

# **From Clicks to Clothing**

Exploring Social Media`s Role in Fast Fashion Trends and  
Overconsumption

Esma Armac

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## **BACHELOR'S THESIS**

Author: Esma Armac

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Supervisor: Annemari Andresen

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### **Abstract**

The exponential expansion of social media has tremendously impacted consumer behaviour, especially in the fast fashion industry. This thesis aims to examine the influence of social media platforms on the rapid rise and fall of fast fashion trends.

Key participants in the fast fashion sector, such as Inditex and Shein, skilfully use social media as a marketing tool to generate and sustain trends and promote impulsive buying choices, eventually resulting in overconsumption.

This study investigates the specific social media strategies used by fast fashion companies. This method included several techniques, such as influencer marketing, targeted advertising, and curated information feeds, on customer perception of trends and subsequent purchase decisions. In addition, it emphasizes the business tactics and marketing approaches used by these organisations to enhance sales.

To further interpret the effect of social media marketing on consumers' decision-making behaviour and its impact on their purchase intentions, as well as their readiness to pay for fast fashion companies, it is essential to establish effective and well-designed social media marketing tactics. The poll was completed by a convenience sample of fast fashion consumers who are active on social media.

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Language: English

Key Words: fast fashion, social media's influential marketing strategies, trend cycles, social media tactics, influencer marketing

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## 1 Introduction

Social media has transformed the process of creating and consuming trends, facilitating the rapid dissemination of fashion concepts worldwide. These platforms have made fashion more accessible, enabling a wider range of voices and styles to be seen and acknowledged (Uphance, 2024).

Social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, have created a setting where trends arise and disappear at an unparalleled pace. The visual characteristics of these platforms, together with the algorithmic marketing of popular content, result in the ability for a single viral post to quickly generate a worldwide demand. As a result, fast fashion businesses have been compelled to decrease the duration between the design and retail stages in order to stay current with short-lived trends, resulting in a higher number of collections released per yearly (Uphance, 2024).

Moreover, user-generated content and peer recommendations enhance trust and authenticity. As a result, customers are more inclined to make spontaneous purchases and discover unfamiliar companies or items that are featured on social media platforms. This eventually leads to increased sales and influences the overall market trends in fast fashion (Onofrei et al., 2022).

The global fast fashion market value is projected to increase from 2021 to 2027, as reported by Statista. In 2022, the global fast fashion market was valued at more than 106 billion U.S. dollars. It was predicted that there would be a significant increase in the following years. The projected worldwide market value of fast fashion in 2027 is estimated to be over 185 billion U.S. dollars (Statista Fast Fashion Market, 2024).

## **1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the impact of social media on fast fashion trends and overconsumption. It aims to understand how social media platforms influence the constant purchasing of new clothes. Ultimately, it seeks to demonstrate the impact of social media on our perception of fashion in the modern digital era.

This thesis will focus on the examination of online platforms and influencers who receive payment from companies to provide information and promote fast fashion, which often results in overconsumption.

The research focuses on two companies: Inditex, the Spanish giant encompassing brands like Zara and Stradivarius, and Shein, the rising Chinese fast fashion player. Additionally, the thesis will explore alternative solutions, such as the second-hand market, thrifting and sustainable brands.

## **1.2 Aim and Goals**

The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of social media on trends by exploring the relationship between online platforms and the rise of fast fashion, with a focus on understanding the role of social media in promoting excessive consumption.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Within this thesis, three research questions will be answered.

- 1. How do Inditex and Shein, two major players in the fast fashion industry, use social media to promote their latest trends?*

Theoretical aspects of Social Media Marketing will be examined by analysing how Inditex and Shein collaborate with social media platforms and influencers. This will help establish a theoretical framework for understanding how social media influences overconsumption and branding.

A survey will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of branding fast fashion on social media, in order to investigate the connections between social media marketing, fast fashion, overconsumption, and branding.

2. *How does social media influence consumer purchasing decisions?*

In order to answer the question, the thesis will collect data, such as the experiences and motivations and reasons of consumers who are being influenced by social media like Instagram and TikTok.

3. *How aware are the consumers about the environmental effects of fast fashion?*

To address this question, the study will gather data on the environmental impacts of fast fashion. On the questionnaire participants will be asked about their brand awareness, the method by which they were initially introduced to the brand, and the frequency with which they encounter brand posts on social media. Participants will also be asked whether they purchased from these companies because of their social media presence and if there were reasons behind their decision. The responses will be analysed to determine their understanding of the overconsumption and the extent to which their purchase behaviour is influenced by social media.

## **1.4 Methodology**

This study investigates the impact of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok on trends and the cycle of overconsumption. Additionally, the study will investigate which strategies are used by fast fashion firms, as well as how social media influencers affect customer behaviour.

A mixed-methods approach will be used, integrating quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques. A survey will collect information on customer experiences and impressions of social media, fast fashion, and purchase behaviours. The survey's recruitment strategy will be a convenience sampling, with a focus on social media users. The survey design includes closed-ended questions to collect quantitative data (e.g., purchase frequency) and qualitative insights (e.g., reasons for purchasing fast fashion).

In addition to the poll, a research component will include case studies on the social media strategies of two big fast fashion companies: Inditex (Zara), and Shein. Content analysis will be performed on these companies' social media postings to uncover major themes. Data analysis will include applying statistical tools to find patterns and correlations in the survey's quantitative data.

The information from the case studies will be thematically analysed to better understand how social media tactics are executed and how they may influence customer behaviour. This mixed-methods approach provides a full grasp of the research subject. The questionnaire collects quantitative data on customer behaviour, whilst the case studies give in-depth insights into the unique social media methods utilized by fast fashion firms.

## **2 Fast Fashion**

This chapter defines fast fashion, investigates its relationship with popular culture, and addresses its significant social and environmental effects.

### **2.1 Definition**

Fast fashion is defined as an industry working with mass production of clothing. The rise of digitalization in the 2000s led to a rapid increase in demand for fast fashion, resulting in companies shifting their focus on quick and cost-effective production. As consumers try to keep up with rapidly changing trends, fast fashion has only grown more popular (McNeill & Moore, 2015).

The popularity of fast fashion allowed retailers to shift manufacturing to low-wage nations and use new technology to accelerate production. According to Knošková and Garasová (2015), fast fashion firms have become a multi-billion-dollar sector due to their ability to rapidly adjust to new trends and produce at low costs.

Popular fast fashion companies include H&M, Zara, Shein, and Asos, among many more. All these fashion firms have received harsh criticism for their harmful environmental effect and horrid labour conditions.

Others have criticized the industry's ethical practices and social consequences. The worldwide fast fashion business generates 100 to 150 million clothing products each year (Global Fashion Industry Statistics, n.d.). In the early 2000s, these businesses created two to five collections each year. Nowadays, Zara, for example, produces 24 collections every year. These clothing are intended to be worn by the customer for a brief amount of time. When a new trend emerges, the garment is abandoned, and the customer is urged to purchase new clothing (Centobelli et al., 2022).

## **2.2 Fast Fashion and Popular Culture**

Examining the world of fashion, one cannot ignore the impact of popular culture. An important part of modern human existence, popular culture encompasses a wide spectrum of social and cultural events. Popular cultural phenomena include, for instance, films, popular music genres, and viral social media trends. For those looking to improve their personal aesthetics, the quest of fashion and popular culture never goes out of style. Symbolic culture (the common meanings, beliefs, and values that influence how people interpret and understand the world around them) and consumer culture (a society in which the consumption of goods and services is an important cultural and economic activity and where people's identities are often defined by their consumption choices) are two examples of the many expressions and influences that make up popular culture. Language, rituals, conventions, and other cultural practices are included, as is material culture (the tangible items, artefacts, and settings that represent cultural meanings and values, like fashion, architecture, and art) (Storey, 2006). Across other things, it is intimately linked to fashion, consumerism, leisure, luxury, lifestyle, and taste and reflects a culture that is regularly transmitted across various socioeconomic classes and groups within a certain area or throughout the globe (Storey, 2006). Modern civilization depends heavily on fashion as it allows people from various social classes to communicate their wealth or position.

It is a widespread impact that is strengthened by changes in consumer behaviour and the emergence of rapid fashion. Quick turnover of cheap apparel is given top priority in the fast fashion business model to satisfy customer expectations.

Consumers nowadays are paying more and more attention to this emerging trend; since 1980, the retail sales value of fast fashion items has increased by 20% (Sull & Turconi, 2008). Production of fast throwaway copies of well-liked fashion products is at the core of this trend, which aims to promote a cycle of ongoing consumption of the newest styles. Several elements coming together, such as external delivery services, coordinating logistics, and high market demand, enable the quick and effective delivery of these so-called "throwaway chic" items. This environment is ideal for the fast fashion business to grow quickly (Sull & Turconi, 2008).

### **2.3 Effects of Fast Fashion**

The environmental impacts of rapid fashion are substantial and extensive. The fashion business, as stated in a 2023 assessment by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is responsible for up to 10% of the total carbon emissions worldwide each year. This significant contribution establishes the sector as a key contributor to climate change (Hardy, 2024). The significant carbon footprint of the industry mostly arises from its fast-manufacturing cycles and extensive use of oil-based synthetic fabrics like polyester. This not only reinforces dependency on fossil fuels but also results in the discharge of microplastics into water systems. The fast fashion model, which involves producing over 52 'micro-seasons' of apparel each year, worsens these problems by promoting excessive consumption and early disposal of clothes (Hardy, 2024). Consequently, a significant amount of trash is produced, resulting in millions of metric tonnes of textiles being deposited in landfills each year. This not only contaminates ecosystems but also increases environmental damage. Fast fashion is a major cause of worldwide ecological problems because of the high-water consumption and chemical waste resulting from textile dyeing and treatment operations (Hardy, 2024).

The primary concern surrounding the fast fashion business is on its impact on environmental and social sustainability. This sector is well recognized as a significant contributor to pollution, mostly because to its unethical manufacturing practices (Joy, Sherry, Venkatesh, Wang & Chan, 2012; Kumar & Mohan, 2021).

Moreover, the detrimental effects of fast fashion on the environment significantly bigger than the advantages it brings in terms of employment. (Peters, Li & Lenzen 2021).

The news coverage of ultra-fast fashion's detrimental impact on environmental and social sustainability has increased. "Inside the SHEIN machine: Untold" is a documentary that was published in 2022, shedding light on Shein's many instances of abuse in relation to social and environmental sustainability. However, these issues do not seem to have a detrimental effect on the consumer's perception of both fast fashion and ultra-quick fashion stores. According to Professor Ioanna Pappasolomou, Assistant Professor Yioula Melanthiou, and Marketing Specialist Anestis Tsamouridis (2022), fashion consumers show knowledge regarding the negative effects of fast fashion on the environment and workers in the supply chain. However, they lack of motivation to align their actions with this knowledge, resulting in what is known as the intention-behaviour gap. However, it should be noted that there is no mention of this phenomenon in any scholarly literature, although it may also be applicable to the concept of ultra-fast fashion.

### **3 Social Media**

This chapter delves into the definitions of social media, its influence on fast fashion trends, and the role of influencers in shaping fashion trends and promoting consumption.

#### **3.1 Definition of Social Media**

Numerous definitions exist for social media. Certain definitions of cooperation and communication put focus on the activities that occur within specific websites. Others direct their attention towards the tools implemented on these websites. Users can collaborate, communicate with peers, share information, submit and transmit images, leave remarks, generate expressions, and discover the advantages of utilizing social media tools on these websites. Social media has emerged as an important driver for transformation across various domains of contemporary society. Individuals differ in their ways of interaction, communication, and even how they think.

Social media, a term first created in the twenty-first century, refers to a wide range of networked technologies and tools that highlight the collaborative and communicative capabilities of the Internet among its users.

Social media is defined as online platforms which promote communication and promote information sharing and interaction among individuals. Thanks to the rapid growth of social media, individuals now have the convenience of easily connecting with their friends, colleagues, families, and even strangers online. With the rise of smartphones, social media has experienced significant growth in the Appstore environment. Instagram and TikTok have become popular platforms for the community of travellers and fashion enthusiasts. In addition, numerous businesses are taking advantage on the power of social media as a marketing tool to promote their offerings, provide customer service, and facilitate the exchange of goods and services (Maryville University, 2021).

### **3.2 The Impact of Social Media on Fast Fashion Trends**

Social media has an important influence in shaping trends in our everyday lives. With fast fashion on the rise, social media has played an unbreakable role in the present fashion industries. Previously, the industry's yearly fashion calendar included just two runway collections. Today, manufacturers are exhibiting 52 collections every year, which equates to a new collection every week. Furthermore, with the emergence of social media, fashion trends are evolving at a much quicker rate than in the past.

