



Consumers' perception of micro-influencer content with Fast fashion brands.

Trabajo de grado

Karoll Tatiana Espinosa Franco

Bogotá, Colombia

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Karoll Tatiana Espinosa Franco

Marketing y Negocios Digitales

Tutor:

Tunyaporn VICHENGIOR

Bogotá, Colombia

2024

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Glosario

Marketing digital: es un conjunto de técnicas y estrategias que promueven a una marca en entornos de internet como los sitios web, buscadores y redes sociales. Busca conocer a la audiencia en profundidad para ofrecerles contenidos y ofertas personalizadas de acuerdo con sus intereses y comportamiento en línea. (Shelley Pursell, 2023)

Decisión de compra: es el recorrido de un buyer persona en su ruta como comprador. Puede iniciar su proceso como un extraño que busca información y finalizar como tu cliente. Se lleva a cabo por medio de 5 etapas: reconocimiento, consideración, decisión, compra y posventa. (Ana Isabel Sordo, 2023)

Micro influencers: Son perfiles que tienen entre 10.000 y 100.000 seguidores. Su nivel de influencia y alcance es mayor que la categoría anterior. Son personas a quienes las marcas les prestan más atención y consideración. El tamaño de su audiencia les permite tener una mayor cercanía con sus seguidores. (Juan Molano, 2023)

Moda rápida: La moda rápida es un modelo de negocios que se centra en la producción de prendas al por mayor, y lo más rápidamente posible, en respuesta a las tendencias del momento. (Nicioli, 2023)

Resumen

Este estudio investiga la percepción de los consumidores de la Generación Z cuando están expuestos a contenidos de micro influencers en las redes sociales que promocionan marcas de moda rápida en el sector minorista, y cómo esto podría afectar a la decisión de compra. A través de los datos de la encuesta realizada a 150 participantes, el análisis de las respuestas y la comprobación de las hipótesis, la investigación explora aspectos clave como el reconocimiento de las marcas de moda rápida frente a las que no lo son, la relación entre los consumidores y los micro influenciadores, promoviendo variables en su dinámica que podrían beneficiar el compromiso y la interacción con la marca. Sin embargo, esta relación puede verse afectada negativamente por un cambio en la percepción del consumidor impulsado por las actuales tendencias de hábitos sostenibles. Por último, el estudio analiza cómo este contenido de prácticas insostenibles por parte de los influencers también podría afectar directamente al reconocimiento de la marca, provocando una transformación en las ventas y en la decisión de compra. Estos datos sugieren que las empresas en crecimiento deberían dar prioridad a las prácticas sostenibles para promover mejores opciones de consumo y mejorar sus estrategias de marketing.

Palabras clave: Micro-influencers, decisión de compra, sostenibilidad, percepciones de los consumidores, reconocimiento de marca, tendencias, moda rápida, mercado minorista.

Abstract

This study investigates the consumer perception of Generation Z when exposed to micro-influencers' content on social media that promotes fast fashion brands in the retail sector, and how this could affect purchase decision. Through the, survey data of 150 participants, analysis of the responses and testing of hypothesis, the research explores key insights such as the recognition of fast fashion brands versus non-fast fashion brands, the relationship between consumers and micro-influencers, promoting variables in their dynamic that could benefits brand engagement and interaction. However, this relationship can be negatively impacted by a shift in consumer perception driven by current sustainable habits trends. Finally, the study analyzes how this content of unsustainable practices by influencers might also directly affect brand recognition, leading to transformation in sales and purchase decision. These insights suggest awareness for growing businesses that should prioritize sustainable practices in order to promote better consumption choices and enhance their marketing strategies.

Key words: Micro-influencers, purchase decision, sustainability, consumers perceptions, brand recognition, trends, fast fashion, retail market.

1. Introduction

Currently, businesses seek to create better connections with consumers by using influencers or people who could promote their products or services. This approach is usually known as “Influencer Marketing” and its output is to generate a different interaction with customers, fostering a sense of loyalty and closeness in order to increase sales.

This process has shown better results with the use of micro-influencers rather than macro-influencers. The main reason is that the users perceive micro-influencers as more trustworthy and honest with their opinions, while influencers with a large number of followers could generate an image of obligation to the brand and flattery of the product or service they promote.

Despite the increasing popularity of using micro-influencers for product promotion, there is a risk that this might lead to an overabundance of recommendations, in many cases, this may result in better consumer acceptance of the brand or influencer. However, it can also generate problems, especially when it involves the promotion of non-sustainable brands as happens in the fast fashion retail industry. The promotion of these brands by micro-influencers, who are seen as more trustworthy and honest, might lead to increased consumer acceptance, perpetuating non-sustainable practices and negatively impacting in various environmental and social factors.

This document arises from recognizing the problem of the recommendation of non-sustainable brands by micro-influencers. This practice promotes greater consumer acceptance based on an image of trust and honesty, which can change purchasing behavior and brand perception.

To delimit the approach of this study, it is important to highlight that exist numerous studies that affirm that the consumers are against non-sustainable brands, however not many explore how consumers perceive the relationship with the influencer that promote these types of businesses. This situation can promote different emotions in the consumer that can lead to confusion in the decision making process, or in other words consumers could decide whether to continue buying from a brand promoted by an influencer they trust, despite knowing the related negative impacts.

For that reason, it born the next research question:

How does content creation by micro-influencers for unsustainable fast-fashion brands affect Gen Z's perception in the purchase decisions process?

The objective of this question is to focus on the consumers' perceptions when they face content that promotes non-sustainable practices in the retail sector and how this relates to their interaction with the micro-influencers. In addition, the user could encounter different variables such as the desire for social integration, trust in a brand review or the promotion of good consumption practices.

These results aim to promote more sustainable consumption in the retail sector, encouraging more responsible purchasing behavior through digital channels and social media, which currently are the most important channels to interact with consumers.

The document is going to be structured in various parts. First, is the introduction about the subject, using some research and results that others sources to provide a theoretical background and explain more about some terms related to influencers and purchase decision. Next, an explanation of the main objectives and methodology of this document, including the hypotheses. Finally, the analysis of the results obtained from 150 participants, along with conclusion, limitations, and recommendation for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The evolution of marketing in a digital environment.

Marketing is a term that is increasingly vital in contemporary business strategies fostering brand awareness for products or services. According to Kristy Snyder a write for Forbes, marketing is the process that includes from market research to advertising, with the goal of convince about the value of a product or a service fostering a relationship between the brand and the customer by establishing loyalty (Kristy Snyder, 2023).

This concept has been affected by cultural transformation and the way people access new information and address their needs, prompting businesses to adapt and give a solution. In fact, Annmarie Hanlon explains that in the emergence of Web Era 1.0 some businesses want to establish connection with their customers for that reason they started using a strategy call “direct marketing”. This approach was recognized using brochures and shopping-carts to promote information about businesses and product benefits.

Over time, different eras were implemented alongside technologies advancements and changes in cultural preferences, fostering new ways of interaction where was more important to promote a two-way communication between businesses and customers, driving digital transformation within the market and reduce time for marketers' engagement processes. Some important examples that were transformed include:

- Newspaper and magazine adverts to online adverts and social media.
- Door-to-door salespeople to email.
- Company brochures to website.
- Traditionnel public relations (PR) to online PR and blogs.
- Directories like yellow pages to search engine marketing.
- Community groups to social media networks.

