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BLOGGERS AND INFLUENCERS - THE PHENOMENON OF DRIVING CONSUMER FASHION CHOICES

BLOGERI I INFLUENCERI, FENOMENI UTJECAJA NA POTROŠAČE MODNIH ODJEVNIH PROIZVODA

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ABSTRACT

Social networking has become an integral part of everyday life of today's modern consumer. Social media are used for sending messages and sharing product-related information, experiences, and recommendations with virtual friends. The dramatic increase in social media use has posed a major challenge to the fashion industry, prompting it to adapt its communication and content to social media users. Content posted on social networks caters for the needs of consumers and provides both them and businesses with benefits of social media marketing campaigns. A variety of criteria are used to measure the success of marketing efforts on social media platforms, such as fashion influencer tags, audience engagement, and the percentage of discussions related to fashion. The fashion industry, which once struggled to reach its target market, is now achieving it much more easily and faster thanks to social networking. In today's digital landscape, communication is more important than ever. Social media influencers have become a worthy extension of the marketing department; their authority is unquestionable, and their reach and impact are greater than that of any traditional advertising method. The fashion industry sees the influencer as an archetypal consumer, a persona who embodies the real consumer and whose characteristics it considers when creating a trend, a fashion product, and eventually the marketing campaign itself. The paper aims to

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identify the role of influencers in the fashion industry and examine the extent to which they affect/ consumer purchase decisions.

KEYWORDS: social networks, consumers, fashion, fashion brands, consumption, influencers, fashion market, communication, information

SAŽETAK

Društvene mreže postale su neizostavan dio svakodnevnog života današnjeg suvremenog potrošača. Potrošači prenose poruke, pričaju o proizvodima i iskustvima i daju preporuke svojim „virtualnim" prijateljima o proizvodima koji im se sviđaju. Modnoj industriji društvene mreže postale su u kratkom roku temeljni komunikacijski izazov i sadržaj koji je plasiran na društvenoj mreži prilagođen je korisniku. Sukladno navedenom, sadržaj na društvenim mrežama je na sjecištu je stvarnih potreba potrošača i benefita koji potrošači imaju od kampanja na društvenim mrežama. Marketinške platforme društvenih mreža vode se sa različitim kriterijima poput tagova modnih Influencera, uključenost publike te postotku razgovora o modi. Industrija mode koja je nekoć s teškoćom dolazila do ciljanog potrošača, danas zahvaljujući društvenim mrežama dolaze lakše i brže. U vremenu totalne komunikacije, ali i zagušenja komunikacijskih kanala, influenceri postaju poželjna ekstenzija i njihov je autoritet neupitan, a utjecaj veći i od najbolje reklame. Industrija mode Influencere doživljava kao arhetipskog potrošača kojeg zamišlja kada kreira trend, modni proizvod i u konačnici samu marketinšku kampanju. U radu će se nastojati utvrditi stvarna uloga Influencera u modnoj industriji, te će se kroz provedeno istraživanje istražiti njihova uloga i značaj pri donošenju odluke o modnom proizvodu.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: društvene mreže, potrošači, moda, modne marke, potrošnja, Influenceri, tržište mode, komunikacija, informacije

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to continuous advances in information technology in today's modern society, social media, a new, easily accessible source of information has become an integral part of everyday life. The media has always been a driving force of public opinion and social change, which is why the need to harness its power is still strong. The only thing that has changed is the way in which this is done. The main function of the media is to present the goods, services and products in demand. Technological advancement has enabled the development of new forms of media such as blogs, social networks and web portals. The power and influence of the media, and therefore of social networks, is profound and all-pervasive. New technologies have changed the world we live in, our habits, behaviour, and the way we communicate. A blog is a digital platform that enables the blog owner to create and post content and share opinions and experiences with their audience. The fact that younger generations routinely check updates on their friends' or acquaintances' activities demonstrates the powerful influence of social networks. Social media offer their users an opportunity to experiment with their identities and change certain aspects of their self depending on the current trends. People are inclined to trust a product and more likely to buy it if they see on one of the social networks that a friend has bought or recommended it. Sharing content on social networks increases its exposure. The search for products, services and information begins with search engines such as Google, and social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The rapidly developing digital technology has

opened up a world of possibilities for the advertising industry. Social media are used to connect businesses with potential consumers. Promotion and sales through social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, which involves daily communication with users and customers, has become a necessity rather than a matter of preference. Social media followers seek for new and useful information, and want that information to be accurate and timely. The role and importance of social networks should not be taken lightly. Even traditional industries and organisations are adapting their communication strategies that now begin by collecting information on social networks. Social media is a two-way communication medium, which has completely changed the way businesses interact with customers. Through adequate use of social networks, businesses can improve their sales results and build a loyal consumer base.

