Will influencer marketing be the key to success for sustainable fashion?

A quantitative research into influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and its association with buying intention

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of social media, new varieties of marketing have been established over the past decades, with one of them being influencer marketing. It is expected that the popularity of this marketing strategy will only continue to grow in the coming years. Additionally, one of the most considered branches of influencer marketing is fashion, and thus this study will focus on influencer marketing related to fashion content. Within the fashion industry, consumers are becoming more aware of the consequences of fast fashion, the use of sweatshops and environmental consequences of clothing production. Sustainability is a concept that keeps evolving and the sustainable fashion industry is expected to grow tremendously in the coming years. Based on theoretical findings, this research expands on the concepts of influencer marketing and sustainable fashion, and aims to answer the question whether influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is (positively or negatively) associated with intention to buy sustainable. This study uses both cultivation theory and the theory of planned behaviour to find out whether the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion was mediated by the three factors of TPB (attitude, subjective norms and PBC). The data was collected through an online survey and the parallel multiple mediation model was tested though Hayes' Process Macro. Findings of this study conclude that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. Additionally, it was observed that exposure was not positively associates with attitude, but that attitude was positively associated with buying intention. However, it was found that the association between exposure and buying intention was not mediated by attitude. Moreover, it was found that subjective norm did mediate this relationship, and that exposure was positively associated with subjective norm and that subjective norm was positively associated with buying intention. Lastly, PBC was found to not mediate the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing of sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion. Exposure and PBC were found to be not positively associated, but PBC was in fact positively associated with buying intention.

KEYWORDS: Influencer marketing, buying intention, sustainable fashion, Theory of Planned Behaviour, parallel multiple mediation model

Table of contents

1 Introduction

With the rise of social media, new varieties of marketing have been established over the past decades. One of these marketing strategies is influencer marketing, where people with a considerably higher following promote a company's products or services to their followers on social media (Belanche et al., 2021). This can be done through paid advertising, but a brand can also offer free products in the hope they will be featured on the influencer's social media accounts (Vrontis et al., 2021). Influencer marketing is not a new marketing strategy anymore, as statistics show that 86% of marketeers used influencer marketing as a strategy in 2018. It is expected that the popularity of this marketing strategy will only continue to grow in the coming years (Rahal, 2020). Even though it is not a new strategy anymore, its developments within the market are creating the need for constant additional research (Taylor, 2020). Influencers are seen as experts in their own specific domain (Masuda et al., 2022). In recent years, the fashion industry has become one of the most considered branches in regards to influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020). This research will therefore focus on the fashion industry.

Within the fashion industry, consumers are becoming more aware of the consequences of fast fashion, the use of sweatshops and environmental consequences of clothing production (Henninger et al., 2016). Equally to influencer marketing, sustainability is a concept that keeps evolving (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) and the sustainable fashion industry is expected to grow tremendously in the coming years (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). Sustainable fashion can be defined in numerous ways. For this research, it will be defined as sustainably sourced and manufactured clothing by people with fair wages and working conditions, which ultimately means that the production of sustainable clothing is also better for the environment than the production of fast fashion (Henninger et al., 2016).

Research on the impact of influencer marketing on buying intention (Chetioui et al., 2020) and buying behaviour (Croes & Bartels, 2021) have been conducted, as well as research on influencer's credibility (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Reinikainen et al., 2020) and on social media marketing in the context of fashion (Kim & Ko, 2012; Wu et al., 2020). As for sustainable fashion, research regarding the buying intention (Lira & Costa, 2022) and motivations for the consumption of sustainable clothing (Lundblad & Davies, 2016) has been conducted before. Additionally, research on sustainable fashion awareness (Kong et al.,

2016) and on monetisation strategies and tactics behind sustainable fashion influencers (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021) have been conducted.

Overall, only limited research has been done on influencer marketing regarding sustainable fashion and little to no research has been done concerning consumers in the Netherlands. Therefore, this study is of academic relevance, as it will give new insights concerning associations with influencer marketing on sustainable fashion with regards to consumers within the Netherlands. Additionally, as Taylor (2020) argues, influencer marketing is a strategy that keeps evolving and creates the need for constant additional research on the topic. This research will be of social relevance, as it will give insights in the evolving trends of influencer marketing and sustainable fashion as well as how this is associated with the consumers' intention. Additionally, research on sustainable fashion is of importance to society, as the issues surrounding the fast fashion industry are far from resolved, and are thus becoming more important to consumers (Jacobsen & Harrison, 2021). This study will therefore investigate if influencer marketing is an effective strategy that can be associated with sustainable buying intention, and will provide insights valuable for the environment.

This study aims to investigate how influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is associated with consumer's buying intention. Therefore, the following research question has been formulated: *To what extent is influencer marketing on sustainable fashion associated with buying intention of young adults in the Netherlands?*

This research is divided in five different chapters. The second chapter will discuss the theoretical framework, zooming in on the concepts of influencer marketing, cultivation theory, sustainable fashion and the theory of planned behaviour. The theoretical framework will also discuss the hypotheses that were created to help answer the research question. Chapter three will then move on to further elaborate on the methodological approach of this research and will thus discuss the sampling procedure, the sampling description and the data collection which includes the measures for this research. Chapter four will discuss the results of the analysis and will thus discuss the analysis of the hypotheses. Lastly, the discussion will be presented in chapter five, which includes theoretical and practical implications, limitations and suggestions for future research and the conclusion where the research question will be answered.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Influencer marketing

Influencers recommend and introduce products to their audience within a specific domain, which is frequently done through advising, educating and amusing their audience (Masuda et al., 2022). They are seen as opinion leaders within their own field of expertise, which is one of the leading reasons why influencers' opinions are valued by consumers when buying a product (Masuda et al., 2022). For instance, people turn to fashion influencers when seeking advice or inspiration regarding how to style certain clothing items or where to purchase the best blazer. As Jin et al. (2021) argue, consumers trust influencers who promote products more than when a brand promotes its own products, because of their expert status and strong personal appeal (Vrontis et al., 2021). This has led consumers to see influencers as a reliable source regarding reviews and advice (Masuda et al., 2022). Ultimately, they have a strong impact on their followers' attitudes and behaviours because of this expertise and are seen as more trustworthy as their recommendations come from personal stories and experiences (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). The impact on attitude and behaviour, together with the more personal approach of marketing through opinion leaders, has been proven more effective than traditional mass media and has been proven to have significant impact on the decision-making process of the consumer (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Influencer marketing has proven to be a particularly successful marketing strategy for companies (Glucksman, 2017). Glucksman (2017) further points out that influencers are not only seen as credible, but that they can also serve as a connection between brand and consumer. Influencer marketing differentiates itself by targeting a more specific audience, which was previously not possible with traditional marketing and mass media. Additionally, the use of social media marketing strategies, and thus influencer marketing, gives more measurable campaign results and more insights into brand reputation and consumers' opinions (Silvia, 2019). Other motivations for brands to use influencer marketing is to change brand attitude, create brand awareness and to stimulate buying intention (Bakker, 2018).

2.1.1 Parasocial relationships

With the rise of new mass media in the 50's, such as television, movies and radio, the concept of parasocial relationship was coined by Horton and Wohl (1956). Parasocial relationships refer to the perception of a face-to-face relationship between the viewer and the performer of these new mass media (Dibble et al., 2016). These performers exist of tv personalities, characters in a movie or any other celebrity that has a presence in the media (Hoffner & Bond, 2022). The theory of parasocial relationships explains that the relationship between performer and viewer is one sided, but can feel to the viewer as if the performer is part of their trusted circle. Viewers perceive the relationship as if they know and understand the performer in a similar way they know and understand face-to-face friends (Perse & Rubin, 1989). This perceived relationship between viewer and performer is formed by the feeling of familiarity and similarity to people in the viewers' social circle.

Media have developed over the years, with social media now being one of the most prominent and popular forms of media. Social media has provided not only the possibility for performers to give a look into their personal lives and thoughts, but has also created more possibilities for interaction between performer and viewer (Chung & Cho, 2017). Through social media, it is possible to engage and interact with followers through liking, commenting, sharing and messaging, which was not an option with traditional mass media. This two-way communication may be limited, but it does create a deeper and more personal bond between performer and viewer (Bond, 2016). Even though the relationship would not be as profound as the relationship with a face-to-face friend, this two-way communication ultimately strengthens the relationship and perception of a trusted friend.

With regards to influencer marketing, this means that followers can form a parasocial relationship with social media influencers, which not only adds to the trustworthiness and credibility of the influencer (Masuda et al., 2022), but it also differentiates influencer marketing from other forms of marketing (Belanche et al., 2021). After being repeatedly exposed to the content of an influencer, followers can create a feeling of intimacy towards this influencer, resulting in a parasocial relationship. Compared to the theory of Horton and Wohl (1956), social media does provide a limited amount of interaction, which traditional mass media did not offer, resulting in a perceived friendship between follower and influencer (Farivar et al., 2021). The bond that the follower feels with the influencer can feel similar to the bond the follower feels with face-to-face friends, as inlfuencers often post

about their day to day lives. This results in a familiarity and relatability for their followers, which ultimately strengthens the parasocial relationship (Bond, 2016). Additionally, the two-way communication between follower and influencer provides opportunities for brands regarding engagement. Even though social media has brought new ways of communication between brand and consumer (liking, commenting, etc.), it is difficult for brands to engage their audience as much as influencers are able to (Vrontis et al., 2021). To conclude, the trust around inlfuencers is mostly formed through the perceived opinion leadership and the parasocial relationship with the influencer, which makes their recommendations valid for their followers, and therefore making influencer marketing a unique and effective marketing strategy (Farivar et al., 2021).

