

THE FORGOTTEN GENERATION: EXAMINING GEN XERS' INTENTIONS TO UTILIZE  
SOCIAL MEDIA SITES FOR FASHION CONSUMPTION

by

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(Under the Direction of Monica Sklar)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze members of the Generation X cohort intentions to utilize Social Media sites for fashion consumption. An adaption of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) for Social Media was used to measure perceived ease of use (EU), perceived usefulness (PU), perceived playfulness (PP), social media capabilities (CP), critical mass (CM), trustworthiness (TW), intention to use (IU), and actual use (AU). Women ages 41-52 were asked to participate in the study through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 208 participants completed the survey and 178 usable responses were analyzed in SPSS. Multiple regressions were performed to test the relationship between EU, CM, CP, PP and PU; the relationship between PU, TW and IU; and the relationship between IU and AU. The findings yielded significant implications for the fashion industry and consumer behavior research based on Generation X.

INDEX WORDS: Generation X, Fashion Consumption, Social Media Marketing, Technology Acceptance Model

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## **DEDICATION**

“They tried to bury us; they didn’t know we were seeds”

I dedicate this work to Daddy Jim.

AAA-0

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---

“It has been one of the greatest and most difficult years of my life. I learned everything is temporary. Moments. Feelings. People. Flowers. I learned love is about giving. Everything. And letting it hurt. I learned vulnerability is always the right choice because it is easy to be cold in a world that makes it so very difficult to remain soft. I learned all things come in twos. Life and death. Pain and joy. Salt and sugar. Me and you. It is the balance of the universe. It has been the year of hurting so bad but living so good. Making friends out of strangers. Making strangers out of friends. Learning mint chocolate chip ice cream will fix just about everything. And for the pains it can't there will always be my mother's arms. We must learn to focus on warm energy. Always. Soak our limbs in it and become better lovers to the world. For if we can't learn to be kinder to each other how will we ever learn to be kinder to the most desperate parts of ourselves.” -Rupi Kaur

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## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 contains the following sections: (a) background of study, (b) purpose of study, (c) significance of study, (d) definitions, and (e) objectives.

#### **Background of Study**

“With all this hype about Baby Boomers and Millennials, marketers have virtually forgotten about a generation that should not be overlooked: Generation X” (Peralta, 2015, p.1). Generation X is unquestionably influential to the economy of the United States, although small in terms of population size as compared to the Boomers and Millennials; they exhibit a more impactful buying power than the larger cohorts. Their connections to the generations preceding and following the X cohort, the Boomers and Millennials, along with their “technological savviness” make them a unique consumer base and of extreme importance to retailers and marketers, alike (Carlson & Christopher Lee, 2015). According to data acquired by American Express, Generation X has more spending power than any other generation (Lesonsky, 2014). Generation X holds 29% of the estimated net worth dollars in the US and 31% of total income - representing a “virtual goldmine” for fashion marketers, which remains practically untapped (Brettel, Reich, Gavilanes, & Flatten, 2015).

The women of Generation X are shopping for not only themselves, but the entire household. Because Gen X women often have both children and Baby Boomer parents within the household, this generational cohort has a unique influence on their preceding and following cohorts. Targeting these women through social media sites can impact the purchases made for

consumers spanning three generational cohorts; a study focused on these women can provide powerful insight for marketers and retailers within the fashion industry.

It is important to direct marketing efforts towards the women of Generation X, which according to the literature buys more due to higher disposable income (Lissita & Kol, 2016). Generation X acts as the bridge between Baby Boomers and Millennials, and often influences members of both the aforementioned cohorts, as they support their aging parents as well as children who are not yet out of the house (Peralta, 2015). This family structure, along with Gen Xers entering peak earning years within their careers, makes Generation X the cohort holding the most decision making and buying power out of all generational cohorts (Peralta 2015; The New Strategist Editors, 2015; Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). Because the Millennial cohort is the largest division of the American population, research has largely been focused on this generation and Generation Xers have been out the focus for marketers for quite some time. This cohort makes large contributions to the American economy as they are the largest purchasers of many home and apparel items. Because this generation represents the largest portion of buying power, the gap in marketing efforts through new media should be addressed.

A Nielson report released in January of 2017 revealed that Generation Xers were more dependent on social media than the younger Millennial cohort which is often assumed to use social and digital media platforms the most (Bromwich, 2017). Adults in the younger end of the Gen X bracket were found to spend an average of 6 hours and 38 minutes a week on social media networks, as compared to 6 hours and 19 minutes spent by Millennials. Baby Boomers spent a dramatically lower amount, averaging 4 hours and 9 minutes a week (Bromwich, 2017). Millennials and Gen Xers are nearly tied in smart phone usage as well, with 97% of the younger cohort and 94% of Xers using mobile technology (Bromwich, 2017). Facebook, Instagram, and

Twitter dominate the field of social media usage for both Millennials and Gen Xers, and are viable channels for marketing to this once forgotten generation.

As Generation X women are busy establishing careers and families, they have less free time for traditional forms of media such as print magazines and newspapers. They are in need of a quick and efficient way to view new goods and services as well as make purchases. Social media networks present the perfect channel to reach Generation X as they can access this form of media on their own time and engage in word of mouth conversation with their peers. Online social networks are seen as one of the most promising tools in the digital advertising environment (Brettel, Reich, Gavilanes, & Flatten, 2015; Carlson & Christopher Lee, 2015). Sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be effective advertising channels and are capable of competing with traditional media channels such as radio and television (Lin & Kim, 2015). Sponsored advertisements through social media sites have become important pathways for marketing strategy and can create “direct connections among advertising consumers, producer, and brands” (Lin & Kim, 2015).

Gen Xers are driven by straightforward forms of marketing that focus on product details, utility, and functionality. They appreciate being able to access social media on their own time and the ability to read peer reviews on products and services that they are interested in purchasing (Eastman, Iyer, & Thomas, 2012 ; Dias, 2003). Marketers can use Facebook or Instagram posts to simply show an item and list utilitarian and functional benefits to Generation Xers. By studying the intentions of Generation X women to use social media sites, marketers can better understand the way they use these sites and what motivates them to choose social networks over more traditional forms of media, such as print and broadcast.

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to discover the specific intentions Gen X women have regarding their use of social media sites to view information related to fashion. Using the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media, the relationship between perceived ease of use, critical mass, social media capabilities and perceived playfulness with the perceived usefulness of a social media platform for the women of Generation X will be tested. The relationship between the perceived usefulness and perceived trustworthiness of a social media site on the intention to use a social media site will be tested, as well. Lastly, the impact of intention to use a site on the actual use will be analyzed. This data can then be used by brand marketers to satisfy the needs of Gen X women as well as reinforce the consumer-brand relationship through social media marketing.

## **Significance of Study**

This study will aid in the understanding of Generation X women and their use of social media sites to gather information regarding fashion; the findings will allow fashion marketers to directly target those within the Generation X cohort. The majority of marketing campaigns focus their efforts on the millennial cohort, viewing power in numbers as a way to draw in businesses and turn a profit (Dias, 2003; Lissita & Kol, 2009). However, by discovering the intentions of the women of Generation X, marketers can target this often-overlooked segment. Gen Xers spend, on average, more time on social media than the younger millennial cohort, and have more disposable income and buying power. By focusing purely on the women of Generation X, who do the majority of shopping for their families, the study can hone in on the source of this cohorts' buying power.

Previous studies focused on Gen Xers when they were young adults in their 20's and behaved in a much different way. These studies no longer pertain to the consumer behavior and purchasing patterns that Gen Xers will exhibit as adults (Beldona et al, 2009). It is of utmost importance to truly understand this generation in order to properly market to them and reach them through new media channels such as social media sites. While they are smaller in numbers as compared to the millennial cohort, they have the spending power and influence over other generations to make a great impact on the profitability fashion retailers. The findings of this study will enable marketers to tap into this market and better understand a consumer that has long been overlooked.

### **Definitions**

**Generational Cohort:** “generally defined as a group of individuals who have shared similar experiences and have unique common characteristics around these experiences” (Beldona, Nusair, & Demicco, 2009, p. 407). Cohorts are developed through their personal attachment to life experiences and major societal events that occur during their formative years (Noble & Schewe, 2003).

**Baby Boomers:** defined as consumers born between 1946 and 1964 (Eastman, Iyer & Thomas, 2013; Norum, 2003; Schewe, Meredith, & Noble, 2000).

**Generation X:** Americans born during the years 1965 to 1976, who are now 40 to 51 years old comprise the Generation X cohort; Gen Xers are known for their acceptance of diversity, pragmatism, rejection of rules, and the fact that they were latch-key kids (Beldona, Nusiar, & Demicco, 2009; Burnsed & Bickle, 2015).

**Millennials (Generation Y):** defined as those born from 1977 – 1995 (Generational Breakdown, n.d.; Norum, 2003; Eastman, Iyer, & Thomas, 2013).

**Generational Marketing:** defined as a marketing approach that recognizes generation as an archetype of consumer behavior and important market segmentation tool (Belhadjali, Abbasi, & Whaley, 2016; Dias, 2003; Van den Bulte & Wuyts, 2007).

**Social Media:** “the online means of communication, conveyance, collaboration, and cultivation among interconnected and interdependent networks of people, communities, and organizations enhanced by technological capabilities and mobility” (Tuten & Solomon, 2014, p. 4).

**Social Media Marketing (SMM):** defined as a form of Internet marketing that utilizes social networking sites as a marketing tool. The goal is to produce content that users will share with their social network to increase brand exposure and broaden reach (Tuten & Solomon, 2014; Naylor et al 2012; Van den Bulte & Wuyts, 2007).

**Word of Mouth Marketing:** defined as “informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers” (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261). Also considered “the intentional influencing of consumer to consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010, p. 71).

**Perceived Usefulness (PU):** as the “extent to which the social media user believes that using a particular social media site helps to meet the related goal driven needs of the individual” (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014, p. 10).

**Perceived Ease of Use (EU):** “degree to which the social media site is free of effort” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p.11).

**Critical Mass (CM):** “the extent of the membership of people that matters most in a user’s social media network” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p.11).

**Social Media Capabilities (CP):** “the sites features, applications, and social media tools that benefit the user’s need for social media activities” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p12).

**Perceived Playfulness (PP):** “the extent to which the social media related activities are perceived to be fun and enjoyable apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p13).

**Trustworthiness (TW):** “reflects the extent to which a social media user feels security of their profile information, shared text and graphics, and other social media site related activities” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p15).

**Intention to Use (IU):** “the voluntary and cognitive representation of the user’s readiness to actually use the social media...is determined by the user’s perceived benefit from social media” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p14).

**Actual Use (AU):** “defined in terms of the frequency of social media used by the user” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p14).

## **Objectives**

1. To determine the intentions of Generation X women to utilize social media platforms to consume information related to fashion.
2. To determine if perceived ease of use (EU) and external factors critical mass (CM), social media capabilities (CP), and perceived playfulness (PP) affect the perceived usefulness (PU) of a social media site as related to fashion consumption for Gen X women.
3. To determine the effect of perceived usefulness (PU) and trustworthiness (TW) on intention to use (IU) a social media site as related to fashion consumption for Gen X women.
4. To determine the impact of intention to use (IU) a social media site for fashion consumption on the actual use (AU).

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Chapter 2 contains the following sections: (a) generation x, (b) generational cohort theory, (c) generation x demographics, (d) women of generation x, (e) generation x fashion consumption, (f) marketing to generation x, (g) generation x and new media, (h) companies targeting generation x women, (i) social media marketing, (j) word of mouth marketing, (k) technology acceptance model, and (l) research gap and summary of hypotheses.

### **Generation X**

Americans born during the years 1965 to 1976, who are now in their 40's and 50's, comprise the Generation X cohort. This cohort's name was popularized after the publication of the David Coupland (1991) novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. Generational cohorts are generally defined as a group of individuals who have shared similar experiences and have unique common characteristics around those experiences (Beldona, Nusair, & Demicco, 2009). Cohorts are developed through their personal attachment to life experiences and major societal events that occur during their formative years (Noble & Schewe, 2003). Generational values are shaped by "collective experiences of regional historical events, and reinforced by societal customs and home characteristics" (Connerton, 1989). Gen Xers are "known for their acceptance of diversity, pragmatism, rejection of rules, and the fact that they were latch-key kids" (Burnsed & Bickle, 2015, p. 20). Sixteen percent of the American population is within Generation X, totaling 49 million (The New Strategist Editors, 2015).

Research conducted by Wolburg and Pokrywczynski (2001) suggests that life stage, current condition, and cohort experiences influence the behaviors of a generation. “Xers grew up during the era of the pill and legalized abortion, liberalized divorce, and the influx of women into the labor force...further, they came of age during a period of increasing diversity and the blurring of gender roles” (Mitchell, McLean, & Turner, 2005). Gen Xers were the first generation to grow up with the beginnings of modern day technology, such as VCR’s and video games. They witnessed the integration of personal computers both into school systems and their homes. Gen Xers were also the first generation to experience women entering the workforce and the prevalence of dual-income households. Members of Gen X are more comfortable with women and minorities in leadership roles, as most Gen Xers’ mothers worked outside of the home, and the generation as a whole is more ethnically diverse than the preceding Boomer cohort (Mitchell et al, 2005; Eastman & Liu, 2012).

This generational cohort is sandwiched between two much larger groups, the Baby Boomers, who were born between 1946 and 1964, and Millennials, who were born between 1977 and 1995. The Boomers comprise 24% of the population, and Millennials comprise 25% of the population, while Gen X accounts for approximately 20%. However small in size, “Generation X is a vital part of the nation’s commerce and culture because of their life stage” (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). This cohort, now in their 40’s and 50’s, are in their peak earning and spending years, giving the small percentage of the population a disproportionate amount of total buying power in the United States (The New Strategist Editors, 2015; Peralta, 2015). Gen Xers are at the height of their careers, many are experiencing promotions, incomes are rising, and average spending amounts are climbing, as well (The New Strategist Editors, 2015).

## **Generational Cohort Theory**

Strauss and Howe's Generational Cohort Theory (1991) demonstrates that many values, attitudes and beliefs that a generation holds are caused by events that a generation is witness to, and is not purely a function of age and maturity level. Events may include, but are not limited to, wars, shifts in the economy, presence or death of historic figures, or ideological experiences (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). Some formative events in the lives of Generation Xers include MTV, AIDS, and the collapse of communism (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Gen Xers were raised in a "context of insecurity and change", witnessing differences in both financial structure of the American economy as well as family structures in the home (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Generational Cohort Theory supports the belief that cohorts vary in terms of their focus on social desirability, loyalty, materialism, leadership characteristics, and values (Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). These differences can serve as insight to the ways that each generation will behave as consumers. Although Gen Xers tend to be less brand loyal than Boomers, they are more adaptable, personally responsible, and seek challenging opportunities (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008).

## **Generation X Demographics**

By analyzing the demographics of this generational cohort, fashion marketers can better understand who exactly they are targeting, and the best ways to communicate with their potential consumer. According to the United States Census Bureau's population estimates, 61% of Gen Xers are non-Hispanic white. This is slightly smaller than the percentage of non-Hispanic whites in the population as a whole, making Generation X slightly more diverse than the US population on average (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Eighteen percent of Gen X is Hispanic, 14%

African American, and 7% Asian, which are higher percentages for reach minority group than seen within the Baby Boomer cohort. This cohort recognizes and appreciates their diversity and looks for representation of minorities and women when it comes to fashion advertising and marketing (Dias, 2003).

Generation X is highly educated; the percentage of Americans with a college degree peaks among Gen Xers and Millennials with more than one third of Gen Xers holding a bachelor's degree (The New Strategist Editors, 2015; Eastman & Liu, 2012). The women of Generation X tend to have a higher level of education than the men – 65% of women have some college experience as compared to 59% of men (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Asian Gen Xers are the most highly educated race within the cohort 60% having a bachelor's degree and approximately 75% with some college experience. Hispanics, conversely, tend to be the least educated, with only 16% with a bachelor's degree (The New Strategist Editors, 2015).

