

Title: What are the effects of social media usage on the consumption behaviors of Chinese adolescent females in fast fashion market

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1. Introduction

In recent China, use of social media has become an essential factor influencing the consumption habits of female adolescents. The prevalence of fast fashion as the predominant trend has been widely observed in the fashion industry. Fast fashion is the consequence of mass-production of ready-made garments that leads to the development of fashion industry and low requirements for skilled workers of the garment industry (Linden, 2016). Additionally, fast fashion involves affordable clothing lines that replicate the latest high-end fashion trends, and it satisfies the strong desire for luxury fashion among adolescents in developed countries, although it is inherently unsustainable (Joy et al., 2012).

From empirical observations, it seems that social media usage should be considered as an incentive to fast fashion consumption of adolescent girls. To be more specific, adolescents who pursue short-lived trends under the influence of influencers on social media have more frequent consumption in fast fashion. This phenomenon intrigues the author to understand how social media usage affects the attitudes of female adolescents towards fast fashion.

Previous studies have mainly examined the role of sustainability on fashion consumption of Chinese females, few focused on how social media usage can be influential in the fast fashion consumption behaviors of the Chinese adolescent females. Therefore, this paper is going to investigate the effect of social media usage on the consumption behaviors of Chinese adolescent females in fast fashion market.

In order to provide a more detailed explanation of the phenomenon of fast fashion consumption among adolescent female consumers in China, convergent parallel design is the research method used, questionnaires and structured interviews are the methods being used. The Chinese application “Little Red Note” is chosen as the social media being analysed, since it is popular among adolescent females in China.

2. Literature review

Since the research question involves a relatively new research field that just have started being studied more in these few years, there are very few resources that are in open access, and some specific information provided in this literature review is limited. For instance, there are very few research related to the fast fashion market and fast fashion consumption in China.

Main data bases used for the research are ResearchGate, Taylor& Francis, Springer, Elsevier, Pub Med Central. The range of years of the studies used in the literature review is from 2010 to 2025, and the key words used for research are “Fast fashion market”, “Fast fashion consumption”, “Adolescent consumers”, “Female consumers”, “Social media”, “Adolescent girls”.

2.1 Global fast fashion market & Chinese fast fashion market

The size of the global fast fashion market has been estimated at \$229,790 million. It is expected to reach \$282,480 million by 2031, increasing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3% over the forecast period (Global Info Research, 2025). Detrimental effects of fast fashion industries can be overexploitation of the resources on Earth, harm to the land and air, and the illegal deprivation of rights of the workers (Fang, 2023). The marketing strategy of many offline fast fashion stores is to create fake images of urgency that the clothes are supplied in limited quantity and are all unique in style by displaying few products in large space to trigger the consumers to buy the products (Gupta and Gentary, 2018). Chinese fast fashion market has a clear structure called oligopoly type III, which means the selling by fast fashion apparel firms are driven mainly by cost, digital, and scientific help in purpose of maximizing the spare quantity to be sold with high efficiency. Specifically, precise consumer targeting, competitive advantage, and complete production mode are all benefits of the Chinese fast fashion marketing model. (Ge et al., 2019).

To sum up, fast fashion has become a dominant feature of the global fashion market nowadays, while there are large external costs of expanding fast fashion industries. Young consumers who are unable to afford to purchase high-price sustainable fashion without sustainable awareness tend to purchase more fast fashion products. Fast fashion industries use unique marketing strategies to increase sales revenue, and China has designed its own marketing model of fast fashion.

2.2 Relationship between social media use and fast fashion consumption

According to Laeder (2018), social networking sites can be addictive to people because of special-designed algorithm and reward systems of social media such as Snapchat, Instagram and so on. In addition, there are more chances that people may be exposed to more commercial self-posts on the social media. Meanwhile, since social networking sites has integrated into the contemporary society and people are under huge peer pressure, it is common that people consciously compare themselves with others on social media. Moreover, Jain (2014) found that usage of social media can increase the number of purchases of the users in fast fashion since they passively receive information about various fashion products by self-posts of others. Specifically, some consumers tend to have high level of envy when browsing positive and attractive images of others and this may cause them to purchase trendy clothes impulsively. Additionally, according to the research results of Chandrakala (2024), social media usage has a substantial effect on purchase decisions of young consumers by promoting impulsive buying and increasing their brand loyalty by offering a platform for interactions between them and the brands online. Whatsmore, the majority of the teenagers in the research make purchase decisions depends on the popularity of people on social media who post the information about the products. Findings from the study of Heinonen (2011) show that when making purchasing decisions, consumers tend to firstly rely on reviews and feedbacks that others posted online about the products.