2.1.2 Impact buying behaviour

Studies have shown that parasocial relationships with influencers not only impact the consumers' attitude towards a product, but also impacts the buying intention of viewers (Bi & Zhang, 2022; Farivar et al., 2021). Bi and Zhang (2022) argue that influencer marketing may not be impacting behaviour directly, but the perceived relationship the follower has with the influencer and the credibility they have, ultimately increases the persuasiveness of the buying intention and behaviour. However, research by Bognar et al. (2019) reveals that influencer marketing has a significant effect on the buying behaviour of consumers, which is directly related to their trustworthiness (Vrontis et al., 2021). When consumers are deciding what product to buy and which brand to choose, they are more likely to pick the brand or product recommended by an influencer (Bognar et al., 2019). Moreover, the aforementioned research emphasises that consumers are likely to suggest products recommended by an influencer to their friends and family, insinuating that using influencer marketing will ultimately lead to (electronic) word-of-mouth advertising. The proven impact of influencer marketing on buying intention and behaviour makes influencer marketing an effective strategy, and offers potential for the sustainable fashion industry.

Research by Martínez-López et al. (2020) claims that there has to be a match between the brand and the influencer who promotes the product, as it would otherwise not result in a favourable buying behaviour of the followers. Additionally, Dinh and Lee (2021) researched why followers are motivated to buy products endorsed by influencers, and found that social comparison, fear of missing out and materialism were three factors that

motivated followers to buy the products promoted by influencers. The aforementioned research also found that followers are likely to imitate the influencer, as the followers perceive the lives of the influencer as desirable, and therefore want to use the same products to be more like them.

2.2 Sustainable fashion

As mentioned, the fashion industry has become one of the most popular branches regarding influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020). Within the fashion industry, different trends have emerged over time, with sustainability being one of the most prominant ones (Gazzola et al., 2020). The sustainability trend, as argued by Gazzola et al. (2020), is expected to last and change the fashion industry, as younger generations pay a growing intention towards sustainable clothing and the issues that are created by the fashion industry. Influencers are following these trends, and are promoting sustainable fashion and a sustainable life style, educating their followers and stimulating them to make more conscious decisions when purchasing (fashion) products (Orminski et al., 2020).

Sustainable fashion has been acknowledged for over a decade, showing an increase in conversation concerning sustainability and an increasing ethical concern regarding the fashion industry, with in particular the use of sweatshops (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021; Lundblad & Davies, 2016). This sustainability trend is gaining more attention, as people are becoming more aware of the fast fashion industry, where clothing is produced fast, sold for less, is made from cheap and low-quality fabrics and stimulates the consumers to buy higher quantities of clothing more frequently (Jacobsen & Harrison, 2021). Fast fashion is repeadetly unethically produced and is manufactured under unfair working conditions (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Turker & Altuntaş, 2014). Jacobsen and Harrison (2021) argue that even though the fast fashion market is the most sizeable within the fashion industry, people are becoming more aware of the issues that go with it and are thus becoming more aware of sustainable clothing consumption. As a result of more awareness concerning the consequences and harm of fast fashion and the fashion industry in general, a slow fashion movement started. This movement challenges the fast fashion market by creating a slower production which is fair for the workers creating garments, resulting in fair working conditions (Henninger et al., 2016). These concerns within the fashion industry have led consumers to engage in more sustainable behaviours, such as reselling or donating clothes,

boycotting unethical brands and buying more sustainable clothing (Jägel et al., 2012). With this increase in interests, luxury fashion brands as well as high street fashion brands are developing more sustainable and conscious clothing lines and some brands even focus on being completely sustainable (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Additionally, as a result of the increasing interest in sustainable clothing consumption, social media is being used to promote sustainable fashion and has shown an increase of not only purchase intention, but also an increase of positive attitude towards sustainable fashion in general (Mukendi et al., 2020).

However, even though the sustainable fashion industry is a growing market, knowledge regarding the production process is still limited, resulting in a still unsure consumer who will not fully commit (McNeill & Moore, 2015). The public awareness concerning sustainability has pressured companies into making more green decisions, being more responsible with regards to the ecological footprint they are leaving behind and consider the social responsibility they have (De Freitas Netto et al., 2020). This has led companies in all branches, including the fashion industry, to commercialise green products and has sometimes led to greenwashing. Greenwashing suggests that companies mislead their (potential) customers and other stakeholders by communicating positively about their environmental performance, where in reality their environmental performance is low. Consumers are therefore lacking trust in companies and expect more transparency about the environmental efforts of companies and seek more educational communication from the companies. As a consequence, not all consumers are convinced of this sustainability trend, as some do not believe companies' intentions and statements on sustainability (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). Research has found that the challenge for marketeers therefore lies with reaching the consumers in an authentic way. Research by McNeill and Moore (2015) emphasises that other challenges lie with consumer knowledge regarding sustainability as consumers do not have the necessary knowledge yet to make informed decisions. Furthermore, trust in brands and scepticism about sustainability efforts (greenwashing), affordability (fast fashion is more affordable) and style (sustainable fashion has the reputation of not being stylish) are all challenges marketeers deal with when promoting sustainable fashion (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). McNeill and Moore (2015) further point out how a more sustainable clothing consumption contradicts the culture of impulse buying,

where fast fashion remains more attractive for the consumer who is looking for constant change in their wardrobe.

2.3 Cultivation theory

Cultivation is a mass media theory, which explains how being exposed to media for a long period of time could influence the perception of the social world, as individuals would see it as presented in the media (Nabi & Riddle, 2008). Additionally, cultivation emphasises how the role of media exposure not only impacts viewers' perception, but also their beliefs, attitudes and values (Shrum, 2017). The theory was first coined by George Gerbner (1998) in the 60's when television exposure became part of everyday life. As television exposure was the most dominant form of media exposure at the time, most of the testing of cultivation was focused on the impact of television exposure on people's perception of social reality (Shrum, 2017). Most research done over time therefore studied the relationship between time exposed to television and the viewers' beliefs of the world, and have found that the more people are exposed to television, the more their beliefs align with the portrayed world on television. Overall, this means that the more an individual is exposed to socially constructed realities shown in the media, the more this individual will perceive that as reality (Gerbner, 1998; Tyer, 2016).

Since cultivation theory was first coined by Gerbner (1998), the media landscape has rapidly changed. Despite the digitalisation of the media landscape, research by Morgan et al. (2014) and Stein et al. (2021) both argue that cultivation theory will remain the same despite the digitalisation. Additionally, this statement is confirmed by research by McNallie et al. (2020), as they argue that social media can have a similar impact on world views as television use, and thus cultivation theory expands its genres further to different forms of media as well. Multiple studies have been done over the past two decades, where cultivation theory is linked to exposure through social media (Nevzat, 2018; Tyer, 2016; Wei et al., 2020). Moreover, Krcmar (2019) argue that social media may have a stronger impact than traditional media, as social media celebrities (or influencers) are often admired and are followed by people who identify with them. It can therefore be argued that the impact of an influencer that viewers choose to follow, is bigger than the impact of a television personality, as viewers will identify more with the influencer.

Furthermore, cultivation theory can be distinguished in first- and second-order effects, which relate to the types of questions used in cultivation analysis and are ultimately based on two different psychological processes (Morgan et al., 2014). First-order effects refer to more general views and opinions, and relate to more real-life frequencies and probabilities of reality (Lett et al., 2004; Stein et al., 2021). It relates more to general impressions viewers have about what they learn from and see on television (Croucher, 2011). Second-order effects however relate to the impact television exposure can have on viewers' beliefs and attitudes (Lett et al., 2004: Stein et al., 2021), and will thus affect the viewers' value judgement about social reality (Morgan et al., 2014). As mentioned, followers want to imitate the influencers, as they picture the 'perfect' life and their followers desire to live like them (Dinh & Lee, 2021). Influencers are able to impact their followers' attitudes as they are seen as trustworthy and share recommendations and opinions that are valued by their followers (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). This research will therefore primarily focus on second-order effects, as this research is interested in finding out if exposure to influencer marketing can be associated with people's beliefs and attitudes, which can ultimately be associated with buying intention.

Research on cultivation theory and influencer marketing, specifically related to sustainable fashion has not been conducted yet. However, cultivation theory related to influencer marketing has been studied before, as Suciati et al. (2018) have studied the link between travel influencers and cultivation theory before. Additionally, research by Whyke et al. (2022) and Tuominen et al. (2023) have made the link between influencer marketing and cultivation theory as well. Furthermore, research has found that influencers can impact buying intention of their followers (Bakker, 2018; Bi & Zhang, 2022; Bognar et al., 2019). However, research regarding sustainable fashion influencers and their impact on buying intention, specifically on the Dutch market, is still limited. Therefore, it would be relevant for this study to research the relationship between influencer marketing and buying intention of the Dutch consumer, specifically on sustainable fashion. Thus, this research wants to investigate whether the association between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and buying intention of sustainable fashion is compatible with previous research. Therefore, the first hypothesis that will be tested is:

H1: Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is positively associated with the intention to buy sustainable fashion

2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour

In addition to cultivation theory, the theory of planned behaviour will be used to conceptualise this research. The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) is a theory that was specifically created to predict intentions and behaviour in a certain context (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioural intention consists of motivational factors that ultimately impact one's behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). The stronger an individual's intention to engage in certain behaviour, the more likely the individual is to perform this behaviour. People's intentions are related to the degree of how willing they are to try and the amount of effort they are willing to put in to something (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). Their intentions refer to the likelihood of a consumer's plans or intention to buy a certain product or brand in the future (Chetioui et al., 2020). TPB therefore serves as a predictor of behaviour and gives an understanding regarding purchase intentions and behaviours (Ajzen, 2002).