As Gen Xers are becoming established in their careers and are experiencing increases in wages, along with increases in home ownership rates. Two thirds of the generational cohorts own their home, which accounts for 21% of the nation's homeowners (Norum, 2003). Median incomes for Gen X households range from \$61,383 for 35 to 39 year olds to \$70,879 for 45 to 49 year olds (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). As Generation X starts to fill the older, 45 to 49 age group, they are falling into some of their peak earning years; the median income of households within this age group of Gen Xers is higher than any other group at \$70,879 in 2013 (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Generation Xers are also less likely to be considered "poor" than the average American – only 12.2% of Gen Xers were considered to have a financial status less than what is considered to be middle class (Lissita & Kol, 2016).

Among these households, those headed by Asians experienced an even higher median income of \$82,676; incomes of non-Hispanic white Gen Xers were similar. However, Hispanic and Black households had a much lower median income of \$48,618 (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Married couples, many who have “dual earners”, have the highest incomes, those age 35 to 44 with a median income of \$88,536, and those age 45 to 49 \$94,780 (Egeln, 2016). Men of Gen X are in their peak earning years, with incomes being well above the average of other generational cohorts, with 70% of Gen X men working full time. Again, Asian men have the highest median income within the cohort, with the Hispanic median income being the lowest (Gen HQ, 2016). With these high median income levels, many Gen X households have a generous amount of disposable income that will be spent on household items as well as clothing for the entire family (Eastman et al., 2013).

Being among one of the most highly educated generational cohorts has proven to be well worth it for Gen Xers - the higher the educational level, the higher the earnings. Male Gen Xers with at least a bachelor’s degree had median incomes of nearly double that of those with only a high school diploma (Eastman & Liu, 2012). 90% of male Gen Xers and 74% of females are part of the American work force and these Gen Xers account for 26% of the nations’ laborers (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Unemployment is less common for the men and women of Generation X as compared to other generational cohorts – the unemployment rate for men of Gen X is 5.7% and only slightly higher for women of Gen X at 5.8 % (Gen HQ, 2016).

Dual incomes attribute to the buying power harnessed by those of Generation X. Both partners being active in the labor force has become the norm among Gen X couples and these couples are more likely than couples in any other generation to be dual earners. Gen Xers also account for the majority of managers; workers in this age group tend to be overrepresented in

leadership positions and underrepresented in service jobs. Job tenure, defined as “the median number of years a worker has been with his current employer” (The New Strategist Editors, 2015, p. 182) has become stable for the men and women of Gen X. The average male Gen Xer has been with their current employer for 5.4 years, while women have held tenure for an average of 5.2. This stability and assurance of income also contributes to the amount of disposable income and buying power held by this generation (Gen HQ, 2016).

Members of Generation X value their home life and family structure. 65% of Gen Xers are currently married, with approximately half in the first marriage and the remaining on the second or higher marriage. In terms of living arrangements, 56% of Generation X households are headed by married couples. Among these, non-Hispanic whites head the majority of households, at a 63% majority (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Gen Xers are said to be in the “crowded-nest life stage”, with most households averaging more than three people. 57% of Gen X homes include children under the age of 18 (Dias, 2003). 21% of Gen X households have one child at home while 23% have two children and 12% are home to three or more children (Gen HQ, 2016).

As Gen Xers are in what is considered middle age, they are in the most steady life stage. “As people age through their thirties and forties, life becomes more routine. Gen Xers are now at the stage of life when work, marriage, children and home are the central focus” (The New Strategist Editors, 2015, p. 194). Gen Xers are looking for stability within their lives and careers as they look to raise their children and create a happy household. Priorities of Gen Xers are shifting, as they are shifting from pursuing their own wants and needs as Millennials do, and focusing on meeting the needs of their families and children (Lissita & Kol, 2016).

Gen X households headed by people aged 35-53 are in their peak earning years and they spend 15 to 18% more than average (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). Households aged 35 to 44 spent \$58,784 in 2013, spending a disproportionate amount on items commonly purchased by parents with children under the age of 18; those in the 45-54 bracket spent an even larger \$60,524 (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). The two main factors behind Gen X spending include being in peak earning years as well as spending in order to raise children. Gen Xers have also been hit the hardest by the Great Recession, with average spending being slashed by 11%. However large the setback, this generation is still spending and holds buying power to rival the larger cohorts of Millennials and Boomers (Egeln, 2016).

Members of the Generation X cohort tend to have the least amount of leisure time because they are juggling work and family responsibilities (The New Strategist Editors, 2015). This makes it more important to be able to directly market to Gen Xers as they do not spend the same amount of time watching television or reading print media as other generations, and therefore are not exposed to the same frequency of marketing media. Gen Xers spend the majority of their time at work; women spend twice as much time caring for their household and children as the average woman (Dias, 2003). Because of their lack of free time and minimal exposure to more traditional forms of media such as print and television, it is important to directly focus on Gen Xers using forms of new media, such as social media, that they can access on their own time.

By recognizing the racial diversity of the Generation X cohort, along with their levels of education and household income, marketers can understand which products and features will most likely align with the wants and needs of the target Gen X customer. Gen Xers have disposable income of nearly \$1,500 per month to purchase garments and fashion related items

that are not deemed necessities (Vitola, 2016). Tapping into what makes Generation X different will allow marketers to create a lasting relationship with the Gen X consumer.

### **Attitudes of Generation X**

“The findings of secondary, observational and industry interview research concludes that Generation X, although still portrayed by society and marketers as slackers and rebels, are neither any longer. This generation keeps up on current events and reports their belief in that buying a home is part of the American dream” (Dias, 2003, p. 85). Generation X is willing to work hard for what they want, but still playing by their own rules. This generation is said to be composed of computer savvy and talented multi-taskers “who can accomplish a day’s work in half the time of their predecessors” (Martin & Prince, 2008, p. 69). Overall, Gen Xers have become well educated and successful professionals, thanks to their environments growing up. Watching their parents, who are members of the Baby Boomer cohort, dedicate a majority of their time to work, and still falling victim to an economic downturn, Gen Xers are more concerned with a work-life balance (Martin & Prince, 2008). Gen Xers are looking for empowerment in all areas of life and pride themselves on being self-reliant; they are saving for retirement and always looking for ways to improve their family’s financial status (Martin & Prince, 2008).

Gen Xers are content and optimistic about their future, with two thirds being satisfied or very satisfied with their lives (Lesonsky, 2014). Approximately 25% of Gen Xers are satisfied with their financial situation, with 42% of the generational cohort identifying themselves as middle class. Most of the people within the cohort feel that they are better off than their parents were at the same age, and are hoping that their children will be better off than themselves (The

New Strategist Editors, 2015). Forty three percent of Gen Xers identify as Protestant, which is much lower than the 51% of Baby Boomers and 63% of older Americans. Fifty one percent of Gen Xers support same sex marriage, more than the older generations, but significantly less than the 62% of Millennials who support the cause. In terms of political ideals, 35% of Generation X identity as politically moderate, 34% as conservative, and 30% as liberal (The New Strategist Editors, 2015).

### **The Forgotten Generation**

Generation X has become the “forgotten generation” to marketers, often overpowered by the focus on the two much larger generational cohorts preceding and following the Gen Xers – the Millennials and Baby Boomers (Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). Now that generation X has entered their middle age, businesses and media alike are focusing the majority of their attention on the younger and much larger generational cohort, the Millennials, in order to “capture their spending”(Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). However, Gen Xers are homeowners and heads of households, making them the largest purchaser of products and services needed by “crowded – nest families” (Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). Retailers should take note of these spending patterns and return focus to this generational cohort.

Mitchell, McLean, & Turner (2005) argue that the main challenge for marketers today is to create generational specific strategies. For Generation X, this means appealing to their diversity and being able to reach the wide cultural, attitudinal, and economic range within the cohort. By researching the way Gen Xers are behaving now as adult consumers who have influence over younger millennial consumers and older Boomers who are members of their household, retailers can tap into this “forgotten generation.”

## **Women of Generation X**

The women of Generation X are an area of opportunity for fashion marketers. While they are extremely busy – juggling home lives with children and parents in the picture, as well as careers, they lack the free time that millennial shoppers have. With their limited time, they need a quick way to access information related to fashion and shopping, making social media the perfect platform to reach these women. A study done by the University of Michigan found that Gen X women are better educated than any previous generation; they work longer hours, and spend more time reading (Klotz, 2016). This study also re-enforced the idea that many Gen X women have children and most of them are employed outside of the home. These women remember a time before smart phones and social media, but are just as addicted as the younger generations (Allison, 2017). Facebook is Generation X's favorite platform, with 71% members of the site, and they account for 27% of Instagram users (Allison, 2017). They are able to understand the importance of social media and its many uses, which is something Baby Boomers have not been able to grasp.

Phillips and Sternthal found that people from different generations experience differences in environmental stimuli (As cited in Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). These differences in experience may contribute to the way that Gen X women shop both in store and online and marketing considerations should be made to appropriately market to those of this generation. Burnsed and Bickle (2015) found that Generation X women have an equally mixed preference for both individual store and department stores, and lacks the brand loyalty that younger Millennials often have. Additional research developed by Eastman & Liu (2012) found a higher mean level of status consumption among Millennials than Gen Xers; showing that Gen X women are not as interested in brand names and the perception of status that comes along with them. This lack of

brand loyalty is most likely due to the fact that Gen X women were exposed to more promotional efforts as compared to brand advertising over the years (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). Gen X women may become brand loyal over time if trust is established between the brand and the consumer; this may only last 6-8 months, if another brand comes along that offers more price conscious or functional items (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009).

Generation X women do not shop as much as Millennials do in brick and mortar stores, or spend as much time on each shopping trip; however, they do spend more time shopping and visit stores more frequently than the older Baby Boomer cohort (Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). Research conducted by Beldona, Nusair & Demicco (2009) found that there was a presence of age and cohort effects on online purchases and that Generation X women demonstrate a “greater propensity to buy” than Baby Boomers. It has been found that there are differences among all generational cohorts when it comes to consumer goods. Each cohort has “different personalities and attitudes...these varying attitudes affect the kinds of things they purchase and also influence their motivations to purchase” (Dias, 2003, p. 78). Generation X women tend to stray from “trendy” stores that younger Millennials flock to, and are motivated by utility when making purchases (Dias, 2003).

Women of Generation X were more likely to shop in department stores and fashion retailers such as Gap, Banana Republic and Ann Taylor which offered both casual items as well as garments that are more professional and can be worn to work (Dias, 2003). They prefer to shop in stores that are not crowded – meaning that store planners should make large aisles, display less merchandise on the sales floor, and make sure to focus on way-finding through the store (Dias, 2003). Observations conducted by Dias (2003) noted comments made by Gen Xers

when shopping for pieces that were convenient as well as utilitarian, including “this could be good for work” and “I like this shirt, I won’t have to iron it.”

Generation X women rate the comfort of clothing to be of high importance as well as clothing fit; trendiness is of less importance to this cohort than its younger counterparts (Dias, 2003). Shopping for Gen Xers and Baby Boomers is viewed as more of a necessity whereas it can be a fun, social outing for Millennials, or Gen Y. Dias (2003) suggests that Gen Xers prefer brands that carry both business and business casual at lower prices than department stores. Gen Xers tend to be price conscious, yet still concerned with keeping up appearances and fitting into the “norm” of the peers. Gen X women look for brands that understand their age; they want to be “just fashion enough” and clothes that “are going to be forgiving on my changing body shape, but show a bit of edge” (Allison, 2017). Dias (2003) concludes that marketers must take into account price, value, and ease of wear to successfully market to the Gen X segment.

### **Generation X Fashion Consumption**

Generation X women are not concerned with brand names or impressing their peers; instead, these shoppers look for the functionality and value of an item – this translates into the way they shop for clothing (Barber, 2014). Xers tend to research a brand or website before making a purchase, and want to ensure that marketers are not taking advantage of them and that they are receiving the best deal as possible. Research conducted by the University of New Hampshire found that Generation X women are very motivated to and adept at searching for purchase-related information (Barber, 2014). Generation X shoppers have a keen understanding of marketing and media when it comes to shopping for clothes; they use websites and social media platforms to reinforce existing opinions on brands and products (Barber, 2014).

Generation X has the largest annual household expenditure overall as compared to the Millennials and Baby Boomers. Xers also spend more on clothing annually than the other groups; Millennials spend \$1,708, Boomers \$1,937, and Xers \$2,442 (Henderson, 2016). Generation X department store shoppers spend 14% more than the typical online shopper and inject almost \$30 billion into the e-commerce economy each year. The average internet user spends \$813 on purchases made online yearly compared to \$926 for Generation Xers (Henderson, 2016). Those who shop online are also likely to use social media sites to find discounts as well as rate or review the product(s) that they purchased on the site.

	Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers
Housing	\$16,505	\$21,954	\$18,320
Clothing	\$1,708	\$2,442	\$1,937
Eating Out	\$2,891	\$3,864	\$2,900
Food at Home	\$3,264	\$4,882	\$4,234
Entertainment	\$2,186	\$3,231	\$3,286
All other spending	\$20,559	\$30,608	\$28,960
Total Spending	\$47,113	\$66,981	\$59,646

Table 2.1: Annual Household Spending by Generation (2017)

### **Marketing to Generation X**

Generation X is considered a “controversially complex cohort that promises to give marketers a run for their money” (Martin & Prince, 2008, p. 65). Each generational cohort has “unique expectations, experiences, generational history, lifestyles, values, and demographics that influence their buying behaviors” (Williams & Page, 2011, p.1). This makes it extremely

important to marketers and retailers alike to understand Generation X and take into consideration what makes them unique, and target them accordingly. By understanding the characteristics and behaviors of the Gen X cohort, it will be easier for marketers to build relationships and gain trust with its target segment. (Williams & Page, 2011). Generation X is the only generation that continues to receive messages from all major media sources; 40% of Gen Xers get most of their information about current news and events from the Internet, and 39% from television (The New Strategist Editors, 2015).

Gen Xers reached adulthood during uncertain economic times and are more likely to be self-employed professionals who embrace their own personal freedom as compared to the older Boomer cohort, who were more likely to be employed by large corporations. They value their families and children and have taken more responsibility for raising themselves than any prior generation (Williams & Page, 2011). Because they are less traditional than Baby Boomers or even the preceding Depression era generation, Gen Xers are open to different types of marketing and advertisements. “Generation X prefers non-conformist advertising, ones that show something against the system. They also like advertising that is humorous, or shows some kind of unexpected twist” (Dias, 2003, p. 86)

Generation Xers are focused on raising their families and have more needs and financial constraints than the younger generations, causing a focus on shopping at value-oriented retailers. Gen Xers are considered realists, they trust themselves and their close friends, and tend to dismiss claims coming from marketers (Mitchell et al, 2005). Gen X wants to be shown the features of a product as well as an explanation of the features in order to make a purchase. “Generation X is a complex consumer group with contradicting points of view, goals, and desires...this media and technology savvy group is not anti-advertising or marketing...actually,

they welcome it in its purest form” (Mitchell et al, 2005). Gen Xers are “the most price conscious and have low price sensitivity...they want products and messages designed uniquely for their tasks and lifestyles” (Williams & Page, 2011, p. 7). Gen Xers also value technology, and view it as an important part of products and services as well as their everyday lives.

Cable television and Internet is the best way to reach Gen Xers, as traditional television channels are becoming less attractive to this generation; “give them plenty of access to information and educate them into buying” (Williams & Page, 2011, p.7). Gen Xers prefer an informal communication style and want to be kept in the loop with retailers and marketers through feedback and the ability to share information. Although they are not drawn to traditional marketing styles as used in print media, overly modern approaches can deter Gen Xers, as they are skeptical of “overly slick marketing approaches” (Williams & Page, 2011). Use of straightforward facts and figures about the product as well as honesty from the advertiser is the most effective for Gen Xers. Group events and word of mouth recommendations from friends and peers positively affect Gen Xers purchasing behavior, as well (Williams & Page, 2011).

Members of Gen X are also conscious of time, as they are busy with juggling their careers and family life. Gen Xers would much rather watch a quick advertisement on television or online than have to read the details through a newspaper or magazine (Martin & Prince, 2008). Television currently holds the largest percentage of Gen Xers attention regarding marketing and promotion, however, online media is close behind and has the trajectory to surpass broadcast media (Martin & Prince, 2008). This generation places less of an emphasis of material goods and tends to focus on the intangibles that a product or service may provide. Through watching their parent’s generation struggle through tough economic times, Gen X has learned to not be “driven by acquiring possessions” and to look to the intrinsic values of goods and services. Gen Xers are

looking for products that will simplify their lives and allow for more free time as well as more time to spend with their families (Martin & Prince, 2008).

