



# “Factors influencing Generation Y male students’ fashion leadership: A marketing case”

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# FACTORS INFLUENCING GENERATION Y MALE STUDENTS' FASHION LEADERSHIP: A MARKETING CASE

## Abstract

Fashion leaders significantly contribute to an economy's clothing segment, given their unique role in influencing fashion followers to purchase fashion clothing. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the factors that influence the sizeable and lucrative Generation Y male student cohort's fashion leadership. The study conveniently sampled 400 Generation Y male students between 18 and 24 years old enrolled at two public South African higher education institutions. The study used a descriptive research design. A standardized self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. Data analysis included computing the descriptive statistics, the internal consistency reliability, the nomological validity, collinearity diagnostics, and multiple linear regression. The study results suggest that although product knowledge, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching behavior have a statistically significant favorable influence on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies, decision-making confidence was not a statistically significant predictor. The study offers valuable insights that could assist marketing practitioners and fashion retail stores in understanding and better influencing the Generation Y male cohort's fashion leadership. This, in turn, will aid them in rethinking and adapting their marketing endeavors to appeal to this market segment.

## Keywords

fashion leaders, fashion consciousness, consumer  
behavior, regression analysis, South Africa

## JEL Classification

M30, M31, M39

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the global fashion industry has reached new heights in revenue. In 2018, the McKinsey global fashion index anticipated that the fashion industry would grow by between 4 and 5 percent, an increase from 2017 when growth in the industry was predicted to be 2.5 to 3.5 percent. These increases imply an increasing demand for fashion-related items, which positively influences global fashion sales (McKinsey, 2019). For example, in the first quarter of 2020, fashion revenue in the United States and Japan amounted to US\$ 127 billion (Statista, n.d.a) and US\$ 75 billion (Statista, n.d.b), respectively. In South Africa, revenue in the fashion clothing industry amounted to R20 billion in the first quarter of 2020 (Statista, n.d.c). This revenue is projected to reach an annual compound growth rate of 12.8 percent from 2020 to 2024, equating to a market value of R33 billion by 2024 (Statista, n.d.c). Of the five fashion commercial market segments in South Africa (footwear, shoe care products, accessories, bags, and clothing), clothing is the most significant contributor to the fashion industry (Statista, n.d.d).

The clothing segment of South Africa's fashion industry is vital for economic growth, contributing substantially to the country's economy, level of employment, as well as gross domestic product (Tustin et

al., 2014). Moreover, the fashion industry comprises many fiercely competitive influential key role players, each aiming to succeed in an ever-changing and dynamic environment (Engelbrecht, 2015). The clothing segment covers, among others, adult male and female clothing, children's clothing, underwear, costumes, and professional clothes. Furthermore, multi-brand merchants and e-commerce are the principal sales channels in this market segment. Sales in the clothing segment were forecasted to reach R10 billion by the end of 2020, reaching an annual growth rate of 13.3 percent, producing a projected market volume of R18 billion in 2024 (Statista, n.d.d). The user penetration level of clothes was 22 percent in 2020 and is expected to reach 36.7 percent by 2024. In addition, the average revenue per user of clothing is expected to be R839 in 2023. Owing to the critical contribution of the clothing segment to the economy, it can be deduced that change agents, also referred to as fashion leaders, play an influential role in affecting fashion followers to purchase fashion clothing (Engelbrecht, 2015).

Fashion leaders are consumers who show an interest in new fashion and influence other consumers to purchase the latest fashion clothing (Haluk Koksall, 2014). Fashion leaders represent individuals who have adopted the tendency to purchase new and different fashion clothing items before others, which plays an essential role in pioneering history concerning the acceptance of the latest and upcoming fashion (Kang & Park-Poaps, 2011). Furthermore, fashion leaders view themselves as early adopters of the latest fashions, internally growing their fashion innovativeness through social or psychological characteristics. As such, fashion leaders exhibit a natural innovative behavior (Cho & Workman, 2014; Workman & Lee, 2013), and acceptance by the majority of the market concerning the latest fashion is generally introduced and fast-tracked by fashion leaders (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008; Haluk Koksall, 2014).

