



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

The role of digital influencers in the adoption of sustainable practices

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by

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Abstract

Our world is currently witnessing an unprecedented devastation of its environment, economy and society caused by humankind's actions. Despite current efforts to bring about positive change through sustainability, there is still plenty of space to encourage the adoption of sustainable behaviours. Such encouragement could be provided by digital influencers, who have been shown to impact people's decisions, attitudes and behaviours, especially those of women and younger generations. However, for an influencer to successfully impact their followers, they must be perceived as a credible source who is trustworthy, an expert and attractive. Thus, the present thesis aims to investigate the role of influencers and their credibility in the adoption of sustainable practices by female members of Generation Z.

A qualitative methodology was adopted and three focus groups with a total of sixteen female participants from Generation Z were conducted to explore how influencers impact their sustainable behavioural intentions and how they can further encourage their adoption. Findings show that participants place great importance on influencers' trustworthiness and expertise and that these two characteristics can impact their intentions of adopting sustainable practices suggested or adopted by influencers themselves. Results further suggest that there still are plenty of opportunities for influencers to encourage young people to become more sustainable. Participants considered that influencers should be responsible for diffusing information about sustainability due to their vast power and reach. However, they believe that influencers are currently not doing enough to promote sustainability.

Keywords: Digital Influencers; Social Media; Source Credibility; Sustainability; Sustainable Behaviours; Behavioural Intentions; Generation Z

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Resumo

O nosso mundo está neste momento a assistir a uma devastação sem precedentes do seu meio ambiente, economia e sociedade, devido a ações dos seres humanos. Apesar dos esforços atuais para alcançarmos mudanças positivas através da sustentabilidade, há ainda muito espaço para incentivar a adoção de comportamentos sustentáveis. Tal incentivo poderá surgir por parte de *influencers* digitais, visto serem capazes de influenciar as decisões, atitudes e comportamentos das pessoas, principalmente de mulheres e gerações mais novas. No entanto, um *influencer* tem de ser visto como uma fonte credível, isto é, confiável, bem informada e atraente, para conseguir ter impacto nos seus seguidores. Desta forma, a presente tese investiga o papel dos *influencers* e da sua credibilidade na adoção de práticas sustentáveis por mulheres da Geração Z.

Uma metodologia qualitativa foi adotada e foram realizados três *focus groups* com um total de dezasseis participantes do sexo feminino da Geração Z para ser explorado o impacto dos *influencers* nas suas intenções comportamentais sustentáveis e formas de como os mesmos poderão incentivar ainda mais a adoção destes comportamentos. Os resultados obtidos mostram que as participantes dão bastante importância à confiabilidade e conhecimento dos *influencers* e que ambas estas características têm impacto nas suas intenções de adotar práticas sustentáveis sugeridas ou adotadas pelos *influencers*. Os resultados sugerem também haver ainda muitas oportunidades para os *influencers* incentivarem as gerações mais novas a serem mais sustentáveis. Para além disso, as participantes consideraram os *influencers* como sendo responsáveis pela difusão de informação sobre sustentabilidade devido ao seu vasto poder e alcance. No entanto, acreditam que os *influencers* ainda não promovem comportamentos sustentáveis o suficiente.

Palavras-chave: *Influencers* Digitais; Redes Sociais; Credibilidade da Fonte; Sustentabilidade; Comportamentos Sustentáveis; Intenções Comportamentais; Geração Z

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Current worldwide trends point to the unprecedented damage that human actions are causing to our environment, global economy and society (UNDESA, 2020, 2021; WMO, 2021). Factors such as pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, increasing social inequity and poverty are examples of how human activities have been harming our planet. Despite current efforts, there is still plenty of space to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices or behaviours to help attenuate these pressing problems (Abrahamse, 2019; Nguyen & Johnson, 2020; White et al., 2019). One approach to encourage such behaviours is through their promotion, by means of the vast social media networks available.

The increasing use of social media platforms and related digital technologies by consumers have given rise to micro-celebrities, generally referred to as “influencers”, who are perceived as a source of important information by consumers (de Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017) and are able to influence their decisions, attitudes and behaviours (Casaló et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019). However, for an influencer to have impact on their followers, they must be perceived as a credible source of knowledge (Belanche et al., 2021; Ohanian, 1990; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The credibility of a source, i.e., of an influencer, can be determined by three main characteristics: their trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). The greater an influencer’s credibility, the greater their followers’ intentions of performing certain behaviours, such as imitating the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021) or purchasing a product endorsed by them (Ohanian, 1990; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

Research suggests that women are more susceptible to social influence than men, and are likely to purchase products recommended or used by their

favourite influencers, and to act on the advice of influencers they trust or wish to be like (Bearden et al., 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2011; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Research also shows that younger consumers are more likely to be influenced by social media influencers as they are quick to pick up on the latest trends (Childers & Boatwright, 2021; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). Moreover, it may be enlightening to study a generation who grew up on social media and whose concern for social and environmental concerns is increasing (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Thus, the scope of this research extends to female members of Generation Z.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

Despite existent literature on influencers, little research has focused on how the different characteristics of source credibility impact consumer behaviour (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Furthermore, to the author's knowledge, research regarding how influencers may impact consumers' sustainable behaviours is very scarce (White et al., 2019). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to investigate the role of influencers and their credibility in the adoption of sustainable practices by female members of Generation Z. The objectives of this research are to gain an understanding of how influencers' trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness impact the sustainable behavioural intentions of female members of Generation Z, as well as how influencers can further encourage the adoption of such behaviours by this same population.

1.3 Methodology

The present thesis adopted a qualitative research methodology in order to meet its objectives and three focus groups were conducted as a data collection method. This enabled the gathering of different views and opinions from many

people and provided rich narratives and discussions which were later analysed through a general approach on thematic analysis.

1.4 Structure

This thesis is structured in six main parts. The first part pertains to this introduction. In the second part, a literature review documenting findings from earlier research on the study's most relevant topics is conducted. The adopted methodology is presented and justified in the third part, including the research problem, research design and data analysis methodology. Part four presents the study's main results and is followed by part five which includes a discussion of the enquiry findings related to each research objective, the study's conclusions and, lastly, its limitations and further research recommendations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Influencers

The current widespread use of social media has led to the appearance of influencers who have been shown to impact consumers in a much greater scale and with a greater power than traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Unlike these traditional celebrities, who are publicly and massively known due to their jobs, influencers are "normal" people who become online celebrities for their social media related activities (Belanche et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Influencers use their social media platforms to stay connected to their followers, in order to establish long-term relationships with them (Belanche et al., 2021; Casaló et al., 2020; de Veirman et al., 2017) and build successful communities (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019).

Most definitions of the term “influencer” focus on their expertise and influence power over their followers. Casaló et al. (2020) define influencers as opinion leaders and describe them as people who have a considerable level of expertise on a certain subject, or who have a substantial amount of social connections, and are capable of influencing others’ decisions, attitudes and behaviours, to the point that they can even be perceived as role models. Other authors have defined influencers as content creators whose social networks have reached a considerable size through the accumulation of a solid base of followers due to their knowledge and expertise on certain subjects, such as fashion, beauty, health, and travel (de Veirman et al., 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Indeed, individuals tend to follow influencers whose content is related to their own interests. Influencers often share their opinions, advice and experiences, and tend to promote products related to their topic of interest (Belanche et al., 2021; de Veirman et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, when influencers wander from their usual topics, followers tend to feel confused (Stubb et al., 2019). This confusion is exacerbated if this wandering isn’t addressed and explained by the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021). Followers may believe that the influencer drifted from their usual content in order to receive financial compensation for an ad about a different topic, leading them to doubt the influencer’s messages and genuineness, and consequently harming their credibility (de Veirman et al., 2017; de Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Stubb et al., 2019).

Consumers’ decisions and consumption behaviours are increasingly based on information and advice they obtain from social media and influencers within (Bertrandias & Goldsmith, 2006; Casaló et al., 2020). When consumers view influencers as a valuable source of knowledge, they perceive them and their messages as more credible and authentic, which improves their attitudes towards them (Belanche et al., 2021). Therefore, in order to maintain and widen their

successful communities, it is important for influencers to enhance their followers' perceptions of their credibility (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

2.2 Source Credibility

Marketing research has studied the substantial impact that the credibility of a communicator (or source) has on a message's persuasiveness (Ohanian, 1990). Two models – the source-credibility model and the source-attractiveness model – establish the circumstances under which a communication source is convincing or persuasive. Both these models have been confirmed and validated by research and are the main bases of marketing research on the subject of celebrity endorsement (McCracken, 1989).

Source credibility – in which the source is the influencer who delivers and spreads the message – is a concept that refers to “a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message” (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41). The source-credibility model by Hovland et al. (1953, as cited in Ohanian, 1990) asserts that two factors determine the effectiveness of a message: the source's trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness is defined as the degree of trust in the source's intention to communicate correct information, and expertise as the degree to which a communicator is regarded as a reliable source of information (Hovland, 1953, as cited in Ohanian, 1990). Studies have linked these constructs to positive attitudes (Ohanian, 1990), greater purchase intentions (Chetioui et al., 2020; Ismagilova et al., 2020) and increased intentions of imitating and recommending the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021).

