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Impact of Fashion Influencers on Generation Z and Millennials Purchasing Behaviour

Vpliv modnih vplivnežev na nakupne navade generacije Z in milenijcev

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Abstract

In the age of social media, influencers are an important marketing tool, especially when it comes to their influence on Generation Z and Millennials as they use influencer communication techniques. The article summarises the findings of various studies in which the authors study the influence of online influencers on purchasing behaviour when it comes to fashion products, emphasising the importance of authenticity, originality and transparency. The research also shows that an appropriate content strategy is important for the credibility of influencers, who, through thoughtful storytelling techniques, encourage favourable responses from followers and share content on social networks. In the study, we examined the influence of fashion influencers on the purchasing behaviour of Instagram users, especially when it comes to young people. Our objective was to analyse the impact of influencers, the power of their tools and how they are perceived by consumers. The aim of the research was to contribute to understanding the role of influencers in young people's fashion purchases. Our research shows that Instagram influencers play an important role in the purchasing decisions of respondents who actively follow fashion content. The research results show that official profiles and user reviews have a greater impact on purchasing decisions than sponsored posts by influencers. There is also moderate scepticism regarding the accessibility of fashion influencer profiles, which is reflected in the relatively low share of those who made purchases based solely on their recommendations. Nevertheless, respondents regularly buy textiles online, mainly for practical reasons, e.g. greater choice and easier shopping. Sustainability is also important in their purchasing decisions. The results can significantly contribute to effective marketing strategies when it comes to fashion purchases.

Keywords: digital marketing, influencer marketing, Instagram, fashion, Gen Z and Millennials



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Izvleček

V času družbenih omrežij so vplivneži z uporabo različnih komunikacijskih tehnik pomembno marketinško orodje, še posebno ko gre za njihov vpliv na generacijo Z in milenijce. V članku so povzete ugotovitve različnih raziskav, v katerih avtorji proučujejo vpliv spletnih vplivnežev na nakupno vedenje, ko gre za modne izdelke, kjer avtorji poudarjajo predvsem pomen avtentičnosti, originalnosti in transparentnosti. Raziskave tudi kažejo, da je ustrezna vsebinska strategija pomembna za verodostojnost vplivnežev, ki s premišljenimi tehnikami pripovedovanja zgodb spodbujajo ugodne odzive sledilcev in delijo vsebine na družbenih omrežjih. Z raziskavo smo želeli proučiti vpliv modnih vplivnežev na nakupno vedenje uporabnikov Instagrama, še posebno ko gre za mlajšo populacijo. Naš cilj je bil analizirati vpliv vplivnežev, moč njihovih orodij in kako jih dojemajo kupci. Namen raziskave je bil prispevati k razumevanju vloge vplivnežev pri modnih nakupih mladih. Naša raziskava kaže, da imajo Instagram vplivneži pomembno vlogo pri nakupnih odločitvah anketirancev, ki aktivno spremljajo modne vsebine. Izsledki prav tako nakazujejo, da imajo uradni profili in ocene uporabnikov večji vpliv na odločitve o nakupu kot sponzorirane objave vplivnežev. Zmeren dvom se pojavi tudi glede dostopnosti profilov modnih vplivnežev, kar se odraža v relativno nizkem deležu tistih, ki so nakupe opravili zgolj na podlagi njihovih priporočil. Kljub temu anketiranci redno kupujejo tekstil preko spleta, predvsem iz praktičnih razlogov, kot sta večja izbira in lažji nakup. Trajnost je tudi pomembna pri njihovih odločitvah o nakupu. Izsledki raziskave lahko pomembno prispevajo k učinkovitim marketinškim strategijam, ko gre za nakupe modnih izdelkov. Ključne besede: digitalni marketing, vplivnostni marketing, Instagram, moda, generacija Z in milenijci

1 Introduction

In an era dominated by social media, online influencers have become an important marketing tool for brands seeking to connect with their target customers. In the time of daily connectivity, especially among Generation Z (Gen Z) on social media, influencers build their influence with brands by regularly posting texts, images and videos; this is especially evident among the younger generation.

1.1 The main area

Contemporary research on consumer behaviour increasingly highlights the influence of social media marketing, particularly through influencers, on younger demographics. A distinct group of micro-influencers has emerged, recognised for their perceived authenticity, personal engagement with followers and creative talent. Their success is largely driven by the followers who use them as models in shaping their brands [1].

The rise of virtual influencers further expands

this landscape. Their effectiveness seems closely tied to traits such as emotional warmth, relatability and credibility [2]. The broader context of digital transformation – including advancements in artificial intelligence and the growing role of social media – has considerably reshaped consumer decision-making processes [3]. Retail strategies are now influenced by a mix of channel characteristics and consumer expectations, leading to complex omnichannel marketing approaches [4]. In this dynamic, influencer marketing thrives especially when rooted in transparency and a sense of authenticity [5].

Influencers utilise their online presence to showcase curated lifestyles, perspectives and talents that resonate with specific brand values, forging mutually beneficial relationships. This alignment promotes both social influence and financial opportunities. Micro-influencers – typically with follower counts ranging from 1,000 to 100,000 – often concentrate on niche areas, enabling them to maintain a high

level of trust and perceived authenticity among their audience [6]. Their strategy involves fostering a sense of closeness and collaboration with their followers, blurring the line between the audience and influencer.

In a study involving more than 12,000 participants [1], micro-influencers were found to gain traction on social networks by capitalising on traits such as authenticity, openness and creative communication. Their ability to present themselves through music, art and social engagement significantly enhances their competitive edge. These influencers are most active in sectors such as fashion, beauty, tourism, food and beverages – product categories that are inherently expressive and sensitive to trends and pricing. The study also reveals generational differences; while older generations like Generation X and the so-called Silver Surfers often pursue financial rewards, younger audiences, especially Gen Z, are driven by a desire for recognition. Gender has a limited role; however, financial motives are more evident in entertainment-related sectors, whereas fame-driven individuals focus on interactive areas like music and social exchange. In fashion and tourism, micro-influencers exert especially strong influence and their self-branding revolves around establishing exclusivity while fostering a sense of belonging.