Generation Y includes "individuals born between 1986 and 2005" (Markert, 2004, p. 21), which in 2022 encompasses people aged between 17 and 36 years. In terms of the world marketplace, Generation Y manifests as a sizable target market, surpassing the size of all previous generations (Ferrer, 2018; MSCI, 2020). This size of Generation Y is echoed in the South African marketplace. According to the 2020 mid-year population statistics estimates, Generation Y individuals made up more than the third of the South African total population, with male Generation Y members accounting for approximately 50 percent of Generation Y, 36 percent of the South African male population, and 17 percent of the entire South African population (Statistics South Africa, 2020). These statistics are slightly higher in 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021) and 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). As such, in South Africa, Generation Y, in general, and the male segment, in particular, is a noteworthy target market for any industry, including the fashion industry, given this segment's current and future market potential.

The lifestyle habits of the Generation Y cohort are different from those of the previous generations, and their pace of life is relatively fast (Ladhari et al., 2019). For instance, their need for fashion can easily transition from daytime to evening wear. As such, it is no surprise that this cohort is the driving force behind current fashion trends (Gazzola et al., 2020). In terms of male fashion, Generation Y males have been socialized to perceive fashion in a more favorable light than past generations (Bakewell et al., 2006). The combined efforts of the media, commercial practice, and the change in generational roles have set up new cultural norms whereby Generation Y males tend to take more notice of fashion trends and are more likely than males of previous generations to be involved with fashion (Noh et al., 2015; Sung & Yan, 2020). Insights gained from this study can assist fashion marketers and retailers in effectively targeting Generation Y male students in their promotional efforts and gauging effective marketing strategies to maximize sales and profits.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fashion-oriented consumer behavior results from several behavioral processes and is among the most complicated consumer behavior acts. The

literature indicates that male fashion leaders differ from female fashion leaders on various dimensions, including demographic, psychographic, and behavioral characteristics (Haluk Koksall, 2014). Studying the personalities and attributes of

male fashion leaders is particularly important for scholars and marketers since they can be deemed consumer fashion change agents whose primary role is to lead in their social groups. Identifying the factors that influence male fashion leadership can assist marketing practitioners in segmenting their total male consumer market accordingly by targeting each segment with different offerings, subsequently improving their position in the marketplace. This study focuses on the psychological drivers of male fashion leadership, including product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching.

Product knowledge is “all the information about a product stored in the consumer’s long-term memory, enabling them to participate in the market” (Haluk Koksal, 2014, p. 434). Consumers could either have insufficient or sufficient product knowledge. Generally, consumers with adequate product knowledge are aware of the product category and are prepared to look for certain particulars about each alternative. Conversely, consumers with low levels of product knowledge are unaware of what they do not know about a product (Stanton & Cook, 2019). In most cases, when a consumer has low levels of product knowledge, knowledge can be acquired from experiences with the product, exposures to advertisements, interactions with salespeople, friends, media, or previous decisions held in the consumer’s memory (Haluk Koksal, 2014). From a fashion clothing perspective, product knowledge can be defined as consumers’ perceived knowledge about fashion brands, styles, and clothing attributes. As far as male fashion leaders are concerned, they are believed to develop high expertise and are more knowledgeable about fashion clothing than other males. As such, the assumption is that male fashion leaders will have more fashion clothing knowledge compared to other male consumers.

Product knowledge was measured as a psychological driver of male fashion leadership using a scale developed and validated by O’Cass (2004). The scale comprises questions relating to familiarity, knowledge, experience, and expertise. In addition, Haluk Koksal (2014) used the measurement instrument of O’Cass (2004) to conceptualize product knowledge, referring to male fashion

leaders as either familiar, knowledgeable, experienced, and/or experts regarding fashion clothing. Therefore, it can be assumed that male fashion leaders are more conversant and experienced with fashion and are consequently more knowledgeable about it. Consistent with this assumption, this study proposes that product knowledge positively influences Generation Y male students’ fashion leadership. With adequate product knowledge, decision-making confidence improves.