Later on, a third characteristic of source credibility was suggested: attractiveness (McGuire, 1985, as cited in Ohanian, 1990). Similarly, Ohanian (1990) defined source credibility as a concept including expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness. If the source is regarded as an expert, trustworthy and attractive, their message will be more credible and capable of

influencing their audience's attitudes and behaviours. The source-attractiveness model asserts that a message's effectiveness is determined by the source's familiarity, likability and similarity (Ohanian, 1990). Familiarity refers to the recognition of the source after being exposed to it; likeability is defined as the affection for a source, which results from the source's physical appearance, behaviours and/or other characteristics; and similarity refers to the possible resemblance between the source and the message receiver (McCracken, 1989). Hence, sources who consumers know, like and/or are similar to are considered to be attractive and, thus, persuasive. Research related to source attractiveness has mainly focused on physical attractiveness (Silvera & Austad, 2004). However, attractiveness can also be regarded as a positive attitude toward the influencer, which can stem from a sense of admiration, similarity, familiarity and/or likeability (McCracken, 1989; Silvera & Austad, 2004; Torres et al., 2019). Research has shown that attractiveness can have a positive impact on attitudes, such as an attitude toward an endorsement, a brand (Silvera & Austad, 2004; Torres et al., 2019) or an influencer (Taillon et al., 2020), as well as on purchase intentions (Taillon et al., 2020; Torres et al., 2019).

Source credibility research has addressed many topics and reached a variety of conclusions. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) argued that influencers are seen as more credible, authentic and relatable, thus exerting more influence on their followers than traditional celebrities. Belanche et al. (2021) and Stubb et al. (2019) showed that the credibility of an influencer increases when they disclose being paid for endorsing a product, as well as when they show interest in the product and don't sponsor it merely for the inherent financial compensation. Studies also suggest that a source's perceived credibility is a major driver of consumer behaviour, as it has been connected to outcomes such as a higher intention to keep following, imitate and recommend the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021), a more favourable attitude towards the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021; Chetioui

et al., 2020) and greater purchase intentions (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). However, due to the novelty of this theme's field, little research has looked into how each source credibility dimension impacts consumer behaviour (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

2.3 Behavioural Intentions and Social Influence

Several different lines of research explore the mechanisms through which people are influenced by others to perform certain behaviours. Some authors studied how influencer credibility impacts individuals' intentions to imitate an influencer (Belanche et al., 2021; Casalo et al., 2020). This intention is related to the extent to which individuals will take into consideration, follow and carry out the influencer's suggestions. Behavioural intentions are indicators of an individual's willingness to engage in certain behaviours and the stronger the intention to engage in such behaviour, the more likely it will be carried out (Ajzen, 1991). Other authors suggested that followers might mimic influencers' behaviours due to a desire to be like them (Ki & Kim, 2019). This mimicking behaviour is explained by the consumers' doppelganger effect, which has been described as the phenomenon in which people purposefully and consciously imitate the consumption behaviours of others who are perceived as their role model(s), in order to look or behave like them (Ki & Kim, 2019; Ruvio et al., 2013).

Another line of research has discussed how social influence can impact consumers' sustainable behaviours through several social influence approaches. Particularly, the Modelling approach tells us that people will engage in a certain behaviour after witnessing "models" perform it. The more people engage in that behaviour, the more others are encouraged to adopt it as well (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).

Earlier research has also suggested that women are more susceptible to social influence than men and are likely to purchase products that their favourite

influencers talk about or use, as well as likely to act on the advice of influencers who they trust or aspire to imitate (Bearden et al., 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2011; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Thus, this specific target gender should be further explored.

Because influencers have the power to persuade people to engage in specific behaviours and, considering the ongoing worldwide environmental, economic and social crises, they could be central to involve people in sustainable behaviours.

2.4 Sustainable Behaviours

It is undeniably evident that certain human activities are deeply damaging our planet. Scientists have warned that the current destructive behaviour of humankind will not be sustainable in the long-term and that pro-environmental practices have become crucial in order to alter a potential ghastly scenario of our future (Abrahamse, 2019). Thus, let us first and foremost define the concept of sustainability (or sustainable development). The concept of sustainable development was first introduced in 1987 by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), on its "Our Common Future" report (the Brundtland report). Sustainable development was defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Basiago, 1995, p. 110). There are three interrelated and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development: environmental protection, and social and economic development (Purvis et al., 2018).

Despite the fact that consumers are increasingly demanding sustainable options, there is still plenty of space to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices (Gershoff & Frels, 2015; White et al., 2019), which will not only influence the environmental sphere, but also the social and economic ones, as "improving

environmental sustainability can result in both social and economic advances” (White et al., 2019, p. 24). As previously mentioned, consumers’ decisions, attitudes and behaviours are frequently influenced by others (Casaló et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019) and they can go as far as mimicking influencers’ actions in order to look or behave like them (Ki & Kim, 2019; Ruvio et al., 2013). As a result, the promotion of sustainable practices by influencers can encourage other people to carry them out (Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). A most prominent example of the positive effects of such encouragement is related to the worldwide known activist Greta Thunberg. Greta began protesting in front of the Swedish parliament in 2018, in order to bring attention to the ongoing climate crisis. The young activist uses her social media as a direct channel through which she communicates with the world and, as of April 2022, she had over 14 million followers on Instagram and 5 million on Twitter. With this notable reach, she has been able to impact countless people and their behaviours. The "Greta Effect" inspired young people like her to become involved in climate action and was even able to persuade those who had previously shown little or no interest in her cause. Following her path, in March 2019, a remarkable 1,6 million people – mainly students – from over 120 countries took part in a global climate strike to protest (Jung et al., 2020).

Hence, social media and influencers can play a vital role in encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices, creating a pathway for positive change. However, there is still a scarcity of research on the impact of social influence on sustainable consumer behaviour (White et al., 2019).

2.5 Generation Z

Generation Z was born between 1996 or 1997 (Childers & Boatwright, 2021; Dimock, 2019; Parker & Igielnik, 2020; Williams, 2015) and 2010 (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), following Generation Y (Millennials). This generation is mainly characterized by being true digital natives who are able to access and filter

information instantly (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Williams, 2015). Moreover, having never experienced life without technology or the internet, they have grown up in a constantly connected society (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Turner, 2015). The members of this generation are very adaptive and creative people who are used to multitasking and who seek immediacy in almost every aspect of their lives (Duffett, 2017). Furthermore, they are on their way to be the best educated generation so far (Parker & Igielnik, 2020; Turner, 2015) and are more open-minded and more interested in human rights, race, feminism and LGBTQ+ topics than their older peers (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Its members are more prone to look to governments to solve problems; are very likely to acknowledge that climate change is happening due to human activity; and consider societal change, such as same-sex marriage, to be good for society (Parker & Igielnik, 2020).

Generation Z not only seeks validation and approval through social media, where most of their conversations take place and where they can find most people they know (Finch, 2015), but also resort to social media to look for information rather than traditional media (Childers & Boatwright, 2021; Duffett, 2017). Furthermore, research shows that younger consumers, especially Generation Z (Childers & Boatwright, 2021), are more likely to be influenced by digital influencers as they are quick to pick up on the latest trends (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). However, to the author's knowledge, there are still few studies which focus on influencers' impact on this specific generation. Thus, and due to Generation Z's large presence on social media and increasing concern for social, political and environmental matters, this study intends to shed light on how influencers can impact this generation's sustainable behaviours.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Problem

Despite current efforts, there is still a great need for more sustainable practices to be undertaken in order for rapid and transformational change to take place regarding sustainable development. In this sense, an efficient encouragement of these practices has never been as crucial as it is now. Both influencers and Generation Z can have a strong role in sustainable development. Accordingly, the research problem hereby presented concerns ways in which influencers can encourage the adoption of sustainable practices by Generation Z.

Several research gaps regarding these topics have been identified throughout this study's literature review. Not only is there a lack of qualitative research concerning how source credibility characteristics impact consumer behavioural intentions (Ismagilova et al., 2020), but there is also a gap on how influencers impact people's sustainable behaviours (White et al., 2019), among them those of Generation Z, who is more likely to be influenced by social media influencers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Johnstone & Lindh, 2018). Furthermore, female social media users tend to be more prone to this kind of social influence (Bearden et al., 1990), for which reason this specific target is further explored.

Thus, the aim of this research is to study the role of influencers in the adoption of sustainable practices by female members of Generation Z. This thesis' research objectives are to gain insights into how influencers' trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness impact the sustainable behavioural intentions of female members of Generation Z, as well as how influencers can further encourage the adoption of such behaviours by this population.

3.2 Research Methodology

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

In this study, the researcher adopts an interpretive philosophy: they see the nature of reality as being subjective, i.e., social phenomena is constructed by people's perceptions and actions and is constantly changing. Therefore, in order to understand people's meanings of a situation, the researcher must focus on its details (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2.2 Research Methodology

The present thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology in order to meet the study's objectives. The purpose of qualitative research is to better understand the underlying processes behind human behaviour, as well as the contexts in which it takes place. When compared to quantitative research, qualitative research is more flexible and contextualized, as it enables the researcher to have access to people's thoughts, motivations, feelings and beliefs, in order to understand how and why things happen (Gray, 2017). As such, it is an effective and appropriate methodology for thoroughly exploring an academic subject when additional context and information are needed to explain occurrences (Salkind, 2018) or when relatively little is known about a phenomenon (Gray, 2017), as is the case of the present research.

3.2.3 Enquiry Purpose and Research Strategy

The present research is exploratory and inductive in nature. Despite earlier research findings presented in the conducted literature review, more exploratory research is needed to provide a better understanding of the present thesis' research problem. Exploratory research has the advantage of being more flexible and adaptable to change (Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), and

exploratory research questions or objectives usually emerge when little is known about a phenomenon (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), such as this study's.