1.2 Aim

Further research focuses on the fashion industry and supports these insights. It confirms that micro-influencers are often more effective than their macro counterparts in driving purchase decisions due to the higher trust and authenticity they are perceived to embody [7]. Younger generations, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, are especially responsive to Instagram-based marketing strategies. Studies indicate that women are more susceptible to impulsive purchases triggered by emotionally charged content [8]. Successful Instagram strategies often include storytelling techniques that connect emotionally, highlighting the importance of credible and knowledgeable influencers who foster positive attitudes toward fashion trends [9].

The impact of influencers on Gen Z is especially pronounced. Their credibility directly shapes brand perception and purchase intention, with 85% of young consumers acknowledging that such influencers affect their buying choices [10, 11]. Instagram remains the leading platform where Gen Z prefers to engage with product-related content and lifestyle narratives. In the highly competitive online fashion sector, this level of influence translates into a significant advantage.

Effective influencer marketing also relies on well-crafted content strategies. High-quality storytelling – using methods like brand evaluations, emotional connections, and identity-building – has proven effective in generating favourable electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) [12]. The creative use of elements such as captions, emojis and visually engaging posts further boosts user engagement, especially when used by influential personalities [13]. Studies measuring consumer response indicators such as purchase intent, brand perception and impulse buying demonstrate tangible economic impacts, including improved visibility and consumer interaction [14, 15].

Finally, consumer attitudes in regional markets such as Slovenia reveal a strong preference for sustainable and certified eco-friendly textile products. These items are perceived as more costly but also more responsible and aligned with sustainability values [16].

Successful influencer strategies consistently focus on producing content that is authentic, trustworthy and tailored to the target audience. These strategies often include storytelling and platform-specific adaptations. Influencers vary from celebrities to niche experts, yet the common goal remains, i.e. creating engaging, high-quality content that resonates with their community while enhancing brand visibility and driving consumer behaviour.

1.3 Research field

In the research, we focused on consumer purchasing behaviour, which is one of the most interesting

research areas in marketing, as it is influenced by a multitude of factors that, in various combinations, lead the consumer to make a purchase. Consumer purchasing behaviour is a complex process. Many sciences (sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics) are involved in studying consumer behaviour. We will focus on influencers who impact their followers with their behaviour.

Influencers are individuals who have a large reach and influence on social media and can guide the purchasing decisions and behaviour of their followers with their opinions, recommendations and content. They usually specialise in a specific field, e.g. fashion, technology, fitness or travel, and work with brands to promote products or services. Their influence is based on authenticity, follower engagement and the ability to create compelling content. Fashion influencers have a strong impact on young people (Gen Z and Millennials), as they shape fashion trends, encourage purchasing decisions and promote certain brands through social media. Their authenticity and accessibility create a sense of trust, which is why young people often imitate their style and follow their recommendations. In addition, influencers also affect values such as sustainable fashion, ethical production and individuality, which changes the way young people perceive and consume fashion.

2 Methods

In the research, we used a quantitative online survey method, as we wanted to shed light on various aspects that influence purchasing behaviour and provide insight into the power of influencers when it comes to fashion. Our objective was to analyse the impact of influencers, the power of their tools and how they are perceived by buyers, especially when it comes to young people. The aim of the research was to contribute to understanding the role of influencers when it comes to young people's fashion purchase decisions.

We wanted to analyse the data obtained using a survey questionnaire on the importance of individ-

ual factors with which influencers influence the purchase of fashion products by Gen Z and Millennials and above all, to interpret the obtained results and verify the hypotheses set. Moreover, based on the research conducted, we wanted to provide recommendations for further research and practice.

2.1 Research plan

The online questionnaire consisted exclusively of closed-ended questions. This method was chosen to efficiently gather responses from Instagram users about their behaviours and attitudes related to fashion influencers. A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of exclusively closed-ended questions (multiple choice and Likert-type scales). The survey instrument was constructed based on the themes identified in the literature on influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. Questions consequently covered topics such as Instagram usage habits, engagement with fashion content, perceptions of influencer credibility and self-reported purchasing behaviour influenced by various sources (influencers, official brand content, peer reviews). Where possible, we drew on or adapted items from previous studies to ensure content validity, e.g. we included a question with a 5-point scale asking respondents how often Instagram advertising influences their attitude toward fashion products (from "Never" to "Almost always"), similar to the measures used in prior social media impact studies. Some questions were tailored to our context (e.g. naming Instagram specifically, or local examples), and the overall questionnaire was reviewed by two marketing faculty members for clarity and relevance.

Before full deployment, the survey underwent a brief pre-test with a small group of five individuals from the target population (university students and young professionals) to ensure that questions were clear and interpreted as intended. This feedback led to minor wording adjustments. No formal pilot study or scale validation (e.g. factor analysis) was conducted due to time constraints and the primarily exploratory nature of some questions – this

is acknowledged as a limitation. However, many questions were straightforward factual or preference items (e.g. “Do you follow fashion content on Instagram? Yes/No,” or selecting which content type influences you most), which mitigated the need for extensive psychometric validation of scales.

The survey was conducted via the website Ika.si. Respondents accessed the online survey via a web link. Our sample consisted of everyone who uses Instagram. It comprised several sections, namely Demographics (age, gender, education), Instagram usage (frequency of use, following of fashion content), Content Influence – which types of Instagram content (sponsored influencer posts, friends’ posts, official brand profiles, user reviews etc.) are most persuasive, Behaviour and Attitudes – including whether the respondent follows fashion influencers and whether they have ever purchased clothing based solely on an influencer’s recommendation, and perceptions regarding the fashion industry and sustainability. The survey was anonymous and took approximately 5–7 minutes to complete.

The sample was a non-probability sampling, i.e. a convenience sampling. We accessed the sample by sharing the link to the survey on the social networks Facebook and Instagram, through the online classrooms of marketing and informatics students at the Ljubljana School of Business, and friends/family. We also asked social network users to forward the survey to their friends and acquaintances. The online survey was available for 14 days. We expected approximately 100 appropriate responses for analysis; however, in the end, we received 185 completed questionnaires, 183 of which were completed correctly and met all the conditions.