Decision-making confidence is consumers’ capacity to make good decisions in the market by obtaining and using information (Clark et al., 2008). This implies that consumers have confidence in their skill to assess the attributes of a brand (Chang & Huang, 2002). Fashion confidence signifies consumers’ beliefs that their fashion knowledge is adequate or spot-on about fashion clothing. Furthermore, making decisions confidently is one of fashion involvement’s consequences (O’Cass, 2004). In other words, consumers’ involvement with fashion products, styles, and brands would determine their decision-making confidence. Unlike other consumers, male fashion leaders are prepared to ask additional questions, obtain more information, and make decisions with more assurance. As such, compared to other male consumers, it is theorized that male fashion leaders possess more confidence in their fashion decision-making. O’Cass (2000), Haluk Koksal (2014), and Engelbrecht (2015) confirm that decision-making confidence influences fashion leadership. Like these studies, this study proposes that decision-making confidence directly influences Generation Y male students’ fashion leadership. Fashion consciousness is discussed next as the third antecedent of male fashion leadership.

Consumers who use fashion awareness to influence their purchase decisions concerning the latest clothing are seen as leaders in fashion (Shephard et al., 2016). Previous studies highlight the association between fashion consciousness and leadership in that male fashion leaders exhibit fashion consciousness and awareness (Bakewell et al., 2006; Haluk Koksal, 2014). Fashion consciousness is “a person’s degree of interest in style, fashion, or clothing” (Nam et al., 2007, p. 103). As such, any person interested in clothing, fashion, or appearance is said to be fashion-conscious.

Moreover, fashion-conscious consumers can be characterized as self-confident, self-assertive, attention seeking, competitive, and venturesome (Iyer & Eastman, 2010). Therefore, fashion consciousness has been viewed as an essential factor of a person's lifestyle that influences consumer behavior and purchase decisions (Lee et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2010). Concerning consumption behavior, consumers with high fashion consciousness could pay more for status brands and, consequently, be more prestige-sensitive than consumers who exhibit less fashion consciousness (Casidy, 2012). In addition, Wan et al. (2001) discovered that highly fashion-conscious consumers are also self-confident, brand conscious, health conscious, and innovative; they are fashion leaders. Therefore, male fashion leaders are expected to be more fashion-conscious than other male consumers. This is because male fashion leaders, particularly the younger generation, have become increasingly fashion-involved and aware and care more about their appearance (Janowska, 2008). Following Wan et al. (2001), Bakewell et al. (2006), and Haluk Koksalsal (2014), this study hypothesizes that fashion consciousness has a direct positive influence on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership. A discussion on mood enhancement, another influential factor of fashion leadership, follows.

Mood enhancement is "the enrichment of an individual's state of mind" (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014, p. 435). Mood comprises many kinds of feelings that range from negative (feeling sad and exhausted) to positive (feeling cheerful and excited) (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014). From a clothing perspective, it follows that once clothes are placed on the body, they can impact a person's mood (Moody et al., 2010; Tiggeman & Lacey, 2009). Moreover, individuals express their feelings and reinforce their moods through the clothing they choose to wear. Clothing can change an individual's mood, given that artwork, materials, colors, shapes, textures, and patterns inspire individuals (O'Hagan, 2022). Likewise, trying out new clothes and features such as quality, fashion, style, and color, positively or negatively affect the consumer's mood since these features are multiple sensory clothing aspects (Moody et al., 2010). Therefore, clothing can be employed as an appearance and mood management tool by managing or reflecting a positive or negative mood. It was found that male fashion leaders are more likely to need mood enhancement through fashion clothing that is therefore considered a psychological driv-

er of male fashion leadership (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014). Consistent with this finding, this study posits that mood enhancement directly influences Generation Y male students' fashion leadership. The last driver of fashion leadership is brand switching, which is discussed next.

