



Experiential Marketing: How It Shapes Gen Z Purchase Intentions in the Retail Industry

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Abstract

With the rise of technologies, industries had to adapt their strategies, adopt digital strategies, which led to the loss of use and effectiveness of traditional marketing. Thus, industries started to transition to the use of experiential marketing, where customer experiences have become the focal point. For the retail industry, Gen Z has become the target segment, since this generation is an affluent user of technologies and values personalized experiences, authenticity and engagement. This creates an opportunity for this industry to understand and appeal to consumers emotions, being able to increase satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions. However, little is known on how this new strategy specifically affects Gen Z behaviour outcomes in the retail industry. Thus, a randomized between-subjects experimental approach one factor with two levels (type of ad: experiential (N = 51) vs. traditional (N = 52)) was conducted to test the impact of experiential marketing in Gen Z satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions compared with traditional marketing. To this end, nine hypotheses were elaborated and tested. The key findings of this study show that experiential marketing has a positive and significant effect on Gen Z's engagement. Also, emotional arousal was key in mediating the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z behaviour. For future research, this dissertation can be helpful, since there is not much research on this topic.

Keywords: Experiential Marketing, traditional marketing, gen Z, retail industry, satisfaction, engagement, purchase intentions, emotional arousal

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Sumário

Com o aumento das tecnologias, as indústrias tiveram de adaptar as suas estratégias. Estas indústrias começaram a adotar estratégias digitais, que levaram à perda de uso e de eficiência do marketing tradicional. Por isso, as indústrias começaram uma transição para o uso de marketing experiencial, onde as experiências dos consumidores são o ponto central. Para a indústria do retalho, a geração Z tornou-se no segmento alvo, pois esta geração usa tecnologias recorrentemente e valoriza experiências personalizadas, autenticidade e envolvimento com a marca. Isto cria uma oportunidade para esta indústria para perceber e apelar às emoções dos consumidores, conseguindo aumentar a satisfação, envolvimento e intenções de compra. No entanto, pouco é sabido sobre como é que esta nova estratégia afeta os comportamentos da geração Z na indústria do retalho. Assim, um estudo experimental aleatório com um fator e dois níveis (tipo de anúncio: experiencial (N=51) vs tradicional (N=52)) foi conduzido para testar o impacto do marketing experiencial na satisfação, envolvimento e intenção de compra comparado com o marketing tradicional. Logo, nove hipóteses foram criadas e testadas. As principais observações deste estudo mostram que o marketing experiencial tem um efeito positivo e significativo no envolvimento da geração Z e que o estímulo emocional foi um elemento-chave na mediação da relação entre marketing experiencial e o comportamento da geração Z. Para pesquisas futuras, esta dissertação pode ser útil, na medida em que não existe muita pesquisa sobre este tópico.

Palavras-chave: Marketing experiencial, marketing tradicional, geração Z, indústria do retalho, satisfação, envolvimento, intenções de compra, estímulo emocional

Título: Marketing Experiencial: Como Molda As Intenções De Compra Da Geração Z Na Indústria Do Retalho

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

Nowadays, with the fast development of technology, various experiences have shifted to the digital world (Pantano and Priporas, 2016). Internet has become the centre of products and services delivery (Akçayır et al., 2016), where social media is used by brands to advertise these products or services (Ellitan, 2023). Social media is the channel where consumers go to when they want to engage with brands. It is a point of contact and is the source of experiences. By connecting with consumers through social media, brands can foster long-term relationships (Spyra, 2019). Also, it is useful for brands to use social media so they can gather data on consumers' needs and desires (Spyra, 2019). It is important for brands to understand the impact of social media for their marketing strategy and how it will influence consumers shopping behaviour. (Deepika and Massand, 2025).

With the transition of brands towards digital strategies, traditional marketing has lost effectiveness (Noble and Philips, 2004), since it focuses on communicating the features of the products and not on creating meaningful and emotional connections with consumers (Urdea et al., 2021). This transition has allowed for the creation of opportunities for e-commerce, since online shopping is a source of benefits for consumers. However, products are becoming similar, so organizations need to find strategies to differentiate their products from those of competitors (Urdea et al., 2021). Thus, organizations had to adapt their strategies, where customer experience has become the focal point for differentiation (Shobeiri et al., 2012). Consumers are looking for brands that engage them in experiences, eliciting emotions (Urdea et al., 2021). Within this context, Gen Z, known as “digital natives”, are now a key target for retailers (Parker and Ruth, 2020). Gen Z is a digital generation, that values personalized experiences, authenticity and engagement. For retailers, this creates an opportunity to understand and appeal to consumers emotions, being able to increase satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions. Creating intent to purchase for this target segment is crucial for brands (Deepika and Massand, 2025).

As the creation of experiences has become the focal point of differentiation (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982), brands have started using experiential marketing instead of traditional marketing (Schmitt, 1999). Experiential marketing aims to connect emotionally with consumers. The experiences provided through experiential marketing often involve engaging

the five senses, fostering “deeper product understanding and appreciation” (Upadhyaya, 2017). This strategy helps brands have tools to create pleasurable experiences for its customers (Schmitt, 1999), evoking emotions that turn consumption into a memorable and meaningful experience (Spyra, 2019). Past research has shown that emotional appeals in advertising are effective to capture attention and increase both satisfaction and purchase intentions (Sinha, 2025). Furthermore, according to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), consumers are more likely to engage with brands that elicit emotions.

Despite these developments, there is lack of research on the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z purchase intentions in the retail industry. While experiential marketing has been linked with satisfaction and engagement, its direct effects on Gen Z behaviour in the retail industry remains unclear. Hence, the problem statement of this dissertation aims to study the relationship between experiential marketing through the feel dimension and Gen Z purchase intentions in the retail industry. It will also address how emotional arousal and need for affect influence this relationship. This may allow for a better implementation of experiential marketing in advertising.

1.2 Aims and Scope

The aim of the dissertation is to provide an overview of the influence that emotions created using experiential marketing have on Gen Z purchase intentions. Instead of focusing on all the five “strategic experiential modules” (SEM’s), this research will focus on the feel dimension, since it is the dimension where emotions and feelings are the key (Schmitt, 1999). This dimension is important for organizations to understand what can trigger emotions (Schmitt, 1999). In general, the purpose is to analyse the relationship between the use of experiential marketing vs traditional marketing in the retail industry and the effects it has on the Gen Z’s purchase intentions. The retail industry is characterized as an industry where consumer’s needs are continuously evolving (Alexander and Varley, 2025). Consumers want personalized experiences that go beyond traditional strategies (Barry, 2021). As a result, there is a need of brands to use experiential marketing. Recently, brands started shifting from traditional to experiential marketing. This can be explained by the increasingly need from consumers to experience emotions and stimuli, enhancing their shopping experience (Schmitt, 1999). This shift can have a positive impact on Gen Z. As digital natives, this generation values authenticity, experiences and engagement, making them feel that they are part of a community

(Bogicevic et al., 2024). Consequently, it seems that experiential marketing is suited for this generation, fulfilling their desire for emotional arousal and engagement.

