

# The Role of Fashion Influencers in Shaping Consumers' Buying Decisions and Trends

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**Abstract.** *With the rise of social media, influencers have gained an important role in the marketing strategies of companies. Their constant presence in social media, determined by the creation and posting of content as well as their permanent interaction with the consumers, has created them a great advantage and credibility in the eyes of consumers. The fact that they are not perceived as a form of marketing, increases their credibility and ability to influence their followers. In this article, we present the results of a research about the consumers' perception towards fashion influencers depending on age category. Our results show that fashion influencers have the ability to influence the fashion style adopted by the consumers, but not necessarily the buying decision. The fashion style of young consumers is more likely to be shaped by influencers, while people with ages between 25-40 years are least impressed by influencers. In a surprising way, even consumers older than 40 years shape their fashion style based on influencers, but are not influenced directly in their buying decision.*

**Keywords:** influencer, social media, fashion, fashion trends, consumer, marketing.

## Introduction

In our present society, individuals and consumers are exposed to advertising on a daily basis. Traditional advertising no longer plays an important role for consumers as it did in the earlier days. Because of this shift, marketers try to find new advertising techniques to continue to reach potential customers, so they use the internet and social media for that. In recent years, the expansion of social media platforms has greatly changed the techniques of buying and selling. Through social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others, consumers can share and comment with their friends on experiences about specific products and companies. This has led to a growing need for businesses to generate positive customer experiences and minimize negative messages through the digital word of mouth, which would easily spread to other potential customers through social media platforms.

One way to make the advertising message reach consumers indirectly, is with the help of influencers. In the present society, almost every consumer has at least one social media account and a big part of the communication takes place in the online environment. In this sense influencers have a great impact on consumers' buying choices by being present in the online environment and by recommending different products and services. Each consumer has more or less, one or several celebrities which he/she admires and they can influence their consumer behavior. Influencers have a similar role, by being a leading and influential speaker in the online environment and thus they have the power to influence the behavior of the consumer. Currently, the use of influencer is a new marketing strategy that is used by many companies, especially in the fashion industry, where trends can change rapidly. The aim of this article is to find out the perception of consumers towards fashion influencers and the way consumer behavior is influenced by these. The research in this paper focuses on the fashion industry and the extent to which fashion influencers impact consumer behavior.

## **Literature review**

### ***Influencer marketing***

Influencer marketing has been an existing principle for a long time, but it was referred to as word-of-mouth or referral marketing etc. If we add the social media component to these concepts, the field of influencer marketing emerges. Influencer marketing is a form of social media marketing that involves product approvals and product placements from influencers that have expert knowledge or social influence in their field (Siti & Setyo, 2020; Nirschl & Steinberg, 2018). Influencer marketing can be of two types: one of these is influencer marketing, which develops from unpaid or pre-existing relationships with influencers, and the second one is paid influencer marketing, where campaigns can take the form of sponsorship, advertising, or testimonials.

### ***Fashion Influencer***

An influencer is a third-party individual with a large number of followers on social networks who has the ability to shape opinions and attitudes and set trends through their social media posts (Shin & Lee, 2021). Fashion influencers are the ones who post messages and images related to the fashion industry. They create fashion content that influences the opinion and buying behavior of followers and consumers, through their recommendations and advice or even as models which are imitated by the consumers.

Fashion companies are increasingly interested in using fashion influencers to promote their products because of their expert knowledge and the ability to influence and understand consumers (Halvorsen, 2019; Sudha & Sheena, 2017). In order to promote their products, fashion influencers are supported by brands to attend various fashion shows, designer meetings, parties, and wear clothes on social networks (SanMiguel & Sadaba, 2018). Daily interactions create a close relationship between influencers and their audience, followers (Yua et al., 2021). Influencers are present on multiple channels where they interact with their audience through photos, live sessions, stories, and videos, building a closeness and trust between them (Hajli et al., 2014). Several studies have shown that fashion influencers have an important impact both on the luxury industry (Xia et al., 2022) as well as in developing sustainable consumption by reducing the fast fashion trend (Johnstone & Lindh, 2022).