Gen Xers are concerned with buying environmentally safe products, and seek items that are recyclable or made from recycled products (Mitchell et al, 2005). As a whole, Generation X places much less value on brand names and perceived “prestige” than on actual use and functionality of a product. Gen X consumers “need to believe that they are receiving value and that their purchases reflect their ability to identify and locate such value in the marketplace” (Mitchell et al, 2005). Gen Xers look for communication from advertisers that appeals directly to their cohort, and not the mass market. Gen Xers “resent being lumped together” with other groups such as the Millennials or Boomers (Mitchell et al, 2005).

Marketers should steer clear of using techniques that were once successful for the Boomers, as well as avoid attempting to make a product or advertisement appear to contemporary, as both are turn-offs to the Gen Xers (Mitchell et al, 2005). Hard sells should also be avoided; Gen Xers want to be presented the information about a good or service and be able to make a decision for themselves, as opposed to being persuaded by over the top marketing efforts. Gen Xers are overall cautious, cost-conscious, and skeptical audiences for advertisers (Mitchell et al, 2005).

Research shows that marketers should offer as much information as possible to Gen Xers when advertising a product (Peralta, 2015; Lissita & Kol, 2009). Offering a clear explanation of a product and its benefits through search engine optimization, social media, and review sites allows Gen Xers to perform research on their own time and to discover what a product is and its benefits (Peralta, 2015). It is also important to note when Gen Xers use each type of technology,

and market accordingly. Gen Xers use different screens for different tasks; laptops are usually utilized for “high attention/high complexity” tasks such as reading the news or researching. On the other hand smart phones are often used for “light touch/high frequency” activities such as checking the weather or Facebook updates (Peralta, 2015). For targeted ad campaigns, the appropriate channel should be utilized for the best results when it comes to Gen Xers.

Generation X values sincerity, authenticity, and independence – especially when it comes to advertising (Peralta, 2015). Gen Xers appreciate companies that acknowledge the diversity of their cohort and the fact that each consumer within the cohort is different; meaning that they do not respond well to generic approaches. Research conducted by IPG Media Lab and Yahoo (2015) found that use of personalized ads increased brand favorability and purchase intent among Gen Xers. Marketing approaches should be straightforward and truthful and identify the top benefits the product will provide for both the purchaser and their family. Use of targeted, unique messaging will help build a relationship with Gen Xers and may even create a loyal, return customer base (Peralta, 2015).

### **Generation X and New Media**

The Generation X cohort is well educated and savvy within the world of technology and social media. They are driven by their use of the internet and other technologies and the ability to use those to streamline and simplify their everyday lives (Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). Because of this generation’s integration with technology, they have become accustomed to instant gratification and grow impatient quickly with methods of marketing which may seem outdated or ineffective (Martin & Prince, 2008). “Technology has taught Gen X to multi-task, thus becoming technologically savvy. This characteristic is attributed to being raised in the fast-paced

technology age and playing everything from Atari to Nintendo” (Martin & Prince, 2008). These attributes make social media the ideal channel to market to those of Generation X.

Because Millennials are also tech savvy, and the first generation to use technologies such as email, instant messaging, and cell phones since childhood, Gen Xers are often overlooked as a target for online and social media marketing (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). Millennials are perceived as being constantly tied in to their phones and other mobile devices, and because of their large size, become an easy target for marketers. However, Gen Xers are looking for interactive media, and are moving away from mass communication that comes from traditional print and broadcast media. They are interested in how things work and “behind the scenes” information that could be provided by online and social media platforms would be of high value to this cohort (Mitchell et al, 2005).

Generation Xers primarily access the Internet via their own personal computers and mobile devices; the majority uses the Internet daily and spends several hours per day browsing sites and even making purchases (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). Research conducted by Millward Brown Digital found that 60% of Gen Xers use a smart phone on a daily basis and 67% use a laptop or personal computer on a daily basis, which surpassed the use of laptops and PCs by Millennials (Peralta, 2015). Online shopping has become one of the most popular Internet activities, with approximately 80% of the United States population making purchases online (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Online shopping allows Gen Xers to have the necessary time to shop around and perform the research necessary to them to make an appropriate purchase (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Gen X is “highly sophisticated in its buying behavior and its turned off by slick and generalized promotions”; online based promotions can offer personalized advertisements based off of previous Internet searches, appropriate for Gen Xers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016).

Social media and word of mouth marketing affect Generation Xers; though they have little interest in brand loyalty and perceptions of prestige, they do care about the opinions of others; “they can be unsure of themselves and often need reassurance that their choices are sound” (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 306). Gen Xers like to research while shopping online, and read more reviews and visit more opinion sites than any other generational cohort (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Generation X also spends more online than any other cohort, approximately 15% more than Millennials and 25% more than adults outside of the X age bracket. Retailers should provide a personalized experience to Gen Xers through social media and other online platforms, which will decrease uncertainty of online shoppers (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016).

### **Companies Targeting Generation X Women**

Many large clothing retailers target the women of Generation X and could greatly benefit from knowing how to better market to them through social media sites. These retailers provide the functional clothing and accessories that Gen X women are looking for at an affordable price, as many of these women are shopping for the whole family and may be on a budget. By focusing more effort in to new media channels, these retailers can reach a broader spectrum of their target market and continue to bring new shoppers to both their e-commerce and brick and mortar stores.

#### **Gap, Inc.**

Gap, Inc. which includes Gap, Old Navy, and Banana Republic, targets the modern shopper who is looking for moderately priced yet good quality clothing and accessories. The women of Gen X, who tend to shop for the whole family, are able to do so at two of the stores under the Gap, Inc. umbrella, Old Navy and Gap, while they can find dressier pieces and work

wear at Banana Republic (Gap Inc., 2016). Gap, Inc. views this market as relatively stable, and able to lead to high profits for the company. Gap, Inc. markets to sale shoppers, who want to find great deals on pieces that, will be long lasting and high quality; the most profitable times for the company are during the holidays when there are many sales throughout all departments (Gap Inc, 2016).

### **Ann Taylor**

Ann Taylor, a branch of Ann Inc., targets the Gen X woman by providing high quality work wear and suiting at approachable price points. They maintain well-structured store layouts; beginning with store windows that engage with customers and draw shoppers in through powerful fashion messages (Ann Inc., 2015). The floor plan is kept clean and neat with merchandise purposefully organized and in size order. Merchandise is up to date, yet not overly trendy. Gen Xers are looking for functionality, which they are able to find in the high quality merchandise offered at Ann Taylor. The clothing is known to last, and the retailer also provides tailoring for pieces that need fixing or re-sizing. The Ann Taylor Gen X consumer know that they can find what they are looking for at the retailer and will also be assisted by a friendly sales associate if they need help locating merchandise or styling for a specific occasion (Ann Inc., 2015).

### **J.Crew, Inc.**

J.Crew is known for their preppy and chic styles which cater to a fashion savvy shopper with a classic style. Customers can find basics including jeans, khakis, and cardigans as well as shoes and accessories at J.Crew. The company markets to women who are middle to upper class working professionals who are looking for an affordable price point. Gen X women can find

casual and work wear at the retailer, as well as clothing for their children in the Crew Cuts section. Consumers shop through both e-commerce and brick and mortar locations, and appreciate the level of customer service that J.Crew provides (J.Crew Inc., 2016).

## **Target Corporation**

Target caters to the working woman and mom as a one stop shop for everything from clothing to home wares to groceries; 60% of Target shoppers are women, and half of total shoppers are married. Target also markets to Gen X through playing up the functionality and quality of its products, ensuring that all departments of the store meet up to the brand's promise: "expect more, pay less" (Target Corporation, 2016). Target's consumers have a high level of education and 47% of shoppers earn more than \$74,000 annually, matching with the demographic of the Gen X shopper. Target takes pride in its visual appearance and way finding, and wants to ensure a positive and successful shopping experience for all of their customers (Target Corporation, 2016).

## **Social Media Marketing**

Since the launch of Friendster in 2002, followed by LinkedIn, Myspace, and Facebook, the prevalence of engagement with social media platforms has exploded (Digital Trends, 2016). "It has been reported that 684,478 pieces of content are posted on Facebook, 100,000 posts are tweeted on Twitter, 2million questions are searched on Google, 48 hours lengths of video are uploaded on YouTube, up to 3,600 photos are shared on Instagram, and 571 websites are produced on a daily basis" (Ting, Run, & Liew, 2016, p. 44; James, 2012). Social media plays a major role in delivering, receiving, and exchanging information between parties without restrictions or boundaries that traditional media channels may have (Kim, Sin, & Yoo-Lee,

2014). Social media platforms are also spaces where opinions and information may be shared, and relationships formed, either peer to peer or business to consumer (Akar & Topcu, 2011).

Social media is a technique for marketing to consumers and creating engagement and conversation between the business and consumer; it seeks to engage customers through sites where they already spend their time. Social media advertising spending has increased worldwide by \$17.74 billion as of 2014 as compared to a total of \$11.36 billion in 2013, which is a 52% increase in total spending. This spending pattern shows that engagement in social media drives sales and is a significant form of marketing in today's retail environment (Kumar, Besawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016; Ogilvy & Mather, 2011).

Social media marketing can serve as an overall boost of awareness for the brand in the marketplace as well as in the minds of the consumer (Evans, Bratton, & McKee, 2010; Kumar et al, 2016; Van den Bulte & Wuyts, 2007). "Social network prone" consumers, or those who spend time online interacting with other consumers, are of great importance to retailers. The presence of these consumers on a brand's social media site can positively influence other focal customers and their purchasing behavior (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). These social network prone consumers place more weight on the opinions of others than on content created by a brand, and will respond better to pages with comments and reviews made by their peers (Kumar et al, 2016). Social media can have many other advantages over traditional forms of media such as low cost, customization capabilities, as well as ease of use for both the business and consumer (Hahn, Scherer, & Santos, 2016).

The social feedback cycle represents the "way in which Internet-based publishing and social technology has connected people around business and business like activities" (Evans et

al, 2010, p. 6). Social media and the social feedback cycle allow for the widespread sharing of information between business and consumers; information that was once private is now accessible to everyone. Social media also allows for consumers to create communities in which they discuss goods and services that they have purchased. Businesses have also begun to engage in social business which takes the social concepts of sharing, rating, reviewing, connecting, and collaborating and applies them to all parts of a business (Evans et al, 2010). This practice creates relationships between the business and the consumer and places the customers in a “primary role as an innovator, as a source of forward-pointing information around taste and preference” (Evans et al, 2010, p.10). These social relationships help to facilitate business as well as product design and understanding of the market as a whole. By engaging with the consumer, steps can be made to improving the business and in turn the company’s profits and bottom line (Evans et al, 2010; Nam & Kannan, 2014).

There are two major types of social media communications: organic and paid. Organic is created directly by the brand and placed on a social media platform. This type of communication may lead to earned media; meaning that the consumer shares the communication with others online or by word of mouth. Paid content is paid for by the brand and may be created by an advertising agency or other organization (Fulgoni, 2015). Facebook research discovered that consumers respond better to organic content and that they would like to see more likes or information from friends about the brands and products that they were interested in. In the same vein, consumers desire less paid for promotional content (Fulgoni, 2015). Social media content can produce metrics that help businesses to assess the effectiveness of the media campaign including likes, re-tweets, posts, shares, and impressions. However, it can be difficult to convert these metrics into “hard measures of brand impact” such as profit and sales lift (Fulgoni, 2015).

Research supports the positive effects of firm generated content on social media platforms. Kumar, Besawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan (2016) discovered that social media platform use enhances both the transaction and relationship sides of customer-firm interactions and also improves customer profitability. Firm generated social media content can also help improve the results of television and email based marketing communications by increasing viewership and interaction with consumers. The main result from their research was supporting the thought that “social media marketing matters and that managers should embrace it to communicate and nurture relationships with customers” (Kumar et al, 2016, p.21).

### **Social Media’s Effect on Consumer Behavior**

Social media is an important part of many business’s marketing strategies and can have a significant effect on consumer behavior as well as brand loyalty and trust (Hahn et al, 2016; Kumar et al, 2016). As the retail market becomes increasingly saturated, consumer engagement and interaction is vital for businesses in order for them to stay competitive. Using social media platforms can allow for these interactions to occur and help brands to “deepen their relationships with consumers” (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). Social media has the power to influence consumer awareness as well as opinions, attitudes, purchasing behavior, and post purchase communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Studies have shown that consumers rely on reviews and peer opinions more than business communications when considering making a purchase, making it important for businesses to provide a space for consumer interaction on their social media platforms (Amar & Topcu, 2011; Kim, Sin, & Yoo-Lee, 2014; Clemmons, 2009).

However, as social media grows, companies do lose some control over their brands; information is posted and shared by consumers and some reviews or comments may be negative

or untrue. Judgments about the brand are made by consumers who take into consideration the thoughts and opinions of their peers. Overall, the “conversation” that the brand is able to have with a wide variety of consumers can directly influence the relationship between the two (Enginkaya & Yilmaz, 2014). A study conducted by Hahn, Scherer, & Santos (2016) found that consumer trust has a positive influence on brand evaluation, and that social media campaigns can help to build trust between the business and consumer. Additionally, the trust that a consumer holds with a brand positively influences their emotional response to advertising content as well as their overall brand evaluation (Hahn et al, 2016).

### **Generational Use of Social Media**

“Generation has long been regarded as a segmentation approach due to its predictive capacity of consumer behavior” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010, p. 45). Generation X grew up during the early stages of the Internet and has learned to enjoy what has become a “socially connected world” (Belhadjali, Abbasi, & Whaley, 2016). According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 72% of Gen X consumers use social media, as compared to the 86% of Millennials and 50% of Boomers; making Gen X a large market for social media marketers (Digital Trends, 2016).

Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung (2015) surveyed Millennials on their motivations for using Instagram and found five major components that drove young adults to use the site. These included social interaction, archiving, self-expression, escapism, and peeking. Using this information, marketers can utilize Instagram and other social media sites as marketing communications tools. However, there is a large gap between the motivations and perceptions of Generation X and Generation Y (or Millennials). This research gap leaves marketers questioning

their techniques and uncertain of how to approach the older Gen X cohort when establishing social media campaigns (Vel, Brobbey, Salih, & Jaheer, 2015). Vel et al (2015) state “The perceived gap between generation X and Y could not have gotten larger than initially anticipated...these uncertainties present huge opportunities and threats alike to the marketer and there is need to identify and interpret various emerging trends in order to sustain the delivery of the required customer value at a profit.” Assessing this gap and understanding the behaviors of the Generation X cohort will allow marketers to better target this segment and reach an untapped market.

### **Word of Mouth Marketing**

Prior to the emergence of the digital era word of mouth marketing occurred between peers and was considered to “play an important role in shaping consumers’ attitudes and behaviors” (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Research conducted by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) found that the presence of word of mouth marketing was the most important influence in the purchase of many household goods and that it was seven times as effective as forms of traditional media such as newspapers and magazines. Consumers depended greatly on their “interpersonal networks” to provide them with information on goods and services and whether or not they were appropriate for the everyday person (Brooks, 1957).

The impact of WOM continued to rise as new forms of media such as radio and even television infiltrated the lives of consumers and created interactions between peers. In recent years, researchers and retailers alike have witnessed the growth of digital, social media, and mobile (DSMM) marketing which has in turn influenced with ways that consumers behave across all marketing platforms (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The “digital transformation” of

marketing has facilitated new behaviors, interactions, and experiences among consumers, allowing for the emergence of WOM (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). WOM is defined as an “informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers” (Westbrook, 1987, p. 261). WOM is also considered to be “the intentional influencing of consumer to consumer communications by professional marketing techniques” (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010, p. 71). WOM can include product related discussions, the sharing of product related content, direct recommendations, as well as simple mentions of a good or service (Berger, 2014).