Brand switching occurs when consumers change their purchasing behavior, deciding intentionally to buy another brand instead of their usual brand (Garga et al., 2019). From a male fashion perspective, young South African males who earn a high-income view superior fashion clothing brands as symbols of their social and financial standing; hence, they are likely to stimulate the demand for male fashion (Motale et al., 2014). As such, one reason behind the demand for male fashion is males simply becoming more style-orientated, influenced by the fast-changing trends and the desire to switch brands. Moreover, young males are more likely to switch brands because different brands convey a specific image that identifies which clothing is appropriate in each situation (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014). In addition, males tend to develop a strong attachment and positive attitude toward their favorite clothing brands (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014). It has also been identified that consumers who enjoy clothes shopping are more likely to engage in switching behavior than others (Michaelidou & Dibb, 2008). A study conducted on the behavioral and psychological drivers of male fashion leadership revealed that male fashion leaders could have a high inclination toward brand switching in fashion clothing (Haluk Koksalsal, 2014). Likewise, this study theorizes that brand switching directly influences Generation Y male students' fashion leadership.

This study sought to determine the influence of product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research design and a single cross-sectional research method. The target population was Generation Y male students between 18 and 24 years enrolled at public South African higher education institution (HEI) campuses. From the sampling frame of 26 HEIs reg-

istered in South Africa, one traditional and one technological Gauteng-based HEI campus was selected using judgment sampling. On each campus, a convenience sample of 250 male students was drawn.

A standardized self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire's cover letter highlighted the study's purpose and guaranteed participants' anonymity. The first section of the questionnaire requested participants' demographics, followed by a section encompassing scaled-response items adapted from six previously validated scales. For example, it includes the fashion leadership scale of Goldsmith et al. (1993) (seven items), the product knowledge scale of O'Cass (2004) (four items), the confidence in decision-making scale of O'Cass (2000) (three items), the fashion consciousness scale of Lumpkin and Darden (1982) (five items), the mood enhancement scale of Kwon (1992) (five items), and the brand switching scale of Van Trijp et al. (1996) and Raju (1980) (three items). These 27-scaled items were measured on a six-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree).

As part of the data collection procedure, university staff members at each HEI were contacted to discuss the study, its objectives, and drop-off arrangements. After that, the questionnaires were dropped off at the two participating HEIs with the aid of two trained field workers. The participating HEIs were informed that the participants were to complete the questionnaire voluntarily and that all responses recorded on the questionnaires would be used strictly for statistical purposes.

IBM's SPSS Version 27 was used to capture the data. Data analysis included computing the descriptive statistics, the internal consistency reliability, the nomological validity, collinearity diagnostics, and multiple linear regression.

### 3. RESULTS

Of the 500 sampled participants, only 400 fell within the specified target population, giving this study an 80 percent response rate. The largest portion of the sample (27.5%) originates from Gauteng. Participants from the traditional university made

up the majority of the sample at 53.5 percent. The University of Technology made up 46.5 percent of the remaining participants in the sample. Most participants (35%) were second-year students, while 27.5 percent were first-year students, and 25.3 percent were third-year students. The majority (21%) of the participants were Sesotho speaking, followed by Tshivenda speaking (14.8%) and isiZulu speaking (14.2%) participants. Following the defined target population, this study only included students between 18 and 24 years old. Regarding fashion opinion leadership, most participants (52.5%) perceive themselves as opinion leaders regarding fashion clothing. Of the fashion clothing brands preferred, most participants (24%) indicated purchasing the Nike brand, followed by 9 percent of participants who indicated the Uzzi brand, 6 percent for the Adidas brand, and 5.5 percent for the Identity brand, as well as 5.5 percent for the Vans brand. Regarding spending, many participants (48.5%) indicated that they spend between R801-R1000 on fashion clothing per month, followed by participants who spend between R500-R800 (29.8%). The sample is described in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Sample profile