2. FASHION AS AN AESTHETIC EXPRESSION IN CLOTHING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Fashion constantly changes and is inspired by new trends. It has evolved from being completely conservative to being fully liberal, and then at one point it became a modern feminist movement. There are certain rules in the fashion world that consumers can choose to either follow or ignore. However, the concept 'less is more' is still valid. It is important to be aware that by dressing a certain way, a person is sending a message. This message can be positive or negative, depending on how one dresses and presents himself/herself. "Communication is a channel through which messages about values, social climate and goals are conveyed, and in this way, personal and common interests can be identified. Given that it involves a number of people, communication can both solve problems and generate new ones" (Žugaj et al., 1999, 541). Despite the fact that liberalism has a positive connotation, it is important to know which clothes are appropriate for which situations and dress accordingly. "The main features of the youth market are considerable purchasing power and willingness to spend money" (Kesić, 2006, 60). Fashion is a complex system consisting of many components that influence each other. In spite of its long history, the phenomenon of fashion has only recently become a subject of research. It is important to distinguish between fashion and style - style is a movement embodied in an artistic structure and is associated with the history of art, whereas fashion does not necessarily have a deeper meaning. According to Georg Simmel, fashion has two functions: to connect and differentiate. On the one hand, it shows a tendency towards egalitarianism, but on the other, a tendency towards individualism (the need to be different and stand out). Fashion used to be closely connected to class and commonly associated with the elite. As soon as the lower class started following a trend, it ceased to be fashion. As a result of the development of the industry, consumer society, and marketing in the modern age, fashion has permeated all levels of society, constantly accelerating the pace at which it changes. There is no longer just one fashion, there is a range of fashions, which reflects the growing trend towards individualisation. In trying to find their place in society, individuals consciously build their style and the image they want to present to the world, using fashion as a cultural code of communication. "Market research begins by studying consumer behaviour. The development of mass media has further emphasised the concept of ideal body and beauty image that varies across different cultures" (Erceg Jugović et al., 2016, 146). Ideal body images such as 'a slim and firm but not extremely muscular female body with full bosom' (Benton et al., 2015; Levine et al., 2002, in Erceg Jugović et al., 2016, 146) or, for example, 'a muscular male body with broad shoulders, a flat stomach, narrow waist and hips' (Tiggemann, 2011, in Erceg Jugović et al., 2016, 146), are body forms young people are trying to conform to. We are constantly

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bombarded by the media telling us about 'our' needs through advertisements, films or television programmes, thereby shaping social trends." (Špinderk, 2016, 32)

3. DETERMINANTS OF THE YOUNG CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND THE CONSUMER BUYING PROCESS

Living in the world which provides them with free and unlimited access to information and communication devices, young consumers have a multitude of options to choose from when it comes to purchasing. Their behaviour is influenced by promotional messages on social networks. "Consumer behaviour is the process whereby consumers obtain and consume products, services and ideas" (Kesić, 2006, 5).

3.1. MOTIVATION AND PERSONALITY

Motivation involves goal setting and achievement. "The internal factors which drive a person to action, direct and control it are called motives" (Kesić, 2006, 139). The emergence of motives and their impact on society are undeniable (Kesić, 2006, 140). "Thus, even innate motivation is innate only in essence; it assumes its social component within the framework of a specific society, which in turn determines the behaviour of individuals in a specific environment" (Kesić, 2006, 140). Instruments for reaching the desired state are called motives. There is a hierarchy of motives, i.e. needs that consumers seek to have met. "Essentially, consumer behaviour, and thus the behaviour of those sending messages, is aimed at satisfying the current needs of message recipients because these affect their attention, perception and behaviour" (Kesić, 2003, 63). Goals change on a daily basis; they are adapted to the developments in the environment and to consumers. Human needs are grouped into categories based on their superiority and precedence over other needs that drive human behaviour. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that an individual is motivated by physiological needs such as the need for water, food and clothing; social needs that include the need to be part of a group; esteem needs, and self-actualisation needs that include self-fulfilment. In the new postulation, Maslow suggests that needs are overlapping, i.e. people seek to satisfy higher level needs once lower level needs have been met to a certain level.