One big disadvantage of influencers in general, is the fact that they have a financial or material gain for posting information in the online environment. Consumers should understand that sponsored content is essential to an influencer's income. A fashion influencer is paid based on the

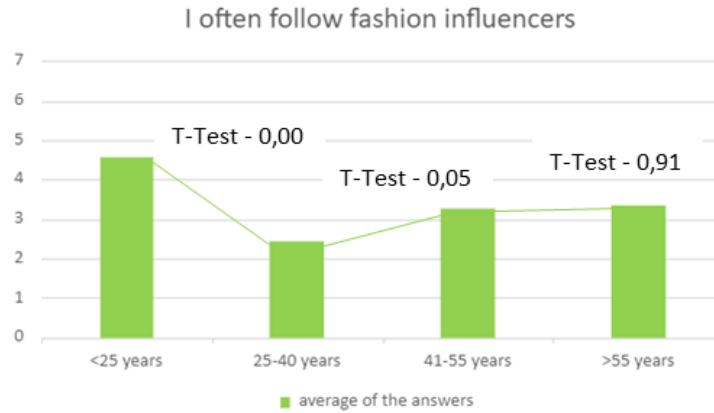
number of sponsored posts, the amount of engagement generated (views, likes, comments, shares, clicks) and commissions on products sold. An influencer's revenue varies depending on the social network they are active on (Bolboaca, 2021). The influencer must choose the products that suit them and identify with them so as not to give the impression in the eyes of followers that they are only doing this for money. For this reason, the credibility of the influencer is important to maintain its followers (Pelau et al., 2023; Waldhoff & Bernhard, 2019). One way to attract the consumers attention and enhance the credibility is to use existent celebrities that perform also in other fields (Pelau et al. 2022), but there are also other experts, trendsetters or bloggers (Barker, 2017).

## Methodology

The objective of this paper is to measure empirically the attitudes of consumers towards fashion influencers and the way fashion influencers impact the fashion behavior of consumers. In order to do so, an online questionnaire with self-determined items was created. The questionnaire consisted of 54 Likert scale questions, with responses ranging from 1 (total disagreement) to 7 (total agreement). Data collection took place by distributing the online questionnaire on social media, in order to reach people who are active online. A convenience sample of 109 participants took part in the survey having the following demographic characteristics. Out of the 109 respondents, 87 were women and 22 were men. Most of the participants in the questionnaire are between 25-40 years old (37.6%), while other participants with ages between 41-55 years old (27.5%), younger than 25 years (21.1%) and older than 55 years (13.7%), took part in the research. By using the discriminant analysis and the t-test in Excel, a comparison between the age groups has been performed. In the following the main results have been presented.

## Results and discussions

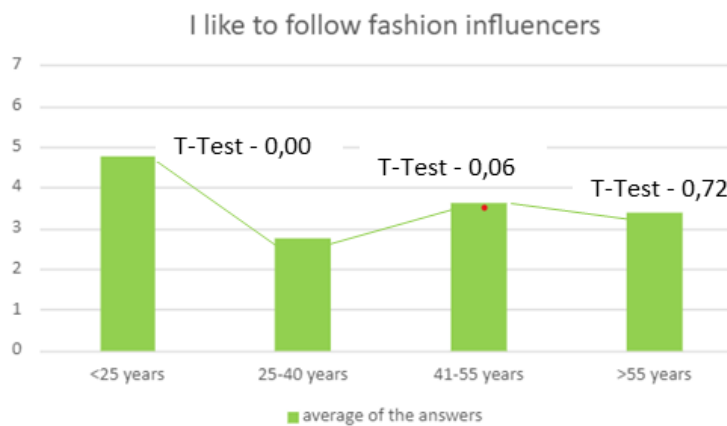
The first statement refers to how frequently consumers follow fashion influencers. The age category younger than 25 years old often follows fashion influencers, with an average of answers of 4.57. This is followed by the age category older than 55 years old, with an average of 3.33. In third place is the age category 41-55 years old, with an average of 3.27. In last place is the age category 25-40 years old, with an average of 2.44. The T-test shows that there is a very significant difference ( $T\text{-test}=0.00$ ) between the age category  $<25$  years and the age category 25-40 years for the frequency of following a fashion influencer. The age category younger than 25 years is very used to follow fashion influencers often compared to the age category 25-40 years, which is not used to follow fashion influencers so often. The T-test between the age category 25-40 and 41-55 years is 0.05, this is a medium significant difference. The T-test for the age category 41-55 and  $<55$  years is 0.91, it is an acceptable difference. Influencer is a recent construct which somehow explains the interest of the age group younger than 25 years old. Probably the age category 25-40 years are more preoccupied with founding a family and having young children, which diminishes their time for watching social media posts. The graphical representation of this item can be observed in figure 1.