The obtained data was then analysed with SPSS and MS Excel, using various statistical methods. We first performed descriptive statistics to summarise the data (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) for all survey questions. This provided an overview of sample characteristics and general trends (e.g. proportion of respondents following fashion content, or average self-reported influence

of Instagram advertising). These descriptive results are presented in a series of tables for clarity.

To test our hypotheses, we employed inferential statistical tests. In particular, we used the chi-square test of independence for hypotheses that involved categorical comparisons (e.g. comparing groups of respondents on whether they have made a purchase based on an influencer’s recommendation). The chi-square test is appropriate for identifying whether differences in proportions between groups are statistically significant. For each relevant hypothesis, contingency tables were constructed (cross-tabulating, e.g. age group by following fashion content, or following influencers by purchase behaviour), and the chi-square statistic (χ^2) and p-value were calculated. A significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance. We reported the p-values and established whether the hypotheses were supported or not.

2.2 Hypotheses

Drawing on the literature review and research objectives, we formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Generation Z and Millennials follow fashion content on Instagram more than older generations.

This hypothesis posits a generational difference in engagement with fashion-related content on Instagram. Younger users, being digital natives, are expected to have higher involvement in following fashion influencers or brands on social media¹. We anticipate that respondents in Gen Z/Millennial age ranges will report a higher rate of following fashion content compared to older respondents (e.g. those above Millennial age).

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Instagram sponsored posts by influencers are the most likely to persuade respondents to buy fashion products.

¹ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/gen-z-social-media-and-shopping-habits/>

This hypothesis reflects the assumption that influencer advertisements (sponsored posts) have a particularly strong influence on consumer buying decisions, perhaps more so than other content on Instagram (such as brand's own posts or peer content). The rationale comes from studies indicating that sponsored influencer content can be highly effective, e.g. one Gen Z study found that 80% of participants responded very favourably to sponsored influencer material². We therefore expect sponsored posts to be ranked by respondents as the content type most likely to convince them to buy fashion items.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The respondents who follow fashion influencers are more inclined to buy clothes based solely on their recommendations.

Theoretical justification for this hypothesis lies in the social influence and parasocial relationship theory: individuals who choose to follow fashion influencers likely trust them or find their content appealing, which should translate into a higher propensity to act on their recommendations³. Prior research shows a strong correlation between following influencers and being influenced by them in purchasing contexts⁴. We expect to find that the respondents in our sample who follow fashion influencers have a significantly higher rate of having made a purchase due to an influencer's recommendation, compared to those who do not follow influencers.

Hypothesis 4: The respondents who follow fashion content are more often willing to buy clothes simply because of influencer recommendations.

This hypothesis is related to H3; however, it extends the concept to anyone engaging with fashion

content (not only specific influencer accounts). The idea is that if a person is interested in fashion content on Instagram – whether through influencers, brand pages, or hashtags – they are immersed in the social media fashion culture and thus more open to influence from any fashion-related source. Essentially, being a follower of fashion content creates a receptive mindset towards influencer suggestions. Industry surveys support this notion: users who follow brands or fashion pages on social media are much more likely to purchase products promoted on these platforms⁵. We hypothesise that the respondents who indicate they follow fashion content on Instagram will show a greater willingness (and actual behaviour) to buy items purely due to influencer endorsements, compared to those who do not follow fashion content.

3 Results and discussion

A total of 183 respondents participated in the survey. The key demographic characteristics are summarised in Table 1. The majority of respondents were female (approximately 78%), reflecting a gender imbalance in our sample. In terms of age, our sample skewed slightly older than the primary target of Gen Z: more than half of respondents (56%) were over 36 years old, while about one-third (31%) were between 19 and 25 years old; the remainder fell between 26 and 35. This indicates that a significant portion of participants were older Millennials or even Gen X, which is noteworthy for interpreting the results of H1 (since we have a substantial comparison group of older vs. younger). Regarding education level, 75% of respondents reported having higher or university-level education, and only 5% had a vocational (secondary) education, meaning the sample was relatively well-educated.

These demographics highlight a limitation, the sample is namely not representative of the general

2 <https://wsj.westsciences.com/index.php/wsis/article/view/317#:~:text=authenticity.%20Transparency%20%2872.5,of%20Generation%20Z%20in%20Indonesia>
3 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02512-1#:~:text=credibility%20and%20purchase%20intention%20by,moderating%20effect%20on%20the%20relationship>
4 <https://wsj.westsciences.com/index.php/wsis/article/view/317#:~:text=locations,percent%20of%20users%20preferred%20partnerships>

5 <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/gen-z-social-media-and-shopping-habits/>

population of Instagram users in terms of gender and age distribution. Instead, it over-represents women and includes a large fraction of older individuals. This bias will be considered when discussing the generalisability of findings. Nevertheless, it also

provides an interesting internal comparison – since we do have respondents across different age groups, we can observe generational differences within our data, albeit within a convenience sample.

Table 1: Demographic data

Demographic data	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Gender	Female	142	78%	78
	Men	41	22%	100
Age	0–18 years	0	0%	0
	19–25 years	31	17%	17
	26–35 years	45	25%	42
	36–45 years	60	33	74
	46 years and older	47	26	100
Education	Primary school	0	0	0
	Secondary school	10	5	5
	High education	35	19	25
	Higher education	68	37	62
	University education	70	38	100
	Total	183	100	

Nearly all respondents were active Instagram users, as expected by our inclusion criteria. Table 2 shows that the vast majority of the respondents (76%) use Instagram, and the majority of Instagram users (91%) spend up to two hours per day on the platform. 62% of the respondents follow fashion content on Instagram. About half of the respondents (49%) believe that Instagram advertising rarely influences their attitude towards fashion products. The mean of the responses for the impact of Instagram advertising ($AM = 2.6$, $SD = 0.9$) shows that the majority of the respondents tend to be moderately influenced by Instagram advertising.

