from consumers. Gunter and Furnham (1998) found that the price level is the number one criteria for

teens when they decide where to shop for clothes. They take their economy into consideration. The same authors also found that teenagers' increased purchasing power increases the likelihood of impulse consumption.

## **2.5 Impulse consumption and influences**

According to Solomon (2002), there are three ways a person can be influenced by others:

*Informational influence*: when a person expresses a high knowledge within a certain area, this person can be seen as a reference group, and thereby affect other individuals' consumption behaviour.

*Utilitarian influence*: this influence comes from people with whom teenage girls have some kind of social interaction with, such as friends, family, and relatives. It can lead them to purchase clothes in order to please the image other people have of them.

*Value-expressive influence*: when someone purchases clothes in order to enhance the image others have of them, taking after people they idolize.

### **2.5.1 Reference groups**

A reference group is a group that influences a person's attitudes and behaviour, regardless of whether they belong to the group or not. According to Kotler et al. (2008;244), reference groups influence the consumer in three ways, by exposing the person to new behaviour, by affecting the person's attitude and self-image, and by affecting the person's clothing preferences.

A group can affect a teen in a positive or in a negative way. A negative influence can be an avoidance group. The person will avoid purchasing clothes that could associate them with this group. Many people find it easier to know who they do not wish to be associated with than whom they want to imitate (Englis and Solomon, 1995).

Moschis and Moore's (1979) study states that the most important reference groups for teenagers are family, friends, and the media. Lindstrom and Seybold (2003) have reached the same conclusion and that these reference groups influence the teenagers' consumption decisions.

Solomon (2006; 353) further discusses factors that make individuals a reference group to a person. The propinquity to other people plays a major role when it comes to the relationship one has, and how much they can influence a person. The more we see of other people the more we are able to associate with them. This is called *mere exposure*. The degree to which groups attract

others is linked to how highly the group is valued. The higher the belonging to a certain group is valued, the bigger the influence it has on the consumer's decisions. Solomon (2006) calls these groups *cohesive groups*.

### **2.5.1.1 Opinion Leaders**

Opinion leaders are often compared to innovators, because they are often the first to adapt to new products and trends (Chan and Misra, 1990). Because of this they have a great influence on others. It is therefore important for companies to identify their consumers' opinion leaders as a way to reach and affect their target group. By targeting the right person companies can spread trends to an entire segment (Solomon, 2002; 327). Opinion leaders are someone whose opinion we trust and respect above others' because of their experience, knowledge or personality. Most opinion leaders are ordinary consumers who are able to affect 5-10 people in their close environment. They affect other people's values, beliefs and behaviour and with this they also influence their consumption decisions.

Studies show that influences from peers tend to be even more powerful than one's own opinions and the prospect of purchasing a certain product increases if friends give the product a positive judgement (Solomon, 2002; 315). When information is spread between individuals in a more informal way than traditional marketing communication, it is called *word-of-mouth*. This is seen as a more trustworthy way of communication, since it comes from a person the teenagers normally trust. *Word-of-mouth*, therefore, affects teenagers more than traditional marketing. 80% of purchase decisions have been influenced by some kind of direct communication (Solomon, 2002; 318). Since direct communication can take place in a store environment, this affects impulse consumption.

Our friends, parents or certain celebrities' opinions and views are present in the back of our mind as we go shopping. We might recall that they love a certain product, which makes us more likely to purchase it, since we expect to agree with their opinions.

### **2.5.1.2 Parents**

Parents have a great influence on their children since they raise them and shape them since birth, which affects how the teenager thinks and acts today (Gunter and Furnham, 1998). Consumption is introduced to the children by the parents and therefore, the parent's consumption behaviour

can be transferred to the teenager. A parent's price and quality consciousness, among other factors, are often imitated by the child. This has shown to be important for the child's future consumption (Gunter and Furnham, 1998; 12).

The effect from parents is the greatest when the child is young, and the consumption is financed with parents' money, but with age, and when they reach their teen years, they find their influences mainly come from their friends (Gunter and Furnham, 1998).

Teenagers often go shopping with their parents in order to make them pay for their clothes. Many times, they 'pre-shop' with their friends to find what they want, and then return to the store with their parents later (Underhill, 1999; 163).

### **2.5.1.3 Friends**

When children reach their teenage years they start to trust and depend on their friends to a greater extent. They want to become more independent and distance themselves from their parents. They take after their friends' clothing preferences and consider their views in decision-making (Moschis and Moore, 1979). Lindstrom and Seybold (2003) state that early teenagers are more inspired by their friends than older teenagers are. Furthermore, the influence of friends changes over time, since teenagers go back and forth between a desire to be accepted by others and a need of expressing individuality (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003; 52). Teenagers tend to learn materialistic values and social motivations from their friends as well as styles and consumption moods (Ying, 2010).

### **2.5.1.4 The media**

Companies tend to use celebrities and beautiful models in their advertising. When consumers see a model they find inspiring and can identify with, there is an *assimilation effect*, which means that they feel inspired and motivated to look and act like the model. If the model used is too far from their self-concept, the advertisement has a *contrast effect*, and they can instead feel depressed and dissatisfied with themselves (Mårtenson, 2009; 35).

Companies also use the advantages of modern media technology to spread their advertising. During the last couple of years, the traditional media have changed (Johansson and Malmsten, 2009). Media communication through apps for mobile phones and blogs are a very effective way

of marketing. Further, Johansson and Malmsten (2009) state that the internet has provided a meeting place reminiscent of older days' market places, which means that an individual consumer can control what information she reads and how often. There are millions of blogs today and each day 750 000 new ones are started (Weber, 2009). Blogs are a two-way communication that stands out from traditional media because of this. Teenage girls can comment directly on their favourite fashion bloggers' posts and ask where she bought her dress. The reader of a blog feels that it is worth spending their time on (Bausch, Haughey and Hourihan, 2002). One chooses to read a specific blog because one enjoys it. A good blog is not just cost-efficient marketing but has high credibility for its readers (Frankel, 2005). Bloggers have become the new celebrities and some of them have their own TV-shows and clothing collections. They have become the new opinion leaders (Bille and Malmnäs, 2003). People and groups with an indirect influence on a person are called an aspiration group and consist of the teenager's favourite artist or other celebrities that the teenager admires and is inspired by (Solomon, 2002; 306). This is a fact known by the companies. It is the reason why they try to associate themselves with celebrities in their advertising; to increase their revenues. Teenagers are very keen to be accepted and look to opinion leaders to show them what is right. This can lead to teenage girls impulse purchasing a garment a famous blogger says she likes.

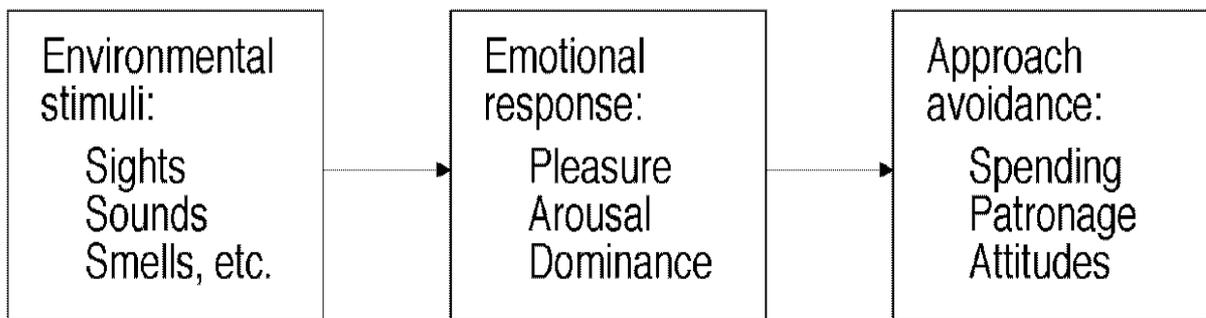
## **2.6 Impulse consumption and the store environment**

The environment in stores is known to affect consumers' consumption behaviour and can explain many of the factors behind impulse consumption. These factors can include the layout and décor of a store, the people who work there, the music they're playing, and how the products are displayed. "The consumer environment refers to everything external to consumers that influence what they think, feel and do" (Peter and Olson, 2005; 24). This environment has two parts, *social stimuli* and *physical stimuli*. Social stimuli are influence from others, reference groups and families. Part of the social environment can be talking to a salesperson. Physical stimuli changes people's feelings and mood and can be things like a product, a store or a sign (Peter and Olson, 2005). A change in the consumer's environment can change their behaviour. For example, better lighting in a changing room can make the consumer feel better about the item they are trying on. These positive emotions lead to impulse consumption.

The atmosphere of a store can be divided into three categories according to a study by Baker in 2002 (Nordfält 2008). These are; *design factors*, *background factors* and *social factors*. Design factors are the way the products are displayed in the store and how the store is designed.

Background factors may not be recognized by the consumer, such as smells or sounds. The social factor is the meeting and relationship between the store's staff and the consumer. Baker's study shows that all three of these factors affect the consumer's purchasing decision and thus their impulse consumption.

The Mehrabian – Russell model, or MR model for short, is a model developed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). It shows the effects the in-store experience has on the consumer's consumption behaviour. It is meant to help us understand the effects of the different aspects of the store. The MR-model consists of the factors environmental stimuli, emotional response, and approach/avoidance behaviour. The environment in the store affects the consumer's mood and feelings which in turn affects their consumption behaviour (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982).



**Source:** Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

*Figure 1. Model of human-environment interaction*

**Figure 2 the MR-model**

Donovan et al. show in a follow-up study (1994) that pleasure is a significant predictor of both extra time spent in the store and unplanned spending. This means pleasure in the way that the consumer likes and appreciates the store environment. When the consumer reaches this level of pleasure, impulse consumption increases. This consumer is more likely to find a store pleasurable when they feel welcome. As a consumer, we want to be noticed. Lempert (2002; 37) states, “consumers want to be respected and appreciated”. Stores can increase their impulse sales by making sure every person who enters the store is acknowledged. A smile or greeting shows that the customer is acknowledged by the staff, and thus, makes them feel welcome and in a better mood, and their mood affects their shopping behaviour. To ignore a shopper is a grave insult (Lempert, 2002).

Stores can control the environment around the consumer and should make sure to use this opportunity to their advantage. Therefore, the displays and décor should not be random but well thought out. Smells affect our minds (Hultén, Broweus and van Dijk, 2008; 53). We often remember scents and associate them with different memories or feelings. Overpowering scents can disturb shoppers. Welcoming smells can make them feel at home (Lempert, 2002). Music also affects the shoppers' behaviour. Slow songs can slow the shoppers down, while faster tracks can get people moving to the cash register.

The store layout can be constructed to control the flow of the customers. A free-form layout is especially encouraging for impulse shopping (Peter and Olson, 2005). Free-form is when the products are organized so that every display is visible from every part of the store, encouraging unstructured flow of consumers (Peter and Olson, 2005). This may increase impulse consumption when, for example, a consumer looking at a blouse spots a great necklace to go with it. The disadvantages of this layout are that it is not an efficient use of store space, and can seem confusing (Peter and Olson, 2005).