Items	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	
18	3.3
19	13.8
20	17.3
21	20.8
22	21.5
23	14.8
24	8.5
<b>Opinion leadership</b>	
Yes	52.5
No	44.5
Missing	3.0
<b>Clothing brand</b>	
Adidas	6.0
All Star	0.5
Batho	0.3
Champion	0.3
Chino	0.3
Converse	0.5
Daniel Hechter	4.3
Diesel	0.5
Echo	0.8
Ellese	0.8
Ellesse	0.3
Factorie	0.3

**Table 1 (cont.).** Sample profile

Items	Percentage
G-Star	0.3
Gucci	0.3
Guess	0.5
Hemisphere	2.8
Identity	5.5
Jordan	0.3
K7	0.3
Kappa	1.5
LA	0.3
Lacoste	0.8
Levis	2.8
Lotto	0.5
LTD	0.8
LV	0.3
Markham	1.3
Maxed	0.3
Mr Price	1.0
Network	1.3
Nike	24.0
North Face	1.0
OBR	1.3
Old Khaki	0.3
Olive	0.5
Pep	1.0
Polo	1.0
Puma	2.5
Raw	2.0
Redbat	4.0
Reebok	1.3
Relay Jeans	3.8
Ripcurl	0.3
Roberto	0.3
RT Denim	2.5
Superga	0.3
Tosoni	0.3
Under Armor	0.3
Uzzi	9.0
Vans	5.5
Missing	3.0
Year of study	
1 <sup>st</sup> -year student	27.5
2 <sup>nd</sup> -year student	35.0
3 <sup>rd</sup> -year student	25.3
4 <sup>th</sup> -year student	8.8
Postgraduate student	3.0
Missing	0.4
Language	
Afrikaans	5.0
English	2.3
isiNdebele	2.5
isiXhosa	7.5
isiZulu	14.2
Sepedi	5.8
Sesotho	21.0
Setswana	9.5

**Table 1 (cont.).** Sample profile

Items	Percentage
SiSwati	5.8
Tshivenda	14.8
Xitsonga	10.5
Missing	1.1
Province	
Eastern Cape	7.2
Free State	12.8
Gauteng	27.5
KwaZulu-Natal	5.0
Limpopo	25.8
Mpumalanga	6.5
Northern Cape	5.8
North West	7.8
Western Cape	0.8
Missing	0.8
Institutions	
Traditional	53.5
Technology	46.5
Spent on fashion	
R500-R800	29.8
R801-R1000	48.5
R1001-R2500	21.7

Measures of location (mean =  $\bar{X}$ ) and variability (standard deviation = SD) were calculated for each of the constructs included in the study. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the extent to which Generation Y male students exhibit fashion leadership tendencies and perceive themselves as being knowledgeable about fashion clothing, confident concerning their fashion clothing decision-making process, being fashion conscious, viewing fashion clothing to be a mood enhancer, and engaging in fashion brand switching behavior. Given a Likert-type scale, higher mean values are associated with greater agreement concerning Generation Y male students' fashion leadership and its antecedents.

The Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and mean inter-item correlation (MIIC) values were calculated to measure the validity and reliability of the scales used in the study. Correlation analysis (Pearson's  $r$ ) was undertaken to assess the nomological validity of the proposed multiple regression model by ascertaining whether there are statistically significant relationships between fashion leadership, product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching among Generation Y male students. All these computed values are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics, reliability and validity measures, and correlation matrix

Construct	$\bar{X}$	SD	MIIC	$\alpha$	Correlation matrix – <i>r</i>				
					(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Fashion leadership (1)	3.97	1.01	0.42	0.84					
Product knowledge (2)	3.94	1.04	0.49	0.79	0.73*				
Decision-making confidence (3)	4.63	1.00	0.57	0.80	0.43*	0.48*			
Fashion consciousness (4)	3.82	1.07	0.43	0.79	0.70*	0.66*	0.39*		
Mood enhancement (5)	4.22	0.99	0.40	0.72	0.62*	0.58*	0.36*	0.60*	
Brand switching (6)	4.23	1.05	0.39	0.72	0.56*	0.47*	0.35*	0.52*	0.53*

Note: \* Statistically significant at  $p \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

