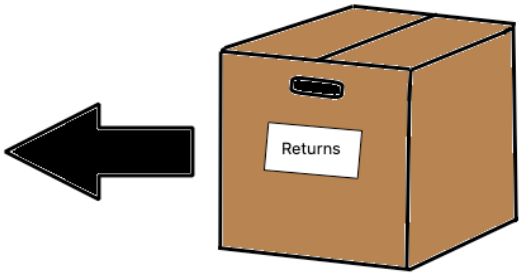
UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

Influencer promotional codes' impact on returns

A trigger for impulse buying behaviour



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Key words: *Impulse buying, Social media, Influencer promotional codes, Returns management, Avoidance and gatekeeping strategy.*

Abstract

The aim of this research was to explore if the effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media and the usage of influencer promotional codes. Moreover, to explore what possible managerial implications there are for clothing retailers in relation to their returns management processes and influencer promotional activities on social media. The study was conducted through a quantitative approach based on an analytical survey targeting millennials.

It can be concluded that impulse buying behaviour amongst millennials does increase the incentives to returns. It has also been shown that social media in general affects the return behaviour amongst millenials to a greater extent than influencer promotional codes. Simultaneously, influencer promotional codes were shown to have a slightly higher perceived impact on impulse buying behaviour than social media. This highlights that high returns frequency is more than just a post-purchase issue. Thus, firms could benefit from looking over their social media and marketing strategies in an attempt to decrease the number of returns, where both financial and environmental advantages can be reaped.

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1. Background

Reverse logistics has received increased attention in recent years and is a term used to describe a range of activities. While it is disputed which activities are included under reverse logistics, the most commonly used activities are known as “the five R's of reverse logistics” ; returns, recycling, repair, remanufacturing, recalls and repackaging (Rogers & Tibben‐Lembke, 2001). Reverse logistics has been identified as a possible source of major losses for firms, but also an opportunity for reduced costs which explains the strategic importance for firms to develop and implement efficient processes in relation to reverse logistics. Moreover, reverse logistics should be considered by firms not merely from a cost-efficiency perspective but also from a sustainability perspective, as these processes are major contributors to GHG emissions. Increasing environmental degradation is forcing firms to rethink their reversed logistics (Shaharudin et al., 2015).

One activity in particular which has proven to be highly important in relation to reverse logistics is the handling of returns, referred to as returns management. Returns refer to products moving backward in the supply chain as a result of a consumer's regrets of purchases, excluding damaged and defective goods (Rogers & Tibben‐Lembke, 2001). Studies have shown that e-commerce returns rates have spiked with 95% in the last five years (Schiffer, 2019). As returns rates across industries have grown majorly in recent years, return handling has taken center stage as firms attempt to reduce the rising costs associated with returns. Moreover, it is not merely the economic fallout which has forced firms to acknowledge and look over their returns management processes, but also the sustainability implications (Shaharudin et al., 2015). To get an idea of the extent of the severity of the effects of returns on the environment, UPS handles a staggering 1 million returned packages a day during Christmas periods. Furthermore, around 5 billion pounds of returned products end up in US landfills every year (Schiffer, 2019). As consumers are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious, the detrimental effects of the high returns rates on the environment has become another incentive for firms to actively work towards developing efficient returns management practices (Shaharudin et al., 2015). The urgency of allocating resources and focusing on reverse logistics, especially in relation to returns management, is thus highlighted by the cost-efficiency and sustainability implications associated with such processes.

2. Problem Discussion

The clothing industry in particular has been under a lot of scrutiny in recent years due to its high returns rates and being a major contributor to GHG emissions where e-commerce and social media have been mapped out as the main villains. Social media has been identified as an important factor as it has derailed consumers to divert more towards unsustainable and impulse buying. Studies have shown that 34% of online shoppers tend to consume more impulsively as a direct result of social media. Moreover, 63% of these impulsive consumers tend to return these products which is an alarming development (Sdc Executive, 2019). New trends in relation to online shopping and the influence of social media are also emerging rapidly, which are impacting further the manner in which clothing retailers are able to operate their businesses, primarily from a returns management perspective. Such trends include the "try before you buy" mentality, where consumers are ordering large volumes of clothing with the intent to try on at home and subsequently return unwanted items (Sdc Executive, 2018). Another bothersome development is "deshopping" where consumers have admitted to merely purchasing products in order to post online with the intention to return the product (Sdc Executive, 2018).

An explanation for the more unsustainable and impulsive consumption that has emerged in the social media context is the usage of influencer marketing which has increased in popularity among clothing firms. Influencer marketing has been recognized as the fastest-growing online customer-acquisition method which explains why up to 86% of marketers resort to such marketing and budgets are continuously soaring (Digital marketing institute, 2018). Influencer marketing is a relatively new concept, where social media profiles with large followings are used as a basis for marketing. There is an evident shift from traditional marketing to influencer marketing, where influencer marketing is broadly used by clothing retailers due to the ability to more efficiently reach and impact consumers. The main reasoning as to why such marketing is so effective is due to higher credibility and authenticity being acquired. Some researchers describe that these influencer endorsements on social media have the ability to be a highly useful electronic word-of-mouth which highlights why firms tend to cater to such marketing techniques (Abidin, 2016). Moreover, there is a lower resistance to diffuse the message to the consumer which more traditional marketing techniques are unable to muster (De Vries et al., 2012). However, while this type of marketing has been depicted as more effective, the heightened impulsive consumption that

can be derived from social media and influencer marketing in itself is highly alarming and prompts for a deeper dive into what consequences there are in implementing such manners to market products and brands on consumers' returns behaviour.

Influencer marketing can be done in various ways, but a popular manner is the usage of promotional codes which has increased vastly in popularity. The idea is that clothing retailers issue promotional codes which influencers post on their social media and share with their followers in an aim to sell more products (Chitrakorn, 2020). While such codes have led to more sales and are an efficient manner in which to engage consumers, there are some aspects in relation to these that clothing retailers should acknowledge. Exploring if these promotional codes issued on social media encourage impulse buying among consumers is yet to be explored, as well as how these codes could come to affect returns in particular.

While the move towards more online shopping is many years in the making, the covid-19 pandemic has surely prompted and accelerated this paradigm shift in consumer shopping behaviour further (Unctad, 2020). E-commerce and social media usage has spiked among consumers as a result of this where impulsive consumption has thrived (Von Abrams, 2020). Moreover, studies have shown that boredom during quarantine could further explain the impulse buying behaviours of consumers during this trying time. Consumers have also been shown to be more open to exploring new products, where promotional codes and vouchers are dictating their choices greatly (Rueter, 2020). While this may seem promising for retailers, in the midst of the heightened impulsive consumption, the reverse logistics of firms have been left with enormous online returns challenges (Ryan, 2020). Thereby, the necessity to explore the linkage between social media and consumers' returns behaviour more closely has never been more relevant.

3. Purpose & research question

The aim of this research is to contribute to the scarce existing literature related to social media and consumers' returns behaviour by exploring if the effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes issued on social media. In this report, social media refers to all kinds of social media platforms as the result is not dependent on which kind of social media the codes are issued. The rationale behind looking into influencer promotional codes in particular is due to the lack of existing research within this area and relating it to consumers' returns behaviour.

Moreover, the hope is to explore what possible managerial and environmental implications there are for clothing retailers in relation to their returns management processes and influencer promotional activities on social media. Based on this reasoning, the following research question has been formulated;

Do influencer promotional codes issued on social media platforms affect consumers' returns behaviour?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Reverse logistics

Reverse logistics, which include the flow of returns backwards in the supply chain, has been recognized as a strategically important chain of activities, but still, a majority of firms ignore or lack the knowledge to foresee the impact returns have on the firm and its logistical system (Mollenkopf et al., 2011). Today, offering free returns to customers is considered a vital tool for competitiveness, causing unclearness of the actual true cost of returns (Frei et al., 2020). Generally, returns rate levels amongst retailers are at 20-40 % but some businesses have reported returns rate as high as 70-80 % (Frei et al., 2020). Frei et al. (2020) highlights the detrimental economic fallout which can be derived from returns, explaining that a retailer with an annual revenue of 10 billion US dollars, has a yearly loss of 462 million due to returns. Even a small improvement in returns rate, such as 5 %, could in the end have a major impact and deliver greater improvement to the net margin (Frei et al., 2020).

The reverse flow, therefore, comes both as a challenge and an opportunity for firms, both from a cost point of view but also the environmental aspect has increased in importance amongst consumers (Jing et al., 2018 & Shaharudin et al., 2015). To gain competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive environment, firms strive to acquire benefits that will differentiate them from the perspective of the target customer. Looking specifically into the e-commerce industry, return and shipping policies have become, as stated, a vital tool for competitiveness since it enables the firm to go beyond a sole focus on price competition (Mollenkopf et al., 2011). Through the reverse flow, firms strive to accomplish value-adding activities in order to minimize the reduced profitability created by the returns (Mollenkopf et al., 2011). Simultaneously, reverse logistics could also be seen as a tool for creating customer value and building brand loyalty, and highlights that reverse management should be considered both from an operational and marketing perspective in order to capture both sides (Mollenkopf et al., 2011).

How well a retailer can handle returns and how their returns policy is designed not only affects the profit of the retailer but also market shares and the product price they are able to offer (Jing et al., 2018). The leniency of the returns policy indicates the retailer's ability to provide customer service post-purchase, which builds brand loyalty and in the end

competitiveness (Jing et al., 2018). To be able to compete beyond product price through additional service, has become a vital part of most retailers' strategy nowadays. According to Jing et al. (2018) if the transferring cost of returns, which refers to the cost of the moment of returns backward in the logistic chain, can be offset by the salvage value of the return, the retailer should offer a liberal returns policy from a financial perspective. However, only 10-20% of the original value is in general able to be recouped by retailers. Since returns have become a major influence on profitability, retailers have started to stringent their returns policies in an attempt to limit the number of returns and associated cost (Jing et al., 2018). Retailers have started to reconsider their processes when handling returns and stopped blindly accepting them all. The reason behind the returns is stated to be investigated to see if there is a legitimate reason (Frei et al., 2020). They are becoming less lenient with the consumers by starting to blacklist serial returners, which in a way is a concept that pushes the responsibility towards consumers instead of the retailer (Frei et al., 2020).