We specifically explored which types of Instagram content respondents find most convincing when it comes to making purchasing decisions for fashion products. This addresses H2. We provided multiple options and allowed respondents to select all that apply. The content types included: sponsored influencer posts, posts by friends/acquaintances, official brand profiles/posts, user reviews or opin-

ions (e.g. in comments or Q&A stories), and video tutorials or product demonstration posts. Table 3 summarises the results of this question.

Table 3 shows the responses when the respondents were asked which types of content on Instagram most persuade them to buy. Official brand profiles convince the most respondents (59%). Ratings and opinions of users (48%) also have a significant impact on the purchase, as users often trust the experiences and reviews of other consumers. Sponsored posts by influencers (15%) proved to be the least convincing in this survey.

The results from Table 3 are somewhat striking: official brand profiles outranked influencer posts by a large margin in terms of perceived influence on purchasing. This finding runs counter to the assumption in H2 that influencer-sponsored posts would dominate. Instead, it appears that respondents rely more on direct brand communications and peer feedback. This could reflect a scepticism towards influencer promotions – possibly viewing them as ads – or simply that

Table 2: Using Instagram and following fashion content on Instagram

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Do you use the social network Instagram?	Yes	136	76	76
	No	42	24	100
	Total respondents	178	100	
How much time do you spend on Instagram per day?	Less than 1 hour per day	63	46	46
	1–2 hours per day	61	45	91
	3–4 hours per day	12	9	100
	More than 5 hours per day	0	0	100
	Total respondents	136	100	
Do you follow fashion content on this platform?	Yes	84	62	62
	No	52	38	100
	Total respondents	136	100	
Do you think Instagram advertising influences your attitude towards fashion products?	1 – Never	14	10	10
	2 – Rarely	52	39	49
	3 – Sometimes	48	36	85
	4 – Often	16	12	97
	5 – Almost always	4	3	100
	Total respondents	134	100	
Mean of the responses		2.6	Std. deviation	0.9

official brand pages often provide reliable information (e.g. product details, new arrivals) that directly facilitates purchase decisions. The relatively high trust in user reviews (48%) aligns with global trends where consumers trust peer experiences and reviews as much as or even more than traditional advertising.

Our survey included questions to gauge how

many respondents actively follow fashion influencers on Instagram and whether they imitate or take inspiration from these influencers, as well as if they have ever made a purchase based solely on an influencer's recommendation. These questions help address H3 and H4 by segmenting the sample according to their engagement level.

Table 3: What types of content on Instagram convince you the most to buy?

What types of content on Instagram convince you the most to buy? – more possible answers	Frequency	Valid	Percentage (%)
Sponsored influencer posts	20	130	15
Posts by friends and acquaintances	51	130	39
Official brand profiles	77	130	59
User reviews and opinions (comments, Q&A story)	62	130	48
Video tutorials and product demonstrations	39	130	30
Total respondents		130	

Table 4 shows that 46% of the respondents regularly follow fashion influencers, 16% only sometimes, while 38% do not follow fashion influencers. The largest share of the respondents (42%) rarely follow

ideas and styles recommended by influencers and 25% of the respondents do not imitate them at all. The mean of the responses for the variable following fashion influencers (AS = 2.2, SD = 0.9) shows that

while most respondents follow influencers, they only occasionally or rarely imitate them in fashion trends.

Only 30% of the respondents have purchased clothing solely on the recommendation of an online influencer.

Table 4: Impact of content and influencers

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Do you follow any fashion influencers?	Yes	61	46	46
	No	51	38	84
	Sometimes	22	16	100
	Total respondents	134	100	
Do you want to imitate their ideas, styles, recommendations on fashion trends?	1 - Never	34	25	25
	2 - Rarely	56	42	67
	3 - Sometimes	33	25	92
	4 - Often	11	8	100
	5 - Almost always	0	0	100
	Total respondents	134	100	
	Mean of the responses	2.2	Std. deviation	0.9
Have you ever purchased clothes based exclusively on the recommendation of an online influencer?	Yes	40	30	30
	No	94	70	100
	Total respondents	134	100	

Table 5: The respondents' opinions on actual image of fashion industry

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Do you think that the fashion trends predicted by online influencers are important to you and affect your purchasing behavior?	1 - I don't know	3	2	2
	2 - Never	43	33	35
	3 - Rarely	46	35	70
	4 - Sometimes	35	27	97
	5 - Often	4	3	100
	6 - Almost always	0	0	100
	Total respondents	131	100	
	Mean of the responses	3.0	Std. deviation	0.9
Do you think fashion influencers portray a realistic image of the fashion industry?	1 - Yes	5	4	4
	2 - Partially	75	57	61
	3 - No	51	39	100
	Total	131	100	
	Mean of the responses	2.4	Std. deviation	0.6
Do you think fashion influencers portray a realistic lifestyle?	1 - Yes	1	1	1
	2 - Partially	39	30	31
	3 - No	91	69	100
	Total respondents	131	100	
	Mean of the responses	2.7	Std. deviation	0.5

Table 5 shows that 68% of the respondents believe that fashion trends posted by influencers

on their Instagram profiles are not relevant to their shopping process. Only 4% of respondents believe

that influencers represent the real fashion industry. Most respondents (57%) estimate that the portrayal of the fashion industry is only partly realistic. The average agreement (AS = 2.4, SD = 0.6) is closer to the “Partially” answer, confirming that the general opinion in the sample is reserved: most do not believe that influencers fully capture reality, but are aware that some aspects of fashion are still reflected. As many as 69% of the respondents believe that fashion influencers do not portray a realistic lifestyle

and additional 30% estimate that this portrayal is only partially realistic.

Table 6, which shows how respondents assess their attitude towards fashion, shows that 39% of the respondents follow fashion, but do not necessarily dress according to trends, 31% follow fashion only occasionally, and 18% of respondents regularly follow fashion and trends. The mean (AS = 2.7, SD = 1.0) shows that most respondents tend to follow fashion moderately.