The appearance of the store is part of the shopping situation along with the staff's behaviour, the consumer's intentions, the products for sale, the companions of the shopper and much more (Peter and Olson, 2005). The store's image consists of more than its physical attributes; it also includes their service, their price level and convenience. A store can encourage impulse consumption by creating an atmosphere where the consumer feels comfortable.

## **2.7 Impulse consumption and post-purchase feelings**

“Regret is experienced postpurchase from the product chosen...or from the decision-making process” (Das and Kerr, 2010; 1). This means that the consumer may end up regretting a purchase because the product was not as good as expected, or because the process of choosing the product wasn't efficient enough, or a combination of these reasons. This could be the case with impulse purchases, as the decision-making process then is often distorted and quicker than usual. However, the feelings the consumer experiences following an impulse purchase can often be happiness and excitement according to Dittmar and Drury (2000). Negative feelings instead arise when the need to purchase becomes a form of compulsion. This can happen when the feeling of having to purchase something takes over beyond reason, making impulse purchasing a negative experience. When it comes to purchases of clothing, a reason to be dissatisfied with a purchase can be that one never ends up wearing the garment. “As more time passes after a

purchase but before use, shoppers tend to question their purchase and lay blame on the influences of others” (Lempert, 2002; 96).

No company can survive without satisfied customers. Companies can increase customer satisfaction by thanking them for their purchases. This is easily done via e-mail, where the retailer can also recommend the consumer other products based on their previous purchases (Lempert, 2002). Providing excellent customer service can be what makes a person choose one store over another. This customer service starts in-store and should continue post-purchase. Companies should educate their stores’ staff into taking the extra step to satisfy every consumer, and make sure they have the means to do so (Lempert, 2002). An impulse purchase by a consumer can possibly be turned into what Bayley and Nancarrow (1998) call a breakthrough impulse, the first in a series of purchases, if a company follows up on their consumers’ shopping, and work toward keeping them satisfied post-purchase. A disappointed consumer is not likely to purchase from that company again, and not likely to recommend the retailer to friends (Lempert, 2002). Dissatisfaction often stems from the product not living up to the consumer’s expectancies. Lempert (2002) makes a point that young consumers may be more forgiving if a company meets her complaints quickly and in her own language. Companies who meet complaints in standardized ways can risk making the consumer even more disappointed. Thus, companies can gain more by adapting their communication to teenagers. They should also realize that every purchase is important and try to make it a positive experience for the consumer.

## **2.8 Clothes and Fashion**

Statistics from 2010 about the Swedish population’s consumption show that they spend 5.1% of their money on clothes and shoes. This means that the Swedish population consumes clothes and shoes worth over 74,5 billion Swedish kronor (<http://www.ekonomifakta.se/>, 2011).

As discussed above, consumption has become a part of teenagers’ identities. Clothes transmit an image both to the person wearing it as well as to the surrounding environment (Gunter and Furnham, 1998). Dittmar and Pepper (1992) talk about an extended sense of self where clothes play an important part in informing others about, for example, social and occupational status such as values and beliefs (Dittmar and Pepper, 1992; Gunter and Furnham, 1998; 43). Acuff (1997; 114) states that looking good, self-esteem and social acceptance are the most important things for early adolescents aged 13 to 15 years. Teenagers are often sensitive when it comes to

what they wear publicly, and in their school environment (Acuff, 1997). Those concerned with their public image are more aware of what products are socially accepted and are also more interested in clothes.

## **2.9 Theoretical Summary**

The majority of Swedish teenagers receive allowance from an early age and their purchasing power has increased every year since 1998 (Swedbank and Cosmos Communication, 2008). Clothes have become a way for teenage girls to state their identity and transmit an image to their surroundings. Consumption is a part of teenage girls' identity and shopping is a way for them to socialize. Shopping for clothes is motivated by having fun (Hartman and Kiecker, 1991). Kacen and Lee (2002) state that impulse consumption can make consumers happy and satisfied. High-involvement purchases are products one feels strongly about and therefore is willing to spend money on (Mårtenson, 2009). Clothes are a high-involvement product category for most teenage girls. Wood (1998) concludes that young female consumers make more purchases on impulse than other demographics do. Teenage girls are more likely to act on impulse because they do not have an adult's perspective on the future (Rook, 1987). Teenage girls often shop in groups, which can increase their impulse consumption, since they listen to their friends' opinions. A person is often more likely to purchase an item if her friends like it. To fully understand teenage girls' consumption behaviour, knowledge of their reference groups and opinion leaders is necessary. Moschis and Moore (1979) state that the most influential reference groups for a teenage girl are family, friends and the media.

Engel (1978) describes impulse buying and unplanned buying, while Stern (1962) defines four types of impulse purchases. An impulse purchase breaks the shopper's normal consumption routine, and is not a purchase they have considered beforehand (Rook, 1987). Impulse consumption decisions are made in the store. The effect of the in-store experience on the consumer's purchase behaviour is explained in the MR-model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). 80% of purchase decisions are influenced by direct communication (Solomon, 2002), for example, through staff and customer interaction. The store environment, along with the staff, affects the customer's mood and feelings, which in turn affects their purchase decision (Donovan and Rossiter, 1982).

### 3 Methodology

*This chapter will describe and present the methods used in the thesis. We will present our scientific approach and our research method as well as the methods used to collect data. We describe our focus group and expert interviews. Finally, we discuss the credibility of our methods.*

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#### 3.1 Scientific approach

The *hermeneutical* approach means to study a phenomenon and try to understand it (Johansson, 2011). To understand a person is to understand what she wants to express through her actions, and this understanding is achieved through interpretation (Johansson, 2011; 96). According to the hermeneutical approach, one approaches their study with a certain degree of previously obtained knowledge, which can consist of general beliefs about the world, as well as more specific facts about the subject (Johansson, 2011; 96). The *positivist* approach assumes instead that human actions can be sterilized from their social relations and surroundings (Halkier, 2010; 1). This is not an approach suitable for our study since we are aiming to find out how shopping is influenced by social pressure and store environments.

The hermeneutical approach suits our study since we are studying how shopping behaviour is affected by different factors. This means that we are striving for an understanding and interpretation of what influential factors are being expressed through the teenage girls' shopping habits. We want to understand their thoughts and what affects their behaviour.

When using the hermeneutical approach, one switches between studying and interpreting the unity and its parts. This is referred to as the hermeneutical circle (Johansson, 2011; 96). This is how we carried out our study, by studying both individual factors and how all of them come together, and how one factor alone can have a huge influence on the impulse consumption process as a whole.

We approached our study with the pre-conceived notion that teenagers are influenced by other people and their environment. Reality is individual, social and cultural (Backman, 1998) and we perceive it differently based on previous experiences, beliefs and attitudes. Through our literature review we also gained specific knowledge about impulse consumption, teenagers, and reference groups before conducting our main study.

The *deductive* approach means assuming that a general rule is true and that it therefore explains individual cases (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; 3). It can be used for testing existing theories to see if they agree with reality. An *inductive* approach means to study reality and draw conclusions from this. It assumes that what is found by studying individual cases is also generally valid (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; 3). The *abductive* approach means to develop theory and empirical findings simultaneously throughout the research process to better understand and explain them both. Abduction includes understanding, and is a more in depth way of explaining something, compared to using deduction and induction (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009; 4).

We use an abductive approach to our research. In this way the theory is developed through the empirical findings. We use this approach since we believe that our empirical findings cannot be understood without theory and theory is better understood when applied concretely.

There are three kinds of scientific study approaches; *explorative*, *descriptive*, and *causal*. An explorative study aims to provide basic knowledge of a topic, often for use in further research (Lekvall and Wahlbin, 2001). The descriptive study aims to describe something using questions like, who; what; when (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2006). A causal study aims to predict the future by creating models to predict when and how things occur (Patel and Davidson, 2003).

We have used all of these approaches to some extent in our study. Our pre-study was exploratory, and we strived to gain basic insight into the teenagers' thoughts and behaviour. Our main study is mostly descriptive. It describes our respondents' behaviour and the factors that influence it, and clothing stores staffs' experiences on the topic. Our study also has causal traits, in the way that we explain what factors drive teenage girls to shop impulsively and what store environments can make them purchase clothes on impulse.

### **3.2 Research approach**

There are two different kinds of research approaches. The quantitative approach aims to generalize and describe a situation using statistics derived from a large population. The qualitative approach aims instead to describe in depth the actions and thoughts of a smaller population. The quantitative approach provides an overview while the qualitative approach provides details (Holme and Solvang, 1997).

We have used a qualitative approach to our research. This approach is the most fitting since we want to study our target group in depth and see how they interact with each other and how they are affected by outer stimuli, for example store windows. The qualitative approach is a soft way to collect data using interviews and analyses (Patel and Davidson, 2003). It is a fitting approach to discover behaviour and thought patterns (Holme and Solvang, 1997). We do not want quantitative data for general statistical analyses but instead we want to reach a higher understanding of the causes and effects of the target groups behaviour and views. Holme and Solvang (1997) recommend the qualitative approach when focusing in depth on a smaller group instead of a broad survey of a larger group, which is the case in our study. The views, behaviour and attitudes we are looking to analyze are not fitting to generalize through quantitative data collection. We wish to gain a deep understanding of teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes and all the factors that contribute to and control it.

Our choice of approach is designed to provide us with closeness to our object of study so that we can really see how their actual behaviour is, since answers provided in quantitative surveys sometimes are not really processed by the interview subject, and not always representative of their actions, instead giving a picture of how they wish they would act. Another aspect of our choice of research approach is that large companies have the capacity themselves to do large-scale quantitative analyses, which would be impossible for us to provide; whereas they might not have the same chance of intimacy with the target group that we have access to.

### **3.3 Chosen methods**

#### **3.3.1 Method of Data Collection**

Primary data is data collected by the authors themselves and secondary data is data obtained from other sources (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2006). We have used a combination of primary and second data, focusing mainly on secondary data at first and then adding primary data to this as our study proceeded. We began our study by collecting secondary data from different written sources. We collected primary data from a pre-study interview and a focus group with girls aged 13 to 15 and from expert interviews with staff from fashion clothing stores. We collected secondary data from literature study. The information we needed to gather was teenage girls' impulse consumption habits, and their views and thoughts about what influences their shopping decisions. We needed information about their economy, their fashion inspiration and influences, their shopping habits, and their views on clothing stores. We wanted to see them discuss these

questions among themselves to see how they affect each other. We also needed information about how stores and their staff reason about impulse consumption, and what they do to increase it.

### **3.3.2 Primary Data**

The main part of this data was collected in the second part of our study. It was important for us to collect primary data to be able to answer our research questions. Primary data has the advantage of being collected for the sole purpose of this study, and as authors, we can therefore control how it is collected and tailor it to our research needs (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2006).