In recent years, social media was the frontrunner in fuelling overconsumption. The rise of shopping hauls and try-on videos with popular hashtags on social media has resulted in greater purchasing sprees. Ultra-fast fashion pushes people to purchase and wear inexpensive clothes from businesses like Shein and Zara and then waste them after just a few years. These companies have expanded the fast fashion business model almost tenfold. Ultra-fast fashion firms have grown dramatically because of improved marketing methods and cooperation with influencers.

### 3.3 The Role of Influencers in Fast Fashion and Overconsumption

Influencers are people, who voluntarily share content (text, image, audio, video) on a certain topic with high and regular frequency, hence initiating social interaction. This is done by using internet-based communication channels such as blogs and social networks like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, or TikTok. Influencer stand out from the crowd of social media users due to their ability to achieve high reach via their activities. If someone has gained influence only via their digital presence, they are specifically referred to as social media influencers (Deges, 2018).

Utilizing influencers is seen as a more personal and intimate way to connect with customers compared to paid advertisements (Appel et al., 2019). Many people view influencers as reliable and genuine, with a dedicated and passionate group of followers. They are regarded as authorities in their field, inspiring others to consume and interact with the content they produce.

Influencers have the freedom to work independently, crafting their own unique content while seamlessly integrating a company's advertising needs. The influencer has the power to shape the brand's message in a way that promotes authenticity and effectively reaches the target audience (Council, 2022).

Fashion Influencers are key actors in increasing trend cycles and promoting excessive spending. They have hundreds, if not millions, of followers who like their style. Popular social media trends include 'Hauls' and 'What I'd Wear to...' videos on TikTok, where creators showcase their purchases in a 30-second clip.

The "sophieapps" Instagram account shows how to mix different fashion brands in a smart way, mostly using clothes from Inditex to give followers a wide range of styling ideas and direct links to buy the items shown (see Figure 1). Adding shopping options to an influencer's page shows how social media can be used for business.

A post by "sophieapps" shows a stylish outfit, which successfully draws attention to and promotes a certain fashion item (see Figure 2). This way of marketing uses the influencer's personal style to make the product more appealing and get people to interact with it, which can lead to more people seeing the brand and buying their product. In their Instagram post, Zara's Instagram page is tagged to provide followers with quicker access (see Figure 2). Additionally, the first image features highlight with direct links to outfit inspirations (see Figure 1). These links allow users to quickly and easily access the featured products. It makes it easier for people to purchase products and builds brand trust through recommendations.

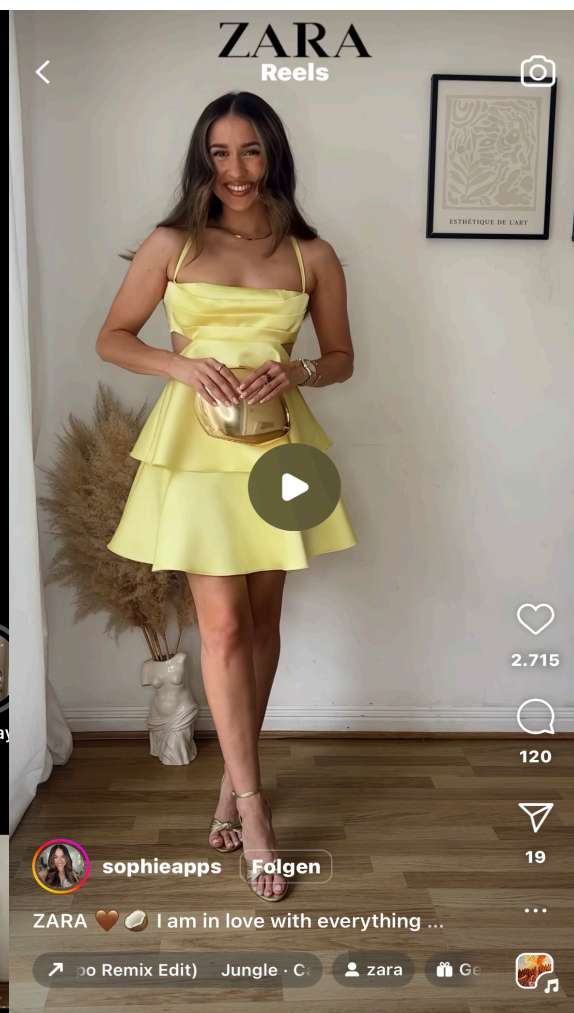
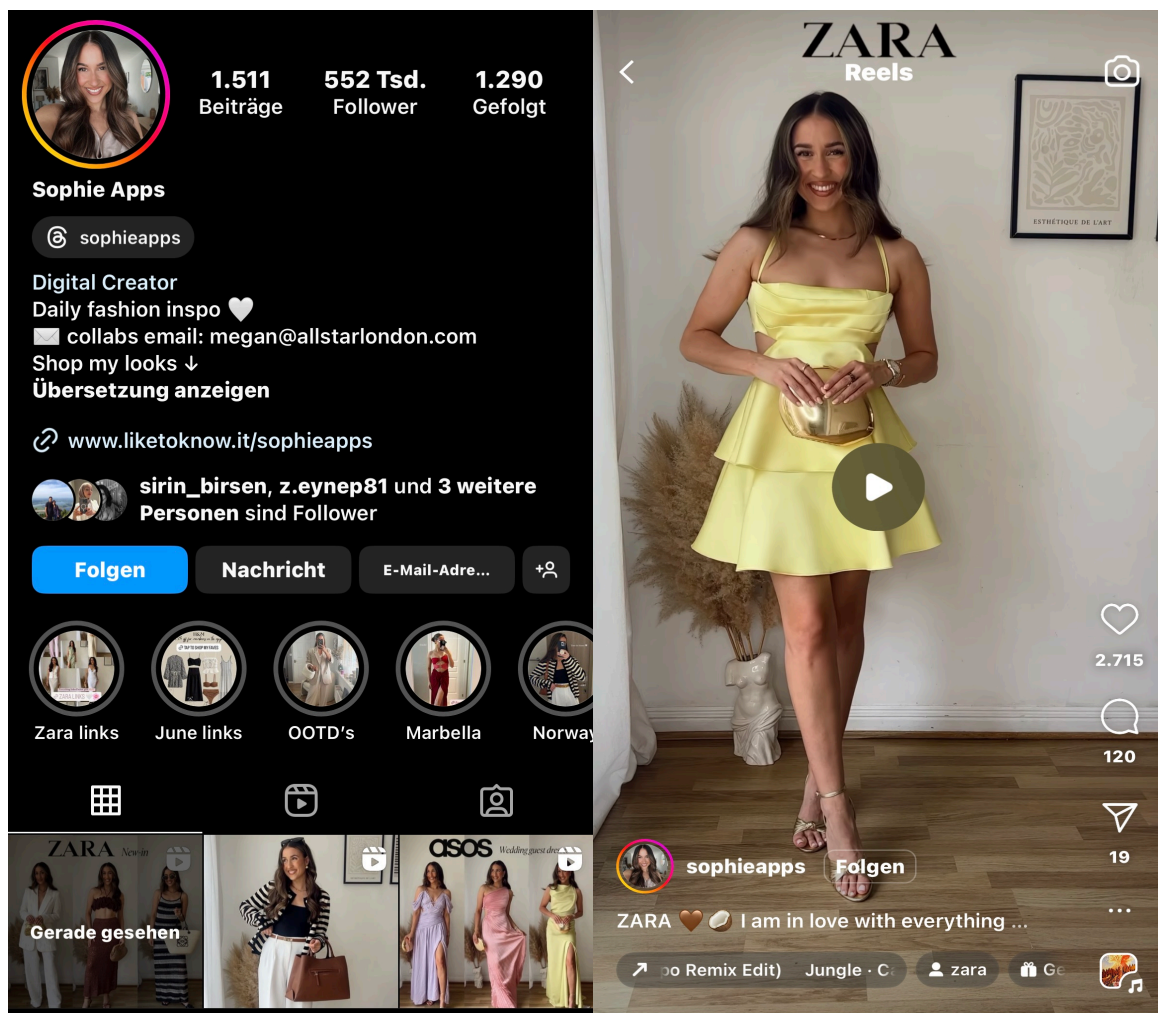


Figure 1. Instagram Profile of @sophieapps (@sophieapps) Figure 2. Post featuring an outfit from Zara (@sophieapps)

### **3.4 The Power of Social Media: How Platforms Shape Consumer Behaviour**

This chapter investigates how social media platforms influence consumer behaviour through targeted advertising, trend creation, and social media marketing, with a focus on their impact on fast fashion trends and the role of TikTok and Instagram in driving consumer engagement.

In today's digital era, social media platforms have evolved into strong tools that greatly impact customer behaviour, notably in the fast fashion business. Companies such as Inditex and Shein use these platforms to not only promote their newest trends, but also influence and generate new customer wants via targeted advertising.

#### **Targeted Advertising**

Social media sites like Instagram and TikTok utilize advanced algorithms to analyse user preferences and behaviours, allowing marketers to target certain groups. Inditex and Shein apply these skills to adapt adverts to specific consumers, boosting the possibility of interaction and purchase (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By analysing data from user interactions, these businesses may promote their items in a manner that appeals to the consumer's unique style and interests. This personalized strategy improves the effectiveness of marketing and the user's purchasing experience, resulting in greater sales and brand loyalty (Hudson & Hudson, 2013).

#### **Trend Creation**

Social media is more than just an advertising platform; it is also a fertile field for developing and disseminating new fashion trends. Influencers play an important part in this process. Fashion influencers on sites such as Instagram and TikTok may shape trends by showing the newest fashions from Inditex and Shein to their fans. When influencers promote a product or a fashion trend, it rapidly develops popularity, encouraging customers to buy the products and feeding the fast fashion cycle (Freberg et al., 2011).

### **3.5 Marketing in Social Media**

Social media marketing describes "the utilization of social media technologies, channels and software to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offerings that have value for an organization and its stakeholders" (Tuten & Mintu-Wimsatt, 2018, p. 1). Various marketing goals can be achieved through the utilization of social media: from advertising to commerce or customer relationship building (Tuten et al., 2018, p. 1). The importance of social media marketing is continuously growing, especially as there are more and more users. In 2023, there are 4.95 billion people actively using social media in the world, which is an increase of 7.07% from the 4.62 billion in 2022. Back in 2015, there were only 2.08 billion users, that's an increase in users of 138.2% in just eight years (Dean, 2024).

Social media is now a news, entertainment, and inspiration source. Since more businesses are using social media more than ever, it has also emerged as one of the most successful digital marketing mediums. Marketers effectively harness the pulling power of social networks for marketing as the number of users keeps rising and the influence of platforms like Instagram and TikTok effect consumer purchasing behaviour.

Ad spending in the Social Media Advertising market is projected to reach \$219.8 billion in 2024 (see Figure 3), with an expected annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.86% from 2024 to 2028, leading to a market volume of \$255.8 billion by 2028 (see Figure 3). The United States is anticipated to generate the highest ad spending globally, amounting to \$76.4 billion in 2024. By 2028, mobile platforms are projected to account for the entire \$255.8 billion of social media ad spending. Additionally, the number of users in the Social Media Advertising market is expected to reach 6.054 billion by 2028 (Statista Social Media Advertising, 2024).