However, as mentioned before, despite the growing adoption of experiential marketing in retail industries, little is known about how it affects Gen Z's purchase intentions specifically. Prior research lacks the exploration of emotional and behavioural patterns of Gen Z in the retail industry. Also, prior research has found that experiences generate increased customer satisfaction (Brakus et al., 2009), but not specifically for Gen Z in the retail context. The same applies for engagement (Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2010). Thus, it becomes crucial to understand if the relationship between experiential marketing and traditional marketing affects Gen Z's satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between experiential marketing vs traditional marketing in the retail industry, exploring its effects on Gen Z's purchase intentions, engagement and satisfaction. It was also considered relevant to study the effects of emotional arousal and need for affect on these two marketing strategies. Therefore, the dissertation will address the following research questions:

Research question 1: How does experiential marketing shape Gen Z purchase intentions in the retail industry?

Research question 2: How does experiential marketing affect Gen Z satisfaction in the retail industry?

Research question 3: How does experiential marketing affect Gen Z engagement in the retail industry?

Research question 4: Does emotional arousal mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

Research question 5: Does need for affect moderate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

1.3 Research Methods

To answer the research questions, a quantitative approach was followed to collect primary data. More precisely, an experimental approach was applied. This experimental approach was conducted with the objective of investigating the effects that experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has on Gen Z's satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions. Moreover, statistical analysis was performed through SPSS software. For this analysis,

experiential marketing and traditional marketing were considered the independent variables, while Gen Z's satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions were considered the dependent variables. Additionally, need for affect was considered a moderator and emotional arousal a mediator. The data collected contained a total sample of 103 participants from 11 countries, in which demographic variables and work status were recorded. The demographic of age was used also as an inclusion criterion to make sure that only Gen Z answered the survey.

1.4 Relevance

As mentioned before, in the past few years, there has been a shift from traditional marketing to experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999). Understanding the impact of experiential marketing on Gen Z's purchase intentions in the retail industry is necessary. This generation represents a challenge for brands that still have traditional marketing approaches, since they are a digital generation that value brands that elicit emotions (Bogicevic et al., 2024). According to NielsenIQ and GfK in collaboration with World Data Lab (WDL) (2024), this generation is becoming one of the largest consumer segments, making retailers feel pressured to design strategies that go beyond product features and benefits. Experiential marketing is known to build emotional connections with consumers through the SEM's ("strategic experiential modules") (Schmitt, 1999). However, the impact on Gen Z's purchase intentions remains underexplored. Thus, this dissertation seeks to explore this relationship, making it relevant both academically and practically. Academically, this research will contribute to fill the existing gap by examining the impact that experiential marketing has on Gen Z's behaviour, more specifically for the feel dimension. This will develop a deeper understanding on how emotions influence retail consumption among Gen Z. Practically, this research will help marketers and retailers to understand how different marketing strategies affect Gen Z behaviour. These insights can help retailers design experience-driven campaigns that align with Gen Z expectations, stimulating positive emotions and feelings, enhancing satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions.

1.5 Dissertation outline

This dissertation is organized into five main chapters, each addressing a different aspect of the research. The current chapter, Chapter 1, introduces the topic, providing an overview of the background of the problem that will be addressed, the problem statement, aim and scope, research methods and relevance. Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature related to the key themes of the research and the hypothesis that derive from it. Chapter 3 details the methodology

used throughout the research to collect the necessary data. Chapter 4 presents and analyses the results obtained. Finally, in Chapter 5, the conclusions will be addressed, as well as limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing has gained prominence in the last few years, being applied in various industries (Urdea et al., 2021). This can be explained by the more experience-focused marketing strategies (Liu et al. 2020). It is a communication tool used to enhance companies marketing strategies, where elements from sensory marketing are used (Levy and Guterman 2021). It is a technique where consumers are encouraged to “sense, feel, think, act and relate” with a brand (Schmitt, 1999), fostering deeper product understanding and appreciation (Upadhyia and Maheshwari, 2017). These five different types of relating with a brand are called “strategic experiential modules (SEMs)” (Schmitt, 1999) (see Table 1). These SEMs are used to intensify consumers’ experiences with a brand (Levy and Guterman 2021) and to enhance their satisfaction (Upadhyia and Maheshwari, 2017). These experiences can be implemented by using “experience providers (ExPros)” (Schmitt, 1999). Some examples of ExPros are communications, verbal and visual identity and product presence (Schmitt, 1999).

Table 1: Summary of Strategic Experiential Modules (SEMs)

Sense	The objective is to create sensory experiences. It is used by companies as a differentiation tool.
Feel	It is about customers’ feelings and emotions, having the objective of creating affective experiences.
Think	Appeals to the intellect and focuses on convergent and divergent thinking. The objective is to create experiences that can be cognitive and problem solving.
Act	It is focused on customers’ physical experiences.
Relate	It relates the individual to something outside their private state. It is about appealing to the individual’s self-improvement.

Source: Schmitt, 1999

Experiential marketing aims to connect emotionally with consumers through holistic product experiences using various tools and techniques (Upadhyaya and Maheshwari, 2017). These techniques are based on personalization, transforming consumption into memorable experiences (Gómez-Suárez and Yagüe 2021). It focuses on creating enjoyable experiences from the moment of the purchase to the after-consumption moment (Larocca et al. 2020).

According to Schmitt (1999), in experiential marketing, consumers are viewed as being rational and emotional, being focused on “achieving pleasurable experiences”. An experience-oriented company is focused on creativity and innovation, being these considered the most important intangible assets displayed by employees (Schmitt, 1999).

Experience thinking allows for value creation activities, which focus on exceeding customer expectations (Pine and Gilmore,1998). Consumers value more experiences and the creation of memories than physical things, so products and services must yield to experiences (Pine and Gilmore,1998). Therefore, experiences are key for companies to differentiate themselves (Pine and Gilmore,1998).

According to Bayır (2022), experiential marketing allows for the creation of satisfaction through desire and emotions. It has also been shown that it allows for an increase on engagement, especially among Gen Z (Song, 2024), and that customer experiences allows for the prediction of customers’ purchase intentions (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013).

2.2 Traditional Marketing

Traditional marketing is the basic concept of marketing. It is an offline way to promote products using a more conventional approach such as print, broadcast, direct mail and telephone (Bist et al., 2022). It generally operates locally (Paşcalău and Urziceanu, 2020), being considered important since it places advertisements in crowded public places (Mehmeti-Bajrami et al., 2022). It views consumers as being rational decision-makers, being focused on functional features and benefits (Schmitt, 1999). The goal of traditional marketing is to create value through time, accessibility and ownership (Durmaz and Efendioglu, 2016).