In summary, usage of social media has a significant impact on purchasing decisions of consumers. Peer pressure, increasing exposure of commercial advertisements, popularity of the bloggers, and feedbacks from them on social media can all influence purchasing decisions made by consumers.

2.3 Female adolescents consumption behaviors in fashion market

In Turkey, young female fast fashion consumers ranging from different age groups consider different factors when purchasing. Specifically, young girls who have entered puberty regard the suitable sizes of the clothes as the most important factor when purchasing clothes. In contrast, the older Turkish adolescent females value reasonable prices of the clothes in their purchasing decisions (Karaoglu et al., 2019). In America, the majority of the young female consumers aged 16 to 18 years old are aware of fast fashion. Nevertheless, they lack sufficient information to consistently adopt sustainable purchasing habits and make responsible fashion choices. (Williams and Hodges, 2020). In China, most of the female Gen-Z consumers who have received good education are more concerned about the quality of clothes than male when doing fashion shopping. Additionally, most of the female Gen-Z consumers regard individualistic style of the clothes as a significant factor in selection of clothes (Zhang, 2023). It is shown by results from the research of Maurya (2014) that Indian adolescent female consumers have higher awareness of brand popularity than male consumers, and the higher-income adolescent female tend to engage in more sustainable fashion consumption. While most female consumers in the market are aware of sustainable fashion, some young consumers still continue purchasing fast fashion despite the low quality of the clothes. Rather than adopting a proactive

approach to purchase sustainable clothes, the consumption behaviors of those young consumers may be constrained by economic barriers, as well as imperfect information they have obtained in the market (Stankevičiūtė, 2025).

Overall, it can be shown that fashion consumption of adolescent female consumers in different countries are driven by factors such as prices, the level of information available to consumers, and socio-economic status of their family.

2.4 Conclusion

Among the studies in the literature review, nine studies applied primary research method and eight applied secondary research method. Primary studies, such as those used by Jain (2019) and Williams (2020), have provided finding through conducting surveys, experiments, and case studies on consumer behaviors and sustainability. The data obtained can be depend on the countries where the research were conducted. To be more specific, factors such as socio-economic conditions of the researched group can varied among countries with different average living standards. Furthermore, the sample size ranges from 40 to 200 in the primary studies of the literature review, and the research with smaller-scale sample size potentially limit the generalizability of the results to broader populations. Most of the secondary studies used by the research above have analysed existing data, theoretical frameworks and research methodologies. Constraints of the secondary studies above may be a lack of credibility of the original data sources, such as outdated or regionally restricted datasets.

As demonstrated in the literature review above, the rapid development of fast fashion and social media has a high level of impact on the consumption behaviors of adolescent females. Although there are studies showing how social media can influence the consumption behaviors of adolescent consumers, there is a paucity of research into specific Chinese social media platforms and the impact of their usage on Chinese adolescent consumers.

3. Methodology

The research method employed in this research is convergent parallel mixed method. According to Alele (2023), a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection, with separated data analysis of the two types of data can provide deeper insights into the research problem. Convergent parallel mixed method can be effective in triangulating two types of data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the results. According to Bell (2010), triangulation is a method to give a more objective and justifiable conclusion of the data and a critical evaluation of the results.

The quantitative data of this research was collected by questionnaires. An 11-item questionnaire was developed to assess the impact of usage of the application “Little Red Note” on fast fashion consumption behaviors of Chinese female adolescents. The questionnaire includes likert-scale question to assess the level of impact of the usage of ‘Little red book’ on purchasing decisions, and multiple choice questions to assess certain preference of fast consumption of the participants. Questionnaires were sent via Wechat groups and school email to the participants, and it took approximately 10

minutes to complete the questionnaire. Additionally, purpose of the questionnaire was informed at the beginning of the questionnaire and the responses are anonymous. A sample of 30 female adolescents aged from 15 to 19 years old studying in a high school located in a first-tier city in China, finished the questionnaires. After receiving the questionnaires, the respondents could opt in to participate in the interview.