Inductive research approaches are often used in exploratory and qualitative studies. In inductive research, the researcher studies a specific phenomenon in order to arrive at general conclusions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Furthermore, unlike a deductive approach, an inductive approach allows for a causal inference to be studied without prescinding of an understanding of the way people perceive situations and their surroundings (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 Data Collection Methods

Exploratory studies often rely on qualitative data collection methods such as interviews. In-depth or semi-structured interviews can better provide an understanding of the reasons behind people's decisions, behaviours, views and opinions. They allow for probing questions to be asked when the interviewer wishes for the interviewees to elaborate, as well as for the discussion of additional questions the researcher hadn't considered before (Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

For the purpose of the present study, focus groups were used as a data collection method. Focus groups are a type of group interview which focuses on a certain subject and in which discussion and interaction among participants is encouraged by the moderator. The aim is to obtain a range of different views and opinions in a tolerant and safe environment (Gray, 2017; Salkind, 2018; Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Focus groups have several benefits: they make it possible to acquire information from a large number of people in a short amount of time; they help researchers explore and gain valuable insights into new topics; and their in-group interaction leads to a better

discussion of several perspectives when compared to individual interviews (Gray, 2017; Salkind, 2018; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Researchers also benefit from a better access to the feelings, attitudes, beliefs, reactions and experiences of participants in a way that isn't as accessible through other methods (Gray, 2017). Nevertheless, focus groups also pose a few challenges, such as less control or influence over the process and its outcomes (Gray, 2017). Their success depends on the moderator's ability to keep the group focused on the topic at hand, to encourage discussion and interaction, and to ensure that discussions aren't dominated by one or more members (Gray, 2017; Salkind, 2018; Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, locating and persuading the right people to participate can be difficult, especially as focus group sessions may take at least an hour and there's a need to reconcile participants' different availabilities (Gray, 2017).

Focus groups' participants should be chosen based on criteria related to the study's topic (Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). As this study's aim is to understand the role of digital influencers in the adoption of sustainable practices by female members of Generation Z, every focus group participant was a woman who belonged to this generational cohort.

The conduction of several focus groups helps in the identification of patterns during the data collection and analysis stages (Saunders et al., 2012), as well as in the achievement of data saturation, which gives qualitative research more credibility (Gray, 2017). In the present research, data saturation was reached at the third focus group, i.e., at this point no new information was being received (Saunders et al., 2012) and, therefore, the researcher concluded that a sufficient number of interviews had been conducted and enough information had been obtained to reach the study's objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Focus groups usually involve four to twelve participants (Saunders et al., 2012). The first focus group was conducted on the 21st of January 2022 at 3:28PM with seven participants; the second one on the 25th of January 2022 at 6:38PM

with four participants; and the third one on the 27th of January 2022 at 7:04PM with five participants. Due to the geographic dispersion of the participants and to current concerns regarding the spread of the Covid-19 virus, every focus group was conducted through videoconferencing by means of the software Zoom, facilitating the conduction of the interviews electronically and in real time.

3.3.2 Sampling

In order to reach the study’s objectives, a non-probability sampling technique was used: purposive sampling. This technique limits the sample to the specific target group which conforms to the researcher’s criteria (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), in this case, female members of Generation Z. Subsequently, the researcher opted for a snowball sampling strategy: the researcher identified and made contact with a small number of initial participants who, in turn, suggested and identified other potential and suitable participants to take part in the study, and so on (Gray, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012).

3.3.3 Sample Description

Demographic information was gathered from the participants before each focus group. Each participant’s year of birth was collected for confirmatory purposes, as they had to have been born from 1996 onward to be part of Generation Z. The total sample included sixteen women from Generation Z and every participant was of Portuguese nationality. The following table contains a demographic description of the study’s sample:

Participant	Year of Birth	Residency	Occupation
A	2000	Porto	Student
B	2000	Madeira	Student
C	2000	Porto	Student

D	2000	Bragança	Student
E	2000	Madeira	Student
F	2000	Braga	Student
G	2000	Porto	Student
H	1999	Porto	Student-worker
I	1999	Porto	Student
J	1999	Aveiro	Student
K	1998	Aveiro	Unemployed
L	1998	Porto	Student
M	1998	Porto	Student
N	1997	Porto	Student
O	1996	Porto	Student
P	1996	Viana do Castelo	Student

Table 1: Sample's Description

3.3.4 Interview Design

As aforementioned, three semi-structured focus groups were conducted for the purpose of this research. Prior to all focus groups, the researcher produced a list of topics and questions to be covered, though the use of this script varied between interviews as new and probing questions emerged. This list included an introduction in which the interviewer introduced herself, the theme of the study and the purpose and importance of the interviews. Confidentiality, as well as the usage of the gathered information only in the scope of this research were both assured. Additionally, it was explained to the interviewees that there were no right or wrong answers and that their answers should be discussed among them. Finally, the researcher asked for oral consent for the audio recording of the interview. A few warm-up questions were followed by sets of the main topic-related questions: Digital Influencers, Sustainability, Sustainability Promotion by

Influencers and Sustainable Behavioural Intentions. The list ended with several final questions, including whether the participants would like to add anything else. Along the lines of the script, the interviewer had suggestions for probing questions if needed.

3.4 Data Analysis Methodology

The analysed data was sourced from the three conducted focus groups which were carefully transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Appendix 1 contains the interview guide produced by the researcher and all focus group transcriptions can be found in Appendix 2.

The data analysis procedure used within this study is a general approach on thematic analysis based on the work of Miles and Huberman (1994, as cited in Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This approach follows general iterative steps in order to analyse qualitative data. The first step of the process pertained to data reduction, in which the researcher summarised, coded and categorized the obtained data. Coding enabled the researcher to recognize patterns and connections within the data and the codes that emerged were mainly in the form of expressions and sentences which were later grouped into categories. In turn, these categories were later grouped into themes. In total, twelve categories and four themes emerged from the coded data. Codes and categories changed as some disappeared and gave place to more general ones. New categories also emerged from codes that didn't fit into the already established categories. Moreover, some categories derived deductively from the theory, whereas others were data driven.

The second step was to display the data by means of matrixes and quotes which are helpful for both the researcher and the reader to easily understand the data. Appendix 3 presents the study's results in an organised manner by means of a matrix, while a more thorough and summarised data analysis is presented

below, structured by theme and category. The final step of data analysis was to draw conclusions, which can be found throughout the next chapter's discussion.

3.5 Research Quality Assurance

Although purposive samples cannot be truly representative of a population, focus groups are valuable for gathering exploratory data that can be used as a foundation for further investigation (Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, a few quality issues are associated with these types of research and interviews. One of them pertains to reliability, which concerns whether other researchers would obtain similar results. However, findings from data collection methods such as this one aren't intended to be reproducible, as they explain reality at a point in time and reality is subject to change (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, as cited in Saunders et al., 2012).

Another concern regards to the generalisability of the study, i.e., the extent to which the study's results may be applied to different contexts or situations (Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Qualitative research does not seek to be representative of a population or to reach statistical findings, but to build on theory (Maxwell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012; Yin, 2009). As such, the researcher connects her own research to existing theory, in order to demonstrate that this study's findings have a considerable importance.

A further issue pertains to validity, which refers to the degree to which the research findings accurately reflect the gathered data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This depends on whether the researcher has deduced the right meanings from the language participants used (Saunders et al., 2012). The validity of this study is strengthened by a detailed explanation of the research process, a correct conduction of the interviews, a thorough exploration of the obtained answers and posterior themes, as well as the presentation of cases that may contradict conclusions (Maxwell, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

4. Results

4.1 Theme 1: Influencers and Social Media

4.1.1 Social Media Usage

Social media platforms are greatly used by all focus group participants and each platform has its own purpose, despite a general preference for more modern and trendy platforms. Whereas Facebook is more “ancient” and merely used to chat with family members or university work groups through Messenger, “Instagram is more modern”, addictive and used for leisure, entertainment, gossip and to talk with other people. One participant mentioned that they “use Instagram a lot more than any other social media”. Furthermore, alongside Instagram, Whatsapp seemed to also be a very popular platform to talk to friends and family, with another participant stating that they “also use Instagram and WhatsApp the most”. Other less used social media included Twitter, mainly used to check the world’s news; LinkedIn for professional purposes; TikTok for entertainment and content creation; and Pinterest for inspiration.

4.1.2 Preferences regarding influencers

Every interviewee stated that they follow influencers on social media and implied that influencers are most closely associated with Instagram. Furthermore, the majority of influencers mentioned by participants were Portuguese women. In general, participants prefer influencers whose content is related to their own interests such as fashion, travelling, beauty, lifestyle, fitness, health, decoration and food.

Respondents further stated that they value favourable personality traits and an effective and interactive communication from influencers, mentioning that

“they should be nice and know how to communicate”, “I like to see interaction content such as polls”, “I prefer humble people” and “I like energetic and creative influencers”.