Table 6: Attitude towards fashion

Question	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
How would you rate your attitude towards fashion?	1 - Not interested	18	10	10
	2 - I only occasionally follow fashion trends	53	31	41
	3 - I follow fashion, but I don't dress according to trends	67	39	80
	4 - I regularly follow fashion and trends	31	18	98
	5 - I am very involved in the fashion industry (e.g., blogger, stylist, influencer, fashion designer)	4	2	100
	Total respondents	173	100	
	Mean of the responses	2.7	Std. deviation	1.0

Table 7 shows how often the respondents buy fashion products (textiles) online, showing that as many as 34% of the respondents buy textiles online frequently, 27% of them sometimes and 22% rarely shop online. The mean of the responses (AS = 3.0,

SD = 1.1) indicates that the overall level of online shopping is moderate, with a standard deviation of 1.1 indicating that the habits of the respondents are relatively diverse.

Table 7: Online purchasing

Question	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Do you buy fashion products (textiles) online?	1 - Never	16	9	9
	2 - Rarely	40	23	33
	3 - Sometimes	47	27	60
	4 - Often	59	34	94
	5 - Almost always	10	6	100
	Total respondents	172	100	
	Mean of the responses	3.0	Std. deviation	1.1

Table 8 displays what most attracts the respondents to buying clothes online and shows that the largest proportion (60%) are most attracted by the greater choice of products, with 57% also pointing out the ease of delivery and returns. Furthermore,

lower prices (43%) and other benefits (discounts, promotions, loyalty programmes) (46%) influence the decision. Influencer recommendations (5%) are by far the least common reason to buy online.

Table 8: What attracts you most to online clothing shopping?

What attracts you most to online clothing shopping?	Frequency	Valid	Valid (%)
Lower prices than in stores	71	167	43
Greater choice of products	100	167	60
Influencer recommendations	8	167	5
Easy delivery and returns	95	167	57
Other benefits (discounts, promotions, loyalty programs)	76	167	46
Total respondents		167	

In Table 9, which shows whether the respondents are interested in the sustainability aspect (eco materials, ethical production), we can see that the majority of the respondents (68%) occasionally take

sustainability aspects into account when buying clothing. Only 6% always buy sustainable products, while 26% do not pay attention to this aspect.

Table 9: Sustainability

Question	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Are you interested in the sustainable aspect (eco materials, ethical production) when buying clothes?	1 - Yes, I always buy sustainable products	11	6	6
	2 - Yes, I occasionally take this aspect into account	117	68	74
	3 - No, it doesn't matter to me when shopping	44	26	100
	Total respondents	172	100	
	Mean of the responses	2.2	Std. deviation	0.5

Table 10, which presents how much the respondents spend on online clothing purchases per month, shows that the vast majority of the respondents (75%) spend up to 100 euros per month on online clothing purchases, 20% spend up to 100 to 200 euros, only 5% of the respondents spend from

200 to 400 euros, and no one exceeds spending more than 400 euros.

With the descriptive results covered, we now proceed to hypothesis testing, where we tie these findings back to H1–H4, providing statistical evidence for confirmation or rejection.

Table 10: Monthly spending on online clothing purchases

Question	Answers	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
How much do you spend per month buying clothes online?	< 100 euros	124	75	75
	100–200 euros	33	20	95
	200–400 euros	9	5	100
	> 400 euros	0	0	100
	Total respondents	166	100	

Hypothesis 1. Generation Z and Millennials follow fashion content more on Instagram than older generations. NOT CONFIRMED

To test H1, we split respondents into two age groups: “younger” (Gen Z & Millennials, roughly ages 15–35) and “older” (above 35, which in our

sample primarily corresponds to Gen X). We then compared the proportions of each group that reported following fashion content on Instagram. However, since our sample had a skew (with 56% over age 36), we conducted a chi-square test to see if

the difference was statistically significant.

The Table 11 shows that out of 173 respondents, 130 (75.1%) provided valid answers and 43 (24.9%) did not, regarding whether people younger or older than 46 follow fashion content on the platform.

Table 11: Summary of statistical analysis characteristics

Case processing summary	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Age younger older 46 Do you follow fashion content on this platform?	130	75.1	43	24.9	173	100.0

Based on the analysis of the results (Table 12), we can see that Gen Z and Millennials (aged 19 to 45) are slightly more likely to follow fashion content on Instagram compared to older generations (46 years and older). However, the chi-square test (Table 13) $p = 0.269$ ($p > 0.05$) shows that the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, H1 cannot be confirmed.

Table 12: Age contingency table according to fashion content monitoring

Age younger older 46		Do you follow fashion content on this platform?	
		Yes	No
19–45 years	Count	69	38
	Percentage	64.5%	35.5%
46 years and older	Count	12	11
	Percentage	52.2%	47.8%
Total respondents	Count	81	49
	Percentage	62.3%	37.7%

In other words, H1 was not confirmed by our data. The difference in following fashion content between younger and older respondents, while present in raw percentages, was not statistically reliable given our sample size and distribution. One likely reason is the composition of our “older” group: many older respondents in our sample might still be

Table 13: Chi-square test for age association and monitoring of fashion content

Chi-Square statistics	Value	df	Asymp-totic sig-nificance (2-sided)	Exact sig. 2-sided)	Exact sig. (1-sided)
Pearson chi-square	1,222 ^{a)}	1	.269		
Number of valid cases	130				

^{a)} 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.67.

relatively tech-savvy (since they came through social media channels), and a fair number of them do follow fashion content, making the gap smaller than hypothesised. In our data, 63% of the respondents under 36 followed fashion content, compared to about 55% of those aged 36 and above – a difference, but not a dramatic one. Therefore, H1 cannot be confirmed with statistical confidence, suggesting that in our sample, Gen Z/Millennial users were not significantly more likely to follow fashion content on Instagram than the older (Gen X) users.

Here’s a bar chart visualising the percentage of people in each age group who follow fashion content on the platform (Figure 1). People aged 19–45 are more likely to follow fashion content (64.5%)

compared to those 46 and older (52.2%). Conversely, a higher percentage of older users (47.8%) do not follow fashion content compared to younger users (35.5%).