Prior to the Internet and the omnipresence of social media and digital marketing, WOM was exclusive to in person communication and was private to the individuals engaging in conversation. Today, WOM can occur in online discussion forums and be witnessed by consumers all over the world (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Consumers can use WOM and peer review sites to research a product and serve as a “search and decision support tool” (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). Yelp, founded in 2004, served as the first major peer review site in which consumers could actively engage in WOM for local businesses. By 2006, the site had 1 million monthly visitors and revenues of up to \$30 million by 2010 (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Social media sites Friendster, Myspace, and Facebook shortly followed and 2002, 2003, and 2004, respectively. Global and local brands began using social media and peer review sites as digital marketing channels, allowing for WOM between consumers to occur (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016).

Berger (2014) argues that WOM is “goal driven and serves five key functions: impression management, emotion regulation, information acquisition, social bonding, and

persuasion (p. 587). People can present themselves in a particular way depending on what WOM they choose to participate in online. Consumers can also express their emotions towards a particular good or service through engaging in WOM as well as bond with peers. Additionally, consumers can gather information on a product or service through peer review sites as well as persuade others to purchase or avoid a particular business through the reviews and WOM that they produce (Berger, 2014).

### **Impacts of Word of Mouth Marketing on Consumer Behavior**

WOM has a vast impact on consumer behavior and has the ability to break through the clutter of the abundance of marketing campaigns consumers are exposed to every moment of every day (Bughin, Doogan & Vetvik, 2010). Consumers value opinions that appear genuine and that are expressed directly to them, making WOM quick and effective; “social talk generates over 3.3 billion brand impressions each day and shapes everything from the movies consumers watch to the websites that they visit” (Berger, 2014, pg. 587; Keller & Libai, 2009). WOM can increase product awareness as well as persuade consumers to try new things through the recommendations and comments from their peers (Van den Bulte & Wuyts, 2009). Bughin, Doogan, and Vetvik (2010) found that “word of mouth is the primary factor behind 20-50% of all purchasing decisions and generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising” (p. 8).

Godes and Mayzlin (2004) found that online discussion forums could be used to measure WOM and that it was positively associated with marketing outcomes. Positive links were also discovered between user generated ratings and reviews and sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels (2009) focused on “refer a friend emails” and their impact on new customer acquisitions and discovered that the impacts of this form of online WOM was much

greater than the impact of traditional forms of marketing on new customer acquisition.

Villanueva, Yoo, and Hanssens (2008) also found that WOM was more impactful than forms of traditional media stating that “traditional marketing customers created greater short-term but less long-term value than those acquired through WOM.”

“The sheer volume of information available today has dramatically altered the balance of power between companies and consumers. As consumers have become overloaded, they have become increasingly skeptical about traditional company-driven advertising and marketing and increasingly prefer to make purchasing decisions largely independent of what companies tell them about products” (Bughin, Doogam & Vetvik, 2010, p. 114). As consumers move throughout the consumer decision journey – from initial consideration to active evaluation to the moment of purchase – WOM is informing the actions and choices they decide to make (Bughin, Doogam & Vetvik, 2010; Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013).

WOM makes the most impact when passed within tight, close-knit networks, but may have less reach than if passed in a larger community. However, consumers are still willing to evaluate information about goods and services that is from people they do not know. Weiss, Lurie, and MacInnis (2008) researched how consumers evaluate information from strangers to make decisions or gain information. They discovered consumers are willing to trust these online sources of information based on frequency and thoroughness of the reviews (Weiss, Lurie, & MacInnis, 2008). Being able to harness the power of word of mouth marketing can be imperative to marketers and have potential to gain higher returns on marketing investments (Bughin, Doogam & Vetvik, 2010).

## Technology Acceptance Model

Fred Davis (1989), a computer science research specialist and MIT graduate, created the Technology Acceptance (TAM) model to theorize the usage behavior of computer technology. This model was adapted from the Theory of Reasoned Action which explains a person's behavior through their intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TAM was developed to “include critical technology related factors to explain an individual's decision making process to accept new information system technologies in an organizational setting” (Davis, 1989; Kim & Lin, 2015).

TAM uses the concepts of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to explain computer usage behavior. Perceived usefulness (PU) can be defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance” (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000, p.15). Perceived ease of use (EU) is defined as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort” (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000, p.15). According to TAM, intentions to use technology will determine whether a person will use the technology or not (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014).

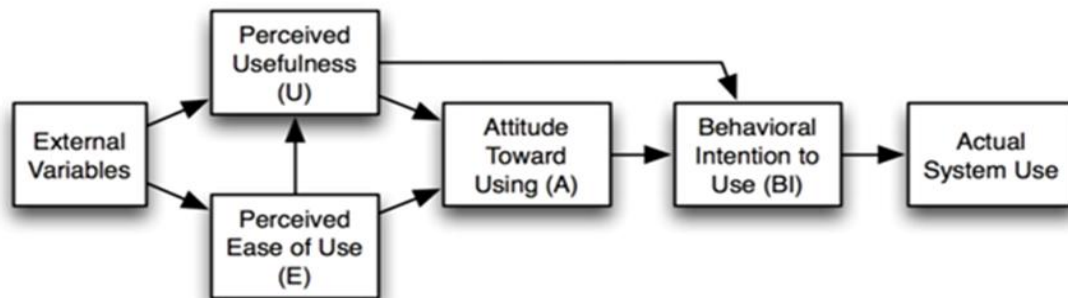


Figure 2.1: Technology Acceptance Model

TAM has since been revised in many studies to fit the context of particular technologies being examined. Utilizing the Technology Acceptance Mode, studies have shown that an audience is more likely to adopt mobile phone technology, Wi-Fi networks, and satellite radio systems when these technologies are perceived as useful and easy to use (Schejter, 2006; Shin, 2011; Wei, 2006; Lin, 2010).

### Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media

TAM has also been revised to include “social influence processes in predicting the usage behavior of a new technology by its users” (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014, p. 10). Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson (2014) have modified TAM for social media usage. This framework adds critical mass (CM), social media capabilities (CP), perceived playfulness (PP), and trustworthiness (TW) as variables in addition to those included in the original model. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model’s widespread usage and ability to explain the adoption and use of various types of technologies, it is proposed that TAM will be a valid framework to explain Generation Xers decision making process and intentions for adopting the use of social media platforms regarding fashion consumption (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014).

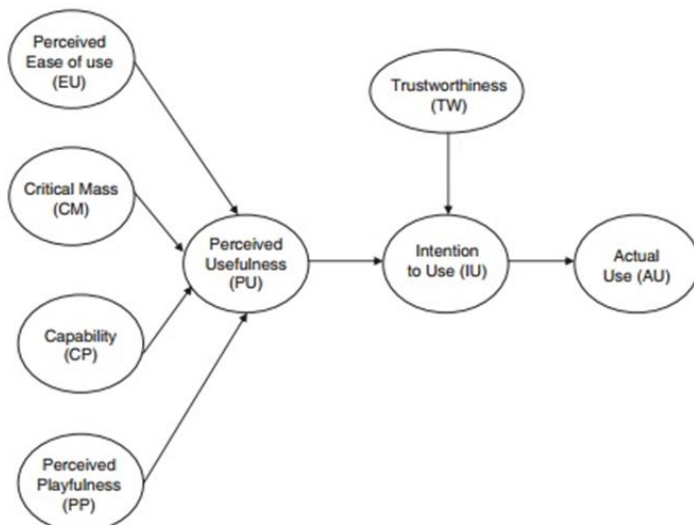


Figure 2.2: Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media

## **Perceived Ease of Use**

Perceived ease of use can be defined as the extent to which a person believes that using a technology will be free of effort, and has been established as an important factor in influencing user acceptance and end usage behavior of information technologies (Venkatesh, 2000).

Venkatesh and Davis (1996) suggest that perceived ease of use is similar to self-efficacy, which can be defined as judgements one makes on how well they can execute specific plans of action.

This construct has been previously studied outside of TAM under the name of “complexity” by Thompson, Higgins, & Howell (1991) and “ease of use” by Moore and Benbasat (1991).

Overall, it demonstrates that individuals look to minimize their effort when it comes to employing various technologies. This supports the relationship between perceived ease of use and end usage behavior, as the easier it is to utilize a form of technology, the more likely an individual is to use it (Venkatesh, 2000).

## **Perceived Usefulness**

Perceived usefulness is defined by Davis (1989) as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance; this stems from the definition of the word useful: “capable of being used advantageously” (Davis, 1989, p.320).

Research conducted by Schultz and Slevin (1975) and Robey (1979) indicated that the performance of a technology was most highly correlated with perceived usefulness and self-predicted use; a system that does not help individuals perform their job well is less likely to be perceived as useful. TAM shows that perceived usefulness will be influenced by perceived ease of use as the easier a technology is to use, the more useful it can be to the user (Venkatesh, 2000).

## **Critical Mass**

Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009) state that critical mass is the point at which enough users have adopted an innovation so that there is an exponential growth of the adaption of that innovation to the point that it can become self-sustaining. In terms of social media, perceived critical mass is the point at which an adopter perceives that a site has enough members for them to associate with the site (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). It has been shown that critical mass has a significant positive effect on intention to use social media sites. In other words, if a user perceives a site to have an appropriate amount of users that they can associate with in terms of common interests or friendships, they are more likely to intend to use that site (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Overall, the benefits that come from using a social network increase as the amount of users increases, and the site becomes visible to larger social networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

## **Capability**

Information technology capabilities have been found to be important differentiators for many businesses over the years; for example, banks in the 1980s who invested in IT capability performed better than those who did not (Bharadwaj, 2000). Capabilities have the power to enhance the performance of both a business and a new technology (Trainor, 2012). In terms of social media, capabilities play an important role in a users' willingness to adapt to using a specific network. Overall, research shows that social media sites with capabilities that match the needs of the user are more likely to be perceived as useful and lead to actual use of the site (Rauniar et al., 2014).

## **Perceived Playfulness**

Perceived playfulness describes the degree to which a user believes that a social network site will bring them enjoyment or pleasure (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Most literature examining playfulness in TAM have found that users who found a sense of enjoyment or who had fun while using a particular technology had a mediating or direct effect on their intention to use the technology (Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992; Moon & Kim, 2000). Moon and Kim (2000) found that perceived playfulness had a direct effect on the behavioral intention to use the world wide web; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009) discovered the same significant positive effect of perceived playfulness on the intention to use social network sites for college students.

## **Trustworthiness**

Trust in a social media site is built from the belief that there are safety mechanisms within the site to benefit the user (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Trust is a critical factor for social media sites because of the potentially harmful outcomes that may occur when safety features are not in place. A user must trust the site to keep personal information safe and not take advantage of the trust they have placed in the site as a consumer (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Gefen, Karahana, and Straub (2003) found that a user having trust in a site has a direct effect on the intent to use that site; Sledgianowksi and Kulviwat (2009) also found that perveiced trust has a significant positive effect on intention to use social networking sites for college students.

## **Intention to Use**

Behavioral intention, or intention to use, is based off of the definition of intend, or “to have in mind as a purpose; plan to do, use, or give” (Warshaw & Davis, 1985, p. 214).

Research has been conducted to determine the intention to use many technologies from web sites to mobile banking; with perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness influencing behavioral intention either directly or indirectly (Luarn & Lin, 2004). Intention to use can be increased through the mediating TAM variables, including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived playfulness, etc. (Luarn & Lin, 2004).

### **Actual Use**

According to TAM actual system usage is determined by the intention to use a particular system, which is determined by the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the system (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1989). TAM traces the impact of various external variables on internal beliefs, attitudes, and intentions, which impact actual system use (Legris, Ingham, & Colletette, 2003). The external variables intervene indirectly, influencing attitudes toward using the technology and the perceived ease of use and usefulness of the system (Legris et al., 2003). TAM has been proven to be a useful theoretical model that aids in the understanding and explanation of use behavior in information technology implementation (Legris et al., 2003).

### **Research Gap and Summary of Hypotheses**

Fashion marketing focuses new media efforts on Millennials who are perceived to be using social media sites the most. However, Generation X women are spending more time per week, on average, on social networking sites than both the Millennial and Boomer cohorts (Bromwich, 2017). Generation Xers are looking to consume information about goods and services through this new media channel, yet they are overlooked for the larger Millennial cohort

(Burnsed & Bickle, 2015). This study explored, quantitatively, the intentions of Generation X women to use social media platforms for fashion consumption.

The relationship of perceived ease of use (EU), critical mass (CM), social media capabilities (CM), and perceived playfulness (PP) with perceived usefulness (PU) will be tested. The relationship of perceived usefulness (PU) and trustworthiness (TW) with intention to use (IU) will also be measured. Lastly, the relationship between intention to use (IU) and actual use (AU) will be analyzed (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014). The study proposes utilizing an adaptation of the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media as shown in Figure 2.3 and hypothesizes the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** EU, CM, CP, and PP are positively related with PU.

**Hypothesis 2:** PU and TW are positively related with IU.

**Hypothesis 3:** IU is positively related with AU.

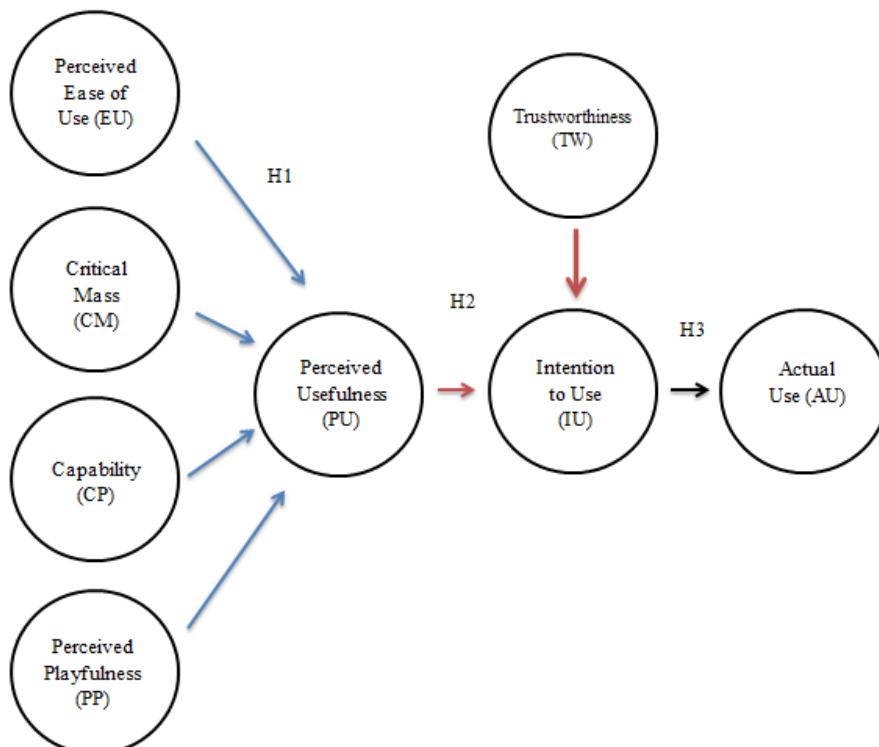


Figure 2.3:  
Research Model

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **METHODS**

Chapter 3 contains the following sections: (a) research method, (b) survey design, (c) study variables, (d) sampling, (e) data collection, and (f) data analyses.

#### **Research Method**

This study utilized an online survey, conducted to analyze members of Generation X intentions to utilize social media platforms to follow fashion trends. Online surveys are administered using the Internet, and are able to reach a larger audience than a paper survey (Dillman, 2000). Online surveying was chosen initially for its relevance to a digital media based study and has also proven to have many benefits as compared to traditional forms of data collection such as pen and paper surveying and interviewing (Cowles & Nelson, 2015). These benefits include ease of data gathering, minimal costs, automation in data input and handling, an increase in response rates, as well as flexibility in design (Cowles & Nelson, 2015). Survey design does have some limitations, however; internal reliability can be low as questionnaires are self-reported (Dillman, 2000).

A quantitative approach was deemed the most appropriate for the study as it is attempting to identify the relationships between variables in the Technology Acceptance Model as they relate to Generation X women and social media use. TAM has been successful in previous research studies focused on the intention to use various social media sites. Ting et al. (2016) studied the intention to use Instagram in developing markets while Rauniar et al. (2014)

used TAM to study millennial use of Facebook. TAM has not yet been utilized to study the use of social media for fashion consumption by members of Generation X.