#### **3.3.2.1 Focus groups**

The focus group is a form of group interview with a high degree of interaction among the respondents (Halkier, 2010). Therefore, we used a focus group as a way to gain a deeper understanding of the teenage girls and the way they act together. Since shopping often is a social activity for them, we wanted to see them interact and discuss the subject. The questions we need answers to are broad and deep, and cannot be answered in a simple 'yes or no' survey. The focus group allowed us instead to form a relationship with the study objects and make them open up to us and provide us with more honest and in-depth information. Focus groups are a good way to learn more in-depth about the behavioural patterns of a group and their beliefs (Halkier, 2010; 8). The focus group helped us understand how each person is influenced, by what, and by whom. This is the advantage of the focus groups compared to ordinary interviews, the fact that we can see how the participants interact (Halkier, 2010). This interaction is important since the girls often interact when shopping. Focus groups are a good way to allow the participants to express their real views and thoughts, since the participants can discuss amongst each other, and thus, delve deeper into the subject (Halkier, 2010).

Since we want to know what influences their decisions (for example, which reference groups) focus groups are a good way of seeing how others affect the study objects (Halkier, 2010); for example, if some of them tend to change opinions when others in the group express a different view. The way the group interacts will be a representation of how girls aged 13 to 15 interact. For our main study, we chose to do one large focus group instead of several mini focus groups because we found it suitable for our research to see how a larger group interacts, since that is usually the environment teenage girls inhabit, for example, in a classroom. We found it

interesting to study the girls together in a focus group to see how factors like popularity, confidence and characteristics affected their answers.

Before proceeding with the focus group we composed an interview guide with the questions we wanted to discuss, as a way to lead the conversation. It is important to have prepared questions beforehand, including some introductory questions to set the mood for the focus group (Halkier, 2010). We used a semi-structured interview style, which means that we had a set of questions prepared in order to steer the discussion into the topics of interest to us, but we also let the participants discuss freely in order to see what thoughts appeared when they were allowed to speak more freely. We used a probing interview technique, asking follow-up questions when they said something that seemed interesting. The pre-study interview and our focus group were held in Swedish since that is the native language of the participants. The quotes used in our thesis are translated by the authors. We first transcribed the data in Swedish and then translated it to English. The interview guides used for both our pre-study and our focus group can be found in a translated version in the appendix.

### **3.3.2.2 Pre-study interview**

We started our data collection by conducting a preliminary study. This consisted of an in-depth interview with two female participants at the age of 14. We interviewed the two respondents together to enable discussion between them. The interview allowed us to test their responses to our questions and help us further develop our questions for the focus group. We aimed to gain some preliminary insight into what factors affect the teenagers' impulse shopping behaviour in order to find out what theories and models would be suitable for further analyses. We wanted to gain some insight into their views on these subjects to help design our question for our main study and focus group. This was important for us in order to learn more about how teenage girls feel and reason about impulse consumption. We asked questions about their economy, their shopping behaviour, and the effect of a retail environment, their role models and how this correlates to their impulse consumption. We used a semi-structured interview guide and used a probing interview technique with follow-up questions to really reach the respondents' in depth thoughts. The names of the respondents have been changed to let them remain anonymous.

The preliminary study also proved that the respondents understood our questions and could answer them in a relevant way. It helped us to further narrow down our purpose and define key terms.

### **3.3.2.3 Executed focus group**

Halkier (2010) states that the participants should not be chosen at random but by using key criteria that are important for the aim of the study. Our focus group had eight participants aged 13 to 15. They all attend the same school, since we wanted to study the affect the school trends has on them. We chose girls of this age since the aim of this study is to study girls attending Swedish grade 7 to 9. They were all familiar with each other from before, which we found necessary to allow them to open up about how they influence each other and how they shop together. The focus group was held in a small classroom at the School of Economics, Business and Law at the University of Gothenburg. We felt this was neutral ground and allowed the respondents to feel relaxed. It is important to choose a venue where the respondents can feel comfortable but where background noise is limited so that the focus group can be recorded (Halkier, 2010). We provided them with candy, muffins, donuts and soft drinks. We introduced ourselves and the general topics we would be discussing to make the participants feel prepared (Halkier, 2010). We did not mention the word “impulse” in our introduction of the subject since we did not want to affect their answers. We informed the participants that they would remain anonymous so that they would feel comfortable giving honest answers. We started by asking general questions about their free time and shopping habits before steering the discussion towards impulse consumption. We decided to open with more general questions to make the teenagers comfortable and get them talking (Wärneryd, 1990). We then let them discuss and talk very freely among themselves to see how they act among each other and who seemed to be leading the conversation. We managed to create a very lively, fun, open and honest discussion that lasted for two hours. We took turns being moderators, asking questions, and taking notes. We managed to remain almost invisible while steering the topics of discussion, thus making the interviewer effect disappear. The whole focus group was recorded as well. We then transcribed the focus group as thoroughly as possible. The names of the respondents have been changed to protect their anonymity.

The aim of the focus group was to gain insight into the girls’ impulse consumption behaviour and their attitudes towards stores, their displays, and their staff. We also wanted to gain insight into what makes them shop, what factors effect and influence their purchase decisions.

### **3.3.2.4 Expert interviews**

We wanted to do expert interviews to gain insight into store staff’s views and knowledge on teenage girls’ impulse consumption. When using expert interviews, individuals who are

beforehand known to possess certain knowledge, significant for the study, are selected. These individuals should be individuals with experience and knowledge to share (Lekvall and Wahlbin, 2001). We wanted to interview people with longtime experience of working in a clothing store. We conducted interviews with Lina Karnell and Sofia Larsson, who both have a long experience of working in clothing stores and also have an education in store management. They have also written a bachelor thesis on impulse consumption and therefore have great insight into the subject. They currently work at Cubus and Design Only, respectively. Both these stores are fashion clothing stores located in the center of Gothenburg. Design Only has a much higher price level than Cubus, and we found it interesting to see if the impulse consumption by teenage girls differs depending on the price of the clothes.

The interviews took place over breakfast at a café in central Gothenburg and lasted for about one and a half hours. We asked questions regarding how stores work to increase impulse consumption. We wanted to hear about their experiences of teenage girls' impulse shopping habits and how they act in stores.

We transcribed the interviews directly afterwards. The interviews were conducted in Swedish and the quotes provided in the thesis have been translated by the authors. The interview guide is provided in a translated version in appendix 3.

### **3.3.3 Secondary data and source criticism**

Our secondary data was collected through literature reviews from scientific articles and journals, textbooks on marketing and consumer behaviour, and from databases such as Business Source Premier and Emerald. Our keywords used were impulse consumption, teenagers, consumption behaviour, teenage girls, clothes, fashion, retail and unplanned buying, among others. We tried to select a mixture of older and more recent data and articles.

We approached all secondary data collected with a critical attitude, since it is not written by us or specifically for our thesis. We chose this data carefully and considered the source. When searching in databases we mostly chose to receive only peer-reviewed results. When we found references were made to another source we always, if possible, gathered the information directly from the original source instead. We were more critical towards sources like teenage magazines and only used data from these sources for statistics from their surveys, and not for theoretical contribution.

### **3.4 Criticism against chosen methods**

The focus group was designed to make the girls seem comfortable and open up to us, and we certainly feel that we achieved this. However, we are aware that teenage girls might be affected and in some cases restrained by the presence of their peers, which might affect their answers. But since this might be the case in the shopping habits as well, we still felt that a focus group was the best way to collect primary data. As with all qualitative study, our research might have the drawbacks that the conclusions drawn are tainted by the authors' interpretation of the data, and that the sample size may be too small to make generalizations. The aim of our thesis is not to make generalizations about the entire clothing retail industry, nor about all teenagers. We aimed to show the thoughts behind, and behavioural patterns of, girls aged 13 to 15 impulse consumption of clothes. We have strived to remain neutral in our analyses. We feel that our chosen methods are the best way to gain a deep insight and knowledge about our research topic. For the aim of our study we found expert interviews to be the best complement to our focus groups, since we wanted to study impulse consumption from both a consumer and a store staff point of view. We feel that our experts possess highly relevant knowledge for our study.

### **3.5 Credibility**

The aim of our study is not to generalize our findings about all teenagers and their consumption. We rather see our study to be used as a help for others who want to understand more about teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes. They can use our findings and apply these to their specific problem or situation.

#### **3.5.1 Reliability**

Reliability measures to which degree the study will give the same results if repeated (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2006). Reliability means that different researchers should come to the same conclusions (Wibeck, 2000; 119). We have used a qualitative method with focus groups and expert interviews. With these methods a high reliability can be hard to achieve, since people and thereby their answers are affected and influenced by the environment they are in, how the questions are asked, their mood, and the attitude of the interviewer. This makes it almost impossible for different researchers to reach the exact same conclusions (Svenning, 2003; 63). In qualitative studies, the concept reliability is therefore rarely used. Because of this, validity earns an extended meaning (Patel and Davidson, 2003). For this reason we have focused on discussing validity in our thesis, since it is more relevant to our chosen method.

We have, however, tried to ensure a high reliability by remaining as neutral as possible when acting as interviewers, and performing our primary data collection in neutral surroundings. We tried to take a step back and let the respondents in our focus group discuss freely among themselves. We also transcribed all our oral data immediately after the focus group and interviews, while we had the experience fresh in mind, to ensure that no observations concerning how the girls affected each other and their roles within the group were lost in our memory.

### **3.5.2 Validity**

Validity means "the extent to which the conclusions drawn for the experiment are true" (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2006; 276). When the thesis has a high validity, it measures only what it is intended to measure (Patel and Tebelius, 1987). It measures whether the aim and the purpose of the thesis was in fact what was actually studied. The data collected and the results drawn have to be of relevance for the problem. Kreuger and Caisey (2000; 202) recommend doing preliminary testing of one's intended questions before performing one's main study to increase the validity of the thesis. Our pre-study helped us achieve this by testing the understanding of our questions.

A threat to validity when it comes to people participating in a focus group is that they can be affected and pressured within the group (Wibeck, 2000). As we discussed earlier, we found it interesting and relevant for our study to see the social interaction between the teenage girls and how they affect each other. Another threat concerning the validity of the study when using focus groups is to place the session in an environment unfamiliar to the respondents, since it can make them feel uncomfortable (Wibeck, 2000; 121). However, since we noticed in our pre-study that the girls were so affected by their school environment, we felt it better to remove them from it. To avoid that the validity in our focus group was affected by us being older girls, we informed the respondents that it wasn't a strict interview with right and wrong answers, and that a free discussion is encouraged, and that there would be no judgment of their opinions from us. We tried to make the respondents feel comfortable by acting friendly, since according to Fine and Sandstrom (1988; 17) it is important when it comes to younger respondents to moderate the discussion as a friend to ensure an open discussion.

The validity of our thesis is also strengthened by the fact that we chose expert interview subjects with relevant knowledge, since they have a long experience of working in clothing stores and an education in store management.

Throughout our entire process, we have tried to interpret the answers objectively. We have not tried to affect the teenage girls, nor the experts, to provide any particular answers.

The theories we have chosen to discuss can all be applied to impulse consumption, even though some of them were not originally formulated to discuss this. We have provided a detailed description and discussion of our methods used, which allows our readers to see that our results are valid.