People’s familiarity and comfort with traditional marketing comes from its enduring presence. Seeing ads in newspapers, magazines or billboards continues to be part of people’s everyday life (Raluca, 2016). If the ads are well placed and suit the target population, the results may be fast and effective (Raluca, 2016).

Traditional marketers weigh products functional features in terms of importance, trade off features and choose products that provide the greatest overall quality (Upadhy and Maheshwari, 2017). They must understand the characteristics of the product that the customers are interested in (Grundey, 2008).

While experiential marketing focuses on the five senses, traditional marketing may focus only on one (Upadhy and Maheshwari, 2017). For this type of marketing approach, the goal of product development is to develop new product characteristics, therefore making an improvement (Schmitt, 1999).

According to Bist (2022), traditional marketing is losing effectiveness. Because of its high expenses, traditional marketing makes it challenging for companies to expand, mainly when sales and awareness are low (Mehmeti-Bajrami et al., 2022).

Usually, companies that adopt traditional marketing strategies have the main objective of satisfying customers' needs (Durmaz and Efendioglu, 2016). However, these companies may lose engagement with consumers, because of the lack of personalized experiences (Ahmad, 2025), which may lead to decreased purchase intentions.

2.3 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction represents a feeling of fulfilment when customer expectations are met (Oliver, 1999). It is one of the main goals of organizations (Wahyuningtyas et al., 2017) because of its low purchasing costs, base profit, revenue growth, cost savings and price premium (Bayır, 2022). It is crucial for these to understand how to improve customer satisfaction (Urdea et al., 2021), since it is key for profitability and growth (Bayır, 2022). For this, experiential marketing is useful, because it builds long-term relationships with consumers by creating lasting memories and encouraging engagement (Datta 2017), being an important indicator for customer satisfaction (Bayır, 2022).

Before buying a product, customers create expectations about its performance (Peter and Olson, 1999). These are called the "Prepurchase Expectations" (Peter and Olson, 1999). After the purchase, there are the "Postpurchase Perceptions", where consumers have a thought about how well the product performed (Peter and Olson, 1999). The difference between the two is called "Disconfirmation" (Peter and Olson, 1999). There are three types of disconfirmation: Negative, positive and neutral. The first type is a negative disconfirmation, where the

performance of the product is below expectations (Oliver, 1999). The second type is positive disconfirmation, where the performance of the product exceeds expectations (Oliver, 1999). The third type is neutral disconfirmation, where the performance meets expectations (Peter and Olson, 1999).

To achieve customer satisfaction, organizations need to satisfy customers' needs and wants (LaBarbera and Mazursky, 1983). Customer needs refer to the "basic human requirements", (Kotler, 2000), whereas wants refer to needs directed to specific objects (Kotler, 2000). If customers are not satisfied, consequences can be severe (Singh, 2006). It can be the main reason for brands to discontinue their products and for customer loss (LaBarbera and Mazursky, 1983).

Satisfaction has elements of cognition and affect (Oliver, 1999). Affect refers to the customer being pleased with the product. Cognition is about the customers knowing why they like the product (Peter and Olson, 1999). According to Schmitt (1999), the higher the customer value, the higher the level of satisfaction.

2.4 Purchase Intentions

Intention represents an individual's inclination of what behaviour they want to carry out (Ferraz et al., 2017). Purchase intentions represent the customers' prediction of which brand they will choose to buy from (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). It is the result of the marketing efforts made by a business (Esmailpour and Mohseni, 2019) and of the effort done by customers to purchase from a specific brand (Spears and Singh, 2004). It is the main input for brands to forecast future sales. It is important for brands to know how their actions will affect customers' purchase intentions (Morwitz, 2012).

To be able to encourage consumers to buy the product, each business needs to be able to identify the factors that influence customers' purchase intentions (Wasan, 2018). This will help brands to understand consumers' behaviour and to develop appropriate marketing strategies (Esmailpour and Mohseni, 2019).

When buying a product, consumers do internal and external search. Internal search is when consumers base their decision on a previous experience. External search is when consumers search for information through outside sources (Waheed et al., 2018). After searching, if the product meets the customers' expectations and needs, the purchase intention will increase (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, consumer experience is a key factor for influencing purchase

intentions (Bellman, Loshe and Johnson, 1999). The value that the customers perceive from products is also an important factor, increasing their purchase intentions (Esmailpour and Mohseni, 2019).

Nowadays, online purchases have gained prominence. Online purchase intentions are when a customer has a specific behaviour towards an online product or service (Lee et al., 2022). It is affected by the level of trust that consumers have on online retailers (GeorgeLa ȃa roiu et al., 2020). Research concluded that about two-thirds of consumers use internet to purchase online (Peter and Olson, 2010).

2.5 Engagement

Engagement represents a motivational state. It is the interaction that the customer has with a brand. It can be done through multiple channels, both online and offline. It is composed of cognitive, emotional and behaviour states (Hollebeek et al., 2011). To be effective, organizations need to understand who they want to engage and how (Van Doorn et al., 2010). There exist several engagement sub-forms such as “brand engagement” (Hollebeek et al. 2014), and “customer engagement” (Pansari and Kumar 2016).

Brand engagement is a form of emotional and moral commitment. It reflects the strength between a brand promise and how these promises align with individual’s needs, both inside and outside of the organization (Buckingham, 2008). It is something that cannot be forced, it depends on the consumers free will, being an investment that customer make to have brand interactions (Hollebeek et al., 2019). It is considered the most important aspect of brand management (Buckingham, 2008). If an organization has strong brand engagement, true and lasting commitment will be easier to reach (Buckingham, 2008).

According to Hollebeek et al. (2019), customer engagement is “*a customer’s motivationally driven, volitional investment of focal operant resources (including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social knowledge and skills), and operand resources (e.g., equipment) into brand interactions in service systems*”. It is a key factor for establishing strong relationships between brands and individuals, consumers or not (Safitri and Komaryatin, 2025). It has five dimensions: “*valence, form or modality, scope, nature of its impact, and customer goal*” (Van Doorn et al., 2010).

With the rise of technologies, customer engagement has extended to the online environment. Online customer engagement has grown significantly in the last few years (Rasool et al., 2020), aiming to capture customers' attention and promote longer and more meaningful interactions with the brand's digital platforms (Safitri and Komaryatin, 2025).

In an increasingly digital marketplace, understanding and managing both brand and customer engagement has become crucial for brands to build strong relationships with its customers and to differentiate from competition (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Vivek et al., 2014).

2.6 Emotional Arousal

Emotional arousal refers to the intensity of an emotional response (Caruelle et al., 2023). It is a state of physiological activation (Morris et al., 2002) and subjective activation when the individual is exposed to stimuli (Reisenzein, 1994). The arousal part of emotion can be viewed in the feel indicated by individuals (Russel et al., 1989). Ads that evoke positive arousal will have more attention from individuals (Poels and Dewitte, 2006).