A total of three respondents agreed and provided their e-mail address to be contacted. Based on the answers of the questionnaires, method of structured interview was used, and the questions were personalized for each interviewee. Conducting structured interviews can provide more depth and help understand the attitude of the participants behind their responses of the questionnaires more clearly, and more detailed information can be given through their further explanations. The results of the interviews were examined by categorising the codes and themes using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis method can increase the effectiveness of interpreting and comparing the results of each interview. Specifically, the variabilities and the similarities between the results of each interview can be shown clearly through grouped codes and themes.

Nevertheless, there were certain challenges of using convergent parallel design mixed method during the comparison process of the results of questionnaires and interviews. Firstly, since responses of the interviews can be more variable than the answers of the questionnaire, it may require a more complicated interpreted process after using thematic analysis. In addition, time costs was also counted in the research, which required good time allocation to design the questionnaires, conduct interviews and analyse the two types of data. Moreover, since small sample of female high school

students are involved in the research comparing to the large population in China, the responses are not generalizable, which means they can not represent the consumption behaviors of all the Chinese young female consumers in fast fashion. Nonetheless, the data can still signal the tendency of consumption of female adolescent group in fast fashion under the influence of social media usage and provide certain level of insight into the phenomenon.

4. Results

To show a clearer contrast of data obtained from the questionnaires, statistical analysis method is used and bar charts are used to show the percentage of respondents for different answers of the questions. Thematic analysis method is used to illustrate the relationship of different answers of the three interviewees.

4.1 Quantitative data

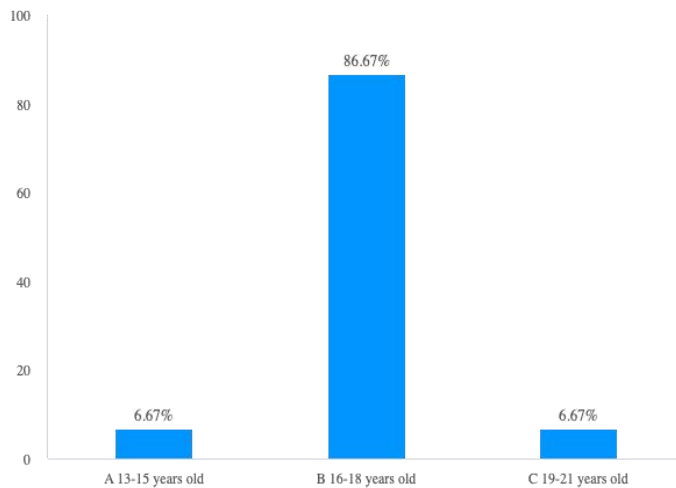


Chart 1.1 Age of the respondents

Chart 1.1 provides the data of age ranges of the people who finished the questionnaires and the age ranges given in the question are “13 to 15 years old”, “16-18 years old”, and “19-21 years old”. Among the respondents who answered the questionnaires, the youngest respondents are 15 years old and the oldest respondents are 19 years old. As shown in Chart 1.1, 86.67% of the respondents who answered the questionnaires are 16-18 years old.

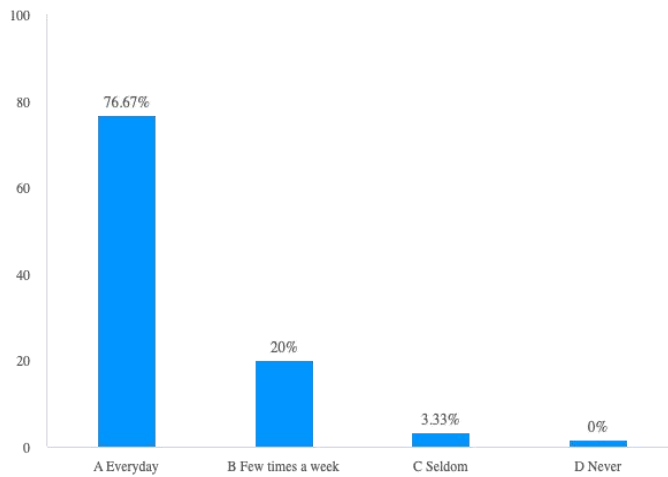


Chart 1.2 Frequency of using “Little Red Note”

The frequency of using the application “Little Red Note” is shown in chart 1.2, and the options are respectively “Everyday”, “Few times a week”, “Seldom”, “Never”. As illustrated in the chart, more than half of the students use the application “Little Red Note” everyday.