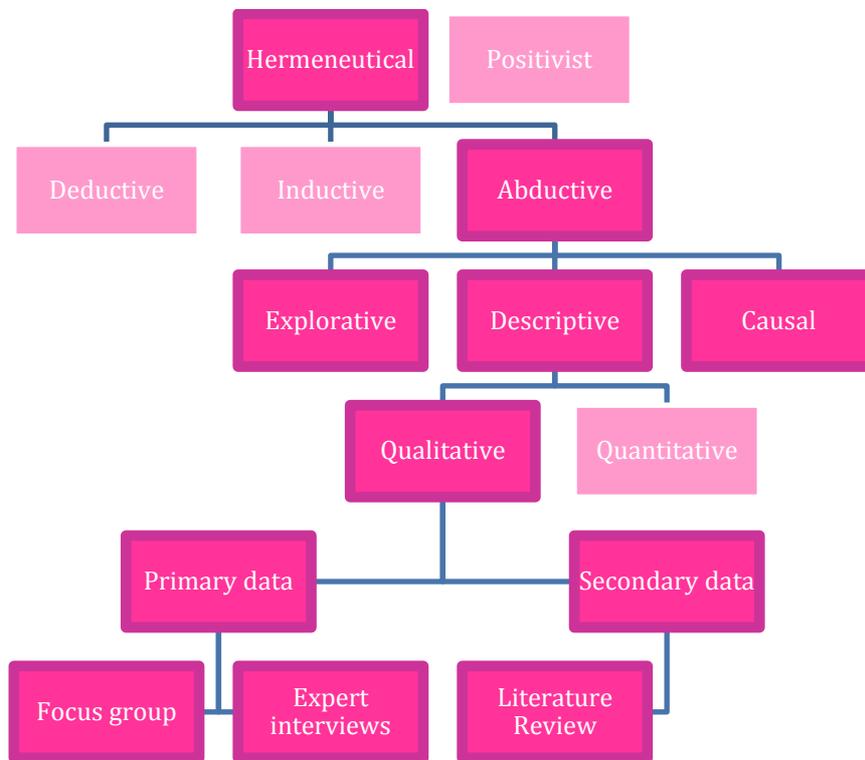
We both participated in collecting all the data, performing all the sessions, and following analyses of them, together. This has given us an interpretation from two different points of views, with different background and experiences. It helped us make sure that nothing was forgotten or misinterpreted. This increases the validity of our analyses and results.

### **3.5.3 Generalizability**

Generalizability describes whether the results drawn from this specific study can be generally applied to a larger population. In our thesis we have interviewed teenage girls from one school in the centre of Gothenburg, where the students are known to come from relatively financially well-off families. We suspect that our results would change in certain aspects, mostly in where the teenage girls shop, if we had interviewed girls from another school, for example, in a suburb. We assume the impulse consumption patterns would be the same but the clothes might be purchased in other, cheaper stores. The same can be said of smaller cities than Gothenburg and of other countries.

### 3.6 Overall study approach

In the figure 3.1 below, we present the approaches and methods we have used in our thesis.



**Figure 3.1 our choice of research approach and method**

The darker boxes show our chosen approaches and methods, while the lighter boxes represent the ones we have rejected.

## 4 Results and analyses

The following chapter analyses the results from our expert interviews and focus group in relation to relevant theories described in the theoretical framework chapter. We will present what we found to be the most important factors when it comes to influencing teenage girls' impulse consumption. We will present their thoughts, behaviour, and feelings on impulse purchases of clothes. These results will be presented in accordance with our research questions and our information needs.

### 4.1 Respondents

At first we present the respondents from our focus group as well as from our expert interviews. We have later structured the chapter by our research questions and information needs, where the significant results and analyses will be presented. However, fashion will not receive a sub-section of its own, since the other factors we highlight in our analyses frequently incorporate fashion. Impulse consumption by teenage girls aged 13 to 15 is mirrored throughout the analyses. As in the rest of our thesis, the term teenager refers to 13 to 15 year olds.

#### 4.1.1 Focus group participants

In the table below, we have summarised the ages, allowances and shopping frequencies of our focus group participants. We chose to show allowances and shopping frequencies for each participant, since we found this very relevant for our analyses and results. The respondents all go to the same school, which we found necessary because our pre-study indicated that the school environment was very important for teenage girls.

Table 4.1 Focus group respondents

| Name     | Age | Allowance (Swedish kronor)        | How often do you go shopping? |
|----------|-----|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sara     | 13  | 200 kronor /week                  | Every day                     |
| Lina     | 14  | 700 kronor /month                 | Every other day               |
| Rebecca  | 14  | 750 kronor/month                  | 6 days a week                 |
| Emma     | 14  | 1000 kronor/month                 | 3 times a week                |
| Mikaela  | 13  | Money when needed                 | 3 times a week                |
| Ida      | 15  | Child benefit (1050 kronor/month) | All my free time              |
| Elsa     | 15  | 600 kronor/month + extra          | Several days a week           |
| Victoria | 14  | 700 kronor/month                  | 4 days a week or more         |

#### **4.1.2 Expert interview respondents**

The names of our expert interview subjects are Sofia Larsson and Lina Karnell. Sofia Larsson works at Design Only, an exclusive clothing store. Lina Karnell works at Cubus, a low-priced, ‘fast fashion’ clothing chain. We found it important for our study to interview one person from each of these two segments, since we wanted to find out if impulse consumption by teenage girls changes with the price level of the clothes. Sofia Larsson has almost three years of retail working experience. She has previously worked at Stadium, and has been in charge of the accessory department at Design Only. Lina Karnell has three years’ experience of working in retail stores. She has previously worked at Vero Moda and has been in charge of the men’s department at Cubus. The respondents both have education in store management and have also written a thesis on impulse consumption. These two respondents will henceforth be denoted “experts” in the text, or by their name when we refer to an individual opinion.

#### **4.2 What influences teenage girls’ thoughts on the impulse consumption of clothes?**

In our theoretical framework, we mentioned that Wood (1998) claims that women are more likely to purchase on impulse than men, as well as that younger people are more likely to impulse purchase than older people. This was confirmed in our focus group. The girls stated that they seldom know what they are looking for when they go shopping, and they often impulsively find items they just have to have.

Emma, 14: *“You look around, and if you find something nice, I just buy it!”*

That teenage girls buy a lot on impulse was also confirmed in our expert interviews. Both our experts said that it was very common. Both the exclusive store and the budget chain experience a high frequency of impulse purchases by teenage girls. They found it surprising how easy it seemed for the teenagers to spend money without a second thought. They find that they can easily make the girls make more impulse purchases. However, they said that they often do not even have to talk them into buying something, since the girls do this themselves. Many of the impulse purchases were made without them even trying on the items, perhaps due to the fact that they shop so much that they know their exact size. When a girl does enter the dressing room, it most often ends with a purchase.

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *“Once in the dressing room, it’s a done deal”*

The experts found teenagers in general to be the biggest group of impulsive shoppers. Teenage girls often have a strong idea of how they want to look, depending on their persona (Solomon, 2006) and we found this to be a factor that often leads to impulse consumption. Our experts asserted that when a teenage girl enters the store, she quickly scans the displays and is directly drawn to the items she knows are 'right'. If she spots something she knows is trendy or accepted at school, she will most likely buy it without further thought. The experts felt that the girls almost always buy something, and they often suspect that they are buying just to have something new.

Mikaela, 13: *"I always feel like I'm missing something even though I'm not"*

It is evident from our focus group that the girls go shopping a lot. When we asked the girls how often they purchase an item of clothing (as opposed to just 'window shopping' and browsing stores), they became very confused and could not give a straight answer. However, after a while, they came to the conclusion that they make a purchase at least once a week. One girl admitted that some weeks she can buy up to five items. A contribution factor as to why they so frequently purchase clothes may be that they love the feeling of owning something new:

Elsa, 15: *"When I wear a new sweater I feel 'God I look hot!'"*

Wearing new clothes gives the girls' self-esteem a boost. Acuff (1997) states that looking good is one of the most important things for teenagers, and our focus group confirms that they feel good when they look good.

Sara, 13: *"When I feel that I have a nice outfit it gives me the energy to go to school"*

Our results also suggest that the pressure the teenage girls feel to fit in at school affects their consumption behaviour. This agrees with Gunter and Furnham's view (1998) that clothes transmit an image of the person wearing it, and Acuff's (1997) statement that teens are often sensitive when it comes to how they dress in the school environment.

#### **4.2.1 Who are their role models and where does their style inspiration come from and how is this related to trends and impulse consumption?**

The girls' main role models are slightly older girls in their community. A reason for this is probably that they are easier to relate to than celebrities and fashion bloggers. Their main influence, however, seems to be their friends, siblings and the school environment. They adapt to each other within their group of friends. We also found Solomon's (2006) *word-of-mouth* communication theory to be confirmed, but more so when the teenagers discuss other types of products such as makeup and jewellery. When it comes to clothes and fashion, we found that teenage girls are more likely to observe and adapt than anything else. Teenage girls were found to be more affected by their friends, siblings and their school environment than other reference groups.

##### **4.2.1.1 The school**

According to Moschis and Moore (1979), the most important reference groups for teenagers are parents, friends and the media. We have found, however, that the school environment is the most influential and controlling factor for the teenage girls. When we asked the question "*What influences your style the most?*" the girls all answered "*Our school*". With this, we see that the school becomes an important reference group. Our study shows that clothes are a way for teenage girls to make a statement, show that they fit in and become accepted at school. The school trends are very important for the girls to follow, and what school they go to thereby affects their style. The girls often spend their breaks at school discussing what other people are wearing and what does or does not look good. The girls have a great need to be accepted at school and among their friends. We have found this desire to fit in and to have the right clothes to be a contributing factor to teenage girls' impulse consumption.

Ida, 15: "*It's weird, if we attended a different school, then I wouldn't have the style I have*"

Victoria, 14: "*I can see someone at school wearing a certain outfit, and then I think; I want something like that!*"

They said that they hold back from experimenting with trends to avoid standing out too much at school. They also expressed a certain desire to leave the school environment, since they long for the next phase in their life.

Emma 14: *“After graduation, I think everything will be different. We will throw away our Uggs and Prime Boots!”*

This confirms what our pre-study indicated, that the trends at school are more important to the girls than global fashion trends. It also shows that they believe they will be more independent in their fashion consumption choices when they are older. This is in line with Lindstrom and Seybold (2003), who claim that that the mid-teen years are an age where children are highly influenced by others. When they are younger, they are affected by their parents, and after their teenage years they become more independent. This is a reason why being accepted is extra important for girls aged 13 to 15. To be able to fit in at school, they feel they have to own the right clothes, which can increase their impulse consumption.

#### **4.2.1.2 Parents**

As we mentioned in chapter two on our theoretical framework, Gunter and Furnham (1998) state that parents have a great influence on the teenagers’ shopping habits, since they introduced them to consumption. Furthermore, Gunter and Furnham (1998) state that the parents’ consumption behaviour is transmitted to their children. In contradiction to this, our study shows that it is the teenagers’ consumption behaviour that is forced on their parents.