The theory, originally coined by Ajzen (1991), has been used for many empirical studies in the social and behavioural sciences researching behavioural intentions (Bosnjak et al., 2020). For this research, TBP will be used to study the behavioural intentions regarding sustainable fashion consumption, in relation to influencer marketing. TPB contains three different factors related to intention: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (PBC). As Ajzen (2002) explains, all factors are linked with human behaviours, beliefs about expected consequences (behavioural beliefs), beliefs about what we expect from other people (normative beliefs) and beliefs about certain factors that may impact our behavioural performance (control beliefs). This means that both cultivation theory and TPB are linked to beliefs, as cultivation theory researches the impact of exposure on attitudes and beliefs (Gerbner, 1998), whereas TPB researches the impact of beliefs on intention (Ajzen, 1991).

2.2.1 Attitude

The first factor of TPB, attitude towards the behaviour, entails that an individual can have a positive or negative attitude towards a certain behaviour, and is formed by

behavioural beliefs (Ajzen, 2002; Djafarova & Foots, 2022). The attitude an individual has towards something impacts the expectation they have that their behaviour will result in a particular outcome (Rex et al., 2015). With regards to influencer marketing, research by Pradhan et al. (2016) emphasises that when the influencer and brand are compatible, it can have a positive effect on brand attitude. Furthermore, Chetioui et al. (2020) point out that influencers, when seen as credible, are likely to impact consumers' attitude towards a brand, and will ultimately impact their buying intentions. With regards to sustainability, research by Djafarova and Foots (2022) has found that the younger consumer (generation Z) is ethically conscious and are aware of the impact environmental choices may have on future generations.

Research by Pradhan et al. (2016) emphasises that influencer marketing can have a positive effect on attitude. This research links the exposure of influencer marketing to cultivation theory, as cultivation emphasises how the role of media exposure is associated with individuals' attitudes (Shurm, 2017). This research is interested in finding out if the exposure to influencer marketing, specifically on sustainable fashion, is associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion.

Furthermore, the TPB argues that attitude can be positively associated with behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). Previous research by both Choi and Johnson (2019) and Yadav and Pathak (2016) point out that a positive attitude towards green product consumption is positively associated with the intention to buy green products. Additionally, Bosnjak et al. (2020) explain that the higher the positive attitude, the stronger the intention to buy will be. Thus, this research would therefore suggest that the higher the positive attitude towards sustainable fashion, the stronger the intention to buy sustainable fashion.

Additionally, this study aims to find out if the direct relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion (H1) is mediated by attitude towards sustainable fashion (indirect relationship). This will indicate whether the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion is operated via a third variable (attitude towards sustainable fashion), and will thus explain the relationship more specifically. The following hypothesis was therefore created:

H2: Attitude towards sustainable fashion mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion.

2.2.2 Subjective norm

The second factor of TPB, subjective norm, is a result of normative beliefs and is about the social pressure to behave a certain way (Ajzen, 2002). It is about the perception an individual has to behave in some way, as people important to them may (dis)approve or expect certain behaviour (Chetioui et al., 2020). As research by Chetioui et al. (2020) point out, the social pressure to behave the 'right way' and to please family and friends by acting that way, is linked to consumer behaviour and makes subjective norm a strong predictor of buying intention. Additionally, research by Rex at al. (2015) predicts that subjective norm is a strong predictor of sustainable behaviours, as research has shown that this is the case for buying fair trade groceries, recycling product and buying environmentally friendly products. Moreover, research by De Lira and Da Costa (2022) suggest that subjective norms are positively associated with the intention to buy consciously. Additionally, the impact of subjective norm on buying intention has been widely studied and confirmed (Nam et al., 2015; Roh et al., 2022; Vu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, research on the impact of influencer marketing on subjective norms is still limited. However, research by Lapinski and Rimal (2005) does link cultivation theory to subjective norm. They suggest that being exposed to messages in the media or seeing people engage in certain behaviour (on tv, or in this case on social media), will likely result in perceiving that behaviour as socially acceptable and will thus be seen as behaviour that will be approved of by society. Additionally, research by De Lenne and Vandenbosch (2017) found that social media exposure to content of sustainable organisations, activist and sustainable brands was positively associated with subjective norms. For this research it is therefore interesting to find out if exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is positively associated with subjective norm towards sustainable fashion consumption.

Moreover, it will be tested if the direct relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion (H1) is mediated by subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption (indirect relationship). Testing

subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption as mediator, will give a more specific explanation of the relationship and thus the following hypothesis was created:

H3: Subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion

2.2.3 Perceived behavioural control

Lastly, PBC refers to the difficulty or ease to perform a certain behaviour, which is a result from control beliefs. People are often more motivated to perform a certain behaviour when they know there is a chance of achievement related to the behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). The PBC can therefore differ per situation, as people are likely to be realistic in what is impossible to achieve (low PBC) and what is possible to achieve (high PBC). Therefore, PBC is strongly related to perceived self-efficacy and perceived controllability (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). When an individual is realistic in their judgement, PBC contributes to predicting behaviour.

With regards to ethical purchases and influencer marketing, research by Djafarova and Foots (2022) shows that Generation Z consumers value influencers as a source for information regarding ethical consumption. The aforementioned research emphasises that influencers not only promote sustainable items, but that they also serve as the ones trying out the products before recommending, which ultimately makes it easier for the consumer to source ethical and sustainable products. The association between influencer marketing and PBC is therefore relevant for this study, as influencers can serve as a source of information, making it easier for the consumer to find the right product. Therefore, it is interesting for this research to find out if influencer marketing and PBC are positively associated with each other with regards to sustainable fashion consumption.

Moreover, research on the association between PBC and buying intention has been conducted before (Hasan & Suciarto, 2020; Hsu et al., 2017; Rehman et al., 2019), and has proven PBC to be positively associated with buying intention. For this research it would therefore be relevant to investigate whether PBC of sustainable fashion consumption is positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. Moreover, it is relevant for this research to find out if the direct relationship between exposure to influencer marketing

on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion (H1) is mediated by PBC of sustainable fashion consumption (indirect relationship). Testing PBC of sustainable fashion consumption as mediator, will give a more specific insight of the relationship and thus the following hypothesis was created:

H4: Perceived behavioural control of sustainable fashion consumption mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion

As mentioned, both cultivation theory as well as TPB will be used for this research, and are the fundamental base of the hypotheses. To visualise this research, a conceptual model was created, which can be observed in figure 1. The left and middle column of the model represent cultivation theory, whereas the middle and right column represent the TPB. When looking at the conceptual model, it can be concluded that it is a parallel multiple mediaton model, as the independent variable (exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion) is modelled as predictor for the dependent variable (intention to buy sustainable fashion), both directly and indirectly through three mediators (attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption), with the condition that the three mediators do not influence each other (Hayes, 2017).

Figure 1

Conceptual model
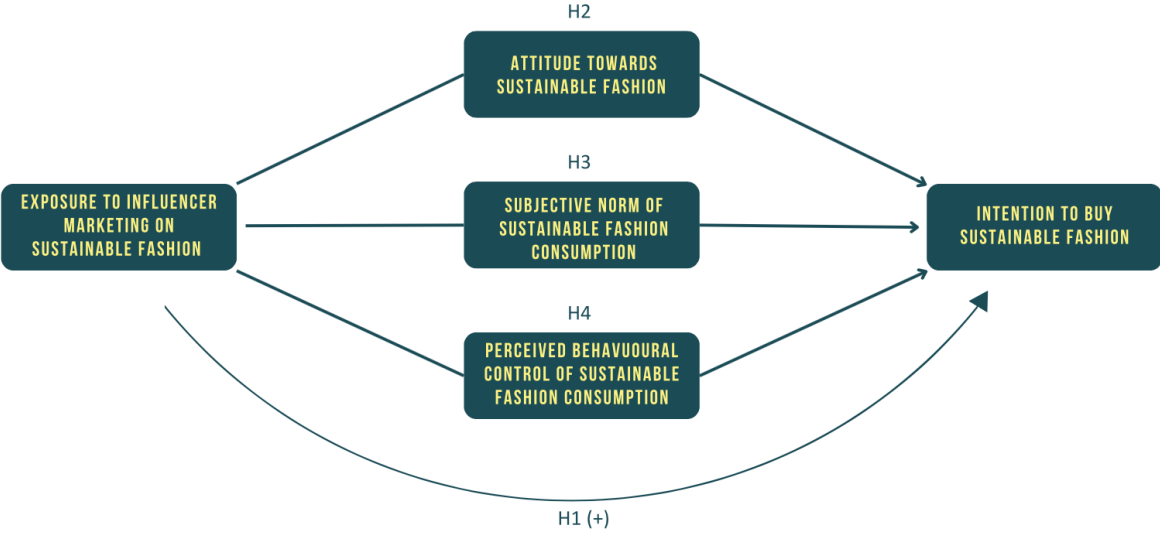
3 Research design

3.1 Method

To answer the research question *"To what extent is influencer marketing on sustainable fashion associated with buying intention of young adults in the Netherlands?"* quantitative research was conducted in the form of an online survey. A quantitative approach was chosen, as this method is known to give a more generalised insight of the population and is often used when researching attitudes of individuals (Babbie, 2014). For this research, the attitudes and buying intentions associated with influencer marketing on sustainable fashion were investigated regarding consumers within the Netherlands. Babbie (2014) explains that when researching and measuring impact or association, numerical data is more suitable compared to nonnumerical data. The motivation to use an online survey for this research, was because they are often appropriate for studies containing individuals as the units of analysis which is typically too large to research directly (Babbie, 2014). As this research aims to investigate buying intention over a large group of people and is aiming for a generalised insight, surveys are therefore the most suitable. The programme that was used for this survey is Qualtrics, as this programme gives a clear overview of the collected data and provides the option to import the collected data into SPSS.