Table 2 outlines that the decision-making computed the highest mean ( $\bar{X} = 4.63$ ), suggesting that male Generation Y students are confident in their decision-making capabilities involving fashion clothes. Brand switching scored the second highest mean ( $\bar{X} = 4.23$ ), suggesting that Generation Y male students derive pleasure from trying out different brands, followed by mood enhancement ( $\bar{X} = 4.22$ ), which indicates that Generation Y males derive pleasure from fashion clothing. The means computed for fashion leadership ( $\bar{X} = 3.97$ ) and product knowledge ( $\bar{X} = 3.94$ ) suggest that male Generation Y students perceive themselves as fashion leaders and knowledgeable regarding fashion clothing. While the lowest recorded mean was for fashion consciousness ( $\bar{X} = 3.82$ ), this value is still very much in the scale’s agreement area. As such, the evidence in this sample suggests that male Generation Y students are fashion-conscious.

Each construct’s  $\alpha$  values were above 0.60 (Zikmund & Babin, 2013), indicating the internal-consistency reliability of each of the scales used in the study. Moreover, all MIICs were above 0.15 (Clark & Watson, 1995), suggesting the convergent validity of the items within each scale. While the computed MIIC for the decision-making confidence scale was slightly above Clark and Watson’s (1995) recommended range of 0.15 to 0.50, it was still reasonable to conclude discriminant validity for each scale used in the study.

Table 2 shows evidence of nomological validity in that statistically significant relationships in the correct direction were computed between pairs of variables planned for inclusion in the regression model. There were statistically significant positive relationships ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) between fashion leadership and product knowledge ( $r = 0.728$ ) decision-making confidence ( $r = 0.429$ ), fashion consciousness

( $r = 0.696$ ), mood enhancement ( $r = 0.621$ ), and brand switching ( $r = 0.558$ ) among Generation Y male students. In addition, there were also statistically significant positive relationships between product knowledge and decision-making confidence ( $r = 0.483$ ), fashion consciousness ( $r = 0.662$ ), mood enhancement ( $r = 0.577$ ), and brand switching ( $r = 0.467$ ).

Moreover, there were statistically significant positive relationships between decision-making confidence and fashion consciousness ( $r = 0.393$ ), mood enhancement ( $r = 0.363$ ), and brand switching ( $r = 0.354$ ) among Generation Y male students. Similarly, statistically significant positive relationships were evident between fashion consciousness and mood enhancement ( $r = 0.602$ ) and brand switching ( $r = 0.517$ ) and between mood enhancement and brand switching ( $r = 0.527$ ).

After calculating the descriptive statistics and checking the reliability and validity, collinearity diagnostics were run on the independent constructs in the study to check for any severe multi-collinearity issues before performing the multiple regression analysis. In the test, the subject number served as the dependent variable. The results of the collinearity diagnostics performed on the factors present in the data set of this study are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Multi-collinearity diagnostics

Constructs	Tolerance	VIF
Product knowledge	0.445	2.245
Decision-making confidence	0.732	1.367
Fashion consciousness	0.455	2.199
Mood enhancement	0.536	1.866
Brand switching	0.626	1.598

Note: Constant = Dependent variable: Subject number.



As illustrated in Table 3, with tolerance values above 0.10, ranging from 0.445 to 0.732, and an average VIF value of 1.855, which is well below the suggested 10, no multi-collinearity concerns were detected, which makes the dataset appropriate for regression analysis.

Multiple linear regression analysis was undertaken to determine the influence of product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching behavior on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies. Table 4 illustrates the multiple-regression analysis model summary and the ANOVA results.