4.1.3 Opinions about influencers and social media

Influencers and social media prompted mixed reactions, with both positive and negative opinions expressed. According to many participants, influencers carry “a negative connotation”, are fake, toxic, lack genuineness and only show the positive side of life: “it isn’t real. They only show the good side (...) I think a lot of accounts are a bit fake, which probably isn’t the best kind of influence”. Two participants regarded influencers as role models and idols who contribute to the pressure of being accepted within society. On the other hand, one participant had “a very positive opinion about digital influencers” and was quite considerate of influencers, stating that “it’s a lot easier to share (...) the positive side of our lives (...) and when we’re not fine we (...) struggle (...) to share on social media (...) having in mind that (...) this isn’t a real and total representation of people’s lives, or of the influencer (...) I can have a more positive perspective about what the person is sharing”.

Along the same lines, social media elicited both positive and negative opinions. One participant stated that “social media are good to communicate with people”, however, it is also “a bit bad because (...) they imply that you’ll only be accepted in society if you do exactly what everyone else is doing there”.

4.2 Theme 2: Sustainability

4.2.1 Definition of Sustainability

Throughout the interviews, sustainability was linked to the environment, pro-environmental practices and products (“recycling”, “saving energy, saving

water”, “biodegradable”), cruelty-free products and local resources and production sources. Sustainability was also connected to a good “conscience” and seen as “very fashionable”, “trending” and “a bit recent”. Furthermore, several participants regarded sustainability as expensive, given their financial dependence, stating that “There are brands whose materials they use [are better] and they pay their workers more, but their clothes end up being more expensive. So, a person wants to stop buying fast fashion but can’t because they don’t have the money to do that.” and “in my generation, or at least speaking for myself, not being a financially independent person, I can’t push it with the things I buy (...) so when I want to buy something for myself that is more sustainable, I still don’t make enough money for some things”.

4.2.2 Sustainability Awareness and Communication

Interviewees seemed to be aware of sustainability’s importance and concerned with current environmental issues, mentioning that “fast fashion sucks, but because it is cheaper we always buy it and the less we buy, the better” and “The matter of pollution is what worries me the most right now (...) Or the matter of plastic. It really shocks me especially when I see (...) sea animals, seagulls and turtles suffocating and dying because of plastic objects”. This awareness comes from sources such as television, social media, school, brands, parents. Participants believe that the communication of sustainability issues is growing, with one participant stating that “this appeal is increasing (...) I think that social media has increasingly opened our eyes to sustainability issues”.

4.2.3 Sustainable Practices

Most participants consider themselves to be sustainable people in general. Some sustainable practices usually carried on by them included recycling, saving water and energy, opting for glass Tupperware’s instead of plastic ones, drinking

from a reusable water bottle, using metal straws and avoiding single-use cotton pads and period products. Other interviewees, on the other hand, acknowledged that they were not sustainable and expressed a feeling of guilt. One of them shared that “I don’t consider myself to be sustainable at all (...) Even [regarding] the water bottles you were talking about, I’m not even sustainable with those. I buy the plastic ones. I don’t recycle. And when it comes to sustainability regarding clothes (...) trying to buy second-hand, I don’t do that either. I always buy things that are new and I frequently go shopping. I know it’s wrong”.

Moreover, in every focus group, several participants pointed out that some of the sustainable practices they adopt are for economic reasons, rather than sustainable ones. One participant mentioned “I was thinking about going shopping and taking bags. But I think that was mainly because the bags have to be paid for now (...) I think people opted [to take their own bags] not because of sustainability but for the price of the plastic bags”, while another stated “I end up being more sustainable because I don’t want to waste my money on clothes (...) not as much because of the environment, rather because of not wanting to spend money”.

4.2.4 Obstacles to becoming more sustainable

Despite participants’ sustainable habits, there are still challenges which prevent them from being more sustainable. As previously stated, almost every participant is still financially dependent and, as such, lack the financial capacity to purchase some sustainable products. One participant mentioned that she “can’t be sustainable when it comes to clothing because, with my money, I can’t buy expensive clothes”, reinforcing her impression that sustainable products are expensive. Another obstacle pertained to previous bad experiences with sustainable products. Some respondents shared that “one thing that annoys me now are paper straws (...) I hate paper straws” and that “I once purchased a

bamboo toothbrush (...) and it was awful". Other impediments included a difficult time finding sustainable products, scepticism towards certain sustainable practices and difficulty resisting fast fashion purchases. The most frequently reported obstacle, however, related to convenience reasons: "I could stop using my car and ride public transports, but the time I take to get to a place by car and by public transports is ridiculously different"; "I think those reusable cottons aren't convenient at all. It's really a question of convenience".

4.3 Theme 3: Influencers' role in sustainability promotion

4.3.1 Influencers' Sustainability Promotion

According to interviewees, influencers have increasingly been promoting sustainability. Several participants named female influencers who promote sustainable practices and products – such as Sandra Silva and Catarina Barreiros – or who support sustainable initiatives from brands – like Alice Trewinnard for EDP Zero. However, most participants agreed that "it's very rare to see a post about sustainability, you have to search for specific accounts and specific content", to which others responded that "it's [due to] the type of influencers we follow. Because if sustainability isn't an interest of ours, then we won't be searching for people [who talk about it]". As a result, there appears to be some difficulty finding sustainability content from influencers, as well as little interest in following sustainability-related influencers. In spite of this, many participants stated that they "would like them to promote it more". Although this seems contradicting, participants later clarified that "there are some influencers whose content is completely focused on that, and of course that the content they share is frequent. If you follow those pages, you'll probably see it [sustainability content] often. However, there are a few influencers from other areas who could also include sustainable practices but don't do it as much. And, in that case, I

think there's a lack of promotion and a lot of opportunity to improve". Furthermore, all interviewees seemed to perceive influencers as responsible for communicating and educating people on sustainable practices due to their power and reach. One participant stated that "if those people have the means to reach other people, I think it's valuable of them to try to promote those practices so more and more people can adhere", while another one referred to the promotion of sustainable lifestyles as "an obligation of theirs, despite a lot of them not doing it".

4.3.2 Influencers' Trustworthiness

Throughout every interview, the trustworthiness of influencers was a major topic and seemed to be closely linked with their credibility. According to participants, influencers' empathy, likability and genuineness increase their trustworthiness. Additionally, participants' trust in influencers increased when their advice proved to be truthful and useful, as well as when they demonstrated to be knowledgeable about their content: "I even think that this matter of having knowledge regarding what it is they are talking about influences the trust that the person who is watching has in the influencer a lot".

Nonetheless, participants perceived friends and acquaintances as more persuading and trustworthy than influencers, and often described their concerns regarding influencers' intentions when promoting sustainability, as one mentioned "the first thing that comes to my mind when I see an influencer adopting sustainable practices is that they're either being fake or they only want more followers because it [sustainability] is trending". These doubts were worsened by their negative connotation of advertisements, as these can damage influencers' trustworthiness: "I think that if it's publicity the doubts get even bigger, because you know the person is being paid to say that, so you think 'is it really true what they are saying or not?' (...) you start thinking 'they've never

shown any sustainable behaviour and are only sharing this now, and on top of that are receiving money for it?'. It's a bit dubious". Furthermore, celebrities were seen as even less trustworthy than influencers in this matter.

4.3.3 Encouraging the adoption of sustainable behaviours

Throughout the interviews, participants discussed their thoughts on how influencers could efficiently promote sustainability and encourage sustainable behaviours, such as adopting those behaviours themselves and providing their followers with tips and demonstrations on how to do it. Among this debate, they also stated that influencers' content could be adapted to sustainability: "influencers could have sustainable behaviours in their area. For example, people are interested in makeup so they could present sustainable behaviours (...) associated with the areas they address". Furthermore, it was made clear that "if it's a person who has never talked about the subject and all of a sudden has become super 'eco', it's odd", suggesting that influencers should carefully introduce sustainability to their content not to seem so distrustful. Moreover, influencers should avoid posting ads of sustainable products if they don't actually use them, as well as talking about sustainability without having educated themselves on the matter first, as this could potentially reduce the influencer's trustworthiness and credibility.

Participants further stated that influencers' words and actions should be consistent with their sustainability content, as "consistency (...) is very important and it bothers me when they talk about, for example, the reusable cottons, and then show us their three-story closet. This bothers me a lot, because they should be consistent". In addition, respondents mentioned that influencers should start by promoting simpler and more affordable sustainable behaviours, as well as ones which are less commonly acknowledged, such as choosing to purchase products from brands who provide fair labour conditions to their workers.

4.4 Theme 4: Sustainable Behavioural Intentions

4.4.1 Influencers' impact on behavioural intentions

Although a few participants stated that they have never copied influencers, most of them admitted to having imitated influencers' behaviours and purchases at some point. One participant even mentioned "I've copied clothes, recreated recipes, recreated workouts. I'm very influenced". Some of them have inclusively purchased sustainable products because of influencers. Such products included reusable makeup removers, menstrual cups, reusable tote bags and dishwasher tablets. Despite this, many participants argued that "if one of my friends tells me about it, I think I would be more compelled to buy it than I would be if I saw an influencer suggesting it". As aforementioned, participants perceived friends and acquaintances as more persuading and trustworthy than influencers, due to a negative outlook on paid advertisements, which decreased their likelihood of adopting a sustainable behaviour promoted by an influencer.

Nevertheless, several influencer behaviours and characteristics favoured participants' likelihood of adopting a sustainable practice or product promoted by an influencer. Interviewees stated they would be more likely to adopt a sustainable behaviour if the influencer promoting it was "genuine, and if it's something they really do", "if they show that they know about it (...) because it means that the person is really committed to that", if they trust the influencer, are familiar with them, and if they "like the person and their personality is attractive". Every participant agreed that all these characteristics positively impact their intentions, except for one. Several of them stated that an influencer's attractiveness is "not relevant (...) because it doesn't make a lot of difference in the promotion of something". One participant also mentioned that "their attractiveness is what makes you want to follow them, but it's not necessarily what is going to make you change something in your life".