4.2 Returns management & the environment

The shrinking global supply of material and increasing environmental degradation are forcing firms to rethink their operation. To minimize environmental impact has become crucial, and firms need to consider all steps in the supply chain in order to reach a sustainable operation (Shaharudin et al., 2015). Excessive or unnecessary resource usage and waste are still major issues, and looking particularly at returns, they are causing a vastly damaging impact to the environment each year (Frei et al., 2020). The high returns rates' environmental impact is partly a result of increased transportation and product waste. According to Vogue Business (Schiffer, 2019),

"US returns alone create 5 billion pounds of landfills of waste and 15 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually, which is equivalent to the amount of trash produced by 5 million people in a year".

Even though there is a rising awareness amongst both authorities, firms, and consumers, the progression away from a throw-away society is slow and multiple firms are far behind (Frei et al., 2020). They are struggling to manage their reversed flow, and the reason is a combination of a continuing underestimation of the scale of the problems caused by returns, lack of knowledge and also high costs (Frei et al., 2020 & Shaharudin et al., 2015). It has also been stated that there is a lack of consistent data, leaving firms unable to track and manage

returns (Frei et al., 2020). The data that is crucial in order to establish a sustainable reversed flow is often incomplete, fragmented, held by various departments, not consistently monitored, and not reported to the senior management level (Frei et al., 2020).

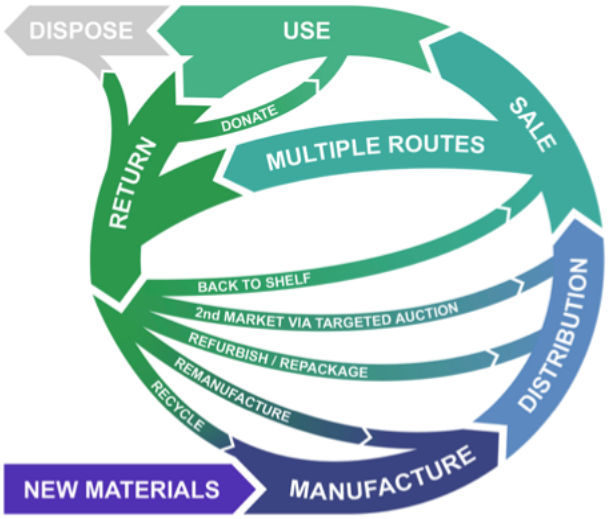

Figure 1. *"Circular economy in product returns" (Frei et al., 2020).*

There are multiple ways for a firm to handle returns, and as the image above shows, a circular economy of product returns is the main aim (Figure 1). A circular economy refers to a system with the purpose of continual use of resources, and in the specific case the products and material, and thereby minimizing waste (Frei et al., 2020). While such a system would be beneficial both from an environmental and financial perspective, firms struggle to achieve it. It has been shown that most products that pass the reversed flow seldomly undergo any repair, in some cases receiving new packaging could also be impossible (Frei et al., 2020). This is causing the retailer to either sell the product at a reduced price, auction it off to charity or even dispose of it, which is often completely unnecessary both from an environmental and financial perspective.

Still, there are opportunities to find effective ways to reduce the returns rate which include influencing consumers' buying behavior, and improving the processes of the reversed flow in order to reach a more circular economy (Frei et al., 2020). Firms have started to launch recovery programs, such as repair, reuse, remanufacturing, remarking, and refurbishing (Shaharudin et al., 2015). Other concepts within the field of reverse logistics in relation to sustainability have also been discussed, such as product life-cycle stages management, closed-loop supply chains, integrated supply chain management, and green or sustainable supply chains. These all share the same aim, to resolve environmental challenges throughout

the supply chain of firms (Shaharudin et al., 2015). Nonetheless, in order to manage the unsustainable way of operating the reversed flow and especially returns, there needs to be a wider understanding of the scale and cause of the problem.

4.3 Customer incentives for returns

The decision made regarding a purchase or a return from a customer perspective is always based on expectations (Minnema et al., 2016). The expectation itselves consists of both product quality and performance, which in turn creates uncertainty. According to Minnema et al. (2016), a customer purchases a product if the expected utility is greater than the utility of not buying it. Generally, expectations increase the likelihood of the consumer buying the product while uncertainty decreases it, which is based on the consumer being risk averse (Minnema et al., 2016). The uncertainty is often created by a lack of information during the purchasing moment. Online shopping does not allow the customer to examine the product, which results in a decision being made on imperfect information (Minnema et al., 2016). The inability to examine the product could create a *negative post-purchase product evaluation*, which has been identified as the most common reason for making a return (Minnema et al., 2016). It has been stated that product expectation prior purchase is often based on online customer reviews, which highlights customer reviews' ability to both affect purchasing and return decisions (Minnema et al., 2016). Minnema et al. (2016) further state that overly positive reviews lead to more purchases but at the same time it also increases the returns made. Another factor that will increase the return probability is the variance in reviews, since it creates greater uncertainty which triggers the likelihood of expectations not being met (Minnema et al., 2016).

Kaushik et al. (2020) have looked more specifically on what factors that differ the most from customer expectations, in turn causing the most returns. The factors were ranked and the result showed that overall apparel appearance was the most troubling area causing the most returns. Presented below are the top ten causes to why apparel online products are being returned, defined by retailers.

1. *Fit and size*
2. *Defects*
3. *Fabric variation*
4. *Quality issue*
5. *Color variation*
6. *Found a better product*
7. *Style variation*
8. *Misleading information*
9. *Thickness variation*
10. *Stretchability variation*

(Kaushik et al., 2020)

Other than the presented factors above, that mainly consist of issues related to the appearance of the product, some service related issues were also presented. Factors such as wrong product delivery, lenient returns policy and receiving partial orders were also shown to be major contributors to returns. Kaushik et al. (2020) also looked at how the consumer purchase behaviour contributes to the decision of returning a product. Both impulse and unplanned buying was included under the factors triggering consumers to return. It was stated that impulsiveness leads to cognitive dissonance (Kaushik et al., 2020), which could be explained as contradictory thoughts that can cause the consumer to feel regret, fear, guilt or anger. If the consumers are not able to justify their choices, the chances of them returning the product is quite high in order to ease their conscience (Kaushik et al., 2020).

4.4 Returns avoidance & gatekeeping

The problem of returns have, as mentioned, become costly for retailers leading to investments being made in order to decrease and in best case scenario avoid returns (Minnema et al., 2016). A high returns rate indicates a poor customer experience which weakens the retailers reputation and loyalty in their customer base (Asdecker, 2015), which could be devastating in a highly competitive market such as the fashion industry. Returns management refers to the actual management of reverse logistics, it consists of how to handle and process returns efficiently as well as prevent returns in the first place in order to reduce the reverse flow (Asdecker, 2015). To be able to reduce the flow, activities such as *gatekeeping* and *avoidance* are of utmost importance.

Gatekeeping refers to the activities that limits the amount of allowed returns in the system, and if successfully implemented this is a way to limit the volume of returns and at the same time maintain the same level of customer service (Rogers et al., 2002). Focus in returns management should be on the point of entry into the reverse flow, since this is where most potential lies in eliminating unnecessary costs related to unwanted returns (Rogers et al., 2002). Simultaneously, there should be more than one gatekeeping point in the supply chain in order to make it efficient. Firms need to establish what returns they have a possibility to face, in order to establish guidelines and therefore also implement an efficient gateway system. It is vital to spread knowledge of the cost associated with returns within all levels of the firm, but also allow empowerment for all involved to make the right decision to detect unwanted returns early (Rogers et al., 2002).

Avoidance on the other hand refers to the activities implemented to minimize the number of returns. These activities include; ensuring quality of product, changing of promotion activities or user friendliness in pro-purchasing stages (Rogers et al., 2002). The avoidance of returns in the first place has been shown to be beneficial but for this to be possible, there is a need for the perceived customer value to be high in an aim to create customer loyalty. An increased customer loyalty results in better customer insight, which could in turn lead to more supportive supply chain capabilities (Rogers et al., 2002). In order to execute avoidance factors such as service quality, product quality and price of the product is essential. Moreover, the information given to the customer plays a vital role in the avoidance strategy (Rogers et al., 2002). To provide the consumer with better decision material, investments in technology

has been made, which has allowed retailers to guide customers to a more suitable choice when ordering, considering previous order experiences (Rogers et al., 2002). Moreover, making additional information sources available, such as online customer reviews in an attempt to reduce returns (Minnema et al., 2016). Furthermore, retailers have been seen integrating their returns management in their product development process in order to take advantage of the knowledge collected by previous returns (Rogers et al., 2002). In the apparel industry, sizing and fit is also a major issue causing high returns rates. The avoidance strategy appropriate in order to minimize these kinds of returns is to apply sizing guidelines across all products in order to strive for product consistency (Minnema et al., 2016). The consistency will decrease the perceived uncertainty for the consumer and thereby decrease the likelihood of a return.

It has been shown that retailers with high returns rates will experience a positive financial impact if they implement avoidance and gatekeeping strategies (Asdecker, 2015). Moreover, Asdecker (2015) emphasizes the importance of considering tightening their returns policy, since it might be a source of more returns. However, the most crucial measure in order to avoid returns is the need for retailers to establish why returns are being made in the first place, so proper actions can be implemented. If the actual cause of return cannot be measured, you are unable to swiftly manage the problem.

5. Theoretical Framework and hypotheses

5.1 Impulse buying

The concept of impulse buying has been disputed amongst researchers but a commonly used definition is “buying which presumably was not planned by the customer before entering a store, but which resulted from a stimulus created by a sales promotional device in the store” (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). In shorter terms, the concept of impulse buying has been described as a consumer's sudden urge to buy something with diminished regard for its consequences (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018). It has been identified that one of the most common reasons for a product being returned is due to a regret of an impulse purchase, which indicates that returns are more than a post-purchase issue. An impulse purchase increases the likelihood of return due to the lack of consideration and actual need for the item during the time of purchase (Yong-Seo et al., 2016).