### **Survey Design**

The questionnaire developed for this study comprised of 52 questions. The study used an internet survey administered using Qualtrics and distributed to a convenience sample using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Convenience sampling through MTurk allowed this study to be both time and cost effective. MTurk is comprised of panel workers who agree to complete human intelligence tasks (HITs) that are requested by an individual or business (requestor). The MTurk workers are then compensated for the work they complete for the requestor (Amazon Mechanical Turk, n.d).

Internet surveys are able to provide a more dynamic interaction between the participant and the questionnaire and offer multiple design, data collection, and data analysis opportunities that paper and interview questionnaire do not (Dillman, 2000). Access to the internet varies for participants, and may be troublesome and even prevent some from retrieving the questionnaire. Those without access to the internet along with internet users who are not members of Amazon MTurk will not be able to be sampled.

MTurk also allows for participants to be screened before taking the survey, making it a quick and efficient way to collect data. Using MTurk will allow the study to engage a diverse set of respondents at a relatively low cost and in a short period of time (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Because participants are paid to complete HIT's, an academic survey in relation to this study, results may be skewed. Random sampling is considered to be the most ideal route when administering a survey; however, it can come at a much higher cost (Emerson, 2015). Sampling

using MTurk allowed this study to be more time and cost efficient, and has been affective in previous consumer behavior studies (Egelin, 2016).

### **Study Variables**

The scales utilized for this study were developed within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model and the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media (Davis 1980; Davis 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Rauniar et al., 2014). The survey measured the eight variables outlined in the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media which included perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social media capabilities, critical mass, perceived playfulness, trustworthiness, intention to use, and actual use. All variables were measured using previously developed scales that have been adapted in wording to better suit this study. Items in each scale were scored according to Likert 7 entered as: “Strongly agree = 7”, “agree = 6”, “somewhat agree = 5”, “neutral = 4”, “somewhat disagree = 3”, “disagree = 2”, “strongly disagree = 1.”

#### **Perceived Ease of Use**

Perceived ease of use (EU) is defined in this study as “degree to which the social media site is free of effort” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p.11). Perceived ease of use was measured using items previously developed by Fred Davis as part of the Technology Acceptance Model (1989).

Perceived ease of use was measured using nine items including “it would be impossible to use social media without expert help” and “learning to use social media sites is easy for me” on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Davis (1989) originally used the scale to predict user acceptance of computers; it has since been adapted for various technologies, including social media. The Cronbach’s alpha score for the scale was .91 (Davis,

1989). Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency of the scale, meaning it measures how closely related a set of items are as a group. The higher the Cronbach's alpha, the more internally consistent and reliable a scale is. An acceptable value for a Cronbach's alpha is .7 to .8 (Field, 2013). For perceived ease of use, the Cronbach's alpha score was internally consistent.

### **Perceived Usefulness**

Perceived usefulness (PU) was defined in this study as "extent to which the social media user believes that using a particular social media site helps to meet the related goal driven needs of the individual" (Rauniar et al., 2014, p. 10). Perceived usefulness was measured using items previously developed by Fred Davis (1989) as part of the Technology Acceptance Model. Perceived usefulness was measured using six items including "using social media improves the performance of my tasks" and "using social media enables me to access a lot of information" on a seven-point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Davis (1989) originally used the scale to predict user acceptance of computers; it has since been adapted for various technologies, including social media. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .97, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Davis, 1989).

### **Perceived Playfulness**

Perceived playfulness (PP) was defined in this study as the "the extent to which the social media related activities are perceived to be fun and enjoyable apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated" (Rauniar et al., 2014, p13). The scale for perceived playfulness was based off of original work done by Lieberman in 1977 and adapted for use with the World Wide Web by Moon and Kim (2000). Perceived playfulness was measured with nine items such as "Using social media stimulates my curiosity" and "When interacting with social

media sites, I do not realize the time elapsed” on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .96, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Moon & Kim, 2000).

### **Social Media Capabilities**

Social media capabilities (CP) was defined in this study as “the sites features, applications, and social media tools that benefit the users need for social media activities” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p12). Social media capabilities were measured using scales developed by Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, and Johnson (2014). The authors developed the scale in order to assess the features social media sites must have in order to capture their target audiences (Rauniar et al, 2014). Social media capabilities was measured with three items including “applications and capabilities of the social media sites I use meet my social networking needs” and “images and videos can be easily downloaded or uploaded to social media sites I use” on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Cronbach’s alpha for social media capabilities was .80, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Rauniar et al., 2014).

### **Critical Mass**

Critical mass (CM) is defined in this study as “the extent of the membership of people that matters most in a user’s social media network” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p.11). Critical mass was measured using scales developed by Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, and Johnson (2014). The CM scale was developed to analyze the critical level of membership in a personal social media network (Rauniar et al., 2014). Critical mass was measured with three items including “social media sites are popular among my friends” on a seven-point Likert scale with 1=strongly

disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for critical mass was .83, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Rauniar et al., 2014).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness (TW) was defined in this study as “the extent to which a social media user feels security of their profile information, shared text and graphics, and other social media site related activities” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p15). Trustworthiness was measured with six items using a scale developed by Büttner and Göritz (2008) originally used for measuring perceived trustworthiness of online shops. Trustworthiness items include “social media sites are able to fully satisfy their customers” and “I am happy with the standards by which social media sites operate” on a seven-point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .95, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Büttner and Göritz, 2008).

### **Intention to Use**

Intention to use (IU) was defined in this study as “the voluntary and cognitive representation of the user's readiness to actually use the social media...is determined by the user's perceived benefit from social media” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p14). Intention to use was measured using items developed by Moon and Kim (2000). Moon and Kim (2000) developed the scale to analyze users' intentions to access the World Wide Web; it was adapted in wording to suit the use of Social Media Sites. Intention to use was measured with three items such as “I will use social media on a regular basis in the future” on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .87, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Moon & Kim, 2000).

## **Actual Use**

Actual use (AU) was defined in this study as “the frequency of social media used by the user” (Rauniar et al., 2014, p14). Actual use was measured using scales developed by Moon and Kim (2000), which were originally used to measure frequency of use of the World Wide Web and will be adapted in wording to suit use of Social Media Sites. Actual use was measured with two items including “How many times do you use social media during the week?” with responses ranging from “not at all” to “several times each day”. The Cronbach’s alpha for actual use was .83, showing that the scale was internally consistent (Moon & Kim, 2000).

## **Other Variables**

### **Demographics**

The questionnaire asked demographic questions concerning age, gender, race, marital status, level of education, and annual household income. Participants were required to be within the Generation X age bracket, meaning they were born between the years 1965 and 1976, in order to participate in the study; they also were required to identify as female as the study was analyzing the women of Generation X. Those who are not eligible were removed through the screening process. The number of social media sites used on a regular basis by the respondent as well as whether or not the respondent followed fashion through social media platforms was also assessed.

**Table 3.1***Survey constructs, item sources, and Cronbach's alphas*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Item Source/ Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Study's Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Perceived Ease of Use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It would be impossible to use social media to follow fashion without expert help</li> <li>2. Learning to operate social media sites to follow fashion is easy for me</li> <li>3. It is easy to learn how to use social media to follow fashion</li> <li>4. I find it easy to get social media sites to do what I want them to do</li> <li>5. It takes little time to learn to use social media to follow fashion</li> <li>6. It is easy to remember how to use social media to follow fashion</li> <li>7. Using social media to follow fashion requires a lot of mental effort</li> <li>8. My interaction with social media is clear and understandable</li> <li>9. It is easy for me to become skillful at using social media to follow fashion</li> </ol>	0.91 (Davis, 1989)	0.891
Perceived Usefulness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using social media improves my ability to follow fashion</li> <li>2. Using social media enables me to accomplish following fashion more quickly</li> <li>3. Using social media does not enable me to have more accurate information on fashion</li> <li>4. Using social media enables me to access a lot of information about fashion</li> <li>5. Using social media does not enable me to access the newest information on fashion</li> <li>6. Using social media enables me to acquire high quality information on fashion</li> </ol>	0.97 (Davis,1989)	0.795
Perceived Playfulness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When interacting with social media sites, I realize the time elapsed</li> <li>2. When interacting with social media sites I am not aware of any noise</li> <li>3. When interacting with social media sites I often forget the work I must do</li> <li>4. Using social media makes following fashion enjoyable</li> <li>5. Using social media makes following fashion fun</li> </ol>	0.96 (Moon & Kim, 2000)	0.799

	6. Using social media to follow fashion makes me happy		
	7. Using social media does not stimulate my curiosity about fashion		
	8. Using social media leads to my further exploration of fashion		
	9. Using social media to follow fashion arouses my imagination		
Social Media Capabilities	1. Social media sites I use provide clear instructions for posting	0.80	0.615
	2. Images and videos can be easily downloaded or uploaded to social media sites I use	(Rauniar et al., 2014)	
	3. Applications and capabilities of the social media sites I use do not meet my social networking needs		
Critical Mass	1. Social media sites are popular among my friends in the US	0.83	0.678
	2. A good number of my friends use social media to follow fashion	(Rauniar et al., 2014)	
	3. Few people from my work use social media to follow fashion		
Trustworthiness	1. Social media sites are able to fully satisfy their users	0.95	0.771
	2. Social media sites are not genuinely interested in their users welfare	(Büttner & Göritz, 2008)	
	3. I trust social media sites with the information listed on my profile		
	4. I feel safe with my postings to social media sites		
	5. I am not happy with the standards by which social media sites operate		
	6. I would rely on advice about fashion from a social media site		
Intention to Use	1. I will use social media to follow fashion on a regular basis in the future	0.83	0.813
	2. I will rarely use social media to follow fashion trends in the future	(Moon & Kim, 2000)	
	3. I will strongly recommend others to use social media to follow fashion		
Actual Use	1. How many times do you use social media during the week in order to find information regarding fashion and trends?	0.83	0.620
	2. How many hours do you spend on social media each day to find information regarding fashion and trends?	(Moon & Kim, 2000)	

## **Sampling**

The questionnaire was distributed electronically through the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk (M-Turk), a service available through Amazon Web Services. M-Turk is defined as “a crowdsourcing Internet marketplace enabling individuals and businesses (known as Requesters) to coordinate the use of human intelligence to perform tasks that computers are currently unable to do” (Amazon Mechanical Turk, n.d.). The study utilized convenience sampling through the Amazon site; the questionnaire was open to all participants within the target segment. The target participants for this study are defined as females born between the years of 1965 and 1976, who are 41 to 52 years old, making them members of the Generation X cohort. Screening questions regarding age, social media use, and fashion interest were satisfied in order to participate.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection was completed after receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The survey was administered using Qualtrics and shared as a human intelligence task (HIT) using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants, or MTurk workers, were paid \$0.75 for completing the HIT. The target sample for this study was 150 – 200; Field (2013) explains multiple regressions using a sample of at least 100. Once the target sample size was reached, responses were downloaded from Qualtrics and transferred to Microsoft Excel. Data was then cleaned and checked for missing items; missing items were corrected through the use of means averages. Data was then imported to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

## **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Cronbach's alphas of each variable were run to ensure internal reliability of each scale within the questionnaire. Frequencies and descriptive statistics of each variable and demographics were ran. Mean averages of each variable were also tested to ensure that the data were free of bias. Regression analyses were used to test the relationships between perceived ease of use, critical mass, social media capabilities, and perceived playfulness on perceived usefulness. The relationship between perceived usefulness and trustworthiness with intention to use was also analyzed. Lastly, the impact of intention to use on actual use was measured.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

Chapter 4 contains the following sections: (a) assessment of basic assumptions, (b) descriptions of the study sample, (c) variable descriptions, (d) regression analyses, and (e) summary of hypotheses tests.

#### **Assessment of Basic Assumptions**

Before performing hypotheses tests, the data was inspected and cleaned as well as tested for basic assumptions. This included a review of sample size and any missing data as well as testing for linearity, statistical independence, homoscedasticity, as well as normality of error. A total of 208 participants responded to the online survey distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and administered through Qualtrics by April 19, 2017.

The data were first downloaded from Qualtrics to Excel where a visual inspection of the data was performed. Fifteen responses were deleted because they were completed by males and eleven responses were deleted because the participant's age did not align with the Generation X cohort. An additional four responses were deleted because they were left incomplete by the participant, leaving a total of 178 usable responses. Mean imputation was then used a total of ten times for missing responses; using this approach lowers variability but allows for the use of a larger sample size. Following the completion of the visual inspection and organization of the data, the data were uploaded to SPSS.

Once in SPSS, the first steps were to test for the four principal assumptions of linear regression: (1) linearity, (2) statistical independence, (3) homoscedasticity, and (4) normality of error. Linearity was tested by using Q-Q plots of observed versus predicted values. Points along each line were symmetrically distributed with a roughly constant variance, as seen below:

Figure 4.1: Q-Q Plot of EU

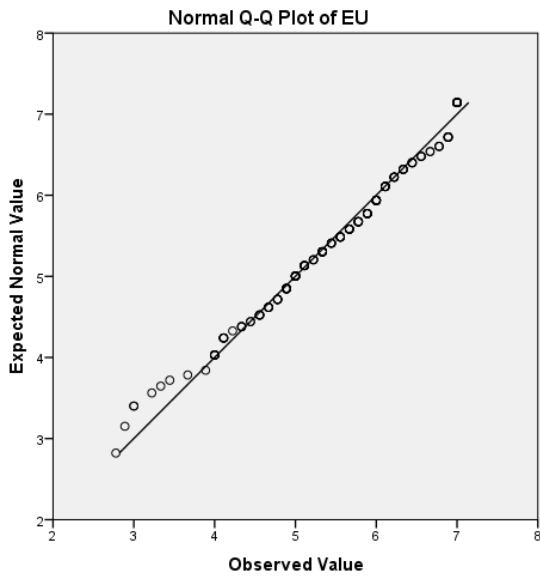


Figure 4.2: Q-Q Plot of PU

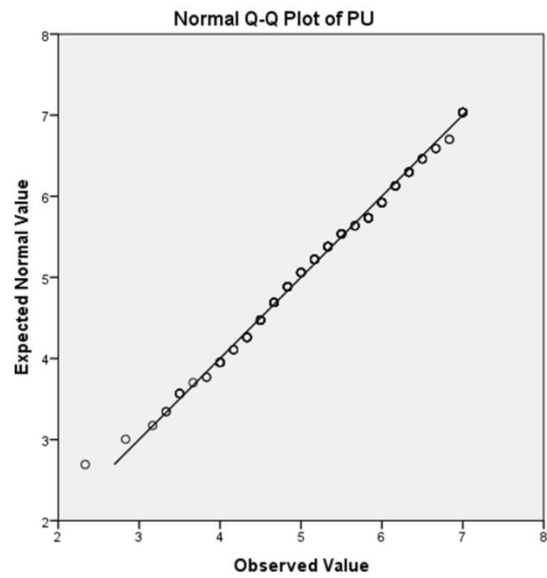


Figure 4.3: Q-Q Plot of CP

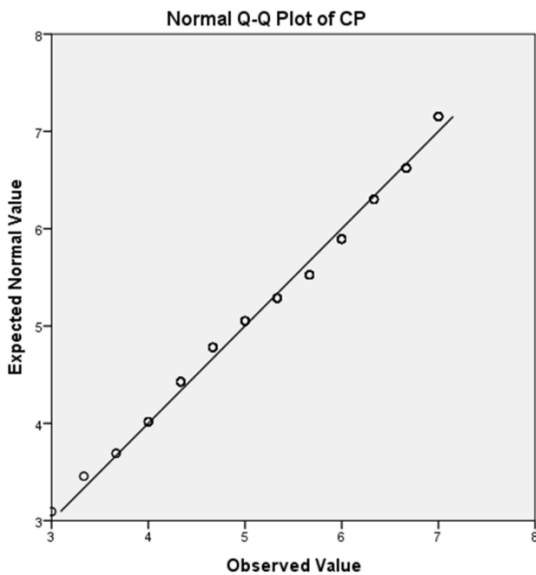


Figure 4.4: Q-Q Plot of PP

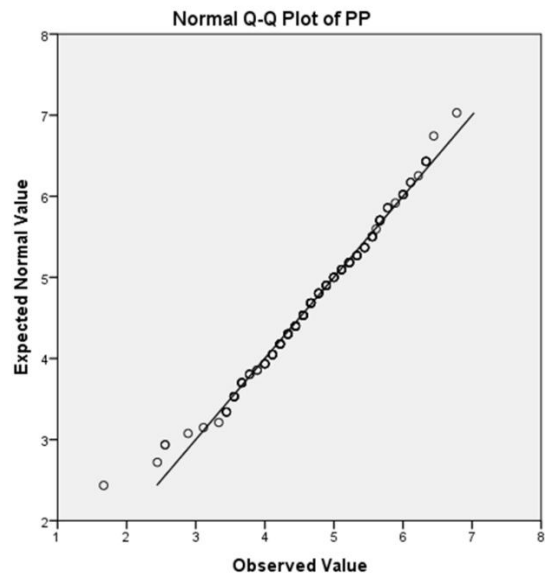


Figure 4.5L Q-Q Plot of CM

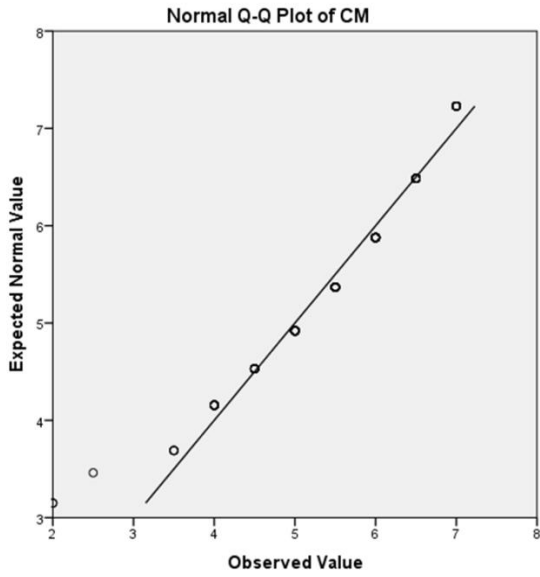


Figure 4.6: Q-Q Plot of TW

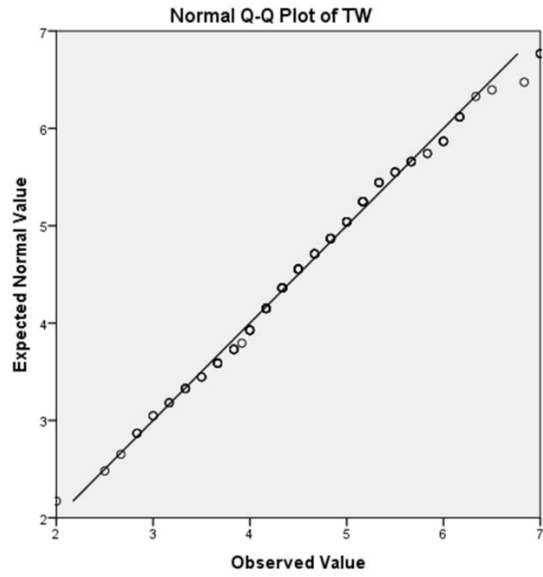


Figure 4.7: Q-Q Plot of IU

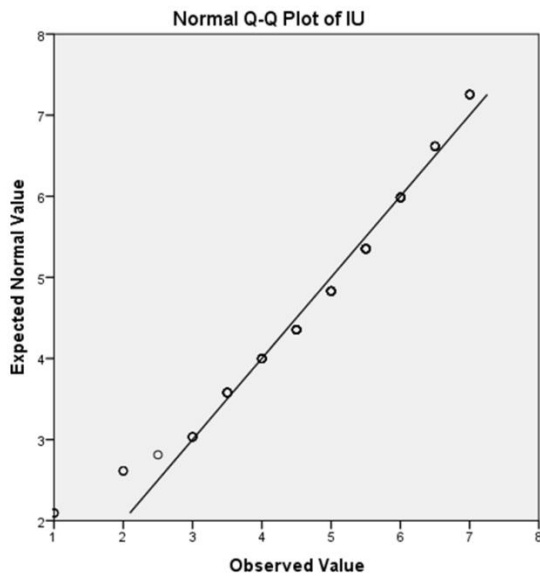
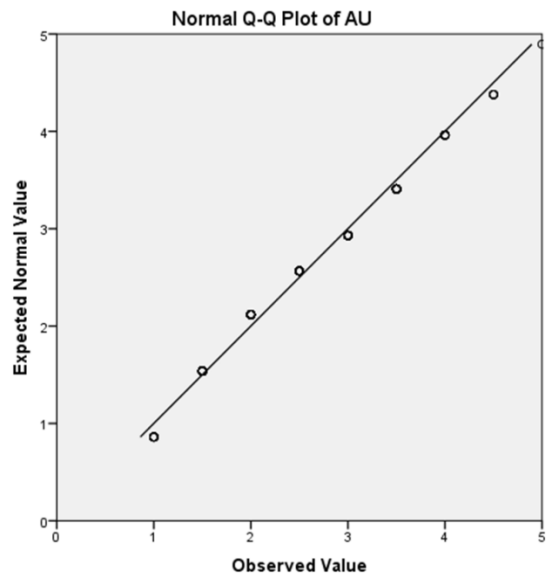


Figure 4.8: Q-Q Plot of AU



Next, statistical independence was tested by creating plots of the residuals versus the predicted values. Because the data were selected by a non-biased process, and there were no non-random patterns in the residual plots, the assumption of independence was met. The assumption of homoscedasticity was also met, as there was an equal variance of residuals in scatterplots of the residuals versus predictor values. Lastly, the normality of error assumption was met as histograms of the residuals were approximately unimodal and symmetric.

## **Descriptions of the Study Sample**

### **Demographics**

In order to better understand the demographic characteristics of the sample, descriptive statistics of the data was collected. Participants who identified as females age 41 – 52, or part of the Generation X cohort, were the target sample for the survey. Analysis of frequency tables were prepared for the remaining demographic variables. Ethnicity of the participants was 115 (64.6%) White/Caucasian; 8 (4.5%) African American; 5 (2.8%) Hispanic; 2 (1.1%) Multi-Racial; 44 (24.4%) Asian/Pacific Islander; 3 (1.7%) Native American; and 1 (.6%) do not wish to disclose.

Level of education for the participants was 17 (9.6%) High School Graduate; 26 (14.4%) Some College; 6 (3.3%) Trade/Technical/Vocational Training; 19 (10.6%) Associate's Degree; 67 (37.2%) Bachelor's Degree; 39 (21.7%) Master's Degree; 1 (.6%) Professional Degree; 1 (.6%) Doctorate Degree; and 2(1.1%) do not wish to disclose. Household income for the participants was 28 (15.7%) less than \$29,999; 56 (31.5%) \$30,000 - \$59,999; 56 (31.5%) \$60,000 - \$89,999; 21 (11.7%) \$90,000 - \$119,999; 10 (5.6%) \$120,000 +; and 6 (3.3%) do not wish to disclose.

Marital status of the participants was 19 (10.7%) Single, Never Married; 141 (79.2%) Married or Domestic Partnership; 2 (1.1%) Widowed; 9 (5.1%) Divorced; 5 (2.8%) Separated; and 2 (1.1%) do not wish to disclose. The number of children within the household for participants was 41 (23.0%) none; 58 (32.6%) 1; 48 (27.0%) 2; 16 (8.9%) 3; 9 (5.1%) 4; 2 (1.1%) 5+; and 4 (2.2%) do not wish to disclose. More detailed information on demographic characteristics can be found in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants (n=178)*

Variable	<i>n</i>	Percent
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	115	64.6%
African American	8	4.5%
Hispanic	5	2.8%
Multi-racial	2	1.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	44	24.4%
Native American	3	1.7%
Do not wish to disclose	1	.6%
<b>Level of Education</b>		
High School Graduate	17	9.6%
Some College	26	14.4%
Trade/Technical/Vocational Training	6	3.3%
Associate's Degree	19	10.6%
Bachelor's Degree	67	37.2%
Master's Degree	39	21.7%
Professional Degree	1	.6%
Doctorate Degree	1	.6%
Do not wish to disclose	2	1.1%
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than \$29,999	28	15.7%
\$30,000 - \$59,999	56	31.5%
\$60,000 - \$89,999	56	31.5%
\$90,000 - \$119,999	21	11.7%

\$120,000 +	10	5.6%
Do not wish to disclose	6	3.3%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single, Never Married	19	10.7%
Married or Domestic Partnership	141	79.2%
Widowed	2	1.1%
Divorced	9	5.1%
Separated	5	2.8%
Do not wish to disclose	2	1.1%
<b>Children within Household</b>		
None	41	23.0%
1	58	32.6%
2	48	27.0%
3	16	8.9%
4	9	5.1%
5+	2	1.1%
Do not wish to disclose	4	2.2%

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### **Limitations of Study Sample**

The survey sample is skewed as the majority of respondents identified as White/Caucasian. Because of the biased nature of the survey responses, the resulting data can only truly represent the White/Caucasian women of Generation X. Although this was not the intention of the study, this information is still important and can be readily used by marketers within the fashion industry whose main target consumer is identical to the respondent of this survey. According to the U.S. Census, the distribution of ethnicities within the American population differs from that of the survey sample. In the total United States population 61.3% identify as white, not Hispanic or Latino; 13.3% Black or African American; 1.3% American Indian and Alaska Native; 5.7% Asian; 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander; 2.6% Two or More races; and 17.8% Hispanic or Latino (United States Census Bureau, 2016).

The percentage of survey takers that identify as white is representative of those who identify as white within the U.S population according to census data. The survey is severely lacking African American and Hispanic representation as only 4.5% and 2.8% of the survey takers as compared to 13.3% and 17.8% of the population are African American and Hispanic, respectively. Conversely, the survey had an unexpectedly large number of Asian/Pacific Islander respondents. 24.4% of the survey takers identified as Asian/Pacific Islander while this ethnicity only accounts for 5.9% of the American population. Additionally, the survey had a disproportionate amount of multi-racial respondents, with 1.1% of survey takers identifying as such while 2.6% of the population identifies as more than one race. The only truly representative group within the survey was Native American with 1.7% of respondents compared to 1.3% of the population identifying as such.

Table 4.2

*Comparison of Survey Sample to U.S. Census Data*

Ethnicity	Survey Results	Census Data (U.S., 2016)
White/Caucasian	64.6%	61.3%
African American	4.5%	13.3%
Hispanic	2.8%	17.8%
Multi-racial	1.1%	2.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	24.4%	5.9%
Native American	1.7%	1.3%
Do not wish to disclose	.6%	N/A

**Social Media Use**

Descriptive statistics were also utilized to better understand participant’s use of social media sites and their shopping behaviors. Analysis of frequency tables were prepared for the questions pertaining to social media use, fashion interest, and shopping behavior.

*How important do you consider fashion?*

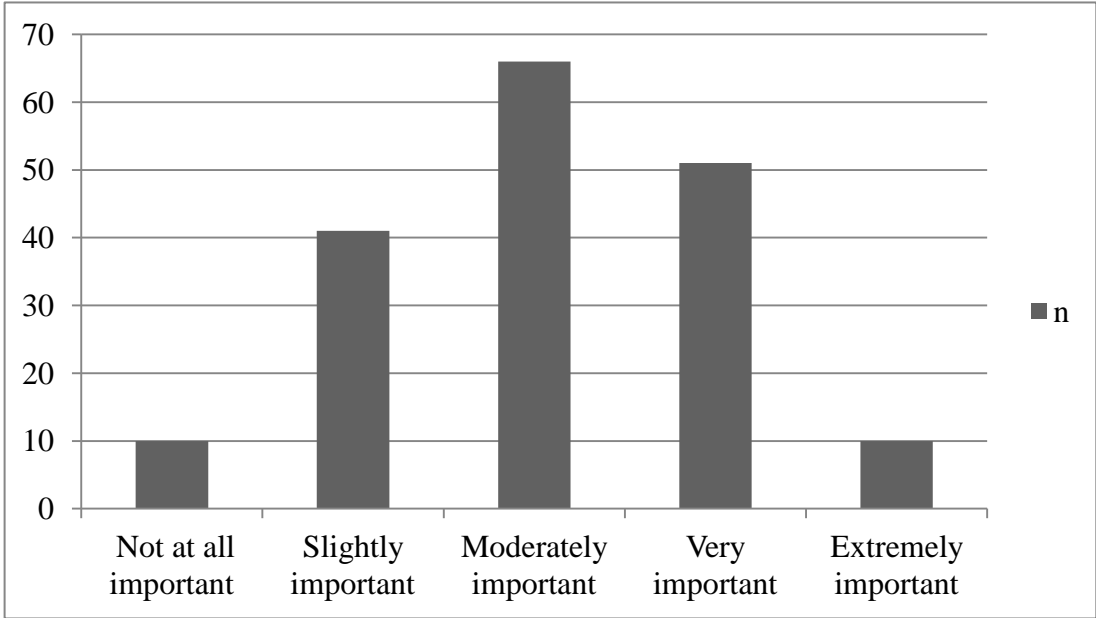


Figure 4.9: Importance of Fashion to Sample Population

*How often do you use social media to follow fashion and trends?*

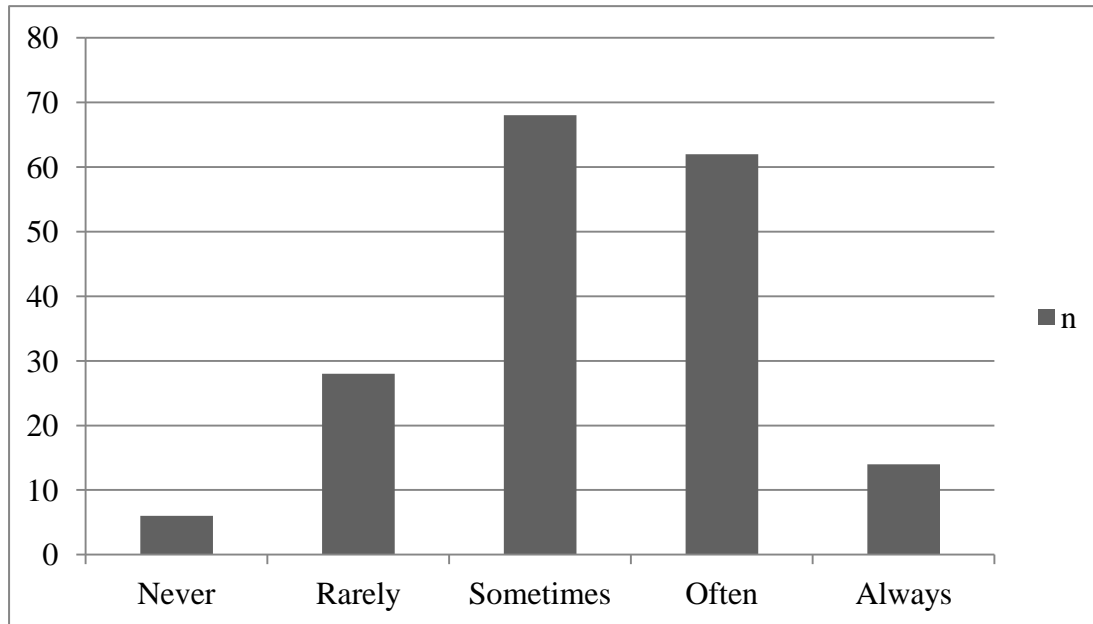


Figure 4.10: Frequency of Social Media Use

*How many times during the week do you use social media in order to find information regarding fashion and trends?*