3.2 Sampling procedure

The sample for this study consisted of individuals in the Netherlands, aged 18-37, who follow fashion influencers that mention sustainability on social media. The research focusses on Dutch individuals, because a research gap was found concerning consumers within the Netherlands. Additionally, research by Johnstone and Lindh (2018) demonstrates that sustainable awareness increases with age and that influencers can have an impact on this awareness. However, influencers do have a stronger impact on the younger generations compared to older generations. This corresponds with research by Bakker (2018), which states that people between 19 and 24 years of age tend to follow influencers more than older generations. Additionally, statistics demonstrate that 28% of Gen Z (16-23) and almost a fourth of Millennials (24-37) follow influencers on social media (Lashbrook, 2021), making them the most prominent age groups regarding influencer marketing. As for sustainability,

studies have found that younger generations, mostly emerging adults between 18 and 34 years old, are sustainability-conscious (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020). This is due to the fact that this younger audience is often more open minded, and are generally more open to new ideas and concepts, such as sustainable clothing. Considering these statistics, the units of analysis are individuals between 18 and 37 years old, which includes individuals consisting of Gen Z (16-23) and millennials (24-37). For this research, minors will be excluded as this would require parental consent and ethical guidelines and thus the minimum age will be 18. As research regarding age groups concerning influencer marketing and sustainable consumption has been widely studied, age will be considered as a control variable but will not be separately tested through a hypothesis.

The sampling method that was used for this research is virtual sampling, which is a nonprobability sampling method that uses social networking sites to spread surveys, making this an online method of snowball sampling (Baltar & Icart, 2012). Even though research by Baltar and Icart (2012) argue that virtual sampling may be challenging to reaching the right people because of its random process, it will be an advance for this research as it would automatically reach people that use social media. Additionally, the aforementioned research shows virtual sampling often gives more responses than the traditional snowball sampling, as respondents can directly see who is spreading the survey as personal social media accounts are used. Social media platforms that were used to spread the survey were Instagram and LinkedIn as well as WhatsApp. Participants were also asked to share their survey with other suitable respondents within their network. Moreover, the survey was shared on SurveyCircle, as sharing the survey on social media did not provide enough respondents. SurveyCircle is an online platform which allows researchers to share their surveys and helps generate respondents. In total, 100 participants were retrieved via SurveyCircle.

3.3 Sample description

A total of 287 people participated in the survey, however, 117 people either did not fit the criteria or did not finish the survey. 25 people were either too young (younger than 18) or too old (older than 37) to fall within the requested age range and 14 people did not have the Dutch nationality. Moreover, 51 people indicated that they do not follow any fashion influencers that mention sustainability. To conclude, 27 people did not reach the end

of survey. A total of 170 valid responses was left, which falls within the minimum of respondents necessary to get a generalisation of the population for this research, which was between 150 and 250 respondents according to the guidelines of Erasmus University.

The 170 respondents that were left after cleaning the dataset, which will now serve as the sample (N=170), existed of 147 females (85%), compared to 26 males (15%). The sample had a minimum age of 18 and a maximum age of 37, with a mean age of 24.01 (*SD* = 3.32). The respondents were asked which was the highest level of education they had completed, ranging from none to Master's degree. In total, 53 participants (35.1%) have completed a Bachelor of Applied Sciences, 35 participants (23.2%) have obtained a Bachelor's degree on university level and 33 participants (21.9%) have obtained a Master's degree. Participants were asked how many fashion influencers they follow that mention sustainability in their content, giving them multiple choice answer options. Almost half of the participants indicated that they follow between one and two fashion influencers that mention sustainability in their content. Additionally, 27.7 percent of the respondents follow three to four of such influencers. Most of the sample size (42.2%) spent less than 10 minutes per day watching these influencers' content. 96.5% of the respondents uses Instagram to follow these influencers, thereby making it the most popular social media platform. TikTok is used by 75 participants (43.4%) and YouTube is used by 33 participants (19.1.%).

3.4 Data collection and operationalisation

The survey questions, which can be seen in appendix A, were based on the TPB and cultivation theory, with the concepts of exposure to influencer marketing and sustainable fashion. The survey was provided in Dutch, but participants had the option to change the language to English if they preferred. The survey consisted of questions regarding the different variables of the conceptual model: exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption, PBC of sustainable fashion consumption and intention to buy sustainable fashion. Before answering these questions, participants were first provided with some general information and ethical considerations. The communication on ethical concerns and individual informed consent is necessary to protect the respondents from any harm and to assure that they are aware of what they are participating in (Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2012). The information at the beginning of the survey therefore consisted of elaboration on who

was conducting the research, how much time it would take to fill out the survey and who to contact in case of any questions. Additionally, it was communicated that partaking in this survey would be completely voluntary and that the outcomes of this research would solely be used for thesis purposes. Before the participants could continue with the survey, they were asked to agree with the provided information and agree to partake in the survey. To check whether the participants met the inclusion criteria, the respondents had to fill in some general questions regarding age, nationality and whether they followed a fashion influencer that mentions sustainability in their content. If participants did not fit the criteria, they were not able to continue with the survey. At the end of the survey, some final questions on demographics were asked, such as gender and level of education. Participants were giving the option to leave any comment or concern before ending the survey. One respondent mentioned that they find it hard to know what clothing items are actually sustainable. Moreover, it was mentioned that sustainable clothing is often less fashionable by one respondent and it was mentioned that the price is often higher for sustainable fashion and therefore less accessibly than fast fashion. Lastly, on respondent mentioned that they found it important that the fashion industry should offer less fast fashion, and that the industry should slow down in general.

3.4.1 Measures

Existing scales were used to measure the exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, the attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption, PBC of sustainable fashion consumption and intention to buy sustainable fashion. All scales can be seen in appendix B, where both the original items as well as the adjusted items can be seen.

To measure the exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, the Facebook Intensity scale by Ellison et al. (2007) is adapted to fit this research. The scale consisted of eight items in total. The first item asked participants to indicate the amount of fashion influencers they follow that mention sustainability in their content. As the original item measured Facebook friends, the multiple-choice answers within that scale were not applicable on the adapted question. Therefore, the scale was changed to fit the adapted item. The second item had a 6-point scale to measure the average amount of time in minutes per day spent on watching the content of fashion influencers who mention

sustainability in their content (1 = *less than 10 minutes*, 2 = *10-30 minutes,* 3 = *31-60 minutes*, 4 = *1-2 hours*, 5 = *2-3 hours*, 6 = *more than 3 hours*). The remaining six items were all 7-point Likert-scale items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) and measured the exposure to these influencers through statements such as "It is part of my everyday activity to watch the content of these fashion influencers" and "I feel I am part of these fashion influencers' community".

Furthermore, the concepts of attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption are tested through scales by Lira and Costa (2022), which they originally derived from Judge et al. (2019). The scale was originally about slow fashion, but was changed to sustainable fashion to fit this research design. Attitude was measured through five items with a 5-point Likert scale. Repsondents were asked what they thought of the purchase of clothes considered sustainable (*useless – useful*, *harmful – beneficial*, *bad – good*, *unpleasant – pleasant*, *unimportant – important*). Moreover, the subjective norm scale consisted of seven items which were all 7-point Likert scale based " (1 = *strongly agree,* 7 = *strongly disagree*; 1 = *low ,* 7 = *high*; 1 = *not at all,* 7 = *very much*). The scale measured the social pressure the respondents experience from people important to them, with regards to sustianable fashion. This was measured through statements such as "I feel under social pressure to buy sustainable fashion" and "most of the people who are important to me have bought sustainable fasion. PBC was measured through three items which were all 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), and measured the difficulty or ease respondents experience regarding sustainable fashion consumption. The scale consisted of questions and statements such as "how much control do you have over purchasing sustainable fashion?" and "if I wanted, it woulf be easy for me to buy sustainable fashion".

Lastly, the concepts of intention of buying sustainable fashion was tested through scales by Lira and Costa (2022) and Han et al. (2010), which were adapted to fit this research design with regards to sustainable fashion. The scale consisted of eight items in total, and were all 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale consisted of statements such as "I am willing to buy sustainable fashion" and "When I have to choose between two identical fashion items, I always choose the one that is most sustainable".

Furthermore, accessibility and parasocial relationships were added as control variables and were tested through scales by Han et al. (2010) and Farivar et al. (2021),

respectively. Both the accessibility scale as well as the parasocial relationship scale were 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The accessibility scale consisted of three items and measured how feasible it was for the respondents to buy and access sustainable fashion, through statements such as "buying sustainable fashion is expensive" and "finding sustainable fashion takes time and effort". The parasocial relationship scale consisted of 4 items, and measured the intensity of the relationship experienced by the respondents. This was measured through statements such as "I think this influencer is like an old friend" and "this influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends". Both control variable scales can also be seen in Appendix A, including their original scale as well as the adjusted scale.