5.1.1 Hawkins Stern’s impulse buying theory

The phenomenon of impulse buying could be explained by Hawkins *Stern’s impulse buying theory,* which argues that firms can through marketing affect consumers to purchase impulsively. Stern (1962) has divided impulse buying into the following four categories; *pure impulse buying* which refers to a purchase that was not at all intended from the beginning and re*minder impulse buying* refers to when a consumer is reminded that they need or want a specific product which they had initially forgotten. *Suggestion impulse buying* can be explained as when a consumer finds an immediate need for a product they see for the first time. Lastly, *planned impulse buying* refers to when a customer purchases a planned product but simultaneously buys another product due to promotions. The factors affecting the different scenarios include economic, personality, time, location, and even cultural factors, but the buying situation also plays a significant role (Stern, 1962).

Stern’s theory (1962) further explains how the expenditure of resources as *money, time, physical-* and *mental efforts* affect the likelihood of an impulse purchase. The smaller these efforts are, the larger are the chances of an impulse purchase occurring. Retailers therefore strive to make the customer experience as swift and easy as possible in order to increase the likelihood of impulse purchasing (Stern, 1962). Stern (1962) also presents nine factors that

are presented as the major influences of impulse purchasing, that are widely used by retailers in order to trigger purchasing among consumers. These influences include;

1. *Low price.* Price is the most triggering factor of impulse buying. It could be a discount that persuades the customer to purchase a particular product instead of the one that was initially intended. It could also lead to a pure impulse purchase if the customer purchases a product merely because of the discount with no initial intention for it (Stern, 1962). Important to highlight is that there are no defined lines where a price becomes attractive, there are multiple factors affecting how attractive the discount is.
2. *Marginal Need for Item.* It is described as to what degree the consumer has a need for the product (Stern, 1962). If there is a continued need for the product the incentive to purchase impulsively increases.
3. *Mass Distribution.* The more available the product, the greater becomes the likelihood of impulse purchasing (Stern, 1962).
4. *Self-Service.* Refers to how easy it is for the consumer to purchase the product. If the product is available quickly and with greater freedom, the consumers' incentives to purchase impulsively increases (Stern, 1962).
5. *Mass Advertising.* Connected to reminder or planned impulse purchasing. Often based on the consumer's knowledge regarding the product, obtained mostly from advertisement (Stern, 1962). The more familiar the consumer is with the product and brand, the more likely they are to make an impulse purchase.
6. *Prominent Store Display.* Refers to how the product is positioned. When consumers are not looking for a specific product, it is of most interest for retailers to front the product in order to increase the likelihood of impulse purchasing (Stern, 1962).
7. *Short Product Life.* If the product has a short life cycle, it increases the incentives for customers to purchase impulsively since the need for the product is continuous (Stern, 1962).
8. *Small Size or Light Weight.* The size and weight of a product also influences the incentives to impulse purchasing since the physical effort of purchasing the product can't be too great (Stern, 1962).
9. *Ease of Storage.* Is connected to number eight and refers to the physical place where the consumer is able to store the product. If the consumer can store the product in an easy way, the incentives to purchase impulsively also increases (Stern, 1962).

The theory also emphasises the importance of retailers including impulse buying behaviour in their marketing strategy. Factors such as price and size might be difficult for retailers to affect in the long run and therefore focus should be on advertisement (Stern, 1962). According to Stern (1962), a key in order to increase the incentives for impulse consumption is to create a close tie-in between at-home and in-store advertising.

To conclude, impulse buying behaviour amongst consumers could be a major trigger for high returns rates. This is due to the consumer purchasing a product with little or no consideration that often results in feelings of regret or guilt, ending with the consumer returning the product.

H1: *Impulse buying impacts the returns behaviour of consumers*

5.2 Social media

While Stern's theory was based on a physical store basis, the basic concept of ease of buying through availability is still extremely relevant in an online environment which makes it intriguing to apply this particular theory in the social media context of today. Nonetheless, there are still other aspects related to impulse buying that are not covered within this theory due to the development of technology. The revolutionary change of digitalization has added new dimensions that affect the concept of impulse buying which need to be acknowledged and explored.

The rules of communication have started to change where social media has become a significant information channel changing the traditional way of communication between businesses and consumers. Now that users are able to share and create media content, the line between information producers and consumers is starting to blur (Cao et al., 2014). Even in traditional in-store contexts it has been known that social factors could be a major influencer for impulse buying (Zhang et al., 2016). With the increased communication that is enabled through social media, social factors become even more important in the concept of impulse buying. Social media has also increased the availability of *word-of-mouth* (WOM) communication, which has the ability to significantly impact consumer behaviour, attitudes, purchase intentions and decisions (Cao et al., 2014). According to Cao et al. (2014) there are five stages that consumers go through when making a purchasing decision, *recognition of*

needs, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and lastly *post-purchase evaluation*. In order for the consumer to go through these five stages, they need a specific amount of information at each stage in order to support their decision. This is where WOM information plays a significant role, providing the consumer with specific information that in the end affects the purchasing decision made (Cao et al., 2014).

Consumers increasingly choose to gather information regarding a purchasing decision through browsing reviews, where browsing refers to the gathering of product information without any purchasing intentions (Zhang et al., 2016). It has been shown that information gathering through online reviews increases a customer's incentives to impulse buying since they in the process of browsing may find a need they did not intend to have (Zhang et al., 2016). Customers have stated that WOM creates more reliability than traditional marketing that comes from the retailer, which also goes hand in hand with the identified trend of younger generations becoming more reluctant to traditional advertisement (Graeme-Duffett, 2017 & Zhang et al., 2016). The reviews increase the incentives for impulse buying by increasing the expected quality of the product and thereby reducing uncertainty. Retailers have therefore been forced to adapt their marketing communication strategies in order to reach out to customers. Here, influencers play a significant role, promoting their opinions and information for all consumers to take part of, reaching a significantly wider audience. Retailers have thus started creating influencer relationships where social media profiles are compensated to spread positive WOM regarding their products. By using influencer marketing through social media, retailers can decrease costs that otherwise would have been created by celebrity collaboration or expensive advertisement (Al-Mashhadani, 2019). It has been stated that influencers posting positively charged information influence an impulse buying pattern amongst consumers. Simultaneously, negative charged information also triggers disuse of impulse buying, but not at all to the same extent as the positive information triggered purchase (Abaid-Ullah et al., 2021). The possibility to influence has been partially shown in the fashion industry since fashion purchases often are associated with greater uncertainty for the consumer compared to other products (Cao et al., 2014). If firms have the ability to understand consumers' informational needs at each of the stages of the purchasing decision, they can increase the incentives for impulse buying behaviour (Cao et al., 2014).

It has also been shown that browsing, from a consumer perspective, is mostly caused by a need to kill time and avoid boredom, not an actual need to search for an item (Sundström et

al., 2019). Strong emotions in general have been shown to trigger impulse behaviour where boredom is included. However, this has shown to differ between various types of products and buying situations (Sundström et al., 2019). Looking specifically at fashion products, they are in general often connected with strong emotions such as identity or belongingness, which are emotions that tend to trigger the consumer to a higher risk of impulse buying (Sundström et al., 2019). Therefore, especially younger consumers, tend to make impulse purchases in an aim to diminish the sense of boredom, which is described as "click the boredom away" (Sundström et al., 2019). The browsing for fashion items could be seen as a hunt for joy, that could end with obtained inspiration or a purchase, which has a high tendency to end up being an impulsive one.

As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that 34% of online shoppers tend to consume more impulsively as a direct result of social media and 63% of these impulsive consumers tend to return these products (Sdc Executive, 2019). Thus, social media has an effect on impulse buying, and as a consequence could come to affect consumers' returns behaviour where impulse buying works as an instigator.

H2: *The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media*

5.3 Influencer promotional codes

As presented by Aragoncillo & Orus (2018), an impulse purchase is typically a result of a stimulus that occurs due to a sales promotional device. This is echoed by Stern (1962), who highlights the role of price as being a major enabler of impulse buying. Furthermore, special promotional activities have shown to attract significantly more attention than regular advertising does (Cao et al., 2014). Based on this, the usage of influencer marketing and promotional codes among clothing retailers today does not come as a surprise due to promotions' general ability to instigate impulse purchases.

Looking at influencer marketing, an increased use of promotional codes can be noticed in an attempt to influence the purchasing incentives amongst consumers. This allows retailers to combine two strong incentives for increased impulse buying behaviour; price in combination with WOM. Promotions in general are one of the most popular ways for a retailer to boost the demand for a specific product since from a consumer perspective, it could be used as an

excuse to purchase a product that they might not have a basic need for (Jing et al., 2019). There are two types of promotions; price and quantity promotions, where price has the strongest incentive to motivate purchase. Price promotions have a strong marketing effect because the discount enhances the consumers perceived transaction value (Jing et al., 2019). Discounts have a stronger incentive to affect the intra-personal conflict regarding that the purchase is not fulfilling a basic need but instead a pure pleasure purchase (Jing et al., 2019). The higher the discount the more the incentive to buy increases despite no actual need for the actual product. Looking at the *justifications-based theory*, discount is used as a justification in order to purchase a product that you might not need in your everyday life but still not feel that much guilt over the purchase (Jing et al., 2019). Price promotions have been stated as an action-focused marketing avent with the aim to have a direct impact on consumer behaviour (Gamliel & Herstein, 2011). Offering discounts has become a vital competitive advantage in a highly competitive market, it allows retailers to attract consumers that otherwise would have done their consumption elsewhere.

Earlier, the fact that impulse buying is a precedent for returns was presented. As made evident in this section, reduced price and promotional activities can have an effect on impulse buying. Based on this premise, where social media and promotional activities have been said to affect the returns behaviour among consumers due to its linkage to impulse buying, influencer promotional codes issued on social media can as a consequence also possibly affect consumers' returns behaviour through its ability to instigate impulse buying.

H3: *The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes*

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy which is the basis for this study is positivism, where the main goal is to observe the reality through empirical research, observation and experimentation (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The reasoning as to why is due to the manner in which the researchers have decided to conduct this particular research. Through the usage of a deductive and quantitative approach, the aim of this research is to analyze the relationship between chosen variables, and state if impulse buying impacts the returns frequency triggered by social media and influencer promotional codes. Moreover, the knowledge obtained from the study will be used to draw conclusions through measurable data. This is in accordance with the positivism paradigm as presented by Collis & Hussey (2014).

