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Influencer Marketing in the Fashion Industry

The advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing in fashion promotion

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| <p>The premise of the thesis came from observing fashion marketing and associated industry trends and activities. The aim of the thesis was to explore and determine how influencer marketing has evolved, what the foundational cornerstones of the industry are, and to determine whether using it brings more positive or negative effects. In recent years, influencer marketing has become a key talking point in terms of marketing tools as it has grown tremendously, with marketers continuing to see positive outcomes from it.</p> <p>Studies, papers on the subject, books and other relevant research material were used in order to build a picture of the current situation regarding influencer marketing and how it works in today's fashion environment.</p> <p>Descriptive research was used to interview key players to gain more knowledge and points of view on influencer marketing. Three people were interviewed that work in the industry and were asked questions on how influencer marketing comes across in their own work as well as how they see it evolving in the future.</p> <p>The research concluded that marketers are more than willing to continue using influencer marketing, with it being seen as effective by most marketers. By combining the brand's and the influencer's audiences a brand can have a wide reach to consumers it might not reach by its own. Evidence has shown that brands that previously have only worked with models are starting to open doors to the possibility of working with influencers. Their effectiveness on buying behaviour is recognised and utilized through different campaigns.</p> <p>Authenticity and oversaturation are recognized as critical challenges that influencer marketing faces. As opportunities arise for influencers, it is important to focus on who your audience is and who are the consumers the brand focuses on.</p> | |
| Keywords | Influencer marketing, fashion marketing, marketing, influencer |

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Topic

To explain influencer marketing, you must first know what an influencer actually is. Not to be confused with someone who simply has a big following, an influencer is a person that can affect the thinking of their followers, get them to do something different (Forbes, 2017). Influencer marketing in turn helps utilize their power to get people to buy from you. During the past few years, the level of influencer marketing has skyrocketed. From 2015 to 2017 alone, Google searches for “influencer marketing” went up 438 percent (IMH, 2017). This has led to more and more brands taking into account the wants and tastes of younger audiences. Creating or predicting trends are aspects of the fashion business that everyone tries to master.

Since the number of people watching pay-tv is going down (Feldman, 2018), marketers are shifting their focus online to sites such as YouTube or popular social media sites such as Instagram or Facebook. Younger people may never choose to get pay-tv when Netflix is an option which limits the opportunities for advertising through traditional means. In 2018, the number of TV households worldwide was 1,67 billion (Statista, 2019) whereas in 2019 the number of people using Facebook was 2,4 billion with YouTube and WhatsApp having over 1 billion users each (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). This gives marketers far better opportunities to reach their target audience rather than using traditional TV adverts. TV does not offer the same opportunities for influencers as social media platforms do. As the younger generation is moving away from TV and towards streaming services and social media, influencers are seemingly the easier method to advertise through.

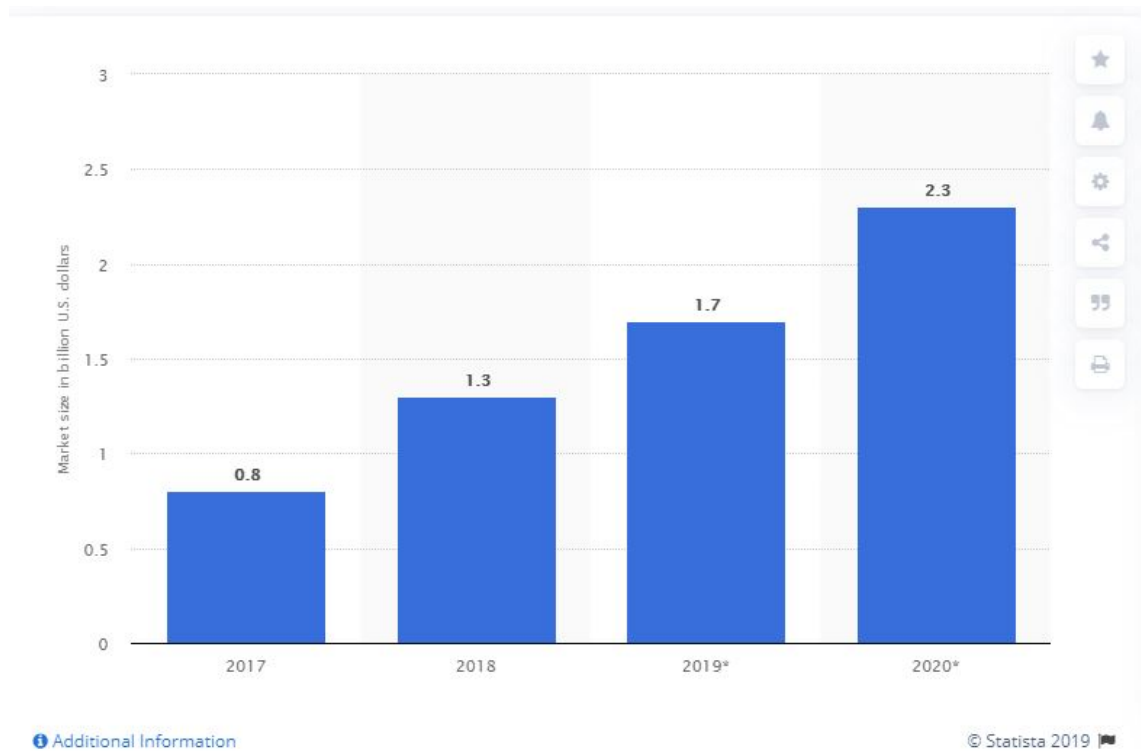


Figure 1. Instagram influencer market size 2017-2020. Guttman, 2019

As shown in the graph above, the market for influencer marketing is still growing at a quick pace with the market size more than doubling from 2017 to 2019. Instagram currently has over 1 billion monthly users with the amount rising constantly (Instagram, 2019). This gives marketers incentive to continue to invest marketing budgets into influencer marketing promotions.

The topic is something that has been a big part of marketing discussion in the past few years. From the Economist to BBC to The New York Times, major publications have been focusing on influencers more than before. Even though the phenomenon of influencers is as old as time, social media and our attitudes towards celebrities have skyrocketed the reach and influence of the new wave of nouveau riche influencers.

THE QUOTE

“Fashion has overwhelmingly turned into a multimedia entertainment business where recognition and buzz decide the day. Accordingly, the silent language of a well-cut piece of clothing is no longer sufficient.”

– Jil Sander, 2019, n°51

Picture 1. Jil Sander for Self Service Magazine, 2019

The importance of the topic comes from various aspects. From a monetary standpoint alone, understanding the topic can help companies increase sales and succeed in the industry. Helping companies understand why the consumer acts in a certain way or what trends to look out for can provide strong advantages as well as techniques to grow their business. But it is also a very interesting topic. Seeing how popular opinions shift regarding different trends is fascinating. It gives an insight into people's views, how they operate a certain way and sometimes even why this occurs. Some of the importance comes from the fashion cycle. How trends are created and by whom, what is picked up from designs made decades ago and how that is inserted into modern culture. It can be argued that there is nothing new that can be thought of because of how fashion works in cycles. A lot has already been made and how current designers can adapt to this to create something coveted is very interesting.

Now, as the middle class spreads and globalisation homogenises taste, it becomes harder to find countercultural pools bubbling with novelty. The very word “influencer” reveals the problem. These people are nodes of transmission rather than sources of creativity. Fashion brands need them to spread word of their wares. Influencers need the support of the brands to prove their continued relevance and to make a living.

Each is looking to the other, asking what shall I wear?

Luke Leitch, the fashion editor of the Economist’s 1843 Magazine, speaks about unoriginality in fashion (2018)

Since there have always been influencers and gatekeepers, it is inevitable that people will follow someone’s lead. Whether it is the rulers of the country or a celebrity, people have been influenced by others for centuries. It is more than likely that you have been influenced by multiple things this week alone. Whether it’s a commercial that makes you buy a certain type of food or buying a piece of clothing because you saw it on the street or on social media worn by someone you follow, people tend to pick up on things constantly. Influencer marketing is a double-edged sword. Without the research needed, it is hard to know the audience you are going to reach and the effect you are going to have. It requires you to know who you are catering to and the correct people to utilize in doing so. Without this, it is a wasted effort. To get the most out of it, one must study the field and know who the right people are for the jobs required. To summarize, influencer marketing is a positive and well yielding marketing tool if used correctly but has negative effects if the marketer does not study his audience and the influencer’s audience.

1.2 Research Question

Looking at the current situation in fashion, hype and influence are things that are being prioritised over design and actual talent. A great example of this is the appointment of Virgil Abloh as the new menswear designer of Louis Vuitton (Friedman & Paton, 2018). Having no previous education in the field of fashion and becoming famous for being the creative director of Kanye West and his own lines Pyrex Vision and later Off-White, Abloh is the manifestation of what is, in my opinion, wrong in men’s fashion currently. On the other hand, it is great that barriers are being brought down and that in this case, basically anyone can become the leading menswear designer for the world’s biggest fashion brand. At the same time, it is sad that in this case the decision was most likely made on the basis of how much money Virgil’s name can bring in (as seen from the popularity of his Off-White label and his Nike collaborations) and not because of his merits as a designer. A piece of clothing, however ugly it may seem to the regular consumer, can become “hyped” or coveted if someone famous wears it or if it’s designed by the “correct”

person. Virgil's designs for his brand Off-White are a representation of this with repetition in every collection and only simple changes being applied to the new collection.

With research and conducted interviews the thesis aims to answer what the upsides and downsides of this phenomenon are. How it can both help the market grow and water down the effects of it. Internet influencers have become a mainstay in fashion, and it is important to understand how brands are using this to their advantage.



Picture 2. One of Virgil Abloh's designs for Off-White (Off-White, 2018)

The design above is a representation of what Off-White is. Loud graphics printed on shirts and hoodies, often with the exact same motifs or with very little variation. With a price tag of €265, it is still sold out in every colour (Off-White, 2018). This feeds into the culture where cuts or designs are not as important as hype or getting the right people to wear your clothing. This has always been a great way for brands to get their designs out there, but it has blown up due to internet culture and the easy accessibility to your favourite celebrities. Landry Thomas, an image consultant and personal shopper for football players describes the phenomenon;

“Regrettably, most players, those without much knowledge about fashion turn to these brands, whether because they have a strong presence in the market (Balmain, Givenchy), or because they are targeted by the brands directly (Philipp Plein). But a lot of information circulates in the locker room, the effect of community is a big factor,” says Thomas. In other words, once you sold to Messi or Pogba, you sold to all of them. And once you sold to them, you sold to their millions of fans. Thomas adds that part of his professional duty is to steer his clients away from the brands mentioned above. (Rabkin, 2019)

This leads to my research question; what are the advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing in the fashion industry? Getting recommendations about products from people you look up to is easy but as influencers get paid to advertise, the sense of trust between influencers and their audience also weakens. Trends can go from online to the racks of Zara in two weeks (Stevenson, 2012) and influencers are a big part of the reason why.