**Table 4.** Summary of regression model and ANOVA results

Regression model	R	R2	Adjusted R2	F	p-value
Model 1	0.808	0.653	0.648	148.015	0.000

As illustrated in Table 4, the statistically significant F-ratio of 148.015 ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) indicates that the regression model predicts Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies. The R<sup>2</sup> value suggests that the five independent variables explain 65 percent of the variance in Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies. Nonetheless, 35 percent of the variance remains unexplained by these five variables, inferring that other factors also influence this cohort's fashion-leadership tendencies. This finding opens up opportunities for future research into determining which factors contribute to explaining this cohort's fashion-leadership tendencies. The contribution of each independent variable to the prediction of Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies was computed, as reported in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Contribution of independent variables to predicting male Generation Y students' fashion leadership tendencies

Independent variables	Standardized Beta coefficient	t-values	p-values
Product knowledge	0.380	8.743	0.000
Decision-making confidence	0.033	0.970	0.333
Fashion consciousness	0.260	5.982	0.000
Mood enhancement	0.152	3.739	0.000
Brand switching	0.154	4.159	0.000

The results in Table 5 indicate that product knowledge ( $\beta = 0.380$ ), fashion consciousness ( $\beta = 0.260$ ), mood enhancement ( $\beta = 0.152$ ), and brand switching behavior ( $\beta = 0.154$ ) all have a statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) positive influence on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies. However, this construct was not a statistically significant predictor despite decision-making confidence positively influencing Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies. Haluk Koksak (2014) also found that fashion consciousness, product knowledge, mood enhancement, and decision-making confidence positively affect male fashion leadership.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the factors influencing Generation Y male students' fashion leadership. The antecedents of fashion leadership included product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching. On a six-point Likert-type scale used to record responses, means above 3.5 were computed on the male fashion leadership construct and each of the five antecedents thereof. This suggests that male Generation Y students exhibit fashion leadership tendencies, perceive themselves as having fashion product knowledge, and are confident in their decision-making prowess when purchasing fashion clothing. Moreover, they consider themselves fashion conscious, view fashion clothing as a mood enhancer, and engage in fashion brand switching behavior. In addition, the results of this study show that although product knowledge, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching behavior have a statistically significant favorable influence on Generation Y male students' fashion leadership tendencies, decision-making confidence was not a statistically significant predictor.

Given the results of this study, it is recommended that fashion retailers constantly renew clothing on their websites and host fashion clothing campus activities or marketing campaigns to instill relevant product knowledge amongst male Generation Y consumers. Moreover, fashion

retailers are encouraged to boost Generation Y male students' decision-making capabilities involving fashion clothing through a fashion involvement mentorship program, whereby male students are invited to participate in fashion involvement-related activities. These activities could include fashion photoshoots, marketing campaigns, television, social media, and radio advertisements, backstage crew assistance for pageants and fashion shows, and launching innovations such as virtual fashion games. In addition, worth mentioning are fashion advocacy

programs through public speaking for a particular group of people that could be misunderstood in society. In addition, it is recommended that fashion retailers engage Generation Y male fashion leaders to spread positive word-of-mouth regarding their fashion clothing through their social media accounts, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Tumblr, as well as create fashion clothing content through blogs and vlogs. Finally, fashion retailers should consider using male celebrity endorsers to promote the ideal 'fashion-conscious man'.

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## CONCLUSION

Unexpected fashion trends heavily influence the South African fashion industry. As such, fashion leaders have an essential role in the diffusion of fashion change. This is because fashion leaders accelerate fashion change by being the first to purchase and wear new clothing. Therefore, understanding fashion leadership within a specific market segment is essential for fashion retailers to keep up with developing fashion trends. Therefore, this study investigated Generation Y male students' fashion leadership.

Additionally, this study analyzed how the psychological drivers of product knowledge, decision-making confidence, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching influence fashion leadership amongst Generation Y male students. The key insights from the study are that Generation Y male students exhibit fashion leadership tendencies and perceive themselves as being knowledgeable about fashion clothing, confident concerning their fashion clothing decision-making capabilities, fashion conscious, view fashion clothing as a mood enhancer, and engaged in a fashion brand switching behavior. In addition, this study indicates that product knowledge, fashion consciousness, mood enhancement, and brand switching behavior are predictors of Generation Y male students' fashion leadership. An in-depth understanding of these psychological drivers will assist fashion retailers in effectively targeting Generation Y male students and influencing their fashion leadership.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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