**Figure 1. The frequency of following fashion influencers based on age categories**

Source: Own research results

The following statement referred to the statement regarding the joy of following fashion influencers. The age category younger than 25 years old is the one to like most to follow fashion influencers, with an average of 4.78. It is followed by the age category 41-55 years old with an average of 3.63. In third place there is the age category older than 55 years old with an average of 3.40. The age category 25-40 years old is, with an average of 2.73, the one to like least to follow influencers. We can conclude that younger people like to follow influencers compared to older people. The T-test shows that there is a very significant difference (T-test=0.00) between the age category <25 years and the age category 25-40 years. This means that the younger people like to follow influencers very much compared to people in the age category 25-40 years, who do not like to follow influencers so much. The T-test between the age category 25-40 and 41-55 years is 0.06, which is an acceptable difference because the two age categories do not like to follow fashion influencers so much. The T-test for the age category 41-55 and <55 years is 0.72 and it shows that there are no significant differences. The graphical representation can be observed in figure 2.

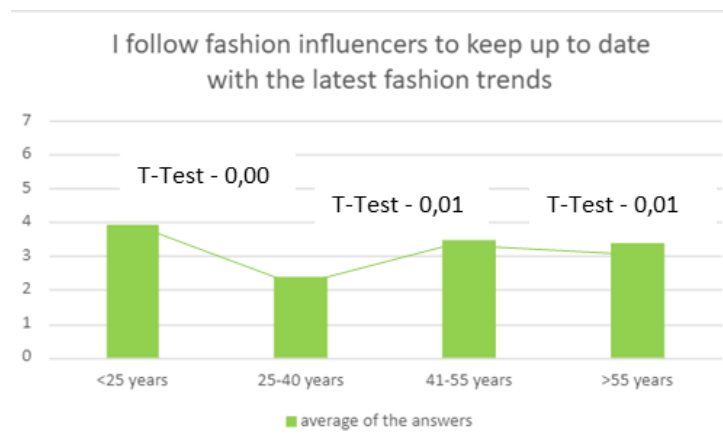


**Figure 2. The joy of following fashion influencers based on age categories**

Source: Own research results

The next statements refer to the reasons of following influencers. The first reason refers to the need of being informed about the latest fashion trends. The results show that the age category younger than 25 years old is the most likely to follow fashion influencers to keep up with the latest fashion trends, with an average of 3.91. In the next places, there are the age categories 41-55 years

old with an average of 3.47 and the age category older than 55 years old with 3.40 respectively. With an average of 2.39, the age category 25-40 years old is again in last place. This means that they do not necessarily follow fashion influencers to keep up with the latest fashion trends. The T-test between the age category <25 years old and age category 25-40 years old has a value of 0.00, showing significant difference between the two age groups. This significant difference shows us that the age category younger than 25 years old always want to keep up with the fashion trends and use influencers to be informed, while the age category 25-40 years is not so keen on the information posted by influencers about the latest fashion trends. The T-test between the age category 25-40 and 41-55 years old has a value of 0.01, showing again a very significant difference. The age categories 41-55 years old pay more attention to the latest fashion trends compared to the age category 25-40 years old. The T-test for the comparison between the age category 41-55 and younger than 55 years is 0.91 and it shows no significant differences. These results can be observed in the graphical representation in figure 3.