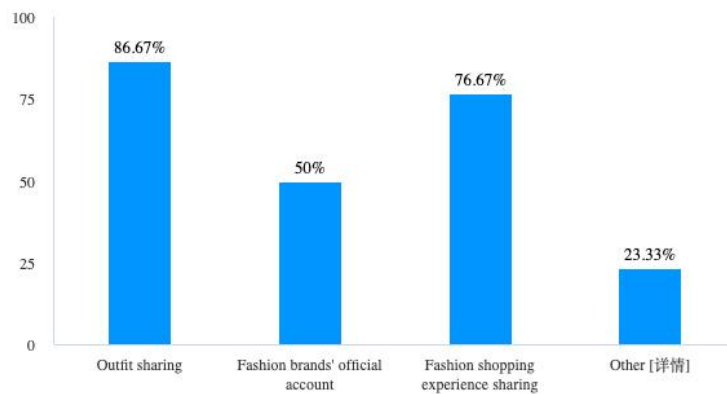


Chart 1.3 Type of fashion-related content browsed on “Little Red Note”

Chart 1.3 illustrates the types of fashion-related contents that the respondents browsed on ‘Little Red Note’ and the contents include ‘Outfit sharing’, ‘Official Fashion brand account’, ‘Fashion shopping experience’, “Other”. 86.67% of the respondents

frequently browse outfit sharing content and 76.67% of the respondents frequently browse fashion shopping experience shared by other users on the application “Little Red Note”. Half of the respondents prefer browsing contents posted by official accounts of fashion brands. 4 respondents who chose “Other” frequently browse fashion contents related to celebrities and cosmetics.

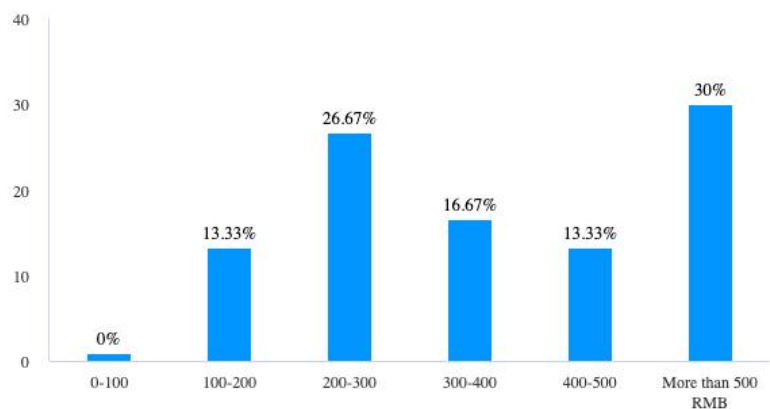


Chart 1.4 Price range of fashion products recommended

Chart 1.4 shows the price range of products recommended to the respondents in their “Little Red Note”. According to the data identified in the chart, 30% of the respondents browse products that are over 500 RMB in the recommendation page of their “Little Red Note”, 26.67% of the respondents browse products ranged from 200-300 RMB and 16.67% of the respondents browse products ranged from 300-400 RMB in their “Little Red Note”. Fewer people frequently browsed products ranged from 100-200 RMB and 400-500 RMB in their “Little Red Note” and 0% of the respondents browse products that are lower than 100 RMB in their “Little Red Note” .