Several interviewees further mentioned that the number of people who talked about a sustainable behaviour and the amount of times they saw that behaviour would impact their intentions of adopting it: “I feel more motivated to adopt a sustainable behaviour if it is encouraged by several people and not just one or two influencers” and that “I think that the amount of times you see a product or a habit in the life of a person (...) if you see that for them it is normal to do that, perhaps it will encourage more”.

4.4.2 Concern for the planet’s future

Apart from influencers, participants indicated that both environmental issues and concerns regarding future generations were, too, drivers for behavioural change. One participant stated that “It really shocks me especially when I see (...) sea animals, seagulls and turtles suffocating and dying because of plastic objects (...) This kind of communication that is shown to us and makes us more aware of this problem is what encourages me the most to change my behaviours”. While another one mentioned that “regarding why I adopt those behaviours, it’s (...) also because I worry about future generations. One thing that happened to us is that previous generations didn’t really care, and now it’s our turn and somehow it has to be us to do all the work. They didn’t worry about us, so I think worrying about future generations is also something that makes me apply those sustainable practices”.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Discussion

This thesis’ research objectives are to gain insights into how influencers’ trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness impact the sustainable behavioural

intentions of female members of Generation Z, and how influencers can further encourage the adoption of such behaviours by this population. Within this section, the study's results are discussed in light of the research objectives, considering both literature and enquiry findings. Other complementary and relevant findings are also discussed.

The obtained results show that both influencers' trustworthiness and expertise can increase participants' intentions of adopting a sustainable behaviour suggested or adopted by the influencer. These findings can be paralleled to previous ones which showed that each of these source credibility characteristics increase purchase intentions (Chetioui et al., 2020; Ismagilova et al., 2020), and that both of them as one single factor positively impact individuals' intentions to imitate the influencer (Belanche et al., 2021). Findings further confirm that both trustworthiness and expertise are closely linked to the influencer's credibility as proposed by Ohanian's source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990). The concepts of trustworthiness and credibility were often used interchangeably by participants and, if the influencer did not demonstrate any expertise regarding sustainability when speaking about it, their credibility was questioned. Results from every focus group additionally suggest that the expertise of an influencer positively impacts their trustworthiness, presupposing a possible relationship between these two constructs.

The third component of source credibility – attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990) – displayed a twofold result, as several participants stated that they would be more likely to adopt a sustainable behaviour if the influencer had an attractive personality, whereas others found it to be irrelevant to their sustainable behavioural intentions. However, it remained unclear whether participants clearly understood that attractiveness not only comprised physical attractiveness but also other positive attitudes toward the influencer, such as a sense of admiration, similarity, familiarity or likeability (McCracken, 1989; Silvera &

Austad, 2004; Torres et al., 2019). Several participants considered attractiveness to be the influencer's physical attractiveness, their content's attractiveness and even their number of followers. One participant linked admiration to attractiveness, but stated that it had no impact in her behavioural intentions. Another participant, however, related the influencer's likeability to their attractiveness and stated that it increased their attention to their content. Furthermore, though not specifically linked to the influencer's attractiveness by participants, their familiarity with the influencer increased their likelihood of adopting a sustainable behaviour promoted by the influencer. Torres et al. (2019) reached the conclusion that an influencer's attractiveness positively impacts purchase intentions when used as a single factor for familiarity and likeability, and Taillon et al. (2020) concluded that, though physical attractiveness increased purchase intentions, likeability did not have the same effect. Thus, both literature and enquiry findings collide among them and there seems to be no general conclusion.

Regarding influencers' encouragement of the adoption of sustainable behaviours by the enquired population, findings show that participants would be more likely to adopt such behaviours if the influencers promoting them adopted the behaviours themselves and displayed this to their followers. Interviewees also stated that the more influencers talked about sustainability and the more times they would see that behaviour, the more it would positively impact their intentions of adopting it. Previous research has discussed how modelling can encourage behaviour change. The assumption is that people will engage in a particular behaviour after seeing "models" doing it themselves, and that the more people engage in that behavior, the more likely they are to adopt it as well (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).

Additionally, participants established that most influencer topics can include sustainability content in order to motivate their followers to adhere to certain

sustainable behaviours. Indeed, individuals tend to follow influencers whose topics are related to their interests (Belanche et al., 2021; de Veirman et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2020) and oftentimes imitate influencers' behaviours and suggestions (Belanche et al., 2021; Casaló et al., 2020; Ki & Kim, 2019; Ruvio et al., 2013). Participants themselves disclosed that they follow influencers whose topics they are interested in and tend to copy their clothes, workouts, recipes, and some of them have even purchased sustainable products because of influencers.

However, participants stated that they would find it odd if an influencer who had never spoken about sustainability suddenly did so. Results indicate that interviewees' trust in an influencer is diminished by a sudden change in the influencer's content as well as by paid advertisements, consequently decreasing their intentions of adopting the sustainable behaviour being promoted. These findings are in line with previous research which found that when influencers stray from their usual topics, followers are left feeling confused (Belanche et al., 2021; Stubb et al., 2019) and may presume that the influencer is receiving financial compensation for promoting something inconsistent with their normal content, causing them to question the influencer's messages and authenticity, consequently reducing their credibility (de Veirman et al., 2017; de Veirman & Hudders, 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Stubb et al., 2019). One participant, however, mentioned that no matter how genuine the promotion of the behaviour is, or whether the influencer is being paid for it, the most important thing is reaching more people with sustainability matters. Nonetheless, according to interviewees, influencers should avoid posting ads of sustainable products if they don't use them, as well as talking about sustainability without first becoming educated on the subject, as this could jeopardize their trustworthiness and credibility. The possible relationship between expertise and

trustworthiness is displayed here once again, along with the negative impact of advertisements on the influencer's trustworthiness.

According to Duffett (2017), the members of Generation Z tend to seek immediacy in almost every aspect of their lives. In alignment, concerns with the lack of convenience of several sustainable behaviours were raised in every focus group and it was stated that influencers should promote simpler behaviours, or provide tips on how to make certain behaviours more convenient.

Other relevant findings which go beyond the research objectives were obtained over the course of this study. Among these, it was discovered that participants use Instagram more than any other social media platform. Other research confirms that Instagram is the most preferred platform among social media users (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Sheldon & Bryant, 2016), especially younger ones (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Statista, 2022). Moreover, most participants considered influencers to be futile and fake, stating that they only care about showing the good side of their lives. Indeed, social media users are able to choose what kind of content they share on their social media, making it more likely for them to only share positive information about themselves (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Thoumrungroje, 2014). Nonetheless, one participant sympathized with influencers, stating that most people struggle to share the bad parts of their lives online. Also in line with previous research, participants seemed to distrust celebrities more than influencers. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) concluded that influencers are seen as more credible, authentic and relatable than traditional celebrities.

Results were also consistent with earlier findings that, though consumers are increasingly seeking sustainable options, there is still room to promote sustainable practices (Gershoff & Frels, 2015; White et al., 2019). Several participants shared difficulties in finding sustainable products and affirmed that, if not for convenience and financial issues, they would adhere to more

sustainable behaviours. Additionally, it was stated that influencers should talk more about economically and socially sustainable practices as these are less well-known, as well as give tips on how to solve convenience issues.

5.2 Conclusions

Academic research focused on both influencers and sustainability is still very scarce. Studies on this subject have mainly explored how social influence approaches can be used to encourage sustainable consumer behaviours (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013; White et al., 2019). However, to the author's knowledge, little to no research has been conducted to understand how influencers impact consumers' sustainable behaviours, despite the ongoing environmental, economic and social crises (UNDESA, 2020, 2021; WMO, 2021), as well as influencers' power over younger generations (Childers & Boatwright, 2021), especially over young women (Bearden et al., 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Wilcox et al., 2011; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Thus, the aim of this thesis is to explore the role of influencers and their credibility in the adoption of sustainable practices by female members of Generation Z.

Findings show that participants tend to spend a lot of time on social media, especially Instagram, where they follow influencers whose content relates to their own interests. However, most participants hold a negative connotation of influencers and described them as fake, futile and unauthentic. In spite of this, it was found that respondents tend to mimic influencers' purchasing and overall behaviours. In fact, several participants have inclusively purchased sustainable products due to influencers, such as reusable makeup removers, reusable tote bags and sustainable dishwasher tablets. Results further suggest that participants place a lot of importance on influencers' trustworthiness and expertise, with both these characteristics positively impacting their sustainable behavioural intentions. However, the influencer's trustworthiness steeply decreases if they

share paid advertisements or show little expertise regarding the topics they wish to talk about, therefore reducing their credibility. The influencer's attractiveness had no conclusive general impact on participants, as some stated that it was not relevant to their behavioural intentions, whereas others mentioned that they value a good personality and that the influencer's attractiveness solely impacts their decision to follow their account or not.