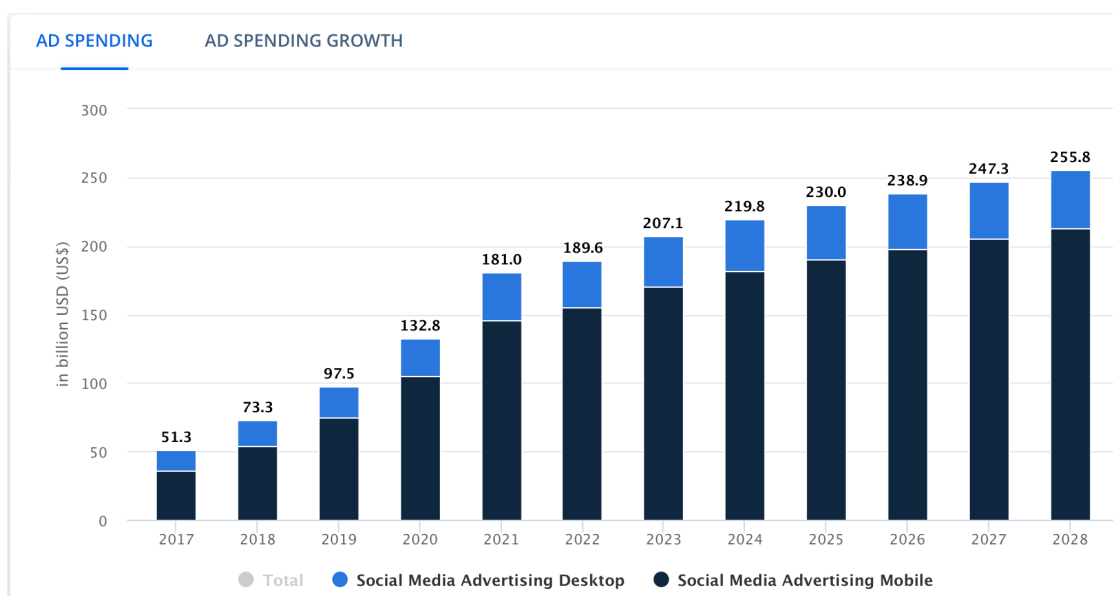


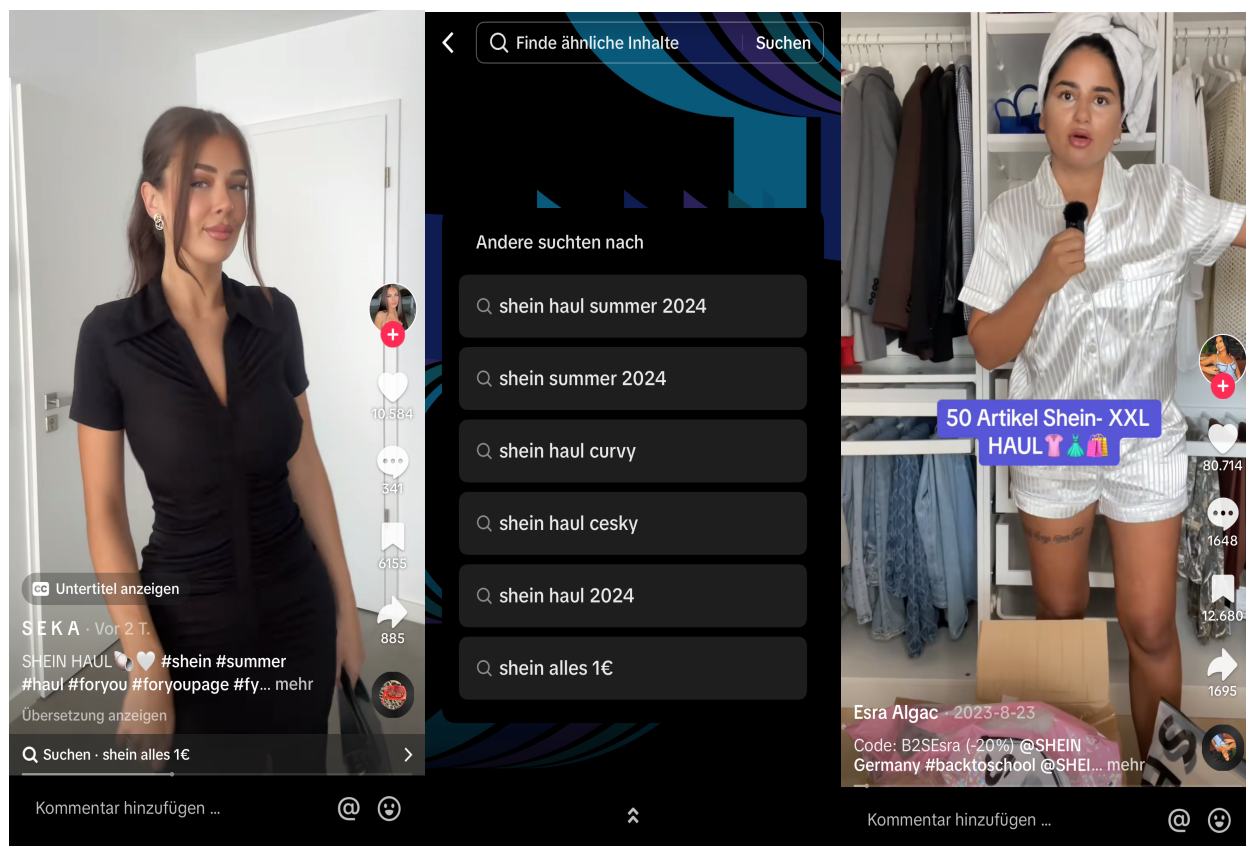
Figure 3. Social Media Advertising Worldwide 2024 (Statista,2024)

### 3.5.1 Marketing on TikTok

TikTok, a social media platform that was initially released in 2016, achieved immense popularity in late 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the social media platform experienced significant growth in popularity and has emerged as an incredibly effective marketing instrument for engaging younger demographics. TikTok has facilitated the engagement of thousands, if not more, of businesses and marketers with their preferred audiences through its captivating short-form videos, creative challenges and trends, and unique format. (Hutchinson, 2020). Marketing on TikTok has significantly influenced the purchasing behaviour of young adults worldwide.

As of 2024, TikTok has approximately 1.5 billion monthly active users, underscoring its status as one of the most influential social media platforms globally. The app has been downloaded over 4.7 billion times, reflecting its widespread appeal. Additionally, the application maintains a high engagement rate of 2.65%, outperforming many other social networks in terms of user interaction (Oestreicher, 2024).

In recent years, it has experienced a rise in popularity for a variety of reasons. For once, TikTok has simplified the process of generating and sharing videos (Xu & Yan & Zhu, 2019). The videos short format ensures that neither the creation nor the viewing process are time-consuming or expensive. Additionally, these videos are initiated simultaneously with the user's application launch. Afterwards, they are played repeatedly, immersing the user in a huge amount of content. Addictive in nature, this type of content frequently leads to users spending numerous hours on the application viewing these videos (Guarda et al., 2021). The combination of audio and video that TikTok is offering is attracting users, as it is perceived as a direct interaction with the brand (Tang, 2019).



**Figure 4. TikTok Screenshots Shein Haul from Content Creators and Search Results (TikTok,2024)**

Figure 4 showcases TikTok influencers promoting Shein, a fast fashion brand. The first image captures a young woman presenting a "Shein haul", highlighting the trendiness and affordability of the products. The second image shows the search results for "Shein haul" on TikTok, indicating the widespread popularity and frequent searches related to Shein on social media platforms. The third image features another influencer discussing her extensive purchase from Shein, emphasizing the appeal of bulk buying due to low prices and frequent sales.

### **3.5.2 Marketing on Instagram**

Created in October 2010 by Mike Krieger and Kevin Systrom as a free iPhone app for photo sharing with friends (Caliandro & Graham, 2020, p. 2), Instagram swiftly became "a leading social networking site" (Hwnag, 2018, p. 116).

Marketing via Instagram can be implemented through a variety of strategies. This enables users to be reached through advertising marketing, content marketing, or influencer marketing.

#### **Advertising Marketing**

Instagram, a subsidiary of Facebook, facilitates the integration of the platform into businesses marketing strategies by allowing them to post advertisements through Facebook Ads Manager (Facebook Ireland Ltd., 2021). This ad placement enables direct link sharing and traffic generation (Grabs et al., 2018). Instagram's native ads, which are seamlessly integrated into users' profiles or between stories, are perceived as less disruptive, thereby enhancing user engagement (Kobilke, 2019). The efficacy of the campaign is improved by the platform's algorithm, which guarantees that users are presented with advertisements that are pertinent to their interests (Kobilke, 2019). The consumer journey from brand awareness to purchase completion is facilitated by shopping functions and call-to-action icons, which emphasizes Instagram's value in the balanced integration of brand storytelling and performance marketing (Facebook Ireland Ltd., 2021).

#### **Content Marketing**

"In times when consumers are becoming increasingly sceptical of traditional advertising, organizations need [...] effective alternatives [...]. In these circumstances, content marketing [...] has gained momentum around the world and is steadily gaining importance in the marketing mix of organizations" (Koob, 2021, p. 1). Content marketing describes the "creation and distribution of relevant, valuable brand related content to current or prospective customers or other target groups" (Koob, 2021, p. 1). It presents a "way to utilize the brand, to connect people to what [...] [the brand does] and why it matters" (Winquinas, 2014, p. 51).

By presenting information as trustworthy and valuable, content marketing leverages its wide reach and persuasive power, rather than as a direct sales promotion. This strategy employs discreet techniques to draw consumers to brand content, enabling users to select the content they consume.

Consequently, it enhances brand awareness and image without explicitly encouraging purchases (Du Plessis, 2017; Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018).

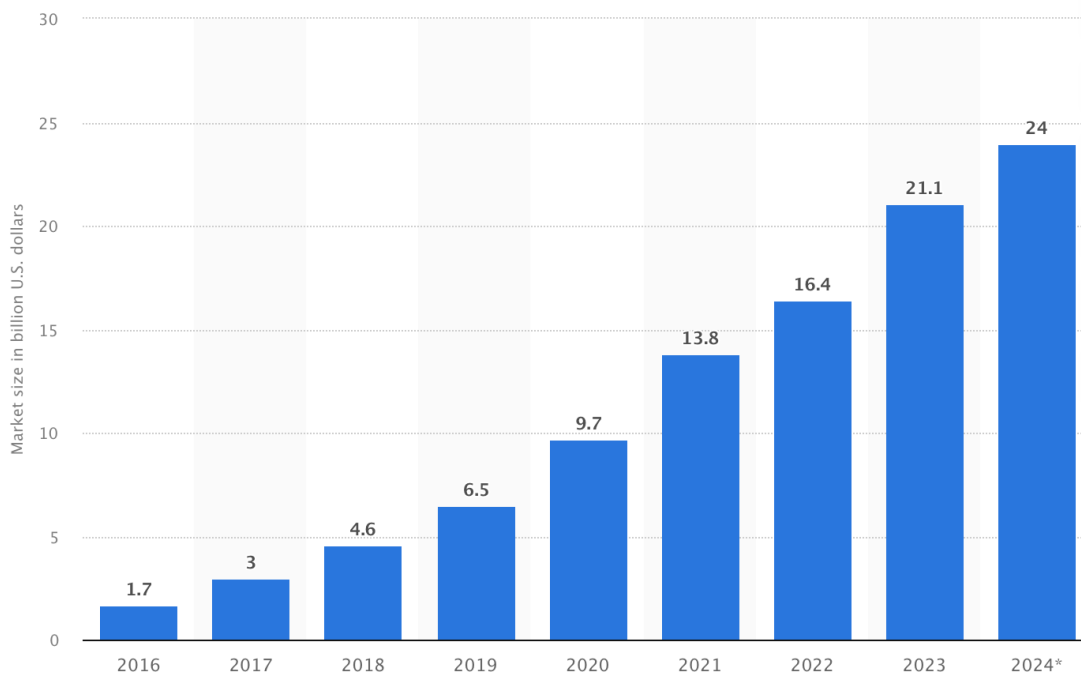
To be effective in content marketing, companies must simultaneously serve as experts and entertainers, providing content that is authentic, informative, intriguing, and entertaining (Grabs et al., 2018). This can involve the exchange of experiences, visions, ideas, or recommendations to cultivate emotional attachment and brand identification (Grabs, Vogl & Bannour, 2018). User-generated content (UGC) is also valuable since it promotes interaction with consumers, who voluntarily share their brand experiences for recognition and status, while also saving time and resources (Fox, Nakhata & Deitz, 2019).

Content types are classified into three categories: (1) basic content, which is entertaining and requires minimal effort; (2) informative content, which offers solutions and resolves issues; and (3) highlight content, which requires the most effort but garners substantial attention (Grabs et al., 2018).

### **Influencer Marketing**

The global market for influencer marketing has grown a huge amount. It went from \$1.7 billion in 2016 to an expected \$24 billion in 2024 (see Figure 5). The industry has grown by an average of 40.5% a year, with big jumps during the COVID-19 outbreak (see Figure 5).

Nearly 60% of businesses plan to raise their influencer marketing spending by 2024 (Statista Global Influencer Market, 2024).



**Figure 5. Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2016 to 2024 (Statista,2024)**

"Influencers are opinion leader in digital social media who communicate to an unknown mass audience" (Gräve, 2019, p. 2). In doing so, influencers "cover various topics and target groups [...] by (allegedly) sharing their personal lives" (Gräve, 2019, p. 2). This openness results in influencers being perceived as approachable, kind, and ordinary individuals who express their unbiased opinions, thereby establishing a high level of credibility and trustworthiness (Funke & Kübler, 2019, p. 27; Krywalski Santiago & Moreira Castelo, 2020, p. 34; Ludwig, 2019, pp. 35–36). A growing number of brands are recognizing the "viral growth potential and far-reaching impact" of forming alliances with social media influencers to promote their products (De Veirman et al., 2017, p. 798). According to a study, trust in traditional advertising is decreasing, users are becoming more critical and try to avoid ads by using ad blockers or paying for ad-free content (De Veirman et al., 2017, p. 798). A "tendency to learn about products through seeking information from others" (Teo et al., 2019, p. 322) can be discerned. The fact that both auditory and visual content can be shared is the reason why Instagram has become a highly popular platform for influencer marketing. In addition, "the development of e-commerce has made Instagram increasingly attractive to brands" (Krywalski Santiago & Moreira Castelo, 2020, p. 43), which further supports these opportunities.