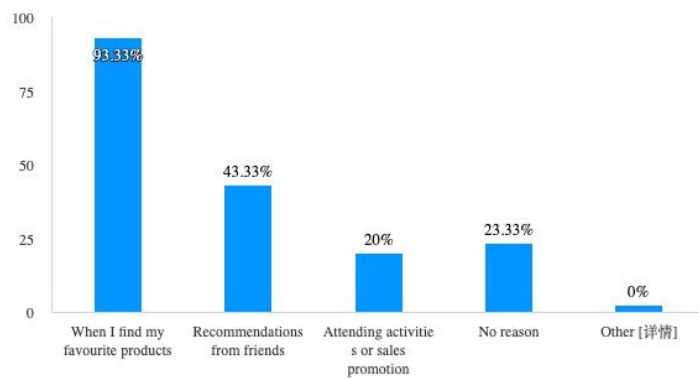


Chart 1.5 Specific conditions when shopping with the help of the application “Little Red Note”

Chart 1.5 demonstrates different situations that the respondents purchase fashion products with the help of the application “Little Red Note”. As shown in the diagram, 93.33% of the respondents make purchasing decisions with the help of the application “Little Red Note” when they find their favourite products, 43.33% of the respondents make purchasing decisions with the help of the application “Little Red Note” when receiving the recommendation of the products by friends, and 23.33% of the respondents chose “No reason”. Fewer people make purchasing decisions with the help of the application “Little Red Note” when attending sales promotion activities.

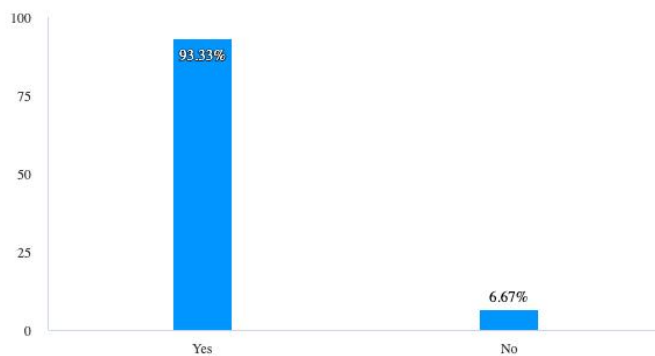


Chart 1.6 Recommendations by bloggers

Chart 1.6 provides the percentage distribution of the respondents who watch recommendation videos by bloggers on the application “Little Red Note” before purchasing fashion products. 93.33% of the respondents purchase fashion products with the help of recommendation videos by bloggers on the application “Little Red Note”.

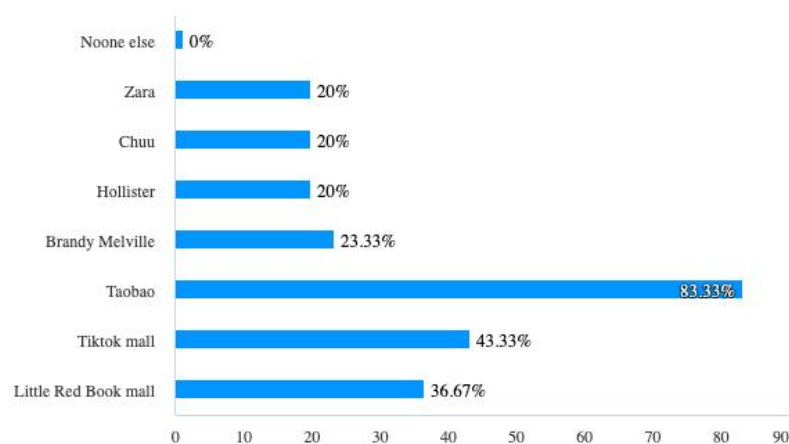


Chart 1.7 Fast fashion brands

As illustrated in chart 1.7, the data reveals that in the last four years, 83.33% of the participants in the questionnaires consume fast fashion most frequently by online shopping application “Taobao”, 43.33% of them bought fast fashion most frequently on the Tiktok online mall, and 36.67% of them bought fast fashion most frequently on the Little Red Note mall. 23.33% of them purchase the fast fashion brand “Brandy Melville” most frequently, and 20% of them bought other fast fashion brands, including Zara, Hollister and Chuu.