The feel dimension of experiential marketing aims to stimulate emotions (Schmitt, 1999). Therefore, emotional arousal can act as a good mediator, since it captures the internal affective process that explains why and how experiential marketing can affect consumer behaviour (Poels and Dewitte, 2006).

2.7 Need for Affect

Need for affect refers to the individual differences of people for their tendency to avoid or not situations and activities that induce emotions. It is the individual's intrinsic motivations on attitudes towards emotions (Appel et al., 2012). People with high levels of need for affect tend to have attitudes based on affect, reacting emotionally to situations (Barceló, 2023). These people are also more deeply involved in emotional events (Appel et al., 2012).

The need for affect and its operationalization, the NAQ (Need for Affect Questionnaire), are considered both an approach and avoidance component, meaning that, at the same time, people can have a motivation to approach and avoid emotion inducing situations and activities (Appel et al., 2012). The NAQ is used to measure this dual system, by having questions that assess the participants extent to enjoy and seek emotions (approach) and, at the same time, assess the extent to which participants dislike or reject emotional experiences (avoid). According to Appel et al., 2012, individuals might enjoy emotional stimulation in some situations and avoid

it in others. Thus, the NQA helps to understand how emotional approach and avoidance together can shape individuals' behaviour (Appel et al., 2012).

Since experiential marketing, particularly the feel dimension, rely on eliciting emotions (Schmitt, 1999), the effectiveness of this approach may vary depending on consumers' affect. Thus, need for affect allows to identify conditions where experiential marketing can be the most effective (Appel et al., 2012).

2.6 Retail Industry

Retailing is the process of delivering a product or service directly to the consumer (Pantano, 2014).

Nowadays, consumers cannot live without technology, so the retail industry had to adapt, becoming more dynamic (Priporas et al., 2017) and deviating from the offline setting (Vakulenko et al., 2019). With technology, this industry has gained tools and capabilities to enhance their marketing strategies (Wilson et al., 2024).

With the rise of technologies, online retail stores have emerged. The emergence of these stores has added benefits to this industry, simplifying consumers shopping experience, making it more accessible and convenient. This led to the creation of an additional shopping channel alongside with traditional stores (Wu and Tseng, 2014). This switch to online retail can help retailers get a large amount of consumer data, being able to monitor consumer behaviours, tailoring their strategies to better meet customers' needs and expectations (Vakulenko et al., 2019). These technologies help retailers to differentiate their brands, using personalized marketing, becoming memorable for consumers (Hilken et al., 2017).

Social media has also influenced the way retailers communicate with their consumers. It allows brands to engage on a personal level with consumers (Wilson et al., 2024), being an efficient method to receive feedback (Pradhan et al., 2018). This channel is also a major source of traffic (Ayodeji and Kumar, 2019)

Besides online stores and social media, retail stores have implemented technologies in their traditional physical stores (Gregory, 2015). Retailers have implemented technologies such as self-checkout system, augmented reality and digital signage. This way, retailers can prevent closure and enhance the shopping experience (Kupfer et al., 2024).

Consumers expect a seamless transition between physical and online store, such as the ability to buy online and pick up in store (Fauzzia et al., 2025).

2.7 Gen Z

Nowadays, we are experiencing a digital culture. Here, age is a key component, which justifies the differences in consumers expectations and in consumer categories (Lee, 2009).

One consumer category is Generation Z. Gen Z are those born between 1997 and 2012 (Bogicevic et al., 2024). It is considered the generation of the digital natives (Parker and Ruth, 2020), being considered highly educated, creative, innovative and with advanced technological skills. (Priporas et al., 2017). This generation values personalized experiences, authenticity and engagement (Deepika and Massand, 2025).

Gen Z can be considered as a challenge for brands, since they seem to have different behaviours than other generations, which can influence consumer behaviour (Schlossberg, 2016). This generation aims to build an emotional connection with the brand, choosing more likely brands that evoke emotions (Song, 2024).

According to Wood (2013), there are four trends that characterize Gen Z. The first trend concerns the comfort that this generation has with technology. The second trend refers to the need for convenience. The third trend is about Gen Z's desire to feel safe. The last trend is a desire to sometimes escape from reality. These trends can be justified by the changes in the world that this generation has experienced in the few last years (Ernst and Young, 2015).

Gen Z consumers are affluent users of social media (Mahapatra et al., 2022), preferring virtual means of communication (Schroth, 2019). According to Morning Consult, a data intelligence company, Gen Z spends about 4h a day on social media and 68% of them use it for entertainment and to scroll (Deepika and Massand, 2025).

This generation demands personalized experiences, mainly regarding digital engagement with brands (Song, 2024), opening a door for experiential marketing. Creating intent to purchase for this target segment is crucial for brands (Deepika and Massand, 2025). It is important for these to understand the impact of social media for their marketing strategy and how it will influence Gen Z's purchase intentions. (Deepika and Massand, 2025).

2.8 Overview & Research Hypothesis

With the rise of technologies, industries need to adapt their marketing strategies. There is a need to switch from traditional marketing to experiential marketing (Grundey, 2008). Experiential marketing is everywhere. It has gained prominence, reshaping how companies communicate with their consumers (Schmitt, 1999). The use of experiential marketing allows consumers to engage with the brands through the SEMs (“strategic experiential modules”) (Grundey, 2008). In particular, the feel dimension focuses on generating affective experiences that appeal to consumers’ emotions and feelings (Schmitt, 1999). Traditional marketing, while effective in communicating information about product features and benefits, often lacks to create bonds with consumers (Levy and Guterman 2021). While traditional marketing is focused on the features and benefits of the products, experiential marketing is experience-focused, where the main goal is to provide experiences to consumers (Schmitt, 1999). The retail industry can benefit from this, since it is consumer-oriented (Har et al., 2022).

The recent generations expect industries to go beyond traditional methods, prioritizing experiences that can create emotions and form connections (Song, 2024). Therefore, experiential marketing is expected to be more effective than traditional marketing, enhancing industries outcomes such as satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions. It is also expected that experiential marketing effectiveness depends on the emotional arousal and need for affect level of individuals.

However, to the best of my knowledge, the relationship between the use of experiential marketing and Gen Z’s purchase intentions in the retail industry is underexplored. Most studies analyse purchases intentions for all consumers. Therefore, the first hypothesis was formulated to understand the relationship between these concepts:

H1: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z’s purchase intentions in the retail industry.

In addition, customer satisfaction is an indicator of success and loyalty (Bayır, 2022). Since the feel dimension focuses on affective experiences (Schmitt, 1999), it can generate stronger satisfaction than traditional marketing. Being this said, it is relevant to examine the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z’s satisfaction. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H2: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's satisfaction in the retail industry.

Like satisfaction, engagement is a critical to build strong relationships between the brand and the consumer (Datta 2017), motivating interactions between the two (Hollebeek et al., 2011). Because experiential marketing invites consumers to participate with emotions, it is expected to promote higher levels of engagement (Priporas et al., 2017). Thus, it is necessary to see if this applies to Gen Z. The following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: The use of experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's engagement in the retail industry.