Sara, 13: *“You are affected by your parents if there are shoes you really want but they say that they are of poor quality or too expensive, but then I feel like you end up getting the shoes anyway”*

This fact was reinforced by our experts, who strongly felt that the teenagers are in control of their parents. They make all the decisions and always get their way. As Lina Karnell explained, the parents seemed to let the teenagers have their way because they want to keep them from getting cranky. We can see a link between our result and the theory that parents try to compensate a lack of time for their children by using money. Our study confirmed what Sonesson (1999) said about parents often feeling guilty for not spending time with their children and compensating for this with higher allowances. We also found that parents want their children to have the same things as their friends. They find it important for the child to be accepted at school.

The parents agree to almost all impulsive purchases the teenagers want to make. It is the parents who pay for all the teenagers' clothes. We found that it is very common for them to make impulse purchases with their parents.

Emma, 14: *"I make most of my impulse purchases when I'm with my mom."*

The experts said that teenage girls often find something they like and then say that they will get their parents to pay for it later. The girls themselves reveal that they often go browsing with their friends but wait to make the actual purchase until their parents are present to pay for it. This confirms Underhill's (2009) statement that teenagers often 'pre-shop' with their friends.

Mikaela, 13: *"You go with your parents when you have already checked out something you want to buy"*

We found that the teenage girls are clever and know how to manipulate their parents, often agreeing to purchase something their parents like just to receive something they themselves like in return. They feel that their parents are more likely to agree to purchase something they want if they first agree to purchase and wear something their parents like. We asked the girls if their parents influence their style, and they all responded *"NO!!"* in unison.

The teenagers' income is based on the allowance their parents give them, but the decision of what to spend it on is up to them. The teenagers said that they do not have to pay for anything in particular with their allowance and can spend it all on whatever they like. Lindstrom and Seybold (2003) mean that a need to express individuality starts during the mid-teen years. Controlling one's own allowance and consumption is a way to make independent decisions and express one's own style. Teenage girls might make impulse purchases as *an act of freedom* as defined by Evans, Foxall and Jamal (2008), just to show that they control what they buy and that they can make their own decisions.

#### **4.2.1.3 Siblings**

As we discussed earlier, family, mainly parents, do not have the influence on a teenager that might have been expected. Although the parents' opinion does not seem to be of great importance to the teenage girls, however, they often mentioned older siblings and cousins as a source of inspiration. Our study shows that siblings' fashion preferences should be emphasised,

since we found a lack of this in other research. All of the teenage girls in our focus group mentioned an older sister as someone they looked up to when it came to clothes, and those without an older sister instead mentioned other female family members, most often a female cousin. We address this in its own subsection, since we find that siblings are very inspirational to teenage girls, and this factor is not discussed in other research to the extent that it was shown to be influential in ours. The teenage girls are somewhat influenced by the media and fashion trends indirectly, as a secondary segment through their siblings, who may be affected by the media. This shows us that teenage girls are more likely to be influenced by an older person in their environment than, for example, a blogger or a famous actress. However, we see that the teenage girls can be influenced by these people indirectly, since the older sister or cousin might be. Siblings were seen as experts when it came to clothes and following trends.

#### **4.2.1.4 Friends**

Gunter and Furnham (1998) state that teenagers' biggest influence is their friends. Moschis and Moore (1979) agree that teenagers base their shopping decisions on their friends' opinions. We found this to be confirmed in our study. All the respondents in our focus group said that their friends affect their style. Our experts said that the teenage groups of friends they see in their stores always look the same and dress alike.

Lina Karnell, Cubus: *"They all look the same, a white tunic, a leather jacket, jeans; you can tell they don't want to stand out."*

We also found that the girls always go shopping together. Both Lina Karnell and Sofia Larsson said that they do this, with one friend or in a group of girlfriends.

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *"It's very rare to see a 15-year old out shopping alone"*

A reason for this can be that they can then receive the approval they need from others directly in the store. They then know that their purchase is accepted, and teenage girls have a desire to be accepted and express this through clothes (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003).

Trends, fashion and clothes is a big topic of discussion for the focus group respondents and they talk a lot about it among their friends. They like going shopping together; it is a way for them to

socialise and have fun. They always shop in groups of a least two. However, they sometimes feel pressure to agree with their friends.

Sara, 13: *“Sometimes I feel like a friend persuades me to buy something”*

Victoria, 14: *“It is hard if I’m shopping with somebody and they say ‘that’s not so pretty’ and I really love it, it makes me question it, and think ‘should I really buy it?’”*

The effect friends have on each other is evident. During the focus group we could clearly see that the girls agreed with each other and finished each other sentences throughout the entire discussion. It was clear that they affect each other. We could easily see how this could be translated into an in-store situation. However, we felt that the girls were very comfortable with each other. They seemed honest and happy. We did not feel that they had a negative attitude to each other. They did not seem at all judgemental towards one another.

To dress alike is a way to show which group of friends they belong to. But there is also a high level of competition among the girls over who finds a certain item first. They most often do not tell each other if they find something they know the others will also like, and if they do, it is to claim the item so that no one else will purchase it.

Elsa, 15: *“If I say I have looked at a shirt, I have dibs on it, that’s why I say it, to let everybody know”*

It is a faux-pas for a close friend to purchase the same garment as someone else.

Emma, 14: *“If one of my best friends has something, I don’t buy it, even if I like it”*

Rebecca, 14: *“It is difficult to have the same thing as your close friends because then you sit next to each other and it looks ugly”*

Elsa, 15: *“If I have a sweater and someone buys the same it would feel weird”*

Our experts believe that the impulse purchases made by the girls when they shop with their friends are made to show to the rest of the group that they can afford the item. However, we did

not confirm this in our focus group. It may still be true, but not something a teenage girl would admit to during the focus group.

#### **4.2.1.5 The media**

Moschis and Moore (1979) state that the media is one of the main factors influencing teenagers. However, we did not find this statement to be true. Although the media seemed to have some influence, it is not the main one. The media did not seem as important as other factors when it comes to teenage girls' impulse consumption. The main influences on the group were found to be friends and older people in their close environment. Family members such as sisters and cousins were frequently mentioned. The girls said that they read fashion blogs and magazines for inspiration, but they often did not find the trends shown there suitable for their age. They said that reading blogs and magazines is a way for them to follow trends. Examples of blogs they mentioned reading include Jak & Jil, Style by Kling, Sofis Snapshots, and Chloé Schuterman. They like looking at blogs for ideas, but they often feel like the outfits worn by the bloggers are not appropriate for them. They often restrain themselves so as not to stand out too much at school.

Rebecca, 14: *“At school, you hold back”*

Even so, we feel the teenagers are influenced by media such as bloggers indirectly, since media might influence older girls, who in turn influence them.

The respondents in our focus groups said that a big reason for following fashion blogs is that they all have iPhones, allowing them to access these blogs whenever they are bored or have time to kill. With iPhones the girls can also access thousands of apps from clothing chains and fashion magazines. These apps are updated daily, making it easy for them to see new trends and what is in stores at the moment. Fashion clothing stores are seen more and more in the media, and our experts stated that they notice a surge of teenage consumers when their store has received more media exposure than usual. Our experts also said that teenage girls often come in to the stores asking for specific items they have seen in blogs. The girls also admitted to doing this, but not to the extent the experts experience it. The experts said that when a famous blogger is photographed wearing a certain item it sells out immediately. It is clear that the media has at least some influence over teenage girls' clothing consumption.

#### **4.2.2 How, if at all, do they plan their shopping and purchases?**

The respondents in our focus group do not plan their purchases in the way that an adult might. For them, planning is considered knowing that they would like a new shirt, but not deciding before what colour it should be, from which store they want to buy it or what it should cost. In our theoretical framework, we listed the four different types of impulse purchases according to Stern (1962). The way teenage girls plan their shopping can be classified as *planned impulse buying* according to Stern's definition (1962). We feel this can be compared to someone going to a grocery store knowing 'I want something for dinner'. Still, the girls do feel that purchases like these are not impulse but planned purchases. We asked the focus group respondents if they evaluate and plan purchases by comparing alternatives, prices and pros and cons. They said no.

Emma, 14: *"No, I can't be bothered..."*

Victoria, 14: *"Yeah because then you always find more disadvantages!"*

The only time they do this is for purchases they consider to be more important (because they are expensive or worn every day), like a new winter jacket.

Ida, 15: *"But if it is something important like a coat or shoes, then I compare"*

In this case it also seems like it is their parents forcing them to think their decisions through. Even so, they are aware that planning and stopping to think over a decision is a good way to avoid overspending on impulse buying.

Emma, 14: *"I go shopping, and I know nothing, then I find something, and I think about it...and I try to buy it later"*

#### **4.2.3 What is their view on spending money and how does this relate to their impulse purchasing of clothes?**

As our pre-study indicated, impulse buying is more likely when the price of a product is low. Stern also identifies price as a factor with major influence on the impulse buying behaviour of consumers (Stern, 1962; 61). One participant in our pre-study also said that *"if something is really cheap, you can just buy it!"* This was also confirmed in our focus group. They feel that if something is cheap, they do not have to think about it, they can just buy it.

Lina 14, *“A sweater for 200 kronor, it’s like, oh my god, it’s just 200 kronor, should I really have to think about it? No, I just buy it straight away”*

But we also found that impulse consumption is even common among more expensive pieces of clothing.

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *“Where I work, we sell expensive clothes, but teenagers have no limits, they can easily buy a sweater for 700 kronor on impulse. They just swipe their card”*

The need for teenagers to follow trends and to have the right clothes seems more relevant than what it costs.

Our pre-study indicated that teenagers do not have a correct view of how much they (or their parents) spend on clothes. They also do not feel the loss of money when buying something, perhaps because they have no fixed expenses to pay. All the respondents in our focus group had their own Maestro card. They are, already at this relatively young age, used to making card purchases and not accustomed to dealing with cash. This may have caused their perception of the value of money; if one never sees the cash actually disappearing from one’s wallet, one is less likely to feel like one is spending it. The access to debit and credit cards from an early age may be a contributing factor to teenage impulse consumption.

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *“At their age, they buy so many things, that it makes me wonder where the money comes from”*

The factors discussed above, along with the knowledge that they can always turn to their parents for more allowance, means that their perception of money is non-equivalent to that of an adult. This is a factor that increases impulse buying, since lower-priced products are consumed on impulse to a greater extent, but the lack of understanding of the value of money means that more products will be perceived as being low priced.

Shopping seemed to be very easy for the girls; they do not experience regret when using their money. Our experts also said that the teenage girls do not seem to comprehend the value of money, often spending large sums like 700 Swedish kronor on an impulse purchase. In the

cheaper stores, where a blouse might cost 200 Swedish kronor, they instead buy more items, ending up with a large total.

We also discovered that these girls receive a much higher allowance than the average reported for their age by Swedbank's study of teenagers' allowances. They also said that they spend at least 90%, if not all, of their allowance the same month they receive it.

### **4.3 What factors lead to the action of teenage girls' impulse purchasing clothes and how do they feel after the purchases?**

As our pre-study indicated, the store environment and the staff have a large impact on teenage girls' impulse consumption. Our empirical results confirmed this to be correct. In our theoretical framework, we presented Dittmar and Drury's (2000) statement that impulse consumption is often followed by feelings of happiness. The girls agree that impulse consumption makes them happy.