3.4.2 Reliability of measures

All variables that were tested through the different scales, as can be seen in appendix A, were tested on reliability. Cronbach's alpha provides a measure that indicates if all the items within a scale test the same construct (internal consistency), meaning that it indicates if the scale measures what it is intended to measure (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A Cronbach's alpha of .65 or higher is seen as sufficient (Vaske et al., 2017). All measurements, except accessibility, are reliable as they have a Cronbach's alpha of .65 or higher (Vaske et al., 2017). Accessibility has a reliability score of .57, meaning that it does not have enough internal consistency and is thus not reliable. Therefore, accessibility will not be included in the analysis as a control variable. Additionally, it is noticeable that PBC has a lower Cronbach's alpha (.65) compared to the other variables, which all have Cronbach's alpha above .82. This can be explained as PBC consists of only 3 items, which can impact the value of Cronbach's alpha (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Table 1 gives an overview of the Cronbach's alpha, observed range, mean and standard deviation of all variables of the items included in the survey.

Table 1

Measurement properties of all variables

	Cronbach's alpha	Observed range	Mean	SD
Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion	.82	1.00 – 7.00	3.65	1.21
Parasocial relationships (control variable)	.83	1.00 – 7.00	3.20	1.31
Attitude towards sustainable fashion	.82	2.00 – 5.00	4.35	0.61
Subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption	.87	1.00 – 6.57	3.68	1.13
PBC of sustainable fashion consumption	.65	2.00 – 7.00	4.94	1.06
Intention to buy sustainable fashion	.85	1.88 – 7.00	4.36	1.01
Accessibility (control variable)	.57	3.00 – 7.00	5.63	0.81

4 Results

A regression analysis was used to test H1, as regression allows to test whether there is a significant relationship between a dependent and an independent variable and can also indicate the strength of this relationship (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2018). Additionally, a bootstrapping method was performed using SPSS Process Macro to examine if the association between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainability and intention to buy sustainable fashion is mediated by attitude towards sustainable fashion (H2), subjective norm towards sustainable fashion consumption (H3) and/or PBC towards sustainable fashion consumption (H4). The Process Macro by Andrew Hayes is a computer tool which can be used as an extension for SPSS (Abu-Bader & Jones, 2021), and uses a regression-based approach to mediation. It allows researchers to see if the relationship between an independent (X) and dependent variable (Y) is mediated by another variable (M) (Hayes, 2013). The bootstrap sampling procedure was done with 5000 samples that were generated through SPSS with a 95% confidence interval. All coefficients shown in the results are the unstandardised effects (Hayes, 2013).

Before the mediation analysis using Hayes' Process Macro was conducted, the data was evaluated for normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. These assumption checks were conducted to make sure that the conclusions of the analysis could be correctly drawn, and thus prevents drawing false conclusions (Moran, 2021). In addition to the assumption checks, a correlation matrix was created before the analysis to test the hypotheses was conducted. Correlation will show the strength of the relationship between two variables, whereas regression will show how one variable affects another variable (Calvello, 2023). The direct relationship of two variables will thus be shown in the correlation matrix. Both the linear regression analysis (H1) and regression through Hayes' Process Macro (H2, H3 and H4) will give a more detailed explanation of this relationship as it looks at predictions and affects. The hypotheses will therefore be answered through linear regression and regression using Hayes' Process Macro.

4.1 Assumption checks

Before the research was conducted, the model was tested for linearity, homoscedasticity and normality, to prevent incorrect conclusions (Moran, 2021). To test for

linearity, scatterplots were created for the independent variable against the three mediators and the dependent variable. The scatterplots were created including a Loess curve, which represents the relationship between the tested variables. All scatterplots showed that the Loess curve was close to zero along the X axis, indicating that the regression is (fairly) linear (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017). After the model was tested for linearity, the model was checked for homoscedasticity. Using the scatterplots of the previous assumption check, it was checked if the residuals had constant variance and if the estimation error was equally distributed along the Y axis. This was the case for all variables, except for exposure to influencer marketing on the X axis, and attitude on the Y axis. This scatterplot showed small signs of heteroscedasticity, however not enough to raise concerns. It can be considered however, that this may impact the standard error of the coefficient once it is used within regression. Lastly, each residual was checked for normality, which implicates that the estimation error should be normally distributed (Kane & Ashbaugh, 2017). To test for normality, q-q plots were created with the residuals from previous assumption checks. All q-q plots showed normal distribution along the diagonal line, which means that there are no violations.

4.2 Correlation matrix

Before conducting the analysis of linear regression and regression through Hayes' process macro, a correlation matrix was created to help visualise the data set and to show the strength of the relationship between two variables, ultimately giving a better understanding of this study's findings. A correlation matrix provides information on the strength of the relationship between two variables, and whether it is a positive or negative relationship. A positive relationship would indicate that when there is an increase in one variable, there is also an increase in the other variable (Calvello, 2023). A negative relationship indicates that when there is an increase in one variable, there is a decrease in the other variable. This strength of the relationship is indicated through correlation coefficients (Pearson Correlation) and can range between -1 (negative relationship) and +1 (positive relationship), with 0 indicating no correlation (Durlak, 2009). The correlation matrix can be observed in table 2.

The correlation matrix shows that there is a significant, strong positive correlation between subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and intention to buy

sustainable fashion ($r = 0.59$, $p = <.001$). Thus, the higher someone's subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption, the higher someone's buying intention. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between control variable parasocial relationships and exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion ($r = 0.58$, $p = <.001$). This indicates that the more exposure to influencer marketing someone has, the more intense the parasocial relationship. Additionally, the relationship between attitude towards sustainable fashion and parasocial relationships ($r = .09$, $p = 0.251$), as well as the relationship between attitude towards sustainable fashion and subjective norm on sustainable fashion consumption ($r = .14$, $p = 0.074$) were found to be insignificant. This is also the case for the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion with both attitude towards sustainable fashion ($r = .15$, $p = 0.053$), and PBC on sustainable fashion consumption ($r = .10$, $p = 0.191$), as both the relationships were found to be insignificant.

To conclude, gender was found to have insignificant relationships with parasocial relationships ($r = 0.01$, $p = 0.864$), attitude ($r = -.07$, $p = 0.378$), subjective norm ($r = .05$, $p = 0.541$), PBC ($r = .07$, $p = 0.264$), buying intention ($r = .00$, $p = 0.960$) and age ($r = -.06$, $p = 0.471$). This is also the case for control variable age, as age has an insignificant relationship with attitude ($r = -.00$, $p = 0.997$), subjective norm ($r = -.04$, $p = 0.618$), PBC ($r = .07$, $p = 0.357$) and buying intention ($r = .08$, $p = 0.278$). Even though both age ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$) and gender ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$) were found to have a significant weak negative relationship with exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, both variables do not have a significant relationship with any of the outcome variables (the three mediators and y). This means that both age and gender do not affect the variables, and that they would thus stay the same between different ages and different genders. Both control variables will therefore be excluded from the analysis to test the hypotheses (Lhakhang et al., 2016).

Table 2

Correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Exposure	-							
2. Parasocial relationships	.57***	-						
3. Attitude	.15	.09	-					
4. Subjective norm	.40***	.39***	.14	-				
5. PBC	.09	.16*	.31***	.29***	-			
6. Buying intention	.33***	.26***	.29***	.59***	.45***	-		
7. Age	-.16*	-.20*	-.00	-.04	.07	.08	-	
8. Gender	-.22*	.01	-.07	.05	.07	.00	-.06	-

Note. Gender: (1 = woman, 2 = man)

* p < .05; *** p < .001

4.3 hypothesis testing

After conducting the assumption checks and creating the correlation matrix, the analysis using linear regression was conducted to test H1 and analysis using Hayes' Process Macro was conducted to test the associations and mediations as presented in H2, H3 and H4. Hayes' Process Macro has been proven helpful for this type of analysis, as this research contains a multiple mediation model, and was used to test multiple mediators and covariates in one analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The linear regression analysis was used to tests the direct impact of the independent variable (exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion) on de dependent variable (intention to buy sustainable fashion) and Hayes' Process Macro was used to test the indirect impact through the three different mediators (attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption), as presented in the hypotheses. Additionally, parasocial relationships was added as control variable and was controlled for, meaning that they were included in all consequent models (Hayes, 2013). For this analysis,

process model 4 was used as this allows more than 1 mediator in parallel between X and Y (Hayes, 2012). The overall model was found to be significant (F(5, 164) = 27.06, p < .001) , and it was able to explain 45.20% of the variance in respondents' intention to buy sustainable fashion.

4.3.1 Answering the hypotheses

H1: Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is positively associated with the intention to buy sustainable fashion

A single linear regression analysis was conducted to test the association between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and the intention to buy sustainable fashion. Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was entered as the independent variable whereas the intention to buy sustainable fashion was entered as the dependent variable. The relationships was found to be moderate and significant F(1, 171) = 20.53, β = 0.33 p < .001, and it was able to explain 10.70% of the variance in respondents' intention. H1 is therefore accepted.

H2: Attitude towards sustainable fashion mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion.

The direct effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was found to be insignificantly associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion (β = 0.08, t = 1.52, p = 0.130). However, the direct effect of attitude towards sustainable fashion on intention to buy sustainable fashion was found to be significant (β = 0.22, t = 2.10, p < 0.05). The indirect effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion (independent variable) on intention to buy sustainable fashion (outcome variable), mediated through attitude towards sustainable fashion, was found to be insignificant (β = 0.02, t = 1.29). This means that attitude does not mediate the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion, and thus H2 is rejected.