This research further revealed that there are many ways in which influencers can encourage and motivate young people to become more sustainable. In fact, interviewees consider that influencers should be responsible for sharing information concerning sustainability due to their vast power and reach. However, participants believe influencers rarely share content about sustainability despite its growing importance. As part of Generation Z, participants are not financially independent yet and strive for immediacy throughout their lives. For these reasons, it is of their opinion that influencers should promote more affordable and convenient sustainable products and practices. Moreover, respondents consider that influencers have the means to include sustainability within their topics. One example given by a participant was that a makeup related influencer can introduce sustainable makeup to their content. However, influencers should be careful when or if they introduce the topic of sustainability to their social media channels, as participants find it suspicious and untrustworthy if an influencer who does not genuinely behave sustainably or has never spoken about this subject suddenly begins to do so without explanation or context.

Interviewees mainly associated the concept of sustainability with the environment and environmental concerns, and perceived sustainability as expensive and trendy. Throughout every interview, it was clear that participants were aware and interested in sustainability matters and seemed genuinely concerned for the planet's future. Furthermore, although a few participants

showed a reduced interest in sustainability, only occasionally or unconsciously engaging in sustainable behaviours, they shared that they felt guilty as a result, suggesting they believe they should be more sustainable. Not only are participants' sustainable behavioural intentions more likely to be affected by influencers' credibility, but also by their growing concerns regarding the environment and future generations, as several participants stated these two concerns were what often drove them to be more sustainable. However, practices related to social and economic sustainability were mentioned in one focus group alone, suggesting that participants' knowledge regarding the social and economic spheres of sustainability still lacks some consolidation.

This concludes that the role of influencers in Generation Z's sustainable behaviours is one of true importance and should not be overlooked. With the rising concerns regarding the global environment, economy and society, the persuasion and communication power inherent to influencers could prove useful in the dissemination of sustainability information and sustainable behaviours. However, pursuing the promotion of sustainability whilst bearing in mind this study's findings remains in the hands of influencers, brands and other organisations.

5.3 Limitations and Further Research

Despite this study's contributions, there are some limitations which can provide opportunities for future research. One limitation was the lack of existing academic research on the role of digital influencers in the adoption of sustainable practices. This may be owed to the fact that, like influencers, sustainability is a relatively recent and growing phenomenon. Future research could further explore the best mechanisms through which digital influencers can successfully encourage people to adopt sustainable behaviours, as well as the impact of other influencer characteristics on such behaviours other than source credibility.

Moreover, it would also be interesting and perhaps enlightening to draw upon influencers' own experiences and thoughts on this matter, instead of consumers'.

Other limitations pertain to the study's methodology. Although a qualitative research methodology is effective in exploring a phenomenon about which very little is known, as well as to understand the underlying processes behind human behaviour (Gray, 2017; Salkind, 2018), the specific and quantified impact of each source credibility dimension on consumers' sustainable behaviours could be further explored through a quantitative methodology. Furthermore, using focus groups as a data collection method granted some limitations, as the researcher had no control over whether participants were swayed into changing their actual opinions due to being inside a group setting, nor over the increased complexity of the data analysis process when participants shared many different views, making it difficult to reach certain conclusions.

Finally, several limitations arose in relation to the study's sample, which was drawn entirely from Portugal, allowing preliminary patterns to be explored. Thus, it would be interesting to replicate the study with participants from different countries or to study cross-cultural differences. Future research could additionally employ a larger sample size so as to consolidate this study's findings. Furthermore, the present research aimed to focus solely on female members of Generation Z, given their higher propensity to mimic influencers' behaviours and follow their suggestions. However, it would be interesting to explore influencers' impact on the sustainable behaviours of different genders and generational cohorts, as well as differences between them, such as between Generation Z and Y.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Introduction and Informed Consent

Hello and welcome. I would like to thank you in advance for your availability and voluntary participation in this focus group. This focus group is fundamental for the development of my master's thesis, which is related to digital influencers and their impact on consumers' sustainable behaviours; more specifically, on the sustainable behaviours of Generation Z member, like yourselves. The session will take around 60 to 90 minutes, during which I will ask you several sets of questions related to the theme.

The aim of the focus group is for me to obtain your thoughts and opinions on the subject at hand, and the answers you give to the questions that will be asked are meant to be debated between all of you. There are no right or wrong answers; and all of the information gathered from your answers and discussions will be extremely relevant for this research.

Before we begin, I would like to ask each one of you for your spoken permission for this focus group to be voice recorded, so that I may later have access to your answers and transcribe them for research purposes only. Your identity is completely anonymous and the data collected is confidential and will be used only in the scope of this research.

1. Opening Questions

As already mentioned, the session's theme is related to digital influencers and how they can impact people's sustainable actions and behaviours. Before we proceed with specific topic-related questions, I would like you to answer and discuss a few more general questions.

1.1. Do you use social media? If so, which social media platforms do you use and why?

1.2. Do you follow any influencers on social media? If so, what kind of information do you expect and/or like to receive from them?

2. Digital Influencers

The next set of questions is related to the topic of digital influencers.

Digital influencers can be defined as content creators whose social networks have a solid base of followers, due to their knowledge and expertise on certain subjects, such as fashion, beauty, health, and travel.

2.1. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about influencers?

2.2. Who is the first influencer that comes to your mind? What do you like most about that influencer and why?

2.3. What characteristics do you think are most important in an influencer? Why?

2.4. Have you ever followed an influencer's suggestions or mimicked their behaviours? Why/why not? If so, please exemplify.

3. Sustainability

The following questions are related to sustainability and sustainable behaviours or practices.

Sustainability can be defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 3.1. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about sustainability?
- 3.2. Do you consider yourselves to be sustainable people? If so, which sustainable practices/products do you adopt/consume? And what motivates you to be sustainable? If not, what is stopping you?
- 3.3. Where have you heard or found information regarding sustainability or sustainable practices?

4. Sustainability Promotion by Influencers

- 4.1. Does any influencer come to your mind when you think of sustainability?
If so, which one?
- 4.2. What is the first think that comes to your mind if you see an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products?
- 4.3. What is your opinion regarding the promotion of sustainability and sustainable practices and/or products by influencers? Why?

5. Sustainable Behavioural Intentions

The next questions are related to how influencers can impact people's behavioural intentions.

- 5.1. Have you ever adopted a sustainable behaviour* because an influencer adopted or suggested it? If so, which behaviour was it? And which influencer adopted/suggested it?

*a sustainable behaviour can either be a sustainable practice or the purchase of a sustainable product

- 5.2. If an influencer adopts or suggests a certain sustainable behaviour, do you feel (more) compelled to adopt that behaviour yourself? Why/why not?

The trustworthiness of an influencer is the degree of trust consumers have in what influencers say and/or do.

5.3. Does the trustworthiness of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?

The expertise of an influencer is their ability to transmit truthful and trustworthy information.

5.4. Does the expertise of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?

The attractiveness of an influencer refers to their quality of being pleasant, attractive and/or admired by consumers.

5.5. Does the attractiveness of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?

5.6. Other than the ones already mentioned, are there any other characteristics of an influencer that impact your intentions of adopting a sustainable behaviour? If so, which ones and why?

6. Closing Questions

As the end of this focus group approaches, and as the main topics have been discussed, the last questions are important to understand your opinion regarding the role that digital influencers have played in the adoption of sustainable practices and how they can better encourage people to adopt them.

6.1. In your opinion, do influencers promote sustainable practices and/or products enough? Why/why not?

6.2. In your opinion, how could influencers encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and/or products (more) efficiently?

6.3. In your opinion, which sustainable behaviours should influencers promote (more)? Why?

Would you like to add anything else?

Once again, thank you so much for your time and participation.

Appendix 2: Focus Groups Transcriptions

Focus Group 1

RESEARCHER: Hello and welcome. Thank you in advance for your availability to participate in this focus group. This focus group is fundamental for my master's thesis, which is related to digital influencers and their impact on sustainable consumer behaviors, more specifically on consumers like you, who are members of Generation Z. The session will take between 60 to 90 minutes. The goal is to obtain your opinions and reflections on the subject in question. The answers you give to my questions must be discussed among you. This is going to be more or less like a conversation between all of you and I'll be here to moderate and to listen. There are no right or wrong answers. Before we start I would like to ask for your permission to record this session. I need you to tell me if you allow it to be recorded.

IM: I authorize.

DO: Yes, I authorize.

IF: Yes, I authorize.

IS: I authorize.

LC: Yes, I authorize.

CO: Yes, I authorize.

IA: Yes, I authorize.

RESEARCHER: Thank you. Now let's start with our first question. **Do you use social media? If so, which social media platforms do you use and why?**

DO: Yes, I think we all do.

IM: Not all of them. I mean we all use them, but not all of them.

DO: Yes, exactly. Instagram.

IF: Facebook.

DO: Yes, Facebook.

IF: I use all of them.

IS: TikTok. It's very in now.

IF: Yes, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat.

IS: Instagram.

IM: Snapchat?

IF: Facebook, Messenger. Yes, I use Snapchat because I have a group from Madeira there and we send each other pictures every day.

IS: I didn't even know you could create groups on Snapchat.

DO: And why do we use them?

RESEARCHER: Yes, why do you use each of those social media platforms?

LC: I've had a Facebook account since I was little, around 12 years old maybe. Back then I signed up because it was fashionable. But now I use it for Messenger, in order to chat. I don't use Facebook itself as much.

IS: Exactly.

IM: Exactly.

IF: Exactly, me too.

IS: And I use it more for [to talk to] family.

CO: Yes, exactly.

IF: And for your family to see what you've been doing.

IS: But Instagram I think it's more for friends.

LC: Yes, it's more modern.

IS: We use Instagram to check [other people's] lives.

IA: Exactly.

DO: Yes.