## 4 Case Studies: Inditex and Shein

Defined by rapid production cycles and trend-driven designs, fast fashion has become a global phenomenon. Leading brands like Zara and Shein leverage various strategies to deliver new styles quickly and at accessible price points. Zara, for instance, has famously streamlined its production cycle, aiming to take only 15 days for a clothing item to go from design to being sold. This focus on speed is a key element of what earned the industry the term 'fast fashion'. Shein, is a Chinese company that is credited for reinventing the fast fashion industry through the use of a rapidly evolving and updated online marketplace made of about 6,000 Chinese clothing factories (Rajvanshi et al., 2023). Gaining insight into how Inditex, with its physical presence, and Shein, a digital-native leader, navigate the world of fast fashion through their divergent strategies is important for understanding their influence on the industry.

### 4.1 Inditex: A Global Fast Fashion Powerhouse

Inditex (Industria de Diseño Textil, S.A.), headquartered in Arteixo, Galicia, Spain is a global leader in fast fashion based on revenue (Inditex, 2024). Established in 1963 by Amancio Ortega Gaona, the company has expanded into a massive retail business with a worldwide reach. The retail and selling of apparel, footwear, beauty and accessories is a big sector (Rozaria, 2023). Inditex operates many brands, including its main brand Zara, as well as Bershka, Pull&Bear, Massimo Dutti, Stradivarius, Oysho, and Zara Home (Inditex, 2024). In 2023, it achieved around 36 billion euros in revenues. The group's sales have shown a steady and continuous growth during the specified time period (Statista, 2023). In 2024, the Inditex Group has a total of 5,692 shops globally as of January 31st (Statista, 2024).

In the current era of technology, social media has become a vital instrument for companies to establish a connection with their target demographic and develop a strong brand identity.

Zara, a prominent Spanish fashion shop under the Inditex umbrella, has successfully used social media to its benefit.

Zara has been a prominent figure in using social media to interact with consumers and advertise its goods, with millions of followers on several platforms (Social Media Strategy of Zara, 2023). Zara's primary social media strategy revolves on promoting their latest designs. The company efficiently leverages its social media channels to create enthusiasm and anticipation for forthcoming launches. Zara strategically utilizes sneak peeks, behind the scenes information, and teasers to build anticipation among its followers (Social Media Strategy of Zara, 2023).

Firstly, Zara smartly leverages Instagram as a dynamic platform to display these changes. The company converts its Instagram feed into a visual catalogue, facilitating client's seamless access and interaction with the most recent fashion trends (Martínez-López et al., 2022). Zara's approach has been successful, as seen by their impressive follower count of over 60 million. A substantial amount of their material consists of video postings, reflecting the current preference of consumers for visual content (Martínez-López et al., 2022). While celebrity endorsements are common, Zara adopts a more relatable approach, preferring micro-influencers, typically individuals with a follower base between 10,000 and 100,000, who better connect with their brand identity and resonate with their target audience. This strategy allows Zara to leverage the micro-influencers established communities, fostering a sense of authenticity and trust with potential customers.

The "Timeless" campaign in 2017 provided an illustration of their collaboration with experienced individuals in the fashion business to explore how ageing affects personal style. This campaign offers a unique viewpoint that challenges the often-seen focus on youth in fashion advertising (Martínez-López et al., 2022).

Zara's social media marketing has made a huge advancement by recognising the unexplored possibilities of micro-influencers. In contrast to conventional beliefs that may overlook these influencers because of their lesser number of followers, Zara acknowledges the significant impact they may have inside their own groups. Their partnership with 522 out of 2421 micro-influencers demonstrates a noteworthy change in marketing paradigms. The significant effect of these partnerships is apparent from their debut campaign for the South African online shop. Through the use of micro-influencers, their branded hashtag was able to reach over six million persons in only one day (Martínez-López et al., 2022).

Zara proactively interacts with followers on social media, cultivating a feeling of community. The brand engages with comments, tags, Instagram story posts and direct messages from its fans, fostering a customized and dynamic experience (Social Media Strategy of Zara, 2023).

#### **4.2 Shein: The Rise of the Online Fast Fashion Giant**

The company was established in Nanjing, China, by Chris Xu in 2008 and is known for its reasonably priced clothing. Shein started more as a drop shipping business rather than a retailer. Instead of designing and manufacturing clothes, the company bought its merchandise in Guangzhou wholesale markets. Shein acquired Romwe, a Chinese retailer, in 2014, transforming the company into a "fully integrated retailer". As one of the largest fast fashion companies, Shein can ship to over 220 countries around the world thanks to its global warehouse network. They also provide accessories, shoes, and household products for sale and does not have a physical store compared to Inditex brands. It seems to be adapting exceptionally well to the demands of younger consumers via the combination of fast fashion manufacturing and user-generated content-based marketing approach (Roy 2021). However, there are other reasons why people are aware of Shein. Also well-known for the publicised reports of their unfavourable conditions, contaminated manufacturing processes, neglect for socially responsible legislation, and plagiarism of concepts from other fashion designers (Shukuya 2024).

#### **4.2.1 Shein's Social Media Strategies and Brand Techniques**

Shein's social media strategy is meticulously crafted to resonate with Gen Z consumers, who are known for their social media impact and digital knowledge. By focusing on platforms like TikTok and Instagram with short-form video content, influencer marketing with relatable micro-influencers, and interactive user-generated content challenges, Shein fosters a sense of community and facilitates trend discovery for its target audience. The COVID-19 pandemic further propelled Shein's online presence, as consumers increasingly shifted towards e-commerce. Capitalizing on this trend, Shein strategically expanded its product offerings beyond apparel, encompassing home decor, beauty products, and even toys, solidifying its position as a one-stop online shopping destination for young consumers (Shein Marketing Strategy, n.d.).

#### **4.2.2 Shein's Marketing Strategies for Capturing Gen Z and Young Female Consumers**

Shein has mastered the art of capturing the attention of Gen Z and young female consumers. Their strategy is a great fit for the preferences of the demographic, who enjoys browsing social media and shopping online. Shein leverages these platforms by partnering with micro-influencers and popular celebrities among Gen Z. They produce captivating short-form video content that highlights the latest trends and actively promotes user-generated content through challenges and hashtags. This promotes a feeling of togetherness and enables prospective customers to witness how individuals showcase Shein's apparel. In addition, it meets the fashion desires of Gen Z and young women by providing trendy items at affordable prices, enabling them to stay fashionable without spending too much. This value proposition aligns well with Gen Z's focus on variety and experimenting with different styles (Shein Marketing Strategy, n.d.).

According to fashion designer Romita Roy (2021), Shein is favoured by young female customers. Thus, this study specifically targets young women within the age range of 21 to 31 years.

Moreover, there are other factors that motivate young female customers to purchase clothing from fast fashion businesses. However, it is evident that the low retail price significantly influences their purchasing choices.

Hawkin Stern's (1962) research in industrial economics highlights the significant impact of retail apparel prices on consumer purchasing behaviour, since it evokes a strong impulsive purchase inclination. While price is undoubtedly a factor, there are multiple reasons why young women are attracted to fast fashion. Studies suggest that the desire for variety, trendy styles, and convenience are significant motivators. Shein meets these needs by providing a regularly refreshed collection of fashionable apparel that comes in a variety of sizes, catering to different body types at affordable prices. This enables young women to explore various styles without making a major financial investment. This speaks to the desires of young women who are looking for a sense of belonging and the ability to showcase their individuality through their fashion choices. In addition, the convenience of online shopping through Shein's user-friendly app caters to the fast-paced lives of young women. Several online media articles indicate that Shein's marketing approach is targeting the impulsive purchasing behaviour of customers (Nguyen, 2023).

#### **4.3 Influencer marketing and social media in the fast fashion industry, impact on consumption**

Influencer marketing on social media platforms is a major driver of fast fashion consumption, influencing purchasing decisions through trendsetting and perceived trust. Fashion brands, such as Zara, H&M, and Shein, partner with influencers who are well-known for their fashion expertise and sense of style (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). These influencers, whether they have a small but loyal following or a large fan base, employ a range of strategies to endorse fast fashion (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024). In addition to sharing static photos and videos of outfits, influencers use social media features to provide their audiences with a dynamic and captivating experience (Seigle, 2024). Setting trends is a crucial strategy, as influencers display the most up-to-date styles and inspire viewers to imitate them.

Discount codes in product reviews encourage quick purchases, while social media challenges centred around wearing or styling certain items can spark viral trends and increase brand recognition (Seigle, 2024). Nevertheless, the marketing model driven by influencers has faced backlash due to its role in encouraging unsustainable consumption habits and leading to the environmental and ethical concerns linked to fast fashion (Einhorn & Wei, 2024).

Affiliate marketing involves the partnership of sales partners to sell products and generate income. Therefore, the individuals known as affiliates promote products from manufacturers or dealers and are compensated with a commission. Affiliates play a crucial role in promoting and selling products from other countries. This principle can also be applied to services. Furthermore, as affiliates suggest other products, this business model is commonly referred to as referral marketing (Esmen & Esmen, 2024).

Shein employs affiliate marketing to improve interaction with consumers, so fostering client loyalty and cultivating a feeling of identity. Both Shein and its customers who have previously made purchases benefit from a win-win situation.

If an individual purchases items from Shein and shares their experience on social media along with their promotional link, prospective buyers who click on the link and make purchases will provide advantages to the promoting purchasers in the form of commissions and discounts. Individuals prefer equality and consistency. Individuals who derived satisfaction from specific advantages provided by Shein are likely to have an increased desire to purchase more items. Additionally, they are more likely to recommend it to their relatives and acquaintances, therefore benefitting both themselves and the brand (Affiliate Program Shein, n.d.). Shein has developed its core competence by effectively targeting its audience and establishing a strong international reputation under this marketing methodology.

## 5 The Psychology of Overconsumption in the Digital Age

The aim of this chapter explores the psychology of overconsumption in the digital age by applying the AIDA model to Inditex and conducting a SWOT analysis of Shein. The analysis focusses on Inditex's utilisation of the AIDA model to effectively attract customer attention, stimulate interest, cultivate desire, and incite action through their social media efforts. In addition, the chapter evaluates Shein's strengths, weaknesses opportunities, and threats, emphasising the brand's competitive advantage, difficulties, and potential for expansion in the e-commerce industry.

### 5.1 AIDA Model Applied to Inditex

Consumers progress through every stage of the AIDA model to attain their desired result. The model is classified as a hierarchy of effects model. Based on the theory, consumers gain knowledge about the brand and form specific emotions and sentiments towards the product or service as they move through each stage of the model. These feelings and emotions then have an impact on their subsequent actions. Management expert Philip Kotler attributes the origin of AIDA to Edward Kellogg Strong, Jr.'s book *The Psychology of Selling and Advertising* (1925). According to Strong's book, the concept was inspired by Elias St. Elmo Lewis (1872-1948), a renowned advertising pioneer.

In 1898, Lewis penned the slogan "Attract attention, maintain interest, create desire," and later expanded it to include a fourth element: "get action". Contemporary marketing and advertising practices heavily depend on the AIDA model. The model outlines a clear and effective approach to persuading potential customers to make a purchase. It breaks down the process into four simple steps, making it easy to understand and implement (DK, 2014, p. 242).

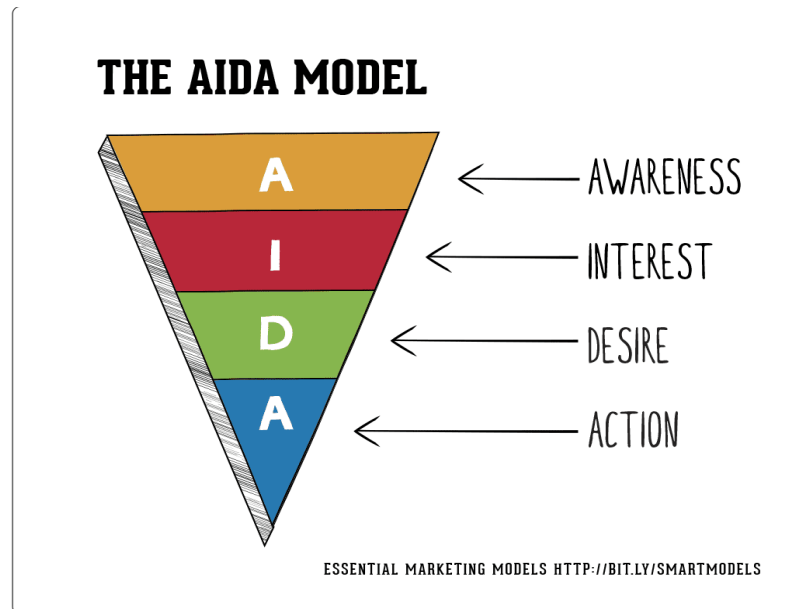


Figure 6. AIDA Model (smartinsights,2024)

**Attention:** Inditex grabs people’s attention with visually captivating content that showcases the newest trends and collections. This is accomplished by using high-quality images and videos on popular platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. These platforms showcase influencers and trendsetting consumers who proudly wear their clothing. Through the use of trending hashtags, links to the website and partnerships with influential social media figures, Inditex effectively reaches and captivates a wide range of viewers (Smith, 2023; Brown, 2022).