H3: Subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion

The direct effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was found to be significantly associated with subjective norm towards sustainable fashion consumption (β = 0.27, t = 2.86, p < 0.05). Additionally, subjective norm towards sustainable fashion was found to be significantly associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion (β = 0.40, t = 6.84, p < 0.001). The indirect effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion (independent variable) on intention to buy sustainable fashion (outcome variable) was mediated through subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption, as it was found to be significant (β = 0.11, t = 2.39). This means that subjective norm partially mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion consumption and intention to buy sustainable fashion, and thus H3 is accepted.

H4: Perceived behavioural control of sustainable fashion consumption mediates the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion

The direct effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was found to have be significantly associated with PBC of sustainable fashion consumption (β = -0.01, t = -0.08, p = 0.933). Moreover, PBC of sustainable fashion consumption was found to be significantly associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion (β = 0.27, t = 4.35, p < 0.001). The indirect effect of exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion (independent variable) on intention to but sustainable fashion (outcome variable) was not mediated through PBC of sustainable fashion consumption, as it was found to be insignificant (β = -0.00, t = -0.07). This means that PBC of sustainable fashion consumption does not mediate the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and intention to buy sustainable fashion, and thus H4 is rejected.

Table 3

Summary statistics for the parallel multiple mediation model

		Attitude (M1)				Subjective norm (M2)				PBC (M3)				Buying intention (Y)		
											Consequent					
Antecedent		β	SE	t		β	SE	t		β	SE	t		β	SE	t
Constant	iM1	4.03***	0.16	25.50	iM2	2.10***	0.28	7.54	iM3	4.59***	0.28	16.61	iy	0.27	0.48	0.55
Exposure (X)	a1	0.08	0.05	1.52	a2	0.27*	0.09	2.86	a3	-0.01	0.09	-0.08	c'	0.12	0.07	1.66
Attitude (M1)		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-	b1	0.22*	0.11	2.10
Subjective norm (M2)		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-	b2	0.40***	0.06	6.84
PBC (M3)		-	-	-		-	-	-		-	-	-	b3	0.27***	0.06	4.35
Parasocial relationship		0.02	0.04	0.44		0.21*	0.07	2.89		0.13	0.07	1.72		-0.03	0.06	-0.56
		$R^2 = 0.03$				$R^2 = 0.19$				$R^2 = 0.02$				$R^2 = 0.45,$		
		$F(2, 167) = 2.41$				$F(2, 167) = 19.11$				$F(2, 167) = 2.08$				$F(5, 164) = 27.06$		
		$p = 0.093$				$p < .001$				$p = 0.128$				$p < .001$		

Note. SE is standard error; parasocial relationship refers to the control variable

* p < .05; *** p < .001

5 Discussion

The popularity of influencer marketing is expected to grow in the coming years (Rahal, 2020) and its developments within the market are creating the need for constant additional research (Taylor, 2020). In recent years, the fashion industry has become one of the most considered branches in regards to influencer marketing (Chetioui et al., 2020). Within the fashion industry, consumers are becoming more aware of the consequences of fast fashion, and thus the importance of sustainable fashion (Henninger et al., 2016). Hence, the sustainable fashion industry is expected to grow tremendously in the coming years (Jacobson & Harrison, 2021). Overall, only limited research has been done on influencer marketing regarding sustainable fashion and little to no research has been done concerning consumers in the Netherlands. Therefore, this research aimed to answer the following research question: *"To what extent is influencer marketing on sustainable fashion associated with buying intention of young adults in the Netherlands?".*

In order to answer the research question, four hypotheses were formulated and tested in this research. This chapter will discuss the results and will reflect on the findings of the theoretical framework. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the limitations and future research suggestions.

5.1 Theoretical implications

5.1.1 Exposure and intention

Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was proven to be positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. This indicates that the more someone is exposed to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, the higher their intention to buy sustainable fashion. The positive association between influencers and buying intention is not entirely surprising, as Bakker (2018) mention this as one of the main motivations for brands to use influencer marketing as a strategy. Jacobsen and Harrison (2021) support this statement, as they argue that using sustainable influencers is a valid marketing tool. The aforementioned research emphasises that the consumers' interest in sustainability is not enough for actual buying behaviour and that influencers are an efficient tool to impact that behaviour. This research has confirmed that this is also true for the Dutch consumer.

Moreover, research by Yildirim (2021) argues that the use of social media influencers can be very sufficient for companies when they focus on sustainable growth. Experimental studies by Martínez-López et al. (2020) has shown that followers see influencers as experts in their domain, and that their followers value their opinion, which will ultimately stimulate the followers to search for additional information of the product, impacting their buying intention.

5.1.2 Attitude

Despite previous literature (Chetioui et al., 2020; Pradhan et al., 2016), exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion. Even though Jacobson and Harrison (2021) emphasised that influencers have a strong impact on their followers' attitude, this is not the case for sustainable fashion content. One of the reasons that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was not significantly associated with the attitude towards sustainable fashion, could be because the respondents' attitude towards sustainability was already positive. As Lee et al. (2021) emphasise, one of the main reasons people follow an influencer on social media is because they can relate to them and identify themselves with them. Additionally, research by Chopra et al. (2020) has found that people only follow influencers that fall within their area of interest. It is therefore possible that people who follow influencers that mention sustainability, were already aware and interested in sustainability, and thus already had a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion.

Additionally, research by Lee et al. (2021) also found consumerism as one of the main reasons why people follow influencers, indicating that people follow influencers for product or brand information and recommendations. This, again, indicates that people who follow sustainable fashion influencers were most likely already interested in sustainable fashion, before following the influencer. Following the influencer would help them source products, but it is not associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion. For future research however, it would be interesting to study whether influencer marketing could change attitude on sustainable fashion by either doing experiments or longitudinal research.

Moreover, even though exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not positively associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion in general, there could still be a positive association between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable

fashion and specific sustainable products or brands, such as shoe brand Veja (Buchholz, 2023) and fashion brand such as Sézane and Stella McCartney (Davis, 2023). As research by both Chetioui et al. (2020) and Pradhan et al. (2016) emphasise, influencer marketing can in fact impact brand attitude, whereas this research investigated the association between influencer marketing and attitude towards sustainable fashion in general. For instance, if an influencer promotes a sustainable brand that their followers either are not familiar with or are unaware of its sustainable aspect, it could lead to a positive attitude towards that specific brand. This could be explored in future research through experiments or through in-depth research investigation how and why certain attitudes are formed. Additionally, future research could study the impact of a specific influencer and researching their impact on the TPB model, to see how this differs to the generalised influencer marketing this study has researched.

Furthermore, attitude towards sustainable fashion was found to be positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. Which insinuates that when an individual has a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion, the higher this individual's intention is to buy sustainable clothing (Ajzen, 2002). Previous research by Mason et al. (2022) found that a sustainable attitude was positively associated with socially-responsible behaviour. Additionally, these results build on existing evidence by Rausch and Kopplin (2021), as their research emphasises that a positive attitude towards sustainable clothing impacts purchase intention.

5.1.3 Subjective norm

Although exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not positively associated with attitude towards sustainable fashion, the results have found that it is positively associated with subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption. Thus, watching fashion influencers talk about sustainable fashion is associated with the social pressure to behave a certain way. This confirms the statement of Lapinski and Rimal (2005), where they suggest that exposure to messages in the media could result in seeing what is presented in the media as socially acceptable. Additionally, the social pressure created by influencers could be explained through parasocial relationships (control variable), as parasocial relationships were found to be significantly associated with subjective norms as well. The parasocial relationship followers can form with influencers could result in seeing

that influencer as part of their social circle and seeing them as a trusted friend (Bond, 2016). As explained, subjective norm is about the social pressure to behave a certain way, as expected and approved by people important to them, such as friends or family (Chetioui et al., 2020). The theory around parasocial relationships would suggest that influencers could fall within this group of important people, as they can be seen as close friends. This could be one explanation as to why exposure to these influencers is positively associated with subjective norms.

Furthermore, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption was found to be positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. This indicates that when an individual experiences social pressure to buy sustainable fashion (subjective norm), the higher their intention will be to buy sustainable clothing. Research by De Lira and Da Costa (2022) confirm these findings as their research suggested that subjective norms are positively associated with the intention to buy consciously.

5.1.4 PBC

Moreover, the analysis found that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not positively associated with PBC of sustainable fashion consumption. Even though Djafarova and Foots (2022) indicate that influencers are making it easier for younger consumers to source products, the results of this research show otherwise. Research by Fielden and Holch (2022) explain that even though some research suggests influencer marketing does impact PBC, this can differ per type of content. This indicates that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not positively associated with PBC towards sustainable fashion consumption, because of the specific content of sustainable fashion. For future research it could therefore be recommended to do a comparative study on the difference between the impact of influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and the impact of influencer marketing on regular fashion.

Moreover, PBC on sustainable fashion consumption was found to be positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion, indicating that people who believe that they are able to buy sustainable fashion have a higher intention to buy sustainable clothing (PBC) (Ajzen, 2002). Research by Kumar et al. (2022) have also found a significant association between PBC and buying intention regarding sustainable clothing, and thus confirm the findings of this research. Additionally, research by Wang et al. (2007) found a significant

association between PBC and intention to buy online, and thus supporting the findings as well.