1.3 Scope

The thesis will discuss the basics of marketing, influencer marketing and consumer behaviour. Further, the thesis will look at different influencers and their impact on the industry and consumers.

The methodology section will cover the collection of information for the thesis. Including research through literature, online articles and interview, the thesis will aim to look at the subject from multiple angles. The literature review will aim to create a base for the interviews. They will then add substance and real-life examples from each of the interviewee's lives.

After the methodology section, the thesis will be discussed in full ending with a conclusion on the subject. The interviews and their results will be examined to provide further examples regarding the thesis topic. Finally, the topic will be concluded with a consensus on the subject.

References and appendices are listed at the end of the thesis.

2 Literature Review

The literature review will look at the basics of the subject and cover selected books, papers and other academic references related to influencer marketing.

Understanding the topic requires an understanding of how influencer marketing works, how influencers create connections with their fan base and how companies can use these connections for profit. In 2014, 74 percent of consumers relied on social media to help with their purchases (Bennett, 2014). This helps marketers as the audience is already turning to social media to help with their decisions, influencers can be used as the tool to reach this audience.

The literature review will look at these different parts of marketing and how they all affect the outcomes from different perspectives. These topics will further help understand how the phenomenon works and how it can be utilized for company gain.

2.1 Marketing

For the thesis to fully make sense, it is important to understand the very basics of marketing itself. Kotler and Armstrong (2010, p.26) define marketing as “managing profitable customer relationships. The twofold goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value and to keep and grow current customers by delivering satisfaction.” The basic concept behind marketing is to tap into people’s wants, needs and demands. Explained by Kotler and Armstrong (2008, p. 8), needs are states where a person feels deprived including hunger or the need for safety, wants are formed by everything around us affecting things such as what kind of food we eat or what kind of clothes we wear. Finally demands are explained as wants that become demands through buying power. When a consumer has limited resources, they choose the option that has the most value for their money.

Marketing is usually seen as advertising or selling but as Kotler and Co. (2012, p. 4) would put it, in today’s world it is important to look at it as satisfying the needs of the consumer and not as ‘telling and selling’. The customer is held at the centre of attention, making decisions based on their wants.

Since the topic revolves around influencer marketing, it is important to look at digital marketing as a necessary tool involved. Described in the book *Digital Marketing* by Dave Chaffrey & Fiona Ellis-Chadwick, digital marketing means achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies (2012, p.9). Basically, this claims that digital marketing brings nothing new to the table, by this logic it is only using the existing theories and models that have been available for years. But as technology dependency grows in the world, new perspectives have to be taken into account.

2.1.1 Influencer Marketing

A basic explanation of what influencer marketing is could be described as using an influencer to advertise your product. A better explanation would be that “it is the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand messaging with their audiences in the form of sponsored content” (Sammis, Lincoln & Pomponi, 2016). Influencer marketing has become a popular marketing tool in recent years with the rise of social media. This has been supported by various studies. In a study by Mediakix, marketers were questioned about influencer marketing.

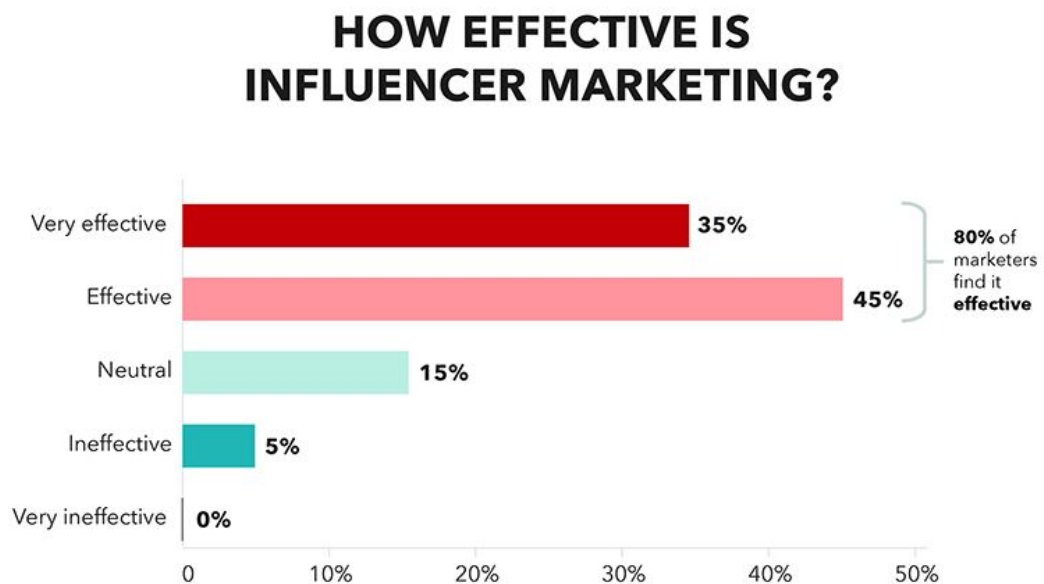


Figure 2. How Effective Is Influencer Marketing? (Mediakix, 2019)

As can be seen on the table above, the marketer side of the industry held influencer marketing as an important tool. In the same study, 89 percent of marketers said that return-on-investment from influencer marketing was either comparable to or better than

other marketing channels. The same narrative continued with Econsultancy and Influencer Intelligence's Influencer Marketing 2020 study. 61 percent of consumers, aged 18 to 34, admitted that they have at some point in their lives been swayed in their decision-making by digital influencers. All of this gives us an image of a huge market that is only growing. Business Insider agrees with that statement, estimating that brand-spending on influencer marketing will grow from \$9Bn in 2019 to \$15Bn by 2022.

In a study done by Tomoson in 2015 influencer marketing was the fastest-growing channel. Whereas some results can be seen as dated, such as blogs being the most effective platform for influencer marketing with 37 percent over Instagram's 6, Tomoson's study gives a clear insight on what was happening in the middle of the 2010's.



Figure 3. Fastest-Growing Online Customer-Acquisition Method (Tomoson, 2015)

What is even more evident today can be seen from the results of Tomoson's study. Traditional display advertising is becoming marginal compared to influencer marketing and other digital acquisition methods.

Explained by Brown in the book *Influencer Marketing* (2008, p. 11), he states that "influencer marketing is a new approach to marketing, important because sales forces both understand and support it. It directly addresses the most common sales barriers within prospective customers and focuses attention on those individuals who advise decision-makers. We call these people influencers, and they are as crucial to the sales process as the prospects themselves." He explains how influencers or decision-makers are creating their own eco-systems, which marketers then try to penetrate with the help of the influencer.

Brown raises an important point about the basis of influencer marketing. "As a marketer, the smaller the number you need to focus on, the more likely you'll find a message that resonates". Rather than trying to influence different age groups or other large groups of

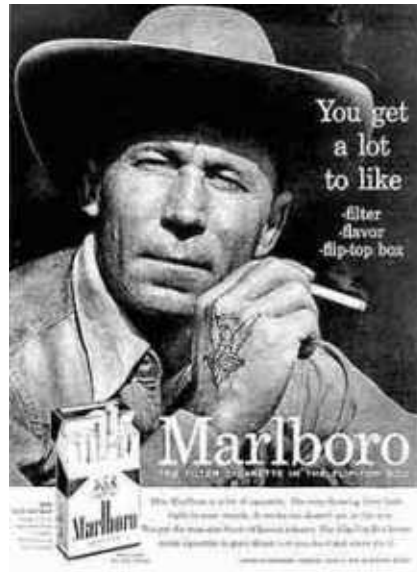
people, marketers should focus on connecting to the influencers in these demographics. Finding the right people to influence is as important as having the right message as they will take care of the large distribution of your message through their fan bases (2008, p. 37).

2.1.2 History of Influencer Marketing

Dating back to Medieval Times, influencing is not a new phenomenon by any means. Royalty had the right to rule and the only person outweighing their influence was God or his representative, the Pope (Gatsby, 2019). Despite this, the word “influencer” was only added to the Merriam-Webster dictionary earlier this year (Adweek, 2019). Back then the earliest signs of influencers came from royalty promoting medicine.

Their influence of course reached further than just promotion. The colour purple has always been associated with royalty, with its roots going back to the ancient Phoenician city of Tyre in modern day Lebanon. The dye being so expensive to make, it could only be afforded by the wealthiest of people (Andrews, 2015). This is one of the earliest cases of associating certain clothing with power and wealth. In ancient Rome, money was not the only thing stopping citizens from wearing purple. Roman emperors forbid their citizens from wearing the colour, disobedience resulting in a death penalty. Only in the 1850s did the first synthetic dyes give purple to the people even though the Byzantine Empire fell in the 15th century.

The influencer does not always have to be a real person as was proven with the Marlboro Man. Before the 1950s Marlboro was considered to be a woman’s brand of cigarettes. Then after reports of cigarettes resulting in lung cancer came, prompting people to look at a safer alternative. Marlboro’s filtered cigarettes were seen as a healthier option, but they still needed to change their image as a woman’s brand (STMU History Media, 2017).



Picture 3. Philip Morris as the Marlboro Man (Gatsby, 2019)

That is where the Marlboro Man came into play. Going in the opposite direction with their advertising than in the years prior, Philip Morris started to portray the Marlboro Man as a masculine, rugged character that was perceived as cool; this drew in crowds of younger male consumers and ultimately “he” was credited as driving cigarette sales from \$5 million to \$20 million (Gatsby, 2019).

A great example of an influencer becoming a big part of a brand is Michael Jordan. In 1984 Nike signed Jordan and when the Air Jordan 1’s hit the shelves in March of 1985, everyone wanted to “Be Like Mike”. By year’s end, the Air Jordan franchise had amassed more than \$100 million in revenues (ESPN, 2013). With this signing, Nike understood the value a player can have on sales, especially when that someone is as special as Jordan.

One of the most successful influencer campaigns came with Old Spice and the Old Spice Man. Their “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” campaign created a ton of buzz as it was featured during Super Bowl weekend in 2010. Aired a few days before and the day after the match, Isaiah Mustafa’s humorous portrayal of a masculine man drove traffic on Old Spice’s website up by 300 percent and doubled their sales (GRIN, 2019).



Picture 4. Isaiah Mustafa as The Old Spice Man (Wieden + Kennedy, 2010)

In today's world there are too many examples of influencer marketing to choose from. Brands seed product to influencers that fit their audience and their posts on social media drive more customers to the brand. Influencers are gaining more and more popularity, verging on that of a traditional celebrity. They might start their own brands in hopes that their popularity and fan base will give them returning customers. In a world of oversaturation, it is important to know who to work with, what influencer will connect you to the correct target audience.



Picture 5. Rapper Travis Scott as the face for Saint Laurent's Spring/Summer 19 campaign (Evans, 2019)

In recent years, the value of influencers has been seen rising. As with the campaign pictured above, people that were previously never connected to highly esteemed fashion houses now appear in worldwide campaigns. With the rise of popularity with hip hop in popular culture, it has opened doors for new influencers to be used such as A\$AP Rocky, Kanye West or Travis Scott.

2.1.3 Four Ps

The four Ps are seen as one of the basic tools of marketing. Influencer marketing connects to this as it is often associated with promotion as an element of the four Ps. Often called the Marketing Mix, the four Ps consist of Product, Price, Place and Promotion. These offer a basic framework for marketing, turning it into a simple process. Described by Kotler and co as a set of controllable, tactical marketing tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants from the target market' (2008, p. 157-158),

- Product is easily explained as the goods-and-services portion of a company. What the company offers, whether it is a finished product or the brand's heritage.
- Price is what is used to evaluate the product, its worth. Even though discounts might be offered it does not affect the full picture.
- Place might be important for a company trying to hold a certain image. It controls where the product is sold, how it might be presented to the public. Own stores, distributors and web stores are examples of this.
- Promotion includes all the methods used to portray the product. Customers are drawn in with advertisements, special offers or other purchase incentives. This is where the marketing segment of the company is focused on, where also influencer marketing would be located. This will be discussed more in length later in the thesis.

To create the most effective method for a company, all 4 P's must be used. The focus on each part is determined by the project, each one is different from the other. As one could expect, promotion is what the thesis is most focusing on. Sales promotion, public relations, advertising, personal selling and direct marketing are the tools that the promotion mix consists of, giving the company means to build customer relationships.

2.1.4 Marketing Process

Almost every marketing process model differs from the previous in some way, but they still have a lot of similarities between them. Most models support the five-step model that can be divided into two parts as can be seen below. The first four steps are used to understand customer needs and wants, design a marketing strategy, use marketing programs to communicate and deliver value, and build strong customer relationships (Kotler & Co, 2013). These become the building blocks for generating profit for the company. By creating value for the customers, companies can move to the final step, capturing value from customers to create profits. The bigger the value you create, the more customers there are to collect value from.



Figure 4. A simple 5 step marketing process (Kotler & co, 2013, p.30)

These steps should be examined thoroughly when thinking about your own company.

- Needs and wants are basics of marketing. Needs are basic states of deprivation such as the need for food, shelter or clothing. Wants are the option between eating a salad or fries. One's society can affect your wants as someone in the US might crave a burger whereas a Finnish equivalent may want rye bread. Both need food but wants control what they actually choose. Wants can also evolve into demands by backing wants with buying power. These choices are what marketers try to influence.
- After understanding the wants and needs of the targeted consumers, marketers can begin to design a customer-driven marketing strategy. Kotler gives advice as to how to design a winning marketing strategy: two important questions. What customers will we serve and how can we serve these customers best.
- Developing an integrated marketing program will help transform the marketing strategy into action. This involves using the previously mentioned marketing mix, or four Ps. This marketing mix is blended together to communicate and deliver the intended value of the integrated marketing program to the customers.

- The fourth step of the marketing process involves building good relationships with the consumers. The key to lasting customer relationships is creating both customer value and customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers are often seen as loyal ones, like Kotler mentions in his book.

Kotler draws attention to the fourth step of the process, saying that “perhaps the most important step in the marketing process involves building value-laden, profitable relationships with target customers.” This makes sense as customers want experiences and not just transactions, maintaining good customer relationships is crucial to success.

As previously mentioned, the first four steps of the marketing process are designed to create value *for* the customer. The final step focuses on the company reaping the rewards, using the strong customer relationships that have been created to capture value *from* customers. Designer boutiques have mastered the service aspect of the store concept. Making the customer feel welcome will more likely result in them buying something and more important, make them come back.

2.2 Fashion Marketing

With influencer marketing being a big part of fashion promotion in social media, it is important to look at fashion marketing as a whole. Mike Easey describes fashion marketing in his book *Fashion Marketing* (2009) as “the application of a range of techniques and a business philosophy that centres upon the customer and potential customer of clothing and related products and services in order to meet the long-term goals of the organization.”

Since marketing and design are somewhat opposites of each other in terms of what they hold in value when it comes to clothing, it is important to look at fashion marketing from both sides of the coin.

| | | |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Sample statements | Fashion marketing is the same as promotion | Design should be based solely on marketing research |
| Assumption | Sell what we can make | Make what we can sell |
| Orientation | Design centred | Marketing centred |
| Alleged drawbacks | High failure rates Relies on intuition | Bland designs Stifles creativity |

Table 1: Two views of fashion marketing (Easey, 2009)

Easey uses the juxtaposition of how adding money decreases creativity to explain different strategies in fashion marketing. Going too much into either end has its faults so one must learn to use both marketing and design centred approaches to create the ideal outcome.

In Tony Hines' and Margaret Bruce's 2007 book *Fashion Marketing*, they mention how not only is it important for brands to be aware of who their customers are but also who their customers are not, creating greater insight into their customer base and their consumption habits. Knowing what the large group of people does not associate with helps the company create content and products that match their customer base's ethical, taste and perhaps monetary values.

What a lot of fashion marketing is focused around is creating a brand or product that people want to own. In *Fashion Marketing*, Hines & Bruce lend an example from Calvin Klein. When a person buys an article of clothing from said brand, it is rarely from the need to clothe oneself and rather from the want to wear a designer label. The Calvin Klein label hints at a better lifestyle, an element of wealth. This is the case with trends and other designer labels, the want forms from the opinions of others and not from within yourself. This will be focused on later in the thesis in the behaviour section.

2.2.1 Promotion and Advertising

Discussed shortly previously in the thesis, promotion is part of the marketing mix along with product, price and placement. Often mistaken with being the same as advertising, promotion holds more value in the grand scheme of things than what people give it credit for. Without it, the public will not have means of accessing your product, they will never learn about it. The previously mentioned promotion mix is used to communicate the product to the masses, using specific tools to reach the right audiences. While the most common approach seen involves either advertising or direct marketing, one cannot discredit

the importance of public relations or sales promotion when it comes to important pushes to your popularity. Meeting the right person can be just as important as launching an ad campaign on Instagram.

Risen from a need to tell people about goods, services and events, advertising is now a multimillion-dollar industry. It is an important part of business, to successfully communicate your product to the masses in hopes of it catching on. In the marketing sense, advertising is placed under promotion so in a way they go hand-in-hand. Advertising in today's world happens mainly online. It is more cost-efficient to put up ads on Facebook or hire an influencer or two to cater your products to the correct crowd whereas billboard ads can cost multiple times the amount of those previously mentioned methods. For example, a national TV ad could cost anywhere from \$60,000 to \$8 million to set up with an average cost of \$342,000 to run the ad for 30 seconds (WebFX, 2018). The biggest online campaigns accumulated costs at a maximum of \$50,000. Especially when talking about new companies, it can be seen how online options can seem more tempting to tackle.

2.2.2 Influencer Marketing in Fashion Marketing

What used to be fashion journalists and designers themselves are now regular people with amassed followers that listen to their advice when it comes to fashion. Influencers in the fashion industry have always existed but the influencer itself has changed. Before social media these people were the actual gatekeepers of the industry with knowledge and years of experience to back their decisions when it came to trends or new designers. Now with the enormous growth of accessibility to the industry, almost anyone can be the new tastemaker.

A good point that Duncan Brown and Nick Hayes bring out in their book *Influencer Marketing* (2008) is how Web 2.0 (websites that emphasize user-generated content) changed influencing, "it's further dismantled the notion that the influence of a person is directly related to the title on their business card." You do not need to have a career in the industry you wish to influence in, this has been more evident in the fashion industry where influencers are a dime in a dozen. People with no previous work or studying experience from the fashion industry could become influential, such is the case with Louis Vuitton's men's designer Virgil Abloh who first got his Bachelor's degree in civil engineering and his Master's in architecture (Business of Fashion, 2019).

In a 2018 article in *Business of Fashion*, Victoria Berezhna writes about how influencer marketing entered the mainstream in the fashion industry. What used to be a promising experiment and something new in marketing, turned into a tool that most brands utilize. In 2017 alone, about 78 percent of brands used influencers in their marketing campaigns, going up from 2016's 65 percent. Another interesting fact Berezhna provides is that in a survey done by Launchmetrics, nearly half of fashion brands said they preferred working with micro-influencers rather than mega-influencers. Those with 10,000 to 100,000 followers are considered better candidates as even though their audiences might be smaller, their followers are more likely to buy the products endorsed by the influencer. This helps brands penetrate niche markets, something that might be harder with influencers who have hundreds of thousands of followers.

Influencer marketing has been previously divided into two categories, earned and paid influencer marketing. Earned marketing comes from unpaid relationships or trade-offs where the influencer receives compensation in product form. Paid marketing includes marketing campaigns, sponsorships and other advertising methods where the influencer gets monetary gain from the advertising (Sheena K. & Sudha M.).

2.3 Consumer Behaviour

Influencer marketing relies on consumers looking at other, often more popular people for advice. Blackwell & Co. describe consumer behaviour in their 2006 book *Consumer Behaviour* as “activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services.” So, to put it simply, consumer behaviour examines why people buy and consume certain products. Obtaining, consuming and disposing are the three primary activities included in the definition of consumer behaviour. In turn, there are different influences, such as the influencing done by more popular individuals or marketers as a whole that affect consumer behaviour decisions.

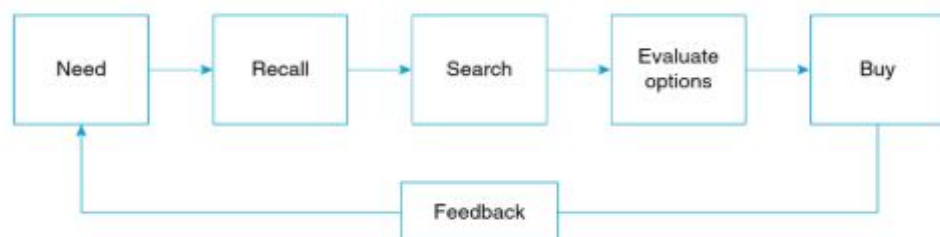


Figure 5. Purchase decision process. (Blackwell & Co. 2006)

Everyone has their own methods of deciding what to purchase. Especially when it comes to fashion, we have our own sources of influence that affect what we end up buying. Whether it be peer groups, past experiences or trends, there is always a reason why we end up with product A instead of product B. Blackwell & Co. explain that we have both consumer and organizational influences that affect our obtaining, consuming and disposing.

- Consumer Influences come from your own life. They include such things as culture, life-stage, attitudes or past experiences. Where you are from and what interests you can have a big influence on what you wear, what you listen to or where you eat.
- Organizational Influences are everything that can affect you from outside of your bubble. These include things such as trends, promotions, word of mouth and store ambiance. Depending on how susceptible a person is, organizational influences can affect you more than what you like or what has worked in the past.

Early research in consumer behaviour tried to target personality as a trait that controls buying behaviour. Later it was realized that it only played a small part whereas other factors such as influence, or socioeconomic status played a larger part. Even Procter & Gamble conducted several studies with personality as a segmentation variable but after three years of efforts and a lack of effectiveness compared to other methodologies, personality was not looked at as a relevant factor (Blackwell & Co. 2006).

2.3.1 Consumer Behaviour in Fashion

When studying consumer behaviour, it is not only important to look at the past to find patterns, things that have influenced people in the past but to also look at the future to try to predict future trends, future buying behaviour. As a complex area, consumer behaviour remains a subject for marketers to look into. Consisting of viewpoints such as social, technological, political, economic and personal factors, it might be hard to know which factors are more important than others. A study published in the Australasian Marketing Journal released in 2001 examined the relationships between gender, age, self-monitoring, materialism, fashion clothing consumption motives and fashion clothing involvement (O'Cass, p.47, 2001). Some of the topics can be explained briefly.

- Self-monitoring is argued to reflect the degree to which an individual monitors, and controls self-presentation in accord with social cues. Differences in orientation and concerns for prestige and appearance can affect the degree to which individuals possess self-monitoring characteristics and thus the brands and products they choose.
- Materialism is largely the degree that individuals find possessions to be involving and are placed in a central position in one's life. Along with self-monitoring, materialism affects the usage of products to portray a certain image. Materialists have been found to rely heavily on external influences, favouring the possessions that are worn or consumed in public places. To put it short, trendiness matters.
- Fashion clothing involvement describes the amount of which an individual invests themselves into fashion. The degree can vary since people can be invested in the level where they, for example, only look at magazines influencers as suggestions or they can follow trends, the fashion cycle and place a great deal of emphasis on the materials or the cut.

The study found that “self-monitoring affects consumer behaviour related to fashion clothing because it is associated with the degree of interest in maintaining a front through fashion clothing because it can be used as a prop to convey an image of the individual to other people” (O’Cass, p.47, 2001). People who were high self-monitors were found to have a strong concern for their image as well as an emphasis on getting sensory pleasure out of the clothing. Other people’s impressions of the clothing and social approval were seen as strong drivers for the self-monitor’s fashion choices.

As cultural factors also play a big part in any consumer behaviour, it also affects fashion. Different areas or countries might be susceptible to brands that other areas might stay away from. This can be seen, for example, as the difference in trends between different countries. A study for the Journal of Asia Business Studies published in 2017 looked at consumer behaviour regarding luxury fashion goods in India. As a demographic it is a great example to draw from as India is forecasted to be the third largest economy in the world by 2025, overtaking Japan (The Press Trust of India, 2019). It has a large number of dollar millionaires (as opposed to the rupee) which in turn creates demand for luxury products. The study examined luxury purchase behaviour through conceptual framework based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). It is affected by a person’s attitude towards the behaviour, a subjective norm and Perceived Behavioural Control or PBC.

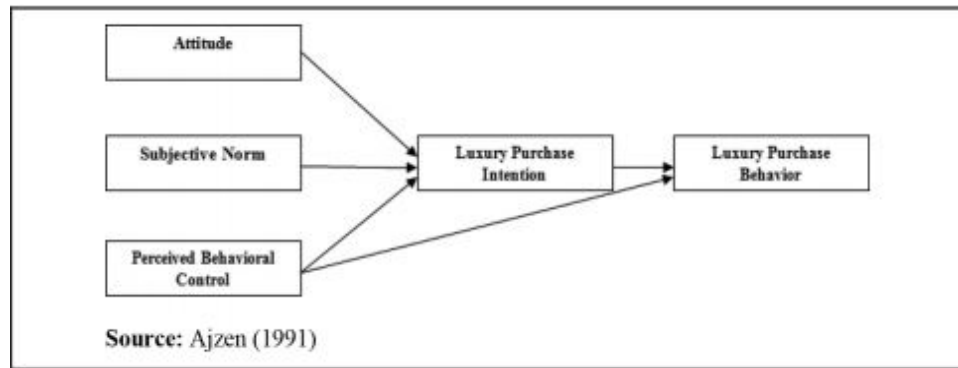


Figure 6. Conceptual framework based on TPB (Ajzen, 1991).

There are a few terms that must be explained in order to fully understand the framework behind the study. Attitude is defined as “an individual’s positive or negative feeling toward performing the target behaviour” whereas subjective norm is the person’s perception of how their behaviour is approved/disapproved by important people in their lives. PBC in turn describes how difficult an individual perceives a certain behaviour (Jain, Khan & Mishra, 2015). These factors are added together to create the decision-making process of how an individual goes through luxury purchases.

The study found that using TPB is an effective method of examining consumer behaviour. In India, the subjective norm was found to have more of an effect on behaviour than attitude, which is more common in collectivistic environments such as India and China. The relationship between PBC and buying behaviour was found to be insignificant, contrary to TPB itself being a useful tool. Seeing a behaviour as difficult did not have any effect on what their purchase ended up being, the opinion of others in your group is seen as a much larger influence.

2.3.2 Buying Behaviour

Buying behaviour is the study of how an individual reacts in a purchasing situation and what drives or influences an individual’s purchasing habits. Similar to consumer behaviour, buying behaviour can be studied with multiple tools and theories, reviewing how something affects a person’s behaviour. However, it is not as vast a subject as consumer behaviour since the only concentration is on the purchasing aspect of the customer. With influencer marketing, this is the result marketers look for. To make customers purchase a product based on the recommendations of an influencer and thus affecting their decisions and buying behaviour.

A study for the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management was released in 2005 focusing on tweenage girls and their buying behaviour with fashion. Tweens are a group of young people whose ages range from pre-adolescent to 14 years. At the time of writing in 2005, they were the richest generation in history with “their spending roughly doubling every ten years over the last three decades.” (Grant & Stephen, 2005).

| Characteristic years | Perceptual stage (3-7 years) | Analytical stage (7-11 years) | Reflective stage (11-16 years) |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Knowledge structures | | | |
| Orientation | Concrete | Abstract | Abstract |
| Focus | Perceptual features | Functional/underlying features | Functional/underlying features |
| Complexity | Unidimensional | Two or more dimensions | Multidimensional |
| | Simple | Contingent ('if-then') | Contingent ('if-then') |
| Perspective | Egocentric (own perspective) | Dual perspectives (own + others) | Dual perspectives in social context |
| Decision-making and influence strategies | | | |
| Orientation | Expedient | Thoughtful | Strategic |
| Focus | Perceptual features | Functional/underlying features | Functional/underlying features |
| | Salient features | Relevant features | Relevant features |
| Complexity | Single attributes | Two or more attributes | Multiple attributes |
| | Limited repertoire of strategies | Expanded repertoire of strategies | Complete repertoire of strategies |
| Adaptivity | Emerging | Moderate | Fully developed |
| Perspective | Egocentric | Dual perspectives | Dual perspectives in social context |

Table 2. Consumer Socialisation Stages (Grant & Stephen, 2005)

A person’s way of thinking and making decisions changes as they get older. Peer pressure may affect you when you are an adolescent or a teenager, but it may not have any value in terms of decision making as an adult. As can be seen from the figure above, strategies and knowledge structures change and evolve with age. Therefore, advertising for little children differs from advertisements for teens, the approach and message need to be different. As a teenager, the acceptance of a brand stems from your peer group or an influencer when at the perceptual stage most decisions come straight from one’s parents (Grant & Stephen, 2005).

Since the earlier stages are more controlled by the person with the buying power, so in this circumstance the parents, it’s more useful to focus on the reflective stage where the person starts having their own money and making more independent decisions concerning their clothing. In her study about consumer socialization of children, Deborah John spoke about the reflective stage; “A heightened awareness of other people’s perspectives, along with a need to shape their own identity and conform to group expectations, results in more attention to the social aspects of being a consumer, making choices and consuming brands”. This results in adolescents becoming more strategic about their choices (1999, p. 187).

2.3.3 Influences on Consumer Behaviour

We can be influenced by stimuli and others around us. Advertisements, word-of-mouth, trends, and pricing for example. Our behaviour consists of the outcome of all these little things that affect our behaviour. This of course changes with age and experience as we value other sources of influence over others.

| Product's attributes | Women | | Men | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | Mean | Standard Deviation | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| Satisfaction | 6,11 | ,925 | 6,08 | 1,003 |
| Comfort | 6,11 | 1,313 | 6,11 | 1,130 |
| Function | 5,98 | ,944 | 5,58 | 1,248 |
| Need | 5,87 | 1,361 | 5,71 | 1,250 |
| Quality | 5,79 | 1,440 | 5,85 | 1,154 |
| Style | 5,59 | 1,017 | 5,55 | ,969 |
| Model | 5,52 | 1,058 | 5,62 | 1,041 |
| Cut | 5,52 | 1,474 | 5,45 | 1,223 |
| Colour | 5,50 | ,966 | 5,59 | 1,011 |
| Used materials (Cloth/fibres) | 5,38 | 1,427 | 5,12 | 1,272 |
| Durability | 5,27 | 1,225 | 5,47 | 1,277 |
| Treatment | 5,11 | 1,271 | 5,07 | 1,413 |

Table 3. Characteristics/attributes of pieces of clothing appreciated by consumers (Azevedo & Co. 2008)

In the table above we can see different attributes that attract consumers to pieces of clothing. In the study carried out by Azevedo & Co. they found out that while 68,1 per cent of men look for pieces that might highlight their physical features, only 60,8 per cent of women did the same. While both men and women held satisfaction and comfort to be the most important factors, only men held quality as a top priority whereas women held function and need above it. This might mean women think that the look of a piece of clothing is more important than the quality of it, that it will last.

| | Women | | Men | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| | Average | Standard deviation | Average | Standard deviation |
| Price | 6,10 | 1,003 | 5,64 | 1,070 |
| Product quality | 5,70 | 1,061 | 5,74 | 1,073 |
| Product variety | 5,10 | 1,299 | 5,04 | 1,299 |
| Store atmosphere | 4,98 | 1,752 | 4,66 | 1,462 |
| Shop-window | 4,38 | 1,934 | 4,47 | 1,656 |
| Brand | 4,19 | 1,712 | 4,22 | 1,861 |
| Pictures seen on the store's website | 3,92 | 1,839 | 3,46 | 1,911 |
| Pieces exposed on the store's manikin | 3,91 | 1,907 | 3,89 | 1,722 |
| Store's decoration | 3,85 | 2,107 | 4,14 | 1,670 |
| Catalogue products | 3,42 | 1,456 | 3,37 | 1,547 |

Table 4. Aspects the customer appreciates when they go to a store (Azevedo & Co. 2008)

As can be seen in the table above, women hold price to be the most important factor when shopping. This can be seen through the success of chains such as H&M, Zara, Forever 21 and other fast fashion chains that offer trendy clothing at a cheap price. Their ability to speed up their supply chain gives them a great advantage; they can react to new trends faster than other brands with lesser resources can. With women, pricing is followed by product quality and product variety. Men hold these same values as the most important ones but with quality edging out pricing for the number one spot.

Even though the aspects both genders appreciate the most are the same, they still have differences in their shopping behaviour. After seeing a shop window, only 41,8 percent of men were tempted to enter the store to see more while 50,8 percent of women say they do it.

People are also susceptible to the bandwagon effect. This refers to the extent to which demand for a product increases because other are consuming the product (Ko & Megehee, 2012). This can be seen in the streets of Finland with the popularity of certain trends. White Nike Air Force 1s, Supreme clothing (whether it is real or fake) or puffer jackets from The North Face are all trends that have exploded in recent years. It is impossible to walk through Helsinki without seeing these items of clothing. Influencers feed this phenomenon as it is often from them that these trends really take off.

3 Interlinkages Between the Fashion Industry and Influencers

With the information about influencers in the age of social media, the literary sources fall short on what's current. As fashion is constantly evolving, literature on the subject that is a few years old may already become dated regarding methods and topics about today's fashion world. Using the connection between the fashion industry and its influencers outside of the literature review, we can explore it more freely and in more of a descriptive manner.

3.1 Fashion Industry

Ever since the concept of haute couture, fashion has been an everchanging cycle where new ideas get mixed and matched with old trends, fabrics and cuts. Now a multitrillion-dollar industry, the fashion industry employs an estimated 1,8 million people in the US alone (Fashion United, 2020) (HRW, 2018), making it one of the biggest industries in the world.

In the end of 2017, the fashion industry employed over 300 million people worldwide (Fibre2Fashion, 2018). This includes retail jobs, factory workers from horrible conditions to European high fashion workers, and a range of other important players in the supply chain. A report by Amed & Co. for McKinsey estimated the industry being worth \$2,5 trillion in 2017, with growth happening year after year.

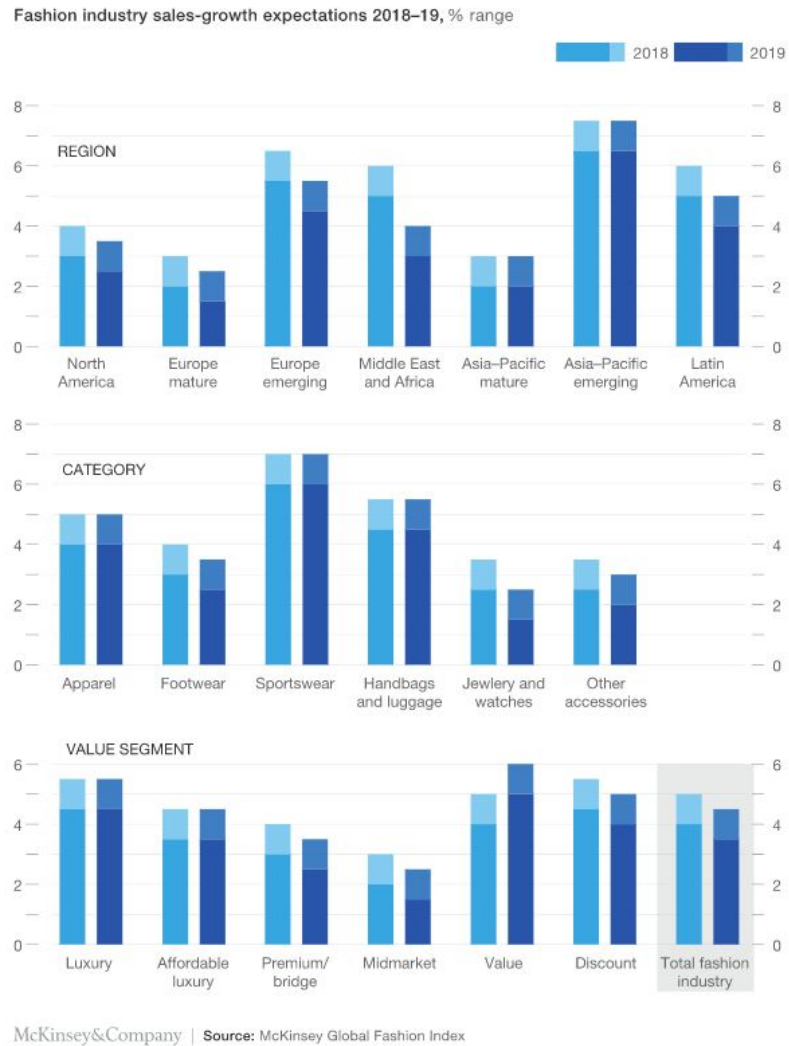
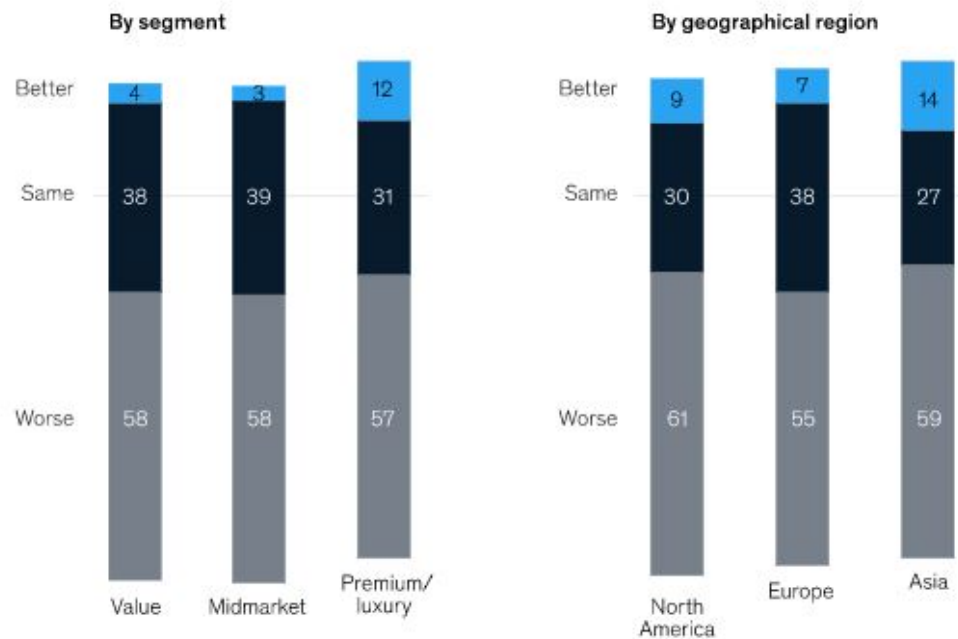


Figure 7. Fashion industry sales-growth expectations 2018-19 (McKinsey, 2018)

The graph above shows growth expectations that were made in late 2018, predicting a lower or similar growth rate than in 2018 with everything else but value. Luxury brands had shown a strong growth in 2018, leaving it to be the segment to be most optimistic about. In late 2019 McKinsey released the expectations for 2020, having a much grimmer outlook on the future.

The majority of fashion executives foresee a slowdown in the industry in 2020, regardless of value segment or geography.

Fashion executives' forecast for the industry in 2020, % of respondents



Source: Business of Fashion—McKinsey State of Fashion 2020 Survey

McKinsey
& Company

Figure 8. Fashion executives' forecast for the fashion industry in 2020 (McKinsey, 2019)

Unlike 2018 when 42 percent of respondents expected conditions to become worse, 2019 saw executives maintaining darker economic predictions with forecasts ranging from 55 to 61 percent of respondents leaning towards worse conditions. Knowing what we know now in 2020, conditions and the market are most likely to be worse at the end of the year than in the beginning.

However, it is very hard to predict how great the effects will be, as reports coming in that sales have gone both up and down. Finnish Textile and Fashion surveyed companies from the field during 30th – 31st of March, asking them how the current epidemic might affect their businesses. 103 companies answered the survey, employing 2900 people with a combined yearly turnover of 660 million. Out of the companies that answered, 41 percent had begun laying off employees with 35 percent preparing to do the same in the following weeks. (Haaksluoto, 2020). Other effects the situation has had is on e-commerce. Finnish e-commerce site Weecos.com announced that their sales has gone up 160 percent in the recent weeks (Haaksluoto, 2020), signalling that even though people

are more wary of going outside to physical stores, it doesn't mean that they are necessarily changing their shopping habits. The spike happened between the 13th and the 29th of March, with the amount of purchases going up 210 percent. Sustainable fashion and the opportunity of supporting local businesses have been seen as some of the reasons for the bump in sales, showing a positive outcome of a negative situation.

3.2 Influencers

Known throughout history as royalty, celebrities and in today's age, regular citizens, influencers are a group of opinion leaders that are held as the tastemakers of society. In the fashion industry they are the people who can start trends, change the public's opinion about what is cool and affect the way the fashion industry operates in general.

Influencers can be split into four different groups: mega, macro, micro and nano influencers. Each of these are based on the follower size and impact (Ismail, 2018).

- Mega influencers are your A-list celebrities such as Justin Bieber or Will Smith. The examples given for influencers in this thesis could also be categorized as mega influencers and it's what will be focused on. Some people from this group are more influential than others even though they might be more known, the following and your impact as an influencer are the most important parts.
- Macro influencers are people who have a following of about 100,000 to 1 million. Many Instagram stars or YouTubers fall into this category as well as people like design influencer Marie Kondo.
- A micro influencer is a person with a following of a thousand to 100,000. Most influencers fall into this category, having a certain niche that people get attracted to such as gaming, fashion or fitness.
- The highest level of engagement is found in nano influencers. People with a small following, less than a thousand, can be seen as more authentic than the celebrities or macro influencers who can call influencing their job. They are your pastors, popular students or community leaders, the everyday people.

In the book *Marketing to Gen Z* (2018), Jeff Fromm and Angie Read explain influencer marketing as something that's evolved from school halls to the screen of your cell phone. What used to be seeing older kids in school and mimicking their tastes has turned into following a person online and taking his suggestions and utilizing them in your life, whether it's listening to certain bands or wearing certain brands.

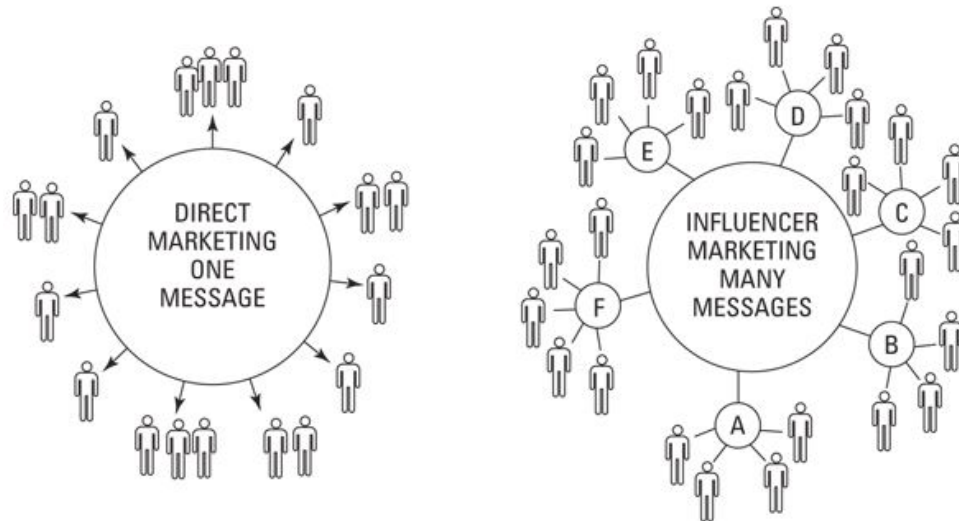


Figure 9. Differences between direct and influencer marketing (Sammis, Lincoln & Pomponi, 2016)

The figure above gives a clear picture of how influencer marketing differs from regular direct marketing. Having an influencer as a hub of information for their fans, it creates a digital word of mouth-experience that will connect possible customers from multiple different backgrounds, economical standpoints and locations. Having this is an advantage when trying to spread the company's message as far as possible (Wissman, 2018).

As established per the two examples in this thesis, it could be said that the most effective influencer advertises products that are directly linked to the person, such as West's Yeezy line with adidas or Abloh's collaborations with Nike or his brand Off-White. Not having to act as a liaison between the brand and the influencer's fanbase creates a more trustworthy image since the person isn't using their social media platforms to advertise products, rather showing the products in their regular lives whether it's from images paparazzies take or at different events. While these two examples have had similar backgrounds and have worked together for multiple years, they are different enough from each other in a manifold of ways that they can be used as separate examples.

3.2.1 Kanye West

Whether it is something that people are willing to admit or not, Kanye West has been one of the most influential people in fashion the last decade. His designs get recreated by fast fashion brands instantly and almost everything he wears becomes a trend.

This kind of influence is rare to see. More often clothing brands copy or take influence from other fashion brands but in the case of Kanye, brands copy him directly, whether they are his own designs or just the clothes he is wearing.

A great example of this comes from his partnership with adidas. Having created multiple popular sneakers with Nike, it did not come as a surprise that his adidas collaborations would be received fairly well. This of course did not stop fast fashion brands copying his designs as could be seen with brands such as Zara.



Picture 6. West's Yeezy Boost 750 (Castillo, 2015)
(Jones, 2016)

Picture 7. Zara's version, released the next year

Seen from the pictures above, Kanye's Yeezy Boost has been one of the most popular new models of the past few years. First debuting in 2015, his adidas line quickly gained attraction from the people interested in fashion. One thing connecting his collaborations with Nike and adidas are the resale prices that follow his releases. More often than not, a shoe purchased from a store can instantly be sold for a profit, sometimes for as much as 1000 percent of the retail price.

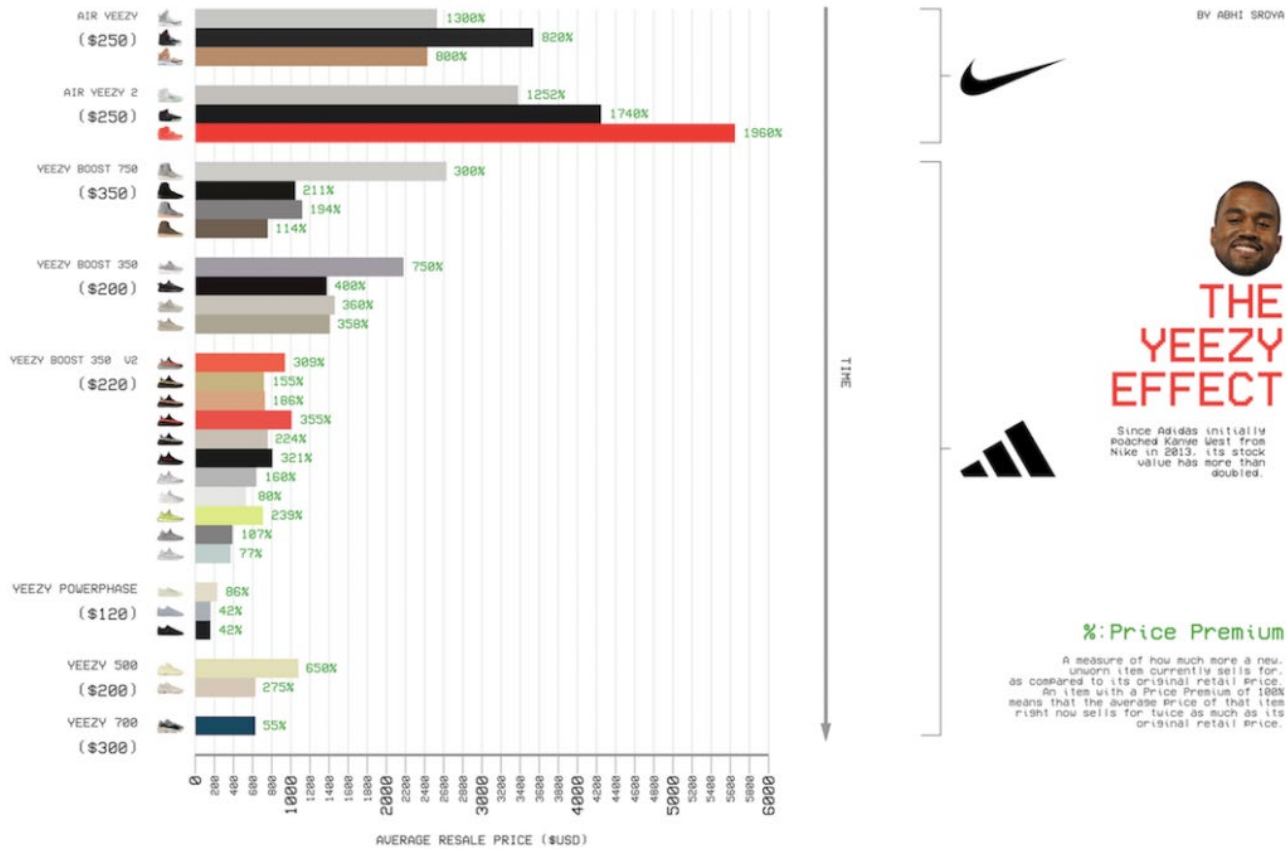


Figure 10. Resale prices of West’s shoe collaborations (Abhi Sroya, 2018).

The graph above points out the influencing power of Kanye. For example, his shoe created with Nike, the Air Yeezy 2 released for \$250. These days, the average resale prices range from \$2000 to \$5000 depending on the colour and the condition of the shoe (Grailed, 2020). Acting as a sort of root influencer, Kanye has been able to set trends that have worldwide visibility. This in turn has created a “cool kid” image; whatever he wears becomes cool.

In 2018, designer Sasu Kauppi gifted Kanye with a shirt from artist TIPPA. After wearing and getting photographed wearing this shirt, it only took a few days for the shirt to sell out on PME’s website.



Picture 8. Virgil Abloh (left) and Kanye photographed in Calabasas. (Kotivuori, 2018)

Working for Kanye with his YEEZY-line, Sasu Kauppi gifted Kanye with the graphic long sleeve that he expressed interest in. After a post by @iamdjlivia showed her posing with Kanye and the shirt in question, orders started coming into the webstore of TIPPA's record label PME. The CEO of PME commented that after the post, multiple orders had come in, some even from overseas (Römpötti, 2018). Only a few days after the post, the shirt that had been available on the webstore for a few months had sold out. This is a testament to the influence Kanye has. Just wearing a shirt once can cause sales to go up, influencing people worldwide to purchase a certain product.



TIPPA® Long sleeve

€39.00

Picture 9. TIPPA long sleeve on the PME webstore (PME, 2018)



Picture 10. Side by side, West's merchandise at his 2016 Saint Pablo tour and Forever 21's designs shortly after (Slingerland, 2016)

His overly confident and often times obnoxious behaviour aside, West is somewhat of a powerhouse in the industry. It has become a joke of some sort that whatever he wears becomes popular. Whether it is clothing that makes you look homeless or "dad shoes", brands are certainly going to follow the trends and imitate the clothing that he wears or

designs. As seen on the pictures above, this attracts fast fashion brands to copy the designs to a tee.



Picture 11. West wearing a sweatshirt from Haider Ackermann (Segretain, 2014) / Picture 12. Similar sweatshirts from H&M (Jones, 2015)

3.2.2 Virgil Abloh

Formerly known as the right-hand man of Kanye, Abloh is currently at the creative lead of one of the most recognizable luxury brands, Louis Vuitton. With his popularity exploding in recent years, Abloh has been able to get to the most coveted position in fashion, the design head of a multibillion-dollar French fashion house.

Abloh's career began studying civil engineering at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Yotka, 2018). Before his graduation in 2002, he was working at a screen-printing store in Chicago called Custom Kings. It was there that Abloh met Don C, designer and close friend of Kanye West. Impressed by his design ideas, Don C closed the link between Abloh and West. This resulted in Abloh working for West before going with him to intern at Fendi in 2009 (Bettridge, 2019) (Yotka, 2018).



Picture 13. Abloh's "The Ten" collection for Nike, designing his versions of Nike classics (Thomas, 2017)

After their time in Italy together, in 2010 Kanye hired Abloh to be the creative director for his creative hub DONDA. For a long time, it remained mysterious as to what he actually did at the outfit, but later interviews reveal him being a creative sidekick for West with collaboration on album design, tour design and merchandise (Ferrier, 2018) (Bettridge, 2019) (Yotka, 2018).

In 2012 Abloh launched his first brand in his fashion career, Pyrex Vision. He purchased deadstock (unused clothing that were removed from sale) Ralph Lauren flannels for \$40, which he then screen printed the word Pyrex and the number 23 (in homage to Michael Jordan) onto and resold for \$550 each (Yotka, 2018).



Picture 14. Actor Jonah Hill in a Pyrex Vision flannel (Virgil Abloh, 2013)

In 2013 he ended Pyrex Vision and founded Off-White, his now famous brand, partly because of the similarities between the Pyrex home appliance brand. With Off-White Abloh ventured into the high fashion world, creating streetwear with better materials and production in Italy.

After a successful few years with Off-White, in 2018 Abloh was asked, to the surprise of the industry, to be the artistic director for menswear for Louis Vuitton (Yotka, 2018) and became the first black American to lead a French top fashion house (Davis, 2020). So far, he has shown three collections in Paris for the heritage brand, adding his own twist to the traditional house. The influx of millennial and Gen-Z buyers that Virgil brings to the brand was most likely seen as a positive when thinking about assigning him to the role. Louis Vuitton's CEO told Quartz that when some of Abloh's first designs for the brand went on sale at a Tokyo pop-up, the first 48 hours brought greater sales than what came from LV's extremely hyped and publicized collaboration with streetwear brand Supreme (Bain, 2019). Arguably, Supreme's bombshell of a collaboration opened doors for collaborations such as Dior x Air Jordan, Gucci x Dapper Dan or Rimowa x Off-White. The

luxury world started to accept streetwear and pop culture and incorporate it into their own DNA.

Like Kanye's, his designs have been copied multiple times by various brands whether it is high street or the counterfeiting industry. His impact on fashion and trends have made him a target for imitation like West. He has been able to collaborate with industry giants like IKEA and Rimowa (Davis, 2020) and as with every collaboration his presence grows, counterfeiters gain more reasons to use his designs.



Picture 15. Off-White Industrial Belt (Off-White, 2020)

Picture 16. Shoes imitating the industrial belt

design in Helsinki (Myyrä, 2020)

3.2.3 Downsides of using influencers

With all the traffic and publicity an influencer can bring to a brand, the relationship can also cause harm to the brand as has been seen before. Knowing the influencer you use for the specific part is important, especially when looking at micro influencers who might be focused on a certain niche topic.



Picture 17. Campaign for Snapchat's Spectacles-glasses (Instagram, 2018)

As can be expected, the campaigns do not always work as agreed or expected. Such was the case with Luka Sabbat and Snapchat in 2018. Sabbat was hired to do a post advertising the glasses as well as show them off in three stories (24-hour pictures or videos), including both Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks (Mediakix, 2019). Instead of this, he only published the post and one story. He breached his \$60,000 contract doing this and it resulted in a lawsuit with the result remaining unclear (Alvarez, 2018).

Another big issue marketers face when working with influencers is follower fraud. Even though an influencer might seem popular with thousands and thousands of followers, the numbers might not paint the full picture of the situation (Schröder, 2019). Since influencers might be buying followers that are nothing but computer-generated accounts, it's important to look at the influencer's engagement; what percentage of their following likes their posts? If the account has 2,000 followers but their posts get around 100 likes on average, it's more than probable that the account has boosted their follower count by buying followers. Even though Instagram has been fighting this problem by deleting these fake accounts (Ellis, 2019), it continues being a problem. A report by cybersecurity firm Cheq estimated that fake followers would cost brands \$1,3 billion in 2019 (Graham, 2019), making it a huge problem for marketers not familiar with signs to look for when choosing an influencer. This has made companies take precautions when hiring an influencer. For example, influencers have to agree that they haven't taken part in purchasing followers, engagement pods or botting.

Another issue previously mentioned in the thesis is the topic of trust. Knowing if an influencer's review is genuine or swayed by a pay check is hard, especially if you have not followed the influencer for a long time and thus have a better sense of their taste and behaviour. In a study done by Adweek in 2019, nearly half of Americans have done purchases based on the recommendations of an influencer. Even though trust has been an issue when discussing influencers, 33,5 percent of respondents to the survey felt that there would be a future for computer generated influencers such as @lilmiquela. This brings a juxtaposition on the subject; how can you trust an influencer that is not real when there is a team behind every post and word they publish? According to a survey conducted by media agency UM, only 4 percent of the information coming from influencers was believed to be true by the public participants surveyed. The highest level of trust was found in information shared by governments, with 12 percent of people viewing the information as "mostly truthful".

4 Methodology

This section will focus on interviews conducted on a small group of three people. The main focus is to answer whether influencer marketing is perceived as more positive or negative.

Kotler & Armstrong describe marketing research as a means to give marketers insight into customer motivations, purchaser behaviour and satisfaction (2010, p.129). This in turn helps marketers make decisions in the future on pricing, product, placement and promotion activities.

The reason a small group of three people was picked rather than interviewing a large group is to get more accurate and precise information on the subject. The interviewees have been close to the fashion field for years and have experience on Finland's culture around fashion. This gives the thesis a more detailed view on certain influencers in the field and how influencer marketing has shown in the streetscape of Finland. The interview was made to gain more information on influencer marketing and its effects. How it has changed during the interviewees' careers and when they feel it is necessary to use.

4.1 Research Methods

Research objectives can be split into three different types as explained by Kotler & Armstrong (2010, p.130):

- **Exploratory** research is used to gather preliminary information that will help define the problem and to suggest a hypothesis. This could be used to describe the literary review portion of the thesis.
- **Descriptive** research is what will be used in this thesis. It is used to better describe problems, situations or markets related to marketing, such as the market potential for a product or the demographics and attitudes of consumers who buy the product.
- **Causal** research is the next step in these marketing research methods. It is used to test hypotheses on cause-and-effect relationships. For example, would decreasing a price of a product create more demand to make up for the drop in the sales price and thus create more revenue?

The choice to focus on descriptive research came from wanting to use opinions and experiences from people in the industry. The earlier sections of the thesis gathered information and theories on the subject, but this method gives a chance to look at the issue from another angle. For the result wanted, three people were chosen from different parts in their careers. Gold & Awad (see section 5.1) both have a few years of experience with Kalaoja being the veteran of the group, already having a 20-year career in the industry. The few-year gap between Gold's and Awad's careers was large enough to be used for this purpose as especially with influencers, the field has changed a lot in the last five years.

4.2 Interview Design

The interview was designed with the specific interviewees in mind. Taking points and areas of interest from this thesis and further discussing them to reveal more information on the subject. The interview is divided into ten questions, each discussing a part of influencer marketing and its effects on the fashion industry.

For the best results, the questions were aimed to collect more information on points from the thesis and to utilize the expertise of the interviewees. They all have their own experience on the subject either from acting as an influencer or from the marketer's standpoint.

4.3 Limitations

Some limitations that might arise from the research are that since the sample size is small, different results might be achieved with a bigger group of interviewees. Using a bigger group would result in answers from a bigger range that the three interviewees do not provide. Having said that, the three interviewees were chosen carefully as they all bring unique perspectives to the thesis. Each one has their own style, own experiences with the fashion industry and different influencers they can draw from.

Since the study is on a niche subject with a small sample size, it might not be applicable on a larger scale or the answers might not be able to be utilized in a larger context outside of this thesis. The questions are tailored to fit the thesis and since the interviewees are all more or less in the same industry, any generalisations towards other industries based on the answers cannot be made.

The research approach these interviews use is survey research. Being the best suited option for descriptive information (Kotler & Co. 2008, p.337), this will help bring more substance to the subject and different points of view. Kotler & Co. points out that a limitation with survey research is that people might not be able to remember fully about why they have presented certain buying behaviour or if they have even thought about the reasoning behind their actions. In this case that might be irrelevant since the people in question are aware of their likes and the reasons behind their decisions.

5 Research and Interviews

The interviews used in this thesis were done by email in late April 2020, to three people prominent in the fashion scene in Finland. The interviewees have credible expertise in the industry due to their qualifications as either a successful marketer or influencer.

5.1 About the interviewees

Scott Gold is the co-founder of Finland's only sneaker related event Sneaker Bash. He also has experience in marketing product to the public, most recently with Lidl's foray into the sneaker world with their €15 sneaker that sold out within hours of releasing.

Karim Awad is a photographer and a co-founder of Finland's biggest fashion related Facebook group Hypend. Through Hypend and his work projects, Awad had been able to see changes in today's fashion atmosphere.

Oki Kalaoja is a stakeholder/partner at skate shop My Favorite Things and CEO of Four Down Distribution. With multiple years in the industry, he could provide insight into the fashion scene and its evolvement throughout the years.

5.2 The effectiveness of influencer marketing

Through the rise of social media, it is easier to access different influencers. Gold gives the example of Ian Connor who rose through Instagram and who most likely would not have become somewhat of a public figure in fashion without social media. In the streetscape the effects of influencers are visible immediately. Brands and trends that these celebrities, models and rappers are wearing become very popular through social media and become worldwide trends but also because of this the trends die out faster than before. This enables brands to come almost out of nowhere and be picked up by relevant Instagram accounts which then helps the brand gain visibility worldwide.

Being publicly known in the industry and the fashion circles can easily lead to getting requests to advertise certain products. Gold mentions that he has gotten offers from multiple brands to show off their clothing/different accessories but has only agreed to

endorse Makia's products so far. Kalaoja has received a six-pack of beer and some shirts but has not felt that giving praise on the shirts would be seen as genuine.



Picture 18. Scott Gold promoting Makia's collaboration with Moomin (Instagram, 2020)

In total, all interviewees see the importance of using certain influencers to advertise to specific niches. To promote a caravan, a marketer should rather hire a nature photographer with ten thousand followers than a fashion blogger with twenty thousand followers since it is more likely that their followers have more interests in common than with the fashion blogger. Every year, Gold and the team behind Sneaker Bash invite influencers to the event in order to gain more visibility. These people are already focusing on fashion on their accounts so the visibility they give comes off as authentic.

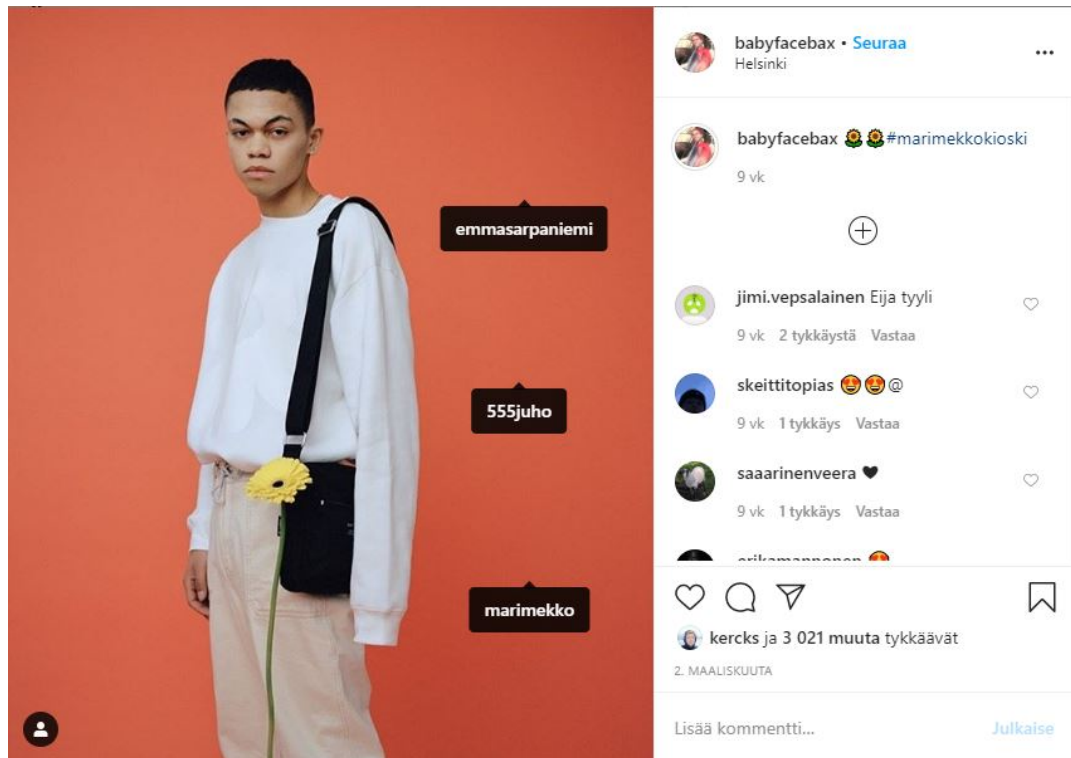
As the barrier to entry has decreased, people have gained the false sense of expertise that their follower counts merits them the qualifications of being featured in a marketing campaign. Kalaoja mentions teenagers with a thousand followers think that after advertising an energy drink or potato chips, they could fluently move into advertising Nike shoes. The popularisation of influencing has led to an American-dream complex that anyone can be featured in major public campaigns but in practice the execution to achieve that level of success and notoriety requires extensive work.