6.2 Research Approach

The logic of the research is based on deductive reasoning where a theoretical structure, consisting of available literature connecting returns to impulse buying, is tested by empirical observations in the form of a survey. The aim was to conclude particular instances deduced from general inferences (Collis & Hussey, 2014) in order to answer the research question *"Do influencer promotional codes issued on social media platforms affect consumers' returns behaviour?"* which goes in line with the characteristic of a deductive approach (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Based on the theory collected, three hypotheses were formulated, covering the aspects the research was aimed to investigate. Deductive positivism has been stated as the predominant research approach within the field of logistics, partly due to the field being quite young compared to other fields which leads to a lack of specific logistics theories (Kovács & Spens, 2005). Therefore, theories from other fields are often applied and tested in order to draw conclusions, which a deductive approach is best suited for. To be able to get a deeper understanding of the customer return pattern, theories from the field of marketing and consumer behaviour have been used in order to test the hypotheses.

The quantitative paradigm was most appropriate for the applied approach and problem formulation in order to achieve the purpose of the research. Characteristics of a quantitative method is the use of numerical data that can be measured and quantified using statistical analysis (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The choice of a quantitative method was based on the

desire to describe the causal relationship between the use of influencer promotional code and customer online product returns. The consumer survey used as an empirical data collection method was structured and categorized in order to present quantified variables to analyze the results statistically and test the hypotheses.

6.3 Data collection

6.3.1 Primary and secondary data

Throughout the execution of this research, both secondary and primary data has been used. The secondary data consisted of previous research conducted within the chosen field which was used as a basis for the literature review and theoretical framework. In order to facilitate the information gathering process and find publications of relevance, some overarching key words and concepts were chosen. Initially, the main focus was on returns and social media, and quickly it became evident that impulse buying was highly connected to these areas. Subsequently, the relevance of promotional activities became apparent after mapping out the main contents of prior research within the chosen field, which explains why influencer promotional codes became attractive to look into. To find relevant articles, the search function "Supersearch" at Gothenburg University's library website was used, as well as google scholar.

A large emphasis was placed on using peer-reviewed articles, and also that these articles were relatively recent in order to enhance the relevance of the research further. However, the Stern theory which was developed in the 60s is used as the theoretical base for impulse buying in this report. The decision to apply this theory in particular was due to the lack of other research conducted on this topic. The aim was to avoid using older theories in order to increase the relevancy of the study, but it became evident that the Stern theory, despite its age, is still highly relevant in the field of impulse buying. Due to its relevance, there was a possibility to explore how Stern's theory could be applied in a modern-day social media context. In regards to the primary data, this was collected through an analytical survey which aimed to explore the linkage between returns, social media and influencer promotional codes. Moreover, it should be noted that there is a general lack of previous research and statistics that provides tangible numerical data in relation to returns. It became clear while conducting an extensive literature review that there were not a lot of available peer-reviewed sources, and the available ones were not that recently published. Based on this, some sources used can be

deemed as outdated. Nonetheless, the sources used in this study have been contemplated carefully and the ones included are the most appropriate and relevant ones.

6.3.2 Formulating hypotheses

As depicted earlier, three hypotheses have been formulated which will be tested in an aim to acquire alluring insights in relation to social media and its impact on consumers' returns behaviour. In formulating the hypotheses, it was vital to conduct an extensive review of earlier research where the primary focus was on social media and returns. Based on earlier research conducted within these areas, it became evident that social media and returns had essentially one area in common, which was impulse buying. While outlining previous research, the following premises could be identified;

1. *Impulse buying triggers returns*
2. *Social media triggers impulse buying*
3. *Reduced price/promotional activities trigger impulse buying*

Based on this, it is intriguing to delve deeper into how social media and the usage of reduced price and promotional activities impact the returns behaviour of consumers' due to its ability to trigger impulse buying. The rationale behind looking into specifically influencer promotional codes issued on social media is that such codes have grown immensely in popularity in recent years. Moreover, there is a lack of prior research which highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how these promotional activities in particular impact returns. Its ability to impact impulse buying is quite troublesome and there is a necessity for clothing retailers to at least investigate how such promotional activities could come to affect their returns management processes. The chosen relevant variables for this study were thereby; impulse buying, social media, influencer promotional codes and returns. Through the premises outlined above, the following hypotheses were formulated;

- ***H1:*** Impulse buying impacts the returns behaviour of consumers
- ***H2:*** The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media
- ***H3:*** The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes

6.3.3 Survey structure

Based on the formulated hypotheses, an analytical survey was developed to explore the chosen variables (see appendix). The survey was based on a structured model, presenting the same question in the same order for all participants (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Funnelling was also applied, meaning that the questions were presented in a logical order from general to more specific (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Specifically, the survey was based on the order of the hypotheses beginning with general questions about impulse buying and subsequently narrowing down to impulse buying caused by social media and lastly finishing off even more narrow with a specific focus on influencer promotional codes' effect on impulse buying. The effect caused by the independent variable on the dependent variable was in focus throughout the entire survey. All questions were presented as closed questions with a mixture of predetermined multiple choice answers and rating scales answers according to the Likert scale. This in order to capture and measure the attitudes and behaviours of the respondents. The choice of the survey layout was appropriate since it enabled an efficient interpretation of the statistical analysis but also since the research follows a positivist approach (Collis & Hussey, 2014). When using closed questions there is a risk of participants not being able to give unequivocal answers due to the fact that the predetermined answers might not be sufficient (Collis & Hussey, 2014). To minimize this dilemma, all questions were provided with 6 to 7 possible answers to choose from, and multiple questions had answers that were formulated as percentage or Likert scale index (see appendix).

To target the right audience a filter question was used at the beginning of the survey to make sure the individuals participating actually had made purchases online. Moreover, there was another filter question which seeked to determine if the respondents used influencer promotional codes. This was done as some questions were only relevant if respondents in fact had used such codes. There was also some use of classification questions such as age and gender, where the decision was made to present these questions last in order to put more emphasis and focus on the questions related to the hypotheses.

6.4 Sampling design

6.4.1 Sampling method

Convenience sampling is a method that belongs to the non-probability type of sampling, referring to the chances of being included as a respondent is not equal for all participants. With the characteristics of using a group of the population that is close to hand (Collis & Hussey, 2014), convenience sampling was seen to be an appropriate choice of method based on both the approach of the research but also time and cost limitations. The sampling method's ability to efficiently collect a sample was crucial for the progression of the research.

Although a convenience sample was the most appropriate choice, it should be noted that it limits the research. As each individual in the population does not have an equal chance of being included, there is a risk of bias, which could be reflected as an under or over-representation of the population. This is a result of the sample being dependent, meaning that the individuals included in the sample are in some way connected, which could interfere with the hypothesis test and affect the p-values since it is based on underlying assumptions of random sampling (SPSS Tutorials, n.d). The sampling method, therefore, creates difficulties in making generalizations and drawing conclusions from the population. Important to highlight is also how the selection method might have resulted in a sample that might not have a wide enough variation of demographic factors related to the respondents, such as geographic spread, income variation, and educational level. Therefore the reliability of the research could have been affected since another sample might not show the same result if the variation of demographic factors differs. More specifically the use of promotional codes and usage of social media might differ between respondents with various prerequisites.

6.4.2 Sample size

In order to answer the research question, a sample of large enough size is needed (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The decision of the sample size was heavily affected by factors such as time constraints, cost, convenience of collecting data and accepted level of precision (Collis & Hussey, 2014). As the variation within the sample was expected to be quite large, since purchasing behaviour can differ from person to person, the research aimed to collect as comprehensive a selection as possible with the convenience method in consideration. Even though a larger sample would better represent the population and increased precision, limitations regarding the timeframe resulted in a sample of 100. A larger sample could imply

unnecessary complexity and become too time consuming to run, even though the result could become more accurate. The benefits of a larger sample did not outweigh the efforts it would imply to collect and process. With a sample collected, the research cannot be the foundation for generalizations, however it can still contribute with valid conclusions supported by the data collected. The aim is to dictate further research and present useful insight related to return behaviour and social media.

6.4.3 Millennials

The target group chosen for the research was millennials, ages 25-40, which was a decision based on various factors but primarily due to the fact that they have grown up in an area of mass consumption and with social media as an integral part of their entire life (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017). Millennials are seen as being digital natives with an expectation of constant connectivity that has the ability to influence the purchases of other consumers (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017). It has been shown that over half of millennials make purchases online, which further highlights their suitability as a target group. Due to this generation's connectivity habits, a wide variety of media is being used during these purchases, such as blogs, reviews, and other social networks to check product ratings, reviews, or feedback on retailers. Millennials are also, compared to earlier generations, more likely to make impulse purchases, which was yet another incentive to target this specific group (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017).

6.5 Processing data

Once the data was collected through the survey, it was transcribed, coded and downloaded into the programme SPSS. SPSS was chosen due to its user friendliness and its ability to efficiently make data comprehensible which was deemed appropriate to ensure the results were easy to follow for the reader. Through this process, it was vital to make a clear distinction between the independent and dependent variables of the study where the hypotheses were used as a baseline in order to identify how the data should be organized and coded. After much consideration, the scales of various questions were condensed to facilitate and ensure the data was understandable and coherent. Moreover, the chosen variables for this study were extracted from the questions where the aim was to fully grasp and interpret the data relevant for each specific variable. This was also done in an attempt to make interpretation of the data easier and ensure that the study measures the variables that it in

actuality intends to measure. Thus, the questions within the survey were grouped depending on their relevance to each hypothesis and its ability to explore it. The full grouping can be found in the appendix. In order to take into consideration multiple views, some of the variables are based on multiple survey questions. To be able to create a single variable out of those hypotheses that contained multiple survey questions, the means of each participant's answers were collected and used (see appendix). Important to highlight is how this merging of the data could have affected the result for hypothesis two and three. Since the data analysis is based on a mean of multiple answers the result might not precisely reflect the respondents exact opinion. After the data had been structured, frequency tables were created and analyzed in an aim to traverse each specific hypothesis. Cross tabulations and Chi-square tests were also used to explore the role of gender in relation to the variables to see if there were any significant differences between gender. While this was not the main aim of the research, it was deemed appropriate as it could give alluring insights as to what role gender plays in terms of impulsive consumption and returns behaviour. Lastly, a correlation and a paired samples T-test in order to test the returns frequency and state any differences in consumer returns behaviour.