5.1.5 Mediation of theory of planned behaviour

To conclude, it can be confirmed that the TPB is positively associated with buying intention (Ajzen, 1991), and that this is thus also the case for buying intention regarding sustainable fashion. The three factors of TPB, attitude towards sustainable fashion, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption are all proven to be positively associated with intention to buy sustainable fashion. This is in line with research by Becker-Leidhold (2018), who suggested that the TPB was positively associated with the intention to engage in clothing rental as a sustainable clothing option. Additionally, research by Abrar et al. (2021) confirm the findings as well, as their research emphasises that a positive attitude towards sustainable clothing, as well as subjective norm and PBC impact purchase intention. Furthermore, research by Nguyen et al. (2019) and by Yadav and Pathak (2016) have also found that TPB is positively associated with buying intention.

Moreover, this research model studied if the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion was mediated by the three factors of the TPB. Out of the three mediators, subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption was found to be the only mediator for the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and buying intention of sustainable fashion. This relationship can thus be partly explained by subjective norm on sustainable fashion consumption, meaning that the social pressure to behave a certain way is indirectly associated with the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion.

Both attitude towards sustainable fashion and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption were not associated with exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, hence the lack of mediation by the two factors of the TPB. One explanation for this could be that consumers already had formed an attitude towards sustainable fashion and are already aware of the accessibility of sustainable clothing, and are thus not associated with or formed by exposure to influencer marketing. This can be explained by the fact that over the years, more companies have incorporated sustainable aspect in their products, and

fashion companies have started communicating more about the importance of sustainable clothing and its benefits (Puspita & Chae, 2021). Because of this growing market of sustainable fashion, it has become easier for consumers to know where to look for these sustainable clothing items, as more brands are creating sustainable products (Lundblad & Davies, 2015). Moreover, Dabas and Whang (2022) point out that both awareness and interest in sustainability has grown immensely over the years. With that, knowledge around sustainability grew over the years, which ultimately helped consumers form attitudes towards sustainability and would make it easier for them to know where to buy sustainable clothing items (Dabas & Whang, 2022).

However, the growing sustainable market (Lundblad & Davies, 2015) and the communication of companies on the importance of sustainable fashion (Puspita & Chae, 2021), may not be enough to impact individuals' subjective norm, as this is about the social pressure of people important to them. Influencers are likely to be part of the people important to individuals, as followers feel as if influencers are part of their trusted circle (Bond, 2016), which can be explained by the parasocial relationship followers can form with influencers (Bond, 2016; Masuda et al., 2022). This could explain why influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was found to be significantly associated with subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and why subjective norm was the only factor of the TPB to mediate the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing and intention to buy. However, it is suggested for future research to further investigate the parasocial relationship aspect of influencer marketing and to what extent followers feel this connection with the influencer. It is therefore suggested to study this by using a sample of people who all follow the same influencer, who is seen as credible by their followers (Chetioui et al., 2020), and thus investigate the parasocial relationship with this one particular (sustainable) influencer. Furthermore, it would be interesting to use the same research model (parallel multiple mediation model) to study the impact of this sample on the three factors of the TPB to find out if this differs with the current sample.

5.2 Practical implications

Influencer marketing brings potential for sustainable fashion brands, as the research indicates that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable content is in fact associated

with the intention to buy sustainable fashion. Fashion brands could therefore use this to their advantage, and implement influencer marketing as a strategy to promote their sustainable fashion brand. Additionally, it was found that influencer marketing on sustainable fashion was positively associated with the subjective norm of sustainable fashion (thus, the social pressure to behave a certain way). This indicates that companies can use influencers to spread sustainable messages and demonstrate their sustainable lifestyle and wardrobe (including products by companies), which ultimately will be associated with subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and thus intention to buy sustainable fashion.

However, the research showed that exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is not associated with either attitude towards sustainable fashion and PBC of sustainable fashion consumption. It is therefore not advised for companies to use influencer marketing to impact attitude, as this study found no association between the two variables. Additionally, the same advice is suggested for PBC of sustainable fashion consumption. Companies may not be able to impact the perception of how difficult or easy is it to purchase sustainable fashion, as this research found no association between the two variables. However, attitude, subjective norm and PBC were all found to be significantly associated with the intention to buy sustainable fashion. For companies this would mean that if people have a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion, a positive subjective norm or PBC towarda sustainable fashion consumption they are more likely to have a positive buying intention of sustainable fashion. For companies it is therefore relevant to find out what possibilities there are to impact those three factors of the TPB, as influencer marketing was only associated with subjective norm.

5.3 Limitations and directions for future research

This study is not without its limitations. In addition to previously mentioned limitations and suggestions, the sample consisted of mostly female participants (85%). As only 15% of the participants was male, this did not give a valid representation of the Dutch population and the generalisation of the study may therefore by compromised (Babbie, 2014). This can be due to the fact virtual snow ball sampling was used, which mostly reached the researchers personal network, which consists of mostly women. For future research it is

suggested to find out if the results of the study would differ with a male population. However, it is adviced to collect data in a different manner, as the virtual snowball sampling may have created selection bias (Baltar & Icart, 2012). Additionally, for this study data was collected by spreading the Survey on SurveyCirlce. The reliability of SurveyCircle can also be questioned, as the platform may stimulate individuals to fill out as many surveys as possible, which may result in respondents not paying attention or lying when filling out the survey.

Second, the scale for the control variable accessibility was not reliable, as it has a Cronbach's alpha of .57. Therefore, it was not used in the analysis and not measured as control variable. For future research it is therefore suggested to measure this differently by using a different scale with a Cronbach's Alpha higher than .65, which would make it reliable (Vaske et al., 2017). Another suggestion would be to create separate control variables of the different accessibility factors, and thus use a different scale for price and for how much effort it would take to buy sustainable fashion, as these were now combined.

Lastly, the research first included four control variables (gender, age, accessibility and parasocial relationships) as it was expected that they would be positively associated with the dependent variables. However, the final analysis was done with only parasocial relationship as control variable, as age and gender were found to have no correlation with the dependent variable (and accessibility was not reliable). For future research it is therefore suggested to focus on a bigger age group, as the age group that was now used (18-37) was too small to draw any conclusions on. Despite the researched age group being the most environmentally aware (Rahman & Koszewska, 2020) and most relevant for influencer marketing purposes (Lashbrook, 2021), it is interesting for future research to get a better understanding of the differences between different ages.

Additionally, respondents mentioned in the comments of the survey that they often struggle with pricing of sustainable fashion, do not find sustainable clothing fashionable and are not sure what clothing items are sustainable. These comments are in line with previous research by Diddi et al. (2019), which was done through focus groups, where respondents mentioned the same struggles regarding sustainable fashion. It would therefore be interesting for future studies to include pricing, style and knowledge as control variables.

5.5 Conclusion

The aim of this research is to answer the following research question: *"To what extent is influencer marketing on sustainable fashion associated with buying intention of young adults in the Netherlands?".* This research used both cultivation theory and the theory of planned behaviour to find out whether the relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion was mediated by the three factors of TPB (attitude, subjective norms and PBC). The results show that individuals within the Netherlands, aged 18-37, have a high intention to buy sustainable fashion when they have a positive attitude towards sustainable fashion, have a high subjective norm of sustainable fashion consumption and have a high PBC of sustainable fashion consumption. To answer the research question, exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion is positively associated with buying intention of sustainable fashion. The relationship between exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion and intention to buy sustainable fashion is mediated by subjective norm, which is not only positively associated with exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion, but also with parasocial relationships.

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Appendix A – Online survey

Intro Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. I am currently writing a thesis for the Master Media & Business at Erasmus University Rotterdam. My research is about influencers and sustainable fashion. The survey will take approximately 7 minutes to fill out. Please answer each question carefully as I am sincerely interested in your personal opinion.

Your participation is completely voluntarily, meaning that you can quit at any time during your participation. Furthermore, your personal information will be kept strictly confidential, and the findings of this survey will be used solely for thesis purposes. Hence, your anonymity is guaranteed. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with participating in this research.

If you have any questions during or after your participation, please feel free to contact me, Julia, at 625941js@eur.nl.

This survey is available in English and Dutch. If you would like to switch to Dutch, please use the language drop down menu in the top right corner.

De survey is beschikbaar in het Engels en het Nederlands. Als u de survey liever in het Nederlands invult, dan kunt u dit rechts bovenin het scherm aangeven.

I understand the above and agree on participating in this research.

○ I agree (1)

○ I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I understand the above and agree on participating in this research. = I do not agree

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Age What is your age?

▼ Younger than 18 (1) ... Older than 37 (22)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Do you have the Dutch nationality?

◯ Yes (1)

◯ No (2)

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Before starting the questions, it is important that you understand the concepts of fast fashion and sustainable fashion.

Fast fashion is defined as clothing that is produced cheap and fast, is sold for less, is made from cheap and low quality fabrics and stimulates the consumers to buy more frequently.

Sustainable fashion in defined as sustainably sourced and manufactured clothing by people with fair wages and working conditions, which ultimately means that the production of sustainable clothing is also better for the environment than the production of fast fashion. Additionally, the materials are of high quality, and the clothing is made to last.

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4: exposure

Before answering the following questions, it is important that you understand who is meant by fashion influencers that mention sustainability in their content. Please read the following text carefully before answering the following questions.

Fashion influencers are people who post mostly about fashion on their social media channels. Their contant can be styling tips, clothing hauls, what they are wearing, fashion

trends, etc. They often collaborate with fashion brands and promote these brands and clothing items on their social media channels. Fashion is their main topic on their social media accounts.

Some fashion influencers talk about sustainability in combination with their fashion content. For example, this can mean talking about sustainable clothing items, about where to buy clothing items that last longer, tips for a timeless wardrobe, the impact of fast fashion, what sustainable materials are and are sometimes working with sustainable fashion brands.