Furthermore, it was considered relevant to add a moderator and a mediator to the analysis. Emotions are key to experiential marketing, particularly for the feel dimension (Schmitt, 1999). When consumers are exposed to emotional stimuli, they experience emotional arousal (Morris et al., 2002). The willingness to avoid or seek for emotions depends on consumer to consumer, reflecting their need for affect. Thus, the following hypothesis were formed:

H4: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's purchase intentions in the retail industry via emotional arousal.

H5: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's satisfaction in the retail industry via emotional arousal.

H6: The use of experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's engagement in the retail industry via emotional arousal.

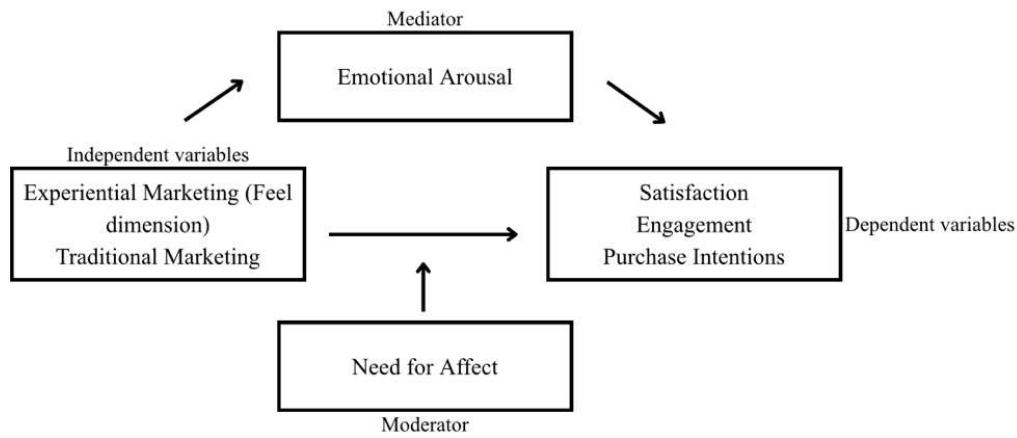
H7: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's purchase intentions in the retail industry moderated by need for affect.

H8: Experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's satisfaction in the retail industry moderated by need for affect.

H9: The use of experiential marketing vs traditional marketing has a positive effect on Gen Z's engagement in the retail industry moderated by need for affect.

These 9 hypotheses aim to explore the outcomes that result from the use of experiential marketing vs traditional marketing. These will later be tested in Chapter 4.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the relationship between experiential and traditional marketing and consumer responses.



Chapter 3: Methodology

The present chapter outlines the methodological approach used in this dissertation. It describes the procedures used to study the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z’s purchase intentions, satisfaction and engagement. Additionally, it explores if emotional arousal explains this relationship and whether need for affect influences it. The hypotheses presented in Chapter 2 were tested as well as the research questions presented in Chapter 1. Therefore, this chapter will describe the sample, research design, description of the variables and the followed procedure.

3.1 Sample

A priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 indicated that a minimum sample of 102 participants (51 per group) is required to detect an effect size of $d = 0.50$ with 80% power at $\alpha = 0.05$ (one-tailed) for an independent sample t-test.

A total sample of 177 participants was extracted from the survey. However, only 103 participants submitted fully usable data¹. Most of the respondents 54.4% (56) were between the ages of 20-22. Out of the 103 respondents, 68.9% (71) were female, 30.1% (31) were male and 1 respondent preferred not to say. The majority of respondents (62.1%) are full time students, 19.4% are working students, 2.9% are unemployed, 14.6% are employed and 1% said other but did not specify. In terms of country of origin, respondents are from: Portugal (87.4%),

¹ 12 of the participants were <16 years old and 6 were >28years old. 34 of the participants did not answer the survey until the end. 22 participants did not answer the validity question right.

other countries from Europe (6%) and others (6.6%). Regarding purchase frequency, 67% (69) of the respondents have bought a perfume in the last 6 months, while 34% (33) have not.

3.2 Research Design

A randomized between-subjects experimental approach one factor with two levels (type of advertisement (N = 51) vs. traditional (N = 52)) was conducted to test the impact of experiential marketing in Gen Z satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions compared with traditional marketing. To ensure that only Gen Z participated in the survey, a demographic question regarding participants age was used as an inclusion criterion. Although Gen Z comprises individuals between 13 and 28 years old, only participants between the age of 16 and 28 were allowed to participate in the survey. This restriction was done considering the abilities of participants, since those below the age of 16 don't have the same ability of making informed and autonomous responses.

After the demographic questions, participants were randomly assigned to one of two advertisements, one using experiential marketing (Figure 1) and one using traditional marketing (Figure 2). The product presented on both advertisements was a perfume. The objective of the advertisement using experiential marketing was to induce feelings through language and image. Thus, this advertisement had a picture of a couple with the perfume, with a sentence appealing to the feel dimension: "Feel the joy". In contrast, the advertisement using traditional marketing focused only on the product and its features.

Figure 2: Ad using experiential marketing.



Figure 3: Ad using traditional marketing.



After seeing the ads, participants were asked questions about satisfaction, engagement, purchase intentions, emotional arousal and need for affect taking into account the ad that they were exposed to. In addition, to make sure that responses were accurate and that the participants were paying attention to the advertisement, a question about the price of the product was made.

3.3 Brand Experience

After being exposed to the type of ad, a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) was used to evaluate the participants agreement to the following statements of the brand experience scale as a control variable: “This ad induces feelings and sentiments”; “I do not have strong emotions for this ad”; “This ad is emotional appealing” (Brakus et al., 2009). It was considered relevant that at least one of the statements was negatively phrased and reverse-coded, reducing response bias and ensuring that participants read items carefully (Brakus et al., 2009). The statement where this was used was “I do not have strong emotions for this ad”. In this case, being reverse-coded means that the lower the level of agreement, the stronger the emotion.