As shown in Table 3 and 15 (appendix), the data used contained cells that had a count of less than five in a cell. This implies that only less than five participants chose that particular answer. The results of a Chi-square test are relatively sensitive to this kind of data which highlights why some extra tests were conducted to ensure that the results were valid. Chi-square tests were conducted based on a 2x2 table in order to test the result with no cells that had a count less than five. The outcome was exactly the same as for the 2x3 table and therefore the results should be valid despite containing cells with less than five.

6.6 Ethical Considerations

In order to gain credibility, a high level of ethical considerations needs to be established through multiple precautions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The main focus of this research, in order to meet ethical expectations, was to establish anonymity and confidentiality among the participants. This was of utmost importance in order to ensure that participants felt comfortable expressing their opinions or behaviour, but also to increase the response rate. The decision was based on Collis and Hussey (2014) expression that anonymity both leads to a higher response rate and increased honesty. Another ethical consideration to consider is not

to infringe or harm anyone's privacy (Collis & Hussey, 2014), which is why personal identification questions in the survey were optional and limited to only ask for age and gender. This decision was made in order to avoid invasions of privacy since further questions would not contribute to the purpose of this study.

Other considerations included ensuring that the individuals receiving the survey were aware that it was optional to participate and provide them with enough information in relation to the research's purpose and the expected time of the survey. The participants had the ability to withdraw from the survey at any time if not comfortable with the questions. Lastly, the research follows accepted research practice both when analyzing and drawing conclusions in order to achieve a high ethical standard.

6.7 Validity & Reliability

As presented by Collis & Hussey (2014), it is vital for a research to have both high validity and reliability. Validity refers to the ability for the research to actually measure what it intends to measure, and reliability refers to the ability of the research to efficiently be repeated without affecting accuracy and precision (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

For this research in particular, in an aim to ensure high validity, it was vital for the composition of questions in the survey to include all variables the researchers were intending to measure which included impulse buying, social media, influencer promotional codes and returns. Thus, the order in which the questions were presented in the survey was contemplated carefully, where it was of major importance to start off with broader questions and consequently moving towards narrower questions in an attempt to fully capture the variables relevant for this study. Nonetheless, it should be noted that there could be a discrepancy between what the respondents answered in the survey and their actual behaviour. There is always a source of uncertainty in relation to the manner in which respondents answer, so while contextualizing the results, this was taken into consideration where the researchers avoided generalizing.

The chosen age group for the respondents within this study could also be questioned, as millennials can be deemed a rather wide age span. Moreover, as the research has been conducted using a convenience sampling method, the respondents mostly consisted of university students. The researchers are aware that students do not necessarily reflect millennials as a whole group and could be deemed as a limitation for this study in terms of

drawing wider generalizations. Even though wider generalizations cannot be drawn due to the size and selection of respondents, the research still contributes with insights in relation to consumers' impulse buying and return behaviour.

In terms of reliability, a larger sample size could have achieved a higher reliability since it would enable the research to be replicable to a greater extent. A larger sample could also aid in minimizing the risk of the occurrence of outliers. Furthermore, the choice of using convenience sampling as a sampling method has limited the research's reliability because of difficulties in replicating the same exact sample. Convenience sampling has been argued to be questionable in capturing representative samples and while this has been acknowledged by the researchers, it was the most appropriate sampling method due to cost and time limitations of the study (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

7. Results

The sample consisted of 100 respondents (n = 100), where 67% were women and 33% were men. Moreover, the age span among the respondents was 25-40 in accordance with the aimed focus on millenials. In presenting the results for this study, each specific hypothesis will be explored through frequency tables, cross tabulations and appropriate statistical tests.

7.1 Hypothesis 1: Impulse buying impacts the returns behaviour of consumers

7.1.1 General statistics

In order to explore the first hypothesis, and state if returns behaviour amongst consumers is impacted by impulsiveness, the returns frequency for planned purchases needed to be collected to be able to compare. Amongst the participants, 76 % stated that they only return less than 20 % of their planned purchases and 19 % stated that they return 20 to 59 % (Table 1). Looking instead at the returns frequency for impulse purchases, table 1, only 56 % of the participants answered that they return less than 20% and 31% answered that their impulse purchases lead to a return in 20 to 59 % of the cases. As shown in table 1, the returns frequency of 60 to 100% more than doubled when comparing planned and impulse purchases even though the response rate is quite low.

		Returns Frequency	
		Planned purchases	**Impulse purchases**
		Percent	Percent
Valid	Less than 20 %	76	56
	20 - 59 %	19	32
	60 - 100 %	5	11
	Total	100	99
Missing	System	0	1
Total		100	100

***Table 1**. Returns frequency on planned and impulse purchases in percentage.*

To be able to state if there is any gender difference in how the participants felt impulse buying impacted their returns behaviour, a Chi-square test was conducted. With a p-value of 0.45, table 3 in appendix, the result showed that there was no significant difference when

looking at impulse purchase returns frequency in relation to gender even though a difference could be seen in figure 2 below.

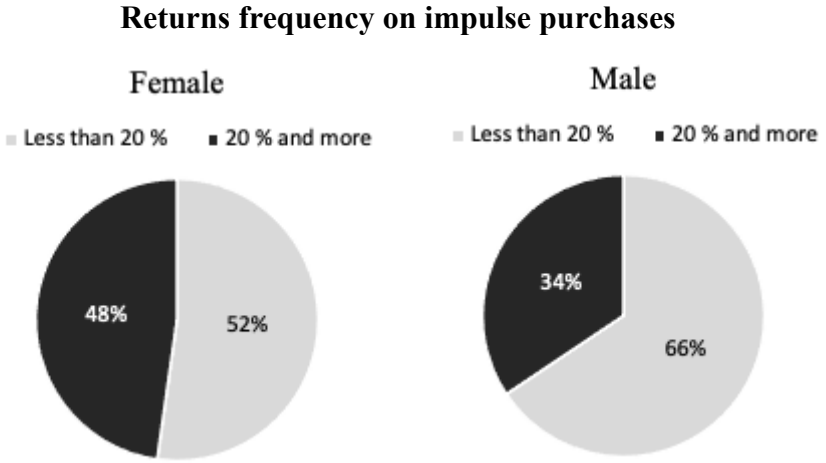

Figure 2. *Returns frequency on impulse purchases divided by gender (Appendix table 2).*

7.1.2 Descriptive statistics

To explore the impact impulse buying behaviour has on returns frequency, a paired samples T-test was also conducted (Table 4, appendix). The result showed that there is a significant difference between the two variables' means. A t-value of 3.4, a p-value of 0.001, and a confidence interval that does not cross the zero point, all indicate the significant difference (Table 4, appendix). This means that there is a significant difference between the mean of returns frequency of planned and impulse purchases. Impulse returns frequency had a mean of 2.60 and planned returns frequency had a mean of 2.22, with the significant difference this result showed that the participants stated that impulse buying did lead to a higher returns rate.

7.2 Hypothesis 2: The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media

7.2.1 General statistics

Since it has been shown that there is a significant difference between planned and impulse purchase's effect on returns, the second hypothesis aims to test this conclusion in a social media context. First, the respondents were asked whether social media triggered impulse buying behaviour. 71 % of the respondents did feel that social media triggered impulse purchases on a medium or high level as shown in table 5. Looking at the returns frequency as a result of social media (Table 6), 44 % of the respondents still returned less than 20 %. If

looking at the two higher categories 35 % of the respondents feel that they return 20 to 59% and 20% of the respondents answer that social media leads to a returns frequency of 60 to 100 %, which is a result that is higher than the returns frequency for both planned and general impulse purchases.

Influence on impulse purchases
Social Media

		Percent
Valid	No to low influence	28
	Medium influence	52
	High influence	19
	Total	99
Missing	System	1
Total		100

Table 5. *Social media´s influence on impulse purchases.*

Returns Frequency
Social Media

		Percent
Valid	Less than 20 %	44
	20 - 59 %	35
	60 - 100 %	20
	Total	99
Missing	System	1
Total		100

Table 6. *Returns frequency of social media.*

To be able to state if there is a gender difference in the returns behaviour triggered by social media, a Chi-Square Test was carried out. The result showed a p-value of 0,003 which indicates a significant difference in the returns behaviour between the genders (Table 8, appendix). Looking at figure 3, it shows that females tend to have a higher returns frequency than males when it comes to purchases made influenced by social media. The gender difference was also tested in relation to what extent social media influences impulse buying behaviour, but here there was no significant difference. Both males and females felt that they were impacted to the same extent.

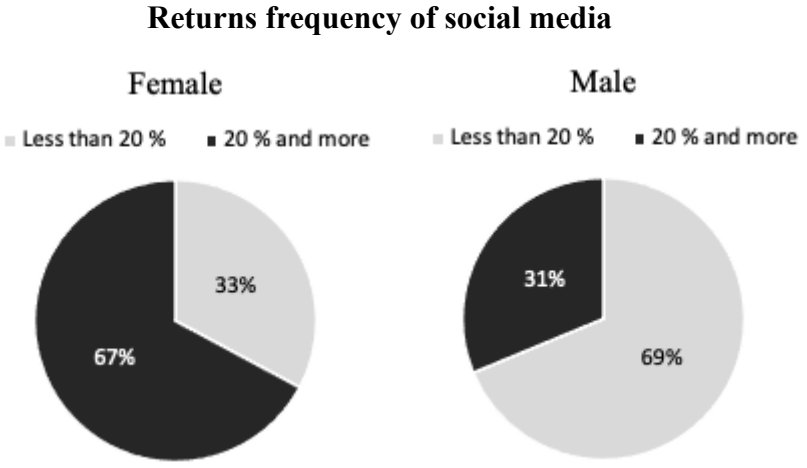

Figure 3. *Returns frequency on social media divided by gender (Appendix table 7).*

7.2.2 Descriptive statistics

To further state the influence social media has on the frequency of returns, the returns rate of social media is compared to both planned and impulse purchases returns frequency. Looking at table 9 in appendix, a moderate correlation could be seen between returns frequency for planned purchases and social media with a value of 0.45. But for impulse purchase and social media, the correlation is quite strong with a value of 0.75 which is quite close to one (Table 9, appendix). This indicates that multiple participants had the same returns pattern when purchasing impulsively as for purchasing impacted by social media but for planned purchases, the returns behaviour differs.