[laughter]

IF: I use Insta for pictures, for people to see what I do. I actually use Instagram a lot as [a kind of] Tinder.

[laughter]

IF: It's not really Tinder, because I know people [from Instagram]. But I speak a lot... for example, now I speak to people through Whatsapp and Instagram. I don't use [text] messages.

LC: Whatsapp. We hadn't mentioned Whatsapp yet.

IS: Yes, Whatsapp as well.

RESEARCHER: Does anyone wish to add anything to this question?

IF: Well basically, Facebook is [used] because of Messenger; Insta for pictures and to speak [to people]; Whatsapp to speak [to people].

IS: And Twitter to check Big Brother updates.

IA: Yes, we use Twitter to check what is happening around the world.

IF: Yes! For example, Insta broke down. If I go on Twitter and search for Instagram then I know-

IS: That it's not your phone[s problem].

RESEARCHER: Alright, I get it. Okay, so next question. **Do you follow any influencers on social media? If so, what kind of information do you expect and/or like to receive from them?**

IS: Discount codes!

[laughter]

IF: Yes, I follow [influencers]. It's more because of the clothes, outfits.

LC: Fashion.

IM: Yes, for fashion.

IA: I don't follow any. But I always check everything out.

CO: I love when they show us what they've received.

IS: Yes, me too.

IM: Me too.

DO: To know which restaurants are in fashion.

IS: And to check all the giveaways that appear!

IA: Yes, I check the giveaways to know if I won.

IM: I'm always commenting [on giveaways].

LC: I've never participated [on giveaways].

IS: I've already won a toothbrush! It's not an iPhone 13, but...

LC: That's not bad.

RESEARCHER: [It's good,] if it's an electric one.

IS: It was [electric]!

RESEARCHER: Okay. Next question. The next questions will be regarding influencers. **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about influencers?** It can be a word, a sentence, anything you want.

IF: Good lives.

IS: What a good life they're living, while I'm here studying to death.

RESEARCHER: Anything else?

IA: I'd say trips. Because they're always travelling, visiting new and different places.

IS: Lucky them to always try new stuff.

IF: Fashion.

CO: Restaurants.

IS: They own everything from the last editions.

IF: When I think of influencers, [I think] they don't do anything and have a Lord's life.

[laughter]

IS: I can only think that they aren't studying to death.

LC: It's not really like that. Some of them study.

IF: Helena Coelho studied Chemical Engineering.

IS: Now, in the present!

LC: A lot of them are designers and a lot of other stuff. I mean, what we see is simply...

IS: That [indiscernible words] gave up on everything in the middle of the course.

LC: It's likely. But I was also thinking of the word "role model". I don't know why, but [because] they try to be examples for society.

RESEARCHER: Yes, nice. Anyone else? DO, you're a bit quiet.

DO: To me, other than everything they mentioned, I also think of toxicity.

LC: Okay.

IS: Me too.

DO: Can you understand it? Because, I think-

IS: They show only the good things.

IM: Yes, exactly.

IS: I think it's a problem of a lot of influencers. They only show the good side [of things]. Which leads us to think they are only living a good life, right? Certainly they aren't, but they only show the good side and not the bad.

LC: Exactly.

IS: They could at least show we're all the same.

IA: Yes, no one wakes up with a complete makeup, foundation...

[laughter]

IS: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Okay. So, from this question, can you tell me what are the things you most appreciate in influencers? For example, you were just saying that it sounds like [reminds you of] toxicity, because they don't show us the bad part of life; so you value, for example, their authenticity?

LC: Yes, stuff that is more real.

IS: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Any other characteristics? I'm moving on to another question now, which is: **What characteristics do you think are most important in an influencer? Why?** Or what is most important for you in an influencer?

IF: Yes, that part about being real is true. But I don't want to open Instagram and see a girl or a boy with a very messy hair, otherwise I wouldn't follow them.

RESEARCHER: So, for you, the attractiveness of the person is important?

IF: Yes, exactly.

DO: I think, for me, it's more [about] the type of subjects they address. For example, I don't follow almost any of the influencers you've mentioned, because the things they address the most are clothes, hair, whatever. I follow influencers that address problems, like mental problems, or problems that everyone has.

RESEARCHER: You mean their content?

DO: Yes.

IM: Yes.

RESEARCHER: And the content has to show that they care about something. Is that it?

DO: Yes.

IM: Yes.

IS: Exactly.

LC: Regarding what DO said, I think that the influencer pleases me or not depending on their eccentricity. I mean, the ones who are very eccentric, who love to show a lot of money, etc. That's a no from me, completely. I prefer humble people.

RESEARCHER: More humble. Okay, nice.

IA: For example, I really like kitchen stuff. So, if they show me recipes... But it's more of a personal taste. I like to see recipes more than clothes, so...

RESEARCHER: Okay. In terms of personality, you've already talked about attractiveness, humbleness, realness. Anything else? Any other personality trait or characteristic that you appreciate more?

[small pause]

IF: Good taste.

CO: Mutual help as well, with the public. We've seen this case of that girl who was missing and, for example, Rita Pereira was one of the first to share the helplines for people with psychological problems, with depression. And I think that's a part that attracts me a lot.

IS: Yes, the fact that they show that they are available to help.

LC: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Next question. **Who is the influencer that first comes to your mind? What do you like most about that influencer and why?**

IA: The first one I followed was Virginia, the Brazilian one. Do you know [her]?

IM: No.

IS: The one who dances with her husband?

IA: Yes. I love her because she accompanies him in everything, I swear. I love their relationship. And she posts stuff that is very real.

DO: Mark Ferris, maybe.

RESEARCHER: Okay, but why?

DO: Maybe because... I don't know, it's because of the type of content I was talking about.

RESEARCHER: Content about lifestyle?

DO: Yes, exactly. He's more easygoing. When I watch any of his stories [on Instagram], I know that I want to open it. I never think like "oh will he show me something that he bought?". I don't like that. I know that his content will always please me and make me laugh. Nothing he has ever posted has made me feel like "oh I wish I was doing like him", because I don't like the "I wish" feeling.

RESEARCHER: Okay, anyone else?

IF: I was going to mention several [influencers].

RESEARCHER: Yes, you can do that. Go ahead.

IF: For example, Sara Rodrigues, who is André Silva's ex-girlfriend. I started following her because of him, but they broke up in the meantime. And I really like her lifestyle and her clothes. And I also like Chiqui Monteiro. She's a big influencer from Porto and I also like her outfits and lifestyle. Also because she gives advice on restaurants and stuff. I don't know any more, but that's what I like, to check out the kind of lifestyle I like, restaurants and clothes. That's basically it.

RESEARCHER: Anything else?

IA: The one I like the most is Inês Aires Pereira. Turns out I follow [influencers], I checked it. I don't know why but she's very funny and I like her content because it's very fun.

IS: I like her a lot too.

IA: And I know that I'll laugh whenever I watch her [Instagram] stories. It's more in the sense of being entertaining for me.

IS: Yes, it's just like me. I also follow Inês Aires Pereira and-

IF: Ah! And also Helena Coelho! She gives a lot of makeup tips and although I don't like her fashion style, her makeup tips are good. [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Alright! What were you going to say IS?

IS: That I really like to follow people who have children and that post funny [Instagram] stories.

LC: Yes, [the ones] that post cute stuff.

IF: Oh! And Mafalda Sampaio!

IS: Yes, Mafalda Sampaio! Madalena Abecassis as well. I love following Madalena Abecassis because she has 4 children and she's always sharing

[Instagram] stories with them. Funny and stupid stuff that her children do.
[laughs]

IF: Yes! And I really like Mafalda Sampaio because of Madalena [Mafalda Sampaio's daughter].

IS: It's because she makes me laugh. It's not because she goes to one place or another, it's because I know I will see a cute [Instagram] story of her children, like them crying and her making fun of the situation.

RESEARCHER: And what about you LC and CO?

CO: I think they've mentioned most of them.

LC: Exactly. I'm trying to think of someone specifically.

CO: I love Mafalda Sampaio, for example, but there are other ones as well. Maybe Inês Rochinha. I like her and her content as well. But I think they've mentioned most of them.

IF: Wait! I forgot! Bruna Corby, I love her. But it's for the same reason I've mentioned, because of the fashion and lifestyle.

IS: I just remembered another one as well! The only influencer that I know who is a dentist, Meg Morais. She's a dentist from Lisbon.

IF: I follow her as well.

IS: And it's cool because she's either posting about clothes and suddenly she's posting surveys about dentistry medicine. She also shares information about all the courses she takes and stuff.

IA: I've met her personally and she's just like she is on Instagram. She's a bit foulmouthed sometimes, even when talking to her patients.

IM: I know one from TikTok but I don't remember her name. She's very funny, but I don't know her name.

IA: Turns out I actually follow some [influencers]. At least two. I probably follow some more, but not those that everyone follows or who are fashion [influencers].

LC: I also follow a lot of footballers. They are influencers as well.

IF: Exactly, me too. Cristiano Ronaldo.

IS: I think I only follow Ronaldo.

IA: Yes, I follow Ronaldo.

IS: I also follow the Kardashians, because of their reality show. I don't like them, but I like their show.

IA: I also follow Dua Lipa. She counts as an influencer.

IS: I also like to watch when they [the Kardashians] share stuff about their children.

IF: I also follow Formula 1 drivers.

IS: Me too. I follow the Portuguese ones.

IF: I follow several of them, because I enjoy watching Formula 1.