3.2. YOUNG CONSUMERS' LIFESTYLE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS BUYING

Nowadays, brands are everywhere and accessible to everyone. This takes consumer shopping experience to the next level. Consumer preference for branded products is increasing. Consumer spending is driven by marketing activities such as advertising and promotional campaigns which exploit lifestyle appeals to increase the market value of the offered product. Modern consumers, in particular the youth, associate a product with a certain lifestyle, they follow trends and buy brands to reflect their actual or imaginary status in the society, i.e. social group they (want to) belong to.

3.3. THE PROCESS OF CHOOSING A FASHIONABLE CLOTHING PRODUCT

Fashion changes from season to season, but the purpose of clothing and footwear has been the same since the beginning of human civilisation. At an age when everyday life has acquired a

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distinctly futuristic flair, new concepts, materials and technologies have been introduced that have completely changed the fashion world and the way we experience clothing. Consumers want to feel comfortable in their clothes, but they also want the clothes they buy to fit well. There are different styles of clothes in the fashion world, so it is important to recognise what fits one best and what clothes make one feel comfortable. Current fashion styles include boho, romantic, street, country, sophisticated, heavy metal, casual and sports. Adding an interesting detail can instantly lift an outfit. When it comes to choosing a fashion item, one should avoid details that are loud and brash as they can create a wrong impression.

3.4. FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND FASHION PRODUCT CHARACTERISTICS THAT DRIVE PURCHASING DECISIONS

In the process of searching for a fashionable clothing item, the consumer sifts through information, evaluates it, and the feedback is used to improve the criteria for that product. The criteria are the specifications and standards that the consumer uses when choosing a product. There are objective and subjective criteria that vary depending on the consumer, i.e. the decision maker. (Kesić, 2006, 323). Price is an important factor regardless of the product in question, and its importance varies from product to product (Kesić, 2006, 324). Consumers rely on prices to make conclusions on product quality. "Given that the price provides the consumer with information on both the 'cash flow' and product quality, the consumer's inclination to rely on the price as an indicator of quality can vary significantly depending on the product category" (Lijović et al., 2017, 63). A brand is a name, term, symbol, design, or a combination of these that identifies the products or services of one seller or group of sellers and differentiates them from those of competitors. "The success of a product is dependent on the positioning, i.e. the value that customers believe a product provides them with" (Renko et al., 2010, 2). Brands are becoming an increasingly important factor in the fashion product choice, and many products in the modern world are brand-based. "Manufacturers and retailers invest enormous amounts in promotion to create the desired perception of a product in which brand plays a key role" (Kesić, 2006, 324). Country of origin is a significant factor in making a decision on buying a fashion clothing item as it affects the perception of the value of the product. "There is a growing trend of delocalisation and shifting production to developing countries in recent decades. Many products are designed in one country and manufactured or assembled in another" (Krajanović et al., 2015, 2). It varies from one consumer to another which product features matter the most. Enjoyable shopping environment is important, as are a number of other characteristics of the product and the purchase process (Kesić, 2006, 324). "On the basis of this concept, the market is segmented by using the benefits that particular groups of consumers attribute to specific characteristics" (Kesić, 2006, 342).

4. COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

With the advent of social networks, new communication channels have opened up that have made communication faster and easier. Social media, as a communication channel, has changed the way people form relationships and communicate. At present, social media is the fastest growing phenomenon that has revolutionised the way messages are conveyed. They allow Internet users to share experiences, opinions, photos, videos and other multimedia content. The variety of social media facilitates social interaction and connectivity using a very simple technology, which makes them accessible to a large number of users with different social backgrounds. Successful managers have long understood why online communication is one of

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the key factors behind a company's success. It enables businesses to establish contact with the contemporary consumer. A company website enables consumers to find all the information they need about the company and its products and services in one place.

4.1. ONLINE COMMUNICATION SERVICES

An Internet forum is an online discussion site where participants can communicate with each other by posting messages with various content. The modern forums originated from conferencing systems and bulletin boards, developed in the late 1970s, and are a technological evolution of the dialup bulletin board system. Forum topics typically include technology, video games, sports, music, and fashion. As a rule, forums require registration if you want to post messages, but not for reading messages. You do not need to register under your given name but can use an alias. Forum rules ensure the smooth exchange of information between users, maintain an environment conducive to constructive discussions, and ensure the anonymity of all users. Forums provide real-time information on a wide variety of topics related to the daily life of people, and allow sharing of their knowledge, skills and achievements. A blog is an online diary or journal written by the blog owner. Entries are shown in reverse order, i.e. the most recent ones are posted at the top. Many blogs are personal in nature where their owners write about events from their own lives. They include links to other websites or commentary on various events. Many companies and education institutions have recognised blogs as a great communication channel for sharing ideas and knowledge. Fashion bloggers' outfit combinations can provide us with ideas for looks we can buy or create ourselves using pieces we already have. Fashion blogs are bringing the fashion industry closer to the consumer, showing us what is trendy and giving us fashion tips. Unlike fashion magazines and television shows, fashion bloggers typically comment on the latest and future trends. Fashion blogs provide unlimited access to the fashion world to anyone with Internet access. "Veteran fashion journalists and editors have started to pick out the most talented bloggers and give them credibility by inviting them to their shows. As they could not ignore the dramatic rise in the popularity of new social media, the traditional media adopted the way bloggers communicate and interact with readers, by allowing them to write commentary on their portals and FB pages" (Batinić, Nova era modnih blogera, http://www.elle.hr/lifestyle/nova-era-modnih-blogera/, accessed on 4 January 2019). Online chat may refer to any kind of, typically, direct communication over the Internet between two or more persons. Chat (chat room, informal conversation) is a form of real-time transmission of messages, which are almost instantly visible, directly from the sender to the receiver. Most chats are divided into several chat rooms that provide a venue for discussion about a particular topic or are intended for people who share professional backgrounds or interests. Chat is popular among the younger population; however, with the growing popularity of real-time messaging tools, chat, as one of these tools, is gaining importance in business communication. Chat can be used to communicate by real-time messaging between two people. Increasingly advanced software tools also enable group chatting.

4.2. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON YOUNG CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOUR

Social media is omnipresent in the modern society. A vast majority of consumers research products or services on social media before making a purchase. The emergence of social media is one of the most important events in the history of media. Knowing how to capitalise on opportunities they offer has become imperative for brands today. Many companies and organisations have recognised the importance of collaborating with influencers on social media,

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i.e. bloggers, vloggers, YouTubers, Instagram and Twitter influencers, who cover various areas such as fashion, beauty, food, etc. Successful social media marketing campaigns enable brands to extend their reach and influence to a wider audience and build a large and loyal customer base, which most traditional media-based campaigns can only dream of. (Mrvoš, Djeca društvenih mreža: Dolazi Z generacija, http://www.novilist.hr/Znanost-i-tehnologija/Djeca-drustvenih-mreza-Dolazi-Z-generaciju?meta_refresh=true, accessed on 4 January 2019). New technologies have changed consumer expectations and behaviour and are affecting their buying habits. New techniques, tools, and methods have been developed to facilitate more effective communication with consumers. New technologies and social networks enable faster information sharing and interaction with consumers. Technology provides companies with an abundance of opportunities to connect with consumers and reach their target groups, thus eliminating the need for consumers to go to shopping malls.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A total of 222 respondents were surveyed with an aim to analyse the impact of influencers' and/or bloggers' posts on social networks on the purchasing decisions and behaviour of consumers buying fashionable clothing. The first step in the primary research consisted of defining the variables, i.e. the elements of influencers' power to affect the contemporary consumer's decision to purchase fashionable clothing. In order to survey as many respondents as possible and collect a sufficient amount of relevant research data, the number of questions and the complexity of answer scales were kept to a minimum. The questionnaire comprised 32 questions, which were classified into several logical categories. In one section of the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was used. The aim of the paper was to:

• categorise the objects (respondents) into a group of consumers who make the decision to buy a fashion clothing item based on what they saw in Instagram posts or read in blogs; the group should be homogeneous with respect to certain variables (purchase decision, purchase frequency; link between the purchased product and influencer posts);

• determine the extent to which influencers and bloggers affect the behaviour of contemporary consumers and their choice of fashion clothing;

• determine the extent to which the consumer's dress style and attitudes towards fashion match those recommended by influencers;

• determine whether consumers rely on influencers' and bloggers' opinion rather than their own when it comes to choosing fashion clothing.

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis H1: Influencers' and bloggers' fashion-related commentary and posts impact the contemporary consumer's choice and fashion style;

Hypothesis H2: The concept of fashion is based on relationships developed with consumers who adopt the fashion, in which influencer marketing plays a significant role.

Of the total of 222 respondents who participated in the survey, 67 (30.2%) are women, while 155 (69.80%) are men. 153 respondents (68.90%) are aged 20-29. 71 (32%) have completed secondary school; 85 (38.30%) have a bachelor's degree, while 65 (29.30%) have a master's or higher degree. As for their employment status, 81 respondents (36.50%) are employed full-time; 7.2% are employed part-time; 39.2% are students; 15.60% are unemployed; and 1.4% are retired. 25.2% of the respondents earn between HRK 2,000.00-5,000.00 a month, followed by 20.7% whose monthly income ranges between HRK 5,001.00-8,000.00. 76.6% of the respondents believe that influencers have a significant impact on the decision to purchase fashion clothing, while 82.40% consider themselves fashion connoisseurs. 31.10% of the respondents buy their clothing directly from the manufacturer's website.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for nominal and ordinal data (not including Likert-type items)

Variable	Subgroup	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	67	30.2
	Female	155	69.8
	Total	222	100.0
Age group	Under 20 years	21	9.5
	20-29 years	153	68.9
	30-39 years	24	10.8
	40-49 years	14	6.3
	50 years and over	10	4.5
	Total	222	100.0
Level of education	Primary school	1	0.5
	Secondary school	71	32.0
	Bachelor degree	85	38.3
	Master's degree or higher	65	29.3
	Total	222	100.0
Employment status	Unemployed	35	15.8
	Employed (full-time)	81	36.5
	Employed (part-time)	16	7.2
	Student	87	39.2
	Retired	3	1.4
	Total	222	100.0
Monthly income after tax (in HRK)	Under 2,500	89	40.1
	2,500 to 5,000	56	25.2
	5,001 to 8,000	46	20.7
	8,001 to 12,000	16	7.2
	Over 12,000	15	6.8
	Total	222	100.0
Would you say that influencers' posts affect people's decision to buy new clothes??	Yes	170	76.6
	No	52	23.4
	Total	222	100.0
Would you say that you are a connoisseur of fashion and fashion brands?	Yes	32	14.4
	Maybe	151	68.0
	No	39	17.6
	Total	222	100.0

Where do you usually buy clothes?	From the manufacturer (store)	29	13.1
	Directly from the manufacturer's online shop	69	31.1
	Shopping centre	63	28.4
	Specialised fashion stores	41	18.5
	I make them myself	20	9.0
	Total	222	100.0
Which of the following fashion products have you bought in the past 6 months?	Evening wear	32	14.4
	Blouses and/or dresses	56	25.2
	Jeans and/or jackets	41	18.5
	Jumpsuits	30	13.5
	Bags	25	11.3
	Shoes	29	13.1
	Beauty products	1	0.5
	Total	214	96.4
Would you say that you are a fan of famous designers?	Yes	174	78.4
	No	40	18.0
	Total	214	96.4
How much would you be willing to pay for a designer handbag mentioned in an influencer's post?	100 EUR	46	20.7
	200 EUR	79	35.6
	250 EUR	56	25.2
	300 EUR	23	10.4
	400 EUR	3	1.4
	500 EUR	7	3.2
	Total	214	96.4
How likely are you to buy a fashion clothing item advertised by an influencer in the future?	Definitely will	85	38.3
	Probably will	129	58.1
	Definitely will not	0	0.0
	Total	214	96.4

Cluster analysis is the name for a group of multivariate techniques whose primary purpose is to group objects based on the characteristics they possess (Hair et al., 2010). Multivariate means that it analyses multiple variables simultaneously and together as part of a whole. Cluster analysis typically analyses objects, rather than variables, as is the case in factor analysis. However, the characteristics of objects are defined by variables which thereby also become part of cluster analysis. Unlike other multivariate statistical techniques, cluster analysis does not provide an empirically-based evaluation of a variable, but rather uses the variables set by the researcher (Hair et al., 2010). Ward's hierarchical clustering method was used to identify groups of respondents with different opinions about the impact of influencers and fashion bloggers on

the purchase decision. Answers to question items on the scale regarding fashion clothing were used as the basis for grouping. A two-cluster solution was selected. The first cluster comprises 82 participants and the second 140. In order to identify cluster characteristics, chi-square tests and independent t-tests of the sample were conducted. For tables larger than 2x2, adjusted standardised residuals in the form of z-scores were calculated to identify specific items with significant deviations from the expected frequencies. To test for differences in the components from the principal component analysis, component scores were calculated. All continuously dependent variables tested showed significant deviations from normal distribution, as determined by Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests and visual inspection of the distribution. However, the sample is large enough to allow the central limit theorem to normalise the distribution of means, so parametric tests have been performed. Variables that were found to be statistically significant were analysed, as were all scores related to differences in component scores regardless of significance. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, p-values were not corrected due to family-wise error. The means of some continuous variables cannot be meaningfully interpreted without consulting on the meaning of particular responses represented by the means in Table 2. Starting with demographic composition, cluster 1 comprises respondents who are, on average, older than those in cluster 2 (t (129.9) = 2.250; p = .026), although the effect is not very large (d = 0.326). Cluster 1 respondents are more likely to consider buying a fashion item advertised by bloggers and/or influencers considering the total amount of such items purchased in a year (t (165.7) = 3.243; p < .001). Moreover, the analysis investigates whether consumers habitually follow influencer posts and how that affects their buying habits (t 167.1) = 2.723; p < .001). Cluster 1 respondents are willing to pay more for an influencer-advertised fashion product than respondents in cluster 2 (t (134.5) = 3.128; p = .002). Cluster 2 respondents consider more factors in a fashion product when making their purchase decisions (t (158.3) = -3.258; p < .026). This is the only instance where cluster 2 scored significantly higher than cluster 1. Cluster 1 respondents consider themselves connoisseurs of fashion (χ2 (2) = 10.222; p = .006) more than cluster 2 respondents. They buy fashion items directly from the manufacturer's website (z = 2.6; p = .009) or make their clothes themselves using the designs of famous designers (z = 2.2; p = .028), unlike cluster 2 respondents, who are more likely to buy their clothing at the shopping centre (z = 3.5; p < .001). Cluster 1 respondents will definitely buy fashion products from famous fashion designers, while cluster 2 respondents will probably buy such clothes in the future (χ2 (1) = 15.250; p < .001). When we look at the component items scale on the scale of attitude towards the role of fashion and clothing in everyday life, on item 'fashion is an expression of self', cluster 1 respondents scored significantly higher on all components, except on social influence, where no significant difference was found (t (152,1) = - 0.434; p = .665). The differences are most significant on components 'fashion is imposed by society' (t (216.9) = 8.032; p < .001) and 'fashion is a lifestyle' (t (218.8) = 8.350; p <, 001), with very large effect size (d > 1). No significant differences were found between clusters when it comes to components regarding possible limitations to buying a fashion product today.

Table 2. Crosstabs of clusters by various variables

Variable	Answer	Statistic	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	χ^2, df, p, V
How likely are you to follow influencer posts and buy products	Definitely will	Frequency	19	13	10.222
		Expected f.	11.8	20.2	2
		Percentage	23.2%	9.3%	.006
		z-value	2.8	-2.8	.215

they advertise in the future?	Probably will	Frequency	54	97	
		Expected f.	55.8	95.2	
		Percentage	65.9%	69.3%	
		z-value	-0.5	0.5	
	Definitely will not	Frequency	9	30	
		Expected f.	14.4	24.6	
		Percentage	11.0%	21.4%	
		z-value	-2.0	2.0	
Where do you usually buy your clothes?	Directly from the manufacturer (store)	Frequency	17	12	
		Expected f.	10.7	18.3	
		Percentage	20.7%	8.6%	
		z-value	2.6	-2.6	
	Directly from the manufacturer's online shop	Frequency	23	46	
		Expected f.	25.5	43.5	
		Percentage	28.0%	32.9%	
		z-value	-0.7	0.7	
	Shopping centre	Frequency	12	51	20.315
		Expected f.	23.3	39.7	4
		Percentage	14.6%	36.4%	<.001
		z-value	-3.5	3.5	.303
	Specialised fashion stores	Frequency	18	23	
		Expected. f.	15.1	25.9	
		Percentage	22.0%	16.4%	
		z-value	1.0	-1.0	
	I make them myself	Frequency	12	8	
		Expected f.	7.4	12.6	
		Percentage	14.6%	5.7%	
		z-value	2.2	-2.2	
How likely are you to buy designer fashion products in the future?	Definitely will	Frequency	44	41	15.250
		Expected f.	30.6	54.4	1
		Percentage	57.1%	29.9%	<.001
	Probably will	Frequency	33	96	.267
		Expected f.	46.4	82.6	
		Percentage	42.9%	70.1%	
Total	Frequency		82	140	

Note: Expected f. – expected frequency, Percentage – refers to percentage within a cluster, χ^2 – chi-square test value, df – degrees of freedom, p – exact statistical significance, V – Cramer's V effect size.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for reasons for buying fashion products (reasons were ranked)

Why do you buy fashion products? (ranks)	M	CI$_{low}$	CI$_{high}$	SD	N
Clothes are a necessity	1.91	1.75	2.08	1.24	214
Products presented by influencers make us stand out from the crowd	2.77	2.58	2.96	1.41	214
Wearing a product advertised by an influencer makes us different, more urban looking and interesting	3.71	3.52	3.91	1.48	214
Products advertised by influencers have a higher reputation than those not advertised by influencers	3.90	3.69	4.12	1.61	214
Influencers' input plays an important role in developing one's own dress style	3.95	3.77	4.13	1.34	214
One needs to continuously cultivate one's image projected through clothes	4.76	4.55	4.97	1.55	214

The statistics presented in Table 3 best describe the cluster of consumers who find fashion extremely important and who follow influencers' posts. The data suggest that for this cluster of consumers, fashion is an investment that helps them express their individuality. Appearance has always been important to them. For them, fashion helps people to distinguish themselves from others. When this is considered in the context of products presented by influencers (M = 2.77), it can be concluded that fashion makes consumers who follow influencers stand out, look more urban, and more interesting (M = 3.71). Furthermore, the data suggest that they are good at choosing what suits their personality best. Today, fashion is accessible to everyone and following it has become a lifestyle. Clothes are often considered a reflection of one's success, fame and social status. For many, wearing fashionable clothes is a top priority; it helps them stand out from the rest, draw attention to themselves, and increases their satisfaction. Fashion is an art form where everyone can be an artist and create their own designs. The way a person dresses affects other people's opinions about that person. First impressions are important because we evaluate a person based on them. A person may claim that he/she does not follow fashion trends and is not fashion conscious, but they still look at themselves in the mirror and think about what to wear. Consciously or not, people dress to project their own perception of themselves. Fashion has always had cyclical nature, which allows consumers to create their distinctive style. Clothes are a necessity and therefore it is said that fashion is one of the basic human needs, regardless of whether you are fashion conscious or not (M = 1.91). One needs to create one's own style of dress, but also be sensible and aware of one's own projection in the eyes of others. Influencers play a crucial role in this type of communication (M = 3.95). It is not enough to leave a good impression once; you need to live up to the image you have created of yourself (M = 4.76). However, the most important thing is to be true to yourself and simply enjoy creating your own style, because fashion is, first and foremost, a freedom of choice. The role of influencers is to present the latest fashion in their posts.

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Table 4. Results of independent samples t-tests of differences between clusters

Dependent variable	Cluster	M	SD	n	t	df	p	d
Age	Cluster 1	2.46	1.06	82	2.250	129.9	.026	0.326
	Cluster 2	2.16	0.75	140				
Do you stand out in your company with your own style of dress?	Cluster 1	2.55	1.07	82	-3.528	158.3	<.001	0.496
	Cluster 2	3.06	0.98	140				
In your opinion, is fashion a reflection of one's identity?	Cluster 1	4.08	0.98	77	3.243	165.7	<.001	0.458
	Cluster 2	3.61	1.04	137				
In your opinion, is fashion a reflection of one's personality?	Cluster 1	4.08	0.98	77	2.723	167.1	.007	0.384
	Cluster 2	3.69	1.06	137				
How much would you be willing to pay for a designer handbag mentioned in an influencer's post?	Cluster 1	2.78	1.28	77	3.128	134.5	.002	0.457
	Cluster 2	2.24	1.06	137				
Component 1a – I would be willing to pay quite a lot for a fashion product presented by influencers.	Cluster 1	0.55	0.55	82	8.032	216.9	<.001	1.028
	Cluster 2	-0.32	1.06	140				
Component 2a – I give a lot of thought to the way I dress	Cluster 1	0.46	0.90	82	5.748	177.9	<.001	0.793
	Cluster 2	-0.27	0.96	140				
Component 3a – I buy new clothes every season	Cluster 1	0.28	0.88	82	3.441	190.9	.001	0.469
	Cluster 2	-0.17	1.03	140				
Component 4a – Dressing up lifts my spirits	Cluster 1	-0.04	1.09	82	-0.434	152.1	.665	0.061
	Cluster 2	0.02	0.95	140				
Component 5a – Lifestyle and fashion	Cluster 1	0.59	0.64	82	8.350	218.8	<.001	1.094
	Cluster 2	-0.34	1.02	140				
Component 1b - Availability	Cluster 1	0.17	0.97	80	1.890	170.9	.060	0.265
	Cluster 2	-0.10	1.01	137				
Component 2b - Affordability	Cluster 1	0.17	0.92	80	1.947	181.4	.053	0.270
	Cluster 2	-0.10	1.03	137				
Component 2c - Trust	Cluster 1	0.11	1.06	80	1.206	152.9	.230	0.172
	Cluster 2	-0.06	0.96	137				

Note: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, n – subgroup size, t – Welch's t-test value, df – degrees of freedom, p – statistical significance, d – Cohen's d effect size.

An independent t-test of the samples was conducted to determine what characteristics are more likely to influence the intention to purchase fashion clothing presented by influencers and/or written about by bloggers. Answers to the question "How likely are you to buy clothing

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advertised by influencers in the future?" were used as a basis for determining the purchase intention of the respondent, i.e. the consumer. None of the respondents chose the answer "I definitely will not". The remaining two options included: "I definitely will" and "I probably will". For the purpose of this paper, the respondents who had expressed their intention to buy fashion clothing in the future were compared against each other, and the results were presented as 'attitude towards fashion clothing advertised by influencers and bloggers'. The most significant difference was found in the 'person with style' component. Respondents who said they would definitely purchase a product in the future had more positive attitudes towards the style of dress promoted by influencers and fashion bloggers (t (191.5) = 3.688; p < .001), with medium effect size (d = .507). The scores for 'I am willing to pay a significant amount of money for the latest fashion item presented by influencers' (t (157.1) = 2.498; p = .014, d = .359), as well as the scores for the component 'I give a lot of thought to the way I dress' (t (202.1) = 2.056; p = .041, d = .286) were significantly higher in respondents with higher purchase intention, who buy new clothes every season. No significant differences were found between the two groups of respondents on components 'I use fashion magazines to help me choose a fashion product' (t (176.0) = -0.290; p = .772) and 'dressing up lifts my spirits' (t (189.6) = 0.280; p = .780). The selection of variables is a crucial step in research and depends on the goals a researcher wants to achieve. This is why we considered the following: 'willingness to buy the latest fashion item presented by influencers'; 'I give a lot of thought to the way I dress' and/or 'I buy new clothes every season' on both the conceptual and practical level, given that the variables must properly characterise clustered objects and be relevant to the goals of the analysis. It was important to include in the analysis those variables that best represent the similarity under study. The selection of variables was made on the basis of theoretical assumptions or models.

Table 5. Results of independent samples t-tests of differences in components on the fashion attitude scale between participants with different buying intentions

Dependent variable	Group	M	SD	n	t	df	p	d
Component 1a – I would be willing to pay quite a lot for a fashion product presented by influencers	Always	0.22	1.06	85				
	Sometimes	-0.13	0.88	129	2.498	157.1	.014	.359
Component 2a – I give a lot of thought to the way I dress	Always	0.17	0.88	85				
	Sometimes	-0.11	1.07	129	2.056	202.1	.041	.286
Component 3a – I buy new clothes every season	Always	0.28	0.92	85	3.688	191.5	<.001	.507
	Sometimes	-0.21	1.01	129				
Component 4a – Dressing up lifts my spirits	Always	-0.04	1.00	85				
	Sometimes	0.00	0.97	129	-0.290	176.0	.772	.041
Component 5a – Lifestyle	Always	0.01	0.97	85	0.280	189.6	.780	.030
	Sometimes	-0.02	1.05	129				

Note: Groups refer to answers to the question "How likely are you to buy a fashion clothing item advertised by an influencer in the future?" "Always" refers to participants who answered "Definitely will", and "Sometimes" to "Probably will".

6. CONCLUSION

We live in a digital world where social media and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube are shaping global communication. Social media have provided us with a new platform for social interaction and communication. The emergence of new forms of online communication has led to new ideas in the Internet world. Facebook is undoubtedly the most famous social networking site, but there are many others out there. Owing to the ever-growing number of users, Facebook and other social networking sites have become an ideal platform for marketing campaigns. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to imagine what marketing would look like without social media. Internet marketing is an indispensable tool in the industry. The modern global economy has become inseparable from internet marketing and social networking. Communication channels such as social networks are used as a source of useful information about potential consumers. The way we communicate with consumers is of the utmost importance. Thus, it is important to create a sustainable communication strategy that has a clear beginning and end. Fashion claims its place as part of the art world. High fashion requires creativity, skill and strategy. We often equate fashion with a brand, a superficial expression of fashion. Regardless of one's individual take on fashion, the fact remains that the fashion and art worlds, in which boundless imagination is intertwined with the search for beauty, are closely connected. Social networks have replaced magazines. Today, fashion trends spread online and affect brands worldwide. The benefits of social media for the fashion industry are obvious in the fact that many designers, regardless of whether they are famous, lesser-known, or just starting out in the fashion industry, use them to reach their target market.

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