Returns frequency of social media had a mean of 2.97 while planned purchases had 2.26 and impulse purchase 2.60. To test the three different means against each other a Paired Sample T-test is again used. When comparing the returns frequency of planned purchases and social media, a t-value of -4.7, a p-value of approximately 0.001, and a critical value that does not cross zero the result indicates that there is a significant difference (Table 10, appendix). Looking instead at the comparison of returns frequency of impulse purchases and social media, a t-value of -3.1, a p-value of approximately 0.001, and also here the confidence interval does not cross zero the result also indicates that there is a significant difference (Table 10, appendix). To summarize, the result shows that there is a significant difference between the mean of returns frequency of social media, planned and impulse purchases. This difference in combination with the presented means indicates that social media triggers a higher returns rate than planned purchases. It also shows that social media creates even higher returns rates than general impulse purchases.

7.3 Hypothesis 3: The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes

7.3.1 General statistics

To state the role of influencer promotional codes in a return perspective, the first hypothesis is used in yet another context, influencer promotional codes. Of the respondents that responded to this question, almost 86 % stated that influencer promotional codes trigger impulse purchases on a medium to a high level. Only 14 % felt that the influence for impulse purchases was low (Table 11). Looking at the returns frequency created by influencer promotional codes (Table 12), 52 % of the respondents that did answer the question felt that

they only returned less than 20 % of their purchases bought with an influencer promotional code. 31 % of the respondents that used influencer codes felt that they returned 20 to 59 % of their purchases, and only 17 % thought they returned 60 to 100 % of their purchases. The high missing value shown in table 11 and 12 is a result of participants answering a filter question regarding the usage of influencer promotional codes, and therefore some percentage of the participants were removed due to lack of experience with influencer promotional codes.

Influence on impulse purchases
Influencer promotional codes

		Percent
Valid	No to low influence	9
	Medium influence	37
	High influence	17
	Total	63
Missing	System	37
Total		100

Table 11. *Influencer promotional codes influence on impulse purchases.*

Returns Frequency
Influencer promotional codes

		Percent
Valid	Less than 20 %	33
	20 - 59 %	20
	60 - 100 %	11
	Total	64
Missing	System	36
Total		100

Table 12. *Returns frequency of influencer promotional codes*

When comparing the returns frequency of influencer promotional codes between gender a p-value of 0.042 is detected (Table 14, appendix). The value indicates a significant difference, meaning that there is a difference between males and females returns frequency created by influencer promotional codes. Looking at figure 4, it is quite obvious that females tend to have a higher returns frequency in relation to influencer promotional codes than males. A comparison was also made between gender in relation to influencer promotional codes impact on impulse buying behaviour. Also here a significant difference was shown, stating that females felt that influence promotional codes trigger impulse buying to a greater extent than males.

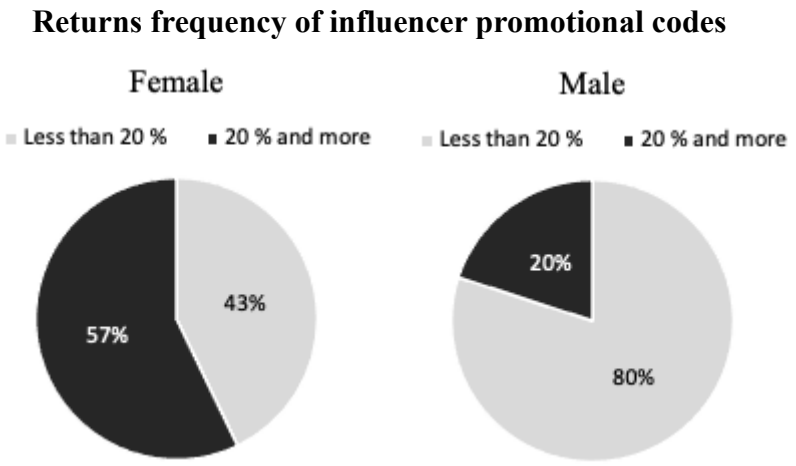

Figure 4. *Returns frequency on influencer promotional codes divided by gender (Appendix table 13).*

7.3.2Descriptive statistics

As for the two other hypotheses, a correlation test was conducted in order to map the consumer behaviour when using influencer promotional codes as well. The correlation between the return frequency of planned purchases and social media is positive, but the value of 0.34 is quite low (Table 15, appendix). But on the other hand, the return frequency for impulse purchase and social media show a quite strong correlation with a value of 0.66 (Table 15, appendix). This, as previous, indicates that the participants did have a similar return behaviour between impulse purchases and influencer promotional codes returns but not to the same extent for planned purchases.

To test the last hypothesis even further the Paired Samples T-test is again used. Return frequency for influencer promotional codes had a mean at 2.78, planned purchases had a mean at 2.30, and impulse at 2.70. When comparing the mean of returns frequency on planned purchases against returns frequency for influencer promotional codes a significant difference can be seen. Looking at table 16 in appendix, the result shows a t-value of -2.581, a p-value of 0.012, and a confidence interval that does not cross zero, which indicates that there is a difference in the returns frequency between the two of them. As the mean-difference states in table 16 (appendix), the returns frequency of social media is significantly higher than for planned purchases. Looking instead at the comparison on returns frequency between impulse purchases and influencer promotional codes, it instead indicates a t-value of -0.539 which instead is lower than the critical value. The p-value of 0.6 is also higher than the significance level of 0.05 and the confidence interval does cross the zero

point, which indicates that there are no significant differences between the two means compared. To summarize, this indicates that there is no significant difference in the returns frequency created by regular impulse purchases compared to influencer promotional codes. Meaning that influencer promotional codes codes trigger higher returns rate than planned purchases but not higher than general impulse purchases.

7.4 Results conclusion

Hypotheses	*Supported*
H1: Impulse buying impacts the returns behaviour of consumers	Yes
H2: The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media	Yes
H3: The effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes	Yes

Summary of result

H1: Impulse purchases trigger more returns than planned purchases, which indicates that impulse buying does impact the return behaviour of consumers.

H2: Social media triggers more returns than both planned and general impulse purchases do, which indicates that the effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by social media.

H3: Influencer promotional codes trigger more returns than planned purchases but not more than general impulse purchases do, this still indicates that the effect of impulse buying on returns is impacted by the usage of influencer promotional codes.

8. Discussion

8.1 General implications

As the results display, this study concludes that impulse purchases can instigate returns to a greater extent than planned purchases, which goes in hand with previous literature presented by Kaushik et al., 2020 & Yong-Seo et al., 2016. As stated, this is probably a result of cognitive dissonance (Kaushik et al., 2020), leaving the consumer unable to justify their purchase since it was a result of the heat of the moment. The only way to fully ease the guilt is to return the product that had no need or function to fill at the time of purchase. The results also confirm Yong-Seo et al. (2016) theory of returns being more than a post-purchase issue where the likelihood of a product being returned can be impacted even before the purchasing moment. This highlights the possibility for retailers to manage their returns even before an order is processed. It is important to highlight that generalizations cannot be made due to the sample size. Moreover, the millennials that participated are not representative of the general public since there is a lack of demographic variance. Therefore, the results presented for all hypotheses highlight the participants' consumer pattern but do not necessarily need to be aligned with the general behaviour among consumers.

The impulse buying behaviour itself could be seen as being highly impacted by social media. The participants felt that social media highly increased the likelihood of them purchasing a product impulsively and the returns rate for social media was shown to be even greater than for general impulse purchases. Therefore, social media was identified as having the largest impact on returns behaviour compared to the other factors that were looked at. Social media's impact on impulse buying and thus, returns was discussed by both Zhang et al. (2016) and Cao et al. (2014) who stated that social factors such as WOM have always played a significant role in impacting consumers' purchase intentions and consequently the returns frequency which is in accordance with the results of this study. The results indicate that millennials have a high reliability in WOM spread through social media, creating high incentives for impulse buying behaviour. It also emphasizes the changing rules of communication stated by Graeme-Duffett (2017) and Zhang et al. (2016), making social media a vital marketing and branding tool for retailers targeting millennials as this group has been shown to be more susceptible for such marketing techniques.

In terms of the results related to influencer promotional codes in particular, the research question of this study can be answered. The research question in focus for this study was the following; *"Do influencer promotional codes issued on social media platforms affect consumers' returns behaviour?"*.

Price, as stated in the literature, is the most common trigger for impulse purchases (Aragoncillo & Orus, 2018 & Stern, 1965) since it enables the consumer to control their cognitive dissonance through a justification based on a reduction in price. As stated by Jing et al. (2019), this could enable the consumer to go beyond not having a basic need for the product but still perceive a high value. When combining social media's stated ability to trigger impulse buying through WOM with the pricing incentives in the form of promotional activities, influencer promotional codes should have a high incentive to trigger impulse buying behaviour, and thereby instigate returns.

Based on the results, influencer promotional codes issued on social media affect consumers' returns behaviour. Such codes have more impact than planned purchases on returns behaviour, however, do not have a significantly larger impact when compared to impulse purchases in general, where social media was shown to have a larger impact on returns behaviour. At the same time, influencer promotional codes were shown to have a slightly higher perceived impact on impulse buying behaviour than social media. A higher number of participants, compared to social media, felt that influencer promotional codes did trigger them to purchase impulsively, but they did not feel that they in turn, return the purchase more frequently than a general impulse purchase. This is quite surprising when acknowledging the theoretical findings in relation to pricing and promotional activities' ability to trigger for more impulse buying behaviour, and thus, instigate returns. This suggests that despite how previous literature has outlined promotional activities and WOM as a trigger for more impulse purchases and more returns, that influencer promotional codes do not impact the returns behaviour of consumers' to the extent firstly anticipated. This brings forth an alluring discussion on why such codes' impact on returns was lower than expected in this study despite their ability to trigger more impulse buying behaviour.