**Figure 3. The need of being informed about fashion trends by influencers based on age**

Source: Own research results

The next statement refers to the way in which influencers inspire the personal fashion style of a consumer. The research results show that the age category younger than 25 years is most inspired by fashion influencers for their own clothing style, with an average of 3.78. The age category older than 55 years, with an average of 3.40, is the second most influenced group. This means that for this age category fashion influencers bring inspiration for their own clothing style. The 41-55 age category has an average evaluation of 3.33, while the least influenced, is the age category 25-40 years with an average of 2.34. Similar to the previous items, fashion influencers do not provide much inspiration for the clothing style of people with ages between 25-40 years. The t-test between the age category younger than 25 years and the age category 25-40 years is 0.00, showing a high significant difference. Similar to the previous item, the significant difference shows us that the age category younger than 25 years old are inspired by fashion influencers for their own clothing style, while the age category 25-40 years old are not so much inspired by these. The t-test between the age categories 25-40 years and 41-55 years is 0.02, showing also a significant difference. The t-test for comparison between the age category 41-55 years and those older than 55 years is 0.92, showing no significant differences. The two age categories have almost the same opinion about this statement. The graphical representation of this item can be observed in figure 4.



**Figure 4. Influencers as inspiration for fashion style based on age category**

Source: Own research results

For the statement regarding the following of fashion influencers to help the consumer to make the clothing product purchase decisions, the results show that the age category 41-55 years is mostly interested because of this reason, with an average of 3.37. It is followed by the groups younger than 25 years with an average of 3.22. In third place is the age category over 55 with an average of 3.13 and the least interested is again the age category 25-40 with an average of 2.10. There can be seen that the respondents follow fashion influencers to help in the purchasing decision of clothing products. The t-test shows that there is a significant difference ( $t\text{-test}=0.02$ ) between the age category younger than 25 years and the age category 25-40 years for following a fashion influencer to help in the purchasing decision of clothing products. The t-test between the age category 25-40 years and 41-55 years is 0.01, showing a high significance. The t-test for the age category 41-55 years and older than 55 years is 0.74 and it shows no significance. The graphical representation of this item can be observed in figure 4.

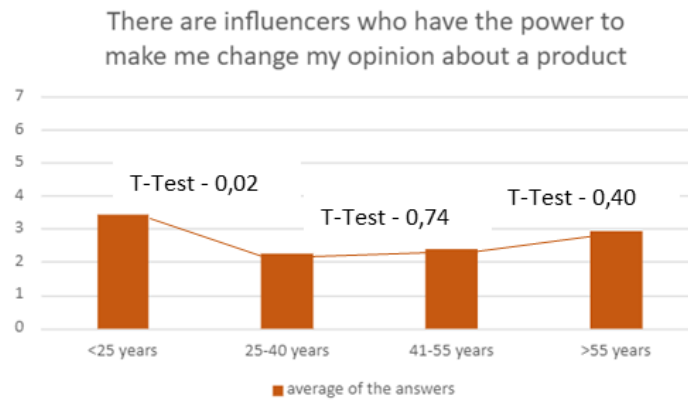


**Figure 4. Influencers as inspiration for fashion style based on age category**

Source: Own research results

The next items focus on the changes in the buying decision determined by influencers. The first item refers to the power influencers have to make one change his/her mind about a product. The age group younger than 25 years, with an average of 3.43 the most likely to change their opinion about a product based on what the influencers say about it. The second most influenced

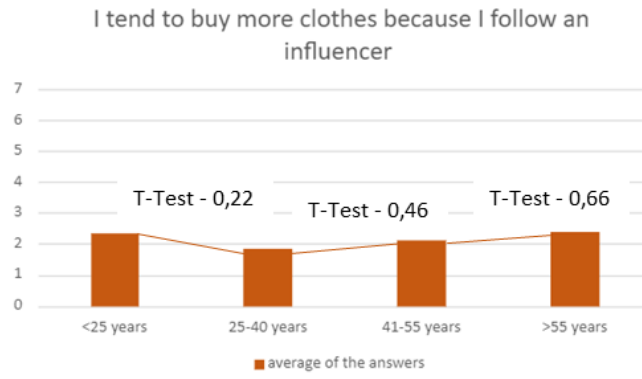
category is the age group older than 55 years with an average of 2.93. The age group 41-55 years old is in third place with an average of 2.40, while the consumers with ages between 25-40 years come last with an average of 2.24. Looking at the responses, we find that most respondents don't really agree that there are influencers who have the power to change opinions about a product, as all averages have under average values. In spite of this answer, there are still differences between the age groups. The t-test shows that there is a significant difference ( $t\text{-test}=0.02$ ) between the age category younger than 25 years and the age category between 25-40 years. The t-test between the age category 25-40 years and 41-55 years is 0.74, showing no significance. The t-test for the age category 41-55 years and older than 55 years has a value of 0.40, showing again no significant differences. The graphical representation of this item can be observed in figure 5.