Currently, we are experiencing the era of Web 4.0, characterized by the Internet of Things and the use of more devices in daily life. Also, this phenomenon reinforces the idea of easier connectivity to the internet for everyday activities. These improvements help marketers to redefine relationships between customers and businesses due to changes in behaviors and a shift away from the use of traditional tools (Hanlon, 2021).

In fact, these advances in technology generated benefits and threats, depending on the economic sector of the business. However, they have also fostered a sense of innovation within processes. consequently, a new concept known as digital disruption has emerged that means “the profound impact of new digital technologies and business models on existing industries,

companies, and markets. It often involves the displacement of traditional methods and the creation of entirely new ways of doing business.” (Magnetar IT, 2021).

Thanks to digital disruption, some businesses understand the importance of integrating digital tools into their processes in order to enhance customer loyalty and engagement. As a result, the primary value chain of some companies was modified to incorporate digital tools that promote cost reduction and expedited production. In the case of marketing processes, the use of websites, social media, apps, and other digital tools were more significant because they help to increase awareness and facilitate interaction with their customers.

Recognizing the significance of digital tools for marketing, in terms of analyzing and acquire data about the clients is important to mention the role of social media within a business strategy. In fact, according to a study of 1.800 marketers from business of all sizes answered “Social media marketing has been around for many years now, and the majority of marketers see it as an important part of their overall strategy. Fifty-eight percent of marketers say social media is “Very important”, with 30 percent saying it’s “Somewhat important”.” (*Buffer / State Of Social 2019*, 2019). According to this research social media is recognized as an important tool for building communities, offering information, fostering trust and loyalty, and delivering other benefits for businesses.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that acquiring data through social media not only aids in building communities with specific values but also facilitates understanding of behaviors and trends. Recognizing that each group with similar behavior and preference will be interested in

the same benefits of a product or services. According with Esteban Ortiz writer of an article in Our World in Data, the rise of social media is a pathway to understand digital transformation and highlight the drastically change of behavior by taking into account device usage and preferences of social media for modern communication. (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019)

Considering this insight and the rise of social media in today's world "the average 18 to 34-year-old was running 8.4 profiles on social media. In India, that average was 11.5." (Morris, 2022). This information helps to understand the importance of why there is a growing trend where social media users seek connectivity in a social and professional scope. This connectivity fosters communities with shared behaviors and helps to find information of interest for everyone.

Regarding the connection between customers and businesses is important to recognize the necessity for people to create communities that bring value and enriching experiences, thereby fostering loyalty and trust. Consequently, individuals are more interested in brands that actively listen to their audience and generate authenticity in their digital communication.

Based on the above, social media is a highly valued tool for marketers; however, its benefits are realized only by those who wield it effectively. Recognizing that integrating social media into marketing efforts could help to acquire more data and create brand awareness for any user, it is important to note that, despite its outstanding value, it often results in vague information and consequently fosters poorly developed marketing strategies. This is the reason exist some tools that enables marketers to focus on specific audiences that might be interested in the brand, and

promote better relationships by understanding behaviors and preference, thereby facilitating the creation of personalized content.

One of the main tools to understand the target audience of a brand is the creation of buyer persona “Buyer personas help you understand your customers (and prospective customers) better, making it easier for you to tailor your content, messaging, product development, and services to meet your target audience's specific needs, behaviors, and concerns.” (Flori Needle, 2023). By establishing the characteristics of the ideal customer with some information like interest, demographic information or potentially buying brands and other relevant data, companies can develop strategies aimed to connect with their audience and foster loyalty.

Furthermore, after analyzing the buyer persona it is important to recognize various aspects about the customer and how they interact with the brand. Despite the marketers’ efforts to pinpoint potential buyers to sell them a product or services, some customers find themselves in separate phases of engagement and interaction with the brand. This process is known as Customer journey “The customer journey is the series of interactions a customer has with a brand, product, or business as they become aware of a pain point and make a purchase decision.” (Aaron Agius, 2023). While the customer interacts with the brand, they experience different stages according with customer journey map that focus on Awareness, Consideration, and Decision, this help to understand what the customer are expecting of the business or how they want to create connection with the values and experiences offered by the brand.

Understanding the impact of digital disruption on the marketing landscape and utilization of digital tools to stay competitive and relevant in today's market is essential for businesses to embrace innovation with a customer-centric approach. In addition, recognizing the characteristics of the brand and the target customers could promote the creation of effective strategies that foster brand loyalty and highly valued experience. This approach involves a comprehensive understanding of customer behavior, preferences and digital channels and some other aspects of the digital culture that the market is constantly changing to meet audience expectation and enhance brand awareness.

2.2 Consumer behavior in purchase decision making process.

According with the last information, the marketing team should be able to categorize a customer base in various criteria, depending on preferences and behaviors, as well as the phase of the customer journey regarding the interaction with the brand base on decision-making and experiences. Understanding this insight is relevant for analyzing and acknowledging diverse factors that could influence consumer behavior at the time of considering a product or service.

Some factors that could impact consumer behavior can be personal factors, based on the channel where they interact with the brand and external influences. According to Hoyer et al.

(2012) cited from (John Dudovskiy, 2015) exist different categories that are explained in the following points:

- Situational factors: It is related to factors that are not controlled by the user but generates triggers for behavior, some examples could be location, environment, or timing.
- Personal factors: This situation is affected by preference and personal circumstances of the consumer, usually this data is the most important criteria for marketers in order to develop buyer persona and tailor a product or service to create effective marketing strategies.
- Social factor: This factor results in interaction and perspectives among customers. This situation could be affected by the influence of potential leaders.
- Cultural factor: It is related to cross-cultural differences between consumers on local and global scales. This factor is important to consider when is necessary to communicate something to a specific audience.

After identifying the factors mentioned above, it is relevant to understand additional theories that study customer behavior and the impulse behind decision-making processes. According to Hawkins Stern cited from (*Consumer Buying Behavior Theories & Models Retailers Should Know*, 2022), he developed the Impulse Buying Theory that is divided in following approaches:

- Escape purchase process: Is the most impulsive scenario that is related to the lack of need to acquire a product or service, yet proceeds to make the purchase decision.

- Planned purchase process: This situation takes place when the consumer plans to buy a product but expects the perfect situation to do it. This process often is prompted by factors of great deals, or price reductions.
- Reminder purchase process: When the consumer is prompted to purchase a product because they saw it elsewhere. This process is not related to immediate need but rather serves as a reminder of their intended purchase.
- Suggested purchase process: This situation is generated due to an effective word of mouth, where the consumer was not planning to make a purchase but after the product recommendation is willing to invest in it.

In fact, these theories previously described offer valuable insights into customer behavior based on different studies and highlight the key motives driving the purchase of a specific product or service. Nevertheless, in today's world due to the arising digital tools and channels use by businesses some researchers analyze new factors that could influence customer purchasing decisions. These new factors function as a complement to the existing theories, by giving a better comprehension of the online customers.

Some studies recognize that digital environment is driven by fast-paced behaviors, requiring businesses to adapt to these new situations. This is why one new factor that affects digital consumer behavior is adaptability "Everybody who wants to enter the network world in order to offer their products and services there must be aware of the distinctive approach, count on it and adapt to it." (Svatošová, 2013). Modern customers tend to develop emotional connections with

brands that demonstrate adaptability and responsiveness. These situations influence client behavior by changing brand perception through meaningful interaction.