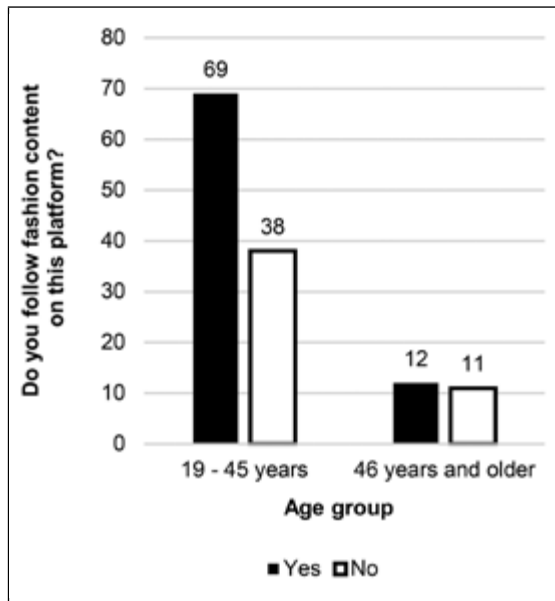


Figure 1: Fashion content following by age group

Hypothesis 2. Instagram sponsored posts by influencers are the most likely to persuade respondents to buy fashion products. NOT CONFIRMED

This hypothesis can be evaluated by looking at the results we described in Table 3 (content types that persuade purchases). The expectation was that sponsored influencer posts would rank highest.

Table 14 shows which types of content on Instagram most persuade the respondents to buy. Sponsored posts by influencers (15%) proved to be the least convincing in this survey. Official brand profiles (59%) have the most significant impact, indicating a high level of trust in direct, official information. Therefore, H2 cannot be confirmed.

Table 14 and Figure 2 illustrate how often different types of Instagram content convince users to make a purchase. The content types are ranked by their influence (frequency of selection) among the respondents. Official brand profiles are the most convincing, with the highest frequency (close to 80).

Table 14: What types of content on Instagram convince you the most to buy?

What types of content on Instagram convince you the most to buy?	Frequen- cy	Valid	Percent- age (%)
Sponsored influencer posts	20	130	15
Posts by friends and acquaintances	51	130	39
Official brand profiles	77	130	59
User reviews and opinions (comments, Q&A story)	62	130	48
Video tutorials and product demonstrations	39	130	30
Total respondents	-	130	

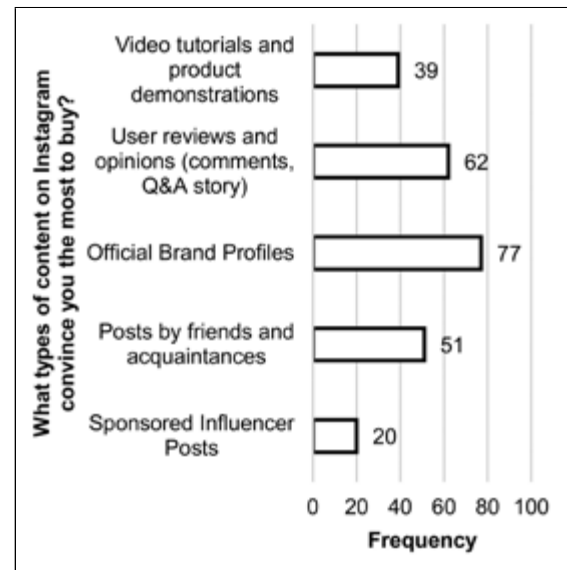


Figure 2: Instagram content types that influence purchasing decisions

This suggests that users trust and are most influenced by direct content from brands. User reviews and opinions (comments, Q&A story) come second (around 62), highlighting the importance of peer feedback and social proof in purchasing decisions. Posts by friends and acquaintances also have a significant impact (around 52), showing that personal connections can influence consumer behaviour. Video tutorials and product demonstrations (around 39) are moderately

persuasive, indicating that informative content helps in decision-making. Sponsored influencer posts have the least influence (about 20), suggesting a possible scepticism or lower trust in paid promotions compared to other content types.

Hypothesis 3: The respondents who follow fashion influencers are more inclined to buy clothes based solely on their recommendations. **CONFIRMED**

Hypothesis 3 deals with the relationship between following influencers and purchase behaviour. We

tested H3 by cross-tabulating “Do you follow any fashion influencers?” (Yes/No) with “Have you ever purchased clothing based exclusively on an influencer’s recommendation?” (Yes/No). A chi-square test was conducted to statistically verify this association.

The Table 15 indicates that out of 173 respondents, 130 (75.1%) provided valid answers and 43 (24.9%) did not regarding whether they follow any fashion influencers.

Table 15: Summary of statistical analysis characteristics

Case processing summary	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Do you follow any fashion influencers? Have you ever purchased clothes based exclusively on the recommendation of an online influencer?	130	75.1	43	24.9	173	100.0

Based on the analysis of the results (Table 16), we can see that among those who regularly follow fashion influencers, as many as half (51.7%) have already made a purchase based solely on their recommendation. Among those who do not follow influencers, such purchases are extremely rare (only

6.1%). Based on the result of the chi-square test (Table 17), $p = 0.001$ ($p > 0.05$), H3 is confirmed, as there are statistically significant differences in purchasing behaviour between different groups of respondents. Those who follow influencers make such purchases more often; hence, we confirm H3.

Table 16: Contingency table to check H3

Cross-tabulation of responses			Have you ever purchased clothes based exclusively on the recommendation of an online influencer?	
			Yes	No
Do you follow any fashion influencers?	Yes	Count	31	29
		Percentage	51.7%	48.3%
	No	Count	3	46
		Percentage	6.1%	93.9%
	Sometimes	Count	5	16
		Percentage	23.8%	76.2%
Total respondents Percentage		Count	39	91
		30.0%	70.0%	

Those who follow fashion influencers indeed are far more likely to have been influenced to purchase fashion items solely on the basis of influencer

recommendations, compared to those who do not follow influencers. This finding makes intuitive sense and aligns with theoretical expectations: if

Table 17: Chi-square test results to check H3

Chi-square statistics	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	27.099 ^{a)}	2	< .001
Number of valid cases	130		

^{a)} 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.30.