A possible explanation to this discrepancy could be due to the low usage rate of influencer promotional codes. 41% of the respondents stated that they do not use influencer promotional codes at all. This rather large loss of respondents made the sample quite small which could

have affected the results presented. Due to this loss, the impulse buying and return patterns might not have been reflected with the same validity as for the two other hypotheses. Also worth mentioning is how the possible lack of demographic variation within the sample could explain the low usage of influencer promotional codes. The participants that used the promotional codes, did so quite infrequently, approximately one to four purchases a year. Thus, influencer promotional codes might not be as widely spread as social media as a concept, and therefore there could still be some hesitance amongst consumers to use them. Moreover, purchasing an item with a discount might lower the incentives among consumers to return. This might be the case even though the consumer regrets the purchase. The financial compensation and ease of guilt might not compensate for the effort to make the return. This could be explained by the justification theory (Jing et al., 2019), meaning that the consumer justifies their keeping of the product in order to avoid the effort of return with the reduced price. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that when influencer promotional codes start to be more widely used, the returns frequency might reach higher levels as an effect.

8.2 Hawkins Stern's impulse buying theory

Even though Stern's theory (1962) is quite old, the result of this study highlights the relevance the theory still has despite the recent years' rapid growth of technology. Stern's theory is, as mentioned, built upon a physical store basis but it could be applied in today's social media context as well.

Stern (1962) emphasizes the importance of ease of buying, stating that both money, time, and physical- and mental effort are highly impacting impulse buying behaviour. The less effort, time, and money a consumer needs to put in, the higher are the chances that an impulse purchase will accrue (Stern, 1962). Looking at both social media and influencer promotional codes as high triggers of impulse buying behaviour, as the result showed, both of the factors contain all of the four parts, resources of money, time, physical- and mental efforts, that according to Stern (1962) will increase the incentives for impulse buying behaviour when being low. Both social media and influencer promotional codes are used by retailers to make themself available and ease the shopping experience in order to increase the likelihood of a purchase. Using social media or influencer promotional codes could be less time-consuming but also the physical- and mental effort that is needed in order to collect information will be less compared on a physical level. Worth highlighting is the closeness to purchase is often

just a click away making the effort and time minimal. As the result showed, influencer promotional codes trigger impulse buying behaviour slightly more than social media did in general. This could also be explained by Stern (1962), where influencer promotional codes include a discount, leaving the consumer with even lower financial efforts, contributing even more to the possibility of impulse buying.

Stern (1962) also mentioned Mass distribution (product availability), Self-Service (ease of purchase), Mass advertising, and Prominent Store Display (product positioning) as major contributors to impulse buying behaviour. When these aspects were implemented to the theory the meaning of these concepts was limited to a physical room, but if this idea is widened and we look at the theory from an updated online perspective the underlying concept still fits. To make the product available by both spreading information regarding the products on multiple platforms, both through mass distribution, and advertisement but also prominent displaying is most retailers aim with social media nowadays. Retailers do not only advertise and position their own product, but they distribute them to influencers to do it for them, allowing them to reach an even broader audience but also increase the likelihood of consumers repeatedly coming in contact with their brand. The concept of Self-Service might not be the same as when the theory was created but social media allows the concept to an even higher degree than Stern might have had in mind. Allowing the consumer to freely browse, read reviews, 24/7 availability and check out at any time.

As mentioned, Stern (1962) divided impulse buying behaviour into four categories, pure-, reminder-, suggestion- and planned impulse buying. Looking from a social media context, WOM should especially trigger categories such as reminder-, and suggestion impulse buying. Suggestion impulse buying could be a result of the consumer, in the process of browsing, finding a need they did not intend to have, resulting in an impulse purchase based on a sudden urge to have. Reminded impulse buying, on the other hand, should be the category that is mostly triggered by social media since retailers presence on social media is all about making customers aware of their existence. When a retailer is creating collaboration with multiple influencers, consumers are daily faced with commercials of their brand, reminding and convincing the consumer of their business idea.

8.3 Logistical & Managerial implications

Now that the research question has been answered, the possible logistical and managerial implications that can be taken from the findings of this report will be outlined. The question is thus what insights have been gained through the results, and how such insights can possibly be used by firms in an aim to facilitate their returns management processes.

There are two main manners in which retailers can seek to reduce their return rates as presented by Rogers et al. (2002); gatekeeping and avoidance strategies. Often, most retailers allocate efforts and resources towards activities related to gatekeeping, where the aim is to dictate and limit the amount of allowed returns in the system. However, it is vital to minimize the number of returns allowed back into the system whilst still maintaining a high level of customer service. Avoidance refers to the activities which seek to reduce the number of returns as a whole where changing promotional activities has been identified as an efficient approach. Avoiding returns has been shown to be beneficial, but customer loyalty is vital for firms to be able to implement efficient avoidance strategies (Rogers et al. 2002).

As made evident earlier in this study, impulse buying behaviour is a precedent for heightened returns which highlights the potential in reducing the likelihood of returns if firms were to look over how and if they trigger consumers to engage in such buying behaviour. If firms seek to minimize the amount of returns, they should be aware of how and to what extent they encourage more impulse purchases, as there is a possibility for them to reduce returns vastly. Now, this study has focused on impulse buying behaviour, social media and influencer promotional codes by exploring how these variables impact consumers' return behaviour. As previously mentioned, the results indicate that social media has great potential in affecting the returns behaviour of consumers while impulse purchases and influencer promotional codes did not impact such behaviour to the same high extent. Based on this, what can be said in relation to avoidance strategies in particular is that firms should look into incorporating how they encourage consumers to engage in more impulse buying, especially through social media in their avoidance strategies.

As Minnema et al. (2016) explain, returns are often created by uncertainty, primarily due to the lack of available information at the purchasing moment, resulting in decisions made on imperfect presumptions. In developing an efficient avoidance strategy based on this primar

issue, the main focus is to provide the consumer with the right amount of information in order to enable them to make the right purchasing decision. By doing so, there is an opportunity for firms to reduce their returns and reduce the likelihood of consumers regretting purchases. Rogers et al. (2002) emphasize the role of online customer reviews to minimize the uncertainty at the purchasing moment in an avoidance strategy. Simultaneously, the result of this study shows that social media is the major trigger for high return rates but does offer a wide opportunity for browsing customer reviews. As Zhang et al. (2016) stated, customer reviews increase incentives for consumers to buy impulsively since they in the process of browsing may be triggered to purchase impulsively, and therefore such reviews can also trigger returns. Thereby, social media could work as an enabler for firms to reduce the number of returns if the consumer using it has a pre-decided need to fill, namely a planned purchase. However, if the consumer does not have a need but instead merely uses social media to browse, perhaps out of boredom, social media can instead trigger impulse buying behaviour leaving the retailer with higher return rates. Thus, the manner in which consumers in actuality use social media will dictate the extent to which it is able to trigger for more impulsive purchases and instigate for more returns.

In relation to influencer promotional codes in particular, promotional activities have been proven to be an efficient manner in which to avoid returns as explained by Rogers et al. (2002). However, this study concluded that influencer promotional codes can trigger more impulse purchases but do not impact consumers' return behaviour to the same extent. Thus, influencer promotional codes might not be a promotional activity which Rogers et al. (2002) refers to, as this type of promotion is quite a new concept. Moreover, it is hard to draw any conclusions in relation to these codes as the results indicated that they do not impact the return behaviour of consumers' to the same extent as anticipated. Thereby, the inclusion of influencer promotional codes in firms' avoidance strategies might not be appropriate, as these were not proven to increase returns so much. Social media was shown to trigger the most returns, and while influencer promotional codes are issued on social media platforms, it seems that it is not this type of social media activity which is the main culprit in terms of instigating returns. There seems to be a need to pinpoint what mechanisms in relation to social media trigger for more impulse buying behaviour and more returns, as this study has concluded that promotional activities issued on social media in the form of influencer promotional codes do not impact returns as much as anticipated.

While this study has highlighted the potential in shifting a little focus from gatekeeping strategies to avoidance strategies in a social media context, a reasoning as to why firms primarily focus on gatekeeping strategies could be due to the difficulties of measuring and deriving returns from specific actions which makes developing avoidance strategies hard. Firms might not have the ability to measure social media's impact on returns and thus how to avoid them, whereas gatekeeping strategies might be easier to implement. As Frei et al. (2020) stated, the data related to returns might often be incomplete or poorly handled, leaving it useless in the development of an avoidance strategy. Moreover, it could be argued that firms tend to encourage more impulse purchases despite the heightened returns it might imply, due to the fact that increased sales compensate for the cost of the returns as presented by Rogers et al. (2002). As long as the revenue from impulse purchases is able to absorb the costs of increased returns, firms might continue focusing on primarily gatekeeping activities. However, it might be appropriate for firms to at least consider the potential in reducing returns by contemplating how they facilitate more impulse purchases, especially on social media. As depicted by Yong-Seo et al. (2016), returns are more than a post-purchase issue and there seems to be a lot of potential for firm's to avoid returns in the first place by implementing efficient avoidance strategies in their supply chains.

8.4 Environmental implications

As stated in the literature, there is an overall struggle amongst firms to achieve a higher level of sustainability and especially in the reversed flow in relation to returns. Even though the awareness amongst both consumers and firms have increased, there are still gaps in the knowledge causing the scale of the environmental problem to be underestimated (Frei et al., 2020). Firms are also starting to realise the competitive advantages that can be reaped through the implementation of more sustainable processes and practices, but the high cost of actually implementing such actions are a major obstacle for firms today.

Looking at return management implications from an environmental perspective, gatekeeping and avoidance activities within the supply chain could be argued to affect the environment at different levels. An avoidance strategy's primary aim is to stop the consumer from buying a good if there is no presumed need or will to keep the product (Rogers et al., 2002). This implies that the goal is to avoid a return in the first place, which is done by reducing the likelihood of consumers' returning goods. In contrast, gatekeeping aims to only limit the

number of allowed returns entering the reversed flow (Rogers et al., 2002). This essentially means that the product is already bought, the material is used, transported and it has already made an environmental impact as it was transferred in the forward flow. Through this, firms that implement an efficient avoidance strategy have the potential to considerably decrease their negative environmental impact in comparison to focusing largely on a gatekeeping strategy. The reasoning behind this is based on the need to decrease overconsumption and impulse purchases in order to reduce return rates and thus, the environmental footprint of firms. In order to face environmental degradation, the consumer demand needs to be altered and it cannot be done through merely a gatekeeping strategy, avoidance needs to be applied in order to reduce the return rates.