5.3 The current state of influencer marketing

The most important thing is finding the right target audience for your product and the correct influencer to advertise to that specific group. “Everybody’s doing collaborations with the same brands just to say they’ve worked with them” -Karim Awad. Being unique and focusing on your own thing is rarer, it is easier to conform to gain followers than stick it out with your own style that might bear fruit in the future. Before you would follow a certain style like punk or preppy whereas now you follow people and imitate their styles. This has led to worldwide trends being adapted for example into the Finnish streetscape much faster than five years ago when these trends would have to be seen in different cities around the world or by following the right blogs that are on trend.

The interviewees use A\$AP Rocky, Kanye with his YEEZY line and on the women’s side Kylie Jenner as great examples of today’s influencers. Their style is imitated and copied by fast fashion brands quickly. Other examples include Travis Scott & Drake with their Nike collaborations, Drake being the first non-athlete to ever sign a deal with Jordan Brand (Lawley, 2014). American celebrities are held as the tastemakers, rappers being in the forefront currently as rap has become more popular than ever (Lynch, 2018).

On the Finnish side a few that were mentioned were Cledos, Babyface Bax, Jimi Vain and the rest of the Töis crew who the young people of Finland look up to. The aforementioned have a combined Instagram following of over seventy thousand. Bax has appeared in a Marimekko campaign, Cledos has had multiple songs on Spotify’s Top 50 Finland-list and Jimi has customized shoes for artists like Playboy Carti and athletes like Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (Instagram, 2020). Kalaoja says that it is refreshing to see that they are focusing on their own thing and what they actually like rather than just sharing discount codes to Junkyard.



Picture 19. Babyface Bax for Marimekko Kioski (Instagram, 2020)

Gold mentions that one of the most important things about working with influencers is agreeing to certain terms. Without the influencer fulfilling their part of the deal, they should not benefit in any way. This thesis mentions Luka Sabbath and Snapchat's feud as a result of when this does not happen. Biggest signs in the fashion industry of influencers becoming more common is the amount of clothing that is being seeded to them. It is seen as a cheap method to spread awareness of a brand while gaining possible new customers. Most high-profile influencers get packages of clothing from brands or during fashion week shows they might be clothed by a brand to appear in their show's audience.

Kalaoja sees authenticity as the most important factor when working with influencers. As a starting point the influencer should already be a fan/user of the product they are going to advertise so that both parties would gain something from the partnership. This does not necessarily mean monetary gain, even added visibility to both parties can be seen as a benefit. He sees current influencers as people who can advertise a face cream from brand x on one day, ice cream on the next, do a "routine escape" to a nearby hotel after that and on the fourth day go to Stockmann's to a VIP-event to show off their newest products. This pattern takes away authenticity from the collaboration with the influencer as too much advertising is easily seen as fake behaviour or only chasing a pay check.

Kalaoja cannot name an influencer in Finland who does it as their job whose work looks authentic.

In Kalaoja's business the popularisation of influencer has not had an effect in their business or the products they sell. Their marketing is done by their skate team who represent the store with their skating. No models are hired, commercial cooperation is done for example, with artists whose music the team likes or who have already been customers of MFT for a while.

5.4 Influencer marketing in the future

Awad estimates that the amount of social media accounts will continue to rise and move to different platform. Brands are getting more and more into working with micro influencers rather than big celebrity-like influencers. This is backed by another interviewee who adds that the pricing of popular influencers is beginning to rise to big heights, so it makes more sense to focus on more micro influencers rather than blow the marketing budget on one big influencer.

Kalaoja sees the trend of influencer marketing to still rise and that it will take time until these commercial collaborations between brands and influencers are seen as oversaturated and dull by consumers. Hiring an army of influencers and rotating the brand's marketing budget from traditional methods to mostly influencer marketing can work for brands like Marimekko but most attempts to succeed at this end up looking awkward as mentioned by Kalaoja. He was getting tired of influencers even at the time when fashion blogs reigned supreme and cannot see this method working forever, just as fashion blogs did not.

5.5 The positives and negatives of using influencer marketing

As long as influencers would actually like the products they are endorsing, it would be looked at in a better light. Authenticity is easily detected and if the collaboration is only done in hopes of money or free items, it easily shows through the posts. Gold feels that the usage of influencers is fine unless the whole brand image is built on the fact that celebrities wear it. Then it is questionable whether the product is popular because it is quality or because it has hype.

- + Brands getting visibility if the influencer is chosen well and their audiences match.
 - + When brands know how to get most of the influencer the campaign can be very successful.
 - + Visibility for both parties. Authentic collaborations bring the best results, the influencer should be interested in the product before the collaboration.
 - + Trends can spread worldwide faster than ever before. The popularisation of social media platforms has enabled consumers to see more different kinds of influencers than before
-
- People do not have their own opinion on things and would rather follow influencers. This can result in trends becoming oversaturated and thus dying out faster.
 - Brands seem to be using generic influencers that do not add any substance to the collaboration so brands should focus on hiring influencers who have more in common with the brand rather than focus on follower counts.
 - Being a social media influencer has nothing to do with the person's own taste or style, having the follower count is the only thing that basically matters. Below par marketing happens with both influencers that take on every campaign in hopes of money or free products and brands who do not do their due diligence when it comes to the influencer and just plan the collaborations based on follower counts.

Most of the issues that the interviewees bring up about influencer marketing focus on the marketers not doing their jobs well enough to research the influencer and their audiences. It seems that when this is accounted for, the positives outweigh the negatives.

6 Discussion

The information gathered for this thesis reveals that there is still a future for influencer marketing. Brands are more than willing to attach influencers to their campaigns and dismiss conventional celebrities or models. In a global context, this can serve as an example of fashion houses bringing in artists they would not have worked before (Travis Scott for Saint Laurent).

Influencer marketing is a subject that draws people to different sides when deciding whether it is positive or negative. While it can be seen as soulless, selling out or as a cop

out method of marketing, it can bring a brand audiences it may have not reached before, a brand can gain visibility worldwide from an influencer that has an audience wide enough. When focused on and done correctly, influencer marketing has the power to get similar or better results as traditional marketing but with only a portion of the price.

Through campaigns such as with Instagram and Facebook, influencer marketing has grown tremendously in the past few years and there does not seem to be an end in sight. Already in 2015, influencer marketing was the fastest growing customer acquisition method with 22 percent (Tomoson, 2015) and in 2019, 80 percent of marketers seeing it as an effective method of marketing (Mediakix, 2019). It is clear that it will stay as a major marketing tool for now with the future remaining unclear.

This marketing tool has brought positive effects to the fashion industry and consumers' lives. The ability to recognize worldwide trends faster than ever before can help fashion savvy customers to stay trendy, give brands more opportunities to appeal to customers in markets they might have not been able to penetrate before.

As with all things, this method has its downsides. Authenticity issues, trouble with sticking to agreements or oversaturation, influencer marketing can be irrelevant or damaging when the marketer does not work hard enough for the campaign. Sometimes an influencer is not what the campaign needs, and a flashy fashion influencer might not be the best person to use when suggesting racial issues can be solved with a carbonated beverage like when Pepsi used Kendall Jenner for their "Live for Now"-campaign (Victor, 2017).

Research, studies, and interviews conducted for this thesis show that when done right, influencer marketing is an important tool that can yield great results. Utilizing it properly and thus researching influencers to be used in the campaign is one of the most important factors of the method. The positive effects outweigh the negative and it can be concluded that with proper knowledge it is an important tool for a marketer. The thesis topic boils down to whether it is more positive or negative and the evidence through research points to it having more benefits than what the harms are.

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Appendix 1. Interview Questions

TEEMU MYYRÄ

Influencer Marketing in the Fashion Industry

The advantages and disadvantages of influencer marketing in fashion promotion

Questions

1. Kuka olet, mitä teet?
2. Miten mielestäsi influenssereiden vaikutus on näkynyt ja noussut katukuvassa ja miten se on mielestäsi muuttunut viimeisien vuosien aikana?
3. Mitä koet hyväksi/huonoiksi puoliiksi influenssereiden käyttämisessä? Pitäisikö kaikkien brändien käyttää tätä hyödyksi?
4. Ketä koet tällä hetkellä olevan hyviä esimerkkejä isoista influenssereista ja heidän vaikutuksistaan?
5. Onko influenssereiden käyttö tullut vastaan omassa työssäsi jollain tapaa ja miten se on muuttunut?
6. Oletko jollain tavoin itse päässyt työskentelemään "influensserina"?
7. Miten arvioit influenssereiden käytön nousevan/laskevan lähitulevaisuudessa? Onko mielestäsi raja tulossa vai käyttö nousemassa?
8. Mitkä asiat koet olevan tärkeimpiä influenssereiden kanssa työskentelyssä ja milloin koet heidän käytön olevan turhaa?
9. Mitkä ovat mielestäsi isoimmat merkit vaatealalla influenssereiden yleistymisestä?
10. Mitä itse olet mieltä influenssereista vaatealalla ja heidän vaikutuksistaan?

Translation of the questions.

1. Who are you, what do you do?
2. How do you feel the effects of influencers has shown and changed in the streetscape and how do you feel it has evolved in the past few years?
3. What do you see as positive/negative sides of using influencers? Should all brands take advantage of this type of marketing?
4. Who do you currently see as good examples of big influencers and their effects?

5. Has the usage of influencers come across your work in any way and in what way has it changed?
6. Have you worked as an influencer in any way?
7. How do you see the usage of influencers rising/falling in the near future? Is there a limit coming or do you see a rise in the usage?
8. What do you see as the most important things when working with an influencer and when do you see their usage as redundant?
9. What do you see as the biggest signs of popularisation of influencers in the fashion industry?
10. What is your own opinion on influencers in the fashion industry and their effects?