3.4 Dependent Variables

Satisfaction was measured after the participants saw one of the two ads. A 3-item satisfaction scale was used and adapted (Oliver, 1980) with the following statements: “I am satisfied with the product presented in the ad”; “My choice to consider this product feels wise”; “I am pleased with this product”. These statements were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Engagement was measured after the participants saw one of the two ads. The Consumer Engagement Scale will be used and adapted (Hollebeek et al., 2014) with the following statements: “This add sparked my interest”; “I was fully absorbed looking at this ad”; “I felt emotionally involved with this ad”. These statements were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Purchase intentions were measured after the participants saw one of the two ads. The 3-item Purchase Intention Scale from Spears and Singh, 2004 was used with the following statements: “I am likely to buy this product”; “I will probably buy this product”; “It is possible I buy this product”. These statements were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

3.5 Moderator and Mediator variables

Need-for-Affect was used as a moderator, because it helps to understand participants' motivation to seek or avoid emotional experiences (Appel et al., 2015). It was measured after the exposure to the advertisement. The NAQ (Need for Affect Questionnaire) was used as a scale with the following statements: "I like to be touched by strong emotions"; "Emotions help me make better decisions"; "I enjoy situations that elicit positive emotions". These statements were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Emotional arousal was used as a mediator, because it captures the immediate affective activation elicited by the feel dimension of experiential marketing (Morris et al., 2002). It was measured after the exposure to the advertisement. Measured using the 4-item emotional arousal Scale from Morris et al. (2002). Participants rate statements such as "I felt excited while viewing the advertisement"; "This advertisement made me feel stimulated"; "This advertisement made me feel enthusiastic"; "This advertisement made me feel thrilled". This will be measured after the exposure to the advertisement and before the dependent variables. These statements were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

3.6 Demographics

Before being exposed to the advertisements, participants were asked demographic questions. The demographics used were age, gender, work status, and country of origin. The demographic of age was classified by using 6 groups: <16, 17-19, 20-22, 23-25, 26-28, >28. Gender was measured categorically (1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = non-binary/third gender, 4 = Prefer not to say). Work status was chosen to be used as a demographic question, because the different lifestyles may influence the purchase behaviours. This demographic variable was also measured categorically with six response options: Student, Working student, Unemployed, Employed, Prefer not to say, Other (please specify). Country of origin was measured through a dropdown list of countries. This variable was included to ensure diversity among participants, since cultural backgrounds can affect consumer behaviour. Lastly, purchase frequency was measured last, by using a multiple-choice question of yes or no, that asked if the participants have bought a perfume in the last 6 months. This variable was considered since recent purchasing can indicate a greater propensity to buy.

3.7 Procedure

When opening the survey, participants received a welcome message, where information about the purpose of the study was displayed, as well as the information about the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. Also, it provided the information that only respondents between 16 and 28 years old would be able to answer the survey. After the welcome message, participants would answer demographic questions, where age was used as an inclusion criterion - only participants between 16 and 28 years old would proceed to answer the survey. After demographic questions, participants were informed that they would be seeing one advertisement, and to pay attention to it, being able to evaluate it accurately. Then, the advertisement was displayed. The advertisement was followed by questions about how the ad aroused emotions and feelings, and how it influenced satisfaction, engagement, and purchase intentions. After being asked questions directly related to the advertisements, participants answered questions about their need for affect, emotional arousal and purchase frequency. Lastly, participants were thanked and dismissed.

Chapter 4: Results Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the data obtained from the statistical analysis in order to answer the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1, as well as test the hypotheses mentioned in Chapter 2.

4.1 Descriptive analysis and intercorrelations

Firstly, a descriptive analysis and intercorrelations were conducted to explore the degree of association between the variables. Before conducting the analysis, the Cronbach's alpha was checked, so that the scores of the statements of each variable could be averaged. This way, the descriptives and correlations can be done.

Concerning the reliability analysis for all the scales, the Cronbach's alpha was as follows: For the brand experience, $\alpha = .78$, indicating that the Cronbach's alpha has acceptable reliability; The satisfaction variable, $\alpha = .90$, which means that the Cronbach's alpha has high reliability; For engagement, $\alpha = .87$, so the Cronbach's alpha showed a good reliability; Purchase intentions had an $\alpha = .95$, meaning that the Cronbach's alpha has a high reliability; For emotional arousal, $\alpha = .93$, which also indicates that the Cronbach's alpha has a high reliability; Lastly, need for affect has a $\alpha = .66$, indicating that the Cronbach's alpha has questionable reliability.

Table 2: Descriptives and correlations among variables.

	Descriptives		Correlations					
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Purchase intentions	3.11	1.65	-	.79**	.76**	.49**	.76**	.24*
2. Satisfaction	4.13	1.34	-	-	.70**	.42**	.68**	.28**
3.Engagement	3.29	1.51	-	-	-	.66**	.82**	.25*
4. Brand Experience	3.74	1.47	-	-	-	-	.65**	.14
5.Emotional Arousal	2.77	1.38	-	-	-	-	-	.21*
6. Need for Affect	4.94	1.18	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: M = mean; SD = standard deviation; r = Pearson correlation; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Performing descriptive statistics allows for the development of a summary of the variables important for further analysis (Morris et al., 2002). These are presented in Table 2. Means, standard deviations and ranges were calculated for each variable.

It can be observed that need for affect has the highest mean ($M=4.94$; $SD=1.18$). However, for emotional arousal the mean was the lowest ($M=2.77$; $SD=1.38$). Furthermore, for the dependent variables, satisfaction was moderate ($M=4.13$; $SD=1.34$), engagement was low to moderate ($M=3.29$; $SD=1.51$), and purchase intentions were low ($M=3.11$; $SD=1.65$).

Regarding correlations, it can be considered strong when $r > .70$. Emotional arousal and engagement have the strongest relationship and are positively correlated, with $r = .82$. The relationships of satisfaction, engagement and emotional arousal with purchase intentions are also strong and positively correlated ($r = .79$; $r = .76$; $r = .76$). Brand experience and satisfaction have a moderate and positive correlation ($r = .42$), as well as brand experience and purchase intentions ($r = .49$). Need for affect has a non-significant positive correlation with brand experience ($r = .14$). For the remain variables (satisfaction, engagement and purchase intentions), need for affect has weak but significant positive correlations, since $r < .30$,

indicating that respondents who like emotional content tend to have better behavioural responses.

4.2 Hypothesis testing

To test hypotheses, an independent samples t-test was conducted to test whether the independent variable, type of ad (Experiential vs Traditional), influences the dependent variables (purchase intentions, satisfaction, engagement).

H1 tests whether the type of ad has a positive effect on Gen Z's purchase intentions. The experiential ad ($M=3.30$, $SD=1.64$) had a higher mean than the traditional ad ($M=2.93$, $SD=1.66$). However, the independent sample t-test showed that the difference was not statistically significant ($t(101) = 1.14$, $p = .128$, Cohen's $d=0.23$). Therefore, H1 is rejected.

H2 tests whether the type of ad has a positive effect on Gen Z's satisfaction. For satisfaction, although the mean of the experiential ad was higher ($M=4.23$, $SD=1.26$) than for the traditional ad ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.42$), the difference in satisfaction between type of ad was not significant ($t(101) = .72$, $p=.236$, Cohen's $d=0.14$), thus H2 is rejected.

H3 tests whether the type of ad has a positive effect on Gen Z's engagement. Engagement was substantially higher in the experiential condition ($M=3.82$, $SD=1.54$) than for the traditional condition ($M=2.76$, $SD=1.28$). This difference was statistically significant ($t(101) = 3.77$, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=0.74$), thus H3 is supported.