Table 18: Summary of statistical analysis characteristics

Case processing summary	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Do you follow fashion content on this platform? Have you ever purchased clothes based exclusively on the recommendation of an online influencer?	130	75.1	43	24.9	173	100.0

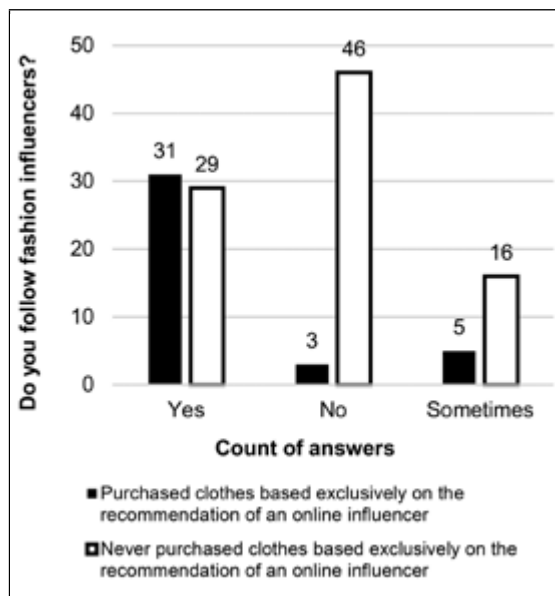


Figure 3: Purchases based on influencer recommendations vs. following fashion influencers

someone chooses to follow influencers, they are exposing themselves to persuasive content and likely have some level of trust or admiration for the influencer, which in many cases translates into trying out products the influencers recommend. Our result resonates with broader research that has found strong positive correlations between consumers'

engagement with influencers and their subsequent buying behaviour⁶.

The bar chart in Figure 3 visualises the relationship between following fashion influencers and purchasing clothes based on their recommendations. Among those who do follow influencers, more than a half (31 out of 60) have made a purchase based on their recommendation. The majority of those who do not follow influencers have not made such purchases (46 out of 49). Those who sometimes follow influencers are more likely not to purchase based on recommendations (16 vs. 5).

Hypothesis 4: The respondents who follow fashion content are more often willing to buy clothes simply because of influencer recommendations. CONFIRMED

Hypothesis 4 is closely related to H3; however, it broadens the scope to anyone following fashion-related content (not just influencers). In practice, to test H4 we looked at respondents who answered "Yes" to following fashion content on Instagram (which could include following brand pages, hashtags etc.),

⁶ <https://wsj.westsciences.com/index.php/wsis/article/view/317#:~:text=locations.percent%20of%20users%20preferred%20partnerships>

and compared their rate of purchasing based on influencer recommendations to those who answered “No” (do not follow any fashion content). Essentially, this is another 2×2 comparison: follow fashion content (Yes/No) vs. ever purchased due to influencer (Yes/No).

The Table 18 shows that out of 173 respondents, 130 (75.1%) provided valid answers and 43 (24.9%) did not regarding following fashion content on the platform and purchasing clothes based on an online influencer’s recommendation.

Based on the analysis of the results (Table 19), we can see that those who have already made a pur-

chase of clothing on the basis of a recommendation are higher in the group that follows fashion content (42%) than in those that do not follow it (10.2%). This means that following fashion content on Instagram increases the likelihood that respondents will decide to purchase clothing solely on the recommendation of an influencer. Based on the result of the chi-square test (Table 20) $p = 0.001$ ($p > 0.05$), H4 is confirmed, as there are statistically significant differences. Those who follow fashion content significantly more often make purchases of clothing based solely on recommendations. H4 is confirmed.

Table 19: Contingency table for checking H4

Cross-tabulation of responses			Have you ever purchased clothes based exclusively on the recommendation of an online influencer?	
			Yes	No
Do you follow fashion content on this platform?	Yes	Count	34	47
		Percentage	42.0%	58.0%
	No	Count	5	44
		Percentage	10.2%	89.8%
Total respondents Percentage		Count	39	91
		30.0%	70.0%	

Table 20: Chi-square test results to check H4

Chi-square statistics	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)	Exact sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig. (1-sided)
Pearson chi-square	14.675 ^{a)}	1	< .001		
Number of valid cases	130				

^{a)} 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.70.

It is worth clarifying the conceptual distinction between H3 and H4 in light of these results. H3 isolated the effect of explicitly following influencer accounts, whereas H4 suggests that even following fashion broadly (which could mean one follows brand accounts or fashion news but not necessarily influencers) is associated with being influenced by influencers. The confirmation of H4 implies that an interest in fashion content in general predisposes consumers to be receptive to influencer suggestions. Possibly, those

who follow fashion content encounter influencers indirectly (e.g. via brand reposts or hashtags) and still absorb their recommendations. Alternatively, it might indicate that people passionate about fashion (as evidenced by following fashion content) are simply more open to trying new things, including those touted by influencers. Either way, H4 underscores a broader point: engagement with the fashion domain on Instagram, in any form, correlates with higher likelihood of influencer-driven purchasing.