Some other factors that could affect digital customer behavior related with the increasing market competition is “they consider that convenience, and trust are the most important variables, the next which are important for them are prices and quality of products.” (Lakshmi, 2016). In an era where various digital channels facilitate interaction between customers and businesses, clients interpret these platforms as a place of convenience and trustworthy by believing they could communicate with brands. Embracing this customer-centric approach promotes the recognition of the benefits of the process and product, fomenting reasons to stand out from the competition. At the end, this strategy helps to increase satisfaction and confidence through transparent information about the brand.

In addition, according to Euromonitor who analyzed consumer trends regarding behavior and preferences of a specific year found this increase need of the people “Young and Disrupted: Gen Z stand up for their beliefs and put themselves out there. These consumers are immune to traditional advertising. Authenticity and social impact make a difference.” (Euromonitor, 2023). which reaffirms that consumers today value authenticity in content that encourages companies to start analyzing the way they conduct their digital marketing campaigns for successful adaptability.

Therefore, the power of information takes place in the consumer decision-making process because for consumers there is an advantage in knowing more about the features of a product from various perspectives, enabling them to compare with the competitors. At the same time, trust is

determined by how the business manages the information to deliver better experience that reinforces the reshaping of marketing strategies nowadays.

2.3. Use of micro-influencers in digital marketing strategies.

According to the above, it is recognized that digital strategies and the use of social networks are a tool for marketing in order to connect with consumers and interact with them. In fact, it is important to recognize the role of an effective brand experience, trust, and convenience of using platforms, which can influence the behavior of consumers to foment purchase-decision of a product in a particular brand.

Due to this situation, nowadays there is an increase in the use of micro-influencers strategies "A micro-influencer is an influencer with a follower count within the range of 10,000-100,000 followers." (West, 2023). Additionally, according to the author of the paper the use of this technique can lead to benefits such as cost reduction since micro-influencers have a lower price range compared to a macro-influencer. Another benefit is that the community built by the micro-influencer, despite being a small number, are usually interested in the type of content that the influencer has, which increases the percentage of engagement with the brand.

According to Forbes magazine (Ehlers, 2021), where it describes that there can be situations with advantages or disadvantages depending on what the brand expects to achieve within its strategy. Some advantages apart from the price as mentioned above, according to Ehlers believes that micro-influencers have greater availability which benefits brands as they can have results with greater ease of agreements and reduced time. Another advantage described by the author is authenticity, since if an influencer begins to generate a lot of content related to advertising or brands, it encourages users to reduce their trust in the statements, associating everything to a monetary benefit and not to an enriching experience as the brand would expect. Finally, an advantage to the effectiveness of the marketing strategy for companies is that they can afford to work with many micro-influencers which would encourage more brand or product content on various platforms and increase a multi-market reach.

There are several theoretical models with implications that can benefit the analysis on influencers, according to Kay where she makes an analysis on the impact of macro and micro influencers, she identifies several differences of how a consumer perceives the creation of content about a brand or a product (Kay, S., Mulcahy, R., & Parkinson., 2020). The author talks about the persuasion model where consumers recognizing the intent of advertising and the use of their fame to promote a product and consequently persuade an audience, this practice promotes consumers to resist these promotional efforts and prefer to avoid them. At the same time, it highlights the importance of "Less is more" because it emphasizes the growing problem of buying followers that

would make influencers with high numbers of followers be seen under an unethical practice that in turn, might not be beneficial for a brand that aims to attract more audience.

According to Michael Gerlich who studies the power of personal connections and how micro-influencers affect consumer behavior (Gerlich, 2023), the author states that in the case that users know the influencer personally, it could favor their credibility since it allows associating personal and financial behaviors, in addition to similar preferences in order to promote the expectation of the benefits of the products. Another insight that the author remarks is that depending on the product that is purchased, consumer behaviors may differ if the consumer is a man or a woman, in turn this interaction will depend on whether the influencer is male or female which will give more credibility to the product, this situation is could be because consumers expect that whoever makes the recommendation is an expert in the field and knows the information about the product in order to give a reliable and trustworthy recommendation.

2.4 Performance of unsustainable brands

In the retail business sector exist various trends that could influence consumers. It is common for some of these trends to establish beauty and fashion standards, promoted by a brand, celebrity/influencer or a product which can boost sales at specific time. According to Matt Bertram

these fashion trends are related to a type of consumer behavior that emphasizes cultural, desires and aspiration influences which can create positive impact on personal success. He mentioned key insights into fashion landscape that affect consumers buyer decision, including emotional connection, desire, validation and social acceptance that promote the idea of fitting into a community that is constantly evolving. (Matt Bertram, 2023).

Due to this increasing sense of belonging to a culture marked by various trends that are constantly being restore and changed, a new retail model called Fast fashion is born “it involves the rapid design, production, distribution, and marketing of clothing, which means that retailers are able to pull large quantities of greater product variety and allow consumers to get more fashion and product differentiation at a low price.”(Maiti, 2024). Moreover, this type of model arises from the increased necessity of brands to maximize current trends set by major fashion houses and to create affordable clothing that any customer can purchase quickly.

This type of business model has impacted the way consumers behave in the fashion market, however, this increasing trend is also driven by different factors that promote sales and as explained before, it encourage consumers to feel positive emotions when acquiring clothing. In fact, according to Brittany Sierra, exits a social psychology aspect regarding fast fashion called Cognitive dissonance. This is the experience of conflicting values or beliefs cause by the emotion of acceptance and novelty, contrasted with the guilt and shame of promoting unsustainable behavior resulting in a divided community. (Brittany Sierra, Feb 2)

On the other hand, exist several factors that can promote or hinder the sales of an unsustainable fashion brand. One of these factors, as previously mentioned, is the role of influencers and their recognition in current marketing strategies in order to create awareness about a brand, product, or service as they are one of the main channels where it is influenced purchase decision. According to some research that says “The aim is for consumers to buy more clothes which are similar to the celebrities and to reduce the distance between them. At the same time they could show their unique vision and decent taste of fashion. Celebrities give the celebrity effect for fashion brand marketing and bring new life to the industry by enhance brand image.” (UkEssays, 2018). The perception of consumers in the presence of a public figures can promote the purchase of lower-cost product in order to create cultural and fashion proximity, fostering to generate acceptance among a group of people who have the same preferences based on an influencer.

Furthermore, in another research that said “it became clear that the more they hear of the issues, the more it consumes their mind and subconscious. The potential of these issues being discussed by the relatable SMIs, may provoke a shift in the mentality of the IFM consumers buying habits” (Duggan, 2021). This highlights the changing mindset of the last generation regarding sustainability products and the importance of creating conscience about purchase behavior. As a result, more people are interested in influencers who care about the information they share with their followers related to brand awareness. As the research suggests, this could promote more responsibility and a prompt faster change in consumers behavior.

Despite some customers understand what fast fashion is and identify when a brand engage in this practices, there are some companies who decided to create a change on the narrative of the brand image by using some tactics such as “Greenwashing”, according to Karen Becker-Olsen and Sean Potucek in encyclopedia of corporate social responsibility, define this term as a practice where organizations use as a false effort of environmental protection, (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013).