Amount influencers About how many fashion influencers do you follow on social media that mention sustainability in their content?

○ 0 (1)

○ 1 - 2 (2)

○ 3 - 4 (3)

○ 5 - 6 (4)

○ 6 - 8 (5)

○ 9 - 10 (6)

○ More than 10 (7)

Skip To: End of Survey If About how many fashion influencers do you follow on social media that mention sustainability in t... = 0

On what social media platforms do you follow these fashion influencers? You can select multiple answers.

☐ Instagram (1)

☐ Facebook (2)

☐ Twitter (3)

☐ YouTube (4)

☐ TikTok (5)

☐ Pinterest (6)

☐ Other, namely: (7)

_____

In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day do you spend watching the content of these fashion influencers?

○ Less than 10 minutes per day (1)

○ 10 - 30 minutes per day (2)

○ 31 - 60 minutes per day (3)

○ 1 - 2 hours per day (4)

○ 2 - 3 hours per day (5)

○ More than 3 hours per day (6)

Page Break

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please provide honest answers, there is no wrong or right.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
It is part of my everyday activity to watch the content of these fashion influencers. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am proud to tell people I follow these fashion influencers on social media. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Viewing content of these fashion influencers has become part of my daily routine. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel out of touch when I have not seen any content of these fashion influencers for a while. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I am part of these fashion influencers'	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

community. (5)		
I would be sorry if these fashion influencers stopped posting. (6)	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	

- -

Page Break ────────────────────────────────────

Parasocial relation To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please provide honest answers, there is no right or wrong.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When I am watching/reading the posts of these influencers, I feel as if I am part of her/his group. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think these influencers are like old friends. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to meet these influencers in person. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
These influencers make me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 4: exposure

60

Attitude The purchase of clothes considered sustainable is…

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	
Useless	○	○	○	○	○	Useful
Harmful	○	○	○	○	○	Beneficial
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	Pleasant
Unimportant	○	○	○	○	○	Important

Subj. norm To what extent do you agree with the following statements? Please provide honest answers, there is no wrong or right.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
People who are important to me think that I should buy sustainable fashion. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel under social pressure to buy sustainable fashion. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People who are important to me would be happy if I bought sustainable fashion. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When it comes to buying sustainable fashion, I want to do what important people think I should do. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Most of the people who are	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

important to me have bought sustainable fashion. (5)

The number of people important to me who have purchased sustainable fashion is...

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Low	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	High

Considering people important to you who make sustainable fashion purchases, how much do you think you would be similar to those people when making a purchase?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Little	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Much

End of Block: Block 6

Start of Block: Block 7

How much control do you have over purchasing sustainable fashion?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
No control	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Great control

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I am confident that I can buy sustainable fashion. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I wanted, it would be easy for me to buy sustainable fashion. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Block 8

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree or disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I am willing to buy sustainable fashion. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I plan to buy sustainable fashion. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will make an effort to buy sustainable fashion. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I have to choose between two identical fashion items, I always choose the one that is most sustainable. (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I have already convinced friends or relatives not to buy fashion that is not sustainable. (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I know the possible environmental and social damage that a fashion item can cause, I do not buy it. (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I already changed or stopped wearing clothing items for ecological reasons. (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I do not buy fashion items manufactured or sold by companies that harm or disrespect the environment and workers. (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Buying sustainable fashion is expensive. (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Finding sustainable fashion takes time and effort. (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Accessibility of sustainable fashion needs to be convenient. (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 9

Start of Block: Block 10

Gender What is your gender?

○ Female (1)

○ Male (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Prefer not to say (4)

Education What is your highest level of completed education?

○ None (1)

○ High school (2)

○ Vocational education (MBO) (3)

○ Bachelor of Applied Sciences (HBO) (4)

○ Bachelor's degree (5)

○ Master's degree (6)

○ PhD, MBA or other equivalent (7)

○ Other, namely: (8) _____

End of Block: Block 10

Start of Block: Block 11

Comments Please let me know if you have any questions or comments about this survey.

_____

End of Block: Block 11

Appendix B - Measures

Theory	Original item	New item	Scale
Attitude (Lira & Costa, 2022)	The purchase of clothes considered slow fashion is… a. Useless – useful b. Harmful – beneficial c. Bad d. Unpleasant – pleasant e. Unimportant – important	The purchase of clothes considered sustainable is… a. Useless – useful b. Harmful – beneficial c. Bad – good d. Unpleasant – pleasant e. Unimportant – important	5-point Likert scale
Subjective norm (Lira & Costa, 2022)	1. People who are important to me think that I should buy slow fashion products	1. People who are important to me think that I should buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	2. I feel under social pressure to buy slow fashion products	2. I feel under social pressure to buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	3. People who are important to me would be happy if I bought slow fashion products	3. People who are important to me would be happy if I bought sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	4. When it comes to buying slow fashion products, I want to do what important people think I should do	4. When it comes to buying sustainable fashion, I want to do what important people think I should do	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	5. Most of the people who are important to me has bought slow fashion products	5. Most of the people who are important to me have bought sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	6. The number of people important to me who	6. The number of people important to me who	7-point Likert scale (1 – low, 7 – high)

		have purchased slow fashion products is …		have purchased sustainable fashion products is …	
	7.	Considering people important to you who make slow fashion purchases, how much do you think you would be similar to those people when making **the** purchase?	8.	Considering people important to you who make sustainable fashion purchases, how much do you think you would be similar to those people when making **the** purchase?	7-point Likert scale (1 – not at all, 7 – very much)
Perceived behavioural control (PBC) (Lira & Costa, 2022)	1.	How much control do you have over purchasing slow fashion product?	1.	How much control do you have over purchasing sustainable fashion?	7-point Likert scale (1 – no control, 7 – great control)
	2.	I am confident that I can buy slow fashion product	2.	I am confident that I can buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	3.	If I wanted, it would be easy for me to buy slow fashion products	3.	If I wanted, it would be easy for me to buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
Buying intention (Han et al., 2010) and (Lira & Costa, 2022)	1.	I am willing to stay at a green hotel when traveling	1.	I am willing to buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	2.	I plan to stay at a green hotel when traveling	2.	I plan to buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	3.	I will make an effort to stay at a green hotel when traveling	3.	I will make an effort to buy sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	4.	When I have to choose	4.	When I have to choose	7-point Likert scale

		between two identical products, I always choose the one that is least harmful to other people and the environment	between two identical fashion items, I always choose the one that is most sustainable	(1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	5. I have already convinced friends or relatives not to buy products that harm the environment	5. I have already convinced friends or relatives not to buy fashion that is not sustainable	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	6. When I know the possible environmental and social damage that a product can cause, I do not buy it	6. When I know the possible environmental and social damage that a fashion item can cause, I do not buy it	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	7. I already changed or stopped using products for ecological reasons	7. I already changed or stopped wearing clothing items for ecological reasons	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	8. I do not buy products manufactured or sold by companies that harm or disrespect the environment and workers	8. I do not buy fashion items manufactured or sold by companies that harm or disrespect the environment and workers	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
Accessibility (control variable) (Han et al., 2010)	1. Staying at a green hotel is expensive	1. Buying sustainable fashion is expensive	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	2. Finding a green hotel when traveling takes time and effort	2. Finding sustainable fashion takes time and effort	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	3. Location of a green hotel needs to be convenient	3. Accessibility of sustainable fashion	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly

		needs to be convenient	disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
Exposure to influencer marketing on sustainable fashion (adapted from Facebook intensity scale) (Ellison et al., 2007)	1. About how many total Facebook friends do you have?	1. About how many fashion influencers do you follow on social media that mention sustainability in their content?	The original scale: 0 = 10 or less 1 = 11-50 2 = 51 – 100 3 = 101-150 4 = 151 – 200 5 = 201 – 250 6 = 251 – 300 7 = 301 – 400 8 = more than 400 Changed scale: 1 = 0 2 = 1 – 2 3 = 3 – 4 4 = 5 – 6 5 = 7 – 8 6 = 9 – 10 7 = more than 10
	2. In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on Facebook?	2. In the past week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day do you spent watching the content of these fashion influencers?	1 = Less than 10 minutes per day 2 = 10-30 minutes per day 3 = 31-60 minutes per day 4 = 1-2 hours per day 5 = 2-3 hours per day 6 = more than 3 hours per day
	3. Facebook is part of my everyday activity	3. It is part of my everyday activity to watch the content of these fashion influencers	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	4. I am proud to tell people	4. I am proud to tell	7-point Likert scale

		I'm on Facebook	people I follow these fashion influencers on social media	(1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	5.	Facebook has become part of my daily routine	5. Viewing content of these fashion influencers has become part of my daily routine	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	6.	I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while	6. I feel out of touch when I have not seen any content of these fashion influencers for a while	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	7.	I feel I am part of the Facebook community	7. I feel I am part of these fashion influencers' community	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	8.	I would be sorry if Facebook shut down	8. I would be sorry if these fashion influencers stopped posting	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
Parasocial relationships (Farivar et al., 2021)	1.	When I am watching/reading the posts of this influencer, I feel as if I am part of her (his) group	1. When I am watching/reading the posts of these influencer, I feel as if I am part of her/his group	7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree)
	2.	I think this influencer is like an old friend	2. I think this influencer is like an old friend	
	3.	I would like to meet this influencer in person	3. I would like to meet this influencer in person	
	4.	This influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends	4. This influencer makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends	