A daydreaming consumer: Evaluating the impact of social media advertising content on 'insta' purchasing

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Interactive Marketing Research Conference 2020
London, UK

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Insights into social media-driven consumption, or to be precise, overconsumption (I)

- Online purchasing is often an impulsive behaviour, with as many as 40%-80% of purchases being 'insta' buys (Clinton et al. 2014).
- Today, social media plays an important role in dramatically changing and shaping consumers' buying patterns (Ramanathan et al.2017).
- Social media has become an integral part of consumer lifestyle (Muhammed et al. 2018).
- The significant growth of fast fashion brands is driven by the the consumption of social media advertising content (Bhardwaj 2010), transforming the way consumers engage and purchase on social mediums.

Insights into social media-driven consumption, or to be precise, overconsumption (II)

- Social media content (visual and interactive) induces impulsive, 'insta' buys (Baldwin et al. 2013; Sundar and Noseworthy 2014; Shaouf et al. 2016):
  - Social media increases a user's self-esteem (Gonzales and Hancock 2011);
  - High self-esteem is associated with low self-control (Wilcox and Stephen 2013);
  - Hence, social media can lead to irrational and impulsive behaviour.
- Everyone: consumers, marketers and policy makers need to evaluate the effects of social media advertising content on consumption, and most importantly, overconsumption.

Daydreaming as part of Digital Virtual Consumption (DVC) (I)

- Digital Virtual Consumption (or DVC) is a process whereby virtual and visual spaces, such as websites, allow for an actualisation of consumer fantasy beyond what material goods can offer (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010): consumer anticipates (imagines) the possession of a good and attempts to escape the reality.
- Imaginative consumption can be applied to the process of DVC:
  - Before a purchase is made, a consumer may daydream of owning the product but although this daydream is real, the daydream is virtual within the consumer's imagination (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010).
  - The consumer then actualises the daydream in material space through purchase and consumption of the product.
  - Rose and Dhandayudham (2014) found that females are more likely to daydream and, hence, act irrationally.

Daydreaming as part of Digital Virtual Consumption (DVC) (II)

- Daydreaming is an imaginary activity whereby an individual, without specific intent, becomes disassociated with their surroundings and instead focuses on their mental images which are more so based on imaginative thoughts rather than memory (Simon 2010): this was found to be true for magazine print adverts (Stevens and MacLaren 2005).
- Daydreaming, enabled via social media content and interactions, is, therefore, a 'dangerous' state of mind that stimulates overconsumption, or is it?
- To date, no research has attempted to conceptualise and test the concept of DVC daydreaming.

Research Aim

To investigate whether social media content advertising fast fashion causes consumers to enter a daydreaming state and in turn trigger impulsive purchasing.