**Figure 5. The power of influencers to make one change his/her mind about a product based on age**

Source: Own research results

For the statement regarding the tendency to buy more clothes because of the following of an influencer, all age categories have low averages showing that they usually don't do this. However, by comparing the means, it turns out that the group older than 55 years is the one to do mostly so, with an average of 2.40. It is followed by the age category younger than 25 years with an average of 2.35, the age category 41-55 years with an average of 2.13, while the last one is the 25-40 age category with an average of 1.83. In conclusion, we see that most respondents do not tend to buy more clothes because of the posts on influencers. The t-test shows that there are no significant differences between the age groups. The t-test has a value of 0.22) between the age category younger than 25 years and the age category 25-40 years. Similar values can be observed for the comparison between the other groups such as  $t\text{-test}=0.46$  for the comparison between the age category 25-40 years and 41-55 years and  $t\text{-test}=0.66$  for the differences between the age category 41-55 years and older than 55 years. The results show that there are no significant differences between the age groups and that following an influencer has a small influence on the purchase behavior of clothing and fashion products. The graphical representation is shown in figure 6.



**Figure 6. The tendency to buy more clothes because of influencers based on age**

Source: Own research results

For the statement regarding the tendency to buy more clothes because of the constant exposure to new trends, the results show that the group younger than 25 age buys more clothes because of this reason, with an average of 2,83. It is followed by the age category 41-55 years old with an average of 2.40 and the age category older than 55 years old with an average of 2.33. Similar to the previous items, the lowest average of 2.20 has the age category 25-40 years. Nowadays, younger people buy more clothes because they are constantly exposed to new trends, compared to older people who don't adapt as much to new trends. Generally speaking, young people are more frequently influenced by new trends. The t-test shows no significant differences between the age groups, having a value of 0.21 for the comparison between the age category younger than 25 years and the age category 25-40 years, a value of 0.66 between the age categories 25-40 years and 41-55 years is 0.66 and a value of 0.91 for the comparison between age category 41-55 years and older than 55 years. Analyzing the average values of the items it can be observed that they are under average. Consequently, without having differences between the age consumers, don't really buy new cloths because of the exposure to new trends. The graphical representation of this item can be observed in figure 7.



**Figure 7. The tendency to buy more clothes because of new trends based on age**

Source: Own research results



## Conclusion

Summarizing the research results, we can state that fashion influencers have an impact on shaping the fashion styles of consumers, but have a lower influence in the buying decisions of consumers. Using the research results, we can conclude that fashion influencers have the greatest influence on the fashion preferences of consumers younger than 25 years and the lowest influence on the age category between 25-40 years. Younger consumers are the generation that use the internet frequently and they are always present on social media platforms. Compared to older consumers, younger consumers use social media platforms more often, with the influence of fashion influencers on their fashion style being greater. One reason for the lower interest of the age group 25-40 years in influencers can be explained by their lifecycle status. They are in the age category when they start to form a family and have children. This focus on family and children might reduce their interest in influencers. For the people older than 40 years the behavior is similar for both analyzed age categories. They have a higher interest in influencers, than the age group 25-40 years but a lower interest compared to the consumer younger than 25 years. The results show no significant differences between the age groups, in influencing the buying behavior. Consequently, influencers impact fashion trends, but they determine the buying decision. The limitation of the research is that it used a convenience sample of 109 respondents and most of the participants in the research were women. This means that women are more likely to follow fashion influencers' recommendations and opinions. Both from research and in reality, we can say that women are the people who are more interested in fashion.

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