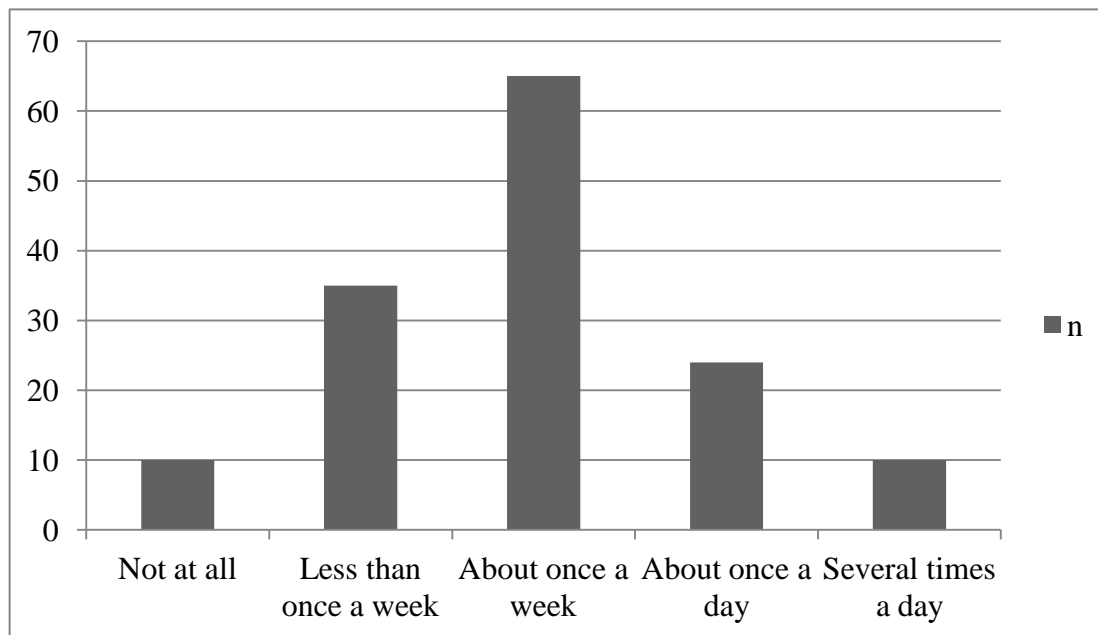


Figure 4.11: Weekly Usage of Social Media Sites

*How many hours do you spend on social media each day to find information regarding fashion and trends?*

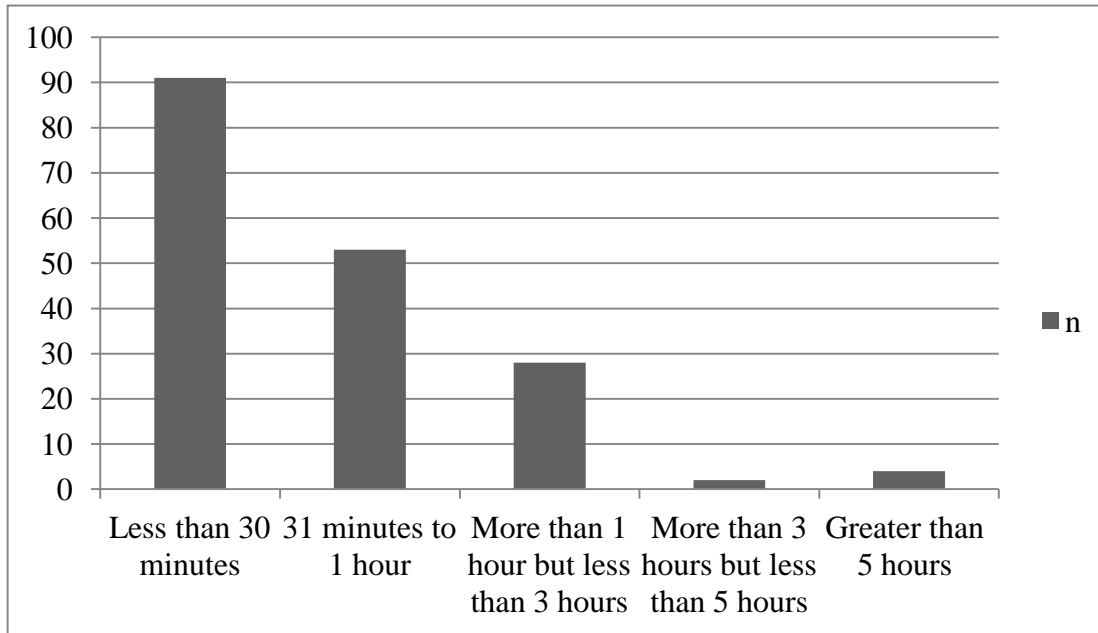


Figure 4.12: Daily Usage of Social Media Sites

*Which social media sites do you visit regularly to find information about fashion and trends?*

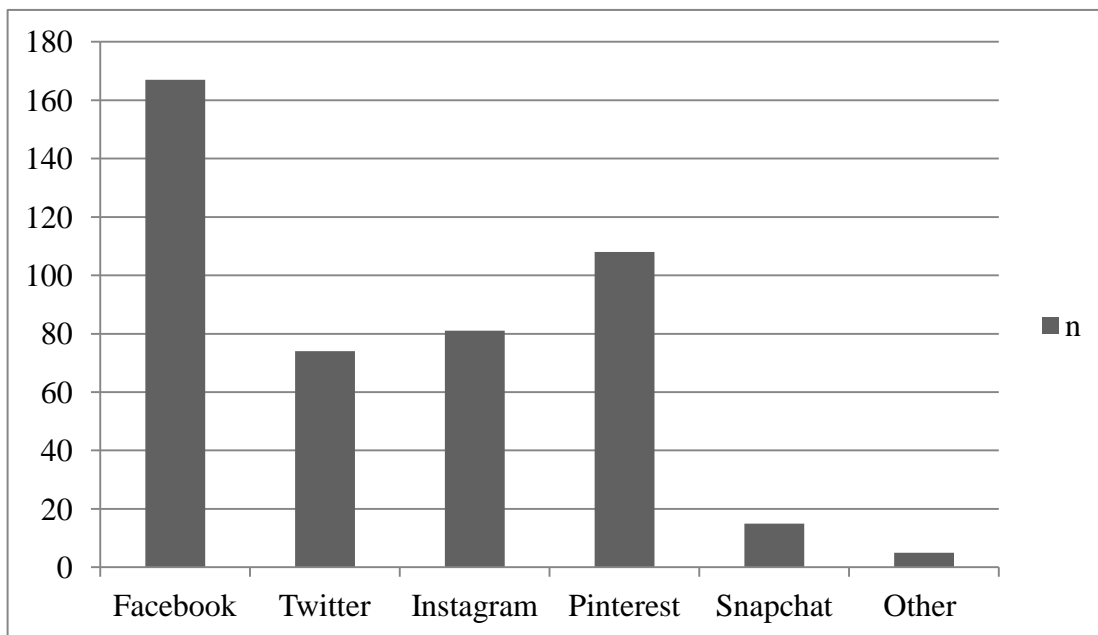


Figure 4.13: Social Media Sites Utilized for Fashion Consumption

*How often do you shop for your spouse or children?*

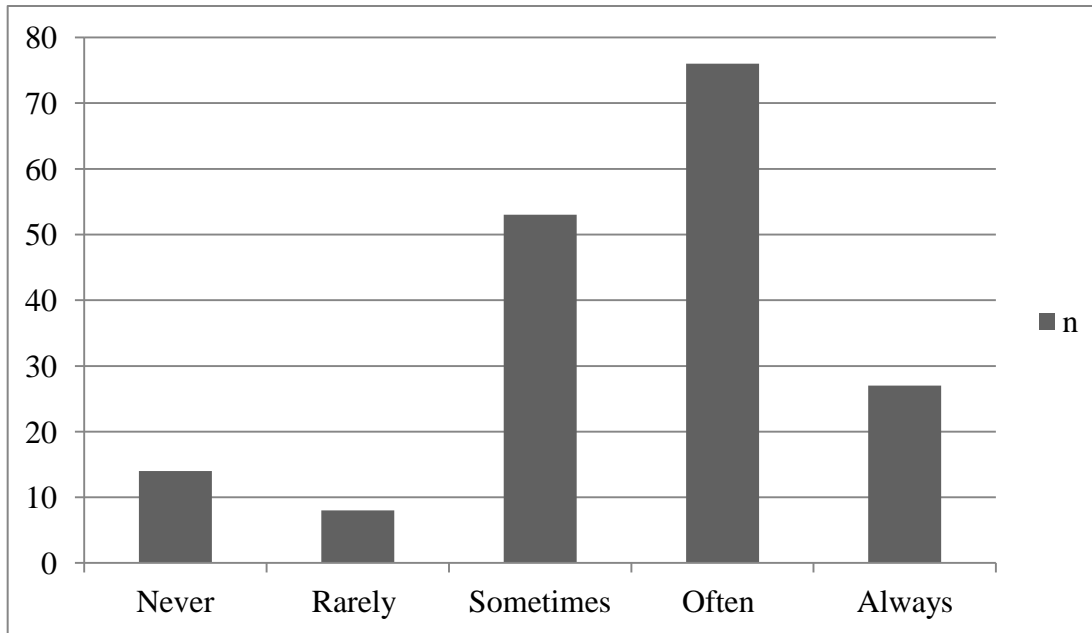


Figure 4.14: Frequency of Shopping for Members of Household

### **Variable Descriptions**

#### **Perceived Ease of Use (EU)**

Perceived ease of use is the degree to which social media is free of effort. This variable was measured on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. There were nine total items for perceived ease of use, with three being reverse coded. The mean value for this variable was 5.4788. The Cronbach's alpha for perceived ease of use was .891, which shows that the scale was internally consistent.

#### **Perceived Usefulness (PU)**

Perceived usefulness is considered the extent to which social media users believe that using a particular site is useful. Perceived usefulness was measured on a seven point Likert scale

with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. There were six total items for the variable with two being reverse coded. The mean value for this variable was 5.1891. The Cronbach's alpha for perceived usefulness was .795 which indicated that the scale was internally consistent.

### **Perceived Playfulness (PP)**

Perceived playfulness is the extent to which social media sites and related activities are perceived to be fun and enjoyable by the user. Perceived playfulness was measured with nine items, with two being reverse coded, on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The mean value for this variable was 4.7319. The Cronbach's alpha for perceived playfulness was .799, indicating that the scale was internally consistent.

### **Social Media Capabilities (CP)**

Social media capabilities are the sites features applications and tools that benefit the user. Capabilities were measured with three items, with one being reverse coded, on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The mean value for this variable was 5.4401. The Cronbach's alpha for social media capabilities was .615, indicating that the scale was internally consistent.

### **Critical Mass (CM)**

Critical mass is the extent of the network of people that matters the most to a social media user. This variable was measured with three items, with one being reverse coded. Critical mass was measured on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The mean value for this variable was 5.5983. The Cronbach's alpha for critical mass was .678, showing that this scale was internally consistent.

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is defined as the extent to which as social media use feels safe and secure using a site. Trustworthiness was measured with six items, two of which were reverse coded. This variable was measured on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The mean value for this variable was 4.6718. The Cronbach's alpha for trustworthiness was .771, indicating that the scale was internally consistent.

## **Intention to Use**

Intention to use represents the users' readiness to use a social media site. Intention to use was measured with three items, with one being reverse coded, on a seven point Likert scale with 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The mean value for this variable was 5.0337. The Cronbach's alpha for intention to use was .813, indicating that the scale was internally consistent.

## **Actual Use**

Actual use is the frequency of social media used by the user. Actual use was measured with two items. The mean value for this variable was 2.5281. The Cronbach's alpha for actual use was .620, indicating that the scale was internally consistent.

## **Regression Analyses**

Linear regression is used to model the relationship between a dependent variable (y) and one or more explanatory variables (x). This type of analysis was relevant to this study because each hypothesis is testing the relationship between a dependent variable and varying explanatory variables within the model.

## Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis stated that the independent variables ease of use (EU), critical mass (CM), capabilities (CP), and perceived playfulness (PP) would have a positive relationship with the dependent variable, perceived usefulness (PU). With  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a significant regression equation was found  $F(1,178) = 66.486, p < 0.0001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .597. This shows that 59.7% of PU can be explained by the independent variables, EU, CM, CP, and PP.

The relationships of each independent variable with the dependent variable were then analyzed. EU was found to be a significant predictor for PU; for every 1 unit increase of change in PU, EU also increases by .355 ( $F(1,178) = 5.312, p < 0.0001$ ). CP and PP were also significant predictors of PU. For every 1 unit change in PU, CP also increases by .245 ( $F(1,178) = 3.528, p = 0.001$ ). For every 1 unit change in PU, PP also increases by .342 ( $F(1,178) = 5.586, p < 0.0001$ ). Because of its large p-value, CM was not found to be a significant predictor of PU within the model; for every 1 unit increase of change in PU, CM increases by .062 ( $F(1,178) = 1.052, p = .294$ ).

Table 4.3

*Regression Analysis for PU (n=178)*

Predictor	$\beta$	$t$	p-value
EU	.355	5.312	.0001
CM	.062	1.052	.294
CP	.245	3.528	.001
PP	.342	5.586	.0001

An additional regression analysis was run to test the model without CM as an independent variable. Again, the overall model is supported  $F(1,178) = 88.224, p < 0.0001$  with an  $R^2$  of .597. While the p-value and  $R^2$  stayed the same, the f-statistic of the overall model as well as the beta coefficients for the remaining independent variables increased upon the removal of CM. The change in the f-statistic shows that the removal of CM from the model improved its ability to predict PU. In addition, each of the remaining variables beta coefficients increased, showing that the correlation between PU and each explanatory variable is higher than if CM was kept in the model. Lastly, the p-value for CP got significantly smaller, also showing that it is more significant within the model when CM is removed. While both overall models are supported, the second model excluding CM is a better linear predictor of PU.

Table 4.4

*Regression Analysis for PU – Excluding CM (n=178)*

Predictor	$\beta$	$t$	p-value
EU	.369	5.617	.0001
CP	.258	3.768	.0001
PP	.373	6.921	.0001

## Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis stated that the independent variables trustworthiness (TW) and perceived usefulness (PU) would have a positive relationship with the dependent variable, intention to use (IU). With  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a significant regression equation was found  $F(1,178) = 50.432, p < 0.0001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .358. This shows that 35.8% of IU can be explained by the independent variables, TW and PU. Both TW and PU were found to be significant predictors of

IU. For every 1 unit change in IU, TW also increases by .679 ( $F(1,178) = 7.530, p < 0.0001$ ).  
 For every 1 unit change in IU, PU also increases by .236 ( $F(1,178) = 2.607, p = 0.010$ ).

Table 4.5

*Regression Analysis for IU (n=178)*

Predictor	$\beta$	$t$	p-value
TW	.679	7.530	.0001
PU	.236	2.607	.010

Because PU had a significantly larger p-value than TW, an additional regression analysis was run to test the model without PU as an independent variable. Again, the overall model was supported with a regression equation of  $F(1,178) = 50.432, p < 0.0001$  with an  $R^2$  of .358. While the p-value and  $R^2$  stayed the same, the f-statistic of the overall model as well as the beta coefficients for the remaining independent variable increased upon the removal of PU. The change in the f-statistic shows that the removal of PU from the model improved its ability to predict IU. In addition, the beta coefficient for TW increased, showing that the correlation between IU and TW is greater than if PU was kept in the model. While both overall models are supported, the second model excluding PU is a better linear predictor of IU.

Table 4.6

*Regression Analysis for IU – Excluding PU (n=178)*

Predictor	$\beta$	$t$	p-value
TW	.721	7.840	.0001

### Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis stated that the independent variable intention to use (IU) would have a positive relationship with the dependent variable, actual use (AU). With  $\alpha = 0.05$ , a significant regression equation was found  $F(1,178) = 87.817, p < 0.0001$ , with an  $R^2$  of .329. This shows that 32.9% of AU can be explained by the independent variable, IU. IU was found to be a significant predictor for AU; for every 1 unit increase of change in AU, IU also increases by .407 ( $F(1,178) = 9.371, p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 4.7

*Regression Analysis for AU (n=178)*

Predictor	$\beta$	$t$	p-value
IU	.407	9.371	.0001

## Summary of Hypotheses Tests

Table 4.6 shows the summary of the research hypotheses tests. Out of the three hypotheses, two were partially supported while the third was fully supported. Upon revision, all three were fully supported.

Table 4.8

### *Summary of Hypotheses Tests*

Hypotheses	Results
H1: EU, CM, CP, and PP are positively related with PU.	Partially Supported
REVISED H1: EU, CP, and PP are positively related with PU.	Supported
H2: PU and TW are positively related with IU.	Partially Supported
REVISED H2: TW is positively related with IU.	Supported
H3: IU is positively related with AU.	Supported

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **CONCLUSION**

Chapter 5 contains the following sections: (a) summary of results, (b) contributions and implications, and (c) limitations and future research.