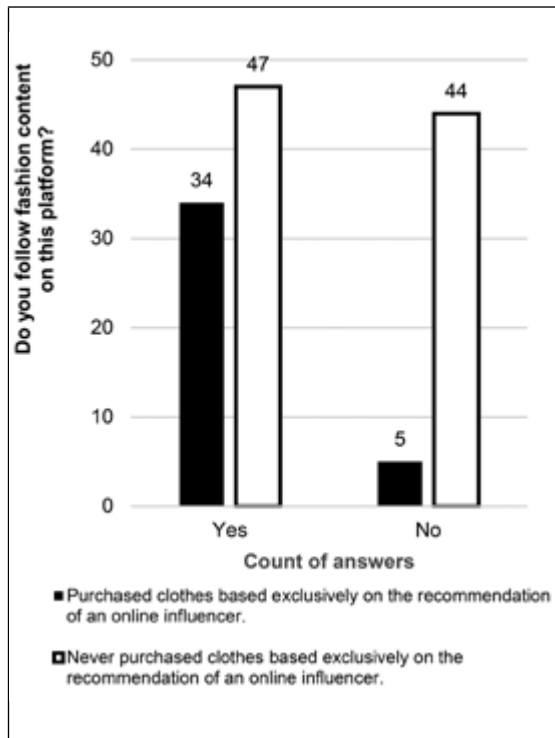


Figure 4: Purchases based on influencer recommendations vs. following fashion content

The bar chart in Figure 4 shows the relationship between following fashion content on the platform and purchasing clothes based on an influencer's recommendation. Among those who follow fashion content, 42% have purchased based on an influencer's recommendation (34 out of 81). Among those who do not follow, only 10.2% have done so (5 out of 49), with a strong majority not influenced.

This research makes several theoretical contributions to the study of influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. First, our results reinforce the idea that social media influencers can indeed alter consumer purchase behaviour; however, they add nuance to the understanding of how and when this influence occurs. The confirmation of H3 and H4 aligns with the social influence theory and the concept of parasocial relationships, i.e. consumers who engage with influencers or fashion content are more susceptible to being influenced in their purchasing decisions. This supports models that link influencer engagement to purchase intention via trust and

relationship-building⁷. Our findings provide empirical evidence of this link in a survey setting and in a new regional context (Slovenia), thus broadening the generalisability of existing theories beyond the commonly studied markets.

Secondly, our study contributes to the literature by comparing the persuasive power of different content sources on social media. The finding that official brand profiles and peer reviews were more influential than influencer posts (H2 not supported) challenges some assumptions in influencer marketing discourse. It suggests that, at least for the surveyed population, the credibility of information might outweigh the charisma of influencers. This insight contributes to theory by emphasising the role of content type and source credibility: it is not just who delivers a message (influencer vs. brand vs. peer) but the perceived trustworthiness of that source that affects consumer response. It echoes the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in that consumers might be processing influencer promotions more peripherally (and perhaps sceptically), whereas brand information and peer opinions could be seen as more central cues for decision-making⁸. Our results invite a theoretical reconsideration of when influencer content crosses the line to be seen as "advertising" by consumers, potentially triggering persuasion knowledge and scepticism (as evidenced by moderate trust and low direct conversion rates).

Additionally, our research offers a regional contribution by being, to our knowledge, one of the first studies focusing on influencer impact on fashion purchasing in Slovenia. It provides a point of comparison with studies from other countries. For example, Erwin et al. (2023) in Indonesia found

7 https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02512-1?error=cookies_not_supported&code=a773f28f-41f0-4ff9-bca8-6b05b52bc827#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20social%20media,moderating%20effect%20on%20the%20relationship

8 https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-02512-1?error=cookies_not_supported&code=a773f28f-41f0-4ff9-bca8-6b05b52bc827#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20social%20media,moderating%20effect%20on%20the%20relationship

an extremely high rate (85%) of Gen Z consumers acknowledging influencer impact on purchases⁹, whereas our Slovenian sample shows a lower rate (30% have purchased based on influencer recommendation). This discrepancy might hint at cultural or market differences – perhaps Slovenian consumers are more sceptical or have different media consumption patterns. By documenting this difference, our study contributes to the theoretical conversation on how cultural context and market maturity influence the effectiveness of influencer marketing. It underscores that influencer marketing theories and models (mostly developed in large markets) should be tested in varying contexts; what holds in one culture may not exactly replicate in another. Our findings thus encourage an expansion of theory to incorporate context-dependent factors such as consumer scepticism, market size and prevalence of alternative information channels.

Finally, our inclusion of sustainability considerations ties our work into the theoretical discourse on ethical consumerism in the digital age. We observed that sustainability is important to our respondents, consistent with prior research in Slovenia and global Gen Z trends¹⁰. While we did not hypothesise directly about sustainability, the prominence of this theme in both our qualitative observations and respondents' attitudes suggests theoretical integration: influencer marketing's impact might increasingly depend on alignment with consumer values like sustainability. This contributes to emerging theories on the intersection of influencer marketing and brand activism/values-driven marketing.

4 Conclusion

Our research shows that Instagram influencers play an important role in the purchasing decisions of respondents who actively follow fashion content. Most respondents regularly buy textiles online, confirming the importance of the online environment for fashion shopping. The influence of Instagram content and influencers is significant, and purchasing behaviour also depends on other factors, e.g. personal interests, perceptions of influencers' authenticity and brand marketing strategies. The research results show that official profiles and user ratings have a greater influence on purchasing decisions than sponsored posts by influencers. There is also a moderate scepticism regarding the availability of fashion influencer profiles, which is reflected in the relatively low proportion of those who made their purchases based solely on their recommendations. Most respondents believe that fashion influencers only partially show a realistic resemblance to the fashion industry, which indicates moderate criticism and scepticism toward their representation.

Nevertheless, respondents regularly buy textiles online, mainly for practical reasons, i.e. greater choice and ease of purchase. Sustainability is also important in their purchasing decisions.

We are aware of the limitations of the research, which is a result of the unrepresentative sample, as it concerns students from a specific school and programme, and friends on social networks, mostly in a limited geographical area of Slovenia.

These findings provide comprehensive insight into respondents' behaviour and preferences in the digital environment, which is valuable for designing online marketing strategies and adapting fashion product offerings. New questions are being raised that can form the basis for new research, e.g. what are the differences between genders, are there noticeable differences in the influence between those who buy fashion products online and in brick-and-mortar stores, how do different social networks affect pur-

9 <https://wsj.westsciences.com/index.php/wsis/article/view/317#:~:text=locations,percent%20of%20users%20preferred%20partnerships>

10 <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/gen-z-social-media-and-shopping-habits/>

chasing behaviour, what are the differences between micro and regular fashion influencers etc.

Data availability statement: From 19 November 2025, the research data are available at <https://zenodo.org/records/17653857>.

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