#### **4.3.1 What influence do the store environment and staff have on impulse consumption?**

As we mentioned in our theoretical framework, the store environment has a great influence on consumer behaviour and is a contributing factor to impulse purchases. The girls agree that the store environment is really important to them. They mentioned factors like lighting, cleanliness, store windows and dressing rooms to be important. For instance, they said that the clothing chain Weekday has good lighting and many mirrors, while Zara has messy and dusty dressing rooms, which annoy them. We found it necessary for the stores to be consistent in their method of displaying items. Our results show that if stores draw the teenagers' attention with a good store window, but do not follow through with nice displays inside, this affects the teenagers in a more negative way than if they just had an ordinary store window, since it leaves the girls feeling disappointed.

*Ida, 15: "You can be tricked by the way items are displayed in a store window"*

*Lina, 14: "H&M can have nice store windows but then you go inside and the displays are weird"*

Our study also showed that if the clothes are exposed in an orderly fashion, preferably on hangers, this increased the chances of the girls buying something. Stores often place 'easy

items', cheap items that are easy for the consumer to buy like socks, nail polish and jewellery, near the register. Our study has shown that these items often become impulse purchases. Another thing the experts pointed out is that, in their experience, teenage girls stay in the store for longer periods of time than adults do.

We also found that the teenage girls find the in-store music to be very important. They know which stores often repeat the same songs, since they frequent the stores so often. They do not like rock music or when the music is too fast, since it stresses them out. If the music is too loud, they know their parents will not be comfortable, which means that they do not bring their parents to certain stores, resulting in lost customers for these retailers. They would prefer slow and relaxing music.

Rebecca, 14: *"It should be like a spa – but with clothes!"*

This differs from the experts' beliefs, which is that the most effective music for encouraging teenage girls to shop is brand-new, popular music. The stores where they work usually play an updated hit list. The girls said that they do like modern music, but that its trendiness is not what makes them prefer certain music.

From our study, we can see that offers such as '3 for 2' and limited edition are very effective on the girls. This was confirmed in our focus group, where all the girls agreed that they often buy '3 for 2', special offers, gift with purchase and limited edition items. These purchases are mostly impulse purchases because the girls feel that they need to make the purchase now while the offer lasts. Impulse consumption increases with designer collaboration collections, since the girls want to have a part of the collection but do not really care what exactly they buy.

Ida, 15: *"I want to buy at least something from such a collection"*

Emma, 14: *"If people know that there's only a 100 copies of something, then I can say 'look, I actually have one' "*

The girls like sales for the most part. What discourages them is if they feel the sale items are several seasons old or just thrown into baskets. They find they can take advantage of bargains during sales. They stated that all their on-sale purchases are made on impulse.

Ida, 15: *“Sales are like, chop-chop, hurry up!”*

The experts said that they noticed that during sales, their regular customers come to the store but also bring their friends along.

When they like a specific garment, the girls also admitted to checking how many items of each size were displayed in the store. If they were few left, it increased their urge to purchase it right away.

Elsa, 15: *“If there is only one left, I really want to buy it!”*

An interesting thing we noticed is the importance of shopping bags. As Sofia Larsson said, *“They seem to only want the bag”*. The girls know what stores have nice bags, and that certain stores have different varieties, and they request the nicer one. They also love the feeling of carrying around many shopping bags.

Emma, 14: *“Lots of shopping bags, I love it!”*

The girls prefer shopping in stores to shopping online. Internet purchases by these girls were more common than we thought they would be (since they cannot legally shop online themselves), but the girls still feel that shopping online is a bit complicated. This may correlate to the fact that it is harder to make impulse purchases online, since they have to go through all the steps of putting products in the shopping bag and providing the payment details; whereas in the store they can just swipe their card. When shopping online, the amount being spent is harder to ignore. The girls also like the experience of seeing items live.

Store staff can make or break a purchase. The girls have strong opinions about how the staff should act and behave in order to increase their purchases.

Elsa, 15: *“If they are annoying and ask a lot of questions, I want to leave!”*

Sara, 13: *“If they’re funny and nice, I want to buy something”*

Emma, 14: *“The worst is when they come up to me and say ‘that looks so hot on you’ and it just feels so fake”*

To find a balance is the key for the staff. Our experts state that this is something they learn by experience, and that they have learned that when they act a bit forward towards the teenagers, it often ends with a sale. It is evident that the behaviour of the store staff can make the teenage girls buy more or less, depending on how they act. As our pre-study indicated, the staff’s looks also affect them greatly. They want them to be good looking and to dress trendily.

Elsa, 15: *“If the staff have nice clothes, I think that I can find something hot in the store”*

Victoria, 14: *“If they look unfresh, I’m like; ‘Hello, what does she know?!’”*

The experts have noticed that what they wear usually sells very well. They find that their outfits are more important than what the mannequins are wearing.

Lina Karnell, Cubus: *“I noticed that when I wore a certain dress, it sold out”*

The teenage girls listen to the staffs’ opinion if they find them inspirational. The experts are aware of this and try to communicate with the teenagers in their language.

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *“You try to adapt to their level”*

The respondents in our focus group do not like being sucked up to, but they appreciate useful facts, like when the staff informs them about the materials of the garments. The experts sometimes feel a certain responsibility towards teenage girls since they find them to be such an easy target. They find them to be very unsure of themselves and just wanting to buy what is trendy at the moment. Store staff have certain guidelines when it comes to impulse consumption and what they can do to increase it. They use little techniques to increase their sales, for example, suggesting leggings to go with a tunic the customer is trying on; they find these techniques very successful.

Lina Karnell, Cubus: *“The additional cost doesn’t matter, they just buy!”*

Another trick used to increase impulse consumption is to mention that the item is really popular among other teenage girls, and is selling really well. Then they cannot resist, according to our experts.

Our study clearly showed that the store staff have a great effect on the teenage girls. Therefore, we found that the MR-model (Mehrabian and Russell, 1947), described in 2.6, is in need of further development. It should also include the store staff as a factor.

#### 4.3.2 What feelings do teenage girls experience during an impulse purchase?

High-involvement purchases are more thoroughly evaluated by the consumer post-purchase according to Hernant and Boström (2010). Since our pre-study shows that clothing is a high involvement category for teenage girls, we expected them to evaluate their purchases carefully. The focus group confirmed that they are very interested in fashion and in following trends, and that clothing is a high-involvement product category for them. However, the respondents do not evaluate their purchases carefully. They just buy what they like. Their decision-making process is extremely short. It seems that all it takes is an outer stimulus, like seeing a trendy dress in the store, and then the decision to buy it is made on the spot. They do not go through the five stages of the decision-making process as described by Engel, Blackwell and Miniard (1995).

Sofia Larsson, Design Only: *“They really have a super quick purchase decision process; it’s just like ‘boom bang’”*

This along with our theoretical studies shows that there is a lack of models describing the decision-making process for impulse purchases by teenagers. We have therefore developed our own model (figure 4.1). This model shows that all it takes for teenage girls to make an impulse purchase is a stimulus, like a nice in-store display or a special offer, and an acceptance of the item, for example, if they know that their friends like it or they have seen it in a fashion blog, and then they will purchase the product.



Figure 4.1 a teenager’s impulse purchase decision-making process. Own model

Our focus group clearly showed that the respondents feel good when they shop. But clothing consumption has become almost a part of their everyday life, to the extent that not even the store staff notice their happiness in the purchases they make. The experts said that older customers are noticeably happy when making impulse purchases, and often chat with the staff at the register; in contrast, teenage girls just pay and move on to the next store.

#### **4.3.3 What feelings do teenage girls experience after an impulse purchase?**

Consumption of clothes has become such a routine for teenage girls that they do not seem to think about it. Rook (1987) defines an impulse purchase as something that breaks the consumer's normal shopping routine. However, our results show that impulse consumption has become a kind of routine for our respondents. It is a part of their everyday life. The experts did not notice teenage girls expressing happiness after a purchase, although the girls stated that shopping makes them happy. However, the girls said that the good feeling after a purchase is often over in a couple of minutes and then they want something new. The drive to find something new has become such a routine for the girls that they hardly show any emotions, even though they just have purchased something. We found the 'shopping high' to be a factor to the increasing impulse consumption of teenage girls. This rush does not last very long and it seemed to us that the girls are always chasing the next high. As one focus group respondent said:

Sara, 13: *"One shirt = 10 minutes"*

Our pre-study indicated that post-purchase regret is not experienced with impulse purchases. As one respondent said, *"you never regret those purchases because it is something you really like"*. The respondents in the focus group mentioned experiencing regret sometimes, if they end up not using the garment because it does not fit well or they do not use it anymore.

Ida, 15: *"If you change your style, you regret old purchases"*

But they also said that they do not return the items anyway; they just let them hang unused in their closet. If the items do get returned, the return is made by the girls' parents, according to our experts. The reason for returns, in their experience, is that the item was an expensive impulse purchase.

The girls mentioned that the feeling of an impulse purchase is different from that of a planned purchase:

Ida, 15: *“I am happier with an impulse purchase because then I feel like I have found something great. With planned purchases, I feel more like ‘good, now I have it, check!’”*

As we discussed previously, we can see the girls’ way of planning is the same as Stern’s (1962) definition of planned impulse buying. It is interesting to notice that to them, there is a great difference between impulse and planned purchases.

Lempert (2002) states that a dissatisfied customer is unlikely to return. Our focus group respondents, however, said that they do not let a bad experience stop them from returning to the store.

The girls enjoy receiving special offers and discounts being sent to them. They always try to take advantage of them. However, they feel that information about new arrivals in store is very annoying and they do not like receiving newsletters. They do not pay much attention to these types of messages, if they want to know what is new; they prefer to look up the information themselves.

Lina, 14: *“If they send me tips of a new sweater, I’m like, do I look like I care?!”*

## **5 Conclusions, recommendations and theoretical contribution**

*This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations drawn from our study. The results and analyses shown in the previous chapter will be used to answer our stated research questions. We then present our final models - our theoretical contribution. Finally, recommendations for further research are suggested.*

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### **5.1 Conclusions**

#### **5.1.1 What influences teenage girls' thoughts on the impulse consumption of clothes?**

We found that the main influences on teenage (aged 13 to 15 years old) girls' impulse consumption of clothes are their closest environment, their group of girlfriends and the school. The media and fashion blogs are not as important a factor as one might expect.

Fashion for the teenage girls is one of the most important things in their life, and when it comes to clothes, the girls exhibit a certain egoism. They want to look their best and they like looking better than their friends. But in the end, they all follow the same trends, and look the same to an outside observer, even though the girls themselves feel that they all stand out a bit from their group of friends.

The girls always shop with somebody, mostly with a group of friends but sometimes with their parents. The main reason for them to go shopping with their parents is that they want them to pay for their shopping. The girls are always in control regardless of whether the parents are present. They know what they want and how to get it.

Our conclusion is that teenage girls are extremely easily influenced when it comes to impulse clothing consumption. We found their main reference groups to be siblings, friends and their school environment. However, the media has some influence, especially through blogs, and directly and indirectly impacted the teenage girls' impulse clothing consumption. Clothes and fashion was found to be their main interest. This, along with their strong desire to fit in and to be accepted, is a huge factor behind teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes. Teenage girls today have a strong opinion of what they want to look like and have the money to spend on it.