Now, it is evident that firms have the ability to influence consumers' buying behaviour immensely and returns have been shown to be more than a post-purchase issue, one could thereby ask why firms have not allocated more resources to halt the devastating development in relation to the heightened impulsive consumption in recent years. This could be explained by the fact that more impulsive consumption results in higher sales, and it seems firms will primarily aim to shift the consumer demand only when their profit margins are being hurt. This is highlighted by the fact that many firms have shifted towards less lenient return policies in recent years as it has been proven that lenient return policies have not been economically feasible. The latest trend of retailers blacklisting serial returners (Frei et al., 2020) is further showing how retailers shift focus from how they might trigger unsustainable consumption, to putting the responsibility in the hands of the consumers. Leading retailers have the possibility to instead rethink their presence on social media and instead use its ability to influence on educating their customers and build loyalty by offering smarter buying decisions and strategies to avoid unnecessary waste.

8.5 Future Research

This study has aimed to contribute to the scarce existing research in relation to social media and returns by exploring how impulse buying behaviour, social media and influencer promotional codes impact the return behaviour among consumers. As depicted in the results, it was shown that social media works as a strong instigator, while influencer promotional codes in particular did not impact returns to the same extent. It should be noted that this report has focused primarily on the consumers' buying behaviour and there can be a discrepancy between what consumers state that they do, and what they actually do. Based on

this, future research would greatly benefit from aiming to encapsulate the firm perspective by perhaps acquiring actual figures in relation to returns. This would enable for a more accurate understanding and an ability to make more well grounded conclusions in terms of how impulse buying, social media and influencer promotional codes in actuality affect returns.

Customer loyalty is a necessity to prevent returns as presented earlier, where the usage of influencer promotional codes adds an extra layer of complexity which is not thoroughly explored in this report. It is not merely the customer loyalty towards the firms themselves which is relevant in the influencer promotional code context, but also the loyalty towards the actual influencers which issue the codes on behalf of the firm. If the loyalty towards such influencers is low, it might affect the customer loyalty of the firm itself. This study has not focused on this added layer of complexity but future research could benefit from exploring how the level of returns differ depending on which influencer issues the codes on social media. There could be a possibility to track various social media campaigns based on these codes and collaborate with firms to more accurately derive returns to specific influencers and promotional codes.

Furthermore, it would be appropriate to explore other social media functions and concepts in order to pinpoint what mechanisms actually facilitate social media's ability to instigate for more returns. An example of such concepts could be in-app selling tools, and mapping out if and how these trigger for both more impulsive buying but also more returns as a consequence.

9. Conclusions

It can be concluded that impulse buying behaviour amongst consumers does increase the incentives to return, and therefore retailers that encourage impulse buying behaviour will face higher returns frequency. It has also been shown that social media is a major influencer for frequent returns behaviour amongst consumers, showing higher returns frequency than both regular impulse purchases and purchases made with influencer promotional codes. This highlights the need to map out what specific mechanisms in relation to social media instigate returns, as influencer promotional codes did not affect returns to the same extent as social media in general.

Based on this study, it is evident that high returns is more than just a post-purchase issue. It seems vital to make firms aware of their ability to trigger frequent returns behaviour and highlight the possibility in reaping both financial and environmental benefits if they were to look over their marketing and social media strategy. As stated, the returns management should focus both from a financial and environmental perspective on an avoidance strategy. To avoid returns in the first place makes the most sense from both perspectives yet firms struggle to implement this due to a lack of knowledge, insufficient data, and a fear of affecting the loyalty amongst their customers.

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Appendix

Returns frequency on impulse purchases * Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		
			Female	Male	Total
Returns frequency on impulse purchases	Less than 20 %	Count	35	21	56
		% within Gender	52.2%	65.6%	56.6%
	20 % and more	Count	32	11	43
		% within Gender	47.8%	34.4%	43.4%
Total		Count	67	32	99
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

***Table 2**. Crosstabulation, returns frequency on impulse buying compared against gender.*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.599[a]	2	.450
Likelihood Ratio	1.622	2	.444
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.160	1	.281
N of Valid Cases	99		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.56.

***Table 3.** Chi-square test, tests the difference in returns frequency on impulse purchases between gender.*

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Returns frequency on impulse & planned purchases	.374	1.103	.111	.154	.594	3.372	98	.001

***Table 4.** T-test comparing the means of returns frequency on impulse and planned purchases.*

Returns frequency on Social Media * Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		
			Female	Male	Total
Returns frequency on Social Media	Less than 20 %	Count	22	22	44
		% within Gender	32.8%	68.8%	44.4%
	20 % and more	Count	45	10	55
		% within Gender	67.2%	31.3%	55.6%
Total		Count	67	32	99
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7. *Crosstabulation, comparing returns frequency of social media against gender.*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.360[a]	2	.003
Likelihood Ratio	11.515	2	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.159	1	.004
N of Valid Cases	99		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.46.

Table 8. *Chi-square test, testing returns frequency of social media against gender differences.*

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Returns frequency on planned purchases & Social Media	99	.453	<.001
Pair 2	Returns frequency on impulse purchases & Social Media	98	.725	<.001

Table 9. *Two correlation tests comparing the correlation between returns frequency of social media against planned and impulse purchases.*

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Returns frequency on planned purchases & Social Media	-.707	1.507	.151	-1.008	-.407	-4.669	98	<.001
Pair 2	Returns frequency on impulse purchases & Social Media	-.357	1.142	.115	-.586	-.128	-3.096	97	.003

Table 10. *T-test comparing the means of returns frequency of social media against planned and impulse purchases.*

Returns frequency on influencer promotional codes * Gender Crosstabulation

			Gender		
			Female	Male	Total
Returns frequency on influencer promotional codes	Less than 20 %	Count	21	12	33
		% within Gender	42.9%	80.0%	51.6%
	20 % and more	Count	28	3	31
		% within Gender	57.1%	20.0%	48.4%
Total		Count	49	15	64
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 13. *Crosstabulation, comparing returns frequency of influencer promotional codes against gender.*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.347[a]	2	.042
Likelihood Ratio	6.730	2	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.141	1	.023
N of Valid Cases	64		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.58.

Table 14. *Chi-square test, testing returns frequency of influencer promotional codes against gender differences.*

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Returns frequency on planned purchases & influancer promotional codes	64	.338	.006
Pair 2	Returns frequency on impulse purchases & influancer promotional codes	64	.657	.000

Table 15. *Two correlation tests comparing the correlation between returns frequency of influencer promotional codes against planned and impulse purchases.*

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Returns frequency on planned purchases & influancer promotional codes	-.484	1.501	.188	-.859	-.109	-2.581	63	.012
Pair 2	Returns frequency on impulse purchases & influancer promotional codes	-.078	1.159	.145	-.368	.211	-.539	63	.592

Table 16. *T-test comparing the means of returns frequency of influencer promotional codes against planned and impulse purchases.*

The Survey

Q1: Have you ever bought clothes online? (Filter question)

- Yes
- No

Questions regarding social media

Q2: How much time do you normally spend on social media per day?

- Less than 1 h
- 1 - 2 h
- 3 - 4 h
- More than 5 h
- I do not use social media daily
- I do not use social media at all

Q3: To what extent do you feel that social media increases impulsive clothing purchases?

- 1 No influence
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Highly influential

Q4: What percentage of your clothing purchases, during the past year, do you consider to be impulsive?

- None
- Less than 20 %
- 20 - 39 %
- 40 - 59 %
- 60 - 79 %
- 80 - 100 %

Q5: To what extent were your impulsive clothing purchases influenced by social media content?

- 1 No influence
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Highly influential

Q6: How often do you return clothes that you bought influenced by social media?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Always

Q7: On average, what percentage of your impulsive clothing purchases leads to returns?

- None
- Less than 20 %
- 20 - 39 %
- 40 - 59 %
- 60 - 79 %
- 80 - 100 %

Q8: On average, what percentage of your planned clothing purchases leads to returns?

- None
- Less than 20 %
- 20 - 39 %
- 40 - 59 %
- 60 - 79 %
- 80 - 100 %

Q9: To what extent does reduced price increase your incentives to buy a clothing item impulsively?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Always

Questions regarding influencers and social media

Q10: To what extent do you get clothing inspiration particularly from influencers' social media?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

- 7 Always

Q11: What percentage of your impulsive clothing purchases, during the past year, was a result of an influencer product review?

- None
- Less than 20 %
- 20 - 39 %
- 40 - 59 %
- 60 - 79 %
- 80 - 100 %

Q12: How often do you normally use promotional codes issued on social media by influencers when ordering clothes? (Filter question)

- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Once to twice a month
- Every two to three months
- Every six months
- Once a year or less
- I do not use influencer promotional codes

Q13: When using an influencer promotional code, how often was the clothing purchase planned?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Always

Q14: Do influencer promotional codes increase the likelihood of you buying clothing impulsively?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Always

Q15: How often do you return clothing that you have purchased using an influencer promotional code?

- 1 Never
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7 Always

Q16: How old are you?

- 16 - 24
- 25 - 40
- 40 +

Q17: What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Grouping of survey questions by hypotheses

H1:

Return frequency on planned purchases

- On average, what percentage of your planned clothing purchases leads to returns?

Return frequency on impulse purchases

- On average, what percentage of your impulse clothing purchases leads to returns?

H2:

Social media's influence on impulse purchases

- To what extent do you feel that social media increases impulse clothing purchases?
- To what extent were your impulse clothing purchases influenced by social media content?
- What percentage of your impulse clothing purchases, during the past year, was a result of an influencer product review?

Return frequency on Social media

- How often do you return clothes that you bought influenced by social media?

H3:

Influencer promotional codes impact on impulse purchases

- When using an influencer promotional code, how often was the clothing purchase planned?
- Do influencer promotional codes increase the likelihood of you buying clothing impulsively?

Return frequency on influencer promotional codes

- How often do you return clothing that you have purchased using an influencer promotional code?