According to some researchers, the phenomenon of greenwashing exists due to different concepts or impact that this practice has depending on the organization analyzing the situation. Based on Francesca Bernini and Fabio La Rosa, in their research, they found a misunderstanding of Greenwashing within certain businesses and regulation or legal enforcement, leading to inconsistencies that allow businesses to create various types of advertising, sometimes promoting genuine environmental initiatives or misleading consumers about their sustainable practices. This research enhances the idea of a comprehensive study of the theoretical sustainability framework in order to create better regulation and audit process. (Bernini & La Rosa, 2024)

3. Methodology

The objective of this study is to better understand consumer perception regarding fast-fashion brands. It is known, unsustainable practices are extremely popular these days, forcing customers to adapt to a different way to consuming or social interaction based on varying preferences. In addition, it is common to relate to the premise that informer consumer does not like to interact with products that promote unsustainable practices due to issues related with poor workforce quality, deteriorated environment process and some other reasons. Nevertheless, there is not a substantial amount of research focused on consumer behavior when a frequent practice, such as influencer marketing, tries to promote fast fashion brands in the retail sector. Therefore, this research aims to better understand consumer purchase behavior towards social media content by micro-influencers when they promote a brand with fast-fashion process in the retail industry.

Consequently, this study will analyze and acquire data through quantitative research in order to address the research question of this document. This data collection format is going to generate numeric results enabling statistical analysis with graphics that present different formats of information. Whit this process, it allows the comparison of negative and positive variables that could affect the consumer when they interact with social media content promoting fast-fashion retail brands. This will help to better understand the theories of human behavior of gen Z related to purchase decision and gather more information about possible negative causes in the

relationship between the user and the influencer. The purpose of this research is to find valuable insights that could help build future marketing strategies and generate better experience and loyalty with a brand.

According with the previous information, a survey will be created to collect the information of a random sample of 150, the only limitation for the sample is to belong to gen Z (Born between 1995 and 2010) in order to identify different variables that could affect consumer perception. The survey is going to be shared through online channels such as social media, QR code, and email to ensure a diverse range of people could answer the questions base on their different cultures, communities or locations.

The survey is going to be divided into different stages, the first one is going to be related to demographic information such as gender, occupation and location. Next, the questionnaire will ask about participants' fast fashion practices in order to understand more about their purchase decision in the retail sector. Finally, the survey proposes different situations regarding relationship with influencers, retail stores, and sustainable or non-sustainable practices, to acquire valuable insights for this research. For this research we have the next hypothesis:

H1: Consumers struggle to accurately distinguish between fast fashion and non-fast fashion brands, complicating their decision-making process when purchasing products.

According to the research presented in the literature review some businesses use different strategies that promote a misunderstanding of their sustainable processes, with strategies such as cost reduction or different methods of workforce development. According to some regulations, these strategies could be considered as proper use of sustainable tools, leading customer to believe that the company have good environmental practices when it is not. In other words, using an advertising tool called Greenwashing.

These practices, like other types of advertising strategies, can change the perception of a consumer in terms of brand's image, altering the narrative of a fast fashion brand and leading consumers to believe that the brand is not involved in such manufacturing processes. This also poses a problem for non-fast fashion brands because they cannot achieve the same level of popularity among consumers. In addition, they struggle to promote their sustainable improvements as a value differentiation in comparison with other retail stores.

According to this, the hypothesis was developed in order to understand if the promotions of fast fashion brand is normalized among customer on social media due to lack of brand recognition, which could lead to acceptance of this type of content and influence purchase decision in favor of the brand, increasing sales while ignoring environmental, social and labor issues.

H2: The content created by micro-influencers for fast fashion brands significantly alters consumer perceptions.

According to some studies mentioned in the literature review, shown that customers of Generation Z are having a different way of consume goods, paying more attention to environmental processes, workforce conditions, sustainable products, and others factors, trying to balance these with various triggers for purchasing clothes like quality, trends, price or social influence. These investigations suggest that in this generation exists an increasing trend of being less tolerant with fast fashion brands, due to a better understanding of the negative consequences these businesses have on third parties. However, these companies are still maintaining high income and market share in the retail sector.

For that reason, this hypothesis aims to better understand consumers of generation Z and determine if they are not only aware of this type of issues caused by fast fashion brands and irresponsible consumption but also if they are really conscious of these situations, promoting an alteration of consumer perceptions regarding fast fashion brands, as some researchers may said.

H3: Micro-influencers' content for fast fashion brands primarily affects consumers' perception of the brand, more than their perception of the influencers, which impacts their purchase decisions.

Since the main objective of this study is to understand consumer perception when they are exposed to fast fashion ads on digital channels, this hypothesis seeks to know more about who is going to have most significant impact whether is the influencers or the brand caused by this type of content. In this context, exist different scenarios, in the case of the relationship with the influencer, it could be possible that variables such as loyalty, trust, and engagement might be affected, however, this does not necessarily represent a change directly in purchase decision, because the consequences are associated with the influencer but not with the brand. In the other case, if consumer perception change for the businesses, that could represent a change in terms of brand image, sales, and in some cases, production processes, potentially affecting consumers' purchase decision either in a negative or positive way.

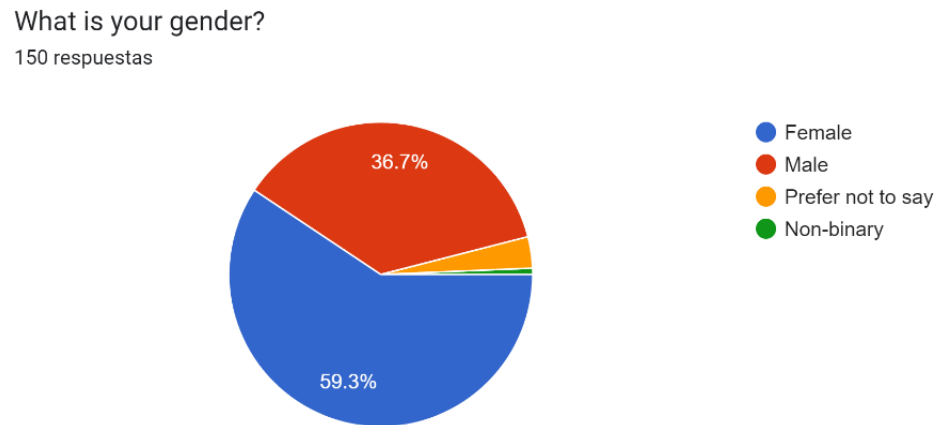
This results could be beneficial to influencers that want to aware more users about sustainable practices, because base on the results, it will be more possible to understand if sustainable content can truly generate an influence in this generation, in order to support more brands and products that have sustainable process, and at the same time, it generates social and environmental conscientization. In other cases, this could help to share information to more people

about retail processes, problematics of fast fashion concerning environment, labor and social aspects and finally promote different consumption habits.

4. Results and analysis

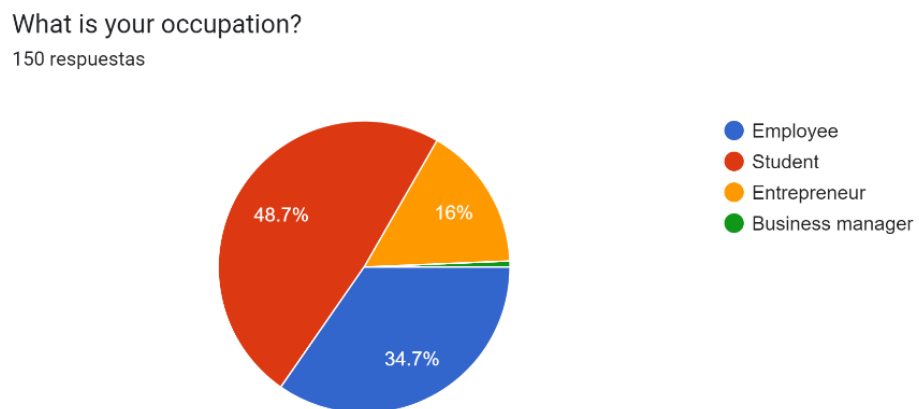
This analysis will follow an order that first present data about demographic result of the survey along with their explanation, followed by the data, charts and analysis of each hypothesis explained before. This order is designed to facilitate understanding of each stage and provide insights about consumer perceptions and purchase decisions regarding the promotion of fast fashion retail brands in digital content by micro-influencers.

Figure 1: Respondent information 1.



Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

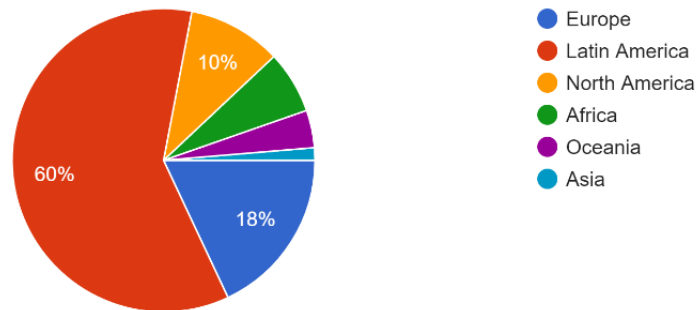
Figure 2: Respondent information 2.



Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

Figure 3: Respondent information 3.

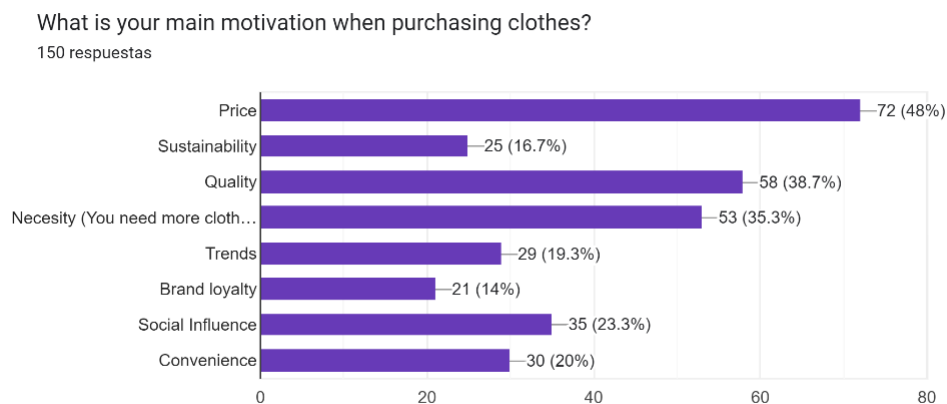
Where are you from?
150 respuestas



Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

These figures are presented first to provide information about the respondents, including demographic data such as gender, occupation, and country. Since the survey was exclusively distributed to people of generation Z, age was not considered as a question on the survey. In this context, this information could be used to better understand more about the responses of the other questions and data recollected, particularly this can be associated cultural perception and importance of the retail industry for each participant.

Figure 4: Motivation for purchase clothing.

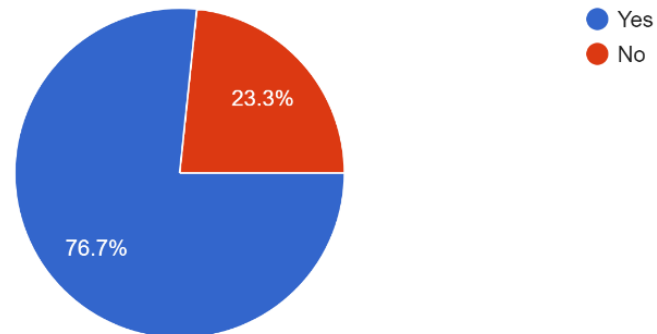


Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

This question aims to gain deeper understanding about the consumption patterns regarding the retail sector among the respondents. As it shows, in the customer purchase decision, the most important variables to buy clothing are Price with 72 answers (48%), Quality with 58 answers (38,7%) and Necessity (35,3%). Initially, this suggests some changes on the consumption habits of generation Z, because it was expected that trends and social influence would have more significant results, according to some explanations in the literature review.

Figure 5: Knowledge of fast fashion

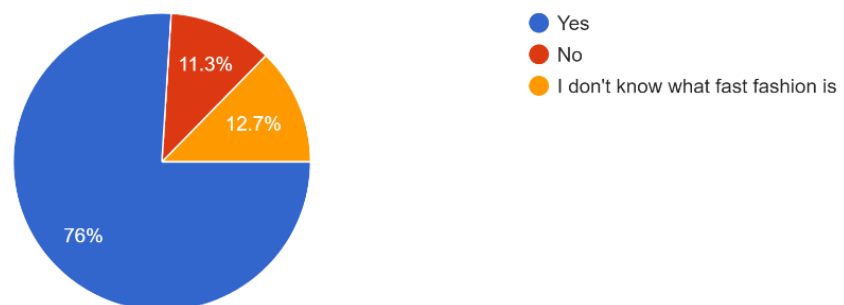
Do you know what is fast fashion?
150 respuestas



Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

Figure 6: Fast fashion purchase.

Have you ever bought in fast fashion stores?
150 respuestas



Source: Own elaboration in Google forms.

These two questions aim to understand more about fast fashion consumption in the retail sector among the contestants. In addition, these results could help relate the information in hypothesis 1 and determine if the consumer truly lacks awareness about fast fashion brands. However, in this case, it is shown that 76% of the people who answer the questions know about fast fashion brands and practices. This will be analyzed with better data in the following sections.

The analysis of the hypotheses will proceed in order. To begin, hypothesis 1 *“Consumers struggle to accurately distinguish between fast fashion and non-fast fashion brands, complicating their decision-making process when purchasing products.”*. This analysis will be structured into two main sections. First, evaluate if the consumers effectively recognize which brands practice fast fashion process, and second understand consumer behavior.

In this case, the question to prove if the contestant recognizes fast fashion brands is *“Organize the following brands based on whether you believe they engage in fast fashion practices according with the last information. Instructions: For each brand listed below, select "Yes" if you believe the brand practices fast fashion, "No" if you believe it does not, or "IDK" if you are unfamiliar with the brand.”* Whit brands from Inditex group, Shein, Fashion Nova, Primark and Uniqlo where the respondents must answer “Yes”, for that the answer were filtered to show the correct ones.

Table 1: Correct answer of Fast fashion brands.

Total of responses	Correct answers	Percentage
150	9	6%

Source: Own elaboration in excel.

Table 2: Fast fashion recognition (Mango)

Organize the following brands based on whether you believe they engage in fast fashion practices according with the last information. [Mango]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IDK	23	15,3	15,3	15,3
	No	58	38,7	38,7	54,0
	Yes	69	46,0	46,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 3: Fast fashion recognition (Shein)

Organize the following brands based on whether you believe they engage in fast fashion practices according with the last information [Shein]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IDK	13	8,7	8,7	8,7
	No	33	22,0	22,0	30,7
	Yes	104	69,3	69,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 4: Fast fashion recognition (Able)

Organize the following brands based on whether you believe they engage in fast fashion practices according with the last information [Able]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IDK	72	48,0	48,0	48,0
	No	42	28,0	28,0	76,0
	Yes	36	24,0	24,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

According to Table 1, it can be inferred that only the 6% of a sample of 150 people answer correctly in identified fast fashion brands. In addition, Table 3 was selected to show that Shein was the most recognized fast fashion brand by the respondents, with a total of 69,3% (Yes). One of the

main reason that could explain this result is the brand image, as Shein is recognized as a fast fashion brand. On the other hand, Table 2 represents Mango's brand image with the lowest recognition as fast fashion business, with a percentage of 24% (Yes) and with a 28% (No) of consumers believing that this business is not doing fast fashion practices. Although Mango is a fast fashion brand, these results may be linked to its brand status and consumer perception, leading some to believe that the company is not involved in fast fashion practices.

Additionally, in the case of Table 4 where it is analyzed if consumers identified Able as a non-fast fashion brand. However, it is shown that 46% (IDK) of respondents are unfamiliar about this retail business and only 28% (No) recognize this sustainable brand, consequently, due to this lack of recognition may limit consumer purchase from Able, resulting in greater promotion and consumer preference for fast fashion brands.

Table 5: Paired Samples Statistics of brand image

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	[Influencers should not promote brands like Zara, Stradivarius, or H&M.]	3,01	150	1,218	,099

Pair 1 [Influencers should not promote brands like Zara, Stradivarius, or H&M.] - [Influencers should not promote brands like Shein or Fashion Nova.]	-0,333	1,191	,097	-,525	-,141	-3,428	149	<,001	<,001
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Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

In this case, a T-test was selected to analyze if businesses such as Inditex group and Shein or fashion Nova have a significant difference in terms of fast fashion brand image. According to the results, there is a significant difference as indicated by a p-value of <0,001. A Mean value of -0,333 that suggest even so, these results do not represent large difference, it shows a clear tendency among the sample to agree that influencers should not promote Shein or Fashion nova. This result might be due to the strong association of these brands with fast fashion, despite all of them engaging in an unsustainable process.

Based on these results, the analysis shows that H1 “*Consumers struggle to accurately distinguish between fast fashion and non-fast fashion brands, complicating their decision-making*”

process when purchasing products.” is accepted, because many customers are unable to accurately distinguish fast fashion brands, as is evidence on Table 1. At the same time there are brands that might employ greenwashing strategies, which could make it difficult for customers to understand their practices, leading them to believe that these brands are sustainable. This promotes a differentiation of brand image that is not accurate in comparison with other brands. Consequently, the purchase decision might be biased due to misleading information on retail production processes.

In the second hypothesis *“The content created by micro-influencers for fast fashion brands significantly alters consumer perceptions.”* For this, primarily this analysis will consider how is the interaction between consumers and influencers, as explored into some questions on the survey.

Table 7: Frequency table of influencer recommendation

[I have bought clothes after seeing a recommendation from a micro-influencer.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	8	5,3	5,3	5,3
	2	23	15,3	15,3	20,7
	3	37	24,7	24,7	45,3
	4	51	34,0	34,0	79,3
	5	31	20,7	20,7	100,0

Total	150	100,0	100,0	
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Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 8: Frequency table of influencer imitation

[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	19	12,7	12,7	12,7
	2	16	10,7	10,7	23,3
	3	36	24,0	24,0	47,3
	4	45	30,0	30,0	77,3
	5	34	22,7	22,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 9: Frequency table of micro-influencer recommendation

[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	4,7	4,7	4,7
	2	13	8,7	8,7	13,3

3	35	23,3	23,3	36,7
4	56	37,3	37,3	74,0
5	39	26,0	26,0	100,0
Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

In these frequencies tables we can see that the most common answers were 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly agree) which have meaningful results with more than 50% of the responses. Consequently, it can be affirmed that people follow the recommendation of influences, creating variables such as trust and desire to imitate.

Table 10: Correlation for influencer variables

Correlations

[I have bought clothes after seeing a recommendation from a micro-influencer.]	[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]	[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.]
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[I have bought clothes after seeing a recommendation from a micro-influencer.]	Pearson Correlation	1	,673**	,445**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<,001	<,001
	N	150	150	150
[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]	Pearson Correlation	,673**	1	,514**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001		<,001
	N	150	150	150
[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.]	Pearson Correlation	,445**	,514**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001	<,001	
	N	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

After doing correlation analysis, the results show that the significance level of p-value is <0.001, which is below 0.05 so it indicates a significant relationship between the variables, so it means there is a strong connection between the desire to imitate influences and the recommendation for purchase decision.

Table 11: Model summary for influencer variables

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error of the Estimate
1	,683 ^a	,466	,459	,838

a. Predictors: (Constant)

[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.],

[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 12: ANOVA for influencer variables

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90,143	2	45,072	64,108	<,001 ^b
	Residual	103,350	147	,703		
	Total	193,493	149			

a. Dependent Variable:

[I have bought clothes after seeing a recommendation from a micro-influencer.]

b. Predictors: (Constant),

[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.],

[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 13: Coefficients for influencer variables

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1,168	,254			4,601	<,001
	[I would like to imitate the outfit of an influencer to feel fashionable.]	,531	,062	,604		8,591	<,001
	[People recommending a product generate more trust than a celebrity.]	,141	,074	,135		1,916	,057

a.

[I have bought clothes after seeing a recommendation from a micro-influencer.]

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

This study was considering after understanding there is a significant relationship between each other. The results show $R^2:0.466$ | $F(2,147):64.108$ | $P < 0.001$. These results suggest a moderately positive relationship between the variables, which means if one variable increases the other is likely to increase. In addition, the significant level shows that is statistically significant. Therefore, the variables of desire of imitation and trust have a significant impact on the recommendation to purchase a product.

Now understanding this significant relationship between the variables, this analysis will begin to examine the interaction between people when they see promotion for fast fashion brands on social media.

Table 14: Influencers promoting fast fashion brands

[Influencers should not promote brands like Shein or Fashion Nova.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	17	11,3	11,3	11,3
	2	22	14,7	14,7	26,0

3	36	24,0	24,0	50,0
4	43	28,7	28,7	78,7
5	32	21,3	21,3	100,0
Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

According to this data, it is possible to affirm that the answers tend to be biased towards one type of response. In this case, according to Table 3 where it shows a frequency table where Shein is recognized as the most popular fast fashion brand, with 69,3% (Yes). Additionally, Table 15 shows if the consumers disagree with the digital promotion of the brand with 28,7% (4: agree) and 21,3% (5: Strongly agree). In other words, this indicates a negative perception of the content created for this brand.

Understanding that consumers disagree with the promotion of content related to fast fashion in social media now this analysis wants to see if after the change of perspective there any consequences.

Table 15: Consequences of disliked brands

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted brands you do not like?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	58	38,7	38,7	38,7
	Yes	92	61,3	61,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 16: Consequences of unsustainable brands

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	47	31,3	31,3	31,3
	Yes	103	68,7	68,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

According to the results, there are a significant number of consumers that agree with stop following someone when they do not represent the values important for sustainable habits, with 61,3% (Yes) in Table 15 and 68,7% (Yes) in Table 16. Consequently, with these results suggests

that consumers are more interested in the type of content they are used to see on social media, prioritizing certain information over others, and at the end, promoting negative consequence for micro-Influencers, such as a decrease in followers.

To summarize, the results of this analysis indicate three key findings. First, consumers have a strong connection with the micro-influencers, generating important factors for engagement like trust and a desire to imitate, which directly affects purchase decision. Second, despite the interaction between people and micro-influencers, there is a negative perception of the content created for fast fashion brands. Third, users are willing to stop following someone when they represent values that are not sustainable, or show “canceled” brands. These results could be aligned with consumer theories explained in the literature review, which indicate that consumers preference and behavior tend to be influenced by their social groups. However, there is an increasing awareness of business sustainability and fashion ethics that has been changing the perspective of consumers.

In conclusion, H2 “*The content created by micro-influencers for fast fashion brands significantly alters consumer perceptions.*” is accepted, because as we saw micro-influencers and consumers have a close relationship that is expected to change consumer behavior. However, when the influencer promotes unsustainable content, it is more probable that consumer perception will shift negatively, affecting both behavior and engagement. These findings could give an idea of the priorities that are having Generation Z in relation to sustainability and ethical awareness in the products they purchase, suggesting a change of narrative for future campaigns.

In order to gain deeper understanding on consumer perception, and considering that consumer views are subject to change, hypothesis 3 seeks to determinate whether the brand or influencer will face the consequences *“Micro-influencers' content for fast fashion brands primarily affects consumers' perception of the brand, more than their perception of the influencers, which impacts their purchase decisions.”* for this, the analysis is going to be divided into three stages, first, brand perception, second, perception of the influencer, finally comparison.

Table 17: Frequencies of purchase.

Have you ever shopped at the stores mentioned above?

(Stradivarius, H&M, Zara, Primark, Shein...)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	13	8,7	8,7	8,7
	Yes	137	91,3	91,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

First, this table shows that 91,3% (Yes) of the sample have shopped at a fast fashion brand. This type of result is predictable given the purchase behavior where consumers accept shopping

in fast fashion stores despite disagreeing with this type of content, as demonstrated in previous results. Therefore, this relationship will be further analyzed.

Table 18: Influencers promoting Inditex brand.

Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores?

Zara, H&M, Mango, Uniqlo

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	36	24,0	24,0	24,0
	Yes	114	76,0	76,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 19: Influencers promoting Fast fashion brands.

Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores?

Shein, Fashion nova, Primark

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<hr/>					

Valid	No	43	28,7	28,7	28,7
	Yes	107	71,3	71,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Accordingly with these results, people continue to follow accounts on social media that promote fast fashion brands, as seen in Table 18 with 76% (Yes) and Table 19 with 71,3% (Yes). As previously explored, these results could be due to brand image.

Table 20: Unfollowing someone because of brands that are not liked.

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted brands you do not like?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	58	38,7	38,7	38,7
	Yes	92	61,3	61,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 21: Unfollowing someone because of brands that are not sustainable.

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	47	31,3	31,3	31,3
	Yes	103	68,7	68,7	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

The result in Table 20 with 61,3% (Yes) and in Table 21 with 68,7% (Yes) shows that the users who follow influencers that promote unsustainable and non-preferable brands are willing to stop following them. This decision could be a representation of negative consequences for influencers when they do not represent relatable values.

Table 22: Crosstabulation to unfollow an influencer.

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits? *

Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores?

Shein, Fashion nova, Primark Crosstabulation

Count	Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores? Shein, Fashion nova, Primark			
	No	Yes	Total	
Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits?	No	26	21	47
	Yes	17	86	103
Total		43	107	150

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 23: Chi-square to unfollow an influencer.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23,777 ^a	1	<,001		
Continuity Correction ^b	21,917	1	<,001		

Likelihood Ratio	22,842	1	<,001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<,001	<,001
Linear-by-Linear Association	23,619	1	<,001		
N of Valid Cases	150				

a. 0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13,47.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

According to the Chi-square results, which it is used to determine if there is an association between following influencers of certain brands and unfollowing someone for promoting unsustainable habits, the significance value was <0.001 , which is less than 0.05. This indicates a significant association between these variables. Therefore, it can be inferred that individuals who follow influencers promoting fast fashion brands are likely to unfollow them when these influencers promote unsustainable practices.

Table 24: Frequent influencers promoting fast fashion brands.

[Influencers should not promote brands like Shein or Fashion Nova.]

			Cumulative
Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent

Valid	1	17	11,3	11,3	11,3
	2	22	14,7	14,7	26,0
	3	36	24,0	24,0	50,0
	4	43	28,7	28,7	78,7
	5	32	21,3	21,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 25: Frequent influencers promoting Inditex brands.

[Influencers should not promote brands like Zara, Stradivarius, or H&M.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	21	14,0	14,0	14,0
	2	29	19,3	19,3	33,3
	3	46	30,7	30,7	64,0
	4	36	24,0	24,0	88,0
	5	18	12,0	12,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

The analysis shows that consumers have a significantly negative perspective with influencers who promote fast fashion brands, respectively in Table 24 with 28,7% (4:Agree) 21,3% (5:Strongly agree) and in Table 25 with 24% (4:Agree) and 12% (5:Strongly agree). According to this, it affirms that users might decide to unfollow the influencer.

Table 26: Purchase decision with “cancelled” brands.

[I stopped purchasing from a brand due to its bad reputation or because it was "canceled"]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	11	7,3	7,3	7,3
	2	27	18,0	18,0	25,3
	3	40	26,7	26,7	52,0
	4	45	30,0	30,0	82,0
	5	27	18,0	18,0	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 27: Purchase decision with Fast fashion brands.

[I stopped purchasing from Shein, Fashion Nova, or Temu after learning about their environmental and labor issues.]

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	12	8,0	8,0	8,0
	2	26	17,3	17,3	25,3
	3	40	26,7	26,7	52,0
	4	49	32,7	32,7	84,7
	5	23	15,3	15,3	100,0
	Total	150	100,0	100,0	

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

According to these tables, the purpose is to comprehend the variable of purchase decision in this situation. In table 26 the highest result is 30% (4: Agree) and the lowest of 7,3% (1: Strongly disagree), in Table 27, the highest result is 32,7% (4: Agree) and the lowest is 8% (5: Strongly disagree). Those results show that people are willing to stop purchasing from a brand “Canceled” or that has a fast fashion brand image, at the same time, this represents a negative consequence to purchase decision of these brands.

Table 28: Correlation of stop following and stop buying.

Correlations

	Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits?	[I stopped purchasing from Shein, Fashion Nova, or Temu after learning about their environmental and labor issues.]
Spearman's rho	Correlation Coefficient	,315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001
	N	150
	Correlation Coefficient	,315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<,001

Nova, or Temu after learning about their environmental and labor issues.]	150	150
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**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

There is a moderate correlation and a significant p-value of $<0,001$, which is less than $0,05$, that means it is statistically significance. These results represent a change in consumer perspective and purchase decision because those who stopped following an influencer are also likely to also stop purchasing from this type of brand.