### **5.1.2 What factors lead to the action of teenage girls' impulse purchasing clothes and how do they feel after the purchases?**

The most interesting result of our study is probably the finding that most of the teenage girls' purchases of clothes are made on impulse. We can mainly see two of the types of impulse purchases defined in earlier research: pure impulse and planned impulse purchases.

It is evident that teenagers have a great fashion interest and follow trends. They know what is in style at the moment, and they know which stores to visit to find what they want. Because of their large fashion interest, teenage girls want to keep up with the quick style changes that spread from the fashion world, creating new trends at school. This leads to new purchases of clothes, if not every week, at least every other week. We found that this factor explained the high frequency of impulse purchases of clothes among teenage girls.

We found that teenage girls often feel like they are missing something and they long for their next shopping trip. This desire is often not based on a real need for new clothing, but rather on emotion and a desire to look good. Here we can see a link between the impulse consumption of clothes and the need to be accepted. Our study shows that teenage girls feel good when they think they look good and have a trendy new outfit to wear to school. They also love the feeling of purchasing and owning new clothes. Chasing this feeling also leads to more impulse consumption.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

If the teenage girls could design an ideal store in relation to their preferences, it would be a store with good lighting, many mirrors, relaxing music, nice displays on hangers and inspiring store windows. The store should have a modern design, as well as being cozy and elegant. It should smell good, and the staff should be good looking and polite, but know their boundaries. The dressing rooms should be large, with a seating area for friends or tired parents. It should be air conditioned and always tidy and clean. Teenage girls are not the most patient crowd; if they could choose, there would never be a line. Teenage girls also want more offers like '2 for 1', goodie bags and free samples. They would also like the stores to offer candy. The store should also have trendy, special, pretty shopping bags.

Our recommendation is that clothing stores should take note of these results, and start with small changes, like changing their music or using fragrances in order to please teenage girls. The staff

should only wear things available in the store, since the girls pay attention to the staffs' outfits. Stores can also try displaying fewer copies of each item, because our results concluded that this encourages teenage girls to purchase the item right away. Our study indicates that teenage girls appreciate and pay attention to special offers that are sent to them. They often put these offers into action and try to use them. Thus, creating special offers for teenage consumers, and sending these offers directly to them, is a great way for retailers to pull the teenagers into the store while creating satisfied teenage customers. Stores should also try to take advantage of the fact that teenage girls shop more and spend more money when in groups. A good idea might be to organize a 'girls-night' event in-store, with special offers and goodie bags.

As for the media, we find the most effective way to reach teenage girls aged 13 to 15 is to target them as a secondary segment through their siblings. Our recommendation for clothing companies, therefore, is to aim their advertising campaigns primarily towards older teenagers. It is important not to aim for a younger age group, since the 13 to 15 year olds prefer looking up to older teenagers. If companies choose to use teenagers of the same age as the target segment in their advertising, they could risk losing customers.

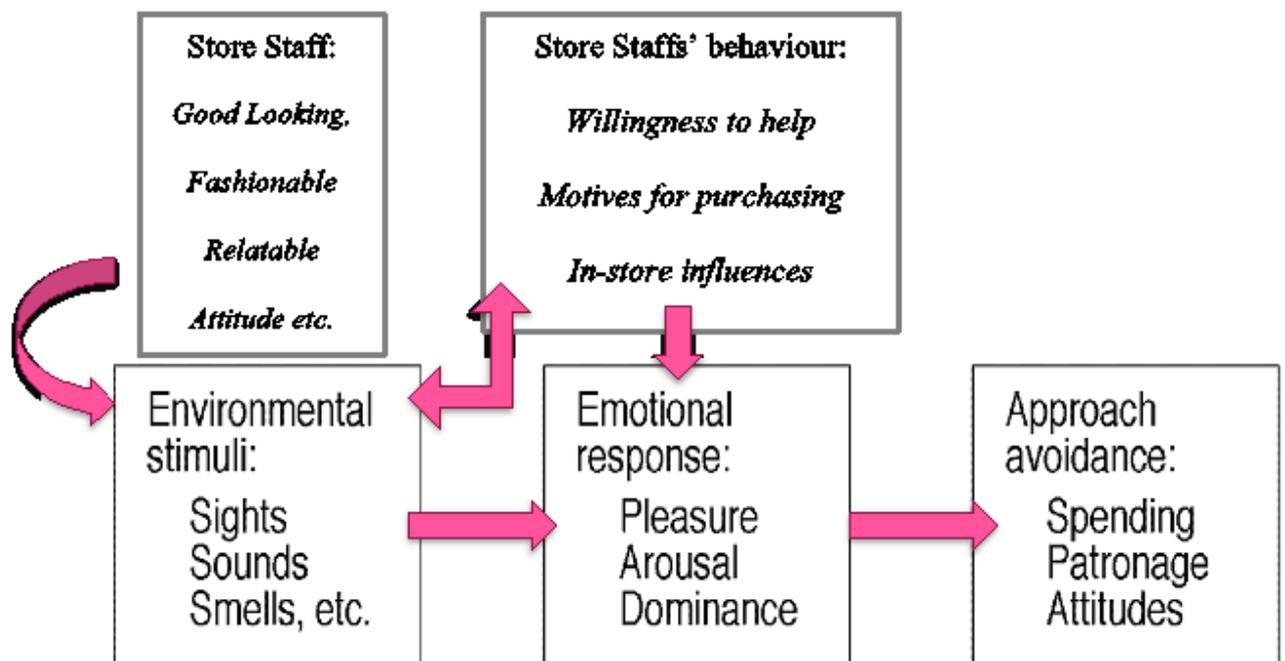
### **5.3 Theoretical contribution**

The age group we have studied, 13 to 15 year olds, have not previously, to our best knowledge and findings, been studied in isolation from other age groups. They are often included in a larger group of teenagers aged 13 to 19. The age group in our study is different from, for example, a 19 year old in many ways, including disposable income, interests and how they spend their free time. Our study therefore provides useful facts for clothing companies looking to better target 13 to 15 year olds. This is a segment that spends a great deal of time and money in clothing stores which means that clothing companies can surely profit from targeting this group and fulfilling their needs and wants.

We have created our own final research model that explains the findings of our study (figure 5.2) and also developed the MR-model to include the effect of the store staff. The factors included in the MR-model are also included in our final research model.

Through our results in our thesis we have found it of great importance to further develop the MR-model, because our study shows that the store staff can make or break a purchase. Impulse consumption is related to the staff since many of the consumers' decisions take place in-store;

which makes it necessary for retailers to make sure that their staff behaves accordingly. In our thesis, teenage girls are confirmed to be easily influenced and their decision-making process (see figure 4.1) is very short. With this said, teenage girls often make the decision to purchase a garment while in-store, where the staffs' attitude, appearance and ability to relate to their teenage customers affect the consumption decision. We found that the store staffs' appearance can affect the environmental stimuli, and their way of communicating could affect the emotional response.

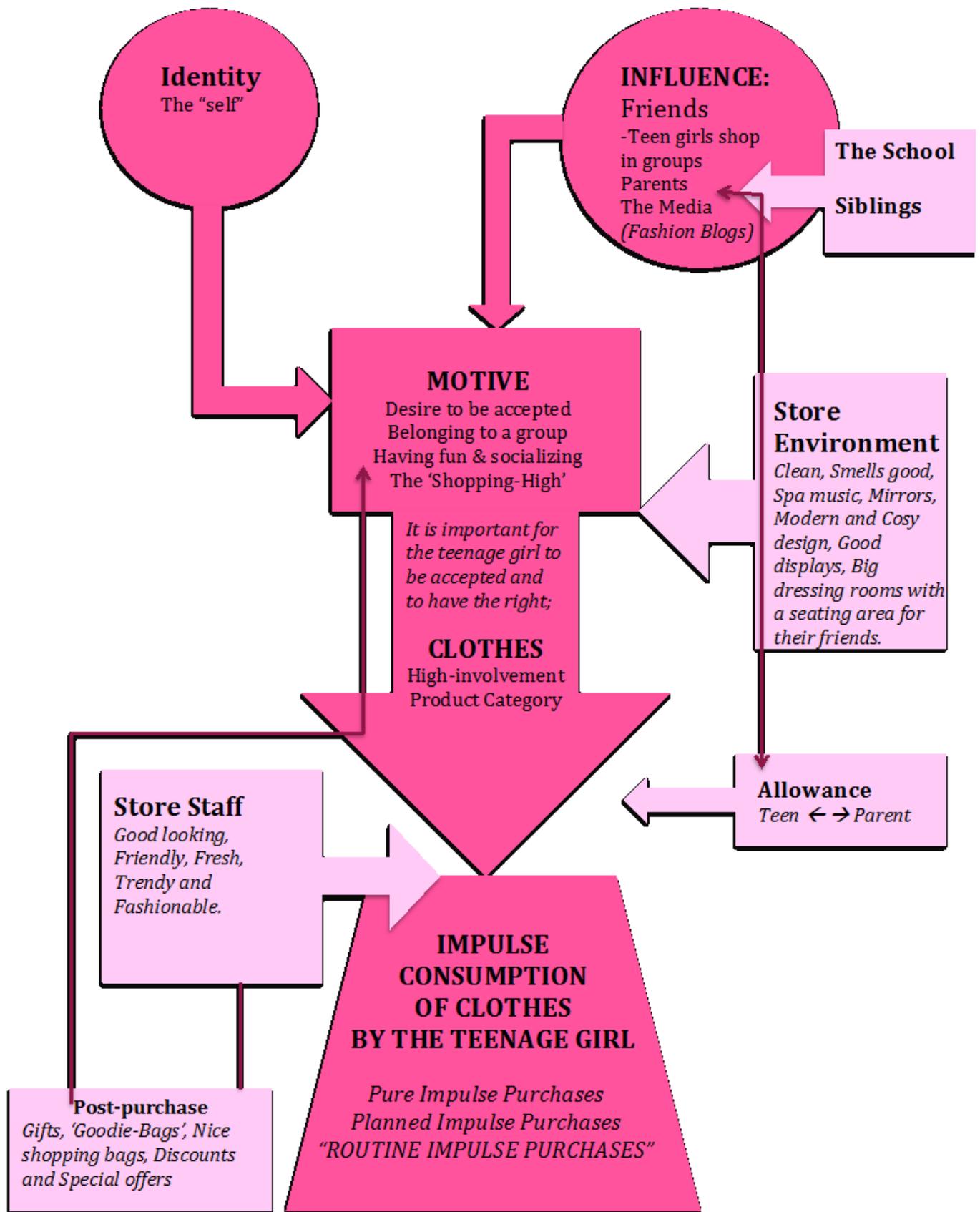


**Source:** Mehrabian and Russell (1974)

**Figure 5.1. a development of the MR-model. Own model**

Thus, our development of the MR-model shows that another factor affecting the teenage girls' attitude towards a store, and thus the likelihood of a purchase, is the store staff. If they are good looking with a good attitude, that provides a positive environmental stimuli in the store. If they behave appropriately and are helpful, this can affect the teenage girls' emotions, making their in-store experience pleasurable and becoming a motive for them to purchase an item of clothing.