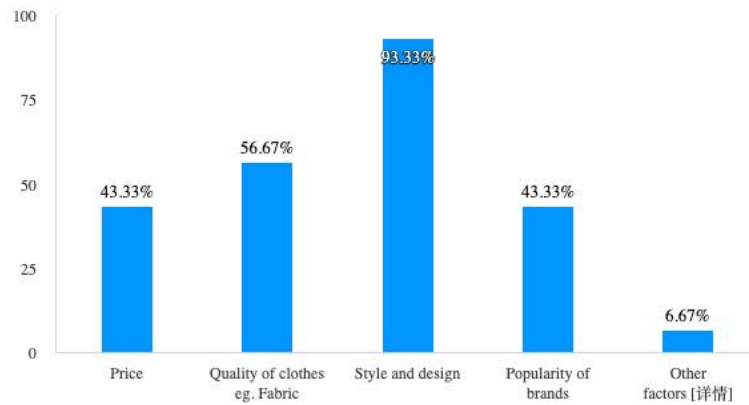


Chart 1.8 Factors influence purchasing decisions in fast fashion

Chart 1.8 provides the most important factors that the respondents considered when purchasing fast fashion products. As the data shown in Chart 1.8, 93.33% of the respondents consider “style and design” of the fast fashion products as the most important factor when making purchasing decisions in fast fashion, 56.67% of the respondents consider “quality of the clothes eg. fabric” of the fast fashion products as the most important factor, and 43.33% of the respondents consider “popularity of brands” and “price” of the fast fashion products as the most important factor.

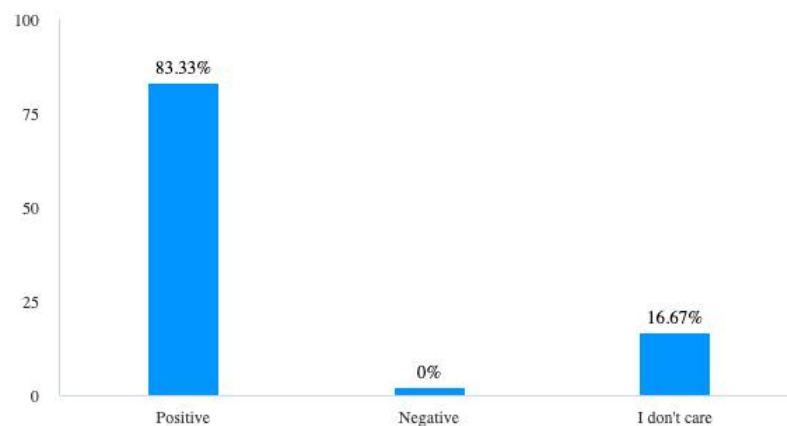


Chart 1.9 Impact of the application “Little Red Note” on fast fashion

Chart 1.9 illustrates the opinions of the respondents on how the application “Little Red Note” influence fast fashion. 83.33% of the respondents think that the application “Little Red Note” has a positive impact on fast fashion, 16.67% of the respondents chose to provide a neutral response, and 0% of the respondents think that the application “Little Red Note” has a negative impact on fast fashion.

4.2 Qualitative data

Themes and codes are categorised according to results of the three interviews. All of the codes and themes tables are available in the appendix.

Shared themes among the three interviewees are “Preference for offline shopping”, “Understanding on fast fashion”, “Algorithmic personalization as a purchase catalyst”, and “Positive impact of the application “Little Red Note” on fast fashion”. The three interviewees all received personalized interviews according to their answers in the questionnaires.

Shared theme of student A and student C is “Preference for offline shopping”, and shared codes of them for the theme are “Wider choices”, “Better experiences”. Shared codes of all three interviews for “Understanding on fast fashion” are “Little prior knowledge” and “ No prior knowledge”. Shared codes of student B and student C for “Algorithmic personalization as a purchase catalyst” are “Personalized recommendations” and “Targeted recommendations”. Shared codes of student A and student B for “Positive impact of the application “Little Red Note” on fast fashion” are “Economic boosts” and “Economic growth promotion”.

Different themes of the three interviewees related to frequency of fast fashion purchasing behaviors can be categorised as “Selective consumption of fast fashion”, “Uncritical engagement in fast fashion”, and “Taste-driven fast fashion engagement”. Shared code of all three interviewees for these themes is “No conscious avoidance in fast fashion”.