To test the effect of the mediator on the dependent variables, a mediation analysis using PROCESS Model 4 with 5,000 bootstrap samples was conducted.

Regarding H4, the aim was to test whether emotional arousal mediates the effect of type of ad on Gen Z's purchase intentions in the retail industry. Type of ad significantly predicted emotional arousal, $b= -0.74$, $SE=0.26$, $t(101) = -2.83$, $p=.057$, which predicted purchase intentions, $b=0.94$, $SE=0.08$, $t(100) = 11.76$, $p<.001$. The indirect effect was significant, $indirect= -.70$, $SE=0.25$, 95% $CI[-1.19, -0.23]$. Thus, emotional arousal significantly mediates the relationship between ad type and purchase intentions, supporting H4.

H5 tests whether emotional arousal mediates the effect of type of ad on Gen Z's satisfaction in the retail industry. As mentioned before, type of ad significantly predicted emotional arousal, which predicted satisfaction, $b=0.69$, $SE=0.07$, $t(100) = 9.38$, $p<.001$. The indirect effect was

significant, *indirect*= -.51, *SE*=0.19, 95% *CI* [-0.89, -0.15]. Thus, emotional arousal significantly mediates the relationship between ad type and satisfaction, supporting H5.

For H6, the aim was to test whether emotional arousal mediates the effect of type of ad on Gen Z's engagement on the retail industry. Type of ad significantly predicted emotional arousal, which predicted engagement, $b=0.86$, $SE=0.06$, $t(100)=13.62$, $p<.001$. The indirect effect was significant, *indirect*= -.64, *SE*=0.23, 95% *CI* [-1.10, -0.17]. Therefore, emotional arousal significantly mediates the relationship between ad type and engagement, supporting H6.

To test whether need for affect has an effect as a moderator on the dependent variables, a moderation analysis using PROCESS model 1 with 5,000 bootstraps sample was conducted.

H7 tests whether the ad type has a positive effect on Gen Z's purchase intentions in the retail industry moderated by need for affect. The interaction between ad type and need for affect was not significant, $b= -0.05$, $SE=0.28$, $t(99) = -0.18$, $p=.856$, 95% *CI* [-0.60, 0.50], so need for affect does not significantly predict purchase intentions, $b=0.41$, $p=.374$, rejecting H7.

H8 tests whether the ad type has a positive effect on Gen Z's satisfaction in the retail industry moderated by need for affect. As mentioned before, the interaction between ad type and need for affect was not significant, so need for affect does not significantly predict satisfaction, $b=0.27$, $p=.469$, rejecting H8.

Lastly, H9 tests whether the ad type has a positive effect on Gen Z's engagement in the retail industry moderated by need for affect. The interaction between ad type and need for affect was not significant, so need for affect does not significantly predict engagement, $b=0.51$, $p=.202$, rejecting H9.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Preliminary analysis

To analyze the degree of association between variables, descriptive analysis and intercorrelations were performed. From the descriptive analysis, it was possible to see that need for affect had the highest mean, which indicates that respondents high in need for affect tend to value emotional experiences, consistent with previous studies (Appel et al., 2012). In contrast, emotional arousal had the lowest mean, meaning that the type of ad did not strongly stimulate emotional activation. For the dependent variables, satisfaction was moderate,

engagement was low to moderate and purchase intentions were low, suggesting that the advertisements used in the experiment did not impact respondents in a way that generated strong emotions or behaviours.

From correlations, it was also possible to conclude that the strongest relationship emerges between emotional arousal and engagement, which is supported by studies showing that emotional intensity increases engagement and behaviour intentions (Sciulli et al., 2017). This means that respondents that are emotionally stimulated are more engaged, which can be explained by the preference of consumers for interactive and personalized content (Schreiner et al., 2019). Similarly, satisfaction, engagement and emotional arousal all demonstrate strong and positive correlations with purchase intentions, revealing that the higher the satisfaction, engagement and arousal from respondents, the higher their purchase intentions. This aligns with other research, where it is shown that positive attitudes, emotions and experiences will lead to increased purchase intentions (Esmaeilpour and Mohseni, 2019). Brand experience has moderate and positive correlation with satisfaction and purchase intentions, since brand experience is a strong predictor of satisfaction, thus a strong predictor of purchase intentions (Brakus et al., 2009). Need for affect has a non-significant positive correlation with brand experience which reveals that enjoying emotional content does not improve brand experience.

Overall, the descriptive and correlational results show that stronger emotions are associated with higher engagement, satisfaction and purchase intentions, whereas the ads used in this research only elicited moderate emotional responses, which may have constrained their behavioural responses.

5.2 Main analysis

Research question 1: How does experiential marketing shape Gen Z purchase intentions in the retail industry?

Research question 4: How does emotional arousal mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

After running a randomized between-subjects experimental approach one factor with two levels (type of ad: experiential vs. traditional), results showed that although the experiential ad produced a higher mean level of Gen Z purchase intentions than the traditional ad, the difference was not statistically significant. These results suggest that the exposure to the experiential ad alone to Gen Z was not enough to influence a strong behaviour towards

purchase intention. Previous research has shown a positive link between customer experience and purchase intentions (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013; Esmaeilpour and Mohseni, 2019), where companies implement experiential marketing mainly because it drives sales (Urdea et al., 2021). However, this research was not specifically made for Gen Z, so the results might differ. The results become clear when looking at the mediating effect of emotional arousal (RQ4). As shown in H4, emotional arousal significantly mediates the relationship between emotional arousal and experiential marketing, meaning that when the experiential ad successfully elicited emotional activation, respondents purchase intentions were higher. This is consistent with previous studies that show that attitudes towards the brands are strong predictors of purchase intentions (Morris et al., 2002). Therefore, the answer to RQ1 is that experiential marketing influences Gen Z purchase intentions through emotional impact, and the answer to RQ4 regarding purchase intentions is that the higher the emotional arousal, the higher the Gen Z purchase intentions.

Research question 2: How does experiential marketing affect Gen Z satisfaction in the retail industry?

Research question 4: How does emotional arousal mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

Previous studies have shown that experiential marketing has a significant and positive influence on customer satisfaction, and that experiential cues should improve customer satisfaction (Wahyuningtyas et al., 2017; Carmo et al., 2022). However, customer expectations differ from generation to generation in the retail industry, thus affecting their satisfaction (Priporas et al., 2017). This can be seen in this research, where even though the mean of satisfaction of the Gen Z respondents who saw the experiential ad was higher, experiential marketing did not affect Gen Z satisfaction significantly, not being able to produce a strong impact to differentiate itself from the traditional ad. On the other hand, emotional arousal significantly mediated the effect of the type of ad on satisfaction, meaning that satisfaction is enhanced when experiential marketing can stimulate Gen Z consumers emotionally (RQ4). This is in line with previous research that supports that emotional arousal is positively linked with satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2008). Thus, the answer to RQ2 is that experiential marketing has an indirect effect on satisfaction through emotional arousal.