**Interest:** To generate interest, Inditex develops content that connects with the lifestyle and aspirations of their target audience. Insider glimpses into the design process, exclusive previews of upcoming collections, and content created by users are shared to create a captivating story that captivates the audience. This stage is essential in captivating the audience and encouraging them to explore the brand's offerings further (Doe, 2021).

**Desire:** During this phase, Inditex effectively generates a sense of appeal by highlighting the uniqueness and scarcity of their products. They employ time-limited promotions and highlight their dedication to sustainable practices, which resonates with environmentally conscious consumers. Through maintaining a high level of quality and resonating with the values of their audience, Inditex successfully transforms the sentiment of "liking" a product into a strong desire for owning it (Johnson, 2023).

**Action:** Finally, Inditex simplifies the process for potential consumers to act on their desire. Strategically placed in posts and stories are clear calls to action (CTAs) that prompt users to take action. These CTAs include phrases like "Shop Now," "Explore the Collection" or "New In" and are accompanied by links to their e-commerce site. The seamless integration of social media content and online shopping platforms increases the chances of turning interest into a purchase (Williams, 2022). Through the implementation of these strategies, Inditex effectively navigates through every stage of the AIDA model to optimize consumer engagement and boost sales.

## **5.2 SWOT Analysis Applied to Shein**

SWOT analysis is a valuable strategic planning tool that enables organizations to evaluate their internal and external environments. SWOT is an abbreviation that represents Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Through a careful analysis of these four elements, organizations can develop a deeper comprehension of their strengths and weaknesses, while also identifying opportunities and threats. It offers a valuable framework for organizations to make well-informed decisions and devise strategies that benefit on their strengths and opportunities, while mitigating their weaknesses and threats. It is widely utilized in various fields, including business, personal growth, marketing, and project management (Meagher, 2024).



Figure 7. SWOT Analysis (Going Digital,2024)

**Strengths:** Shein stands out from its competitors by offering an affordable price point. It aims to ensure that fashion is within reach for every customer, regardless of their economic background and size. Shein offers more affordable prices compared to Zara and H&M, with an average price of 35€. This makes it a popular choice among Gen Z shoppers. On their website and apps, apparel prices span a wide range, from 2€ to 10€, with frequent discounts and special offers. Furthermore, Shein's ability to consistently and swiftly release new products is unmatched. Shein has mastered the art of utilizing media more effectively than its competitors in the fast-fashion industry. The success was driven by digital marketing. When it comes to attracting Gen Z to fashion companies, social media and mobile advertising have proven to be highly effective compared to previous generations. For example, their micro-influencer marketing strategy significantly increases revenue. Shein utilizes customer evaluations to promote their micro-influencer marketing technique. It values the influence of smaller content creators over that of celebrities. On a monthly basis, the company generously offers complimentary products to micro-influencers who have a substantial following on platforms like TikTok and YouTube.

**Weaknesses:** One of the most frequent criticisms of the fast fashion industry revolves around the poor quality and condition of the products. Many customers have taken to social media to express their dissatisfaction, pointing to situations of clothes falling apart and being received with bad smells.

In addition, the clothing featured in Shein's photos appears to have fitting issues and is sometimes delivered in incorrect sizes, as demonstrated in various YouTube videos. Although Shein products are designed and manufactured efficiently, their delivery time is still quite long. In certain areas, the lack of warehouse facilities can hinder the efficiency of the delivery process. Delivery typically takes around two to three weeks (Allison, 2024).

**Opportunities:** Businesses and clients are embracing eCommerce as it continues to thrive in the digital world. Businesses and consumers are reaping the rewards of these advantages, such as reduced expenses and a more convenient and secure customer journey. As the e-commerce fashion industry continues to expand, more and more brands are exploring the world of online shopping (Shah, 2024). To maintain its success, Shein can adopt fresh branding strategies, given its strong online presence. It underwent an extraordinary development within just a brief period. Their impressive sales growth, from US\$2.5 billion in 2019 to a projected US\$48 billion by 2024, underscores their success in the online space (Ecdb, 2024).

**Threats:** Participating in online competition is essential. They face the challenge of competing against industry leaders such as Amazon, as well as smaller retailers that offer budget-friendly clothing. In addition, consumers can enjoy a wide range of physical clothing stores like Zara, H&M and Urban Outfitters, offering the convenience of trying on clothes before making a purchase (Dublino, 2023).

## 6 Breaking the Cycle: Alternatives to Fast Fashion

“Buy less. Choose well. Make it last” -Vivienne Westwood

### 6.1 Second-Hand and Thrift Shopping

Buying second-hand clothing is a highly accessible and cost-effective alternative to fast fashion. Thrift stores, consignment shops, and online resale platforms provide a diverse selection of second-hand clothing at more affordable prices. There are several advantages to engaging in second-hand shopping. These include the positive impact it has on reducing the demand for new clothing production, as well as preventing usable items from ending up in landfills. Additionally, second-hand shopping offers the opportunity to discover unique vintage and one-of-a-kind pieces, all while saving money in comparison to purchasing new items (Gb, 2024). Shopping at thrift stores can also make a positive social impact, as many of them support charitable causes. ThredUp operates as an online platform that serves as a consignment and thrift store for clothing. It offers a platform for individuals to sell their gently used clothing and for others to buy these items at reduced prices (ThreadUp, 2024).

### 6.2 Ethical and Sustainable Brands

There are alternative ways for consumers to buy brand new clothes without contributing to the fast fashion industry. Patagonia, Boden, and Kotn are clothing companies that provide options for individuals with more adaptable budgets, offering alternatives to the fast fashion industry. As an illustration, Patagonia extends its support to workers in low-income areas by implementing Fair Trade certification, which guarantees fair compensation and good working conditions. Boden prioritises sustainability by using recyclable packaging, maintaining ethical production practices, and ensuring fair wages for workers. Kotn is committed to using organic materials and ensuring fair and safe labour standards in the production of their clothes. There is a wide range of ethical, sustainable clothing companies catering to those with the means to invest in them (The Borgen Project, 2023). While these brands may have higher price points than fast fashion, they offer higher quality garments made to last (Lopex, 2024).

## **7 Empirical Framework**

This chapter will introduce the empirical framework that forms the foundation of the research. The empirical framework describes the methodical approach that has been used to collect, analyse, and interpret data related to exploring social media's role in fast fashion trends and overconsumption. The use of this framework is essential in order to ensure the reliability as well as precision of the outcomes.

### **7.1 Research Methodology**

In this thesis, the chosen methodology involves the utilisation of a survey, which is widely recognised as a prominent technique within the field of descriptive statistics. Surveys are frequently employed as a means of collecting data from a subset of individuals, serving as a significant means of acquiring fundamental scientific knowledge. Surveys serve a diverse range of purposes and can be implemented through various methodologies (Scheuren, 2004, p. 9).

Surveys are limited to gathering data from a specific subset of the intended population. In general, market research entails the utilisation of substantial representative samples to effectively portray the attributes and functionalities of a specific market. The survey approach is widely acknowledged as the primary method for collecting primary data in the field of marketing research. Moreover, it can be designed by employing questionnaires distributed to a statistically representative sample of a given population. Typically, a survey consists of a sequence of questions that provide respondents with a predetermined set of fixed-response options, from which they must choose their preferred alternative. Therefore, the researcher is able to effectively oversee the process of constructing, analysing, and interpreting the collected data. On top of that, it is feasible to reduce the variability observed in the outcomes (Malhotra & Birks, 2006, pp. 224-225).

However, it is conceivable that individuals may possess a limited level of conscious awareness when it comes to their underlying motivations for choosing particular brands or organisations. Consequently, individuals may encounter difficulties in offering accurate responses regarding their underlying motivations.

Furthermore, customers may choose to abstain from participating in the questionnaire as a result of apprehensions surrounding the potential exposure of their personal information. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that questionnaires utilising predetermined questions may encounter challenges in maintaining validity in capturing certain types of data, as they are unable to account for the intricacies of individual perspectives (Malhotra & Birks, 2006, pp. 224-225).

Consequently, the decision was made to develop a survey that incorporates both closed-ended questions with predetermined response options, as well as open-ended questions that allow participants to provide their own responses in a free-form manner. The decision has been made to utilise Microsoft Forms as the chosen application for constructing the questionnaire, as it provides straightforward solutions for creating various question formats.

The survey comprises a comprehensive set of 23 questions focusing on demographics, social media usage, and fast fashion consumption patterns. Key areas include the frequency and importance of social media platforms in influencing clothing purchases, awareness of major fast fashion brands like Inditex and Shein, and the impact of social media ads and influencers. Additionally, the survey investigates the correlation between social media marketing and overconsumption, examining consumer motivations, environmental awareness, and interest in sustainable fashion alternatives.

This study employs a range of survey measurement tools to effectively capture participants' responses. The tools applied represent a variety of question types, such as multiple choice, short answer, checkboxes, Likert scales, and open-ended questions. These tools have been selected to ensure a thorough understanding of the impact of social media on fast fashion trends and excessive consumption.

Multiple choice and checkboxes are frequently used to collect demographic information and user habits. Participants must choose one or more options from a predetermined list of choices. This method is highly effective in gathering categorical data, including information on age, gender, occupation, and frequency of social media usage.

Respondents have the opportunity to provide specific information in their own words through short answer questions. This format is commonly utilised for inquiries that necessitate a specific response regarding the respondent's country, without confining them to predetermined choices.

A common method used to gauge the significance of different factors in clothing purchases is the Likert scale. It also helps assess respondents' level of comfort regarding the environmental impact of fast fashion. Participants evaluate each item on a scale, expressing their degree of significance or concurrence. This approach proves to be highly effective in capturing attitudes and perceptions.

On June 30th, 2024, a survey was disseminated to gather insights into the role of social media in shaping fast fashion trends and overconsumption, as well as the interest in sustainable fashion. The survey targeted individuals who are fashion enthusiasts and regular clothing consumers, leveraging global instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram.

Given the familiarity of friends and family members a direct message was sent containing the survey link. To ensure broader reach, some participants further distributed the survey link to others. This approach facilitated a wide and relevant respondent base, ensuring that the survey captured a diverse range of perspectives from participants proficient in English.

## 7.2 Survey Results

In total 83 results were collected with this survey in the period from 31 June 2024 to 14 July 2024. The questions of the survey can be found in the appendix 1.

### Question 1 – Age

#### 1. Age

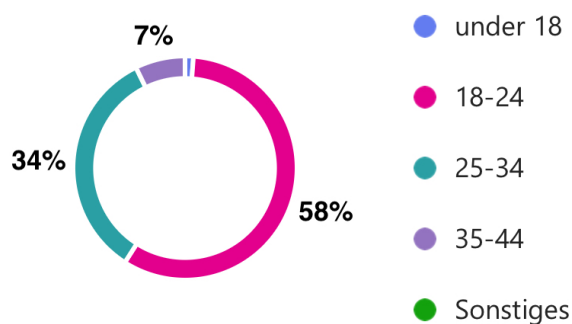


Figure 8. Distribution of age

The survey mainly focused on participants in the age groups of 18-24 and 25-34, which made up the majority of respondents. In the survey, a total of 83 responses were collected. Among the participants, 48 fell into the age range of 18-24, while 28 were between 25-34 years old. There was a limited number of participants under 18 years old, with only one person in this age group. There were six participants in the age group of 35-44. Interestingly, there were no participants in the "Sonstiges" category, which is a German term that refers to "Other". This term was included in the survey because of a limitation in Microsoft Forms, which prevented translation to English during the creation process.

