

How do Gen Z consumers perceive social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion consumption?

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Diplôme : Master en sciences de gestion, à finalité spécialisée en international strategic marketing

Année académique : 2024-2025

URI/URL : <http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/22873>

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HOW DO GEN Z CONSUMERS PERCEIVE SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE FASHION CONSUMPTION?

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To obtain the degree of
MASTER IN MANAGEMENT
with a specialization in International
Strategic Marketing
Academic year 2024/2025



Acknowledgments

At the conclusion of this final thesis, I wish to express my deep gratitude to all those who have supported me and contributed, whether directly or indirectly, to the completion of this work.

First and foremost, I warmly thank my supervisor, Mrs. Cadiat, for her guidance throughout the research and writing process. Her expertise, kindness, and valuable advice helped me overcome the challenges encountered, and progress with clarity through the various stages of this thesis. I would also like to thank Mrs. Hubin for the time she generously dedicated to reading this thesis.

A sincere thank you to the sixteen participants in this study, without whom this research would not have been possible.

I also want to express my profound appreciation for the unwavering support of my family and friends. Their encouragement and comforting presence have been a true strength during this crucial, intense, and sometimes, uncertain period.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to my father for his careful proofreading and insightful feedback, which played a key role in the successful completion of this master thesis research. I am deeply grateful for his presence and the time he has devoted to me throughout these past five years of study at HEC.

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List of Abbreviations

ADEME	<i>French Environment and Energy Management Agency</i>
Gen Z	<i>Generation Z</i>
Net Gen	<i>Net Generation</i>
TPB	<i>Theory of Planned Behavior</i>
SMI	<i>Social Media Influencer</i>
SMMS	<i>Social Media Marketing Strategy</i>
PKM	<i>Persuasive Knowledge Model</i>
WOM	<i>Word-of-Mouth</i>
e-WOM	<i>Electronic Word-of-Mouth</i>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

Currently, the fashion industry is one of the most contested sectors due to its harmful effects on environment and society. According to the French Environment and Energy Management Agency (ADEME), this sector is one of the biggest contributors to climate change, accounting for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, in 2023, the fashion industry released 968 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere (Statista, 2023). Beyond emissions, textile production is responsible for around 20% of global potable water pollution, mainly due to the dyes and finishing products used (European Parliament, 2024). Furthermore, in Europe, a resident consumes an average of 26 kilograms of textiles per year, of which almost 11 kilograms is thrown away during the same year (European Parliament, 2024). As a result, a significant proportion of textile waste is sent to landfill, while the recycling rate remains limited (European Parliament, 2024).

Fast fashion occupies a prominent place among the main causes of these environmental and societal issues. This model is characterized by low-cost, offshore mass production designed to offer clothes at very affordable prices. This movement is based on the constant renewal of collections and the intensive use of marketing campaigns to encourage over-consumption (ADEME, 2025). According to ADEME (2025), over 100 billion items of clothing are sold worldwide every year. The social repercussions of this type of textile production are also of concern. Indeed, working conditions are often characterized by a lack of respect of fundamental rights. Tragedies such as the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in 2013 (Bangladesh), which claimed the lives of over 1,100 people, highlight the disastrous consequences of fast fashion (Bick et al., 2018).

In recent years, textile industry stakeholders have gradually become aware of the need to rethink the way they produce and consume in light of the environmental and social consequences caused by the current economic model (Ndayisaba & Swaen, 2019). In response to these concerns, sustainable fashion, more commonly referred to as slow fashion, has emerged as an alternative to fast fashion. This movement favors responsible production processes that respect the environment. Furthermore, slow fashion pays particular attention to transparency and the origin of the materials used (Solino et al., 2020). In contrast to the frantic fast-fashion model, sustainable fashion advocates conscious and thoughtful consumption (Solino et al., 2020). Finally, this approach ensures respect for workers' conditions and promotes local manufacturing (Statista, 2024).

However, despite growing awareness, the share of responsible clothing still represented only 3.9% of the ready-to-wear market in 2021 (Statista, 2024). Indeed, numerous empirical studies have demonstrated that, although aware, consumers do not necessarily translate their responsible buying intentions into actual purchasing behavior (Zhuo et al., 2022). In the literature, this phenomenon is frequently referred to as the attitude-behavior gap, a concept introduced by Ajzen (1991) as part of the Theory of Qualified Behavior (Blas et al., 2023; Wintschnig, 2021). This gap can be explained by several factors, including the high price of sustainable fashion products (Blas et al., 2023), the perception of these products as less trendy and stylish (Blas et al., 2023), consumption habits that reduce cognitive effort and direct attention towards more familiar choices than sustainable fashion (Wintschnig, 2021) or the lack of knowledge and information about these products (Sarker, 2016).

For several years, influencers on social media have proven their ability to shape consumer behavior and guide purchasing decisions (Tartaraj et al., 2024). Indeed, these influencers enjoy a large audience and have the power to convey powerful messages (Vemuri et al., 2023). Social media influencers establish strong and affective bonds with their audience through frequent interactions and authentic

contents. This reinforces the credibility of these individuals, and the trust established with their community, which is often lacking in traditional advertising (Vemuri et al., 2023).

Faced with a growing awareness of the limits of the current consumption system, some influencers are committed to promote sustainable fashion on social media platforms through the content they propose (Vemuri et al., 2023). As a result, influencers of this kind play a decisive role in raising awareness of environmental and social issues, thanks to their persuasive power and broad audience. Hence, by making sustainable fashion accessible and engaging, they can inspire their audience to embrace behaviors that benefit both society and environment (Vemuri et al., 2023).

Generation Z has evolved in an environment deeply marked by the advent of the Internet, the widespread use of smartphones and the rapid expansion of social networks, giving them immediate and unlimited access to a multitude of information (Ndayisaba & Swaen, 2019). This digital context has profoundly shaped their purchasing behavior, notably by integrating the use of mobile devices into their buying process (Zhang et al., 2023). Confronted with major global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical upheavals and environmental emergencies, Generation Z seems more aware of ecological and social challenges than previous generations (Khalil et al., 2021). Indeed, compared to older generations, Generation Z appears more aware and concerned about environmental and social issues, and seems more inclined to adopt sustainable behaviors (Zhang et al., 2023). In fact, Generation Z shows a clear intention to turn to brands committed to sustainable fashion (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022). However, although Generation Z is sensitive to environmental and social issues, some studies reveal a discrepancy in their purchasing behavior (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

In this context, influencers on social media could play a major role in raising the awareness of new generations, particularly Generation Z, who embody the consumption of tomorrow. Therefore, it seems relevant to examine how this generation of consumers perceives influencers when they promote behaviors or brands associated with sustainable fashion.

1.2 Problem Statement

The rise of social networks and their growing integration into our daily lives have turned them into powerful tools for communication and marketing. Among the main drivers of this shift, influencers stand out thanks to their ability to connect with their audience through engaging content. Time and again, they have proved their power to shape the behavior and the attitudes of their communities. Nowadays, this influence extends to various sectors including sustainable fashion and more conscious consumption habits.

Sustainable fashion is drawing in a steadily growing audience, especially among younger generations who are increasingly aware of environmental and social challenges. Due to their close ties with their audiences and their power of persuasion, influencers are seen as facilitators of change towards more thoughtful consumption.

Nevertheless, some uncertainty persists in this sector regarding the true reach of influencer marketing. Henceforth, influencers are subject to increased scrutiny from consumers. Indeed, consumers are expecting a high degree of authenticity, transparency and consistency between their statements and their actual actions. Despite the undeniable potential of influencers to promote sustainable fashion, a number of issues remain concerning how their actions and discourses are perceived by consumers, particularly in terms of the trust and credibility placed in them. For instance, influencers are frequently accused of greenwashing when they address sustainability in their content. In the same vein,

consumers may also be wary of the true motivations behind an influencer's collaboration with sustainable fashion brands.

The central question of this research is therefore: How do Gen Z consumers perceive social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion consumption?

The research objectives associated with this central question are:

- Explore the barriers perceived by Gen Z consumers when exposed to influencers' content promoting sustainable fashion consumption.
- Explore the motivations perceived by Gen Z consumers when exposed to influencers' content promoting sustainable fashion consumption.
- Analyze how Gen Z consumers perceive the different communication strategies used by influencers on social networks promoting sustainable fashion consumption.

1.3 Research Motivations

1.3.1 Managerial Motivations

From a managerial perspective, it seems relevant for sustainable fashion brands to understand how Generation Z perceives social media influencers who promote responsible consumption.

In response to this need, the results of the research will enable managers and brands enhancing effectiveness of their collaborations by identifying the influencers' profiles that best align with their image and values, thereby, ensuring consistency between the two entities.

Furthermore, this study draws attention to risks associated with some forms of communication, sometimes perceived as opportunistic or insincere. Indeed, in a sustainable context where greenwashing practices are more widespread, such discourse may undermine consumer's confidence and damage brand reputation.

By exploring both Generation Z's barriers and motivations when faced with influencers involved in sustainable fashion, this study seeks to provide key levers that brands can activate to encourage more responsible purchasing behavior. Building on these insights, this research will also present areas of improvement, both in the type of content proposed by influencers, and in the perceived authenticity and credibility of the messages delivered.

Thus, the results of this study will provide a better understanding of the Generation Z consumers' expectations and behaviors regarding these forms of collaboration, enabling brands to adapt their strategies and optimize the reach of their marketing actions.

1.3.2 Academic Motivations

A significant part of contemporary literature has studied the effectiveness of influencer marketing on social media, with a particular focus on consumer behaviors and purchase intentions. However, most of these studies adopt a general perspective, without taking into account the specificities of sustainability (Chen et al., 2024; Durmaz et al., 2023; Martínez-López et al., 2020; Masuda et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2025; Sankala, 2024; Thilina, 2021).

While some recent research has addressed the influencers' role in promoting responsible consumption behaviors (Vemuri et al., 2023), few studies have tackled the way these messages are perceived and evaluated by consumers.

In parallel, Generation Z is generating growing interest in the literature due to its intentions to consume in a more responsible way and its interest in sustainable fashion (Liu, 2022; Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023; Mahrs & Berthem, 2022; Tran et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2023).

However, the intersection between this generation, social media influencers and sustainable fashion remains under-explored to date. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, only two empirical studies have addressed this topic, both adopting exclusively quantitative methodologies and in specific socio-geographical contexts, thus limiting their scope and requiring further research (Ge, 2024; Le Tan & Dai Trang, 2023).

Therefore, the present research is designed to address this dual gap. On the one hand, by using a qualitative and exploratory approach, it aims to capture the underlying motivations, barriers and emotions that influence young consumers (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). On the other hand, this research introduces the French speaking Belgian context to broaden cultural and geographical understanding of young consumers' perceptions towards social media influencers promoting sustainable fashion consumption.

1.4 Approach

Building on the general introduction established in the first chapter, the present research thesis is structured around five additional sections, each designed to progressively address the central research question, and the subsequent objectives derived from it.

The second chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature by synthesizing previous studies and relevant theoretical frameworks related to the subject of the study. Following this, the third chapter is dedicated to the research design. It provides a detailed explanation of the chosen methodology, as well as the sample and data collection methods employed. The fourth chapter presents the empirical findings of the study and delivers a detailed description of the data collected and the emerging patterns. Subsequently, the fifth chapter discusses and interprets the results while contrasting the data with the existing literature. Finally, the last chapter of this thesis synthesizes the main insights of the research and highlights its theoretical and managerial contributions. It concludes with an acknowledgment of the limitations of this study and encourages further exploration of the subject in future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter offers an in-depth synthesis of the existing literature relating to the research topics. Based on a funnel-shaped approach, it progressively explores current knowledge, from broad notions such as sustainability to more specific concepts linked to the research question, notably the Generation Z behaviors and perceptions with regard to sustainable fashion and social network influencers.

2.1 Sustainability

2.1.1 Context and Key features

The concept of sustainability, officially pioneered in 1987 in the Brundtland Report of the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development, has since become a key principle in most industries including the fashion sector. The notion of sustainable development has gradually emerged as an evolution of the concept of ecodevelopment. Developed in the 1960s, the concept of ecodevelopment was already putting forward the idea of economic growth that takes environmental issues into consideration. However, this approach remained relatively binary, focusing on the link between economics and ecology, without fully integrating the social dimension.

In contrast, sustainable development significantly broadens the previous perspective by incorporating a more comprehensive view. Indeed, sustainability encompasses three key dimensions: economics, equality and environment. Therefore, a sustainable society aims to reconcile those three aspects forming a balance between environmental imperatives, social equity and economic considerations. These three pillars are commonly referred to as the “Triple Bottom Line”, encompassing People, Planet and Profit (Thiele, 2024). According to the Brundtland Commission Report (1987), sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own.

Between the 1980s and the beginning of the 21st century, sustainability was commonly illustrated by a tripartite Venn diagram, highlighting the interdependence of these three fundamental dimensions which are often referred to as the “three Es” (Caradonna, 2022). However, more recently, a theoretical alternative has aroused considerable interest in the context of sustainable development: the “doughnut model”, conceptualized by the economist Kate Raworth. This analytical framework moves away from simplistic representations by proposing a more systemic vision of the conditions necessary for viable development. It defines an operational space for humanity, situated between two thresholds: a social floor guaranteeing basic needs and an ecological ceiling not to be exceeded, based on the nine planetary limits formulated by Johan Rockström in 2009 (Caradonna, 2022).

2.1.2 Sustainability Marketing

Marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. When strategically designed, marketing has the power to encourage more sustainable lifestyles and gently steer consumers toward environmentally responsible purchasing decisions (Ray & Nayak, 2023).

In response to the growing prominence of environmental concerns and the steady rise of a more eco-conscious consumer base, green marketing has gradually become an essential component of corporate strategy (Tu et al., 2024). The concept was first introduced by Hennion in 1976, who highlighted the importance of identifying environmental challenges and explored how marketing could serve as a lever to address them effectively.

Green marketing refers to the promotion and sale of products or services based on their positive environmental impact. This impact can come from the fact that the product itself is environmentally friendly, or from improvements made to the production process and packaging to reduce environmental damage (Reddy et al., 2023). As environmental awareness continues to grow, adopting green marketing practices enables companies not only to enhance their image, but also to attract a dedicated segment of environmentally conscious consumers and differentiate themselves in competitive markets (Saraswathi, 2023).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of green marketing lies in a brand's ability to build consumer trust by clearly communicating its environmental values and demonstrating these commitments through transparent and verifiable practices (Tu et al., 2024).

Although the green marketing approach was an important step forward, it did not fully take into account the broader dimension of sustainable development, including the social and ethical aspects of business practices, such as working conditions, equity and inclusion. Faced with these limitations, sustainable marketing, which integrates ecological and social considerations into the marketing process, has emerged as a more comprehensive model (Mishra & Sharma, 2014). Its main objective is therefore to promote products and services that are not only environmentally friendly, but also socially responsible, targeting consumers who value offers with minimal negative impact on both the environment and society (Mishra & Sharma, 2014).

2.1.3 Greenwashing

Implementing green or sustainable brand marketing often faces a number of challenges. While this type of marketing can boost consumer confidence in the brand, the misleading promotion of environmental and social attributes to a product can lead to controversy known as “greenwashing” (Tu et al., 2024). This can therefore lead to the opposite effect, resulting in a loss of consumer confidence, which in turn hinders sustainable purchasing intentions (Braga et al., 2019).

The concept of “greenwashing” was first introduced by Jay Westerveld in 1986 (Tu et al., 2024). This term describes the practice of making false, exaggerated, or unsubstantiated claims about the environmental benefits of a product or service in order to gain market share (Dahl, 2010).

Many companies resort to this practice to manage their reputation with the public, regulatory authorities or financial institutions. They disguise their actions by presenting themselves as sustainable when in reality they are not. More experienced and environmentally conscious consumers are more likely to evaluate critically the environmental actions of a company. Conversely, those who do not fully understand environmental issues are less likely to be affected by greenwashing (Tu et al., 2024).

Faced with discourse perceived as unclear or misleading, consumer skepticism sets in and their trust in brands is compromised. It is therefore essential for companies to guarantee the veracity of their information on their products and practices (Braga et al., 2019).

2.1.4 Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption involves consuming goods or services while taking into account their environmental and social impact (Areola et al., 2022). To this extent, such an approach is characterized by concerns regarding the environmental and social consequences of consumer choices. There are various levels of environmental awareness, divided into five different classes of consumers: engaged

consumers, aware consumers, consumers in transition, reluctant consumers and finally, rejecting consumers (Francis & Sarangi, 2022).

Ecological awareness is one of the fundamental pillars that prompts consumers to behave more responsibly. Indeed, it has been proven that once individuals are sensitized to the environment, this usually equates to a tangible commitment, which further encourages them to turn to environmentally friendly products and services (Severo et al., 2023).

2.2 Sustainable Fashion

2.2.1 Context and Key features

Following industrialization, fashion became more accessible and progressively democratized. This transformation led to a significant change in purchasing behavior, in which personal identity tends to merge with the possession of material goods. Given the evolution of the industry, companies have refocused their priorities on maximizing profits, exploiting the opportunities offered by accelerated growth, while neglecting negative environmental and social externalities (Solino et al., 2020).

In this context, fast fashion has emerged as an economic model based on mass production and the stimulation of rapid, recurrent and often unreasonable consumption. Based on the constant renewal of low prices collections, this form of ephemeral consumption aims to create a sense of urgency among consumers (Solino et al., 2020). Indeed, fast fashion, with its fleeting models, encourages consumers to buy immediately, at the risk of seeing their favorite items disappear from the shelves.

Nowadays, fast fashion appears to be one of the main factors worsening environmental and social crises (Palm, 2023). Indeed, it generates a considerable ecological footprint and promotes unethical labor practices (Palomo et al., 2023). Centered on immediate consumption and the rapid depletion of resources, this model therefore stands in stark contrast to the principles of sustainability.

These challenges have prompted the fashion industry to rethink its practices and seek alternatives aimed at mitigating the negative impacts associated with this model, in an approach geared towards sustainability (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). At the same time, the rise of social networks has heightened consumer awareness. Indeed, consumers are paying closer attention to the materials used by brands and their environmental commitments (Farzin et al., 2023). As a result, their expectations have been gradually revised, with consumers demanding greater transparency, ethics and responsibility in production processes.

As a consequence, the shift in consumer expectations has given rise to a broader movement aimed at redefining textile consumption. This movement incorporates ideological values such as social responsibility and respect for the environment, contributing to a reconfiguration of production models in the industry (Solino et al., 2020).

Within this context, sustainability, which has emerged as a major trend in the fashion sector over the past decade, has gained prominence giving rise to sustainable fashion. This concept which is a branch of the broader slow fashion movement, is often used interchangeably with terms such as “eco-fashion”, “green fashion” and “ethical fashion” (Ray & Nayak, 2023).

In line with these principles, sustainable fashion aims not only to reduce the environmental footprint of the textile industry, but also to enhance the working conditions of its workforce (Kustenкова, 2017). Hence, by integrating sustainable practices into every stage of the product life cycle, from design to

disposal, sustainable fashion intends to build a more ethical and responsible fashion world (Ray & Nayak, 2023).

2.2.2 Sustainable Fashion Consumption: Attitude-Behavior Gap

Numerous studies have highlighted the inconsistency between positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption and actual purchasing behavior (Bocti et al., 2021; Cherradi & Tetik, 2020; Chwialkowska, 2024; Farzin et al., 2023; Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Niinimäki, 2009; Ray & Nayak, 2023, Roozen et al., 2021). Indeed, although consumers display positive attitudes towards sustainability, this posture rarely translates into concrete sustainable purchasing practices (Cherradi & Tetik, 2020; Niinimäki, 2009). This phenomenon can be illustrated by cognitive dissonance which occurs when a conflict arises between individuals' beliefs and their actions, which in turn leads to psychologic tension (Ly & Vigren, 2020).

First and foremost, price appears to be a recurring obstacle to the adoption of sustainable behaviors. Farzin et al. (2023) confirm that, despite their desire to support environmental protection, consumers are reluctant to pay higher prices for eco-responsible products. This finding is corroborated by Mishra and Sharma (2014), who warn that excessive prices could compromise both the acceptability of green products and their commercial attractiveness. However, this view seems nuanced. Indeed, Saraswathi (2023) points out that for the same quality between a conventional and a sustainable product, many consumers are willing to pay more when the perceived environmental benefits confer a higher value on the eco-responsible product. This disposition seems particularly marked among consumers with higher incomes and belonging to more advanced age categories, who are more inclined to invest in higher-quality sustainable products (Bocti et al., 2021). Conversely, a large proportion of consumers, especially those with modest incomes, express fears that the prices of sustainable products will remain out of their reach (Sarker, 2016), underlining the fact that cost acceptability depends closely on income level.

Although some consumers are willing to pay more for bio-sourced clothing, they remain unenthusiastic about the second-hand market. They associate this market with poor quality, lack of hygiene and social stigma (Adamkiewicz et al., 2022). Aesthetic criteria such as style, design and alignment with trends continue to largely dominate clothing choices, even among consumers who consider themselves environmentalists (Blas et al., 2023; Bocti et al., 2021; Niinimäki, 2009). Indeed, many consumers perceive sustainable fashion as undesirable and out of step with current trends (Bocti et al., 2021). This negative image directly undermines the adoption of responsible clothing, especially as the existing offer is often criticized for its lack of variety and stylish options (Bocti et al., 2021).

Lack of knowledge and information about eco-fashion is also a significant barrier. Sarker (2016) observes that the majority of consumers, particularly those with below-average incomes, have limited knowledge of sustainable fashion. Similarly, access to reliable information on the environmental impact and ethics of products is perceived as difficult by consumers. Indeed, Niinimäki's (2009) study reveals that 56.7% of consumers state they cannot easily find this information. This difficulty leads consumers to base their purchasing decisions on criteria such as price, appearance or convenience, rather than ecological criteria (Niinimäki, 2009).

Sustainable consumption is often perceived as demanding in terms of time and effort. As a result, many consumers prefer simpler and more immediate choices (Bocti et al., 2021). Convenience is therefore essential in capturing consumers' attention. The absence of physical outlets in some regions limits direct access to these products, adding a further barrier for those wishing to opt for sustainable alternatives (Bocti et al., 2021). This observation appears surprising given the increasing prevalence of online shopping among consumers today. In addition, the proximity of a store and the availability of products at the right time also play a crucial role in the purchasing process (Saraswathi, 2023). This

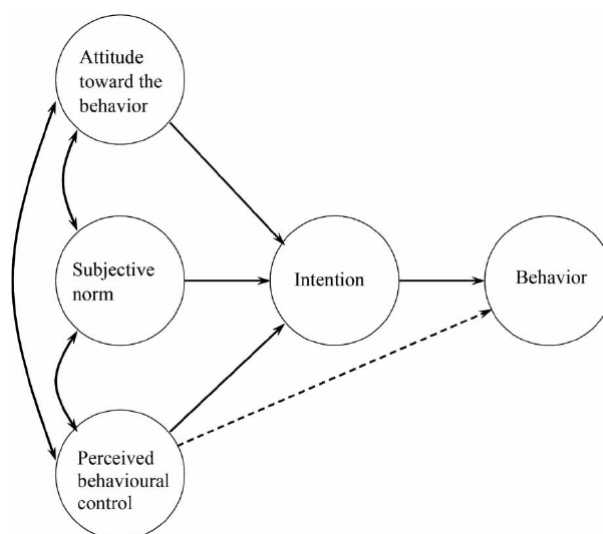
issue seems to limit the adoption of sustainable behaviors. Indeed, although more and more people are aware of environmental issues, the complexity associated with the process of buying these products remains daunting.

Furthermore, consumers expect companies to be socially and environmentally responsible. However, this expectation does not systematically translate into purchasing actions (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Although, many consumers express sustainable intentions, confidence in the veracity of green claims often guides their final decision. Indeed, some companies exploit greenwashing to benefit from environmentally conscious consumers (Chwialkowska, 2019), taking advantage of the growing popularity of sustainable fashion (Ly & Vigren, 2020). As a result, consumers often find it difficult to believe brands' ecological assertions, which sometimes deters them from choosing eco-responsible and sustainable options (Cherradi & Tetik, 2020; Ly & Vigren, 2020).

Finally, some consumers feel powerless facing the magnitude of environmental and social challenges, believing that their individual choices have a negligible impact on the overall situation. This perception of limited effectiveness often leads to a loss of motivation. As a result, individuals prefer not to change their habits, convinced that their actions will not make a difference (Bocti et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have used the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain consumer behavior towards sustainable fashion. (Ayar & Gürbüz, 2021; Bocti et al., 2021; Cherradi & Tetik, 2020; Ray & Nayak, 2023; Wu & Chen, 2014).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), formulated by Icek Ajzen in 1991, is an essential conceptual framework for understanding and predicting human behavior, particularly in the area of consumption (Ajzen, 1991). According to this theory, the adoption of a behavior is primarily influenced by the individual's intention, which in turn is determined by three factors, namely attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms (social norms) and perceived behavioral control. In the concept of sustainable fashion, Ray and Nayak (2023) emphasize that the subjective norm plays a central role in purchasing decisions. They explain that the influence of social opinions is particularly important in environmentally conscious communities. Thus, when sustainable behaviors are socially valued, individuals are more inclined to adopt responsible practices to meet the expectations of those around them.



Ajzen, I (1991) *Theory of Planned Behavior*. [ResearchGate](#)

In conclusion, although the benefits of sustainable fashion are clearly recognized, consumers are adopting it to a lesser extent. However, the growing awareness of the limits of the current system, as

well as the aspiration to adopt more responsible behaviors, point to the possibility of a more sustainable future (Kustenkova, 2017).

2.3 Social Media

Social media are defined as online platforms that provide its users with the ability to create individual profiles, develop friendly relationships, and interact with their contacts through sharing, reacting to, and commenting on various contents, including images, texts, and videos that are posted on their news feeds (Phua et al., 2017). These platforms, reaching billions of users worldwide, have become essential elements of contemporary marketing strategies (Chen et al., 2024). Indeed, beyond the simple dissemination of information, social networks facilitate the creation of interpersonal relationships, enabling brands to establish a more direct and personalized link with their audiences.

Moreover, these platforms offer marketers the possibility of rapidly and massively disseminating promotional content, targeting specific audiences more precisely (Chen et al., 2024). By becoming ubiquitous interfaces in consumers' daily lives, they have opened new opportunities for business, creating stronger brand engagement and offering direct interaction with consumers (Tafheem et al., 2022).

2.4 Social Media Influencers

2.4.1 Definition

The notion of influence refers to an individual's ability to alter other's attitudes or behaviors through actions or discourse (Durmaz et al., 2023). It fits into the framework of Albert Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, according to which individuals adopt behaviors by observing and imitating those of models they consider as references.

With the rapid rise of social networks, the term influencer has gained prominence in the digital landscape. First appearing in the early 2000s, this activity has rapidly evolved from a simple hobby to a fully-fledged profession generating income (Joshi et al., 2025). These digital actors play the role of opinion leaders, cultivating a carefully crafted image through the content they share. As they relate their daily lives in the form of multimodal narratives, social media influencers manage to federate a large community of followers (Joshi et al., 2025). Typically, influencers develop expertise in specific areas such as health, travel, food, lifestyle, beauty or fashion (Lou and Yuan, 2025). Moreover, they are often characterized by the size of their audience, which can range from a few hundred subscribers for nano-influencers to over a million for macro-influencers (Boerman et al., 2022).

Unlike traditional ambassadors, such as actors, athletes or other established public figures, social network influencers are ordinary individuals who have gained online notoriety through the regular dissemination of content on digital platforms. Their perceived accessibility gives them the status of "popular celebrities", which differs from the distant image associated with conventional public figures (Schouten et al., 2020). Whereas brand ambassadors were historically selected for their pre-existing notoriety, influencers, although initially anonymous, tend to build their image and visibility over time through the content they propose (Lou & Yuan, 2019). As a consequence, their credibility is progressively acquired through regular and meaningful interactions with their audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Influencers on social networks are generally perceived as independent third parties, capable of exerting a significant influence on their audience's attitudes (Lin et al., 2021). Indeed, as their digital presence has been consolidated over time, their impact on consumers' perceptions, preferences and decision-making behaviors has been intensified, reinforcing the effectiveness of their messages and their persuasive power (Joshi et al., 2023).

2.4.2 Social Media Influencers and Parasocial Interactions

Regular interactions nurture a feeling of closeness, which in turn, encourages the development of parasocial relationships. These are defined as unilateral relationships in which an individual feels some form of emotional connection with an influencer, even in the absence of real reciprocal interaction. Parasocial relations reinforce an individual's emotional attachment to an influencer and increase the effectiveness of the messages disseminated by the latter (Hudders & Lou, 2022). On the basis of parasocial interaction theory, social network users perceive certain influencers as close friends or trusted advisors (Lin et al., 2021). As a result, they become emotionally invested in these one-sided relations, which they perceive as authentic and meaningful, a phenomenon that appears to intensify as the frequency of exposure to the influencer's content increases (Kurtin et al., 2018).

A more intense parasocial bond with an influencer is associated with an increased perception of their trustworthiness. This underlines the importance of this type of relationship in building trust (Lin et al., 2021; Lou & Kim, 2019).

2.4.3 Social Media Influencers Credibility

Influencers' credibility has a significant impact on the way consumers perceive their messages. The credibility of a source has been widely studied over the decades, and several theories have attempted to understand its determining factors. Hovland et al. (1953) first identified two essential elements for a source to be perceived as credible, which are expertise and reliability (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Expertise refers to the source's skills and knowledge in a particular field, while reliability corresponds to the trust that can be placed in it in terms of truth and sincerity. In 1985, McGuire introduced a third factor, attractiveness, which refers to the physical appeal or likeability exuded by the source, which also influences the perception of its credibility (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Several years later, in 1990, Ohanian proposed a holistic approach to the credibility of a source, highlighting the interdependence of these three dimensions, namely reliability, expertise and attractiveness (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Moreover, influencers' perceived credibility is also influenced by the informative value of their content. Lou and Yuan (2019) demonstrate that the more informative their content is, the more followers trust the influencer who is perceived as competent.

In the context of sustainable fashion consumption, influencer credibility as well as valuable informative content and expertise have also proven to be effective in the promotion of sustainable consumption (Vilkaite-Vaitone, 2024).

2.4.4 Social Media Influencer Message Congruence

The fit between the influencers' personality and the message they convey is an important factor in the success of their message and recommendations, particularly in the context of greenfluencing (Boerman et al., 2022). Indeed, several works have demonstrated that the impact of a persuasive message is

largely based on the alignment between influencers' image, personality or expertise and the promoted entity with which they interact, which is called congruence (Janssen et al., 2022; Schouten et al., 2021; Venciute et al., 2023). This term describes the degree of alignment between two entities (Kim & Kim, 2021). Such correlation is essential when it comes to promoting ecological behaviors. In contrast, any discrepancy between influencers' message and actions can lead to accusations of hypocrisy that risk damaging their credibility, leading to a loss of trust in the public and diminishing the effects of the message (Boerman et al., 2022).

From a theoretical point, the notion of congruence can be explained by the Match-Up Hypothesis, which indicates that when influencers' characteristics align with the message they are providing, this produces a more positive influence and enhances the effectiveness of their statements (Kim & Kim, 2021). Indeed, such a match strengthens perceived credibility, giving the influencer's trustworthiness and expertise more weight (Schouten et al., 2021).

Within the framework of influencer-brand partnerships, numerous studies have shown that consumers evaluate a product or a brand more favorably when the endorser's image and values are congruent with those conveyed by the brand itself (Kim & Kim, 2021; Schouten et al., 2021). As an example, Kim and Kim (2021) demonstrated that a wellness influencer elicited a more positive reaction after recommending an organic detox juice than a high-calorie milkshake. Along the same lines, Schouten et al. (2021) showed that a food influencer was perceived as more credible and competent when recommending a food processor, rather than when recommending a product unrelated to his field.

2.4.5 Social Media Influencers Similarity

Beyond congruence between the influencer and the content he disseminates, the notion of perceived similarity between the influencer and the consumer personality plays also a decisive role in persuasion processes. Indeed, consumers tend to give more credibility to individuals with whom they share similar characteristics, interests or experiences (Ge, 2024). This perception of similarity and social proximity fosters a sense of identification, which in turn, reinforces trust in the source of the message (Tafheem et al., 2022).

This mechanism is particularly effective when the similarity between the consumer and the influencer is combined with a positive perception of the influencer's trustworthiness and attractiveness, two key dimensions of perceived credibility (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Thus, the convergence between perceived similarity, trustworthiness and attractiveness contributes significantly to strengthen consumers' trust in influencers' posts and messages.

2.4.6 Social Media Influencers and Sustainability

In recent years, a new wave of influencers has appeared in an environment deeply marked by increasingly worrying environmental crises. Due to these growing stakes, social networks have become strategic places for some content creators to advocate responsible consumption within their community (Knupfer et al., 2023). Indeed, nowadays, influencers have considerable power to raise awareness towards pro-environmental behaviors among consumers, especially young people (Buvár et al., 2023; Lidgren & Major, 2021; Vikøren & Eriksson, 2024).

Among them are the greenfluencers or eco-conscious influencers, content creators who make use of social media platforms to encourage sustainable lifestyles in line with environmental preservation (Hartmann et al., 2024; Knupfer et al., 2023; Sharma, 2024). As a result, greenfluencers offer content

around a variety of themes, such as ethical fashion, responsible tourism, waste reduction, promotion of sustainable products or conscious and thoughtful consumption (Chwialkowska, 2019; Hartmann et al., 2024; Knupfer et al., 2023). In other words, this sub-category of social media influencers (SMIs) stands out for its expertise and clear commitment to sustainability (Conte et al., 2025), what makes them role models in this discipline (Sharma, 2024).

Within this diversity of profiles, de-influencers share common characteristics with greenfluencers as both promote sustainable consumption (Elstantil et al., 2025). De-influencers actively challenge the culture of excessive consumption, encouraging their communities to embrace more reasoned and moderate lifestyles favoring quality over the fleeting appeal of ephemeral trends (Elstantil et al., 2025). In this sense, this type of influencers differs from classic ones by discouraging impulse buying and advocating minimalist consumption, centering on the essentials (Elstantil et al., 2025). In addition, they are seen as more trustworthy and authentic thanks to their recommendations, which are deemed to be favorable to society and environment, as well as their strong and assertive convictions (Elstantil et al., 2025). As a result, the reach and impact of their messages are more significant.

Moreover, traditional influencers, although not specialized in sustainability, can also contribute to this transition. Indeed, their broader audience, usually less aware of these issues, is a difficult target to reach for influencers initially invested in sustainability (Buvár et al., 2023). However, their perceived lack of expertise and the absence of a lifestyle consistent with the messages they convey can tarnish the credibility of their recommendations. To overcome this issue, it has been shown that using expert sources or quoting scientific advice in their content can increase the authenticity and impact of their messages (Buvár et al., 2023).

Regarding the effectiveness of messages generated by influencers promoting sustainability, it appears that individuals with a high level of environmental awareness react mainly to informative content, treating information rationally. Whereas those with a lower level of awareness of environmental issues will be more influenced by emotional bonds created through parasocial relationships with the influencer (Knupfer et al., 2023).

Furthermore, engagement with eco-responsible influencers seems to be linked to the degree of exposure to them. Indeed, the more consumers interact with them, the more they are likely to adapt their consumption practices (Knupfer et al., 2023).

At the same time, influencers can help overcome social barriers hindering the adoption of pro-environmental behaviors (Chwialkowska, 2019). By making these practices the norm, influencers make them more accessible and desirable in consumers' eyes. In the sustainable fashion sector, these brakes are particularly observed among post-millennial generations, for whom this mode of consumption is difficult to associate with current trends and attractive aesthetics (Lidgren & Major, 2021).

When it comes to sustainability, the credibility of the source plays a decisive role. In particular, influencers who advocate eco-friendly behavior can be accused of hypocrisy if their actions fail to corroborate their discourse, referring to the principle of congruence discussed previously in the literature review (Boerman et al., 2022). Consequently, influencers who manage to align their behavior with their messages or potential collaborations with sustainable brands are more likely to generate a positive attitude from their followers (Lidgren & Major, 2021; Palin & Sköld, 2022).

Another important aspect to highlight is that greenfluencers are generally perceived as being driven by intrinsic motivations rooted in their personal values, which strengthens their credibility in the eyes of their audience (Conte et al., 2025).

Additionally, the research of Lidgren and Major (2021) revealed that influencers who support their green claims with solid evidence and relevant information increase the credibility of their message. By disseminating informative and educational content, the latter help to address the lack of knowledge among some consumers who are unaware or misinformed about sustainable practices and products (Lidgren & Major, 2021).

Last but not least, excessive recourse to commercial partnerships in a green context can create doubt among consumers regarding the influencer's credibility, what in turn can hamper the adoption of responsible consumption behaviors (Sharma, 2024).

2.5 Collaboration Between Brands and Influencers

2.5.1 Context

Social media have revolutionized advertising practices, enabling marketers to target their audiences more precisely and promote their brands effectively (Lin et al., 2021). Thanks to these platforms, brands can now disseminate promotional content quickly and widely, to reach specific markets segments (Chen et al., 2024).

With the rise of influencers on social networks and their recognized effectiveness in influencing consumer attitudes (Lin et al., 2021), many brands have begun to integrate them into their promotional strategies (Joshi et al., 2025). In this way, influencers act as brand ambassadors, creating sponsored content designed to convey and enhance the image and name of the brand (Joshi et al., 2025).

Promotional content created by influencers is often perceived as more authentic, spontaneous and personal compared to traditional brand advertising (Lou and Yuan, 2025). Indeed, influencers tend to structure their publications around feedback and details about the products they are promoting. This approach reinforces the informative dimension of the message and enables consumers to better understand the characteristics of the product or brand (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

Therefore, thanks to their ability to establish a relationship of trust with their community, influencers represent a strategic asset for brands seeking to optimize the effectiveness of their advertising campaigns (Boerman et al., 2022; Durmaz et al., 2023; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2021).

2.5.2 Influencer Marketing

The rise of partnerships between brands and influencers on social networks has led to the emergence of the term “influencer marketing”, a strategy that aims to use influencers as powerful leverage to promote products and guide consumers' purchasing decisions (Pan et al., 2025). Influencer marketing is also described as an approach that encourages influential digital figures to convey brand messages to their audiences in the form of sponsored content (Tafheem et al., 2022). Ultimately, influencer marketing is based on taking advantage of opinion leaders' influence to increase brand visibility and drive purchase decision (Lou and Yuan, 2019).

This type of marketing approach fits within a broader social media marketing strategy (SMMS), referred as a coordinated set of actions implemented by an organization. It is based on an in-depth analysis of the reasons why consumers interact with brand-related content on social media, and the implementation of targeted engagement initiatives. The goal is to transform the links created through

social platforms and the resulting interactions into strategic resources that can be used to achieve specific marketing objectives (Li et al., 2021).

Numerous academic studies have highlighted the significant impact of influencer marketing on consumers' purchasing behavior and decision-making mechanisms (Janssen et al., 2022; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Pan et al., 2025). The effectiveness of this strategy relies heavily on the trust and credibility that consumers attribute to influencers' recommendations (Durmaz et al., 2023).

However, a major challenge lies in the ability to maintain influencer credibility while capitalizing on the commercial opportunities generated by collaborations with brands (Pan et al., 2025). Indeed, the mere identification of a commercial intent in a sponsored content can weaken perceived credibility and reduce consumer confidence (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This skepticism stems from the growing perception that influencers' recommendations are increasingly oriented by financial interests, rather than a genuine intent to advise their community (Pan et al., 2025). As a consequence, their messages are often perceived as promotional strategies.

In this regard, disclosure of sponsored partnerships on social networks is often interpreted by users as a deliberate persuasion attempt, a phenomenon explained by the theory of persuasive knowledge (Boerman et al., 2017). The theory of persuasive knowledge, formulated by Friestad and Wright (1994), explores how consumers perceive the intentions and techniques employed by persuasive agents. The Persuasive Knowledge Model (PKM), proposed by the authors, postulates that two factors influence how an individual reacts to the persuasive attempts he encounters. Direction refers to the consumer's awareness of manipulation attempts, whereas depth depends on the individual's cognitive ability to process the information received (Pan et al., 2025).

Hence, the credibility of an influencer promoting a brand remains central in the effectiveness of advertised message. Indeed, an endorser perceived as more credible has the ability to influence more effectively attitudes and purchase intentions toward a brand or a product (Lin et al., 2021).

2.6 Electronic WOM

Several studies have highlighted the impact of word-of-mouth on consumers' buying intentions. Purchase intention refers to a consumer's predisposition to consider, anticipate or make a future purchase of a product or service (Solihin and Ahyani, 2022).

With the spread of the Internet and the rapid rise of digital technologies, communication patterns have changed radically. Indeed, it has now become easier to share personal opinions and experiences online (Aljumah et al., 2023).

In light of this evolution, word-of-mouth has evolved into a more specific term called electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) (Aljumah et al., 2023; Evans and Erkan, 2014). Electronic word-of-mouth refers to an informal online exchange between individuals, generally perceived as being devoid of any commercial intent, about a brand, product or service. This form of interpersonal communication, although digital, retains the characteristics of traditional word-of-mouth in terms of spontaneity, authenticity and perceived credibility (Solihin and Ahyani, 2022).

In recent years, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has also proven to be a key driver in consumer behavior and decision making (Aljumah et al., 2023; Xu and Abdullah, 2024). A positive electronic word-of-mouth helps improve consumer's brand perception, while allowing businesses to reduce their promotional spending. Indeed, the more favorable online exchanges are, the more likely the brand

image perceived by consumers will be strengthened (Solihin and Ahyani, 2022). In the context of electronic word-of-mouth, consumers tend to refer to other users' feedback and comments on social networks. This generally helps to mitigate the perception of risk associated with the act of purchasing and builds confidence, a trend that is particularly pronounced in the fashion and textile sector (Xu and Abdullah, 2024).

2.7 Generation Z

2.7.1 Definition

To date, there is no clear agreement in literature regarding the boundaries that clearly define the members of Generation Z (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022). However, several researchers place the birth of this cohort after 1995 (Areola et al., 2022; Mude & Undale, 2023; Reinikainen et al., 2020; Su et al., 2019) and its approximate end in the early 2010s (Serbanescu, 2022). This intermediate generation between the Millennials and the Alpha generation (Khalil et al., 2021; Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023) is also referred to as the “Net Gen” or the “Digital Native” (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Unlike previous generations, members of Generation Z have evolved in a digital environment marked by the emergence of the Internet and the World Wide Web (Khalil et al., 2021; Mude & Undale, 2023; Tyson et al., 2021). This precocious familiarity with technology has made them particularly receptive to digital tools and content (Reinikainen et al., 2020). More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced this digital fluency by further integrating new technologies into their daily lives (Erwin et al., 2023). In this context, the habit of permanent and rapid access to information has led to a decrease in attention spans among young people of this generation (Serbanescu, 2022).

2.7.2 Gen Z and Social Media

The literature underlines the significant influence of social networks on Generation Z individuals (Ninan et al., 2020), who are now said to constitute the largest online consumer base. According to Serbanescu (2022), this generation uses social networks primarily to share new things and spread their learning to other Internet users, much more so than previous generations. The same author points out that these digital natives use social networks more as a source of entertainment rather than for socializing with friends. Another study highlights that, beyond entertainment, Gen Z uses these spaces for educational purposes (Erwin et al., 2023).

Evolved in a digital world, Gen Z prefers to use social networks rather than traditional search engines when seeking information or discovering a product or brand (Erwin et al., 2023; Serbanescu, 2022). Along the same lines, advertising on their social media platforms attracts more attention and engagement than conventional ones (Ninan et al., 2020). Consequently, social networking platforms are strategic meeting places for brands and this cohort of consumers (Le Tan & Dai Trang, 2023).

2.7.3 Gen Z and Social Media Influencers

Generation Z pays particular attention to the content disseminated by influencers, which strongly shapes their opinions, behavior or decisions (Erwin et al., 2023; Van Der Cruyssen & Tran, 2023). Previous research has highlighted several criteria considered as essential by this generation regarding the trust they place in these influencers. First and foremost, they prioritize authenticity and sincerity among their fundamental expectations, what includes not acting solely out of financial interest (Wolf,

2020). While paid publications are not systematically rejected by Generation Z, their impact is highly dependent on the way they are presented. Moreover, this young generation seems to give more credence to influencers who integrate the product they are promoting into their lifestyle and personal use (Erwin et al., 2023). In addition, members of this generation look for influencers with whom they can identify, notably by sharing common traits or being perceived as ordinary individuals (Wolf, 2020). Finally, for this generation, trust in an influencer is based more on perceived credibility than on physical appearance and attractive image (Pinto & Paramita, 2021).

2.7.4 Gen Z and Sustainability

First of all, Generation Z differs from its elders in its aspiration for a better quality of life (Su et al., 2019). Similarly, concerns about environmental issues are particularly marked by this generation (Pradeep & Pradeep, 2023), which is worried about the future (Tyson et al., 2021). This is mainly due to the fact that Gen Z has been marked by a high level of media coverage of environmental crises since their early age (Van Der Cruyssen & Tran, 2023).

Unlike previous generations, Gen Z members have a better understanding of sustainable lifestyles (Areola et al., 2022) and are more likely to integrate them into their daily lives (Van Der Cruyssen & Tran, 2023). Furthermore, it appears that this generation is particularly aware of its responsibility and the role it must play in safeguarding the planet (Areola et al., 2022). Last but not least, this group places increasing demands on brands to behave in ways that benefit society and environment (Serbanescu, 2022).

2.7.5 Gen Z and Sustainable Fashion

Generation Z consumers show a greater willingness to buy ethical and responsible fashion than their predecessors (Liu, 2022). As a result, this generation is more interested in knowing the origin of clothing and the nature of the materials used (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023). However, their conception of sustainable fashion is not limited to the purchase of new, eco-certified clothing. Indeed, this generation is also turning to second-hand clothing as part of a sustainable approach (Pradeep & Pradeep, 2023). This preference reflects a broader adherence to the circular economy and the principle of sharing (Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023).

In parallel, certain segments of this generation, notably in China, show a preference for buying quality products, even if this implies paying a higher price (Zhang et al., 2023). Conversely, another study reveals that only people with surplus resources would be willing to invest in sustainable products (Tran et al., 2022).

2.7.6 Gen Z Attitude-Behavior Gap

Although Generation Z is showing a growing interest in sustainable products, it is struggling to translate its intentions into actual purchasing behavior. Torn between the appeal of low-cost fashion and the desire to opt for better-quality sustainable pieces, this generation often finds itself at odds with its ecological values (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022).

Previous research has identified a number of barriers that may hinder Generation Z from adopting sustainable behaviors.

One of the major obstacles is the price of these alternatives. Often students or young adults, these consumers have a limited budget, which restricts their ability to favor sustainable products that are generally more expensive (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022; Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023; Van Der Cruyssen & Tran, 2023). Data from existing research shows that when a more affordable option is available, the majority of Generation Z tends to opt for the latter, despite the sustainable proposition (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022). Therefore, according to the literature, it appears that this cohort undervalues a major argument in favor of sustainable consumption which relates to the longevity and robustness of sustainable products. Indeed, such characteristics not only justify a higher initial cost but also offer consumers the possibility of savings over the long term.

Furthermore, the difficulty of finding sustainable products (Khalil et al., 2021; Le Tan & Dai Trang, 2023; Tran et al., 2022) and the lack of choice in their environment discourage this generation from changing their habits.

Finally, a third major obstacle lies in the lack of clear and transparent information about sustainable brands or products, which is likely to slow down effective purchasing by this consumers' group (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022).

Chapter 3: Research Design

This section presents the methodological architecture adopted to address the research question of this thesis. It describes the selected methodology, the sample and the instruments used to collect and analyze original data.

3.1 Methodology

A qualitative method was adopted to carry out this research and collect primary data. The choice of this method is consistent with a logic of filling the qualitative gaps observed in the existing literature relating to the study subject (Ge, 2024; Le Tan & Dai Trang, 2023).

The qualitative approach is adequate to the research objectives since it is mainly distinguished by its exploratory nature (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). This method aims to capture elements of subjectivity that are difficult to grasp from measurable and statistical data relative to a quantitative approach.

Exploratory research provides an in-depth understanding of complex consumer behaviors, attitudes and emotions, while identifying their underlying motivations and disincentives (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). This thesis follows the same logic as it intends to delve into consumers' perceptions of social media influencers promoting sustainable fashion.

In addition, the research question implies an inductive approach inherent to the qualitative method, since it derives from individual perceptions and experiences. Indeed, an inductive approach relies on data to draw general conclusions or theories. This method is often used when exploring a new or unfamiliar subject where there is no predefined theoretical framework to test. In contrast, the deductive approach is used when we seek to validate an existing theory or hypotheses on the basis of data. These statements draw upon the teachings of the master thesis methodology course.

However, although a qualitative method suits the nature of my research, it has some limitations. First and foremost, the results are difficult to generalize to the entire population due to the limited size of the sample (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). Indeed, a qualitative study does not seek to provide definitive conclusions on a research question, but rather to offer nuanced insights about the problem studied. Furthermore, the interpretation of qualitative data can be influenced by the interpreter's bias, which can affect the objectivity of the analysis (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). Finally, unlike quantitative data, which can be easily codified and analyzed using statistical tools, qualitative analysis relies primarily on discourse analysis and the identification of recurring themes or motifs.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Sampling Technique

For this research, participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique. This choice stems from the desire to identify individuals likely to provide rich and diversified data, based on specific criteria defined beforehand. These criteria include gender, age, fashion appeal, sensitivity to environmental issues and frequency of use of social networks.

3.2.2 Target population

The study targets Generation Z (16-28 years), which is highly exposed to influencer marketing on social networks and known for being particularly sensitive to environmental issues (Pradeep & Pradeep, 2023). In addition, the participants come from Wallonia, a socio-cultural context different from those studied to date in similar research (Ge, 2024; Le Tan & Dai Trang, 2023).

3.2.3 Sample Size

In line with the recommendations made by Giannelloni and Vernet (2019) in their book on market research, the ideal size for in-depth interviews relating to a qualitative approach ranges between 10 and 30 participants. In practice, a sample of around 20 respondents is generally sufficient to reach data saturation. This phenomenon occurs when the survey reaches a point where further interviews no longer provide additional information. This saturation, whether theoretical or semantic, limits the amount of excessive information that could impair the clarity of the analysis (Giannelloni & Vernet, 2019). In this study, 16 participants were interviewed, in line with qualitative research standards.

3.2.4 Sample Diversity

The sample is composed of sixteen participants. As the primary data collection process progressed, it became apparent that subsequent interviews would no longer provide new and relevant information for the research, suggesting that the theoretical saturation point had been reached.

Participants were carefully selected to ensure a diversity of profiles in line with the methodological requirements of qualitative sampling.

N	Gender	Age	Social networks usage (total hours per day)	Fashion appeal	Sensitivity to environmental issues
P1	Male	20	2 to 3	Style Conscious	Concerned
P2	Male	23	5	Fashion Interested	Concerned
P3	Female	25	4	Practical	Engaged
P4	Female	19	4	Style Conscious	Concerned
P5	Male	18	3 to 4	Style Conscious	Partially Concerned
P6	Male	22	1 to 2	Detached	Concerned
P7	Female	19	3 to 4	Detached	Partially concerned
P8	Female	27	2 to 3	Fashion Enthusiast	Concerned
P9	Female	17	3	Practical	Partially concerned
P10	Male	16	2	Fashion Interested	Concerned
P11	Female	21	3	Fashion Enthusiast	Partially concerned
P12	Female	23	1	Fashion Interested	Engaged
P13	Male	26	1 to 1,5	Fashion Enthusiast	Partially concerned
P14	Female	24	1 to 3	Fashion Enthusiast	Concerned
P15	Female	22	4	Fashion Interested	Partially concerned
P16	Male	28	2	Style Conscious	Concerned

Table: criteria of the sixteen interviewees

As the summary table above illustrates, the sample is varied in terms of gender, age, daily use of social networks, interest in fashion and sensitivity to ecological issues. In this way, we can offer a nuanced representation of Generation Z.

The sample includes nine women and seven men of varying ages. In addition, this generation's daily use of social networks fluctuates between one and five hours a day. Furthermore, the data collected through the interview revealed heterogeneity in the respondents' attitudes towards fashion and environmental challenges.

When it comes to interest in fashion, several distinct profiles emerge.

- “Detached”: these individuals do not consider themselves involved in the world of fashion. They do not follow trends and choose their clothes functionally. Fashion is clearly not a priority for them, but rather something of secondary importance.
- “Practical”: although they appreciate being well-dressed, they remain reasonable in their purchases. They buy rarely, mainly out of necessity, and are satisfied with what they have.
- “Style conscious”: these individuals attach importance to their appearance and take pleasure in dressing well, without blindly following trends. They often seek to maintain a balance between their taste for fashion and their budgetary constraints.
- “Fashion interested”: these are people who demonstrate a genuine interest in fashion, without it becoming an obsession. They like to discover new pieces and express their personalities through their style. They can also follow trends without being systematically subjected to them.
- “Fashion enthusiast”: they put fashion at the heart of their daily lives. They actively follow trends, fashion influencers on social networks and designers. For them, buying clothes and accessories is a source of pleasure. They are characterized by frequent purchases and a strong passion for fashion.

Concerning the sensitivity to environmental issues, three profiles have emerged.

- “Partially concerned”: this profile groups together individuals who demonstrate certain awareness of environmental issues, but whose involvement remains limited. As a result, their sensitivity is passive.
- “Concerned”: this level refers to people who are genuinely concerned about environmental issues. They demonstrate a desire to do better on a daily basis. However, their commitment remains partial and does not yet lead to a profound change in their lifestyle.
- “Engaged”: this category is composed of individuals for whom ecological issues are central to their values and lifestyle choices. They are actively committed to reducing their environmental footprint and adopt a more proactive approach than the other profiles.

3.3 Research Instrument

Several research instruments are available as part of a qualitative approach. However, this thesis relies on in-depth interviews to overcome the limitations of predefined responses in closed questionnaires derived from quantitative approaches.

To achieve this objective, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This type of interview allows participants a certain degree of freedom of response, while at the same time ensuring a structured interview guide. Participants can be progressively prompted as the discussion evolves, in order to refocus their answers on the key themes of the study. Semi-structured interviews have proven to be particularly suitable to identify obstacles and motivations, as well as to explore in depth individual perceptions related to the issue under study.

The main topics addressed in the open-ended questions included trust, perceived authenticity, influencer credibility, purchase intention, cognitive dissonance, and barriers and motivations towards influencers promoting sustainable fashion consumption.

The interviews were conducted in French, to accommodate the participant's mother language and encourage spontaneous and natural responses. Exchanges were conducted face-to-face, facilitating observation of the interlocutors' non-verbal language, an enriching element for the analysis. Finally, the duration of the interviews varied between one and one-and-a-half hours, depending on the level of details of the participants' answers and their time for reflection. The collected data were first transcribed in French, then translated into English using artificial intelligence translation tool to align with the language of this thesis.

3.4 Measures

In order to ensure a rigorous and structured analysis of the qualitative data, a horizontal thematic approach was employed. This involved identifying trends and recurring themes in the participants' narratives. An Excel spreadsheet was used to facilitate the categorization of the various themes. Each of these was supported by selected verbatim excerpts to contribute to a faithful rendering of the results.

3.5 Structure of the Interview Guide

The semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 1) was designed in several progressive phases, in line with the methodology outlined by Giannelloni and Vernet (2019).

Introductory phase

The aim of this first phase is to establish a climate of trust with the interlocutor that is conducive to exchange, by alleviating the tension associated with this type of exercise. This stage involves engaging the participants in familiar topics that are not directly related to the object of the study, such as their personal background, interests or lifestyle habits. These initial interactions give the participants the opportunity to express themselves freely in a reassuring environment. The data collected at this stage is not strictly intended for analysis, but rather to help the interviewees condition themselves.

Subject-centered phase

Once a relationship of trust has been established, the interview gradually turns to the core topics. This intermediary phase covers broad topics such as use of social networks, relationship with influencers, interest in fashion and awareness of environmental issues. The questions asked remain general and intended to gather initial impressions and perceptions, without immediately tackling the most complex or sensitive aspects of the interview.

In-depth phase

During this central phase, participants are invited to get to the heart of the matter. At this stage, the questions are more targeted and precise in order to explore in depth attitudes and perceptions, as well as possible obstacles or motivations regarding influencers on social networks who speak out on sustainable fashion.

Interview conclusion

The final step consists in bringing the exchange to a closed and structured conclusion, by offering the participants the opportunity to reconsider certain unresolved thoughts. This allows the participants to take a step back from the discussion as a whole, and to synthesize the elements discussed throughout. The interview has been concluded by asking the participants about the role influencers could play in promoting sustainable fashion.

3.6 Integration of Video Contents

Six authentic pieces of influencer content derived from the Instagram and Tik Tok platforms were integrated into the interviews. These video extracts reflect a diversity of communication strategies related to sustainable fashion.

3.6.1 Objective of Video Integration

The main purpose of introducing video content into the interview was to gather richer and more spontaneous perceptions from participants. This approach aimed to encourage the emergence of unconscious insights, by inviting respondents to react freely to the videos they viewed, without directing them through guiding questions. As a result, these different content strategies enabled a more accurate and representative overview of participants' reactions when exposed to concrete and varied examples of sustainable fashion communication.

3.6.2 Description of Selected Video Extracts

Six video extracts were selected, each featuring a content creator tackling the subject of sustainable fashion.

The first speaker, known by her Instagram handle *unpeudelou*, takes a critical stance on the fast fashion industry. The two videos shown during the interview are taken from her Instagram account (Appendix 2). In the first video, she explicitly denounces the excesses of the Shein brand, using facts and figures to raise awareness of the social and environmental impact of this type of production. In the second, she uses the viral trend “I am... of course that...”, which she adapts to the theme of fast-fashion clothing. In this way, she adopts a sarcastic tone to denounce the consequences of this industry, with statements such as “I am a fast fashion garment of course I am full of chemicals and toxic to health”, “I am a fast fashion garment of course I was made by exploited people”.

The second content creator, *Charlotte Lemay*, is active on Instagram and Tik Tok (Appendix 3). Two videos from her accounts were selected. In the first one, she speaks face to camera against a neutral background to share concrete tips for adopting a more sustainable lifestyle. The second video, in a similar vein, visually illustrates the tips she shares for extending the life of clothes.

The fifth video, from influencer *Margot YMF*'s Tik Tok account (Appendix 4), features sponsored content. The promotional aspect is explicit, with the influencer also offering a promotional code. This is a collaboration with *WeDressFair*, a brand distributor that the influencer describes as being

committed to only eco-responsible brands. In the video, the influencer presents a selection of the clothes she has chosen and takes the opportunity to briefly introduce the characteristics of the brands featured on the site.

Finally, the sixth video features *Lauren Bruls*, also active on Tik Tok (Appendix 5). She presents her own brand of sustainable handbags, guaranteed animal cruelty-free. In this content, she invites consumers to discover her brand's Instagram account and proposes an introductory offer reserved for those who pre-order.

After each viewing, interviewees were invited to share their feelings and impressions towards the influencers and the content they propose. They were also advised to explore the respective profiles of the different influencers if this would help them in their reflection.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In line with ethical research principles, each participant was informed in advance of the objectives of the study, as well as the approximate duration of the interview and the intended use of their data. Responses were recorded in order to simplify data collection and analysis, and explicit consent was obtained from each interviewee beforehand. In addition, the anonymity of their answers was ensured to preserve the confidentiality of the participants.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the empirical data gathered during the sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted as part of this research (see Appendix 6 for the interview transcripts). The analysis is based on a horizontal reading, employing a transversal approach that highlights the emerging themes across interviewees' narratives. As a result, this approach enables the identification of recurring topics as well as points of convergence and divergence within the collected data.

4.1 Findings from Semi-Structured Interview Guide

The interview guide was structured around the main themes this study intends to explore, ensuring alignment between the research objectives and the data collection process.

4.1.1 Environmental Awareness and Sensitivity

The aim of this section is to explore the degree of environmental sensitivity among Generation Z participants. As suggested by many prior studies, this generation would often be described as remarkably attentive to ecological issues.

Most of the participants express concern about environmental issues. Nevertheless, the results suggest heterogeneity in the levels of awareness and commitment among individuals.

More specifically, some have a pronounced environmental awareness, often linked to their academic or professional background, but also to a family environment that has raised awareness from an early age. For these individuals, ecology seems to be fully integrated into their daily lives and is translated into concrete and thoughtful behavior. As a result, it would seem that the social and educational environment plays a key role in shaping ecological awareness.

"I'm an engineer in energy and sustainability, so obviously this topic resonates with me. Ever since I was a kid, my parents taught me basic habits like avoiding plastic bottles and using a reusable one, sorting waste, ... [...] I try to consume in a more mindful way day-to-day because I know renewable energy won't solve everything" P3

A second profile is distinguished by an emotional awareness, mainly triggered by powerful images or content relayed in the media or on social networks. These images elicit an affective reaction that prompts them to adopt certain modest gestures on a daily basis. This suggests that digital media play a key role in raising the ecological awareness of younger generations.

"I'm definitely sensitive to environmental issues. It's a topic that speaks to me. I try to spend my money thoughtfully and avoid wasting it on useless things [...] all the videos on social media like oceans full of waste or sea animals stuck in plastic bags really touch me. They make you think and encourage you to act in your own small way" P1

Despite their awareness of the issues at stake, some of those interviewed do not really feel personally involved in the climate crisis. Indeed, their discourse reflects a rather theoretical concern that does not necessarily translate into concrete action on a daily basis.

"With all the information out there, it's hard to ignore. I'm well aware that the situation isn't normal. What scares me the most are the rising temperatures and natural disasters [...] That said, I'm mostly worried for my future children. Personally, I don't feel hugely affected by the fact that the planet has limited resources" P11

"Yes. It's a topic that touches me [...] My mom has been talking to me about it since I was little, so I've always been aware of these issues, but I admit I don't always pay attention" P15

Within this profile, many demonstrate a form of aloofness towards environmental issues, mentioning the fact that their personal actions will have a negligible or insignificant impact on the current climate situation. On several occasions, this perception is combined with a delegation of responsibility towards public authorities as well as large-scale economic players.

"I don't think I'm the person who's going to save the world by shopping at thrift stores or sewing my clothes" P5

"I don't think that even if I fully committed or went to a protest, it would really change anything. [...] For me, it's more up to authorities, they're the ones who can actually make a difference" P7

"For me, the real problem comes mainly from extremely polluting countries, cruise ships transporting food around the world, ... I think the problem is there and no matter what individual actions we take, it won't be enough to save the planet" P13

4.1.2 Perception and Attitudes Towards Sustainable Fashion

A notable proportion of participants claimed to be unfamiliar with, or even uninformed about the concept of sustainable fashion. Indeed, several confessed that they were unable to clearly define the concept, revealing a lack of knowledge about the scope and characteristics of sustainable development in the fashion industry.

"No, I'm not really familiar or informed about sustainable fashion, I've vaguely heard about it but never really looked into it" P13

"I don't think I'm familiar with this concept. I only know about thrift shops and Vinted" P8

It is worth pointing out that one respondent, although unaware of the precise meaning of the term, realized, once the concept had been explicitly explained, that he had adhered to it without even being aware of it. In this case, the choice was purely stylistic, rather than motivated by ecological or ethical considerations.

"I wasn't really aware of that concept. Actually, without realizing it, I was already somewhat engaged into sustainable fashion because I like going to thrift stores [...] But honestly, it was more for the style than for environmental reasons" P5

However, despite a lack of clarity among some of the respondents regarding sustainable fashion, the data shows that most of them expressed a favorable judgment towards this movement, once it had been properly presented to them. Indeed, more responsible, ethical and environmentally friendly fashion appears to resonate with them.

"I'm really not well informed, so it's hard to say how I perceive sustainable fashion, even if it seems like a good thing at first glance" P7

Although a substantial proportion of respondents showed to be poorly informed, a large majority of participants asserted nevertheless that they were familiar with the term, underlining its beneficial aspects for environment and society.

"I feel like it's becoming trendy again [...] We really notice the difference with our grandparents' generation. Their clothes were better quality and lasted longer. Today, it's much harder to find that. I think it's cool that there's a return to something more ethical and ecological" P9

"I find it super interesting. Anything beneficial for the planet and society is always a good thing" P15

Furthermore, it appears that respondents were more likely to associate sustainable fashion with the purchase of second-hand clothing, whether from thrift shops or resale platforms, rather than with brands specifically labelled "sustainable". This suggests that, for some of those interviewed, sustainability is essentially about reuse and circular economy.

"To me, sustainable fashion means Vinted, clothing rental sites, thrift stores, and upcycling... I really see sustainable fashion as a recycling process, giving products a second life" P12

Notably, some participants assimilate this notion with local, and more particularly European, production.

"I think it's great that some brands are trying to be more local, stay within Europe" P6

"To me, sustainable fashion means made in Europe in good conditions and it limits waste" P16

Finally, the results highlight the dual function of social networks in the construction of fashion perceptions. On one side, these platforms encourage over-consumption by constantly exposing users to new trends. On the other side, they act as a tool for raising awareness by denouncing the excesses of fast fashion and promoting more sustainable alternatives or committed brands.

"We're constantly exposed to fashion on social media, and it pushes us to consume. We need to change our mindsets and learn to buy less" P12

"We are increasingly confronted with sustainable fashion brands nowadays, especially via social media. I think this is thanks to media coverage about poor working conditions and pollution" P14

4.1.3 Fashion Consumption Patterns

This section seeks to describe the Generation Z respondents' actual clothing consumption behaviors, taking into account their concern for environmental issues and their overall positive perception of the concept of sustainable fashion.

Initially, the analysis of the interviews reveals two possible patterns.

A number of interviewees reported infrequent consumption of clothing. However, it seems difficult to attribute this phenomenon to a desire to reduce their environmental impact. Indeed, low consumption rate may be related to budgetary constraints or a less assiduous or disinterested attitude toward fashion.

"I don't spend time getting ready or picking outfits. It's not a priority in my life. I'm also not chasing the latest trends [...] I think I buy new clothes twice a year [...] I don't have a lot of money to spend on clothes. I clearly prefer spending my money on other things" P6

"I don't shop a lot [...] I like dressing up and choosing clothes I like, for sure, but my budget is limited" P9

Moreover, several respondents reported making clothing purchases with relatively high frequency, ranging from weekly to every two months. These testimonials suggest that this generation's shopping habits remain frequent, despite awareness of the issues.

"I love fashion. If I could, I would go shopping every week. I'm aware of the environmental impact, but I must admit I don't always take it into consideration [...] I don't have a specific shopping frequency. It really depends on my schedule and upcoming occasions, but I'd say about once a month or every two months" P8

"Since I've been working and earning money, I end up buying new clothes almost every week. I don't deny myself much when it comes to clothes because it really pleases me, and I like to treat myself" P13

It is furthermore noteworthy that some respondents admit purchasing clothes from brands whose controversial practices they are aware of, while at the same time displaying a critical conscience towards them. This illustrates the tensions between their attitudes and their actual purchasing behaviors, which can be interpreted as a form of cognitive dissonance.

"Unfortunately, when I buy clothes, I usually go for big brands, and I know that's not ideal" P6

"I did order from Shein once, but I quickly stopped after learning about their working conditions [...] I know Shein is just one example among many, and to be honest, faced with how big the problem is, I don't always do much else in my daily life. For instance, I still shop at Zara even though I know it's probably not great either" P8

One of the interviews illustrates this ambivalence particularly well. Indeed, one respondent who appears committed to sustainability, given her studies in renewable and sustainable energies, practices of upcycling and handcrafted clothing, as well as frequent use of thrift stores and second-hand stores, exhibits nevertheless sequences of impulse consumption, characterized by massive purchases of new clothes over short periods.

"Sometimes I get a shopping urge and I buy a lot over a short time, like one month [...] to be honest, even though I love the idea of second-hand and recycling, it's more complicated and time-consuming. So yes, sometimes I give in and buy brand new clothes that are just easier to find" P12

Interestingly, the findings also indicate that despite a high level of education and exposure to sustainability-related topics, consumers exhibit passive purchasing behaviors that overlook environmental or social challenges. This phenomenon may sometimes be explained by an interest or passion for fashion that makes it difficult to adopt consistent practices.

This discrepancy is particularly evident in the case of participant 2, who stated:

"Since I started architecture, I've had a lot of courses about sustainability. I'm pretty exposed to it, so I'm very aware [...] I'm also doing my thesis on thermal comfort and how to reduce energy consumption in buildings" P2

Despite this awareness, the same participant later acknowledged:

"I haven't really tried to adapt my consumption habits. I think I have a few ecological items, like some vegan shoes I bought without really knowing [...] It would be hypocritical to say I chose them for their eco-friendly aspect, even if I'm happy to know that" P2

Nevertheless, a large number of participants claim to have deliberately stopped buying from brands such as Shein and other fast-fashion leaders. The motivations cited mainly reflect ethical considerations, notably suspicion of abnormally low prices, as well as media revelations about working conditions deemed unacceptable. This explicit rejection evokes a growing awareness and a desire to disengage from a brand they judge irresponsible.

"I've bought from Shein in the past, for example, but after learning about the working conditions and what's going on behind the scenes, I made the decision to never buy from them again because I really can't support the social impact" P3

"I prefer shopping at independent stores. I would never buy from Zara, Shein, ... I know why the prices are so low and I don't want to be part of encouraging that system" P7

Finally, several respondents demonstrated their willingness to consume better through episodic gestures, such as opting for thrift stores, second-hand platforms, or even higher-quality products. However, these initiatives, while positive, do not seem to represent a radical transformation of their consumption habits, but rather occasional actions.

"Now, if I see something with a price that's too low or suspicious, I don't buy it because it's usually a sign that workers' rights weren't respected. I also tried second-hand shopping on Vinted because I liked the concept" P11

"I've tried to favor second-hand by turning to thrift stores [...] I occasionally look on Vinted [...] What I mainly do is avoiding ordering from extremely low-priced fast-fashion sites like Shein, AliExpress, ..." P14

"In my own way, I was already trying to consume differently by favoring clothes that last over time with a somewhat timeless style, for example. I've never bought from a site like Shein because the prices always seemed suspicious, and it screams bad quality. It doesn't bother me to spend more on clothes if I know the quality is worth it. I have a list of brands I often shop from like Fred Perry, I doubt they are perfect in terms of sustainability but at least their clothes last" P16

4.1.4 Internal and External Barriers

This section explores the various potential obstacles that could hinder or limit the effective transition from intentions to sustainable behaviors among the individuals interviewed as part of this research. The aim is to describe the internal and external obstacles likely to explain the gap observed between attitudes in favor of responsible consumption and the concrete actions implemented.

First and foremost, it is worthy to mention that the first barrier identified to the purchase of sustainable fashion clothing lies in the perception of price. Indeed, almost all respondents consider sustainable articles as financially inaccessible. These high costs are often incompatible with their economic resources and budget restrictions, particularly when studying or starting out in their working lives. One testimonial points out that the financial investment in the purchase of higher-priced clothing often represents constraints in other areas of expenditure, such as leisure or social life.

"The main factor for me is clearly price. Even if I care about the cause, if I don't have the means, I won't buy sustainable. Spending more on clothes often means making sacrifices elsewhere: going out with friends, eating at a restaurant, ..." P2

"Even though I'm convinced of the benefits of sustainable fashion, price is the biggest barrier. I think about my sister and the younger generation just starting out in adult life with rent, inflation, and all the daily expenses, they can't always afford to spend more on clothes. So, it's easier to turn to the cheapest options" P9

The results raise a pertinent point regarding the disparity in price which is sometimes deemed excessive between sustainable and conventional fashion. Indeed, the legitimacy of such a difference is questioned, suggesting that the price differential occasionally exceeds what could be justified by quality or manufacturing processes. Conversely, another respondent raises a contrasting stance, revealing doubts about the real sustainability of the processes and materials used when the price is abnormally low.

"Also, I'd pay attention to the price. Logically, a sustainable product should be priced higher. If the price is very low, I'd be suspicious about how it was made and the materials used" P1

"The problem is that when you try to go for better-quality brands with longer-lasting clothes, the prices immediately shoot up [...] I don't always understand why the price gap is so huge. It's often so extreme that it doesn't even seem justified" P5

Additionally, the accessibility of sustainable products is also a recurring obstacle. The difficulty of finding sustainable clothing easily, particularly in certain less urbanized regions, slows down the adoption of this mode of consumption. Consequently, the lack of an easy-to-access offer leads some consumers to prefer more immediate and ubiquitous alternatives such as fast fashion.

"There's also the question of accessibility. For example, in cities like Brussels, you come across thrift shops, second-hand stores, or clothing swaps on nearly every street corner. It's much easier to access. Whereas in Liège, there might be two or three [...] I even know people who go all the way to Brussels just to go thrifting because they can't find anything here" P11

"If it's hard to find the product, that could be a factor. So yeah, I'd say price and accessibility are the biggest barriers" P7

Alongside the accessibility, the investment of time and effort also appears to be a significant barrier. Some respondents mentioned the need for meticulous research and greater involvement to find sustainable products, in contrast to the ease offered by mainstream options.

"The biggest barrier is the fact that I have to take more time when shopping" P3

"If I have a specific item in mind, it's much easier to turn to big brands like Zara rather than going around all the thrift stores or scrolling through Vinted just to find it" P12

As for consumer habits, these can be seen as a new form of resistance to sustainable fashion. Therefore, attachment and loyalty to certain brands, or a preference for more affordable fashion and wider options, also constitute a major brake.

"Sustainable fashion is still relatively new, and people are used to cheap fast fashion items that are super easy to find and available in thousands of copies" P3

"I have a list of brands I shop from often like Fred Perry [...] it's mostly my habits that might hold me back. I'm still attached to brands I already know, and since I'm satisfied with them, it's hard to change overnight" P16

With regard to second-hand models in particular, the answers gathered from the interviewees reveal several points of friction. Firstly, the limited range and few options available are a barrier for consumers, who cannot always find items that suit their tastes or expectations. Secondly, the perceived lack of modernity or visual appeal of second-hand clothes reduces their attractiveness to some members of the Generation Z. In addition, negative experiences encountered on online platforms, such as the receipt of non-compliant products, work against these alternatives. Finally, there remains a certain psychological reluctance to wear clothes that once belonged to others.

"I only know about thrift shops and Vinted, but I can't really get into it. I still find it hard to wear clothes that belonged to people I don't know. Plus, I feel like eco-friendly clothes are often less attractive or fashionable" P8

"I've tried to favor second-hand by turning to thrift stores but I never really found what I liked" P14

"Once, I went into a thrift shop for a costume party and took a look, but I didn't find anything attractive or appealing. I find it's less well presented or displayed than in regular stores" P16

And last but not least, a lack of confidence in the labels or claims of so-called "sustainable" brands was cited in the data. The feeling of partial information or lack of transparency leads to wariness towards these brands. This suggests that clear information is essential to the credibility of these brands in the eyes of Generation Z.

"I struggle more with brands that claim to be purely sustainable. I feel like they're never fully honest. There's a lack of transparency like when something says "Made in France" but other production steps were done elsewhere" P12

4.1.5 Role of Social Media Influencers in Shaping Consumer Attitudes

This section focuses on the influence exerted by social network influencers on the behaviors or purchasing decisions of the sixteen participants, based on the results of in-depth interviews.

The responses suggest that, in one way or another, all respondents have been influenced at various levels, whether as an incentive to buy, a modification or adoption of behavior, or simply a source of inspiration in their decision-making processes.

First of all, several participants mentioned concrete experiences of purchases motivated by content disseminated by an influencer, whether explicitly sponsored or a spontaneous recommendation.

"Yes, during lockdown I bought products from the brand PinUpSecret. They're little goat milk soaps for skincare. I saw a story from Coralie Porrovecchio talking about them, it really made me want to try it and I ended up buying the whole range" P11

"One example I already mentioned is Mathieu Blanchard's sponsorship with Näak, a brand that makes gels and vitamin bars. I bought some and wasn't disappointed" P16

Following this, the evidence gathered revealed a second scenario. Many interviewees described having altered their behavior due to exposure to content published by an influencer. These changes ranged from minor actions in their daily lives, such as trying a new recipe or reading a book, to more significant transformations, including the regular practice of a physical activity or the commitment to a major personal project.

"Recently I tried a recipe that an influencer posted on social media" P4

"Inoxtag made a documentary about climbing Mount Everest, you've probably heard about it. In the video, he said things that really touched and impacted me. After that, I felt inspired to do something incredible in my life too, to challenge myself. After thinking about it, I decided that one day I'd like to do something like biking around France, but that's for later, in a few years" P10

While a minority of participants claim not to have been explicitly influenced, they do admit to drawing inspiration from influencers' personalities or content and using it to incorporate ideas into their lifestyle.

"As I said before, I sometimes get inspired or get ideas. But I've never changed the way I do things because an influencer said so or bought a product just because they promoted it" P5

"Sometimes I'm inspired by them regarding their style, the way they dress and that makes me want to buy something, even if they haven't actually talked about it" P6

Accordingly, these testimonials demonstrate the influencers' ability to shape consumer behaviors.

4.1.6 Trust towards Social Media Influencers

The analysis of the qualitative data highlights several key factors in the building of trust between social media influencers and consumers.

First and foremost, followers tend to place considerable importance on the influencers' authenticity. Interviewees emphasize that they particularly value those who remain true to themselves, despite having acquired a certain level of notoriety. Consequently, the perceived influencers' authenticity is rooted in their simplicity, humility, naturalness and the absence of superficial filters.

"I appreciate those who don't try to go viral at any cost or chase views, but who prefer to stay true to themselves, share what really matters to them, and express themselves sincerely" P8

"He's simple, genuine, and authentic, and that's what I look for in someone" P13

"Anna RVR because I really feel like we're all on the same level with her; she talks a lot about her mistakes or life choices that make us realize none of us are perfect, even when you're famous all over France and Belgium. Same for Mayadorable. Both of them are simple, without

overdoing it, without artifices. They show themselves as they really are, without trying to fit into the mold of influencers with perfect lives” P15

Secondly, a significant proportion mentioned the transparency criterion. Influencers who demonstrate honesty and sincerity are more likely to earn the trust of their communities. In particular, those who share elements of their personal lives and intimacies, notably their emotions, experiences and difficulties, succeed in creating a closer relationship with their audience. This exposure, which translates into a form of vulnerability, fosters the creation of an emotional bond and the trust attributed to influencers.

“There’s a duo of influencers called McFly and Carlito. They’ve always been honest and transparent with their audience. They’ve done podcasts, for example, where they explain how they work with brands. I know they don’t accept just anyone simply because they’re offered money” P6

“They share their journey, physical training... They’re really open about their struggles and small victories, and that naturally makes you feel closer to them and builds trust” P9

“What I like about her is that she really shows the hidden sides of her life. She often opens up about her personal life, and that makes you feel close to her” P11

Additionally, commercial collaborations play a decisive role in influencers' perceived trustworthiness. Participants emphasize that they have more confidence in influencers who select their partnerships carefully, ensuring consistency with their personal values or areas of specialization. As a result, respondents are more positive about influencers who use the products they recommend. Analogously, profiles of influencers who refuse excessive or purely opportunistic collaborations have proven to be indicators of confidence among consumers.

“When she collaborates with a brand, it’s usually well thought out and aligns with her values. She promotes products she actually uses in real life, unlike some influencers who just use their audience for money and promote products they’ve never even tried” P4

“They’re careful to choose products they genuinely like and that align with the ethics of their channel and their values” P6

It has been found that the perception of an influencer's expertise in a specific field significantly reinforces the confidence placed in the latter. Indeed, the interviewed consumers mentioned that content creators who demonstrate genuine knowledge of the subject they cover on their respective networks seem to be more reliable and trustworthy.

“Recently, I started following a guy who gives advice on crypto investment and what I like about him is his knowledge of the subject and professionalism, that’s what I look for when it comes to investing money” P13

It is important to note that influencers who demonstrate true passion, tangible dedication or investment in terms of time are more easily trusted by their followers.

“I think of the influencer Legend. He’s really passionate about what he does, you can tell he takes his time and truly cares about the people he interviews” P1

“When I come across content where I can tell the person took time to research, I feel confident. You can tell he’s passionate about what he talks about” P5

In a complementary way, the results also revealed a relevant piece of information which states that potential personal identification with the influencer's personality favors the trust placed in this individual.

"I see a lot of myself in him. Actually, I look for a person who looks a bit like me and with whom I share the same values" P13

Finally, according to one interviewee, visual and tangible proof supporting the influencer's statements strengthens the perceived clarity which in turn consolidates the audience trust.

"I trust them because, most of the time, they don't just say things, they show all the steps behind their process, which makes it hard not to trust them once you've seen the proof" P12

4.1.7 Perceived Credibility of Influencers Promoting Sustainable Fashion

This results section presents the insights gathered from interviewees regarding how they perceive influencer credibility when it comes to promote sustainable fashion. At the same time, the interview aimed to identify factors that could lead to skepticism towards such influencers.

The interviews reveal a strong expectation of consistency between the discourse and actual actions of influencers who promote sustainable fashion consumption on social networks. Indeed, a perceived dissonance between their statements and their actual behavior often appears to be a discrediting factor. Participants seem to rely on specific criteria to assess this coherence, such as the influencers' lifestyle, consumption habits or even the way they dress. In the same vein, some stressed the importance of the source of the message. In their view, not all influencers are legitimate to address the subject of sustainable fashion, especially when either their profile or their usual content is incongruent with sustainability values.

"If they promote a sustainable lifestyle but are obviously big spenders or don't pay attention to where or how they shop. I wouldn't want to listen to what they say" P4

"If there's a gap between what they say and what they do, it doesn't work. For example, if they promote a sustainable brand but at the same time wear fast fashion or luxury brand clothes, it gives the impression they expect things from us that they don't do themselves" P2

Furthermore, some respondents believe that the credibility of influencers who address sustainable fashion depends on the regular and constant presence of this topic in the content they propose. An isolated statement without continuity tends to be interpreted as an opportunistic approach aimed at following a trend, improving their image, or even increasing their audience.

"If they talk about it consistently over time. Not just one video to look good and gain likes or followers. It has to be a real commitment" P4

"If they just made one video like that, never talked about it again, and it didn't match their usual content. I'd immediately think they're doing it to attract new followers who care about the environment, rather than because they're genuinely invested in the topic" P7

With regard to perceived expertise, the results of this research show that influencers are expected to be well-informed and capable of transmitting relevant information. In particular, figures seem to have a certain weight in building the credibility of the content creator. In parallel, concrete illustrations such

as visits to sustainable brands or the presentation of manufacturing processes represent proof of the influencers' involvement and investment, which in turn, increase their credibility.

"For me, they'd be credible if they were well informed on the topic. It would be even better if they showed behind-the-scenes content from a sustainable fashion brand, really invested in showing the benefits like going to the shop or even the production site" P7

"I think the most important thing is that they're well-informed. They need to use concrete data. I've noticed I take people much more seriously when they use numbers, statistics, facts, ..." P11

Finally, one respondent stated that a discourse perceived as deviating from its initial purpose may be associated with a loss of credibility.

"If an influencer uses the hashtag or title "sustainable fashion" for a video promoting Vinted, but in the video they focus more on how cheap it is than on the second-hand aspect, then I'd start to doubt them" P11

4.1.8 Influencers Engaged in Paid Collaborations with Sustainable Brands

This part reveals the results of the 16 participants' perceptions of influencers who enter into commercial partnerships with sustainable fashion brands. As a result, it aims to highlight the extent to which remuneration influences the influencer's perceived credibility, as well as the reception of the promoted message.

The results of the interviews reveal a noticeable distrust among many participants regarding paid partnerships between influencers and brands committed to sustainable fashion. More precisely, the financial incentive seems, in some cases, to raise doubts about the underlying motivations that drove the influencer to accept the partnership. Thus, the resulting uncertainties fuel negative preconceived ideas as well as doubts about the influencer's true convictions.

"If it's for money, it immediately seems less sincere" P2

"As soon as money is involved, it becomes hard to tell what their real motivations are" P5

However, this mistrust is not unanimous. Several people nuanced their statements by stating that paid collaboration is perceived positively when the brand the influencer promotes is in line with the influencer identity and usual content. We can therefore assume that the perceived authenticity of this partnership is a decisive criterion in the acceptance of remuneration. Indeed, when an influencer displays a sustainable lifestyle or a sincere commitment to environmental issues, the perception of the collaboration is more tolerated by the participants.

"If the brand they're partnering with aligns with most of the content they usually post, I have no issue with it" P3

"The fact that the influencer is being paid doesn't bother me, as long as it aligns with what he has done before. So, if his account already includes videos where he talks about sustainable fashion, and we know that it's a topic he genuinely cares about, it's fine" P12

Furthermore, the results show that being paid does not necessarily constitute a lack of credibility or opportunism. On the contrary, some participants feel that it is legitimate for influencers to be remunerated as long as their visibility contributes to increase sales of the partner brand. This

recognition of the professional nature of the activity testifies a growing understanding of the economic dynamics of the influencers' sector. Indeed, some even mentioned that, for certain influencers, it was their profession and their main source of income.

"Well, if you're promoting a product that brings in money for a brand, it's normal that you get paid too" P6

"I don't mind influencers being paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand because that's how they make a living" P14

For a minority of respondents, the question of remuneration is of little importance as long as the brand promoted is perceived as meaningful and the message conveyed is positive.

"Even if they are paid, they're still promoting a brand that has a positive impact on the planet. So, paid or not, it's still a good thing" P9

4.1.9 Drivers of Sustainable Fashion Influencer Persuasion

This section outlines the various motivations and expectations expressed by the participants, which may incite them to follow the recommendations of influencers who incorporate sustainable fashion into their content.

A widely shared perspective among participants concerns the importance attributed to the quality and accuracy of the information provided. Indeed, influencers must be well-informed and rigorously documented. According to respondents, they would be more inclined to take action if influencers advocating for sustainable fashion demonstrate transparency regarding the characteristics of the promoted products. This notably includes detailed information on the provenance of the clothes, the materials used as well as the working conditions. Thus, it appears that the implementation of such practices would encourage Generation Z to engage with sustainable fashion brands.

"If, for example, an influencer highlights a sustainable clothing brand, they need to be informed and honest about the characteristics of the product and where it was made" P12

"If they are transparent and provide enough information about what they talk about. For example, about the factories where the clothes are made or clearly explaining why a certain brand is responsible" P16

Furthermore, several respondents emphasized the power influencers have to drive behavioral change by raising awareness within their communities. This requires a convincing, well-argued discourse supported by solid evidence or figures, and in some cases, shocking elements designed to create a wake-up call among their audience.

"If I were an influencer, I'd try to create a shock effect by proving to people that their current consumption habits are harmful with stats or concrete examples. I'd talk more about fast fashion and expose the facts" P5

Another recurring expectation expressed by interviewees concerns the influencer's ability to make fashion more accessible and appealing. On the one hand, respondents would be more motivated to adopt sustainable practices if influencers provided them with practical advice, concrete tips or recommendations of responsible brands.

“For example, I follow a girl on social media who dresses exclusively in thrifted clothes or from Vinted. She helps her followers by giving tips, places to go, or even keywords to type in the Vinted search bar to find a certain style of clothing [...] she makes sustainable fashion seem easier and more accessible” P3

“And they need to be convincing with recommendations for alternative brands, and tips or hacks to help us change our habits” P4

On the other hand, consumers expect influencers to highlight the aesthetic and trendy aspects of sustainable fashion by demonstrating that sustainability and style can go hand in hand.

“Influencers should find a way to show us that living sustainably is possible and that we can still be stylish and well-dressed even if we shop in thrift stores or on Vinted” P9

“Above all, she should present sustainable fashion in a beautiful way that truly makes me want to engage with it” P15

Results suggest that participants are more likely to follow an influencer's recommendations when they perceive the influencer as sincere. This sincerity involves honesty and authenticity, especially when influencers openly acknowledge their own limitations. One participant stated he values influencers who admit they are not irreproachable in all aspects. This trait fosters personal identification and makes sustainable fashion feel accessible to everyone, even those who have their own shortcomings.

“If they give advice for a sustainable lifestyle, are honest with us and acknowledge that they are not flawless or perfect in everything, that can really help people like me identify with them and reflect on our habits to change things in our daily lives” P16

4.1.10 Role of Influencers in Promoting Sustainable Consumption

To conclude, the various interviewees were asked to close the interview by answering a final question inviting them to reflect on the role that influencers could play in promoting sustainable fashion. The results showed a clear consensus. Respondents unanimously agreed that influencers have a key role to play in this area. They further emphasized that influencers have already demonstrated their ability to influence behavior in the past, and that they now occupy a central place in the daily lives of younger generations.

“At present, influencer marketing is highly effective, which explains why so many brands rely on influencers to promote their products. Take, for example, AirUp water bottles or Rhinoshield phone cases, without the widespread coverage by influencers, these products likely would not have achieved the same level of popularity. If this strategy works in other industries, there is reason to believe it could also be effective in promoting sustainable fashion, provided that the message conveyed is transparent, consistent, and trustworthy” P2

“Yes, I believe influencers can have a real impact in promoting sustainable fashion. Nowadays, it's clear that they have a strong influence on their communities, especially on young people who are very active on social media” P8

“Absolutely. In 2025, you can't really start a business without being present on social media, because that's how you reach people, in my opinion. It's the same for sustainable fashion. We

need people who can explain it to others and put it in the spotlight because it's still not well known, and influencers are perfect for that" P12

However, participants stated that such influence can only be truly effective if exercised appropriately, in line with the criteria previously cited.

"Yes, influencers can have an impact. The issue is that this impact can go both ways if they don't do things properly or the message isn't well received. Influencers need to know how to approach the adults of tomorrow" P5

"They can play an important role, but it has to be done well. They must genuinely believe what they say and apply it in their daily lives, not just mention it once or twice [...] And when influencers present sustainable brands, consumers need to be sure it's a truly sustainable fashion brand, with enough information given beyond any doubt" P16

4.2 Findings from Influencers' Sustainable Fashion Communication Strategies

As previously outlined, six video extracts featuring different content creators were selected in order to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perception of influencers promoting sustainable fashion. Therefore, this section presents the results relating to the reception of these different communication strategies.

4.2.1 Communication Approach of "unpeudelou"

In general, *unpeudelou* was viewed positively by those interviewed. Through her videos, respondents claimed to perceive a form of sincere commitment suggesting that she seemed genuinely touched by the situation she was evoking.

"She seems genuinely invested in the topic and to really care about the environment and the cause. From the very first glance, she seems authentic and sincere" P4

In addition, many highlighted the consistency between the influencer's usual content, biography, personality and style of dress, and the videos presented to them during the interview. According to the respondents, this consistency and adequacy reinforced the perception of her sincerity and the authenticity of her message.

"The influencer seems legitimate to talk about this because she promotes ethical fashion in her bio. Her video doesn't come out of nowhere and fits with her usual content" P14

In addition, the use of concrete data and hard facts was frequently cited as an effective way of raising awareness among her audience. The use of figures and precise information would confer the influencer a reliable and well-informed position.

"She gives concrete and factual information too, which makes it more real" P13

However, some participants also expressed reservations about the real effectiveness of this type of strategy. In fact, respondents pointed out that, while it might be thought-provoking, this type of content would not necessarily lead to any concrete change in their behavior or daily habits in the future.

"Her message is good, but I don't know if it will have much impact, because overall we already know what fast fashion all is about. Her video makes you want to change, but at the same time, it doesn't really help you to change your habits or tell you what to do" P10

4.2.2 Communication Approach of "chamellow"

As for influencer *chamellow*, the results suggest that her strategy is particularly effective. Indeed, her content is generally well received by respondents. They mention the fact that she makes sustainable fashion easy and accessible through tips and tricks that are deemed within everyone's reach.

"She offers real solutions, and as I said before, that's the most effective and concrete way to encourage people to change. Plus, what she suggests doesn't seem difficult at all" P3

"She really gives useful tips that we can apply ourselves without needing to make a big effort. For example, when she talks about washing clothes, it's a simple tip accessible to everyone" P9

Several participants also noted that she helped make sustainable fashion more attractive.

"Also, she dresses well, so it means you can look good while choosing to buy more eco-friendly, which gives hope and inspiration" P15

Once her profile had been explored, the majority of participants insisted on the coherence between her discourse and her behavior, stressing that her posture seemed aligned with the principles she defends.

"Her profile aligns perfectly with what she says. For example, I saw a video where she chose to travel to Marrakech by train instead of flying" P6

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the benevolent, guilt-free tone she employs in her videos favored adherence to her message.

"She's super gentle, I love the way she speaks to us" P3

"What I also like is that she doesn't guilt people who buy fast fashion" P14

4.2.3 Communication Approach of "margotymf"

When it comes to *margotYMF*'s collaboration, opinions are much more divided. This divergence of opinion echoes the results of the questions on paid partnerships.

For some respondents, the fact that the collaboration is paid does not constitute a hindrance, since her profile seems in line with the *WeDressFair* brand she promotes. The same people also highlighted elements of her profile such as her biography, which includes the term "slow life", and the absence of an over-consumptive lifestyle. All these criteria would seem to make her legitimate in the respondents' eyes to promote an ethical fashion brand.

"I think she was contacted by the brand specifically because of her usual content. I checked out her profile, and she even highlighted a section on ecology. There were sixteen videos in that

section; I saw that she even visited a factory. She's really involved, and the partnership with the brand makes sense" P9

Conversely, others were wary of this paid collaboration, suggesting preconceived ideas about the intentions behind her advertising.

"I'm often skeptical when I see advertising and money involved. Nothing guarantees she'll actually wear those clothes afterwards or that she really supports sustainable fashion" P10

It seems important to point out that some respondents felt that the promotional code could remove barriers linked to the higher prices of sustainable brands.

"I'd also like to highlight that she offers a promo code, which is really cool because it lowers the price barrier and makes sustainable fashion more accessible to everyone" P2

Furthermore, some respondents regretted the lack of concrete information and further details regarding the brands featured on the *WeDressFair* website.

"I might have wanted more information about the brands, not just that it's a site working with eco-responsible brands. Well, if I had to buy and pay the price, that's the kind of information I would have needed" P15

4.2.4 Communication Approach of "laurenbruls"

Finally, the majority of participants initially expressed a favorable opinion of *Lauren Bruls'* creation of a sustainable, animal-cruelty-free handbag. However, a form of mistrust towards sustainability claims made by brands seems to be emerging from this generation. Almost all respondents consulted the concerned influencer's profile and expressed a lack of consistency between the message and the image she portrays on her networks. From their perspective, her content featuring a no-holds-barred lifestyle and luxury brands seemed inconsistent with the creation of a sustainable bag.

"Alongside her brand, the lifestyle she portrays on social media doesn't necessarily reflect any real concern for the environment" P4

"The first two videos on her TikTok account are unboxings of Hermes and Fendi bags... I don't really believe in her claim of a sustainable bag brand" P15

It is also worth noting that several participants deplored the lack of information provided about the sustainability criteria of the brand. This lack of transparency was identified as a major deterrent to purchase intent.

"At first glance, the initiative seems nice. But then, she barely emphasizes the sustainable aspect, she only mentions it very briefly. That's strange because if it's something important to her, she could talk about it more and really highlight it" P9

"When promoting a sustainable brand, I find her video lacks information and details about the materials used and the place of manufacture. These are the two minimum criteria I want to hear in a presentation video of a brand that claims to be sustainable and cruelty-free" P14

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter interprets the results in the light of secondary data derived from the literature review. Through a cross analysis, it aims to assess the extent to which the perceptions gathered from the sixteen participants confirm, nuance or challenge existing knowledge, thereby enriching the current body of literature.

5.1 Generation Z and Sustainability

Generally speaking, the results of this study show that participants are overall concerned about environmental issues, which confirms the existing literature (Tyson et al., 2021). However, it is important to point out that ecology was not considered as important to Generation Z interviewees as suggested by other researchers (Pradeep & Pradeep, 2023), although it remains an important attribute for them.

As mentioned in the literature review (Areola et al., 2022), it appears that Generation Z is notably aware of its responsibility to preserve the planet. However, the results of the present research show a certain inadequacy with this assertion, since some respondents reveal that their actions would have a negligible impact on environmental challenges, sometimes transferring this responsibility to major economic players or public authorities. This observation is in line with the findings of Bocti et al. (2021), who explain that this feeling of low personal effectiveness is a major brake preventing the adoption of sustainable behavior.

With reference to the Triple Bottom Line model mentioned in the literature (Thiele, 2024), the results obtained from the primary data reveal a point worth emphasizing. It appears that interviewees are more aware of the social dimensions of sustainability, referring to the “People” component of this model, than the strictly environmental “Planet” dimension. The results show that workers exploitation provokes stronger reactions and more tangible changes in behavior among Generation Z, in contrast to a certain ambivalence or fatalism towards environmental issues. Thus, this divergence between the social and environmental aspects of the concept of sustainability among Generation Z complements previous work.

5.2 Generation Z and Sustainable Fashion

As far as sustainable fashion is concerned, most study participants declared themselves in favor of this movement. A significant proportion of those interviewed demonstrated a positive intention through occasional gestures of responsible consumption, which corroborates with previous research stating that this generation is keen to turn towards more ethical and responsible fashion (Liu, 2022). However, this attitude does not always seem to translate into a profound or radical shift in their purchasing habits.

Furthermore, several respondents acknowledged a lack of clear information or insufficient understanding of the concept of sustainable fashion. This observation is in line with the findings of the scientific literature, which emphasize key role of knowledge in fostering sustainable behaviors (Sarker, 2016).

Based on the interviews data, it appears that a greater interest in fashion is correlated with a higher frequency of clothing purchases, often associated with impulsive and unreflective purchasing behavior. This phenomenon contributes to a notable contradiction between participants’ awareness of the issues and their favorable perception of sustainable fashion alternatives, contrasted by their actual purchasing

behavior. We can assume that people who aspire to follow fashion trends, frequently changing their clothes, have no real interest in buying pieces that last over time.

Additionally, Generation Z evolves in a digital environment and is highly exposed to social networks (Ninan et al., 2020). As a result, the findings highlight the significant pressure to overconsume experienced by this generation, particularly through the appeal of fast fashion, which offers low-cost products that are easily accessible and aligned with rapidly changing trends. This finding, in line with previous studies (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022), confirms the tension felt by Generation Z between the desire to buy sustainably and the temptation of low-cost fashion.

Both in the literature and in the qualitative interviews, the phenomenon of the attitude-behavior gap or cognitive dissonance is evident, suggesting that although consumers express positive attitude towards sustainability and more responsible fashion alternatives, these attitudes don't necessarily translate into their everyday practices.

Price is described in the literature as one of the main obstacles to the purchase of sustainable fashion for Generation Z (Mahrs & Berthem, 2022; Palomo-Domínguez et al., 2023; Van Der Cruyssen & Tran, 2023). This observation is confirmed by the results obtained from the qualitative study. Indeed, it seems that the budgetary constraints within this population hinder responsible consumption when it involves higher costs. The results suggest that Generation Z undervalues the longevity and long-lasting nature of sustainable garments, which would allow them to keep their clothes longer and thus save money in the long term. Indeed, only one respondent in the sample emphasized this aspect, expressing a willingness to pay a premium price if quality is guaranteed. While a study has shown that Gen Z consumers in China demonstrate a preference for quality products even if this entails a higher price (Zhang et al., 2023), this preference was not reflected among Gen Z consumers in Wallonia.

In line with the conclusions drawn from existing literature, several barriers beyond price were mentioned by the interviewees, including the lack of clear and detailed information on the product or brand, accessibility issues, the effort required, and finally, distrust of claims made by brands that declare themselves to be “sustainable”.

Nevertheless, a barrier not yet identified in the literature emerges from the data. To the best of my knowledge, strong attachment to specific brands and the resulting brand loyalty have not been previously highlighted. Yet, this represents an additional obstacle to the consumption of sustainable alternatives. While general consumption habits have been discussed, the emotional ties consumers develop with particular brands have not yet been addressed.

With regard to the second-hand market, our results confirm that Generation Z does not limit its conception of sustainable fashion to classic “eco-sustainable” brands. On the contrary, according to the findings, this generation is more inclined to turn to the second-hand market, which aligns with Pradeep and Pradeep (2023). This tendency is presumably linked to their financial constraints, leading towards less expensive, sustainable alternatives. However, specific barriers were highlighted by participants, notably social stigma, aesthetic criteria related to the style and presentation of second-hand clothes, as well as a lack of variety in the offerings. These barriers reflect those identified in existing literature.

5.3 Perceived Role of Social Media Influencers

As suggested by previous studies (Joshi et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2021), respondents acknowledged the significant role played by influencers on social networks in shaping their behavior and purchasing decisions, as well as serving as a source of inspiration.

5.4 Building Trust

Both in the scientific literature and in the respondents' statements, it appears that perceived trust constitutes an essential lever in the relationship with influencers and in adherence to their message.

The results of the interviews show that Gen Z members place greater trust in individuals who seem more approachable, share their daily lives, and confide in their community. These findings are fully in line with the theory of parasocial interactions discussed in the literature review. Indeed, through such regular interactions, influencers maintain a close relationship with their audience, which in turn feeds a one-sided emotional connection. Thus, as the literature also suggests (Lin et al., 2021; Lou & Kim, 2019), parasocial relationships act as vectors of trust and stronger adherence to the influencer's discourse (Hudders & Lou, 2022).

Regarding similarity, the literature emphasizes that members of this generation tend to seek influencers with whom they can identify through shared characteristics and common traits (Tafheem et al., 2022), thereby reinforcing the trust they place in them. Once again, the data from the present study confirms these observations.

In the context of commercial collaborations, as previously mentioned in the scientific literature (Erwin et al., 2023), respondents are more indulgent towards influencers who genuinely use the products they endorse and incorporate them into their daily lives. Along the same lines, a careful and measured management of partnerships is likely to strengthen trust.

5.5 Social Media Influencers Promoting Sustainable Fashion

5.5.1 Perceived Credibility

In the specific context of sustainable fashion, influencer credibility is a key criterion.

As defined by Lou and Yuan (2019), an individual's credibility is based on three fundamental dimensions: expertise, reliability and attractiveness. Interviewees stressed out the importance of the first two dimensions. Indeed, the results revealed that an influencers' expertise and knowledge of sustainable fashion, alongside their sincerity and perceived motivations, enhance their credibility. Conversely, physical appearance was not identified as a factor directly linked to the credibility of an influencer committed to sustainable fashion, thus corroborating the findings of Pinto and Paramita (2021) previously mentioned in the literature review.

Almost unanimously, congruence, in other words, the alignment between the influencers' discourse and their behavior, also emerges as an essential condition for the perception of their credibility when approaching sustainable fashion. Indeed, as the literature testifies (Boerman et al., 2022), any consistency may be perceived as a form of hypocrisy, resulting in a loss of trust among Generation Z members.

The study brings new and complementary insights to the existing literature.

Notably, some respondents emphasized that influencers gain credibility when they consistently and regularly address the topic of sustainable fashion in their content.

Furthermore, several participants also raised the importance of visiting manufacturing sites and revealing the behind-the-scenes aspects of sustainable brands, not only to substantiate influencers' claims with tangible illustrations, but also to enhance their credibility with their audience.

5.5.2 Paid collaboration with Sustainable Brands

When it comes to paid partnerships with responsible brands, the majority of respondents are generally receptive, provided influencers demonstrate a prior commitment to sustainability, verifiable through their consumption habits, profile or type of content. This aligns with the literature on the congruent image between the influencers' image and the brand they promote (Kim & Kim, 2021; Schouten et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, managing paid collaboration hinges on a delicate balance. As Lou and Yuan (2019) point out, the mere detection of commercial intent in sponsored content can compromise the influencer's credibility and diminish consumer trust, as clearly confirmed by primary data from some respondents' discourse. This observation suggests that Generation Z, having grown up in a digital environment saturated with the Internet, social networks and online advertising, remains vigilant and critical towards digital marketing. Although paid partnerships are commonplace on social networks, the perceived authenticity of these collaborations is increasingly questioned by this generation, who tends to doubt the influencers' true motivations. This phenomenon aligns with the persuasive knowledge model discussed in the literature review, which describes consumers' ability to recognize persuasive techniques and resist influence attempts deemed insincere.

It is clear from respondents' discourses that they have ambivalent feelings about influencers. While they implicitly or explicitly acknowledged trusting influencers to discover products or brands, they were also suspicious of their real commercial motivations.

5.5.3 Influencers as Drivers of Sustainable Fashion Consumption

Finally, the data collected from respondents offers several promising avenues for influencers to help overcome barriers to sustainable fashion consumption.

First and foremost, faced with a lack of information, participants expect influencers to be well-informed and to share detailed content about the sustainable products and brands they endorse. In particular, they seek information about the materials used, the origin and production processes, and the values upheld by the brand. This demand reflects a strong need for transparency and clear communication around the characteristics of sustainable products.

Another obstacle lies in the lack of awareness about sustainable fashion. Respondents suggest that the inclusion of hard facts, impactful figures and concrete data could raise consumer awareness and inspire them to adopt more responsible behaviors.

Regarding the perceived accessibility of sustainable fashion, which is often considered as complex or difficult to adopt, influencers have a key role to play by offering concrete solutions. Practical tips, easy-to-apply advice and the presentation of affordable, sustainable alternatives are seen as essential to help Generation Z gradually alter their consumption habits.

Another frequently cited barrier is the undesirable image of sustainable fashion. Participants highlighted the influencers' power to raise the image of this sector, making it trendier, more aesthetic

and more attractive. Even though being attractive has not been explicitly identified as a criterion to judge influencers' credibility in this field, their ability to make these products desirable weighs heavily on their adoption. In other words, the fact that influencers are attractive through their style, image, or way of presenting products may implicitly influence consumer's purchasing behavior.

The high cost of products remains a major hurdle. In this context, the use of promotional codes was considered as an effective way to overcome the perceived high price of sustainable brands and encourage their adoption.

One final point deserves emphasis. A participant revealed that adopting a nuanced and transparent stance, openly acknowledging one's own limits and imperfections regarding sustainable consumption, fosters identification with the influencer. Presenting oneself as flawed yet committed to a transition towards a more responsible lifestyle makes the influencer more relatable and inspiring for this generation, demonstrating that meaningful change is within everyone's reach.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary

Initially, the purpose of this research was to enrich the academic literature on the role of influencers on social media in promoting sustainable fashion among Generation Z, by offering a qualitative perspective that remains underexplored to date. More specifically, this study intends to extend existing quantitative work by adopting an exploratory approach, that delves into the underlying mechanisms shaping young consumers' perceptions when faced with influencer discourses related to sustainable fashion.

In this perspective, primary data were collected through sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted with Belgian Generation Z consumers, aged 16 to 18. These in-depth interviews aim to address the following central research question: *How do Gen Z consumers perceive social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion consumption?*

This research question was broken down into three specific objectives. The first sought to identify the perceived barriers that hinder this generation of consumers from engaging with influencer content encouraging more sustainable fashion consumption. The second objective, conversely, endeavored to explore the motivations that may encourage adherence to such content. Lastly, the third objective focused on analyzing how Gen Z interprets and evaluates the various communication strategies employed by influencers, based on a selection of real content drawn from the Tik Tok and Instagram platforms.

The analysis of the interviews enabled the identification of a typical influencer persona on social media who is favorably perceived by Generation Z in the context of sustainable fashion promotion and seen as inspiring catalyst for behavioral change.

Above all, this idealized figure embodies profound authenticity. The influencer does not engage with sustainable fashion solely as a fleeting trend, a means to enhance their image or increase their community size. Conversely, their involvement reflects a sincere and personal commitment, grounded in genuine conviction.

The influencer cultivates a close relationship with their audience by frequently sharing personal experiences and confiding aspects of their life. This persona does not merely disseminate unidirectional content, but regularly interacts with their followers, fostering dialogue through comments, stories and other interactive formats.

This person demonstrates a genuine expertise in sustainable fashion, a subject over which they possess comprehensive mastery. They are able to clearly articulate this concept to their community and illustrate its scope through dynamic and explanatory videos.

Moreover, the influencer exhibits consistency between their discourse, profile and lifestyle. This coherence is particularly evident in their Instagram biographies, where they explicitly define themselves as a “planet lover” or “sustainable fashion advocate”. They illustrate this alignment by producing diverse content related to sustainable fashion, thereby demonstrating that their engagement goes beyond superficial rhetoric and is genuinely reflected into their practices.

Their content is marked by a regular presence of the sustainable fashion theme, reflecting a seamless and continuous integration rather than a sporadic approach.

A significant aspect of their communication is the ability to raise awareness without adopting a moralizing or guilt-inducing tone. They favor the dissemination of impactful information and meaningful data, notably using concrete figures, while maintaining a benevolent tone encouraging thoughtful reflection.

The influencer offers their audience with exclusive access to sustainable fashion brands. They share behind-the-scenes videos capturing their visits to the workshops and factories of brands they admire, showcasing the manufacturing processes and the brands' environmental and social commitments. This immersive approach not only reinforces the credibility of their recommendations but also meets Generation Z's demand for transparency.

This persona also provides practical advice and easily implementable tips for adopting a more sustainable lifestyle. Such content is both accessible and applicable daily, thus facilitating the audience's capacity to take action through tangible and attainable solutions.

In terms of aesthetics, the influencer strives to portray sustainable fashion in an attractive and desirable light. They actively challenge the prejudices that commonly associate this sector with unstylish and outdated fashion.

When managing paid partnerships, the typical persona is rigorously selective. They collaborate exclusively with brands whose values are perfectly aligned with their own, avoiding purely commercial promotions or those disconnected from their realm. They exercise caution by promoting products that they already use or intend to incorporate into their daily life in the near future. Furthermore, they carefully regulate the frequency of their collaborations to avoid saturating their audience and preserve the sincerity of their message.

When the influencer presents a partner brand, they demonstrate rigorous transparency by providing detailed information about the product's characteristics, origin, materials used and manufacturing conditions. They may also offer a promotional code to make the brand they support more accessible to their audience, helping to overcome the financial barrier often associated with sustainable fashion.

Finally, this persona stands out for their honesty and sincerity. Aware of their imperfections, they openly acknowledge their limitations and contradictions, which they share with their community. This realistic and vulnerable stance facilitates the audience identification with them. They convey the idea that the transition to a sustainable lifestyle is an evolutionary path accessible to all, pointing out that if perfection were a prerequisite to adopt responsible gestures, no one would engage in this essential step towards making the world a better place.

6.2 Contribution

6.2.1 Managerial Contribution

In light of the identified obstacles to the adoption of sustainable behavior in the fashion industry, brands now have the opportunity to refine their communication and influencer marketing strategies by addressing these barriers and encourage the path toward action.

Collaboration with influencers who are perceived as authentic, credible and close to their community can significantly strengthen the reach and the resonance of the message conveyed to the target audience.

This research therefore proposes a reference model to guide sustainable fashion brands in selecting influencer profiles most likely to generate a positive perception among Generation Z.

The study further highlights Generation Z's growing mistrust and critical attitude toward paid collaborations.

The choice of the influencer is of strategic importance for sustainable brands. This individual must embody a set of values, an identity and a type of content in line with the brand's image and commitments. Such coherence reinforces the perceived legitimacy of the collaboration and increases the likelihood that Generation Z will be receptive to the influencer's recommendations in favor of the brand.

In this context, transparency is essential. Brands must provide influencers with comprehensive and precise information regarding their practices and commitments. This level of scrutiny is particularly important amid the growing prevalence of greenwashing practices

Generation Z is characterized by a heightened vigilance toward green marketing statements. This cohort seems particularly skeptical when influencer-brand partnerships rely on vague or insufficiently detailed information. The absence of tangible data thus hampers these young consumers' willingness to turn to sustainable consumption behaviors.

Influencers must be encouraged to become fully and sincerely involved in the partnership, by proposing narrative, engaging and meaningful content. Such content is likely to resonate more with Generation Z than superficial promotional messages devoid of depth. As evidenced by the findings of this research, formats including behind-the-scenes footage, workshop visits or explanations of manufacturing processes are effective ways to capture the interest of this demographic.

Finally, it is advisable to adopt a hybrid emotional communication approach extending beyond environmental concerns. Incorporating social and human dimensions into the brand's storytelling can reinforce young consumers' interest and involvement with the latter and its products.

6.2.2 Academic Contribution

This thesis sheds new light on Generation Z's perceptions of influencers promoting sustainable fashion consumption, a subject still relatively underexplored within academic literature.

It addresses a dual gap. First, the paucity of in-depth qualitative studies in this field, as the prevailing body of research predominantly adopts quantitative methodologies. Secondly, the absence of work devoted to this theme within a Belgian French-speaking socio-cultural context.

Furthermore, this research refines various theories related to the perceived credibility of influencers involved in promoting sustainable fashion, while enriching the understanding of cognitive dissonance among young consumers, often torn between environmental concerns and responsible behavior.

Finally, this study distinguishes itself through an innovative research design combining semi-directive interviews with an analysis of six authentic video contents from the Tik Tok and Instagram platforms. This allows the capture of participants' spontaneous reactions and the access of more subtle perceptions that are difficult to observe using other methods.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

6.3.1 Limitations

Several limitations inherent to this study must be acknowledged.

Firstly, the sample comprises of only sixteen participants, a relatively small number that does not allow the generalizability of the findings to the broader Generation Z population. This limitation is typical of the qualitative approach, which seeks to delve deeply into individual perceptions and experiences rather than to produce large-scale generalized results.

Secondly, given its limited size, this sample cannot fully cover the diversity of profiles that exist within Generation Z, a vast and heterogeneous demographic group. The sample is predominantly composed of students, which introduces a potential selection bias as the perceptions gathered emanate mainly from educated individuals, who mostly come from a privileged socio-economic background.

The use of semi-directive interview format, while conducive to spontaneous and rich responses, exposes the study to potential influence from the interviewer. Elements including the tone of voice, prompting, and non-verbal language may have unintentionally steered certain responses or affected the dynamics of the exchange.

Another limitation lies in the possibility of social desirability bias. Given the sensitive nature of the themes addressed during the interview, some respondents may have been tempted to tailor their responses to align with socially accepted or desirable norms, at the expense of expressing their true opinions or practices.

Moreover, the interviews were conducted in French and subsequently translated into English to conform to the language of this thesis. This translation process may have entailed a loss of lexical nuance or idiomatic expression. Accordingly, a partial alteration of the richness and authenticity of the original words cannot be excluded.

Finally, the data analysis relies on the researcher's interpretation. As a result, ensuring complete objectivity is more difficult than in a quantitative study based on standardized measurements. Results are thus dependent on the subjectivity inherent in the process of thematic categorization and discourse interpretation.

6.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

A number of research directions could be explored to further extend and deepen the findings of this study.

To begin with, it would be pertinent to extend the scope of the research to more diverse socio-demographic contexts. Indeed, the present study focused primarily on a sample of French-speaking Belgians, thus limiting the scope of the conclusions to this specific subpopulation. Although the selection criteria aimed to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, social media usage, interest in fashion, and environmental fashion, the sample is predominantly composed of students, with only four respondents engaged in professional employment. This relative homogeneity may have shaped the perceptions gathered, particularly in terms of purchasing power and consumption priorities.

Furthermore, in order to overcome the limitations of an exclusively qualitative approach, the adoption of a mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative data would offer a more global and representative view of the phenomenon under investigation.

Future inquiries might also explore in a more targeted way the differences in perceptions between the various types of influencers namely macro, micro and nano influencers, when addressing sustainable fashion topics. This could help identify which profiles are the most legitimate and effective in promoting responsible consumption behaviors. Finally, it would be interesting to explore how sustainable messages are perceived according to the format used on social networks such as videos, carousels, ephemeral stories or even traditional static posts. This would help guide brands in their choice of strategic media.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

“Thank you for participating in this study. This aim of this research is to explore Generation Z consumers’ perception of social media influencers who promote sustainable fashion consumption. All the responses gathered during this interview will remain anonymous and will be used solely for academic research purposes. Before we begin, I would like to ask for your consent to record this interview, which will allow for a more accurate analysis of your responses. The interview should last approximately one hour. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to express your thoughts openly. We can begin whenever you feel ready. If anything is unclear, or if you would like to revisit a point at any time, do not hesitate to let me know”

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

- a) Could you tell me a little about yourself and your interests?
- b) How do you usually spend your free time?

2. Social Media Use and Exposure to Influencers

- a) How would you describe your daily use of social media? On average, how much time do you spend on these platforms?
- b) Which platforms do you use most frequently? Why these in particular?
- c) Do you follow any social media influencers?
 - If yes
 - (i) Could you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?
 - (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchase decision or a behavioral change? Tell me about that experience.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Could you describe your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?
- b) How do you usually make your fashion choices?
- c) How often do you purchase clothing or fashion items?

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you consider yourself concerned about environmental issues?
 - If yes
 - (i) Can you recall a specific moment when you became aware of environmental challenges?
 - (ii) Have you ever tried to adapt your fashion consumption habits for ethical or ecological reasons?
- b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?
 - If yes
 - (i) What was your first reaction when you learned about that concept?
 - If no (explanation of the concept)

“Sustainable fashion refers to the production and consumption of clothing in a responsible manner, taking into account social and environmental impacts. Unlike fast fashion, which is based on rapid, low-cost production and consumption, sustainable fashion encourages slower production cycles,

longer product lifespans and the use of quality materials, while ensuring fair pricing and ethical practices”

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

- a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain me what gives you that feeling?
- b) If you were exposed to an influencer promoting sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?
- c) Conversely, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer promoting sustainable fashion?
- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

6. Motivations and barriers

- a) What factors might encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer promoting sustainable fashion?
- b) What might prevent you from purchasing more responsible fashion items recommended by an influencer?

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

“Before concluding, I would like to show you a selection of communication strategies used by influencers on Tik Tok and Instagram to promote sustainable fashion. After viewing each video, I invite you to share your impressions and opinions. Feel free to explore their profiles if that helps enrich your reflections”

8. Conclusion

- a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Appendix 2: *unpeudelou* contents

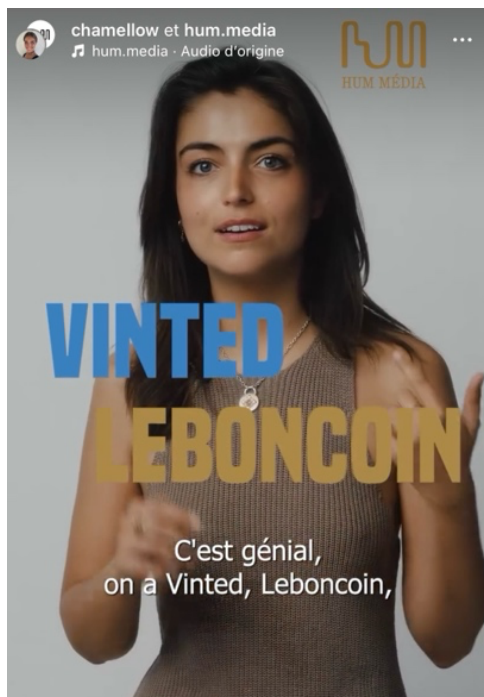


Screenshots from two videos posted by @unpeudelou on Instagram



Screenshot of the Instagram profile of @unpeudelou
<https://www.instagram.com/unpeudelou/>

Appendix 3: chamellow contents



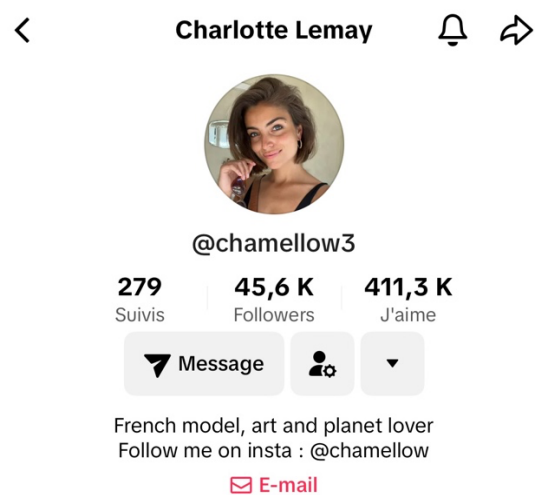
Screenshot of a video posted by @chamellow on Instagram



Screenshot of the Instagram profile of @chamellow
<https://www.instagram.com/chamellow/>



Screenshot of a video posted by @chamellow3 on Tik Tok



Screenshot of the Tik Tok profile of @chamellow3
<https://www.tiktok.com/@chamellow3>

Appendix 4: *margotymf* content



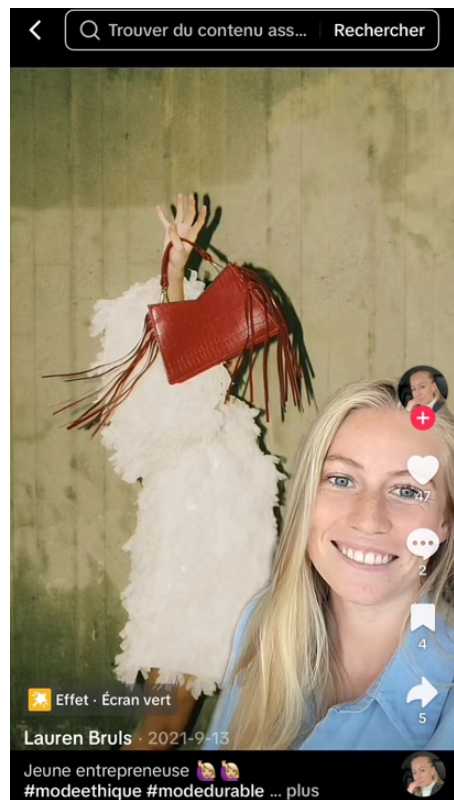
Screenshots of a video posted by @margotymf on Tik Tok



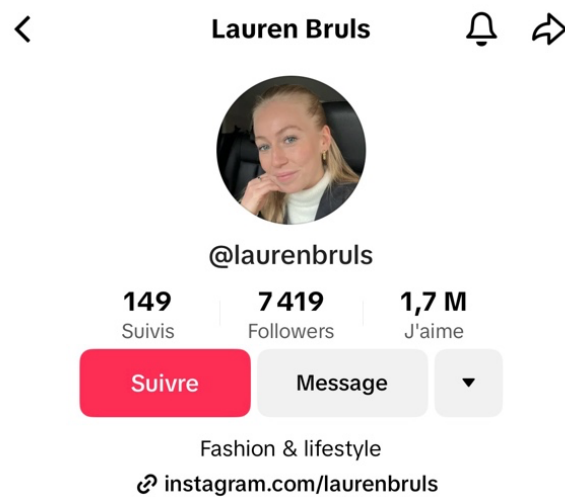
Screenshot of the Tik Tok profile of @margotymf

<https://www.tiktok.com/@margotymf>

Appendix 5: *laurenbruls* content



Screenshots of a video posted by @laurenbruls on Tik Tok



Screenshot of the Tik Tok profile of @laurenbruls
<https://www.tiktok.com/@laurenbruls>

Appendix 6: Transcripts of the 16 participants interviews

Participant number 1 (male, 20 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

At the moment, I'm in my seventh year of technical studies at the Athénée d'Esneux. Next year, I'm going to Australia for a year to have an experience, discover another culture, and most importantly, to learn more about myself. Otherwise, I really like motorsports. I also enjoy paying attention to my style.

b) How do you spend your free time?

In my free time, I spend time with my girlfriend, or I like going out with friends.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

Since my screen time is around 4 to 5 hours a day, I think I easily spend 2 to 3 hours a day on social media.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

The platform I use the most is TikTok. The algorithm makes me addicted. I often feel like going back to it because it shows me the same type of content I've already watched and enjoyed.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Yes, I follow influencers. I usually follow those who post entertaining content. I like learning new things or just watching funny videos to pass the time. I'm thinking about the influencer "Legend". On his profile, there are all kinds of interviews with different guests, and it's super interesting.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Once, the influencer "Anuxem" collaborated with RhinoShield, a brand of durable phone cases. He shared a promo code, and I wanted to order one.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I don't often buy clothes. Sometimes I buy from brands like Carhartt or The North Face. I like to take the time to choose clothes I like. I care about my style, but I try to keep my clothing expenses low.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I try to pick clothes that match my style and that I feel good in. I take my time when choosing, and I don't shop impulsively.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

I'm not a frequent clothing shopper. I buy clothes about three times a year in Roermond, just to get what I need and take advantage of the discounts.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

Yes, I'm definitely sensitive to environmental issues. It's a topic that speaks to me. I try to spend my money thoughtfully and avoid wasting it on useless things. It helps me take care of both the planet and my budget.

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a moment when you really became aware of ecological issues?

I don't have one specific moment that marked me, but all the videos on social media like oceans full of waste or sea animals stuck in plastic bags really touch me. They make you think and encourage you to act in your own small way.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

Yes, I try to reduce my clothing consumption. I limit myself to three purchases per year. I also try to give a second life to clothes that are too small or that I no longer wear, by selling them on Vinted.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

I hear more about sustainability and ecology in general, and less specifically about sustainable fashion. I don't think I'm well informed about it.

- If not (concept explanation)

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

Again, I think of the influencer "Legend." He's really passionate about what he does, you can tell he takes his time and truly cares about the people he interviews. The conversations are smooth and natural. I like social media videos where you learn something new, and I think he does that really well. He naturally builds a sense of trust because you can feel he's genuine.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

I think it depends on the content they've posted before. To truly believe what they're saying, I'd tend to analyze their profile and lifestyle. You can also pick up on clues in how they speak. If for example they seem genuinely affected by the issue and you feel it's a real belief.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

For example, if their lifestyle doesn't match what they're saying. So, if an influencer talks about sustainable fashion but still shops at Zara or similar stores, it wouldn't make sense to me.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

I'd definitely be more cautious. Especially if their profile mainly consists of paid partnerships. I'd tend to think they're only doing it for the money.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If the influencer seems knowledgeable about what they're saying and genuinely believes in their message, I'd be more likely to listen to him.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

Personally, I never shop online. I buy clothes either in Roermond or in stores around here, but that's rare. So, if I can't easily find the product, I simply won't buy it. Also, I'd pay attention to the price. Logically, a sustainable product should be priced higher. If the price is very low, I'd be suspicious about how it was made and the materials used.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

At first glance, she seems very activist. She appears to promote a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. From her facial expression, she seems emotionally affected by the topic. She's an influencer I'd tend to believe. And by quickly checking her Instagram account, I immediately saw some videos about ethical fashion, second-hand clothing, etc., so it all seems consistent.

- b) Chamellow:

Her content is interesting. In both her Instagram and TikTok bios, she shares her convictions like "@nomoreplasticco", "planet lover". However, if we take a closer look at her overall persona, yes, she buys eco-responsibly, but that doesn't necessarily mean she buys less frequently, judging by her photos and so on. So, at first, she seems credible, but it's worth digging deeper...

- c) MargotYMF:

The video itself is cool because she chooses to highlight a responsible brand. The advertising aspect and the fact that it's a paid partnership don't really bother me, because you can immediately see from her bio that she promotes a slow life.

d) LaurenBruls:

At first glance, the idea of creating a sustainable brand is great. But if you look at her lifestyle, it's not really clear how it connects or why she's doing it. It's a good cause, but it doesn't seem to match her Instagram profile and the photos she posts.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, I think influencers play an important role, especially nowadays. They have a wide reach, and if they use it to talk about positive things for the environment, for example it's definitely a plus.

Participant number 2 (male, 23 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm 23 years old. I play football in a provincial team in Beaufays. I'm passionate about golf, whenever I can, I try to go play. I'm studying architecture at the University of Liège in my second year of Master's.

b) How do you spend your free time?

My studies take up quite a bit of time. I also have football practice three times a week. Golf is harder to fit in. I usually play more in the summer when my semester is over. Sometimes I go for a run. I also spend a lot of time seeing my friends. On weekends, I go out. And I see my girlfriend whenever I have free time.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I think I spend too much time on social media. I chat a lot with friends on social media, and I'd say that's what takes up the most time. I use TikTok a lot, especially in the morning when I wake up and in the evening before going to sleep. On my phone, I'm probably around 6 to 7 hours per day. On social media specifically, maybe a bit less, around 5 hours per day.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

It's probably between Snapchat and TikTok. I use Snapchat to talk with people and TikTok more for entertainment and watching funny videos, sometimes also to follow the news.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I mostly follow people who make me laugh. Right now, I'm thinking of Squeezie. So yes, I'd say I mostly follow people for entertainment.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

To date, there are a lot of people advertising their brands on TikTok to gain visibility. One day, I saw an ad of people promoting their mystery box brand for football jerseys. Basically, you buy the box without knowing which football club jersey you'll get. I thought the concept was great, and as I recall, their video really appealed to me. I talked about it to my brother several times, and he ended up offering it to me for my birthday.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I'm definitely looking for unique pieces. When I buy new clothes, I like to take my time to find little gems. I spend time choosing my clothes. But I'm not really an expert. I have a passion for shoes. I have a lot of pairs, all quite original. In the morning, I first choose my shoes, then I adapt my outfit accordingly. I really like dressing well and paying attention to what I wear. I don't have hundreds of clothes, but I think I have a good base.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

Usually, I go shopping when I need clothes... well, "need" is a big word. It's more when I want a change, when it's been a while since I had new clothes. It feels like a need, but really, it's more of a want, because often I could very well do without. When I shop, I try to find "love at first sight" pieces, somewhat original. I like to go off the beaten path, to take a bit of a risk. I'm not really the type to always go for basics without taking risks.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

I don't buy very often. I rarely go shopping, but when I do, I buy several clothes at once. I do this a few times a year, around 4 or 5 times, each time buying in large quantities.

4 Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a moment when you really became aware of ecological issues?

Yes, since I started architecture, I've had a lot of courses about sustainability. I'm pretty exposed to it, so I'm very aware. In general, it's a hot topic people talk about a lot these days. I realized the construction sector consumes a lot, and I think it's cool that we're made aware of this. I'm also doing my thesis on thermal comfort and how to reduce energy consumption in buildings.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I haven't really tried to adapt my consumption habits. I think I have a few ecological items, like some vegan shoes I bought without really knowing. The last pair of shoes I bought was also ecological. It's a small plus, but I must admit it's not what pushed me to buy them. It would be hypocritical to say I chose them for their eco-friendly aspect, even if I'm happy to know that.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of this concept?

I think it's really important. It's good that we're starting to rethink fashion and that some people are trying to change things. I'm not sure fashion is the sector where the most work needs to be done, but in any case, for me, every sector should adopt more sustainable practices.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

When I see that very famous people have foundations or use their money for good causes, and not just for themselves, I'm immediately touched by their personality. It really makes me trust them.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

They need to show some reality. For example, if they talk about a brand, they should take the time to visit it, see how things work, show behind the scenes. For me, if someone takes the time to do that, it clearly shows they're invested and it makes their approach more credible.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If there's a gap between what they say and what they do, it doesn't work. For example, if they promote a sustainable brand but at the same time wear fast fashion or luxury brand clothes, it gives the impression they expect things from us that they don't do themselves. And I wouldn't necessarily want to be inspired by or listen to someone like that.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

If it's for money, it immediately seems less sincere. But it really depends on how they present the brand. If you see they're invested, take the time to talk about it in depth, and yes, they're paid but choose to earn money by talking about something that really matters to them, then that's good. It's not always negative, but money clearly creates some bias.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

Again, it's the way they talk about it and what they do to talk about it. When it's well done, presenting quality content, and you see they gave their time, I'd be more likely to follow what they say because you can see they're genuinely convinced by what they talk about.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

The main factor for me is clearly price. Even if I care about the cause, if I don't have the means, I won't buy sustainable. Spending more on clothes often means making sacrifices elsewhere: going out with friends, eating at a restaurant... Money plays a big role, and I think it's normal, human, to think first about yourself and your budget. Many people might feel they can't act on clothing but can compensate by limiting waste or reducing other consumption.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

I really like that she uses well-known trends to give more visibility to a movement that is still too little known. You can feel that the topic really touches her, that she truly wants to raise awareness. She doesn't seem fake at all; on the contrary, she exudes sincerity that comes through everything she says. Sometimes, it even feels like she's outraged, which makes her message even stronger. The emotions she conveys and the tone she uses immediately give us an idea of her involvement in the topic.

b) Chamellow:

She inspires me a lot of trust. She's already well-known, she's a model... She doesn't necessarily need more visibility, or she could easily get it by talking about other more popular subjects. And precisely, the fact that she chooses to talk about sustainability shows it really matters to her. You can feel she uses her fame sincerely, to get a message across and try to change behaviors.

c) MargotYMF:

I checked out her account, and she seems totally legitimate to collaborate with a sustainable fashion brand. Even if it's paid, she also posts similar content without necessarily being paid, so it doesn't really bother me. Plus, it's great she chose to work with WeDressFair rather than another brand. I'd also like to highlight that she offers a promo code, which is really cool because it lowers the price barrier and makes sustainable fashion more accessible to everyone.

d) LaurenBruls:

The influencer mentions that the bag is "sustainable" and "cruelty-free," yet she does not take the time to explain what these claims actually entail or why they are valid. This lack of elaboration significantly undermines the credibility of her message. Given that sustainable fashion is a highly trending topic, her vague use of such terminology gives the impression of greenwashing. Nowadays, the term "sustainable" can be applied to a wide range of products, but the key question remains: sustainable in what way, exactly?

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

At present, influencer marketing is highly effective, which explains why so many brands rely on influencers to promote their products. Take, for example, AirUp water bottles or Rhinoshield phone cases, without the widespread coverage by influencers, these products likely would not have achieved the same level of popularity. If this strategy works in other industries, there is reason to believe it could also be effective in promoting sustainable fashion, provided that the message conveyed is transparent, consistent, and trustworthy.

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I love sports, I do rowing. I also run a lot. I'm a member of the RCAE club which offers fitness classes. Otherwise, I love going out. I live in a shared apartment, so I often do things with my roommates. I also really enjoy reading when I have more time or watching series.

b) How do you spend your free time?

Now that I no longer live with my parents, chores like cleaning, grocery shopping, and laundry take up a lot of my time. Apart from that, I spend most of my time with my friends. I don't like sitting around doing nothing, so I go out quite often.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I'm on my phone quite a lot. I think I spend about 4 hours a day on average, though it depends on the day. I have little habits, like checking social media as soon as I wake up or before I go to sleep, and I don't really notice the time going by.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I'm almost always on Instagram. I love seeing photos and stories from my friends and keeping up with their lives. I also like the feature where you can see the reels your friends have liked, there are so many relatable or funny videos. I follow a lot of accounts related to general knowledge and current events too, especially since I don't have a TV in my flat. That's how I try to stay informed. Sometimes I also go on Facebook. I use Snapchat mainly to chat with friends and group chats. And I also have BeReal.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I really like Justinaccessible. Her content is very positive, always good vibes. For news, I follow Hugo Decrypte a lot, he's my go-to. I also really like Dalidutilleul. He talks a lot about business, and I find it super interesting. Since I love running, I follow an influencer called Océane. She was recently selected for the New York Marathon, and she launched this really cool concept called the Fastapastaclub I think, it's running clubs in several cities. She shares her training, marathon prep, and lots of stuff from her personal life. And I also follow tons of influencers who cook and share their recipes, since I love cooking.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Definitely with recipes. Since I moved in with roommates, I've been trying more new things. Recently, I was convinced by an influencer to buy an eyelash growth oil, and of course I bought it. I also gave in and bought some makeup removal pads from the LilySkin brand again because of an influencer.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I think my style is quite classic, although you'll rarely see me dressed in black. I like having a bit of color in my outfits. I like looking well-dressed, but I'm also content with what I have. I'm not a shopaholic. I also have a body shape that's a bit harder to dress, so I often struggle to find pieces I really like or jeans that fit me well.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

Let's be honest, with social media you get influenced quickly without realizing it. You might see the same blouse pop up three times and think, "That's nice, maybe I should get one like it." But I'm not someone who follows every new trend. I really don't obsess over it. When I go shopping, it's mostly because I'm missing something like if I've worn the same top for four summers in a row and want a change. That said, when I go out to buy something I actually need, I can easily give in and buy something I don't really need too.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

I'd say I buy clothes around four times a year, and each time I'll buy maybe two or three blouses or jeans.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

b) Can you tell me about a moment when you really became aware of ecological issues?

I'm an engineer in energy and sustainability, so obviously this topic resonates with me. Ever since I was a kid, my parents taught me basic habits like avoiding plastic bottles and using a reusable one, sorting waste, etc. It's impossible not to feel concerned about these problems, especially with recent heatwaves and climate changes. Given my profession, I'm genuinely interested in the subject. I try to consume in a more mindful way day-to-day because I know renewable energy won't solve everything. That said, I still take planes, and I can't be perfect on all fronts.

c) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I've bought from Shein in the past, for example, but after learning about the working conditions and what's going on behind the scenes, I made the decision to never buy from them again because I really can't support the social impact. I also often go to thrift stores instead of big chains like Zara or H&M. My parents aren't into shopping at all, so I never really got into buying things purely for pleasure. I tend to keep my clothes as long as possible and don't replace them very often. I really try not to consume just for the sake of consuming.

d) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of this concept?

Yes, I'm actually quite knowledgeable in the field. After my studies, I did a year at HEC where I worked on a project about sustainable fashion. I met several guest speakers and learned a lot. I also had the opportunity to visit Terre.

It's great to see that fashion is evolving in the right direction, even if sustainable fashion still isn't very well known. We're seeing more and more brands becoming aware and trying to find new ways to move toward sustainability.

For instance, I discovered a company called Le Clothet that offers a clothing rental system, you wear a piece, then send it back so others can use it. I find these sharing-based concepts super interesting.

That project also made me think more critically. I studied Vinted as a case. At first glance, it seems eco-friendly because it's second-hand. But after interviewing several people, I realized many use Vinted just to sell, not necessarily to buy less. In fact, it even encouraged some to buy more because they knew they could sell things later and get money back. So, it's kind of paradoxical, you think you're doing something green, but it sometimes fuels overconsumption.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

- a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

I'd say once again Justinaccessible, the one I mentioned earlier. She has such a radiant personality, and you can really feel that she's genuine and authentic in what she shares. I can't quite explain why, but she's truly inspiring. You can sense how committed she is when she goes live with her followers, so yes, I trust her 100%.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

First, the influencer needs to support what they're saying with concrete examples. Also, it has to be consistent with what they show in their everyday life. That said, I'm not one to blame an influencer who claims to be eco-conscious just because they take a flight once a year. I think that's ridiculous. Nobody's perfect, and people are allowed to live their lives too. Honestly, if everyone did even half of what they do, the world would already be in a much better place. Still, I do expect a minimum level of consistency from the influencer.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

It might be a bit prejudiced to say this, but for me, a person's general attitude says a lot about who they are. We've been immersed in social media for years now, and you start to tell the difference between people who are just hopping on a trend and those who are truly genuine. When I have doubts about an influencer's video, I usually go check their profile, and that's often what confirms or dispels my first impression.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

If the brand they're partnering with aligns with most of the content they usually post, I have no issue with it. On the other hand, if it doesn't match their usual message, then I wouldn't trust them at all.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

For example, I follow a girl on social media who dresses exclusively in thrifted clothes or from Vinted. She helps her followers by giving tips, places to go, or even keywords to type in the Vinted search bar to find a certain style of clothing. That kind of content really influences me because she makes sustainable fashion seem easier and more accessible. Also, showing the behind-the-scenes side of things like going to clothing factories, giving concrete insights into what's really going on. That kind of content really resonates with me.

b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

Mostly the price. Sustainable fashion is still relatively new, and people are used to cheap fast fashion items that are super easy to find and available in thousands of copies. So yes, for me the biggest barrier is the fact that I have to take more time when shopping and spend more money.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

a) Unpeudelou:

I find her really authentic. I don't know how to explain it, but you can tell she's truly concerned about fast fashion and is trying to spark reactions in her audience. Numbers really speak to me, sometimes they're even more powerful than words.

b) Chamellow:

She's super gentle, I love the way she speaks to us. She offers real solutions, and like I said before, that's the most effective and concrete way to encourage people to change. Plus, what she suggests doesn't seem difficult at all, so it makes you want to do the same.

c) MargotYMF:

Since her bio already says "slow life" and her content seems to focus on essentials, I have no problem with it. She promotes a good cause, and that's great. We need more influencers like her to raise awareness about sustainable fashion.

d) LaurenBruls:

I'm a bit torn. Her project is interesting, I won't say otherwise. But she doesn't highlight it enough in her video. She should be proud of it and talk more about it. Also, her account doesn't really reflect a restrained approach to consumption, so it's a bit odd. I'm not sure her commitment is entirely sincere.

8. Conclusion

- a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Definitely. But they really need to pay attention to the way they address their audience. For example, if an influencer just uses guilt to stop people from shopping at Shein, I don't think that's helpful. Some families don't turn to fast fashion by choice, but out of necessity because they simply can't afford anything else. Taking Shein as an example, the best way would be to raise awareness by explaining all the consequences, especially to people who can afford alternatives and show them why the practices there are really appalling.

Participant number 4 (female, 19 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

- a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?
- b) How do you spend your free time?

I'm in my second year of physiotherapy studies. I'm a Cub Scout leader in the Esneux scout group. I occasionally play tennis in my free time. And I like spending time with my friends or going out for drinks on a terrace.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

- a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I do spend quite a lot of time on social media, sometimes without even realizing it or noticing how much time is passing. I mostly use it during my free time. Roughly speaking, I'd say I spend around 4 hours a day on social media.

- d) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

TikTok and Instagram. I find them to be very dynamic platforms. I think it's mostly the video and reel formats that keep me engaged. I always want to scroll to the next video, and I find it hard to stop.

e) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Yes, I follow influencers on social media. I enjoy a bit of everything; I don't have a specific type. It really depends on the moment. One day I might watch funny influencers, another day I'm more into travel influencers.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Yes, recently I tried a recipe that an influencer posted on social media. I've also bought a Neuville bag because an influencer talked about it and I really liked it.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I like taking time to get ready and feel well-dressed when I go out. That said, due to my budget, I try to limit my purchases and mostly buy what I really need, although I do occasionally buy something on a whim. I often shop at small independent boutiques near where I live, to support local businesses and I usually find things I like there.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

It's a mix between needs, budget, and occasional impulses when I really fall in love with something.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

It really depends on my budget. When I'm financially comfortable, I tend to spend more on clothes. Otherwise, I only buy when I'm missing something like if I need a new pair of pants, for example.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

Yes, nowadays we see it everywhere on TV, on social media... so it's hard to ignore it or not feel concerned. Especially for our generation, we're right in the middle of it. So I try to be mindful, like sorting my waste, avoiding plastic packaging and bags whenever possible.

- If yes

e) Can you tell me about a moment when you really became aware of ecological issues?

I think it was when all the youth climate marches and gatherings started happening. That's when I truly realized that we needed to make an effort and change things.

f) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

To be honest, not really. The times when I buy fewer clothes are mostly because I don't have much money. I feel like buying eco-friendly clothes is expensive, and as a student, I just can't really afford it right now.

g) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of this concept?

Yes, I've heard of it. I like the idea of sustainable fashion. I think it's great that some brands are considering the environment and creating durable clothes, especially in today's climate situation. But I also think people still turn to Zara or Shein because it's more affordable. Buying sustainable fashion is still too expensive and not accessible for everyone.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

Léna Situations makes me feel like I can trust her. I like what she shares on social media. Her content is always fresh and full of new ideas. She has a really close relationship with her followers, you can tell she genuinely enjoys making them happy. When she collaborates with a brand, it's usually well thought out and aligns with her values. She promotes products she actually uses in real life, unlike some influencers who just use their audience for money and promote products they've never even tried.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

If they talk about it consistently over time. Not just one video to look good and gain likes or followers, it has to be a real commitment.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If they promote a sustainable lifestyle but are obviously big spenders or don't pay attention to where or how they shop. I wouldn't want to listen to what they say.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

It depends. If the influencer already lives a sustainable lifestyle and is paid by a sustainable brand to advertise, that wouldn't bother me too much. But if their actions contradict what they say, then I'd definitely question their authenticity.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If what they say matches what they do. And they need to be convincing with good arguments, recommendations for alternative brands, and tips or hacks to help us change our habits.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

As I've mentioned before, the price of sustainable clothing is a huge barrier for me. I can be convinced by the benefits of sustainable fashion and still not be able to afford it. But later, when I have a job and income, I would want to make sure I have all the information about a supposedly "sustainable" garment so: how it's made, what materials are used, ... before paying more. I want to be sure of what I'm buying and be fully informed.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

This influencer denounces fast fashion, specifically mentioning Shein in one of her videos. I find her content interesting. The way she raises awareness about the consequences of this production model and workers' conditions really makes me think. It's pretty impactful. She seems genuinely invested in the topic and to really care about the environment and the cause. From the very first glance, she seems authentic and sincere. Browsing her profile only strengthened that impression.

b) Chamellow:

In her videos, this influencer encourages us to consume less, prioritize second-hand shopping, and turn to brands that manufacture in Europe. At first, without looking at her profile, I might have doubted whether her lifestyle matched her message, especially because she's a model, a field often associated with overconsumption. But after reviewing her profile, she seems truly committed to the environmental cause. She also gives lots of tips and advice to help people adopt more sustainable fashion habits. I'd be inclined to trust her and listen to her recommendations because she seems to know what she's talking about.

c) MargotYMF:

The fact that the video is presented as an ad with a promo code doesn't inspire confidence from the start especially when she mentioned the 150 brands available on the website, which sounded suspicious. It almost felt like she was pushing consumption rather than promoting responsible behavior. But after glancing through her profile, she seems like a relatively down-to-earth person, which reassures me about her authenticity and commitment to an eco-friendly brand. She also doesn't seem to be into overconsumption or fast fashion. I might have been tempted to buy what she recommended, after taking the time to check out the website and products myself.

d) LaurenBruls:

Even though she has a sustainable bag brand, on her account she showcases luxury bags she buys from Fendi and Hermès, which aren't sustainable. The fact that she highlights the eco-responsibility of her brand gives me the impression that she's more trying to take advantage of a trend, because consumers are currently more environmentally conscious than before. But alongside her brand, the lifestyle she portrays on social media doesn't necessarily reflect any real concern for the environment. I don't find her very credible. If I had to buy an eco-friendly bag, I wouldn't turn to her brand.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, I think that thanks to their number of followers, they are seen and heard by a lot of people. So if they go about it the right way and offer concrete and feasible solutions, they can have an impact.

Participant number 5 (male, 18 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm in my final year of secondary school at Saint Servais, in the strong sciences track. If everything goes well, I plan to study physiotherapy at university here in Liège. I've also started leading kids' activities at the Patro in Mehagne this year, and I really enjoy it. I also play tennis.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I play tennis once or twice a week. I see my girlfriend several times a week. On Saturdays, I spend the whole day at the Patro in Mehagne. When I'm at home, I watch videos on my computer or series on Netflix.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I'd say I spend about 3 to 4 hours per day. I get bored of reels and short video formats quite quickly. I prefer watching long videos on YouTube, so I'd say I use YouTube more. I use Instagram more for communication.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I mainly use Instagram. For posts and stories. I don't often watch reels because I get bored of them quickly. I prefer watching longer video formats, like on YouTube or something.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I mostly follow rappers and YouTubers on Instagram. One I really like is la Routine. He tests brands and their products, and I really like that concept. He also does small challenges, and sometimes I get inspiration from what he does.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

I don't think so. As I said before, I sometimes get inspired or get ideas. But I've never changed the way I do things because an influencer said so, or bought a product just because they promoted it. I usually buy things based on my own tastes.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

Honestly, I think it does play a certain role. Not in a negative way. I'm not going to follow every new trend and think, "I must buy what's trendy now." I prefer sticking to my own style. And if one day I want to try something new and explore other styles, I'll do it, not because it's trendy, but because I feel like it.

- d) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I've always been shocked by how expensive really simple clothes can be. For example, my brother recently bought black and white Asics for €270. I think that's ridiculous. For me, the price isn't justified, and I prefer going for more affordable basics. The amount I spend on clothes or shoes has to be justified. I might spend more on certain pieces, but only if they feel special to me. I really buy based on what I like and the ideas I have in mind when it comes to style.

- e) How often do you buy clothes?

It depends. For example, if I have my eye on a pair of pants from a certain store, I'll wait for a promotion or special offer before buying them. It really depends on the opportunity and any discounts brands might offer. On average, I think I buy something once every two months.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

To be honest, I don't feel directly concerned. I don't think I'm the person who's going to save the world by shopping at thrift stores or sewing my clothes. If everyone did it, it'd be great, but I think there are

still too many people who care more about money than the environment. To me, society isn't ready to fully embrace eco-friendly habits...

b) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I boycotted Shein because I'm well aware of the working conditions there. But otherwise, not really. The problem is that when you try to go for better-quality brands with longer-lasting clothes, the prices immediately shoot up. And right now, I'm not ready to spend that kind of money on clothes. Plus, I don't always understand why the price gap is so huge. It's often so extreme that it doesn't even seem justified.

c) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If no (explanation)

I wasn't really aware of that concept. Actually, without realizing it, I was already kind of into sustainable fashion because I like going to thrift stores and finding unique, vintage pieces. But honestly, it was more for the style than for environmental reasons. Still, I think platforms like Vinted and thrift stores are good for the environment, and it's great that they exist. Maybe if we were better informed, we'd be more likely to choose sustainable brands.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

There's a YouTuber who tells all kinds of stories, documentaries, etc. In general, when I come across content where I can tell the person took time to research, I feel confident. You can tell he's passionate about what he talks about, and that these are subjects he's really studied before sharing them in his own way.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

They'd have to really know what they're talking about, be involved in it, and be able to give small tips about thrift stores and that kind of thing. But above all, they have to practice what they preach in their videos. Because if someone talks about sustainability but is dressed head-to-toe in Gucci, for example, they'd instantly lose all credibility.

c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If they're talking about sustainable fashion, the first thing I'd do is look at how they dress. I think that already gives you a few clues about their credibility.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

Yes, because supporting those brands should come from a personal desire, a genuine initiative. I'd be much more okay with a brand gifting the product to the influencer and them talking about it afterward, rather than knowing they were paid to do it. As soon as money is involved, it becomes hard to tell what their real motivations are.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If I were an influencer, I'd try to create a shock effect by proving to people that their current consumption habits are harmful with stats or concrete examples. I'd talk more about fast fashion and expose the facts.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

For me, the main reason is that it's too expensive. It's really a shame that the brands offering this kind of clothing are always out of budget, it makes them less accessible. I think if prices were better, more people would be tempted to go for sustainable options. And of course, if the influencer recommends something that doesn't appeal to me or match my taste, I'm not going to buy it just because it's sustainable. Like, I'm not going to wear pants I don't like just to save the planet.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

So, I've already had to do a project on Shein's production methods, etc. In my work, I pointed out that concrete figures are hard to find and that these big companies purposely make things abstract so that consumers don't necessarily realize what's really going on. So I wonder a bit where she got her information from and whether she took the time before publishing those figures to check their reliability. I'm not saying what she says is false, because it does seem close to reality. But the problem is she shares information without us knowing the source. If she had provided sources, I'd be 100%

convinced by what she said. I wouldn't say I'm suspicious either, because it's clear she's doing this with good intentions.

b) Chamellow:

I have a small comment about the comparison between the two videos. In the first one, she's being interviewed and it feels more formal. In the second, you can tell it's all her. She did the editing, the creative work, everything. I'd say the second video had more impact on me because we feel closer to her; we see her at home, doing the things she's talking about. And I find that more authentic. Otherwise, yes, clearly, she seems really engaged in what she's doing, and I totally trust her.

c) MargotYMF:

It's a shame there's an ad. It kind of loses its charm because, without knowing her or her lifestyle, money casts doubt. But then again, looking at her profile, you can tell she's a pretty simple person in her everyday life and not just doing things for views. I don't think she should be blamed for accepting a paid partnership. A lot of people would have accepted it, and maybe being an influencer is her only job, so she has to earn a living somehow. What she promotes is still what she applies in her daily life, so in this context, money isn't really an issue.

d) LaurenBruls:

Her lifestyle doesn't match at all with her brand attempt. She's really the typical example proving that before listening to what people say, you have to check what they actually do. She has no credibility in my eyes.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, influencers can have an impact. The issue is that this impact can go both ways if they don't do things properly or the message isn't well received. Influencers need to know how to approach the adults of tomorrow. I think the fact that they show their lifestyles and show that they're affected too can have a big influence.

Participant number 6 (male, 22 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm studying physical education at Beeckman. I'm 22 years old. I'd say my main interests are sports, especially football. I love everything related to competitive sports. I also really like cycling and tennis, and I've recently gotten into the NBA, American basketball, although it's a bit tricky because the games are often at night. I come from a big family, I have two sisters and a brother, and my parents are still together.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I spend it doing sports. I often go running. I used to play football, I stopped during this past year, but I definitely plan on starting again next year. Usually, I have two training sessions a week and a match on the weekend, so that already takes up a big part of my time. I also have my studies. I have a girlfriend I see regularly and I hang out with my friends whenever I can.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I use social media every day. I wouldn't be surprised if I spend one to two hours a day on various platforms.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I'd say the one I use the most is Instagram. It's my favorite app because that's where I see the pictures my friends share. But I also follow the news there through accounts like Quotidien, Hugo Décrypte, Loopsider... I also follow a lot of sports news on that platform through athlete accounts or sports journalists I enjoy watching. Then there's the fun side of things with the Reels that really make me laugh.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

For news-related content, I like Quotidien, Hugo Décrypte, and Loopsider. For entertainment, I mostly follow YouTubers like Squeezie, Mister V, Inoxtag, Seb la Frite on Instagram. And like I mentioned before, I follow a lot of people who talk about sports.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

I wouldn't say I've been directly influenced by product placements or things they've promoted. Sometimes I'm inspired by them regarding their style, the way they dress and that makes me want to buy something, even if they haven't actually talked about it.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I'm someone who enjoys observing fashion, seeing what people do... But when it comes to fashion, I wouldn't say I'm super involved. That doesn't mean I don't care about how I look or what I wear, but I'm not addicted to clothes, I don't spend time getting ready or picking outfits. It's not a priority in my life. I'm also not chasing the latest trends. And since I'm finishing my studies and haven't started working yet, I don't have a lot of money to spend on clothes... I clearly prefer spending my money on other things.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

If I go shopping, it's because I need new clothes. If I don't need anything, I'd never go shopping just for fun.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

I think I buy clothes twice a year. To give you an idea, when I do go shopping, I might get two pairs of pants, two t-shirts, and a sweater. As for shoes, I think I buy one or two pairs a year.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?
- If yes

- (i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Yes, of course I'm concerned. I really became aware of it as I grew older and started hearing on TV and in the media that the planet wasn't doing well, that we're experiencing global warming... Then, during high school, we participated in big climate marches and demonstrations, and that's when it really hit me that we shouldn't just think about ourselves but also about nature.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

Since I'm not a big fashion consumer, I've never really paid attention to that. Unfortunately, when I buy clothes, I usually go for big brands, and I know that's not ideal. But in the future, I'd like to think more about fashion and maybe turn to something more eco-responsible. Outside of fashion though, I always try to do basic but essential things in my daily life like turning off lights when I leave a room, not letting water run unnecessarily, sorting my waste, respecting nature...

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- *If yes*

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

I think it's great because fashion is still a pretty polluting industry. When you realize that some jeans travel around the world before landing in a store or that some clothes are made with toxic substances that pollute the earth, I think it's great that some brands are trying to be more local, stay within Europe, etc.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

There's a duo of influencers called *McFly and Carlito*. They've always been honest and transparent with their audience. They've done podcasts, for example, where they explain how they work with brands. I know they don't accept just anyone simply because they're offered money. They're careful to choose products they genuinely like and that align with the ethics of their channel and their values.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

I'll go back to McFly and Carlito. They're human, they've already taken the plane before, etc., and they're not perfect or the ultimate role models in terms of sustainability. But when they talk about it, I find them credible. Among all their projects, they've addressed ecology many times and invested themselves in it, even if it's not the core concept of their channel. They've even done a personal carbon footprint assessment with a well-known ecology expert, invited someone to their channel to

share solutions for a more eco-friendly lifestyle, introduced reusable bottles on set, and banned plastic... So they try to integrate this into their work seriously and not just to make money off ecology. You can really tell they're trying to improve and change things using their influence.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

To me, if you want to be sustainable, you can't promote an eco-friendly product one day and then fly around the world the next, or consume products harmful to the planet... If you want to promote sustainable products or behaviors, you can't just talk about it, you have to live it out in your lifestyle.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

Well, if you're promoting a product that brings in money for a brand, it's normal that you get paid too. But to keep the authenticity, you shouldn't choose to promote a sustainable brand just for the money. It should be because it aligns with your values and things you care about.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

For example, if the influencer partners with an eco-friendly brand, they should do a real project with them, show the behind-the-scenes, how the company works, the production processes, the materials used... Basically, the influencer should back up what they're saying with evidence. I'm sure that would have a much bigger impact on me. Also, influencers who highlight shocking facts and call out things that are wrong in society, that has a huge impact on me and my behavior too, as long as it's backed by facts and evidence.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

At the moment, it's mainly the price. These processes are naturally much more expensive, and that gets reflected in the final price. I still can't afford to spend that kind of money on clothes.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

Based on her profile, she really seems committed to everything eco-responsible. The video where she exposes Shein is great. It helps show young people that Shein is one of the worst in terms of environmental impact and human working conditions. I really like what she offers. You can see it's a genuine conviction, and she does it of her own free will because she truly cares.

- b) Chamellow:

She's a very positive influencer for young people. She offers content with attractive and captivating visuals, which helps draw even more attention. I like the way she speaks and the fact that she tries to provide solutions. Her profile aligns perfectly with what she says. For example, I saw a video where she chose to travel to Marrakech by train instead of flying. She helps dispel the initial impression people have of sustainable fashion, that using it means you can't look good or dress well.

c) MargotYMF:

She collaborates with a brand, but that doesn't bother me at all because it's a positive partnership. I'd rather she promote that than Zara, for instance. It doesn't shock me that she earns money from it because it's for a good cause, and only through this kind of approach will eco-responsible brands gain visibility and be adopted by more and more people.

d) LaurenBruls:

Her initiative is good, but if I wanted to buy her bag because it's sustainable, I wouldn't be able to because she doesn't provide enough information. Later, I checked out her account and it's full of trips around the world, luxury brands, luxury hotels, etc. In short, she clearly doesn't put ecology at the center of her concerns, so her choice of an eco-responsible bag raises doubts for me and really makes me think of greenwashing.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Absolutely. Nowadays, influencers have enormous communication power over young people. Thanks to their younger audience, they can explain in their own words and with approaches more suited to the younger generation than TV or the news what ecology and sustainability are, and why we should embrace that way of life.

Participant number 7 (male, 19 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I started studying physical education at university, but after my first exam session, I realized it wasn't really for me. So I'd like to switch to architecture studies at the beginning of next year. I play basketball in Ninane. I'm also a youth group leader in Ninane for the "Baladins" section, which is for kids aged 5 to 8.

c) How do you spend your free time?

I spend a lot of time playing basketball. I have four training sessions a week, so that takes up quite a big chunk of my time. On Saturdays, I'm at the scouts all day, and I also spend a lot of time with my girlfriend whenever I can.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I use social media either to talk to my friends, to follow the news and stay updated, or just to entertain myself. I think I easily spend around three to four hours a day on social media.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I'd say for entertainment, I mostly use TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. And to talk with my friends, it's mainly Snapchat

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I really like a basketball player who makes sort of documentary-style content about his life, his training, and his daily routine. I often watch his stories and videos. His name is Elijah Bryant. And obviously, since I'm passionate about basketball, I find it super interesting.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

I think I've often been influenced by influencers sharing recipes that made me want to try them. I save them and, whenever I get the chance, I try them out with my girlfriend. Also, I get a lot of inspiration from what influencers wear, it gives me ideas. Sometimes I copy their style a bit.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

Fashion doesn't take up a big place in my life. I don't follow trends at all costs. I dress simply. When I go shopping, I usually just pick something I like. I don't have five pairs of sneakers or anything. I usually just have one pair for the whole year. So yeah, I'd say fashion isn't a big part of my life.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

Really just based on my personal taste. I'm not chasing new trends. My style is more simple and timeless. I'm not looking for unique or extravagant pieces. I usually go for clothes that match with everything, because I don't have a big wardrobe.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

Either I shop because I no longer have a certain item, or before, because things didn't fit anymore. Or when I get a bit of money for my birthday or something, then I treat myself in a shop I like. But overall, I don't think I shop very often compared to the average person.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Honestly, I don't feel particularly concerned. Maybe because I don't really pay attention to that kind of stuff. It's not that I don't care, but I don't think that even if I fully committed or went to a protest, it would really change anything. Like most people, I hope: I sort my trash, I try to be mindful of consumption. But I wouldn't say I'm fully engaged in the cause. For me, it's more up to authorities, they're the ones who can actually make a difference.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I'd say more for ethical reasons. I prefer shopping at independent stores. I would never buy from Zara, Shein, etc. I know why the prices are so low and I don't want to be part of encouraging that system.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- *If not (explanation)*

Actually, I didn't know about the concept at all. If I've ever bought something in that spirit, I didn't even realize it. I'm really not well informed, so it's hard to say how I perceive sustainable fashion, even if it seems like a good thing at first glance.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

- a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

There's one person I mainly watch for entertainment, his name is Gartin59. He's super funny, really down-to-earth, doesn't take himself too seriously, and stays true to himself. You can see that he genuinely enjoys what he does and isn't chasing trends or trying to go viral.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

For me, they'd be credible if they were well informed on the topic. It would be even better if they showed behind-the-scenes content from a sustainable fashion brand, really invested in showing the benefits like going to the shop or even the production site. And of course, they'd have to walk the talk, not have a profile that screams overconsumption.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If they just made one video like that, never talked about it again, and it didn't match their usual content. I'd immediately think they're doing it to attract followers who care about the environment, rather than because they're genuinely invested in the topic.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

If the person is already committed to sustainable fashion and they occasionally get paid by brands to promote them, I personally don't mind. That said, it loses a bit of its charm, because you're supposed to do it out of conviction, not financial motivation.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

The influencer would need to bring the topic to life, be informed, show the company, the manufacturing process, what materials are used... That really helps put things into context, illustrates it, helps us understand what's going on, and can make us want to try sustainable fashion.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

The price. If I find a similar product, maybe not exactly the same quality, but two or three times cheaper, I'd go for the cheaper one. And also, if it's hard to find the product, that could be a factor. So yeah, I'd say price and accessibility are the biggest barriers.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

I don't see why she would lie to us about that. We know what Shein represents. So, yeah, I trust her. I think this kind of communication is really good, it can actually make people realize things with concrete figures, and it's likely to raise awareness for some..

- b) Chamellow:

We can clearly tell she's someone who fights for the environment. She really invites us to get to know her lifestyle, to realize that it's accessible to everyone, and the fact that she explains how to do it makes her video even more effective. She doesn't just talk about sustainable fashion. By giving small tips, she helps people make changes and take action right away.

- c) MargotYMF:

Usually, when I see an ad on TikTok or an Instagram video, I skip it immediately. I think it's a shame that there's the advertising aspect, because if everyone reacts like I do, she loses visibility for the brand. And what she's offering is actually really great, if she had done it without getting paid, it would have instantly been seen as something genuine that she truly believes in.

- d) LaurenBruls:

There's no proof that her bag is actually eco-friendly. When you look at her profile, you see that in her everyday life she buys luxury stuff and lives a lifestyle that's not eco-responsible at all. I absolutely

don't trust her. I just see someone who wants to make money and is selling her brand like that, even though we have no idea how the bags are made, or where. Personally, I would never buy that bag.

8. Conclusion

- a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, they can really play a role. A lot of people follow influencers and want to do the same things as them. Not just in fashion, but in every area. If it's presented well, I think they could really influence a lot of people.

Participant number 8 (female, 27 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

- a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm 27 years old and I work as a primary school teacher. I studied teaching at HELMO and then completed a Master's degree at the University of Liège. I've been working for three years now and I really love what I do, even though it's always a bit complicated to find your place in schools when you first start. But since this year, I've finally found a full-time position. My job takes up a lot of my free time with corrections and lesson planning, but I usually try to get everything done during the week after work so I can keep my weekends free and do things I enjoy. As for hobbies, I take padel classes with a group of friends and this year we signed up for a tournament.

- b) How do you spend your free time?

I spend a lot of my free time on social media, watching series, spending time with my boyfriend and friends. I go to group fitness classes at the gym, and I also love reading whenever I get the chance. Usually, when I have less work from school, I like to go out and take walks, eat out, have a drink in the city, go shopping, etc.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

- a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I think I spend a lot of time on social media, sometimes even too much. My screen time is probably around 2 to 3 hours per day. I often have the reflex to grab my phone as soon as I have a free moment, whether it's to reply to messages or just scroll through my feed. But when I'm busy with work or spending time with friends, I can go without social media for the whole day quite easily.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I mostly use Instagram and TikTok for entertainment, and Messenger to chat with friends. TikTok helps me disconnect from reality and think about something else for a few minutes. The short videos tailored to my interests make it quite addictive. I also follow a lot of teacher accounts that share tips, ideas, and experiences. And I mainly use Instagram to follow my friends' posts and some influencers.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I mainly follow women. The type of content I watch the most includes lifestyle videos like vlogs, clothing hauls, product reviews and recommendations. I also like following people who share recipes. And when I'm on TikTok, I love watching funny videos.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Yes, it has happened to me several times. For some purchases, if an influencer speaks positively about a product and I see several other positive reviews, I end up giving it a try. In general, I don't get influenced right away, I wait until I've seen multiple opinions before deciding. I don't rely on just one person, but that person can still have a significant impact on me. In terms of behaviors, I think social media can influence me or at least make me reflect, especially when it comes to sensitive topics like injustice, environmental issues, or global conflicts. Often, it raises my awareness and makes me think. And again, food. I love finding new recipe ideas to break out of my daily routine. I often watch videos about healthy and varied eating, and it usually inspires me to adapt my habits.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I love fashion. If I could, I would go shopping every week. I'm aware of the environmental impact, but I must admit I don't always take it into consideration. Most often, it's my budget that limits my

purchases. Being able to dress how I like is a real pleasure for me. On special occasions, I mostly receive clothes as gifts because people know how much I love them.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I choose based on my personal tastes. I don't follow trends just because they're in style, I only do so if I genuinely like them. I like to take my time and pick out what I think is nice, try things on, and choose what suits me while staying within my budget. I'm not a big fan of online shopping because I feel like the products often don't match the pictures, and above all, because I can't try them on beforehand.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

I don't have a specific shopping frequency. It really depends on my schedule and upcoming occasions, but I'd say about once a month or every two months.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Yes, I've been struck by videos showing working conditions in fast fashion factories, or reports about the massive amount of clothing thrown away each year, or the average number of items people buy. These kinds of statistics always make me reflect and question my consumption habits.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I did order from Shein once, but I quickly stopped after learning about their working conditions. Since then, I've tried to raise awareness around me, I often tell my mom not to order from that site anymore. But I know Shein is just one example among many, and to be honest, faced with how big the problem is, I don't always do much else in my daily life. For instance, I still shop at Zara even though I know it's probably not great either.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

I don't think I'm familiar with this concept. I only know about thrift shops and Vinted, but I can't really get into it. I still find it hard to wear clothes that belonged to people I don't know. Plus, I feel like eco-friendly clothes are often less attractive or fashionable. That's a barrier for me, even though I understand the ecological and economic value of these alternatives. If sustainable fashion involves more than just these two options, then I'm not informed enough.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

- a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

I don't have a specific example in mind, but in general, I feel more confident with influencers who remain authentic and close to their followers. I appreciate those who don't try to go viral at any cost or chase views, but who prefer to stay true to themselves, share what really matters to them, and express themselves sincerely.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

I would consider the influencer credible if they genuinely advocate for sustainable fashion regularly and consistently. You can usually tell through the content they share, their choice of collaborations, and the values they highlight on their profile. It's important to me that their commitment feels authentic and is part of their personal universe.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

I might feel skeptical about an influencer who mentions sustainable fashion in just one story or post while their behavior doesn't align with their message. For instance, if they keep promoting fast fashion brands or frequently indulge in impulsive shopping, it calls their sincerity into question.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

If they had never mentioned sustainable fashion before and suddenly did a partnership with such a brand, I'd feel like they're only doing it for the money and not out of true belief. That said, maybe it's the beginning of something, and I'd want to see whether they genuinely engage with it in the future.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

What could convince me is if the influencer tries to break down the barriers that often stop people from embracing sustainable fashion. For example, by offering affordable alternatives or showing that sustainable clothes can also be trendy. If their recommendations reflect real consumer constraints, I'd be more likely to take an interest. Because right now, sustainable fashion still feels more like an ideal.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

Mainly the price. Even though I have a job and a stable income, it can still be hard to pay a high price for clothes.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

I prefer to react directly after each video so as not to forget anything

- a) Video 1:

This doesn't surprise me at all. I've already seen several videos and articles about Shein on social media. That's actually why I no longer order from the site and even try to dissuade my family from doing so. In my opinion, shocking facts are the most impactful and make people think more when they see the consequences of their actions. I think her approach is the right one to make people realize their consumption habits.

- b) Video 2:

I didn't know this person, but I think it's cool that she uses trends to talk about fast fashion. I was already aware of the impacts, but I don't really know much about the alternatives and haven't really tried to learn more. I think, in the end, we go for convenience, and I probably would have watched the video without it actually changing my daily habits.

- c) Video 3:

I found the video super approachable. It downplays the effort required, in a good way. It shows that even doing a little can make a difference, so it feels more achievable and not so demanding. It's a short video that informs us on what and how to do things. Also, small detail, but the girl's voice is soft and pleasant, which makes you want to listen.

- d) Video 4:

I love the concept of short, informative capsules packed with relevant info. The dynamic editing makes it more engaging. You can tell she integrates this into her daily life. She doesn't just say things, she shows concrete examples, which makes her instantly more credible.

e) Video 5:

I think having a promo code can encourage people to try something new, especially if they didn't know the brand or thought it was too expensive. Also, she shows trendy pieces, so it helps debunk the idea that sustainable fashion is less stylish. I looked at her profile and saw that she shares all kinds of content cooking, vlogs, tips... and that she has other posts about sustainable fashion and environmental topics. So this is a good example of someone who, even when paid, stays true to the kind of content she would create anyway. That doesn't bother me at all.

f) Video 6:

I think the idea of promoting this bag is nice. But the way it's presented in the video didn't really appeal to me. She doesn't explain much, so we don't know many details about the bags. It would be hard for me to take action without more information. She could be saying anything, and I wouldn't know if it's true.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, I believe influencers can have a real impact in promoting sustainable fashion. Nowadays, it's clear that they have a strong influence on their communities, especially on young people who are very active on social media. To reach younger generations, at least in my case, social media has a much greater impact on me than traditional advertising, like what we see on TV or in the streets. If an engaged influencer regularly and sincerely shares tips, ethical brands, or sustainable alternatives, I think it can really encourage people to change their consumption habits as they're given the tools to do so.

Participant number 9 (female, 17 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm in my fifth year of secondary school at the Athénée de Chénée. Later, I'd like to study physiotherapy at university. I don't really do sports at the moment because I'm injured, but otherwise I dance, and I used to do a lot of gymnastics and competitions.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I work for school. I read. I'm often on Netflix. Normally, I do sports, but right now I can't, and on weekends I usually see friends, we try to go out a bit, have a drink or something.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I think I spend around 3 hours a day on average, but sometimes more, sometimes less. It really depends on the day and what I'm doing.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I mostly use TikTok and Instagram for entertainment because I think I'm kind of addicted to short videos that you can scroll through quickly. And I use Snapchat to talk with my friends.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Right now, I like influencers who share their daily routines. They talk about balanced diets, show their workouts, etc. I like that because they have a healthy lifestyle and it makes me want to follow their example and apply it to myself.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Yes, definitely. The videos I'm watching at the moment have changed the way I eat a bit. For example, I've stopped eating cereal in the morning. I try to eat healthier and I recreate some of the healthier recipes I've seen on TikTok and such. But I don't think I've actually bought something just

because an influencer talked about it. Maybe I added it to a cart and then never checked out. At least not that I remember.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I don't shop a lot. I'm very indecisive. Even if I see something I like, I'll often hesitate thinking I might find something better elsewhere. I don't like wasting money and it's happened way too often that I bought something, regretted it, and only wore it once or twice before leaving it in my wardrobe. Since I have less and less money to spend on clothes, I've become more careful. So yes, I'd say I like dressing up and choosing clothes I like, for sure, but my budget is limiting.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I get a lot of inspiration from Instagram, TikTok or Pinterest. Sometimes I see an outfit I like in a post and then I try to find something similar in stores to recreate it. When I do go shopping, I only buy something if I really love it and it catches my eye. I'd never spend money on branded clothes especially not simple items that just have a visible logo like Isabel Marant or Stone Island. Also, I think I don't always shop in the "right" places. I usually go to big chains like Zara or Bershka, because other brands have become too expensive for me. As a student, I don't really see another alternative right now.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

Throughout the year, I treat myself to shopping days when I get money for my birthday or Christmas. So I'd say it's occasional, because most of the time I just don't have the budget for it.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

I don't think I'm as concerned about these problems as I should be. Sometimes I think that my small actions won't change much but at the same time, if everyone thinks that way, nothing will change.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

It's hard given my budget to prioritize better-quality brands with higher prices. I try to turn to small boutiques with affordable prices that not everyone knows about, like Les Copines d'Après or Rimbaldienne, to avoid big chains like Zara or Bershka... and I can still find some nice pieces there that aren't too expensive. In general, I'm not an impulsive shopper and, as I said, I don't buy very often. I also try to shop on Vinted. I think it's a great alternative. It gives clothes a second life and lets you get them for cheaper prices too.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- *If yes*

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

Yes, I've heard about it. I feel like it's becoming trendy again. We realize there's a huge gap between now and back in the day. We really notice the difference with our grandparents' generation. Their clothes were better quality and lasted longer. Today, it's much harder to find that. I think it's cool that there's a return to something more ethical and ecological. I've already tried to shop in thrift stores, but I don't always find things I like because the selection is limited. I do use Vinted too.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

There's a young couple who bought an old school and are renovating it to turn it into their home. We really get to see the whole renovation process, the behind-the-scenes, and a bit of their daily life. There's also another sporty couple who run and are training for the Paris marathon. Same idea, they share their journey, physical training... They're really open about their struggles and small victories, and that naturally makes you feel closer to them and builds trust.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

They would need to show that their lifestyle matches what they say. That we can see it in their other videos, the type of clothes they wear, etc. And that it's not just to look like a good person and gain views and likes. Basically, we need to feel that they genuinely care and that it really affects them.

c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If an influencer suddenly starts talking about sustainable fashion and it's completely different from the type of content they usually post, I'd instantly be suspicious. It's not necessarily a bad thing to explore a new topic, but I don't know why, I'd be more doubtful.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

Automatically, I'd be more wary. I'd tend to think they might be doing it just for the money. I'd be more open to it though if I can see that their content is aligned with sustainable fashion. And even if they are paid, they're still promoting a brand that has a positive impact on the planet. So paid or not, it's still a good thing.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

I think there are a lot of barriers. So influencers should find a way to show us that living sustainably is possible and that we can still be stylish and well-dressed even if we shop in thrift stores or on Vinted, for example. And they should also show us how to go about it.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

Honestly, mainly the price. Even though I'm convinced of the benefits of sustainable fashion, price is the biggest barrier. I think about my sister and the younger generation just starting out in adult life with rent, inflation, and all the daily expenses, they can't always afford to spend more on clothes. So, it's easier to turn to the cheapest options, like fast fashion. I think all of that makes access to sustainable fashion more difficult.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

She really inspires confidence. In her bio, it says "ethical fashion", so the first impression we get of her clearly tells us what she cares about. She speaks out with facts, one of her videos even includes statistics, what she says seems real and aligns with what we often hear about Shein, for example. I know that on TikTok, videos have to be over a minute long to be monetized. The first video, for instance, was very short and didn't go over a minute, so I tell myself she's not doing this for the money but rather out of passion and commitment. As for her clothes, she doesn't seem to wear stuff you see everywhere like Zara, it looks like a pretty original piece that she may have bought in a store that's mindful of its practices.

b) Chamellow:

I think the concept is great. She really gives useful tips that we can apply ourselves without needing to make a big effort. For example, when she talks about washing clothes, it's a simple tip accessible to everyone. You can tell she knows the topic and that it's something she practices in her own life. It really makes me want to believe her and even follow her. And just by looking at her bio "planet lover" and her profile, you can see she's truly into sustainable fashion in her daily life.

c) MargotYMF:

I think she was contacted by the brand specifically because of her usual content. I checked out her profile, and she even highlighted a section on ecology. There were 16 videos in that section; I saw that she even visited a factory. She's really involved, and the partnership with the brand makes sense. The money and advertising always make me a bit suspicious, that's why I went to look at her profile right away, sometimes you wonder if they really mean what they say or if they're just doing it for the money. But after seeing her profile, I had no more doubts.

d) LaurenBruls:

At first glance, the initiative seems nice. But then, she barely emphasizes the sustainable aspect, she only mentions it very briefly. That's strange because if it's something important to her, she could talk about it more and really highlight it. On her profile, she seems to live in overconsumption, which confirms my doubts. Honestly, she doesn't really inspire trust in me.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

I think so. The positive thing about influencers is that they can spread messages and reach a lot of people. But it has to be done the right way. Offering real alternatives and actual tips is, for me, the most effective way. Another super important thing is that they should practice what they preach. That seems essential to me if they want people to follow what they say, otherwise it all loses meaning.

Participant number 10 (male, 22 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm currently in secondary school at Waha in Liège, in the 4th year. I enjoy hanging out with my friends. I love riding electric bike, I often borrow my dad's bike. I'm quite a fan of video games and comic books. In terms of sports, I've been playing tennis for about 3 or 4 years now. And otherwise, I really enjoy spending time with my family.

b) How do you spend your free time?

At home, I often play PlayStation with my brother or with friends online. I read books, well, mostly comic books. I also scroll through social media. And I try to see my friends whenever I can.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I mostly use social media to pass the time when I don't have anything better to do. I probably spend a maximum of 2 hours a day, no more. Not long ago, I actually set a screen time limit of 2 hours a day on my phone to force myself to cut back and not spend too much time on it. Now I'd say I can do without it, and I try to occupy myself with other things.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Mainly TikTok because I can watch entertaining videos, trends, and see what's popular. On Instagram, I mostly look at the news. On YouTube, I just scroll through the shorts or watch longer videos from some gamers or creators.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I mostly watch entertaining content. For example, I really like Greg Guillotin. He does hidden camera pranks, and I love it—he just released a new video, and I still enjoy it as much. I also watch "MrBeast" not sure if you know him, he's an American influencer with 300 million subscribers. I also enjoy French YouTubers like Mishu and Inoxtag. They make me laugh a lot, and I genuinely have a good time watching them. Other than that, I like following influencers who talk about current events on Instagram. It helps me stay informed since I'm not someone who watches TV or reads the news much. I really like Hugo Décrypte, he's great for following the news. There's also the Brut account. And I also enjoy watching Legend's content, which covers all kinds of topics.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Definitely. For example, Inoxtag made a documentary about climbing Mount Everest, you've probably heard about it. In the video, he said things that really touched and impacted me. After that, I felt inspired to do something incredible in my life too, to challenge myself. After thinking about it, I decided that one day I'd like to do something like biking around France, but that's for later, in a few years.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I don't necessarily follow all the fashion trends that change all the time. I'm more into big fashion shifts that stick around longer. For example, a few years ago slim jeans were in, now it's more about wide-legged pants and that's the kind of trend I follow. Also, no matter the trend, I pick what I personally like. If I find a trend ridiculous or not to my taste, I'm not going to follow it just to be "trendy." But overall, I'd say fashion is still important to me. I think in a way it creates identity and reflects your personality. And the way you dress is also the first impression you give people, so yeah, I'd say it matters to me.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

Like I said, I try to follow big trends and choose things I like. I'm not the type of guy with a huge wardrobe. I don't need tons of pants or T-shirts in every color. When I'm missing something, I go on Vinted and try to find clothes I like. Sometimes after events like Christmas, I get small budgets to treat myself, and then I'll set aside a day to go shopping in stores like Nike or Levis and pick things that really catch my eye.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

I don't shop all the time, just occasionally. It really depends on the time of my life. Over the past two years, my body shape and style have changed a lot, so I've had to buy more clothes. For shoes, I'd say I now get about 3 pairs per year. And in terms of clothing, I probably get one or two new pieces per month.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

It worries me a lot, especially with everything that's been happening recently. Ever since we were little, we've been told things like "turn off the lights" or "don't leave the heating on for no reason." And then you see in the news that Katy Perry is going to space and consuming what a French person would in a lifetime. I wonder where the world is going. There was no need for her to go to space, but she did it without thinking of the consequences. To me, everyone needs to rethink their actions. Trump recently pulled out of COP29, and honestly, it feels like we've been going backward these past few months. That's why I'm worried for the future. If we keep going like this, I don't think we'll last another 200 years.

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

People have been talking to me about it since I was a kid. We learned about it in school, it's on the news, in documentaries, and on social media. I see it everywhere. But now that I'm more mature, I really understand how serious and worrying it is. Especially since in the last few years, things have been changing—and not always in a good way, like I mentioned earlier.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

Absolutely. As I said before, I buy a lot on Vinted. I also resell clothes whenever I can. It's important because it gives clothes a second life, it lets you offer stuff you're bored of or that no longer fits to others who'll enjoy it. And at the same time, it helps reduce pollution since you're not constantly buying new stuff.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

It's an important concept that can bring positive change to society. It'll probably raise awareness, and maybe people will start moving toward this kind of fashion. I hope that when they see others buying sustainably, it'll create a snowball effect. But I still don't think it's widespread enough. People probably think that just because they alone choose sustainable fashion, it won't really change anything for the planet. But if everyone did it, it would make a big difference. Recently, for example, everyone boycotted Elon Musk and Tesla, and it had a massive impact, he lost billions of dollars. So yeah, if people got more motivated, I think we could see real change.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

Inoxtag and Mishou, they're really funny, and I always have a good time watching their videos. You can tell they're real and act the same on and off camera. They're super famous now, but they stay down to earth. People really like them because even if you saw them on the street, they wouldn't act cocky because of their fame. You can feel that they're being authentic. I'd say it's also just a gut feeling.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

Honestly, I could never really know if they're credible. If they're spreading a message, that's great. If they have a lot of followers, even better, because more people will see it. It's their choice to share whatever kind of content they want. But if I were in their place, for my own conscience, I'd make sure to apply what I say to everyone. Beyond what they show on their profile, we can never really know what they do in real life.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

Often, some people only do it to jump on a popular trend and gain more followers or views, or to make themselves look like better people in the eyes of their community. You can usually sense those kinds of people, they don't seem truly sincere on screen. And sometimes on social media, the truth comes out about the hypocrisy of certain influencers. Sometimes, even just looking at how much money they're making can be very telling.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

In itself, it's good that the influencer promotes a sustainable brand, because they're spreading a message to a lot of people, that's already a positive thing. Surely, among their followers, there will be some who'll want to make a change. But I still find the money factor a bit unfortunate. For me, it's a matter of conviction. It shouldn't be something you do just for money.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If there's a good edit, a nice presentation, the influencer really sells it well and it's clearly and thoroughly explained, I'd be more likely to follow their recommendations, but I really need something

concrete, not abstract. The influencer really needs to use strong arguments and be well-informed, I'd say.

- c) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

First of all, even if it's sustainable, it still has to be something I like and that matches my tastes. Also, aside from second-hand, sustainable fashion is more expensive, so that could be a barrier. And like I said before, if it's not detailed enough and I'm not convinced that the product is truly sustainable, I wouldn't take the risk of buying it.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

She seems quite committed. It doesn't look like she's doing this just to gain more followers. Her message is good, but I don't know if it will have much impact, because overall we kind of already know what fast fashion is all about. Her video makes you want to change, but at the same time, it doesn't really help you to change your habits or tell you what to do. So I think I'd be more likely to watch her video and then just move on to the next one without thinking much about what I could change.

- b) Chamellow:

I was quite captivated by her videos. I'm not sure exactly why, maybe it's the way she talks or the good quality of the editing. From her description, you can tell she's a committed person and invested in her projects, so I'd tend to believe she's sincere. She provides concrete information and ideas for improvement, so I think it could have an impact, especially with her number of followers.

- c) MargotYMF:

The idea of highlighting a brand doing this is great, because she could have chosen to promote a completely non-sustainable brand. But I'm often skeptical when I see advertising and money involved. Nothing guarantees she'll actually wear those clothes afterwards or that she really supports sustainable fashion. Then again, when I look at her profile, I feel a bit more reassured because she doesn't seem like someone who overconsumes.

- d) LaurenBruls:

I have doubts. In the end, she doesn't really talk much about the sustainable aspect of her bag. The information isn't very detailed, and her profile doesn't match with sustainability or eco-responsibility at all. I'd tend to think she wants to stand out from other handbags by adding an extra feature, but it's not something that really matters to her and that she's just doing it for the money.

8. Conclusion

- a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, I think so, because we currently live in a world where social media plays a big role, especially in the lives of younger generations, who are tomorrow's adults. I believe influencers have a lot of influence over young people and that they can really make a difference.

Participant number 11 (female, 21 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

- a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm studying medicine in Liège. I have an older sister and two younger brothers. I like running. I enjoy setting small goals in life, so I often go for runs. I really like challenging myself, especially when there's a small reward at the end, even if it takes effort. I also enjoy creative things like art and painting.

- b) How do you spend your free time?

I study a lot. I have very little free time, especially right now. My current little challenge is getting my driver's license, so when I'm not studying, I'm busy with driving lessons. When I do have a bit more time, I go out or I go running. I have a boyfriend whom I see regularly throughout the week. And whenever I have some free time, I try to spend it with my two little brothers. I still really enjoy those small family moments. I'm always up for a little aperitif or a casual evening with my family.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

- a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I mostly use it to talk to my friends and stay in touch. I also think it's nice because it lets you keep up with old friends from high school or primary school and see how they're doing. I used to spend a lot of time on TikTok and got super addicted, so I had to set a time limit for myself of 30 minutes. That way, I could free up more quality time instead of just scrolling. It bothered me to waste time on social media instead of spending it with family or friends. I probably spend about 3.5 hours a day on it. I'm still on Snapchat a lot, chatting with my friends, and that takes a lot of time.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

Snapchat. I use it a lot to talk to my close friends. I often take time to send voice messages or videos, and obviously, that takes more time than just sending a text. Now that I've set a limit on TikTok, I use it less. I check Instagram once or twice a day to see my friends' stories and my feed, but I don't stay on it long.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I follow NoraRaconteTout, she's not very well known. I like all things handmade, DIY, and construction. For example, she builds tables herself using materials she finds to keep costs down. She and her boyfriend like renovating houses on a budget, and I really enjoy following their journey. It's cool because you get to see their story, what worked, what didn't, etc. I really love that kind of content.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Yes, during lockdown I bought products from the brand PinUpSecret. They're little goat milk soaps for skincare. I saw a story from Coralie Porrovecchio talking about them, it really made me want to try them and I ended up buying the whole range.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I love watching videos on TikTok or Instagram of influencers showing off their outfits, especially "Outfit of the Day" videos. I find it fascinating to see all the different styling possibilities. But at the same time, fashion can be a bit frustrating for me because, financially, I can't always afford what I

want or keep up with the latest trends. I want to, but my bank account doesn't follow. So I tend to go for basics and pieces I know I can wear often and mix with lots of outfits.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

If I see a piece I like on my feed or in a TikTok video, it can quickly become my new obsession. But in the end, it always comes back to the same thing: can I afford it? So when I splurge on trendy pieces, little "addictions of the moment" it's only because I have some "bonus" money and I can treat myself. Otherwise, I only buy what I need or stick to basics.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

I think I buy a new item of clothing about every month and a half.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

With all the information out there, it's hard to ignore. I'm well aware that the situation isn't normal. What scares me the most are the rising temperatures and natural disasters because that's when it really hits close to home. That said, I'm mostly worried for my future children. Personally, I don't feel hugely affected by the fact that the planet has limited resources.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

Ethically, I've never bought from Shein, even though the prices are tempting. There's been a lot of controversy around that brand, and I don't want to support it by buying from them. I know lots of people still do, and I might not change anything alone, but if everyone keeps that mindset, we'll never make progress. Now, if I see something with a price that's too low or suspicious, I don't buy it because it's usually a sign that workers' rights weren't respected. I also tried second-hand shopping on Vinted because I liked the concept, but after receiving a few items that didn't match the descriptions or weren't as expected, I got a bit discouraged from using the site again.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

I think it's really good and relevant. People need to be able to question themselves and accept change, especially knowing the damage fashion causes. Everyone knows how polluting it is. Especially now with trends on social media. People buy a new outfit, the trend ends, and it just sits in the closet. You can really see that more and more people are becoming careful. Sites like Vinted are great to avoid throwing out clothes or leaving items unworn. It also lets someone else enjoy a piece at a lower price.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

- a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

I'll go back to NoraRaconteTout. What I like about her is that she really shows the hidden sides of her life. She often opens up about her personal life, and that makes you feel close to her. I also really like Zoé Tondou. She's had a lot of acne, and usually influencers try to hide that and present a perfect image, sometimes even editing their photos. But she shows herself naturally, teaches people to accept themselves, and encourages them to do the same. The fact that she's so transparent and shows herself as she really is, I really like that. It makes me trust her because she seems genuine.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

I think the most important thing is that they're well-informed. They need to use concrete data. I've noticed I take people much more seriously when they use numbers, statistics, facts... You need to feel that they really know what they're talking about, and not just reciting a script without really understanding it.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

I'm not sure how to explain it exactly, but I'll give an example. If an influencer uses the hashtag or title "sustainable fashion" for a video promoting Vinted, but in the video they focus more on how cheap it is than on the second-hand aspect, then I'd start to doubt them. It would feel like they're not genuinely committed to sustainable fashion and they're talking about it for the wrong reasons.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

Yes, definitely. I would think they weren't driven to talk about it for the right reasons. Deep down, we'll never really know if they would have highlighted that sustainable brand if they hadn't been paid

to do it. It automatically creates doubts. I prefer when it's someone who talks about it on their own, because they genuinely want to and because it's something they're truly interested in.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

It goes back to what I already said, but what really matters to me is that the influencer talks about it on their own, without being driven by money. And also that it's something you see over time, not just a one-off to look good in front of their audience. You have to feel that it's a topic they care deeply about, that they talk about regularly, and that in their everyday life they truly pay attention to it.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

The price is a big barrier. But it's not just that, there's also the question of accessibility. For example, in cities like Brussels, you come across thrift shops, second-hand stores, or clothing swaps on nearly every street corner. It's much easier to access. Whereas in Liège, there might be two or three, but you really have to search, dig around, and the selection is very limited. You can tell that not all cities are evolving at the same pace in that area. I even know people who go all the way to Brussels just to go thrifting because they can't find anything here. So yeah, even if you want to consume better, think more about the planet or workers' conditions, if it's too expensive or too hard to find, you probably won't take the step.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

I actually see quite a few videos like that, and honestly, I think they're great. I often like these videos because I think it's important for as many people as possible to see them. But honestly, I'm going to skip it. It shocks me in the moment, yes, but then I don't really pay much attention to it in my daily life. On the other hand, you can clearly see she's really into the topic. I have no doubt about her sincerity. But I don't know if it's really the most effective way to change the way we consume fashion. Also, maybe because I don't shop on Shein, I didn't feel directly targeted by the video where she talks about Shein.

- b) Chamellow:

What she says is really great, the message itself is positive and important. But compared to the other video, I feel less emotion, like it affects her less personally. I have a bit of a bias against her, without really knowing why. Maybe it's just the way she presents things, a bit too detached for my taste.

c) MargotYMF:

She presents her product in a way that feels too rehearsed and brief for me, which takes away from her authenticity. Her speech feels almost recited, which makes it seem like she's not fully invested in what she's saying. Then again, I recognize that the word "advertisement" probably played a role too as I immediately assumed there was a financial motivation behind it.

d) LaurenBruls:

At first, I thought the initiative was great, because from the moment someone invests time in creating a sustainable bag, I immediately think she gets it and is contributing to making things better. But in her video, she missed the opportunity to really talk about it in depth. She just mentioned it briefly. So I went to check out her account, and since she doesn't really live sustainably, I started to wonder if she's not just trying to take advantage of the eco-friendly movement, thinking it'll make her trendy, rather than doing it out of genuine commitment.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, I'm pretty sure they can. Today, everyone is on social media and follows influencers. Everyone has their favorite influencers, whom they trust completely, like me with NorahRaconteTout. If those influencers started talking about sustainable fashion, I'm convinced many of us would be influenced. I think they can really have a positive impact thanks to the trust and connection they've built with their followers.

Participant number 12 (female, 23 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I love doing crafts. Right now, I'm into sewing, I bought a machine in September and I've been going at it ever since. I enjoy starting from old clothes and changing their shape or turning them into something else. For example, I made a laptop sleeve out of an old tracksuit. In the summer, when I

have more time, I crochet, I've already made some tops and bags. Other than that, I like going out and running with my dog to get some exercise. I really try to spend as little time as possible on my phone and fully enjoy my life and the moment.

b) How do you spend your free time?

In the evenings, to avoid going on my phone, I read a lot. Whenever I'm with my boyfriend, we try to do things together like playing board games. Outside of exam periods, I go out a lot to parties and student events. I also try to enjoy nature as much as possible like I said earlier, by walking my dog.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

When I have classes, I average around 3 hours a day. But when I'm at home, I have more things to do to keep me busy, so I spend less time on my phone and social media. This week, for example, since I've been at home, my average is about one hour.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I'm really trying to reduce everything, but before that, it was mostly Instagram and TikTok for the short video format. I tend to quickly find videos that interest me in my feed, and that's what makes me spend more time there..

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

On Instagram, I watch a millionaire from the show Who Wants to Be My Business Partner. He talks about lots of things related to starting a business and entrepreneurship. Since starting a business is something I might want to do in the future, I really enjoy his content. In general, I really like watching reels that teach me things. I also love following the progress of home or old farm renovations and it gives me inspiration for my future "home." I also really enjoy DIY influencer videos. I would love to be able to do lots of things myself someday, like fixing up old furniture and turning it into really cool pieces.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

It's happened to me like wanting to try a couple of new recipes I saw on social media. Recently, I came across a content creator who makes a lot of handmade crafts. She made a video using air-dry clay, and that inspired me to buy some to try it out. I also saw an influencer jump-roping and explaining all the health benefits. He said that 10 minutes of jump rope equals 30 minutes of running, and honestly, that convinced me. So I went and bought a jump rope to try it out.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I like looking good and being well-dressed, but I hate looking like everyone else or wearing the latest trendy item that everyone has. I look for clothes that are a bit unique and special, that stand out. Usually, I find those gems on Vinted.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I can definitely be influenced by trends. For example, last year quilted jackets with patterns were trendy, and I wanted one. But I wanted something more original that you wouldn't see everywhere. I also really enjoy going shopping and looking around different stores in shopping centers. I often buy for pleasure, just because I find a piece I like, without looking for anything in particular. Online shopping is different, I tend to have a specific idea in mind, either because it's trendy or I saw an influencer wearing it.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

It really depends on the period. Sometimes I get a shopping urge and I buy a lot over a short time, like one month. And other times, I won't buy anything for three months straight. It also depends on my budget and how much free time I have. For example, during the holidays, I like going to Roermond or Luxembourg with my boyfriend, it's like a little day trip for us.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

- (i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

I studied alternative and renewable energy for three years, and I come from a family that's really into that. I'd say I've been immersed in this since I was little, which is also why I chose that field of study. During those studies, I was really confronted with shocking facts and images like heaps of plastic or abandoned clothing piles in the middle of nowhere. I'm really into the ideas of reusing and recycling, I watch a lot of videos on that. I think there's a real future in it. One day, I'd love to be self-sufficient at home in terms of energy, food, and so on.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I try as much as I can, at my level, to upcycle old clothes whenever I have time, or even make new things myself. I would never throw clothes away, I'll always try to turn them into something else. Last summer, for example, I made 4 tops. I also like the concept of thrift stores. I've already gone twice to Brussels with friends just to go thrifting, and I found a bunch of cool stuff.

Also, I buy a lot from Vinted. But to be honest, even though I love the idea of second-hand and recycling, it's more complicated and time-consuming. So yes, sometimes I give in and buy brand new clothes that are just easier to find. I'm not perfect, but I try to consume better whenever I can.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

To me, sustainable fashion means Vinted, clothing rental sites, thrift stores, and upcycling... I really see sustainable fashion as a recycling process, giving products a second life. On the other hand, I struggle more with brands that claim to be purely sustainable. I feel like they're never fully honest. There's a lack of transparency like when something says "Made in France" but other production steps were done elsewhere. And then, the prices are often too high. I'm willing to pay more for long-lasting pieces like a bag or a coat, but not for a little top I might get tired of quickly.

For me, the real shift has to happen in the mind. We're constantly exposed to fashion on social media, and it pushes us to consume. We need to change our mindsets and learn to buy less.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

I really enjoy seeing influencers who show their success or creations and explain how to achieve the same. It makes things more real. I trust them because, most of the time, they don't just say things, they show all the steps behind their process, which makes it hard not to trust them once you've seen the proof.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

Now that I am studying business, one thing I've really learned is the importance of data. So facts, concrete examples and things that can be proven are what make a message credible to me. I already consider myself quite aware compared to the average person, but for people who aren't yet aware, you need that kind of proof, something that shakes them a little.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

An influencer who doesn't believe in what he's saying, or who isn't knowledgeable enough about the subject. Also, those who do greenwashing, highlighting certain eco-friendly aspects while hiding the rest. For example, if an influencer promotes Zara's sustainable collection and says, "Look how great this brand is, they care about the planet and workers," even though we all know it's just a tiny fraction of their business regarding their disastrous environmental consequences, I will immediately tend to find them fake.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

The fact that the influencer is being paid doesn't bother me, as long as it aligns with what they've done before. So, if their account already includes videos where they talk about sustainable fashion, and we know that it's a topic they genuinely care about, it's fine. I've been following a girl for the past two or three years who's really committed to sustainability, and after a while, sustainable brands started offering her partnerships because of the kind of content she was posting. I thought, good for her if she's making some extra money from it. We already know she believes in the movement, so it's really not a problem.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If, for example, an influencer highlights a sustainable clothing brand, they need to be informed and honest about the product's characteristics and where it was made. Also, if an influencer promotes a sustainable lifestyle, they should be able to explain how we can also apply it in our own lives, with tips, tricks, etc.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

For example, I love thrift stores, but I feel like here in Liège and even in Belgium in general, there just aren't enough compared to France. I think we haven't evolved enough in terms of accessibility. As for purely sustainable clothing, the price is also a big factor, not everyone can afford it. If I'm faced with a sustainable item that's three times more expensive than a non-sustainable one, unfortunately, even if I really want to support it, I won't be able to spend that much. And if I have a specific item in mind, it's much easier to turn to big brands like Zara rather than going around all the thrift stores or scrolling through Vinted just to find it.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

a) Unpeudelou:

Honestly, nothing to complain about. The stats, that's exactly what's needed to spark a realization in people. Personally, it was only after seeing concrete images and figures that I truly became aware of fashion's impact.

b) Chamellow:

She really made me want to keep making an effort. I already do certain things to improve my clothes consumption, like we talked about earlier, but it's true that she brought up a few small things I hadn't thought of before. It's all doable. It's silly, but if everyone applied even just part of what she suggests, we'd already see a real difference.

c) MargotYMF:

Here, we know she's being paid to promote the brand, it must be like the girl I follow. She has "slow life" written in her bio so she was probably chosen by the brand because her content matches the theme of sustainability. In this case, the advertising doesn't bother me at all.

d) LaurenBruls:

Maybe it's just a gut feeling, I didn't take the time to look at her profile, but it feels like greenwashing. If I had done something like that, I would've talked about it way more in the video. It just seems shady, like she's doing it just for her image...

8. Conclusion

- a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Absolutely. In 2025, you can't really start a business without being present on social media, because that's how you reach people, in my opinion. It's the same for sustainable fashion. We need people who can explain it to others and put it in the spotlight because it's still not well known, and influencers are perfect for that. Really, like with anything, visibility is key to getting known. Influencers also need to create diverse and relevant content to reach as many people as possible, with real-life examples, like I mentioned earlier.

Participant number 13 (male, 26 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

- a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

So, I'm 26 years old. I work as a roofer at JDF Toitures. I love sports and I do a lot of it. I play basketball in a club in Ninane and I also enjoy running and hiking. I've set myself goals like the GR20 hike, etc., which were really great experiences. I like to travel and discover other countries and cultures, and I try to vary my destinations.

- b) How do you spend your free time?

I play video games, spend time on my phone mostly on social media. I also like going out and hanging out with my friends, and I spend a large part of my free time doing sports. Sometimes I also work freelance, so I organize my projects and have client meetings.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

- a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

During the week I don't spend a lot of time on social media because my schedule is quite full, so I'd say on average 1 to 1.5 hours per day. On weekends it varies depending on what I have to do, but it can go up a bit.

- b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I spend most of my screen time either on Instagram or TikTok. I really like seeing posts from influencers or friends on Instagram. Otherwise, I use these two apps a lot for their "shorts", which are very engaging and where you can spend a lot of time without realizing it.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Yes and no. I don't really follow any specific influencers daily because I don't feel the need. But I often watch the same type of videos, either "do it yourself" work videos, basketball videos, or funny videos to entertain myself a bit.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or behavioral change? Tell me about that experience.

Well, I have learned things or ways to optimize my daily life thanks to videos I watch on social media. But I can't say I've ever been directly influenced by a person to buy something. After that, I have bought fashion items thanks to ads on social media but those ads came from the brand itself and not necessarily from a partnership with an influencer.

3. Relationship with Fashion

a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

Fashion has a big place in my life. I love clothes, and I have a bit of a taste for luxury clothes. I love being well dressed and buying new clothes. I especially love shoes, I have about 10 pairs even though I always wear the same ones.

b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I get inspired by personalities I like or people I see in videos or meet on the street. I like fashion, so I naturally pay attention to new clothes that come out but also to what's trendy. I often buy after having a crush on a piece of clothing. I never buy a piece I only half like thinking, "It's nice but not great." The most important thing is to find something that really fits my usual style.

c) How often do you buy clothes?

Like I said earlier, I really buy on impulse. If I'm walking around and see a piece I really like in a store, I buy it. If I'm on social media and see an ad for a piece of clothing that catches my eye, same thing, I follow the impulse and buy it. Since I've been working and earning money, I end up buying new clothes almost every week. I don't deny myself much when it comes to clothes because it really pleases me, and I like to treat myself.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Yes, it does concern me because when I traveled, I had the chance to see paradisiacal places on this earth and I find it sad to treat them like that. On the other hand, I enjoy my comfort and the things we have available today. I feel like picking up a plastic bag on the ground won't necessarily make things better, even if it helps a bit. For me, the real problem comes mainly from extremely polluting countries, cruise ships transporting food around the world, etc. I think the problem is there and no matter what individual actions we take, it won't be enough to save the planet.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

No, if I stick to my current fashion consumption, it would be hypocritical to say I pay attention. Plus, since I do sports, I dress a lot in big brands like Nike. We're really far from the perfect eco-friendly consumer ideal.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

No, I'm not really familiar or informed about sustainable fashion, I've vaguely heard about it but never really looked into it because it doesn't really speak to me at the moment.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

Again, I don't have a specific influencer I follow, but sometimes I watch the same one because I like his videos. So there's Inoxtag, who I really like because he's a young guy not that far from my age, so it's easy to identify with him. He's adventurous, brave, takes on lots of challenges, and I see a lot of myself in him. He's not afraid of going from everything to nothing and ending up at the bottom. He's simple, genuine, and authentic, and that's what I look for in someone. Actually, I look for a person who looks a bit like me and with whom I share the same values. Recently, I started following a guy who gives

advice on crypto investment and what I like about him is his knowledge of the subject and professionalism, that's what I look for when it comes to investing money.

- b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

It's hard to answer when I'm not really interested in it, but I'd say they'd have to explain things well, like in the crypto domain. If they choose to talk about it, they have to be knowledgeable. It doesn't make sense to assert something if you haven't clearly informed yourself beforehand.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

I think it's important that the profile matches what they promote. For example, given my clothing choices, if I claimed to be a "sustainable fashion influencer" on social media, I would have no credibility. Also, if an influencer judges those who don't consume like them with a moralizing tone, I wouldn't want to learn from someone giving lessons. It's useless to make people feel guilty.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

It wouldn't change my view of the person or their authenticity. For some, it's their job. It's kind of their only way to make money. Personally, it has never bothered me, no matter the field. In this context, I would see even less of a problem because no matter the influencer's profile, they are promoting something good and helping the brand get known.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

I don't have many ideas. Maybe precisely if the influencer shows that it's easy and possible to have style without breaking the bank and at the same time do something for the environment.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

The cost of the clothing, because sustainable clothing is automatically more expensive. Even though I appreciate luxury and that might seem contradictory, I would have a hard time paying the price I pay

for an “Ami” sweater, for example, for a pair of sustainable jeans. Also, I think it’s all about fashion trends. One day, some big personalities might promote it, and then everything will change. But for now, I’m comfortable with my habits and not yet well informed or interested enough in sustainable fashion.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

a) Unpeudelou:

It’s cool, she seems well informed, you can immediately tell she masters her subject. She gives concrete and factual information too, which makes it more real. She informs us but doesn’t take a moralizing tone, no, that’s good, I don’t have much to say.

b) Chamellow:

I really like her. She makes you want to adopt sustainable fashion without pressuring us; everything she offers is doable and accessible to everyone. On top of that, I find her inspiring. Plus, she shows everything she talks about by filming herself, so you see that it’s something she actually does.

c) MargotYMF:

The fact that it is an ad doesn’t bother me at all, she’s not doing the promotion of Coca-Cola. Here she promotes a brand that makes sense, and if she’s paid for it, good for her.

d) LaurenBruls:

I was just using myself as an example, saying my profile wouldn’t be very convincing to promote a sustainable fashion brand. She’s kind of a typical example. She also clearly likes luxury, and I would be really interested to know why she created that bag.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

I think in the generation we live in today, influencers and social media are important actors in the choices we make in life. We let ourselves be influenced a lot by these people, hence their name after all. So I would say a big yes. If one day sustainable fashion became popular, some influencers would

have had something to do with it, I'm sure. The key is to present it the right way. The topic of sustainable fashion is still too little known, but it's a great project.

Participant number 14 (female, 24 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm 24 years old and I'm in my final year of dental hygiene studies at Barbou. I have been working as a student 3 to 4 times a week at Pizza Hut over 3 years now. I'm passionate about dance, I've been doing it since I was very young. I dance twice a week. And whenever I find a bit of time, I go swimming.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I read a lot. I also like watching series or movies and videos on YouTube. My student job takes up a good part of my evenings.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

It depends a bit on my schedule. When I was doing an internship, I hardly used it. Otherwise, I can quickly lose track of time and not notice how many hours pass. It can vary from 1 to 3 hours depending on the day.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

Instagram and TikTok. I use Instagram to follow some influencers; it also lets me keep up with the news and see what my friends post. TikTok is mostly for getting ideas about new books, recipes, and following new fashion trends. It's a very addictive format for me; I can easily scroll for an hour at night in bed without stopping.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

- (i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

I mainly follow female influencers like Chloé Gervais, Tycia, Léna Situation, Julie Ferrat, Moira, ... Their content focuses on lifestyle, fashion, travel, and I almost only watch that. I like to get inspired by them.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Once I tried Pilates because an influencer talked about it, and since she was a sports influencer, she even offered videos to get started, so I did it. I often recreate recipes I see on social media. I've used promo codes from influencers, but always on websites I already knew.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I like dressing up and choosing my outfits. Fashion is something that speaks to me; my outfits are always thought out and every accessory matters. I often watch "haul" videos, "outfit of the day," etc. I also watch recaps of some fashion shows on YouTube.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I mostly go by what catches my eye. I like clothes with a little originality, usually colorful. I sometimes get influenced by current trends but I try more or less to add my own touch. I've noticed that I tend to buy too quickly, especially if it's been a while since I last shopped, and I sometimes regret some impulsive buys.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

It really depends on the moment. I buy more in spring and summer. I rarely do big shopping sprees where I buy a lot at once. I tend to drop by stores from time to time to see if there is something I like. I also think that since I started working as a student, I'm more inclined to spend money. I couldn't precisely estimate my purchase frequency, but approximately at least once a month, although it really depends on the period, my salary, and new collections.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?
- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Yes, it's hard not to be affected. Especially when you see the working conditions in fast fashion factories highlighted in some media. With social media, there is increasing awareness of this topic. We are more and more exposed to these problems.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I've tried to favor second-hand by turning to thrift stores but I never really found what I liked. I found that there wasn't much choice at least in Liège, and the pieces almost never matched my style. I look occasionally on Vinted, but since I don't like online shopping in general, I quickly give up searching. What I mainly do is avoiding ordering from extremely low-priced fast-fashion sites like Shein, AliExpress,...

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

Yes, I have heard of it. We are increasingly confronted with sustainable fashion brands nowadays, especially via social media. I think this is thanks to media coverage about poor working conditions and pollution. But unfortunately, I think we got used to being able to buy everything we saw at unbeatable prices. The higher price of sustainable fashion items, which to me is justified, might be a factor of reluctance for some people. Especially since we live in an era where we all tend to overconsume, and some more than others.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

The influencers I mentioned earlier because they show relatively simple everyday things, unlike some influencers who showcase a lifestyle completely different from ours. I also trust them because I feel the influencers I follow are not always doing collaborations and sponsored posts; they offer many other things that matter to them.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

If the influencer chooses to talk about it, it has to be done several times and they really wear the pieces in real life, not just for a story. Otherwise, they wouldn't catch my attention.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

If, for example, it's a reality TV influencer recommending the brand, I would tend to be suspicious and wouldn't look further for information. So yes, it's mostly about the type of person talking about it and their background.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

I don't mind influencers being paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand because that's how they make a living. Also, sustainable fashion brands need to make their place alongside big fast fashion brands like Zara, so if influencers can give them visibility, I think that's good. If it's an influencer I know, I would even tend to look into the brand myself.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If the influencer does not just show the brand's items but talks about the materials used, the product origin, the ethics, the brand's goals that they recommend.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

The first reason would be the price. As a student who doesn't earn much and who likes fashion, I've always found clothes at reasonable prices. But that doesn't take away from the fact that I find the higher price of sustainable brands justified. At this stage of my life, I'm not used to and don't intend to turn to those brands. I think when I have a fixed income and a "stable adult life," I will turn to clothes that last longer, favor quality, and buy less often.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

I've already seen several videos like this on social media, and I think we need to keep raising awareness. The influencer seems legitimate to talk about this because she promotes ethical fashion in her bio. Her video doesn't come out of nowhere and fits with her usual content.

b) Chamellow:

I like her videos because she gives advice that's accessible to everyone. She's really involved in this field, so people take her more seriously. What I also like is that she doesn't guilt people who buy fast fashion; she actually gives advice.

c) MargotYMF:

What I like less about this video is not necessarily the fact that it's a collaboration as I mentioned earlier. It's more that she doesn't explain the site much. She talks about a charter, but I would have liked her to talk about the conditions a brand must meet to be part of the site. Also, she mentions the site but doesn't present any of the brands or clothes she chose. However, I think the collaboration fits with her content since she has already done several videos about ecology, but it lacks information.

d) LaurenBruls:

On her profile, she shows a lifestyle that is quite far from ours, which already makes me less interested in following her. For promoting a sustainable brand, I find her video lacks information and details on the materials used and the place of manufacture. Those are the two minimum criteria I want to hear in a presentation video of a brand that claims to be sustainable and cruelty-free. I wouldn't necessarily choose these bags if I wanted a sustainable bag brand.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

I'm convinced that influencers can play an important role in changing things and especially in highlighting a sustainable brand. The more sustainable brands we see in our feed, the more we start to look into them. But for me, it's essential to highlight the reasons why a brand calls itself sustainable.

Participant number 15 (female, 22 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm in my third year of nursing at HELMO and currently doing an internship. I'm a scout leader in the Saint Vincent youth movement. I love reading. I don't really do sports, although recently I started running a bit. I don't know if you can call it an interest, but I have a huge love for animals. I have two cats but no dog, so every day I walk my neighbor's dog. Otherwise, I have quite an active social life, I don't often stay alone at home. I regularly see my friends.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I read a lot. I go for a walk at least once a day. Otherwise, I like to just chill at home and watch one series or another. And as I said before, I often see my friends. My studies also take quite a bit of time; sometimes during my free time, I review my courses and study.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

I'm a lot on social media. I'd actually like to limit it but it's hard. I tend to go on quickly when I'm in bed or during a break. I think I spend roughly about 4 hours a day.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I use Instagram a lot because it's where I follow the most people I know and I like the concept. I also spend a lot of time on TikTok. I like it because it's a pure mix of creativity and entertainment. And maybe Snapchat as well because I often talk to my close friends on that app, it's more intimate.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Yes, my favorite influencer is Mayadorable. I love her humor, her simplicity, and how she doesn't take herself seriously. She's not an influencer who lives for appearances; she really shows herself as she is. You feel that she's not the type to pretend her life is perfect. She shows the ups and downs and that instantly connects her to her community because she has a life like ours without being superficial. I also follow Anna RVR; I've been following her since the beginning, and I've

really seen her whole evolution from when she was little known to when she became famous, and despite that she stayed true to herself.

- (ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

Not really...for buying, at least. I'm not very sensitive to product placements. But I follow an influencer who reads a lot, and she talked about a book, not a sponsored post or anything, she just wanted to recommend it to her community. So I followed her advice and added it to my reading list.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I really like having new clothes to vary my outfits and not always wearing the same thing. I won't lie, I like being "stylish" and receiving compliments on how I dress because it's something I do care about in my life.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I often get inspired by people around me, whether in real life or by what they post on social media. I also look for outfit inspiration on Pinterest.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

I buy new clothes every two or three months. I'm not the type to shop compulsively, I can control myself on that level. But it's true that when I go shopping or place an order, I invest time. I pay attention to choosing pieces I really like and that I can match with what I already have in my wardrobe to create new outfits.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- If yes

- (i) Can you tell me about a time when you really became aware of these ecological issues?

Yes. It's a topic that touches me, but I don't always manage to apply some things in my daily life to improve my consumption, for example. My mom has been talking to me about it since I was little, so I've always been aware of these issues, but I admit I don't always pay attention.

(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

I'm trying more and more to only buy things I need, it's also about the money. Sometimes I give in to pleasure and buy something simply because I find it beautiful. Also, I try to buy on Vinted, but it's sometimes hard to find things I like.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

I find it super interesting. Anything beneficial for the planet and society is always a good thing. But if we talk only about sustainable fashion brands selling new clothes and not secondhand, I've looked into it out of curiosity and honestly, I found it way too expensive, at least for my budget. That's probably why people keep buying fast fashion.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

Anna RVR because I really feel like we're all on the same level with her; she talks a lot about her mistakes or life choices that make us realize none of us are perfect, even when you're famous all over France and Belgium. Same for Mayadorable. Both of them are simple, without overdoing it, without artifices. They show themselves as they really are, without trying to fit into the mold of influencers with perfect lives.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

I think it would make the influencer more credible to go into detail beyond just saying a brand is sustainable. They could talk about how it's made, where the clothes come from, the conditions of the workers, etc. Actually, I need to be informed, not just sold a "sustainable" label, because often that label can mean everything and nothing at the same time.

- c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

Seeing that the influencer wears clothes that are not sustainable at all or even totally opposite to the message they're trying to promote. That would be a dealbreaker for me. It would totally discredit their message. I wouldn't even understand why they'd want us to change if they don't do it themselves.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

I would wonder a bit whether they promote the brand because they are paid to do so or if it's really because they like it. I don't think it's bad at all if they genuinely like the brand, but it still creates some doubt about the sincerity behind the intention to promote it.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

First, I would need to be attracted to the influencer's personality and feel that she is sincere with her audience. Then, as I said, she needs to provide real, concrete information. And above all, she should present sustainable fashion in a beautiful way that truly makes me want to engage with it.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

If I feel that I haven't received enough information from the influencer about where the item comes from. If I don't like the clothing item, obviously. And of course, the price.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

The video is great but it sure won't bring any changes to my life. Actually, these videos don't have much impact on me because she just gives facts without showing us how we could change, even though I don't doubt her interest in sustainable fashion.

- b) Chamellow:

I really like her. She's cool, gives lots of easy-to-do ideas, and her personality speaks to me. Also, she dresses well, so it means you can look good while choosing to buy more eco-friendly, which gives hope and inspiration.

c) MargotYMF:

At first glance, the collaboration is cool. The influencer doesn't seem to be offering something that strays from what she usually does. But I might have wanted more information about the brands, not just that it's a site working with eco-responsible brands. Well, if I had to buy and pay the price, that's the kind of information I would have needed.

d) LaurenBruls:

The first two videos on her TikTok account are unboxings of Hermes and Fendi bags... I don't really believe in her claim of a sustainable bag brand. She might have convinced me if she had talked about it more, but she didn't even bother.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, definitely. On social media, there are lots of fashion influencers, and most people get inspired by their content to find outfit ideas. If all fashion influencers switched to sustainable fashion and showcased cool brands in this field at affordable prices, it could encourage more people to consume it.

Participant number 16 (male, 28 years old)

1. Introduction Phase (building trust)

a) Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your interests?

I'm 28 years old. I'm a chef at a fine dining restaurant in Liège. I have two sisters, but I left home three years ago and have been living alone since then. For a few years now, I got into running and little by little it really became a passion! My biggest achievement was completing the 70 km ultra trail "Olne Spa Olne." My next challenge is to run 100 km. I'm lucky to work at a restaurant that only opens

during the day, so often from 4 pm onwards I have a lot of free time. I still enjoy going out with friends, going to restaurants, having a drink, etc.

b) How do you spend your free time?

I often watch series or movies. I go running. As I said earlier, I see my friends. Also, I like cooking and trying out new recipes at home.

2. Social media Use and Exposure to Influencers

a) How would you describe your social media daily use? How much time do you usually spend on social media?

It's hard to say. It really depends on the day. On average, I probably spend at least two hours on social media after work because I don't have time before. But on weekends, if I stay home a lot, it can increase.

b) Which platforms do you use the most? Why these in particular?

I use Instagram a lot. I follow many chefs; it lets me see new recipes and also learn new cooking techniques. It's also the app where I follow the most people, whether known personalities like comedians or athletes. I also find Instagram is a good place to stay informed about what's going on.

c) Do you follow any influencers?

- If yes

(i) Can you tell me about one or more influencers whose content you particularly enjoy?

Generally, I mostly follow influencers who talk about sports or cooking. I also like watching influencers who recommend products, like Mathieu Blanchard, a fairly well-known trail runner, who has promoted the brand Näak or Salomon, or the chef Simone Zanoni, who promoted Microplane, for example. Since they're experts in their fields, I like to check what they recommend to help me choose when I need to buy a new pair of trail shoes or a new kitchen tool. I also enjoy following people more focused on humor like Jean Benoit Diallo.

(ii) Have you ever been influenced by a content creator in a purchasing decision or a change in behavior? Tell me about that experience.

It's happened several times. One example I already mentioned is Mathieu Blanchard's sponsorship with Näak, a brand that makes gels and vitamin bars. I bought some and wasn't disappointed. Also, at first I got into running mostly because for a while I watched a lot of videos from sports or trail running influencers, and it made me want to start. I realize that social media really have power over me but mostly in a positive way. I spent a long time trying to figure myself out. I didn't know what I wanted to do later on. I first studied business then psychology before wanting to become a chef. One day, I realized I spent a lot of time watching cooking videos and following many chefs on social media. It had almost become an obsession. I ended up wanting to make something more concrete of it, and it became my job.

3. Relationship with Fashion

- a) Can you tell me about your relationship with fashion? What role does it play in your daily life?

I don't spend my life looking for new clothes or keeping up with the latest trends. But fashion is still part of my daily life. I like to dress in things I like and I always try to have a neat style when I go out.

- b) How do you usually choose your clothes?

I mostly look at the quality of the product. I have reference brands I trust where I know the clothes will last, like Fred Perry. I have polos that last and don't lose shape. I also look at the cut of the garment.

- c) How often do you buy clothes?

I think I buy new clothes every two months. For shoes, I buy one or two pairs each year.

4. Awareness of Sustainability

- a) Do you feel concerned about environmental issues?

- (i) Can you tell me a moment when you became aware of these ecological issues
(ii) Have you ever tried to change the way you consume fashion for ethical or ecological reasons?

It's worrying, for sure. I really try to pay attention to simple everyday things like avoiding waste or choosing quality products even though I must admit that with our little habits it's not always easy to completely change how we do things. But I tell myself every little gesture counts and that's already a good start.

A few years ago, I watched a documentary about the textile industry, I think it was on Arte but I don't remember exactly. Deep down, I knew it was bad but somehow I didn't realize it until I saw it with my own eyes. As I said earlier, I really try to favor brands that last over time with good

quality rather than buying several cheap pieces that wear out quickly. Before, I never checked where my clothes were made, and now I really try to buy clothes made exclusively in Europe.

b) Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable fashion?

- If yes

(i) What was your first impression of the concept?

Yes, the first time I heard about it I thought it was a good idea. It questions quite a few things. To me, sustainable fashion means made in Europe in good conditions and it limits waste. In my own way, I was already trying to consume differently by favoring clothes that last over time with a somewhat timeless style, for example. I've never bought from a site like Shein because the prices always seemed suspicious, and it screams bad quality. It doesn't bother me to spend more on clothes if I know the quality is worth it. I have a list of brands I shop from often like Fred Perry; I doubt they are perfect in terms of sustainability but at least their clothes last, and for me, that's already more thoughtful consumption.

5. Authenticity, Credibility, Trustworthiness

a) Can you tell me about one or more influencers you trust and explain what gives you that feeling?

I like Mathieu Blanchard. He's someone I can trust because I know he actually uses everything he recommends. He doesn't accept just any collaboration, and that's already a good indicator of reliability. Generally, I trust influencers who stick to their area of expertise, like a chef giving cooking advice or recommending utensils they use, or a sportsman giving training sessions or recommending energy bars.

b) If you were exposed to an influencer talking about sustainable fashion, what would make you feel they are credible?

That kind of ties into what I just said but it really depends on their competence in the subject and their involvement in that area. It can't be someone who talks about it once or very rarely; that could suggest they do it because it's trendy or because they were paid. You have to see that it's a topic they address often in their videos without their profile having to be only about that. I also like people who are honest with their followers, for example someone who says, "I love fashion, I probably consume more than the average person but I'm slowly trying to buy from more ethical brands because it's important." I definitely prefer that over someone who pretends to be perfect in this area but it's clearly false.

c) On the other hand, what would make you skeptical or doubtful about an influencer who talks about sustainable fashion?

It seems quite logical to me that if someone talks about a sustainable fashion brand once and then makes another video showing new purchases from Pull & Bear, I would be skeptical.

- d) If an influencer is paid to promote a sustainable fashion brand, how would that affect your perception of their authenticity?

I have always been suspicious of paid partnerships, no matter the topic. Each time, I trust collaborations where the brands align with the influencer's profile and content.

6. Barriers and Motivations

- a) What would encourage you to follow the recommendations of an influencer talking about sustainable fashion?

If they are transparent and provide enough information about what they talk about. For example, about the factories where the clothes are made or clearly explaining why a certain brand is responsible. Also, if they give advice for a sustainable lifestyle, are honest with us, and acknowledge that they are not flawless or perfect in everything, that can really help people like me identify with them and reflect on our habits to change things in our daily lives.

- b) What might hold you back from buying more responsible clothing recommended by an influencer?

As you may have guessed, it's mostly my habits that might hold me back. I'm still attached to brands I already know, and since I'm satisfied with them, it's hard to change overnight. That seems logical to me, but if the clothing or brand presented by the influencer doesn't match my style or tastes, I wouldn't buy it. Also, we haven't really talked about secondhand clothes, but I'm less keen on those. I'm still attached to new clothes. Once, I went into a thrift shop for a costume party and took a look, but I didn't find anything attractive or nice. I find it's less well presented or showcased than in regular stores.

7. Video Excerpts of Different Communication Strategies

- a) Unpeudelou:

She seems really well-informed. Apparently, she's invested and did her research beforehand. It's nice, she really seems motivated to make a difference.

- b) Chamellow:

She seems well-placed to give advice, choosing the right approach to encourage people to change. I already favored quality and made-in-Europe products, but from what I see, I can still do a lot more. It's great, she gives ideas, and we can actually do something with her video, unlike the previous person.

c) MargotYMF:

Here the brand and the influencer seem aligned. Nothing to say there. But for me again, it's not a brand that fits my habits.

d) LaurenBruls:

What bothers me here is the lack of information. If I wanted to buy this bag, I wouldn't be able to because I'm not sure where it was made, with what materials, etc.

8. Conclusion

a) After this discussion, would you say that influencers can play a significant role in promoting sustainable fashion?

Yes, definitely. They can play an important role, but it has to be done well. They must genuinely believe what they say and apply it in their daily lives, not just mention it once or twice without it reflecting what they actually do day to day. And when influencers present sustainable brands, consumers need to be certain it's a truly sustainable fashion brand, with enough information given beyond any doubt.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fashion industry, particularly the rise of fast fashion, generates considerable environmental and social externalities. Today, sustainable fashion offers a promising alternative, yet its adoption remains marginal. While Generation Z is becoming increasingly aware of these concerns, there is still a gap between their intentions to buy responsibly and their actual behavior. Within this context, social media influencers appear to be strategic players likely to promote sustainable fashion. However, the effectiveness of their advocacy largely depends on how they are perceived by these young consumers. Consequently, this research seeks to explore how Generation Z consumers perceive social media influencers in promoting sustainable fashion.

To address this research question, a qualitative methodology was chosen with the aim of filling the gap identified in the existing literature at the intersection of Generation Z, sustainable fashion and influencers. To this end, sixteen French-speaking Belgian Generation Z participants, aged between 16 and 28, were selected and interviewed.

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews enabled the identification of an influencer profile perceived positively by Generation Z. This persona is notably characterized by assertive authenticity, a clear alignment between discourse and practices, expertise and knowledge in sustainable fashion, and transparency in brand collaborations. According to respondents, these qualities reinforce the influencers' perceived credibility and contribute to positioning them as key actors in the transition toward more sustainable fashion consumption.

KEYWORDS: social media influencers, sustainable fashion, Generation Z, persuasive knowledge model, parasocial interactions.

WORD COUNT: 22,886



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