#### **Summary of Results**

As the fashion industry moves increasingly towards a ubiquitous e-commerce and Omni-channel presence, more consumers rely on online shopping and social media sites to find information on fashion and trends. Social media, which was once believed to only be for younger, collegiate consumers, has become popular for people of all ages (Eastman, Iyer, & Thomas, 2013). Recent studies found that the Generation X cohort spent more time, on average, than Millennials on social media sites. Generation X has been shown to use social media sites actively; however, many companies continue to reach them through traditional forms of marketing, which are becoming less effective in comparison to online and social media marketing (Dias, 2003).

This quantitative study found that the women of Generation X are present on social media, and use social media sites to find information related to fashion and shopping. These women value the ability to use social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as a time efficient way to gain information related to fashion and trends as well as shop for themselves and their families. This study utilized the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media to test the relationship between ease of use (EU), critical mass (CM), capabilities (CP),

and perceived playfulness (PP) with perceived usefulness (PU); the relationship between trustworthiness (TW) and perceived usefulness (PU) with intention to use (IU); and lastly, the relationship between intention to use (IU) and actual use (AU) of social media platforms (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014).

The study hypothesized the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** EU, CM, CP, and PP are positively related with PU.

**Hypothesis 2:** PU and TW are positively related with IU.

**Hypothesis 3:** IU is positively related with AU.

To test the above hypotheses, the study conducted an online survey administered through Qualtrics and distributed through Amazon Mechanical Turk (M-Turk). The survey consisted of 52 items from previously developed scales pertaining to each variable within the Technology Acceptance Model for Social Media; the items were modified in wording to appropriately measure variables in regards to social media usage. Using Amazon M-Turk allowed the study to reach a wider audience than snow-ball sampling may have provided; the sample consisted of women of different ages within the Generation X bracket, as well as differing ethnic backgrounds and regions of residency.

Upon statistical analysis, the following revised hypotheses were found to be fully supported:

**Revised Hypothesis 1:** EU, CP, and PP are positively related with PU.

**Revised Hypothesis 2:** TW is positively related with IU.

**Hypothesis 3:** IU is positively related with AU.

The analysis of the study's data led to several interesting findings. Hypothesis 1 proposed that ease of use along with critical mass, capabilities, and perceived playfulness of a social media site would be positively related with its perceived usefulness. This was partially supported after conducting a regression analysis of the data. While the overall model was found to be significant, only three of the four independent variables were found to be significant predictors of perceived usefulness. Critical mass, or the extent of the network of people that matters the most to a social media user, was not found to be a significant linear predictor of perceived usefulness. Overall, this shows that Gen X women who perceive a social media site as easy to use, playful or fun to use, as well as find the site to have the right capabilities and are more likely to perceive the site as useful, and in turn use it to collect information regarding fashion.

Retailers can use this finding as a way to shape their sites and advertisements geared towards the women of Generation X. Social media sites should be straightforward and easy to use – clear navigation guidelines as well as and FAQ's and online chat systems should be in place to ensure that the site is as easy to use as possible. Sites should also be fun to use – whether that means the color scheme is bright and playful, or there are games or sweepstakes to enter. Social media sites should also be personalized and geared towards the particular user. Items that have been viewed and coupons geared towards shopping habits should be provided in order to make the site feel special to each different consumer. These combined aspects and capabilities will draw the women of Generation X to utilize the site.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that perceived usefulness and trustworthiness were positively related with intention to use. This hypothesis was also partially supported after conducting

regression analysis of the data. While the overall model was found to be significant in predicting intention to use, only one of the independent variables was a significant predictor within the model. Trustworthiness was found to be significant linear predictor of intention to use a social media site for Generation X women, while perceived usefulness was not. This shows that when a site is perceived trustworthy by a user, they are more likely to intend to use that site for fashion consumption purposes. In order to be trustworthy, the retailer needs for their consumer to feel comfortable leaving personal information on the site. Websites and social networking sites should be encrypted and secure to prevent any hacking or data breaches that would damage their trustworthiness.

Finding that Generation X women do not find perceived usefulness important when thinking about which sites to use when searching for information related to fashion was extremely interesting. This means that they weigh other aspects of a site such as perceived playfulness and trustworthiness more heavily than usefulness when deciding which sites to use. This goes against the Technology Acceptance Model and the framework used to create this study which showed that perceived usefulness is positively related to and has an impact on intention to use. This may show a paradigm shift in the use of the Technology Acceptance Model and question its appropriateness for studies concerning social media. Although it has been used for nearly 20 years and adapted for many physical technologies, it may be time for a shift to study many intangible technologies such as social media.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that intention to use was positively related with actual use. The third hypothesis was supported after a regression analysis was conducted on the data. Intention to use is a significant linear predictor of actual use, and Generation X women who intend to use a site are more likely to use it. A combination of all the overarching factors creates an intention to

use a social media site for Generation X women. A site must be perceived as easy to use, useful, playful, and trustworthy. In addition, the site should have the right mixture of capabilities as well as an ideal amount of a user's friends using the site.

### **Contributions and Implications**

This study makes several significant contributions and implications from the perspective of research and academia, as well as regarding the fashion industry. To begin, this study serves as a contribution to the scope of research in regards to the women of Generation X. This generational cohort has not been the focus of much research in recent years; typically the focus has been on the millennial cohort. Previous literature has focused on the cohort's formative years, and there is little on the cohort as adults. The Xer's have changed in many ways since their time as teenagers and young adults; research focused on the cohort as adults could inform many consumer behavioral studies.

The study also functions as a way to show the fashion industry and marketers that the Generation X cohort is a viable market for new media strategies in addition to traditional marketing strategies that are often used with this age bracket. The women of Generation X use social media regularly for fashion consumption purposes. Posts on Facebook or Instagram showing the functionality and utilitarian benefits of a product would draw in the members of this cohort who look for value and efficiency when shopping. Retailers who market to Generation X, such as the companies listed previously, can use this information to further understand their customers and be able to better reach them through social media marketing techniques.

Further, this study serves as a new way to use the Technology Acceptance Model. The model has been used to survey the usage of many different technologies from desktop computers

and email to Wi-Fi, but has yet to be used to study usage for a specific generational cohort. This study shows that TAM is capable of doing just that, and can be continually adapted to study different cohorts as well as comparison studies between different age groups.

This study may also show that the Technology Acceptance Model is becoming outdated. Since its creation in 1989, the TAM has been used for numerous studies and has been changed and adapted through time. Although it was successful in predicting system use for technologies such as computers and the World Wide Web, our contemporary world and the technologies that we use have changed drastically and continue to progress. With the shift from desktop computers to now smart phones and cloud computing, it may be time for a shift in the ways in which technology is studied. Although this project followed the frameworks laid out by many previous researchers, it does indicate that the same model used to understand how desktop computers are used in the work place may not be the best to study social media. Furthermore, different types of social media have different uses and may not be able to be studied using the same framework. A user may choose to look at Facebook for information that is completely different than what they may find through Instagram or Twitter.

Consumer behaviorists may benefit from taking a step back and finding a new way to study the various types of social media and how they are used. Variables that used to be considered of the utmost importance, such as critical mass and perceived usefulness, may not be as important to consumers today as they were in the 80s and 90s. New models with more emphasis on perceived playfulness, trustworthiness, and even new items may be more beneficial for research done today.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This study has some limitations that can be viewed as opportunities for future research. To begin, the study utilized Amazon M-Turk to gather the data via an online questionnaire. While M-Turk is a value oriented solution for obtaining a large sample size in a short period of time, using this service has the inherent risk of skewing the results. M-Turk is viewed as a convenience sample because the survey can only be taken by those who are members of the service, or M-Turk workers. M-Turk workers are paid a small incentive to complete the survey, resulting in a sample that is not completely randomized. Future research could utilize random sampling to gather more reliable data that better matches the U.S. census data and therefore is more representative of the U.S. population.

Because this study was conducted using an online questionnaire, answers were self reported, which can also be viewed as a limitation. At times, users may click through the survey in order to receive the incentive quickly, or may not answer questions honestly. This study relied on the honesty of the participants, and data may be slightly distorted depending on how participants answered the questionnaire. Participants may struggle with truly understanding their own purchasing motivations and choices and may not be able to answer survey items objectively.

The study focused on Generation X. Future studies could run a comparison survey with Millennials or Baby Boomers to examine the generational differences in social media usage for fashion consumption. This research would illustrate how social media usage has changed throughout the years, and the different aspects of social media sites that each cohort utilizes and finds the most important when looking for fashion related information or online shopping.

In addition, this study only surveyed women within the Generation X cohort; focusing on the way women use social media sites to find fashion related information for themselves as well as their families. Future research surveying the entire cohort would give insight to any differences in social media usage between the genders. Fashion marketing as well as society at large still hyper focuses on the presumption that women do the majority of the shopping within families as well as individually. However, this is changing as gender roles and stereotypes shift and more men increase the amount of time they commit to fashion and shopping.

Lastly, the Generational Cohort Theory and Generational Marketing can be questioned as a result of this study. Studying consumers as a generational cohort is controversial among researchers as many do not agree with this approach to studying consumers. Future research may benefit from looking at groups of consumers in different ways. Although cohorts do behave in specific ways due to their age and experiences they have been through, people born in between cohorts or in “fringe years” may behave the same way. Future research can question the best ways to group people when it comes to consumer behavioral studies.

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## APPENDIX A

### SURVEY

**When answering the following questions keep in mind your use of social media for shopping and fashion searching for yourself as well as members of your family (i.e. children, spouse):**

<i>Perceived Ease of Use (EU)</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
*It would be impossible to use social media to follow fashion without expert help	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Learning to operate social media sites to follow fashion is easy for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*It is difficult to learn how to use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I find it easy to get social media sites to do what I want them to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It takes little time to learn to use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy to remember how to use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Using social media to follow fashion requires a lot of mental effort	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My interaction with social media is clear and understandable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy for me to become skillful at using social media to follow	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

fashion							
<b><i>Perceived Usefulness (PU)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using social media improves my ability to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media enables me to accomplish following fashion more quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Using social media is not useful for me to find information on fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media enables me to access a lot of information about fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Using social media to access the newest information on fashion is difficult	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media enables me to acquire high quality information on fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b><i>Perceived Playfulness(PP)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
When interacting with social media sites, I realize the time elapsed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When interacting with social media sites I am not aware of any noise	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When interacting with social media sites I often forget the work I must do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media makes following fashion enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media makes following fashion fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media to follow fashion makes me happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Using social media does not stimulate my curiosity about fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media leads to my further exploration of fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Using social media to follow fashion arouses my imagination	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b><i>Social Media Capabilities (CP)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social media sites I use provide clear instructions for posting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Images and videos can be easily downloaded or uploaded to social media sites I use	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Applications and capabilities of the social media sites I use do not meet my social networking needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b><i>Critical Mass (CM)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social media sites are popular among my friends in the US	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A good number of my friends use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Few people from my work use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b><i>Trustworthiness (TW)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Social media sites are able to fully satisfy their users	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*Social media sites are not genuinely interested in their users welfare	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I trust social media sites with the	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

information listed on my profile							
I feel safe with my postings to social media sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*I am not happy with the standards by which social media sites operate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would rely on advice about fashion from a social media site	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b><i>Intention to Use (IU)</i></b>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I will use social media to follow fashion on a regular basis in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*I will rarely use social media to follow fashion in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will strongly recommend others to use social media to follow fashion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

\*denotes reverse coding

### Actual Use (AU)

1. How many times do you use social media during the week in order to find information regarding fashion and trends?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Less than once a week
  - c. About once a week
  - d. Several times week
  - e. About once a day
  - f. Several times each day
2. How many hours do you spend on social media each day to find information regarding fashion and trends?
  - a. Less than 30 minutes
  - b. 31 minutes to 1 hour
  - c. More than 1 hour but less than 3 hours
  - d. More than 3 hours but less than 5 hours
  - e. Greater than 5 hours

**Please indicate the following:**

**Select Birthdate: (Must be born between 1965 – 1976 to continue survey)**

**Gender:** Male Female Do not wish to disclose (**Sampling women only**)

**Race/Ethnicity:** White/Caucasian African America Hispanic Multi-racial  
Asian/Pacific Islander Native American Indian Other Do not wish to disclose

**Education:** Some high school High School Graduate Some College  
Trade/Technical/Vocational Training Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree  
Master's Degree Professional Degree Doctorate Degree Do not wish to disclose

**Annual Household Income Level:** Less than \$29,999 \$30,000 - \$59,999  
\$60,000 - \$89,000 \$90,000 - \$119,000 \$120,000 + Do not wish to disclose

**Marital Status:** Single, never married Married or Domestic Partnership Widowed  
Divorced Separated Do not wish to disclose

**How many children are in your household?**

0 1 2 3 4 5+ Do not wish to disclose

**How often do you shop for your spouse or children?**

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

**How important is fashion to you?**

Extremely important Very Important Moderately t important Slightly  
Important Not important at all

**How often do you use social media to follow fashion?**

Always

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Never

**Which social media sites do you visit regularly to find information about fashion and trends? (Choose all that apply):**

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Pinterest

Snapchat

Other (\_\_\_\_\_)

**APPENDIX B**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**

Phone 706-542-3199



**APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL**

April 13, 2017

Dear [MONICA SKLAR](#):

On 4/13/2017, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Review Category:	Exempt 2
Title of Study:	The Forgotten Generation: Examining Gen Xers' Intentions to Utilize Social Media Sites for Fashion Consumption
Investigator:	<a href="#">MONICA SKLAR</a>
Primary Contact:	<a href="#">Julia Kinser</a>
IRB ID:	STUDY00004730
Funding:	None
Documents Reviewed:	Recruitment Message, Consent document, Survey

The IRB approved the protocol from 4/13/2017 to 4/12/2022.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

Dr. Gerald E. Crites, MD, MEd  
University of Georgia  
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

## APPENDIX C

### MTURK HIT RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

#### Instructions

**Please complete a short survey for academic research if you identify as a Generation X Female Consumer.**

Hello Everyone! We are currently conducting research on Generation X Women and their use of social media sites for fashion consumption. If you are a **woman** born between the years of **1965-1976**, please take a moment to complete this survey.

This HIT has been allocated 60 minutes but will take no longer than 20 minutes of your time. We don't want the HIT to expire while you are working, that's why it is set to 60 minutes.

If you would like to take the survey, please follow the line provided. You will be asked to read the consent form, which gives you more information on the study and the researchers, and verify that you are a member of Generation X.

At the completion of the survey, a code will be provided that needs to be copied to this window. If you are not given a completion code, it is because you are ineligible to participate according to the demographics requested. MTurk workers will be compensated \$0.75 for the completion of this HIT.

**Make sure to leave this window open as you complete the survey.** When you are finished, you will return to this page to paste the code into the box.

Julia ([julia.kinser25@uga.edu](mailto:julia.kinser25@uga.edu))

*Thank you for your time!*

**APPENDIX D**  
**CONSENT LETTER**

April 2017

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Department of Textiles, Merchandising, and Interiors at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Monica Sklar (msklar@uga.edu). I invite you to participate in a research study entitled *The Forgotten Generation: Examining Gen Xers' Intentions to Utilize Social Media Sites for Fashion Consumption*. If you volunteer to take part in this survey, you will be asked to answer questions based on your experiences with social media sites, about the following:

1. Perceived ease of use
2. Perceived usefulness
3. Perceived playfulness
4. Capabilities
5. Critical mass
6. Trustworthiness
7. Intention to use
8. Actual use

You must be 18 or older to participate.

This research will be undertaken as an online survey which should take no more than 20 minutes of your time. The survey consists of nine sections of questions; perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived playfulness, capabilities, critical mass, trustworthiness, intention to use, actual use, and selected demographic questions. Your involvement in this study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The information that will be collected in the survey is not expected to cause you any risk, discomfort, or harm if disclosed outside the research. In addition, your name, email address, computer's IP address, MTurk worker ID's, or other information that can identify you will not be associated with your survey responses. However, since this involved the transmission of information over the Internet, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. The results of this research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form, only.

The findings from this project may provide industry and academic insight on the usage of social media sites for fashion consumption purposes by Generation X women. If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to send an email to [julia.kinser25@uga.edu](mailto:julia.kinser25@uga.edu). Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, telephone (706) 542-3199; email address [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

By clicking the box below and continuing to take the online survey, you are agreeing to participate in the above described research project.

Thank you for your consideration! Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Julia Kinser