The research model we have created shows what influences age 13 to 15 teenage girls' impulse consumption of clothes (figure 5.2). This, our own final model, includes the factors included in the MR-model. The model gives a comprehensive view of what influences a 13 to 15 year old girl's impulse consumption of clothes and the different types of impulse purchases they make. This model can be used to explain what makes a teenage girl purchase items of clothing on impulse.



The model shows that behind the motive of a teenage girl's impulse consumption of clothes lies identity and influences from others. A teenage girl's identity is dependent on their persona and the development of the self. The main influences from others come from their friends, siblings and their school. The girls are restricted and pressured by their school environment. To them, the trends at school are more important to follow than worldwide fashion trends. Siblings and other slightly older relatives are a great fashion inspiration for the teenage girls. However, parents have some influence, mainly when it comes to the teenager's allowance, although the teenagers often are in control over how to spend it. The media does not have such a strong impact as expected, but we conclude that the media, especially fashion blogs, has some impact on the teenage girls' clothing consumption. Teenage girls often shop in groups, at least in pairs. This has increased the impulse consumption among teenage girls, since they are seeking approval for their purchases, and receive it directly from their group of girlfriends in the store.

The model shows how identity and influences lead to motives. We found that the motives for clothing consumption were the strong desire the teenage girls feel to be accepted and belong to a group, as well as having fun and socializing with their friends. Another motive can be to experience the feeling of excitement over purchasing something. A way for clothing stores to increase this "shopping-high" and make shopping an even more enjoyable experience for the girls is by providing things like nice shopping bags and gifts with purchases. These post-purchase acts increase customer satisfaction. Clothes are important for a teenage girl since it is a way for them to express themselves, and having the right clothes means that one is accepted. Clothes are clearly a high-involvement product category for the girls, since they gladly spend a great deal of their time and money on it.

The model also shows our finding that the store environment can create a motive for impulse clothing consumption by teenage girls. The teenage girls have very strong opinions on what a store should be like. If it fulfils their requirements by having, for example, good displays and big dressing rooms, the likelihood of an impulse purchase increases. What could ultimately determine an impulse purchase is the way the store staff acts. Teenage girls pay a great deal of attention to the store staff. They are affected by the way they look, dress and treat them. The price level of a store can also play a part in determining what, and how many items, a teenage girl purchases, since when shopping with their friends and not their parents, their allowance is all they have to spend.

The model also shows our conclusion that teenage girls, aged 13 to 15, make three kinds of purchases of clothes; *pure impulse purchases*, *planned impulse purchases* and “*routine impulse purchases*”. The term “*routine impulse purchases*” is invented and defined by us because our results show that this is a way teenage girls purchase clothes. We found this to be additional kind of impulse purchase. The three kinds of purchases are defined as follows:

*Pure impulse purchases*; an impulse purchase that stands out from the teenager’s normal shopping behaviour

*Planned impulse purchases*; when the teenager has decided to buy within a certain product category before entering the store

“*Routine impulse purchases*;” teenage girls today are to be so used to shopping, that purchasing clothes has become a routine. This routine consists of making impulse purchases.

We have invented and defined the term “*routine impulse purchases*”. We felt it was the best way to describe the consumption behaviour we found in our results. Teenage girls have become such routine shoppers that they now hardly longer feel a rush or show emotions when making a purchase, yet they are constantly chasing the ‘shopping high’. This dilemma leads to an increasing amount of impulse purchases. Our final research model (figure 5.2) shows the process leading up to impulse consumption and “*routine impulse purchases*”. We believe that this kind of impulse purchase will play an increasing role in the future.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

While composing our study, we found some topics and angles of approach that would be interesting for future research.

We conducted our focus group interview with only girls. Throughout our research, however, we have found that teenage boys within the same age group frequently purchase clothes on impulse as well. We therefore think that an interesting topic for further studies is teenage boys’ impulse clothing consumption. There seems to be a lack of studies from a male perspective, and it would be interesting to see how the consumption patterns and influences differ when it comes to boys and what the motive is behind their clothing consumption.

We would also like to see a larger quantitative study over the entire Swedish teenage female population aged 13 to 15, and their impulse consumption of clothes and other products, as well

as their influences. A quantitative study could provide more general statistics related to their allowances and spending.

It would also be of interest to perform a study similar to ours on girls aged 18 to 22. This could show how their impulse shopping behaviour changes when they leave school and start to become financially independent.

In our thesis, we study Swedish teenagers. Since authors from different countries base many of their theories on their own country, we would find it interesting to study teenage impulse consumption of clothes worldwide.

It would be also interesting to study the impulse consumption of girls who attend another school or whose parents might not be very well off financially. Our thesis is based on a Western urban culture; therefore we find it interesting as further research to study teenage girls' impulse consumption in a rural area. This would show whether the results we obtained can be generally applied to all areas and social classes in Sweden.

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Focus group 2011-05-11

Expert Interviews:

Lina Karnell 2011-05-17

Sofia Larsson 2011-05-17

### **Image Sources**

Image on title sheet: Original retrieved from <http://www.chloeschuterman.chic.se/>. Adapted version

Figure 2.1: The MR-model; J. Duncan Herrington, Effects of music in service environments: a field study *Journal of Services Marketing* Volume 10 issue 2.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 Pre-study interview guide

1. Please state your name and age (you will remain anonymous in our thesis)
2. What do you do in your spare time? What do you do to enjoy yourselves?
3. Do you receive an allowance from your parents (and if so, how much)? Do you have any fixed expenses you have to pay for yourself?
4. How much do you spend, on average, on clothes every month?
5. What are your favourite stores?
6. Do you mostly shop alone or with someone else or several others? If so, with whom? Is there a difference between shopping alone or with others?
7. Do you feel you can be affected by the people you shop with?
8. Are there certain people whose style you like and that inspire you?
9. Are you inspired by fashion blogs?
10. When shopping, do you know what you are after? Do you plan what you are going to buy?
11. Do you feel you are up-to-date on current fashion trends? How do you keep up with them? Is it important for you to follow trends?
12. How often do you go shopping and visit stores?
13. How often do you buy an item of clothing?
14. How do you feel when you buy something?
15. What makes you fall for a certain piece of clothing? What makes you feel that you just “had to have it”? Can it be that you recognize it from somewhere?
16. Do you ever see something on a blog, a celebrity or a friend, and then see it in-store and think “that is what she has, I want it too?”
17. How often do you purchase something when you did not intend purchase anything?
18. Do you ever regret a purchase?
19. Have you ever returned an item of clothing?
20. Have you ever been disappointed in a clothing store or brand?
21. Are you affected by the staff in stores? Do you listen to their opinions?
22. Are you affected by the store’s design and displays? Mannequins and display windows?
23. Are you often drawn into buying small things placed near the cash register?
24. How do you feel about offers like buy 3 pay for 2? Limited edition products? Gifts-with-purchase offers? How do you feel about items on sale?
- 25.** What do you think influences your style the most?

## **Appendix 2 Focus group interview guide**

1. Please state your name and age (you will remain anonymous in our thesis)
2. What do you do in your spare time? What do you do to enjoy yourselves?
3. Do you receive an allowance from your parents (and if so, how much) and how much of it do you spend every month? Do you have any fixed expenses you have to pay for yourself?
4. What do you spend your money on? How much do you spend, on average, on clothes every month?
5. Are you interested in fashion and clothes? Do you think you are up-to-date on current fashion trends? How do you keep up with trends?
6. Do you read a lot of fashion blogs and magazines? How often?
7. Do you think there is a difference between trends in general and trends at for example your school?
8. Do you and your friends share fashion advice and tips on clothes and trends?
9. Is your clothing consumption inspired and/or influenced by any particular person?
10. Do your parents affect the way you dress and what clothes you buy?
11. Do you think that you can show which social group or clique you belong to by the way you dress?
12. Is purchasing clothes important to you? Is it something you are interested and highly involved in, something you gladly dedicate your time to?
13. How often do you go shopping and visit stores?
14. How often do you buy an item of clothing?
15. Do you mostly shop alone or with someone else or several others? If so, with whom? Is there a difference between shopping alone or with others?
16. When shopping, do you know what you're after, for example "today I am going to buy a new pair of jeans," or do you just see what you like when in store?
17. What makes you fall for a certain piece of clothing? What makes you feel that you just "had to have it"?
18. Are there certain types of purchases that are more exciting/more important/feel better than others?
19. Who usually pays for your clothes, you or your parents?
20. Do you sometimes buy something just to experience the feeling of having something new?
21. Do you usually plan your clothing purchases?

22. How do you go about making a purchase decision? Is it a long planning process where you weigh the pros and cons against each other and compare different products, or do you just make the decision right on the spot in store?
23. How often do you make impulse purchases? Why do you think you make them?
24. Do you usually check to see how many of a certain item is left in the colour and size you want? If there are few, can that make you buy the item right now instead of waiting?
25. Are you affected by the behaviour of the stores' staff and the way they treat you? By their appearance?
26. Are you affected by the store's design and displays? Mannequins and display windows?
27. Do you pay attention to what music the store is playing?
28. Do you fall for offers like buy 3 pay for 2? Limited edition products? Gifts-with-purchase offers? How do you feel about items on sale?
29. Are you often drawn into buying small things placed near the cash register?
30. Do you make sure to take advantage of coupons and special offers?
31. How do you feel when you buy something? What emotions do you experience?
32. Do you ever regret your clothing purchases? If so, why?
33. Are you often more satisfied with a purchase if you had planned for it for a long time?
34. Have you ever returned a piece of clothing because you regretted buying it?
35. Do you think about the money you are spending when making a purchase, that you could have used it to buy something else?
36. Would you buy something again from a retailer that had previously disappointed you?
37. Is there anything special a store can do to make you feel comfortable and want to shop there?

### **Appendix 3 Expert interviews guide**

1. In your experience, how do girls aged 13 to 15 act in store? Do they talk to the staff, their parents or amongst themselves in a certain way? Do they ask certain questions?
2. Have you noticed that teenage girls shop in a certain way?
3. Is the staff instructed to talk to teenagers in a certain way?
4. Have you noticed that you can affect teenage girls to make purchases?
5. Do teenage girls come in to the store asking for garments they have seen in the media?
6. Do teenagers often return items?
7. In your experience, how common is impulse buying?
8. How do impulsive shoppers behave? Do they have certain characteristic traits?
9. Do you believe that customers plan their purchases or not? Do they seem to know what they're after when they enter the store?
10. How do you reason around impulse buying amongst the staff? Is it something you work actively towards?
11. What techniques do stores use to encourage impulse consumption?
12. What do you think is the most important thing a store can do to encourage impulse buying? What in the store environment do you think it is that drives customers to make impulse buys?
13. How do you think the staff's role should be, very pushy or more reserved? Which tactic do you find most effective?
14. In your experience, do special offers and sales have a large effect on impulse buying?
15. Do stores use special music or smells to increase impulse sales?
16. Are there certain layouts or displays that you have found to be more efficient than others?
17. How large effect does the price of a product have on sales? Does a low price lead to more impulse sales?
18. What emotions do you notice customers experiencing when impulse shopping?