5. Discussion

As shown from the results of the questionnaires, the frequency of the respondents using the application “Little Red Note” is mostly high. Specifically, 76.67% of the respondents chose “everyday” in the question about their frequency of using the application “Little Red Note”. The most common content that they are frequently watching is outfit sharing and fashion shopping sharing and approximately 77-87% of the respondents chose these two types of contents. It can be assumed that the fashion sharing content is related to the comments and reviews about the products, which is aligned with findings from the study of Heinonen (2011) that people tend to rely on the feedbacks that others posted online about the products when making purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, half of the respondents prefer watching “Fashion brands’

official account” contents, which supports the findings from Chandrakala (2024) that social media has increased the interactions of the consumers with the brands. The application “Little Red Note” utilises an algorithmic to generate personalized recommendations for different users. All of the interviewees mentioned that the application “ Little Red Note” recommends content to them based on their personal tastes and aesthetics. To be more specific, this algorithm can enhance the desire of the consumers to make purchases, since they are exposed to more information about the products that they may be interested in. Student B thinks that the purchase links under the posts are very convenient, which increase her accessibility to buy her favourite products. Student C mentioned that she can be persuaded to buy specific products because of the “brainwashing” effect of some posts on the application “Little Red Note”. This could be related to the findings of Higgins (2014) that the consumers are receiving more repeated commercial advertisements on the social media, which increases their frequency of purchases in fast fashion.

Furthermore, it is shown from the results of the research that the common price range of the products that are recommended to the respondents by the application “Little Red Note” are “200-300 RMB” and “More than 500 RMB”. To be more specific, it can be supposed that the majority of the respondents have certain level of purchasing power to buy medium-price and high-price products, rather than low-price products. Hence, the application “Little Red Note” may recommend the products with suitable prices to them based on different factors, and this may be related to the precise consumer targeting of the Chinese fast fashion market as reported in the study of Ge et al. (2019). In addition, almost all of the respondents make purchasing decisions with the help of the application “Little Red Note” and recommendation videos of the

bloggers, which can be deduced that they may rely on the popularity of the people who post the information about the products as found by Chandrakala (2024). Additionally, more than 90% of the respondents choose “Style and Design” and more than 50% of the respondents choose “Quality of clothes eg. fabric” as the most essential factors when doing fast fashion shopping. Moreover, as mentioned by student A in the interview, she acknowledged the good quality of some of the fast fashion products that she has purchased. In contrast, only about 43% of the respondents consider “Price” as the most important factor when purchasing fast fashion products. This also conform to the results from Zhang (2023) that the female Gen-Z consumers have higher priority of quality and style of the clothes when purchasing fashion products. Nevertheless, price is the most important factor considered by the Turkish adolescents female consumers aged over 15 years old as mentioned in the study of Karaoglu et al. (2019), and this may be caused by various economic conditions of the research groups in different countries.

It is shown by the results of the questionnaires that most of the respondents use “Taobao”, an online shopping application, as the platform for fast fashion purchases in the past 4 years. Yet, when the interviewees were asked about their preference for online shopping or offline shopping of their favourite fast fashion brands, student A and student C both prefer offline fashion shopping because of the possibility to try the clothes on to ensure better fit before purchasing them. However, student B prefers online shopping on Tiktok online mall and Little Red Note online mall because of convenience of fashion shopping, and discounts on these two online shopping platforms.

For the understanding of the three interviewees on fast fashion, student A understands the term “fast fashion” and is able to describe the definition of it, student C has little prior knowledge of the term “fast fashion”, and student B has no prior knowledge about the term “fast fashion”. Nonetheless, it is shown from the results of the interviews that all of the student have no conscious avoidance of fast fashion, and this may be similar with the findings by Williams and Hodges (2020) that there is a value-action gap of American adolescents female in their fast fashion consumption due to a lack of knowledge related to sustainable fashion.

The majority of the respondents think that the application “ Little Red Note” has a positive impact on fast fashion, and a minority of respondents do not express particular preference as to whether the impact of the application is positive or negative. The three interviewees all think that the application “Little Red Note” has a positive impact on fast fashion. Student A and B think that the impact is positive, given the reason that greater consumption of fast fashion is also beneficial to the economic growth of the countries. Student C thinks the impact is positive, which means there is increased availability of cost-effective and high-quality products in the fast fashion market, since there are more authentic feedbacks about the products provided by the bloggers on social media.