Table 29: Paired samples statistics of stop following and stop buying.

Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits?	1,69	150	,465	,038

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statements? [I stopped purchasing from a brand due to its bad reputation or because it was "canceled"]	3,33	150	1,180	,096
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Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

Table 30: Paired Samples Test of stop following and stop buying.

Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences					Significance	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			Two- Sided	One- Sided
Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	df	p

Pair 1 Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits? -	-1,647	1,154	,094	-	-1,461	-	149	<,001	<,001
On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statements? [I stopped purchasing from a brand due to its bad reputation or because it was "canceled"]				1,833		17,483			

Source: Own elaboration in SPSS.

This analysis aims to determine what are the consequences that consumers are willing to take regarding fast fashion brands or influencers promoting unsustainable practices. The mean difference is -1,647, suggesting that users are more inclined to stop purchasing from fast fashion brands compared to stopped following influencers. Additionally, the significance p-value is

<0,001, so this confirms that is statistically significant. Consequently, the decision to stop purchasing from brands with fast fashion production is more likely to occur, which affects purchase decision.

In summary, building on the findings of hypothesis 2, it is evident that people are willing to make a change in their perception of both brand and influencer. In this analysis include the results of several insight like there is a representative number of people in this sample that follow influencers who promote fast fashion brands; however, they are willing to stop follow them. This situation could trigger a reaction on purchases of a fast fashion brand because it demonstrates a relation that would also directly decrease sales, because people are willing to stop purchasing from this kind of stores. In addition, the impact towards the brand is more likely to occur instead of stop following an influencer. In conclusion, the H3 *“Micro-influencers' content for fast fashion brands primarily affects consumers' perception of the brand, more than their perception of the influencers, which impacts their purchase decisions.”* is affirmed, because as the analysis shows that a change in perception could more greatly affect a brand more, leading to decrease purchase decision.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This research aims to answer this research question “*How does content creation by micro-influencers for unsustainable fast-fashion brands affect Gen Z's perception in the purchase decisions process?*”

Based on the study and the navigation follow through the hypothesis presented in this document, it is possible to say that content creation by micro-influencers could generate a change in perception of the consumers of Generation Z, affecting variables such as trust and desire to purchase, which could improve brand engagement in different occasions. However, in the case of the promotion of fast fashion brands in Generation Z, the results will suggest a change in perception that could affect both influencers and brands in a negative way. First, most of the customers are willing to stop following an influencer, this is directly a representation of new consumption trends, where it is more important for users to follow someone that represents the same values and prioritize sustainable habits. Second, there is an existing relationship between the content promoted in social media and the consequences of affecting both influencers and brands. So, in this case, in relation to businesses, it is likely that consumers take more responsibility on

their consumption, leading to be more responsible, or in other words, a change in the purchasing decisions and therefore generating a decrease in the company sales.

It was also found that not every consumer easily recognizes fast fashion brands due to their brand image. In this case, the results could also help brands with sustainable products or services to stand out from their competition with the following strategies:

- In the case of sustainable businesses in comparison with fast fashion brands, it is important to highlight the values and benefits of the brand to be align with the sustainability trends present in today's market, at the same time, fostering to create a better relationship with consumers of closeness and trust.

- Take advantage of this possible crisis that affects brand recognition of non-sustainable brands and start targeting more Generation Z, who shows that they are changing their purchasing patterns and are more interested in sustainable content in social media that promotes products with benefits to the environment, manufacturing processes and work force.

- Regarding micro-influencers, it is important to recognize the relationship they have with consumers. In this order of ideas, Influencers should take more responsibility and start promoting changes on consumption of their users, emphasizing on important information to make informed decisions, and raising more awareness about brands that follow sustainable process and enhance benefits cross the entire value chain.

6. Limitations and future direction

Despite the results presented in the study, there are some important considerations or limitations that may be useful for future researchers on the subject.

The quality of the responses obtained in the survey may be biased towards one type of consumer, being the highest percentage of women in Latin America, which would help to have a good representation based on other types of cultures. In this case, it would be important that this study takes more people belonging to different countries, gender and ages which would help to improve the buyer persona of sustainable brands.

On the other hand, it would have been interesting to see this type of consumer behavior in a bidirectional way where the type of behavior that micro-influencers have towards non-sustainable brands is also seen not only about consumers, generating a broader picture for the research.

Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are based on customers perspective and benefits without taking into account business operation, which could be affected in negative or positive way depending on the marketing objective they want to approach to generate closeness with the customer. However, these results could help them to better analyze consumer perception and purchase decision of Generation Z on the retail market.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: The questionnaire

Influencer marketing for fast-fashion brands

B *I* U ↻ ✕

This academic survey seeks to explore consumer perceptions of micro-influencers who promote fast-fashion retail products. The goal is to gain deeper insights into how these influencers impact consumer opinions and purchasing decisions. Your participation is solely for academic purposes and is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your valuable time and input.

What is your gender? *

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Otra...

What is your occupation? *

- Employee
- Student
- Entrepreneur
- Otra...

Where are you from? *

1. Europe
2. Latin America
3. North America
4. Africa
5. Oceania
6. Asia

What is your main motivation when purchasing clothes? *

- Price
- Sustainability
- Quality
- Necessity (You need more clothes)
- Trends
- Brand loyalty
- Social Influence
- Convenience

Do you know what is fast fashion? *

- Yes
- No

Have you ever bought in fast fashion stores? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know what fast fashion is

Part 2: Fast fashion questions.



Descripción (opcional)

Fast fashion involves the rapid design, production, distribution, and marketing of clothing, which means that retailers are able to pull large quantities of greater product variety and allow consumers to get more fashion and product differentiation at a low price

Descripción (opcional)

Organize the following brands based on whether you believe they engage in fast fashion practices according with the last information *

Instructions: For each brand listed below, select "Yes" if you believe the brand practices fast fashion, "No" if you believe it does not, or "IDK" if you are unfamiliar with the brand.

	Yes	No	IDK
H&M	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zara	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Primark	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mango	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shein	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fashion Nova	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uniqlo	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stradivarius	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Patagonia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

...

Have you ever shopped at the stores mentioned above? *

(Stradivarius, H&M, Zara, Primark, Shein...)

- Yes
- No

Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores? *

Zara, H&M, Mango, Uniqlo

- Yes
- No

Do you follow any influencers who promote clothing from the following stores? *

Shein, Fashion nova, Primark

- Yes
- No
-

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted brands you do not like? *

Yes

No

Have you ever stopped following someone because they promoted unsustainable habits? *

Yes

No

When a micro-influencer promotes a fast-fashion brand, do you associate the brand's image with the influencer's image? *

Yes

No

Sometimes

It depends on the influencer

How likely are you to consider the sustainability of a product when influenced by a micro-influencer's promotion? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

How does content created by micro-influencers for fast-fashion brands impact your perception of **those brands**? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very negatively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very positively

How does content created by micro-influencers for fast-fashion brands impact your perception of **those influencers**? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very negatively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very positively

On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree with the following statements? *

1 - Strongly disagree

2- Disagree

3 - Neither agree or disagree

4 - Agree

5 - Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
The clothing I ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am willing to ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have bought c...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buying clothes ...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencers sho...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Influencers sho...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to i...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People recom...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I stopped purc...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I stopped purc...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>