## Question 2 – Gender

### 2. Gender

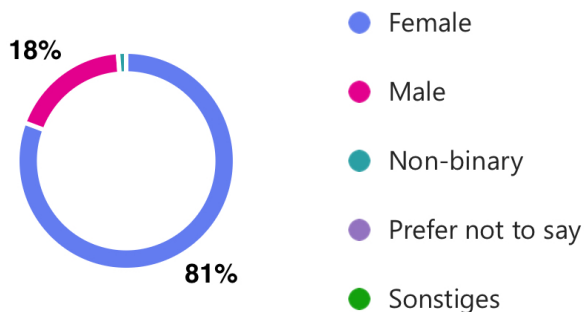


Figure 9. Distribution of gender

In general, the survey participants were predominantly female, making up 81% of the total sample. Eighteen of the respondents were men, and 1% identified as non-binary. No participants chose not to disclose their gender or identified as 'other.'

## Question 3 – Country

### 3. Country (please answer in english)

83 übermittelte Antworten

"England"

"Netherland"

"Poland"

• • •

Figure 10. Distribution of country

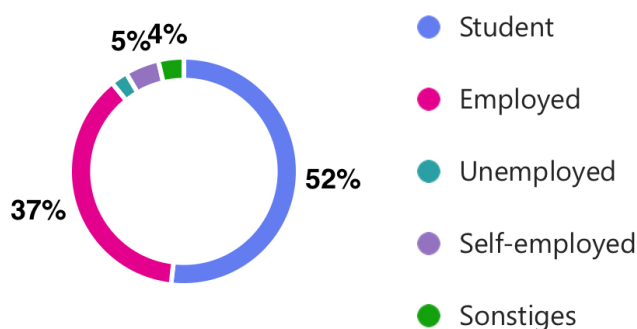
The survey aimed to gather demographic data on participants' countries of residence, which helps contextualize the impact of social media on fashion trends and overconsumption.

A total of 83 responses were analysed. Most respondents were from Germany, with 65 individuals (78.3%) identifying Germany as their country of residence.

Other notable countries included Turkey, with 6 respondents (7.2%); the United States (0%); and France, with 2 respondents (2.4%). Additionally, participants from Greece, Iran, Ukraine, Latvia, Georgia, Argentina, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, and the United Kingdom were also represented. Notably, some participants listed multiple countries of residence, such as Germany/Greece, or provided variations of country names like "Deutschland" for Germany.

#### Question 4 – Occupation

##### 4. Occupation

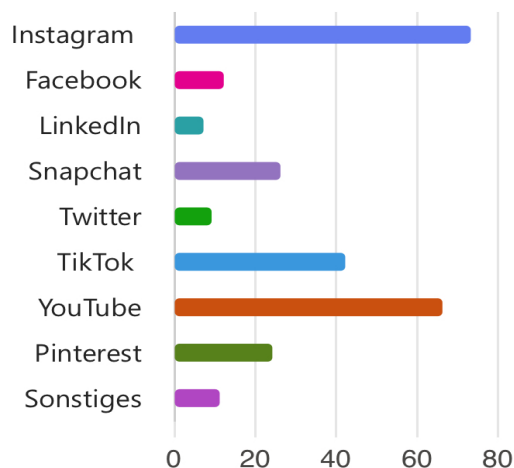


**Figure 11. Distribution of occupation**

Among the 83 respondents, the majority consisted of students, with 43 participants (52%). Working individuals made up the second-largest category, comprising 31 respondents (37%). Out of the total participants, 4 individuals (5%) were self-employed, while 2 individuals (2%) mentioned being unemployed. In addition, a small percentage of respondents (4%) chose to describe their occupation as 'Other'.

## Question 5 – Frequently used Social Media platforms

5. Which social media platforms do you use most frequently? (select all that apply)



**Figure 12. Frequently used Social Media platforms**

Exploring the social media platforms that participants frequently use allowed me to gain insights into their preferences and the potential impact on their fashion consumption behaviours. Out of the 83 respondents, Instagram emerged as the top choice with 73 participants using the platform. YouTube was also widely used, with 66 respondents reporting frequent usage. 42 participants chose TikTok, while 26 participants opted for Snapchat. Pinterest had 24 users, while Facebook was used by 12 respondents. Twitter and LinkedIn had a lower number of users, with 9 and 7, respectively. In addition, 11 participants mentioned using different social media platforms.

### Question 6 - Frequency of social media use

6. How often do you use social media platforms?

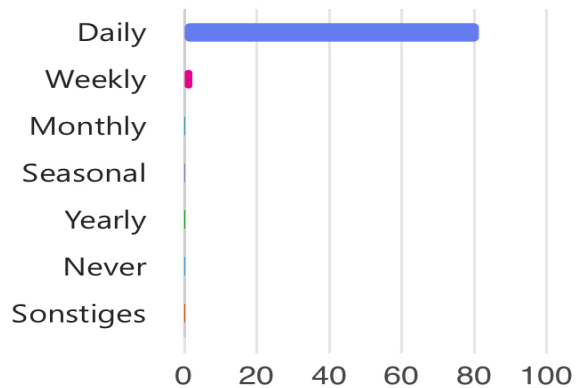
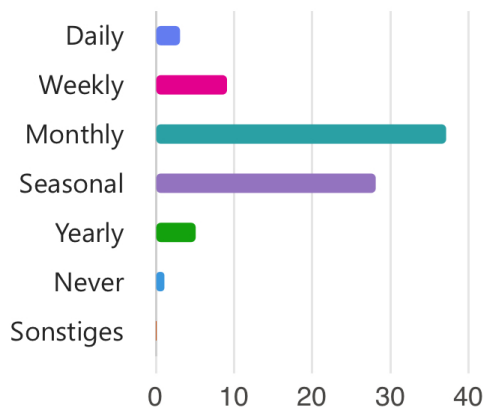


Figure 13. Frequency of Social Media use

Out of 83 respondents, an overwhelming majority, 81 participants, reported using social media daily. Only 2 respondents indicated using social media on a weekly basis. No participants reported using social media monthly, seasonally, yearly, or never.

## Question 7 - Clothing Shopping Frequency

7. How often do you purchase clothing items?



**Figure 14. Clothing Shopping Frequency**

The survey examined the frequency at which participants buy clothing items in order to gain a deeper understanding of their shopping habits. A significant number of 37 participants revealed that they make monthly clothing purchases. This was followed by 28 participants who engaged in seasonal shopping. 9 participants made weekly clothing purchases, while 5 respondents bought clothing on a yearly basis. A limited number of participants, specifically 3, engaged in daily shopping, while only 1 respondent claimed to have never bought any clothing items. This data showcases a wide variety of shopping frequencies, with a notable number of participants regularly making clothing purchases.

**Question 8 – Importance of Factors in Clothing purchases**

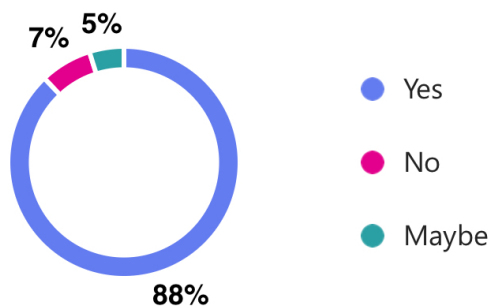


**Figure 15. Importance of factors in Clothing purchases**

The survey examined how important various factors are to participants when making clothing purchases. Among the 83 respondents, price emerged as a crucial consideration, with many ratings it as very important or extremely important. Trendiness also held significant importance, though to a slightly lesser extent. Quality was consistently rated highly across the board, reflecting its importance in purchasing decisions. Brand name, however, was generally deemed less important, with many respondents indicating it was either not important or only slightly important. Sustainability had a varied response, with a moderate number of participants considering it very important or extremely important, while others rated it as less crucial.

**Question 9 – Awareness of the brand Inditex**

9. Are you aware of the brand Inditex (e.g., Zara, Bershka, Mango)?

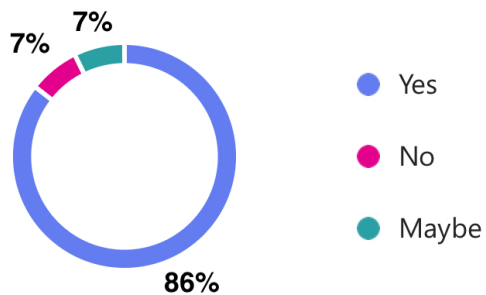


**Figure 16. Awareness of the brand Inditex**

This question focusses on how well-known Inditex and its affiliated brands are among the poll takers. These labels include Zara, Bershka, Mango and many more. Most of the respondents (73 out of 83) are familiar with the Inditex brands, according to the data. Six people said they had never heard of these brands, while four others said they weren't sure and said "Maybe".

**Question 10 – Awareness of the brand Shein**

10. Are you aware of the brand Shein?

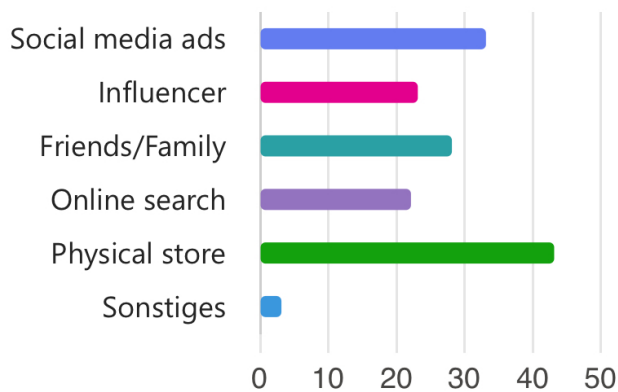


**Figure 17. Awareness of the brand Shein**

These results show that the majority of the people surveyed knew of Shein. Almost nine in ten (71 out of 83) people who took the survey had heard of Shein. Moreover, six respondents said they had never heard of the brand, while another six said they weren't sure and said "Maybe".

**Question 11 – Inditex Brand Awareness: Discovery Channels**

11. How did you first hear about Inditex?  
(select all that apply)

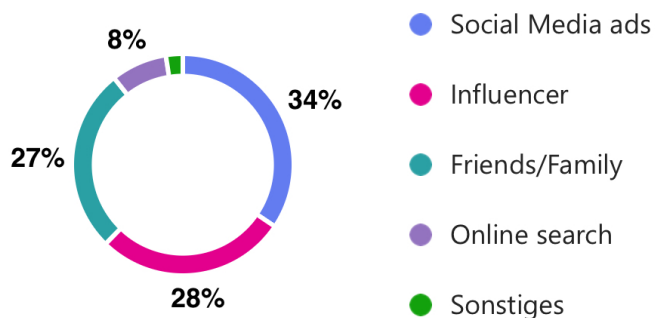


**Figure 18. Inditex Brand Awareness: Discovery Channels**

The main emphasis is on the way in which individuals initially became aware of Inditex. Among the 82 respondents, a significant number of individuals, 43 to be precise, mentioned physical stores as their primary source of initial awareness. According to the survey, 33 respondents mentioned social media ads as the second most common source. Friends and family recommendations followed, with 28 respondents discovering Inditex through personal referrals. For 23 respondents, influencers had a notable impact, while 22 individuals found Inditex through online searches. In addition, 3 respondents chose "Sonstiges," a German term meaning "Other," suggesting the existence of other unspecified sources.

**Question 12 – Shein Brand Awareness: Discovery Channels**

12. How did you first hear about Shein? (select all that apply)

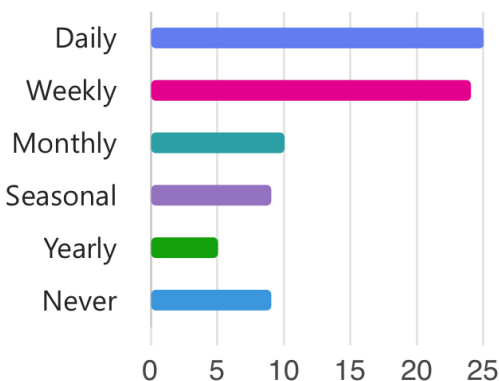


**Figure 19. Shein Brand Awareness: Discovery Channels**

This section delves into the ways in which participants initially became aware of Shein. Out of the 83 respondents, a significant number of 42 individuals came across Shein through social media advertisements. For 34 respondents, influencers played a significant role as the primary source of information. Meanwhile, 33 respondents relied on recommendations from friends and family. Only 10 participants discovered Shein through online searches. In addition, three respondents chose the option "Other".