6. Conclusion

It can be summarized from the results and discussion that the application “Little Red Note” is likely to have a certain level of impact on purchasing decisions of Chinese adolescent females in the fashion industry, based on the findings of this research and the speculation of the selected research group. It is hypothesised that the frequency of browsing the application “Little Red Note” of the Chinese adolescent females is averagely high. To be more specific, when making purchasing decisions, the Chinese adolescent females may be highly dependent on the feedbacks from people with experience of fashion shopping. In addition, it is revealed from the results that online fashion shopping has become prevalent among Chinese adolescent females, and various access of fast fashion brands also stimulate the purchases because of increasing convenience. The precise algorithmic recommendations by the application “Little Red Note” may also be an incentive in fast fashion consumption of the Chinese adolescent females.

It is found that there is a low level of awareness of fast fashion among these Chinese adolescent females who are actively involved in fast fashion consumption. This may be due to a lack of critical thinking of the impact of fashion to environments during the purchase process or insufficient information about fast fashion provided by social media. Additionally, it can be deduced from the results that Chinese adolescent females consider style and design as the most important factors when purchasing clothes in case of gaining recognition from peers by catching up the updated trends on social media.

Although the data and results provided by the research are useful in demonstrating the relationship of the usage of “Little Red Note” and fast fashion consumption behaviors of Chinese adolescent females, there are still some limitations. The first limitation is the small sample size of people being researched and this may lead to a lack of generalizability. The second one is the geographical limitations that the people being researched are concentrated in a first-tier city in China, which means the research results are not enough to represent the different economic status of all adolescent females in China. Therefore, they may have different level of priority of price when doing fashion shopping. The third limitation is that the price of the products purchased by the people in the research do not all conform to the low-price feature of fast fashion, since the price range of fashion products recommended by the application “ Little Red Note” to the researched group in the questionnaires are mostly higher than 500 RMB. Finally, there is no valid data to support the percentage of the fast fashion in the application “Little Red Note”. Hence, it is not enough to conclude according to the opinions of the interviewees that whether the impact of usage of the application “Little Red Note” on fast fashion is positive or negative. It is recommended for the future research to research more about the relationship of the usage of Chinese online shopping platform between the development of Chinese fast fashion and the algorithm of the application “Little Red Note”.

7. Reflection

The first strength of this research is that it fills the research gap of Chinese fast fashion consumption behaviors of the adolescent consumers. The second strength is that the research identified the platform used by Chinese adolescent females to watch fashion-related content and engage in fashion consumption, which means it is helpful for future research. The third strength is that the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data can triangulate the results and provide a more comprehensive insight of the results.

The key limitation of the research is a lack of generalizability, since the sample size of the questionnaires and interviews are relatively small because the research group is limited in a high school of a first-tier city in China. The results from 3 interviewees are not enough to give a conclusion of attitudes towards fast fashion for all participants of the questionnaires.

Through this research, I have a deeper understanding on definition of fast fashion and the impact of fast fashion on consumption behaviors since I have read many related past research. Specifically, the obtained data from my research enable me to connect them with the literature review and to give a more objective conclusion based on the discussion. Additionally, some of my personal views have also changed after the research. Firstly, there are results from the questionnaires that are different from my expectations. For example, before posting the questionnaires, I assumed that “Tiktok online shopping mall” and “Little Red Note online shopping mall” should be the most

common application that the Chinese adolescent females used to do fashion shopping. However, it is shown from the research results that the online shopping platform “Taobao” is the most common application used for fashion shopping by adolescent females. Secondly, I supposed that Chinese adolescent females may regard price of the products as the most important factor when making purchasing decisions instead of high quality of the products. Yet, it is revealed from the research results that more adolescent females prioritize the quality of the clothes over price when making purchasing decisions. Thirdly, answers of the interviewees student A and student C about their preference for offline shopping is also different from my speculation that adolescents mostly purchase clothes online. In conclusion, I have a more comprehensive view of the consumption behaviors of adolescent females in fashion by comparing the assumptions with valid data in the research as well as more findings from past studies.