Research question 3: How does experiential marketing affect Gen Z engagement in the retail industry?

Research question 4: How does emotional arousal mediate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

Previous research has shown that Gen Z shows a high level of engagement during the consumption process mainly due to personalized experiences (Song, 2024). Since experiential marketing uses personalized experiences, it is considered to increase consumer engagement (Song, 2024). This is in line with my research, where experiential marketing had a statistically significant influence on Gen Z engagement. Again, emotional arousal was a significant mediator, since the experiential ad increased emotional arousal, which then increased engagement (RQ4). This is supported by previous research, where experiences that enhance emotions have shown to increase engagement (Hilken et al., 2017; Brakus et al., 2009; Bogicevic et al., 2024). In response to RQ3, experiential marketing affects Gen Z engagement both directly and indirectly (through emotional arousal), enhancing it.

Research question 5: How does need for affect moderate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry?

According to previous research, people with a high level of need for affect tend to be more deeply involved in situations and activities that induce emotions and are more oriented to process emotional information, which then leads to a higher level of engagement (Appel et al., 2012). It also shows that need for affect represents "stable individual differences" (Appel et al., 2012), so individuals with a more enduring personality are not easily shifted by an ad alone. Furthermore, previous research has shown that emotion approach and avoidance yield similar results, meaning that a higher level of emotion approach or avoidance does not affect the individual's behaviour (Appel et al., 2012). This supports the results of my research, where it was possible to see that need for affect did not have a significant effect as a moderator for the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry. This indicates that need for affect did not have an influence on the effect of the type of ad on the respondents' behaviours, so the impact of the experiential ad did not depend on whether respondents tend to have attitudes towards emotions or not. Therefore, answering RQ5, the results of the study indicate that need for affect does not moderate the relationship between experiential marketing and Gen Z's behaviour in the retail industry, since even consumers with a low level of need for affect responded positively to the experiential ad. This means that the behavioural outcomes were driven by emotional arousal rather than by the individual emotional differences of the respondents.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Main Conclusion and Managerial Implications

This dissertation aimed to provide an overview of the influence that emotions created using experiential marketing have on Gen Z behaviour outcomes, mainly in terms of purchase intentions. The results presented in Chapter 4 allowed for a deeper understanding on how experiential marketing influences Gen Z behaviour in the retail industry, and how emotional arousal and need for affect contribute to this process. From these results, I was able to conclude that, although the experiential ad produced a higher mean value of satisfaction and purchase intentions, it was not significant. Thus, experiential marketing did not directly increase Gen Z purchase intentions or satisfaction. Even though experiential marketing is assumed to enhance consumer responses (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009), the present study shows that, for Gen Z, the effect on these responses is different, since the experiential ad only had a significant effect on engagement, compared to the traditional ad. Regarding the effect of emotional arousal as a mediator, it played a central role, having a direct and significant effect on the relationship between experiential marketing and the dependent variables. For the moderator need for affect, this relationship was not significant, since respondents with both high and low need for affect answered the questions similarly. This means that Gen Z behaviour was not driven by the respondent's tendency to avoid or not situations and activities that induce emotions, but by the emotions activated by the ad.

Regarding managerial implications, as the experiential ad produced a positive and significant effect on engagement, the retail industry brands should use this insight by creating experiences that allow Gen Z to engage with it, filling their desire for involvement. Also, because emotional arousal was key to drive Gen Z behaviours, brands should invest in creating experiences that allow for emotion stimulation, since this generation aims to build an emotional connection with the brand, choosing more likely brands that evoke emotions (Song, 2024). Furthermore, given that emotional arousal predicts all Gen Z behaviour outcomes, brands should test experiential content before releasing it making sure that the experiential campaign ensures emotional activations, thus making it more effective.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the results presented in Chapter 4 and the contribution of the research, some limitations have emerged, regarding the undertaken research, that need to be addressed when interpreting

the results, to better understand it, and to be considered in future research. The first limitation concerns the sample size and representativeness. Although the sample size was of 103 respondents, it cannot be considered fully representative of Gen Z. This can be explained by the age of the respondents, where most of them were between the ages of 20-22, limiting the applicability of the results to the older individuals of this generation. Future research should aim for a larger sample with more diverse demographics, providing valuable insights across all ages of the generation. The second limitation concerns the language of the survey, which was administered only in English. This may exclude participants that are not so comfortable with the language, or respondents may have interpreted items differently due to their English level. For future research, I would recommend providing the survey in two languages, English and the native language of the respondent. This would reduce interpretation issues and would increase inclusiveness. Finally, a third limitation refers to the lack of research on the impact of experiential marketing on Gen Z, specifically on their purchase intentions in the retail industry. This made it more challenging to predict results for this dissertation. However, this limitation can also be considered a strength, because the current research can contribute for future research in the field.

Despite the mentioned limitations, the results of the dissertation provide valuable insights into understanding how experiential marketing affects Gen Z purchase intentions in the retail industry, as well as satisfaction and engagement.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Dear participant,
This survey is part of a thesis at Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the differences in **Generation Z** responses through an experiment. You will be randomly assigned to view one advertisement. Only individuals aged **16 to 28** are eligible to participate; respondents outside this age range will not be able to proceed. The survey takes about **5 minutes**. Your responses are **anonymous**, will be kept **confidential**, and will be analyzed and reported only in aggregate in the thesis and related academic outputs.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [s-lrncosta@ucp.pt].

Thank you for your time and honest participation!

What is your age?

<16

17-19

20-22

23-25

26-28

>28

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Non-binary / third gender

Prefer not to say

What is your work status?

Student

Working student

Unemployed

Employed

Prefer not to say

Other (Please specify)

Which country are you from?

Now you will see one advertisement, and then a quiz will be done about it. Please **analyze it carefully** and **pay attention** to as many details as possible so you can **evaluate it accurately**.



Feel the joy.

Sommereve Eau de Parfum –
floral and fruity scent

€39 – AVAILABLE AT www.sommereve.com

OR

LONG-LASTING
FRAGRANCE

Sommereve
EAU DE PARFUM

Sommereve Eau de Parfum
FLORAL & FRUITY SCENT

€39 – AVAILABLE AT www.sommereve.com

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This ad is emotional appealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not have strong emotions for this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad induces feelings and sentiments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am satisfied with the product presented in the ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My choice to consider this product feels wise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am pleased with this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What is the price of the product?

- 24
- 33
- 39
- 42

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This add sparked my interest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was fully absorbed looking at this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt emotionally involved with this ad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to buy this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will probably buy this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's possible I buy this product	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This advertisement made me feel enthusiastic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement made me feel thrilled	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This advertisement made me feel stimulated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt excited while viewing the advertisement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), rate the following statements based on the ad you just saw.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like to be touched by strong emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emotions help me make better decisions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy situations that elicit positive emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you purchased a perfume in the last 6 months?

Yes

No

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