**Question 13 – Frequency of seeing Inditex Brands on social media**

13. How often do you see posts from Inditex brands on social media?

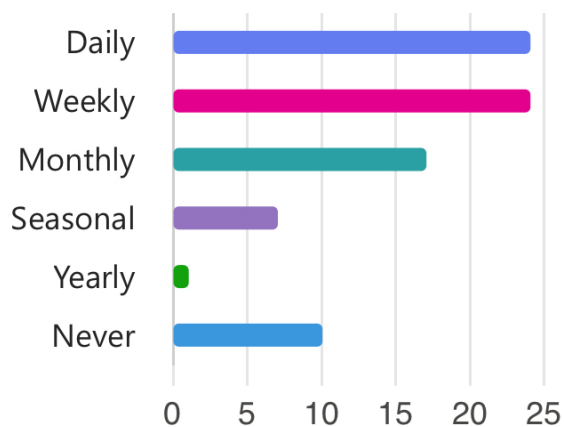


**Figure 20. Frequency of seeing Inditex brands on social media**

A considerable number of participants, totalling 49, mentioned that they frequently come across posts from Inditex brands, either daily (25) or on a weekly basis (24). It is evident that these brands have a strong and unwavering presence on various social media platforms. Ten respondents reported seeing these posts monthly, while 9 mentioned that they come across them seasonally. A smaller group of 5 participants observes Inditex brand posts annually, while an equal number of 9 respondents stated that they have never come across these posts.

**Question 14 – Frequency of seeing Shein on social media**

14. How often do you see posts from Shein brands on social media?

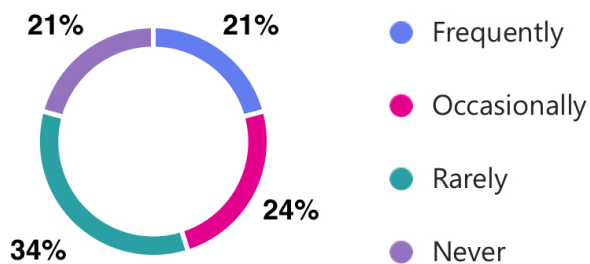


**Figure 21. Frequency of seeing Shein on social media**

Twenty-four individuals come across these posts daily, while an additional 24 encounter them on a weekly basis. A smaller group of 17 participants reports monthly exposure, while 7 individuals notice Shein posts seasonally, possibly linked to specific promotional campaigns. These posts have very limited visibility, with only 1 respondent seeing them each year. Additionally, 10 participants have never come across Shein content on social media.

**Question 15 – Frequency of purchasing from Inditex after seeing it on social media**

15. How often have you purchased a product from Inditex brands (e.g., Zara, Bershka,...

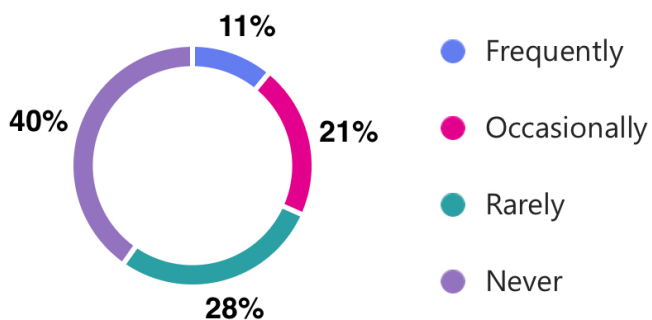


**Figure 22. Frequency of purchasing from Inditex after seeing it on social media**

A significant number of respondents (21%) get influenced by social media when making purchases from Inditex brands. Occasionally, a notable portion (24%) of individuals find themselves influenced by social media when it comes to these brands. A significant number of participants (34%) indicated that they rarely make purchases based on social media influence when it comes to Inditex brands. A comparable percentage of respondents (21%) do not make purchases influenced by social media for these brands.

**Question 16 – Frequency of purchasing from Shein after seeing it on social media**

16. How often have you purchased a product from Shein after seeing it on social media?

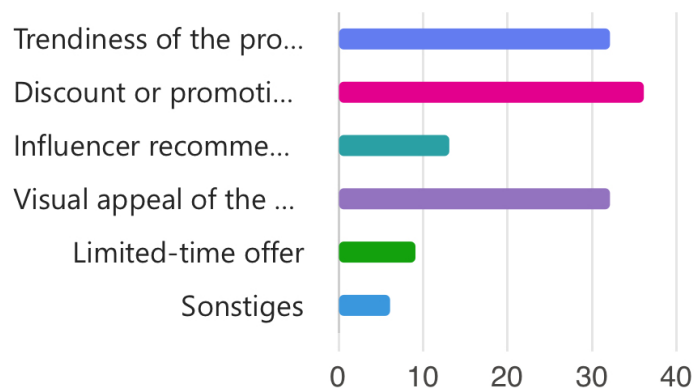


**Figure 23. Frequency of purchasing from Shein after seeing it on social media**

According to the results, a small percentage of respondents (11%) made frequent purchases, while a larger percentage (21%) did so occasionally. The majority of respondents (28%) reported rarely buying products. Interestingly, a considerable number of respondents, 33 (40%) to be exact, claimed to have never made a purchase from Shein despite coming across their social media posts.

**Question 17 – Motivation for purchasing Inditex products after seeing it on social media**

17. What motivates you the most to purchase from Inditex brands after seeing it on...

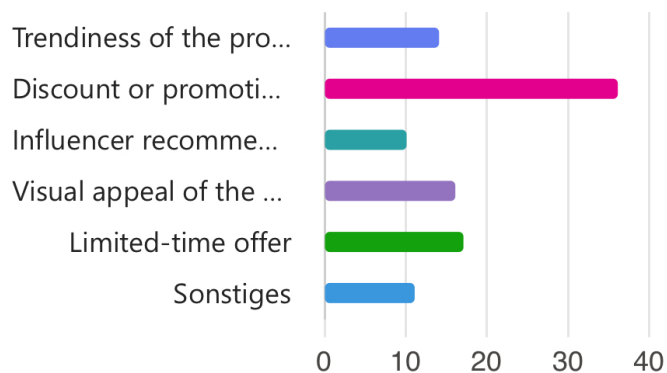


**Figure 24. Motivation for purchasing Inditex products after seeing it on social media**

The respondents expressed their reasons for buying from Inditex brands after being influenced by social media posts. The primary factors that influenced respondents were the availability of discounts or promotions (36 responses) and the popularity of the product (32 responses), closely followed by the visual attractiveness of the post (32 responses). Thirteen respondents were motivated by influencer recommendations, while limited time offers had an impact on nine. In addition, 6 respondents chose different reasons.

**Question 18 – Motivation for purchasing Shein products after seeing it on social media**

18. What motivates you the most to purchase from Shein after seeing it on social...



**Figure 25. Motivation for purchasing Shein products after seeing it on social media**

In this survey question, respondents shared their reasons for buying from Shein after coming across social media posts. The main driving factor was the availability of discounts or promotions, with 36 responses. This was closely followed by the visual attractiveness of the post, which received 16 responses, and limited time offers, which garnered 17 responses. The popularity of the product had an impact on 14 respondents, while 10 considered recommendations from influencers. In addition, 11 participants chose different reasons.

### Question 19 – Social Media and Clothing Consumption

19. Do you believe social media contributes to overconsumption of clothing?

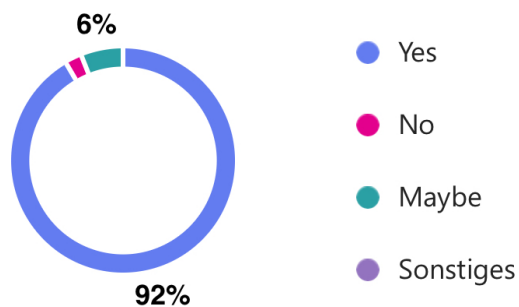
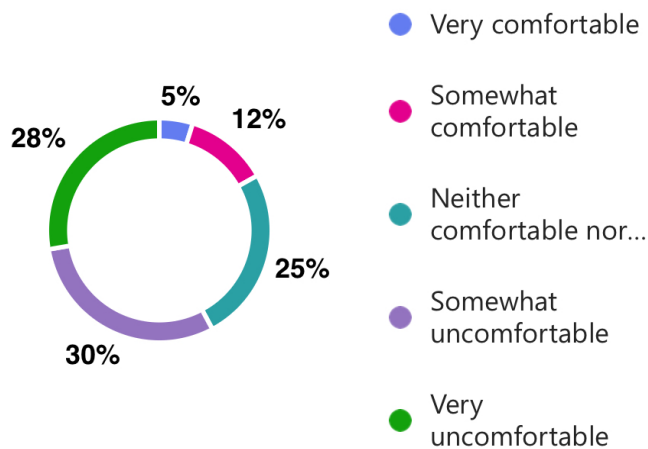


Figure 26. Social Media and Clothing Consumption

This question of the survey aimed to explore the perception of social media's influence on clothing overconsumption. A notable 76 respondents (92%) expressed agreement, emphasizing a prevailing belief that social media has a significant impact on encouraging excessive clothing purchases. Out of the respondents, a small percentage of 2% expressed disagreement, while 6% seemed unsure, suggesting a certain level of ambivalence.

**Question 20 – Awareness of Fast Fashion's Environmental Impact**

20. How comfortable are you with the environmental impact of fast fashion?

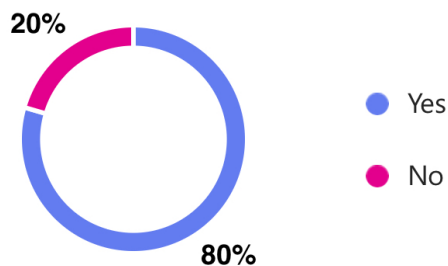


**Figure 27. Awareness of Fast Fashion's Environmental Impact**

Evaluating these results, 30% feel somewhat uncomfortable and 28% feel very uncomfortable with the environmental impact of fast fashion. In contrast, only around 12% are somewhat comfortable and 5% feel very comfortable with the environmental impact, while 25% are neutral, suggesting a substantial portion of participants may be either unaware of the issue.

**Question 21 – Awareness of alternative fashion consumption practices (e.g., second-hand clothing, clothing swaps)**

21. Are you aware of any alternative fashion consumption practices (e.g., second-han...



**Figure 28. Awareness of alternative fashion consumption practices (e.g., second-hand clothing, clothing swaps)**

Participants were asked about their familiarity with alternative fashion consumption practices, such as second-hand clothing or clothing swaps. Based on the evaluation of these results, a large majority (approximately 80%) of respondents have knowledge about alternative fashion consumption practices. It is evident that there is a strong understanding of sustainable options in the fashion industry. Nevertheless, the 17 respondents (approximately 20%) who lack awareness suggest that there is still potential for enhancing public understanding of these eco-friendly

## Question 22 – Interest in Sustainable and Ethical Fashion practices

22. Would you be interested in learning more about sustainable or ethical fashion...

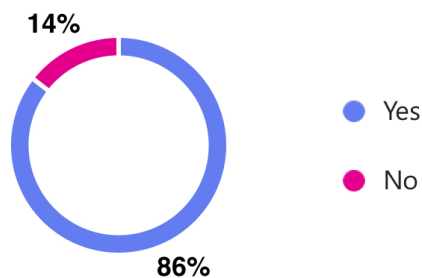
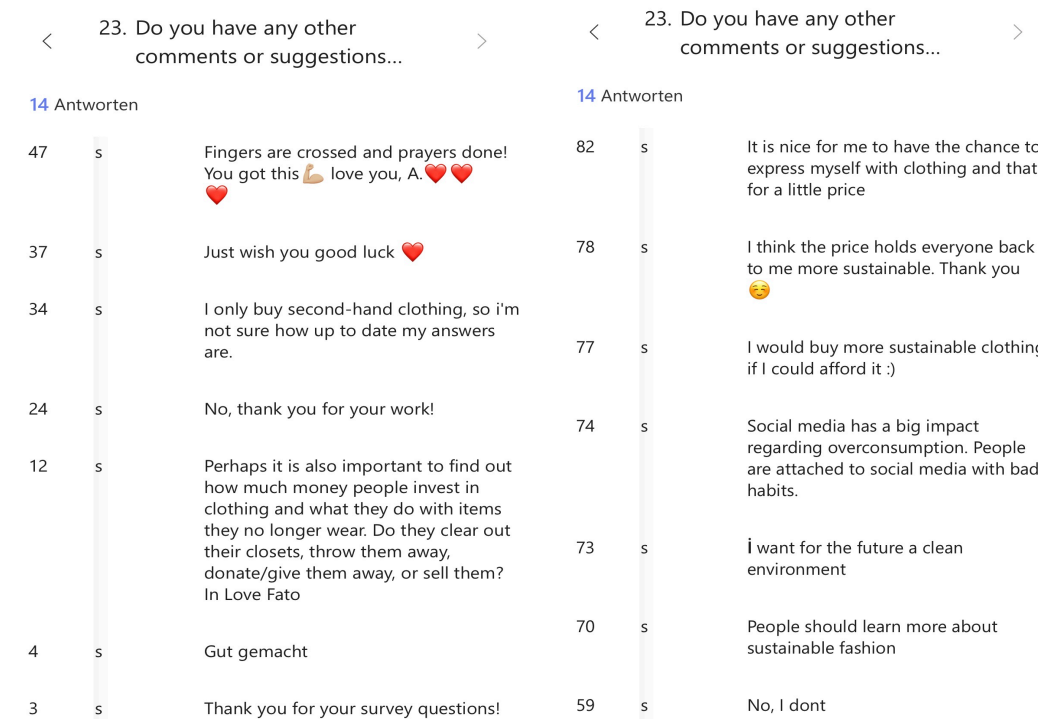


Figure 29. Interest in Sustainable and Ethical Fashion practices

Participants were enquired about their interest in gaining further knowledge about sustainable or ethical fashion practices. A significant majority of 71 respondents (approximately 86%) showed keen interest in acquiring further knowledge about these practices. The evident enthusiasm reflects a rising consciousness among consumers for sustainable and ethical choices within the fashion industry. On the other hand, 12 respondents (14%) showed no interest, possibly indicating their contentment with their current consumption habits or a perception that it is not relevant to them.