Conceptual model
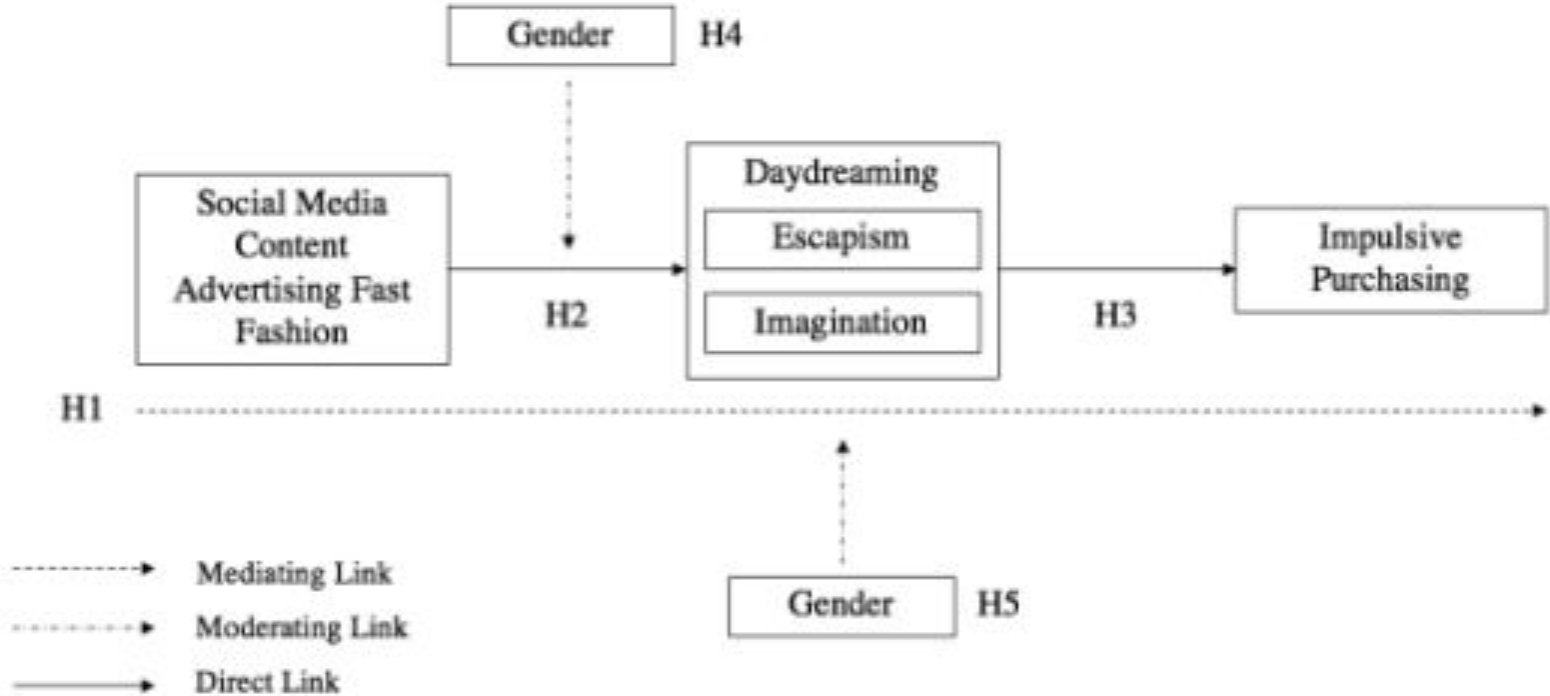
Method

- Quasi-experimental survey (29-item questionnaire) administered via Qualtrics.
- Two test groups: two gender-specific scenarios of social media advertising from fast fashion brands was exposed to males and females.
- Real image and videos were used.
- 422 responses were collected: 200 female and 200 male responses were used for data analysis.

Male Sample Images:

Female Sample Images:
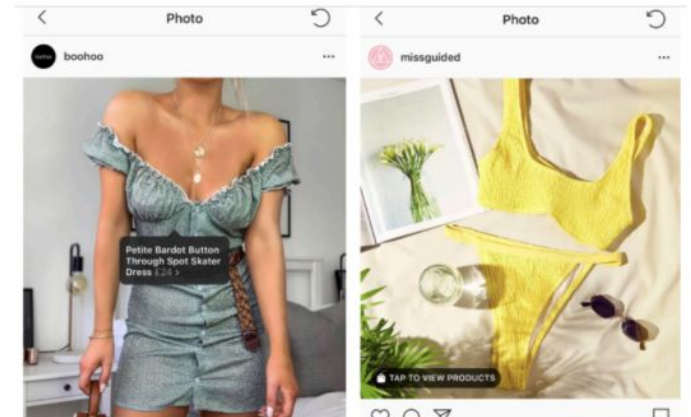
(Un)anticipated consequences of social media content (I)

- Daydreaming in the social media context is associated with both imagination and escapism (new construct has been validated)
- Daydreaming does have a direct relationship with impulsive purchasing behaviour. It is evident that a large proportion impulsive purchasing can be explained by daydreaming for both the male and female samples (44.4% and 34.5% respectively). However, males are more likely to act impulsively as a result of being in the daydreaming state of mind (the relationship is stronger)
- Imagination proclivity is able to explain impulsive purchasing, suggesting it holds significant weight in explaining impulsive behaviour, especially for female consumers.
- Escapism has also been found to be a considerable component of daydreaming able to explain impulsive behaviour, however this relationship is strongest for the male sample.

(Un)anticipated consequences of social media content (II)

- Social media content type does not directly lead to impulsive purchasing nor transmit consumers into a daydreaming state, contradicting the findings of several scholars including Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010), Woermann (2012) and Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015).
- However, daydreaming is the mediator between social media content and impulsive purchasing. Hence, social media content, which triggers imagination and escapism, drives the impulsive 'insta' buying behaviour - which in turn leads to overspending and overconsumption amongst both males and females.

Impact (I)

- Consumers: It is critical to exercise caution and self-reflection when viewing social media content, particularly, when it comes to fast fashion. Tackling UN sustainable development goals (SDGs), sustainable consumption in particular, is impossible if consumers are not mindful of the power social media content has in triggering irrational overconsumption.

- Marketers: Social media content type is powerful and generates sales if it encompasies the notions of fantasy and escapism from reality. However, with the rise of responsible marketing marketers ought to consider how often daydreaming stories should be published. To be responsible, they ought to engage in and practice 'healthy' social media conversations and content creation or even 'anti-social media marketing' thinking.

Impact (II)

- Policy makers: Social media content, with its accessibility and timely relevance, opens door to dream and fantasies which in turn tiggers irrational behaviour. Social media advertising needs to be tightened in light of UN SDGs. Fashion industry and other sectors should be accountable not only for their production but also for approaches to stimulate consumption. This research has demonstrated how social media contributes towards the vulnerability of consumers, which is currently exploited by businesses and brands.

Implications for research

- Thus far, daydreaming in a digital context has only been discussed on a conceptual level with minimal contribution from scholars.
- This research is unique in that daydreaming has been conceptualised in the context of social media with escapism and imagination being proved to be crucial elements of this construct.
- Using conceptual thinking of Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010) and Henning and Vorderer (2001), this study empirically validated that daydreaming as part of DVC consists of escapism and imagination.

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