## Question 23 – Comments or Suggestions



**Figure 30. Comments and Suggestions**

In the final survey question, participants share comments or suggestions related to the survey. Many provided encouraging remarks such as "Good luck" and "Thank you". More detailed comments included a suggestion to explore how much money people invest in clothing and what they do with items they no longer wear—whether they clear out their closets, throw them away, donate, or sell them. One participant noted, "I only buy second-hand clothing, so I'm not sure how up-to-date my answers are," while another emphasized, "People should learn more about sustainable fashion." Additional comments highlighted concerns about the environmental impact and the role of social media in promoting overconsumption. One respondent stated, "I want for the future a clean environment," and another observed, "Social media has a big impact regarding overconsumption. People are attached to social media with bad habits." Financial constraints were also mentioned, with two participants noting, "I would buy more sustainable clothing if I could afford it :)" and "I think the price holds everyone back from being more sustainable. Thank you 😊." Finally, one participant appreciated the affordability of fashion, saying, "It is nice for me to have the chance to express myself with clothing and that for a little price."

### 7.3 Analysis

According to the survey results, participants have expressed a strong interest in fast fashion trends, which are greatly influenced by social media. The survey findings, based on responses from 83 participants primarily aged 18-34. Most of the participants were knowledgeable about popular fast fashion brands and mentioned regularly seeing fashion-related content on social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This is consistent with the AIDA model's Attention stage, which is when companies like Shein and Inditex first catch customers' curiosity. The most popular platform, according to the poll, was Instagram, which was used by 73 respondents. YouTube and TikTok were used by 66 and 42 respondents, accordingly. Users are drawn to these platforms because of their strong emphasis on visual material and influencers, which supports the conclusion that 92% of participants identified social media as a major factor in the promotion of fast fashion. The result is consistent with previous studies that emphasise the influence of visual platforms on fashion trends. A study by Fujiwara & Martin (2023), found that fashion influencers heavily rely on Instagram and TikTok as important platforms. These influencers have a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions by leveraging visual content and trends.

Cross-tabulation results between age group and purchase frequency reveal that younger respondents (aged 18-24) are more likely to make monthly purchases (65%) compared to the older demographic (35%). This suggests that younger consumers are more influenced by fast fashion trends and are more frequent shoppers. Additionally, cross-tables comparing social media platform usage and brand awareness show that Instagram users tend to have higher brand recognition compared to TikTok users, aligning with the survey's findings on platform popularity.

The survey additionally shows that 81 respondents use social media on a daily basis, indicating that fast fashion brands sustain Interest by engaging consumers through lifestyle-oriented content, influencer collaborations, and product showcases.

When examining shopping habits, I found out that many participants make clothing purchases on a monthly or seasonal basis. Price was identified as a crucial factor in purchase decisions, reflecting the influence of fast fashion's affordability on consumer behaviour. Further results showed that quality played a significant role, trendiness was for some important and for others not important, and brand name was viewed as less important. Through influencer partnerships and targeted advertising, fast fashion firms use social media to build brand awareness. These efforts have a significant impact on purchase behaviour. This is consistent with the AIDA model's Desire stage, when customers are motivated to act by strong emotional appeal or a sense of urgency to buy, driven by special offers, discounts, or trendy collections presented by influencers.

The survey results reveal a significant level of familiarity with the Inditex and Shein brands among participants. The significant level of brand recognition can be credited to successful social media marketing strategies. Through influencer partnerships and targeted advertising, fast fashion firms use social media to build brand awareness. These efforts have a significant impact on customer attitudes and purchase behaviour. This is consistent with the AIDA model's Desire stage, when customers are motivated to act by strong emotional appeal or a sense of urgency to buy, driven by special offers, discounts, or trendy collections presented by influencers.

According to the survey, social media advertisements and influencer collaborations played a significant role in raising awareness for both Inditex and Shein. Based on the article by Dilday (2024), social media influencer ads consist of brands allocating their advertising budget towards a post created through a collaboration with an influencer. This is usually accomplished using TikTok Spark Ads and Instagram Partnership Ads.

The Action stage is evident as a significant majority of respondents (80%) demonstrated awareness of alternative fashion practices, such as second-hand shopping. There is growing recognition of sustainable options, although obstacles such as financial limitations and limited access still exist. The survey reveals a significant level of interest in sustainable fashion, as a vast majority of respondents (86%) expressed a desire to gain further knowledge about sustainable or ethical fashion practices.

## 8 Summary

In recent years, social media platforms have become increasingly popular, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in social media usage has intensified the need to stay updated with the latest trends. By utilizing targeted advertising and influencer marketing, these platforms have greatly accelerated the promotion of fashion trends.

Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have greatly sped up the emergence of fashion trends, thanks to fast fashion brands like Shein and Inditex. Content creators have a significant impact on encouraging frequent buying habits through popular trends such as showcasing their shopping hauls and creating "try-on" videos. TikTok has quickly emerged as a potent marketing tool, particularly for captivating younger audiences with its captivating short-form videos and viral trends. This is evident in the way it has popularized fast fashion brands like Shein by trendy "haul" and "try-on" videos (Xu, Yan & Zhu, 2019). Designed specifically with the interests of Generation Z and young female consumers in mind, Zara has utilized social media to strengthen its brand image and connect with its target audience by strategically leveraging platforms such as Instagram. Zara has built anticipation and maintained a dynamic connection with its followers by emphasizing visual content and collaborating with micro-influencers. Collaborating with fast fashion brands, influencers play a vital role in showcasing new collections and creating a sense of urgency among their followers. This dynamic not only drives consumer demand but also exposes users to new styles and promotional offers.

This dynamic has had major environmental impacts, ranging from substantial carbon emissions to extensive textile waste. Shein and Inditex are prime examples of brands that embody the ultra-fast fashion model, which only serves to exacerbate these problems. Nevertheless, delving into options such as second-hand shopping and endorsing ethical brands presents practical ways to address the detrimental impacts of fast fashion and promote sustainable consumer habits.

## 9 Critical Review

Conducting research for my undergraduate thesis has been a valuable academic experience, allowing me to dive into the fascinating area of Marketing. After reviewing both the positive and negative aspects of my work, I have gained a clearer understanding of the research I have conducted.

As part of my thesis, I decided to conduct a survey to get opinions from people who are interested in fashion and social media. This choice was made to gather information that directly answers my research questions and fits the theme of my study. Since 2018, I have developed a strong interest in fashion and learned a lot about it, including its cultural aspects. This background helped me include the role of social media influencers in the marketing strategies of fast fashion brands like Shein and Inditex in my research. Working on this project has been very engaging and rewarding. The survey data has added valuable insights into how social media affects consumer behaviour and overconsumption in the fast fashion industry and creates trends. This experience has not only broadened my academic understanding but also deepened my interest in the complex relationship between fashion trends, social media, and consumer habits.

It was not difficult to find a substantial number of books and academic papers focusing on fast fashion trends, social media, and the resulting overconsumption. Many publications and research papers explore the theoretical aspects of branding, digital marketing, and advertising.

During the empirical part of the study, I had the opportunity to connect with people who were interested in social media and fast fashion trends and actively participated in the research. The analysis of the 83 replies revealed distinct patterns and preferences.

Upon further consideration, I came to the realisation that examining a wider range of social media platforms and conducting in-depth evaluations of multiple influencers would be impractical given the limited scope of this study. Considering the limitations of time and resources, I prioritised key platforms and influential figures to provide a more focused and practical analysis. This deliberate narrowing of focus enabled a thorough exploration of the most significant elements of social media in relation to fast fashion trends and overconsumption.

This study's validity is supported by the precise alignment of survey questions with research goals, notably social media marketing and consumer behaviour in fast fashion. Content validity was assured by focussing on customer awareness, purchase reasons, and interactions on platforms like as Instagram and TikTok. However, external validity is restricted by the sample size (83 participants) and demographic focus (ages 18-34). To improve generalisability, future research should strive for a more varied demography to better reflect the overall consumer trend.

The survey approach is very reliable, since standardised questions reveal persistent patterns of behaviour and opinions. This suggests that comparable findings may be obtained if the research was repeated. However, possible response bias, particularly on sensitive themes such as overconsumption, may undermine dependability. Future study might solve this issue by using more indirect asking or a mixed-method approach, such as interviews or focus groups, to cross-check survey results.

This study effectively dealt with the primary research questions regarding the role of social media on fast fashion trends and overconsumption. Through conversations with fashion enthusiasts and social media users, I discovered the powerful impact that social media platforms have on driving fast fashion trends and shaping consumer behaviour. The research highlighted the impact of social media on the fashion industry, showing how it speeds up the spread of trends and contributes to excessive consumption through targeted marketing, influencer partnerships, and the creation of new trends. In addition, the study offered valuable insights into alternative options for fashion consumption, such as second-hand shopping and supporting ethical and sustainable brands.

While there are certain limits in generalisability and possible bias, the approach used created genuine and trustworthy insights about the influence of social media in fast fashion. The study's concentrated methodology enabled significant research of important platforms and trends, providing unique insights into how social media influences fast fashion marketing and consumer behaviour.

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## Appendix 1



### 1. Age

under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

Sonstiges

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## 2. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Sonstiges

## 3. Country (please answer in english)

Ihre Antwort eingeben

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## 4. Occupation

- Student
  - Employed
  - Unemployed
  - Self-employed
  - Sonstiges
-

5. Which social media platforms do you use ...  
most frequently? (select all that apply)



- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Pinterest
- Sonstiges

6. How often do you use social media platforms?

- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Seasonal
  - Yearly
  - Never
  - Sonstiges
- 

7. How often do you purchase clothing items?

- Daily
  - Weekly
  - Monthly
  - Seasonal
  - Yearly
  - Never
  - Sonstiges
-

8. When making clothing purchases, how important are the following factors? ...

Price

Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Extremely important			

Trendiness

Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Extremely important			

Brand name

Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Extremely important			

Quality

Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Extremely important			

Sustainability

Not important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Extremely important			

9. Are you aware of the brand Inditex (e.g., ...  
Zara, Bershka, Mango)?



10. Are you aware of the brand Shein? ...



- Yes
- No
- Maybe

11. How did you first hear about Inditex?  
(select all that apply)

Social media ads

Influencer

Friends/Family

Online search

Physical store

Sonstiges

12. How did you first hear about  
Shein? (select all that apply)

Social Media ads

Influencer

Friends/Family

Online search

13. How often do you see posts from Inditex  
brands on social media?

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Seasonal

Yearly

Never

14. How often do you see posts from Shein brands on social media?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seasonal
- Yearly
- Never

15. How often have you purchased a product from Inditex brands (e.g., Zara, Bershka, Mango) after seeing it on social media?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

16. How often have you purchased a product from Shein after seeing it on social media?

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

17. What motivates you the most to purchase from Inditex brands after seeing it on social media? (select all that apply)

- Trendiness of the product
- Discount or promotion
- Influencer recommendation
- Visual appeal of the post
- Limited-time offer
- Sonstiges

18. What motivates you the most to purchase from Shein after seeing it on social media? (select all that apply)

- Trendiness of the product
  - Discount or promotion
  - Influencer recommendation
  - Visual appeal of the post
  - Limited-time offer
  - Sonstiges
-

19. Do you believe social media contributes ...  
to overconsumption of clothing?



- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Sonstiges

20. How comfortable are you with the environmental impact of fast fashion?

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable

21. Are you aware of any alternative fashion consumption practices (e.g., second-hand clothing, clothing swaps)?

- Yes
- No

22. Would you be interested in learning more about sustainable or ethical fashion practices?

- Yes
- No

23. Do you have any other comments or suggestions related to this survey?

Ihre Antwort eingeben

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