RESEARCHER: Alright, next question.

IF: Ah! I missed one, I'm sorry. Carolina Nashtai. She's from Madeira and has a great sense of style. It's for the same reasons [I've mentioned]. Okay, you can continue, I'm sorry.

RESEARCHER: No problem. **Have you ever followed an influencer's suggestions or mimicked their behaviours? Why/why not? If so, please exemplify.** And I should mention that mimicking behaviours can even include purchasing the same products as the influencer.

IF: Yes. I've already bought clothes [like theirs]. And their tips, as well. For example, that's why I follow Helena Coelho, because of her makeup tips.

IS: And the stuff she shares from Amazon.

IF: Yes, that too!

IS: She shows stuff that is very cheap and useful. And Adri Silva also shares stuff from Amazon Spain. A lot of stuff that area lot cheaper. Such as a portable battery.

IA: I've also bought that one.

RESEARCHER: So do you usually buy the products they suggest?

IS: If they're cheap, yes.

IF: It depends.

IS: It depends on the price and whether I'll actually use it. I don't buy just because they have it. If it's something cheap and that I think I'll use, then yes [I'll buy it]. Like the portable battery; I've bought it and it was one of the best purchases I've made.

IA: Me too. I bought it because I thought it was very practical. I don't even follow her. I just happened to see it [her story], and I checked out the Amazon link she shared. But I only liked the powerbank.

RESEARCHER: That's nice. Anyone else?

CO: Nutrition-related content. Recipes.

LC: Yes, that's what I was going to say.

CO: Their food, such as snacks from Prozis, for example.

DO: Skincare.

IM: Exactly.

IS: That too.

IA: I've done a lot of recipes that I've seen on Insta.

LC: Sometimes I also see decoration stuff, for the bedroom or such.

IS: Yes! I also love to see things that we can buy at IKEA

RESEARCHER: And you get your inspiration from there [the influencers]?

LC: Yes, and I don't mean just stuff that you can buy, but also tips to do at home. Like moving your furniture around in order to have more space, and stuff like that. And hairstyles as well.

IS: I also watch stuff that motivates me to study.

[laughter]

LC: I need that right now.

IS: Watching people study gives me motivation to study. Not a lot, but it works.

IM: Yes, I watch YouTube videos while I'm studying.

IS: And on Instagram too. Like pretty notes to motivate me. Even if it's just for ten minutes.

RESEARCHER: What about you DO and IM?

DO: For me, skincare and those gadgets from Amazon that they've mentioned. Clothes as well, and food, like they said.

CO: Oh and something no one mentioned, workout plans. It doesn't mean they're exactly the same, but I get ideas from them; from examples of exercises with a water bottle, for example.

RESEARCHER: Okay. So, if no one wants to add anything else, the next topic is about sustainability. The first question is this one: **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about sustainability?**

IF: Recycling.

DO: I thought of vegan, vegetarian and electric cars.

RESEARCHER: Okay, anything else?

IA: I thought a lot about saving. Saving energy, saving water.

IS: Yes, saving.

LC: I thought of environment.

RESEARCHER: Does anyone want to add anything else?

IS: I don't remember anything else.

RESEARCHER: Alright. Next question. **Do you consider yourselves to be sustainable people? If so, which sustainable practices/products do you adopt/consume? And what motivates you to be sustainable? If not, what is stopping you?**

IS: I'm not sustainable at all. I don't do anything [sustainable].

[laughter]

IS: I don't even recycle, I admit.

IF: I'm not [sustainable] either.

IS: For example, I brush my teeth with the water running; I never close the tap when having a shower; it's sunny outside right now and I have 3 lamps on. I'm awful.

RESEARCHER: Okay, it's okay.

LC: I recycle; I try to be careful with [saving] the water when having a shower. I was actually thinking about what I'm not sustainable at. I mean, things that have been being mentioned a lot, like eating less meat, I'm not careful about that. At home we eat meat and fish, and don't think about other options to stop... to reduce that consumption.

RESEARCHER: Okay. I'd only like to mention that sustainable behaviours can also include buying sustainable products, for example. For example, I own reusable metal straws.

IS: Oh, okay. But I don't buy [sustainable] products either. And I don't think there's anything stopping me.

CO: I'm a bit like IS. I've been trying to opt for glass Tupperware's instead of the plastic ones, for example. I don't have plants at home, but if I did I would probably save the cold water that runs before the warm water comes in order to water my plants with it. But otherwise, in terms of [saving] energy, I tend to waste it a bit. My parents are always complaining and telling me to turn the lights off. [laughs]

LC: I was thinking about going shopping and taking bags. But I think that was mainly because the bags have to be paid for now. Even before, I think people opted [to take their own bags] not because of sustainability but for the price of the plastic bags. I think it was because of the money.

RESEARCHER: Yes. They might not have noticed, but it is a sustainable behaviour.

LC: Exactly. Either way, it is sustainable.

RESEARCHER: DO, what about you?

DO: Alright. So, do I consider myself a sustainable consumer? Somewhat. When I think of sustainable habits, I stopped using normal water bottles; it doesn't sit right with me to buy a plastic water bottle.

RESEARCHER: If you'd like to agree, disagree or add something to what DO is saying, please go ahead.

LC: I do that too.

IS: Exactly, I do that too, but it's unconsciously. Turns out I'm a bit sustainable. Ignore all the lights that are on here, I'm sustainable.

[laughter]

RESEARCHER: Anything else DO?

DO: I try not to waste too much water. Regarding energy, for example, right now my bedroom lights are on, but that's because there isn't much brightness in here. If I leave the room I have to turn the lights off, usually, I never forget.

LC: Yes, I do that too.

DO: What makes me adopt them [the practices] is listening to my mom complaining about how much she has to pay for energy.

[laughter]

DO: And what is stopping me... for example, what stops me from having an electric car is not having money.

RESEARCHER: Many sustainable practices require a bit more money.

DO: Yes, they are expensive.

RESEARCHER: If you stop eating meat, for example, vegan food is much more expensive. Would you agree?

LC: Exactly.

IS: Yes!

IM: Yes.

LC: I agree.

DO: Also, [regarding] a vegan diet, what stops me is the stigma. Like, “will my body be able to handle it [the vegan diet] without those vitamins? or is it the same if I take them [the vitamins] through pills? or something like that. And... I was going to say something else but I don’t remember what it was. [pauses briefly] Ah! I once purchased a bamboo toothbrush because it’s very in now, and it was awful.

[laughter]

DO: It tastes bad, it’s horrible.

IS: It’s true! It’s true. [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Alright. Does anyone else want to share anything?

IF: I don’t consider myself to be sustainable at all, really, at all. Even [regarding] the water bottles you were talking about, I’m not even sustainable with those. I buy the plastic ones. I don’t recycle. And when it comes to sustainability regarding clothes, there are a lot of things now that [allow us to] sell clothes; trying to buy second-hand, I don’t do that either. I always buy things that are new and I frequently go shopping. I know it’s wrong. And what is stopping me is that there are pretty clothes [for sale]. [laughs] It’s a bit difficult.

RESEARCHER: It’s okay. But for example, you can be sustainable, even if you don’t buy second-hand, but if you sell your clothes instead of disposing of them. Does anyone sell theirs?

IF: Ah! Yes! I’ve done that.

LC: I do! I usually give the clothes to charity.

IF: I’ve donated [clothes] and sold as well.

IM: Exactly, I’ve sold [clothes] as well.

IS: My parents have given away my clothes ever since I was little. Toys, everything.

LC: Yes, mine too. They would gather clothes that were worn out in a basket and give them away.

IS: And I've received a lot of clothing from older cousins as well. We've always shared a lot of clothes.

RESEARCHER: That's reusing, so it also counts. Without any taboos, does any of you use, for example, a menstrual cup?

LC: No.

DO: Oh, I do! I do!

[laughter]

RESEARCHER: And what about reusable cups? Just like the [reusable] water bottles.

IF: Ah! I reuse the ones from Queima [da Fitas]!

LC: I don't use plastic cups at home, only glass.

IF: I reuse [cups] from parties, from FEUP Café for example. I've kept them.

RESEARCHER: So you kept them instead of throwing them out.

IF: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: A question which I think we haven't discussed much was: what motivates you to adopt these kind of practices? Why do you reuse the cups? Why do you save energy? CO and DO mentioned that she saved [energy] because their parents complained, for example. Are there any other reasons?

IS: The cost of energy, which parents complain about, yes.

DO: Documentaries.

CO: The world's news.

LC: I think because of the economy.

RESEARCHER: The news about environmental concerns?

CO: Exactly.

IF: For me it's mainly because of the economy as well.

LC: Me too. I mean, not as much because of the environment, but because... for example, taking the bags for grocery shopping in order not waste money. Those kind of things.

IS: Me too.

IF: Exactly.

IM: Exactly.

DO: I agree. I think that long-term it ends up paying off, for example the [reusable] water bottle. Not even long-term, perhaps a month of using this water bottle, if you buy the normal amount of [plastic] water bottles [in a month] the cost is much higher.

IF: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Next question. **Where have you heard or found information regarding sustainability or sustainable practices?**

CO: When I was younger I heard [information] during science classes, so, through the teacher and stuff. But nowadays, for example, we end up finding some things on social media although I think that, at least from the content that I follow, I don't find that much information. But by watching the news we see a lot of things related to sustainability, and I think that's the main source.

DO: Those advertisements that appear on YouTube and on TV as well.

LC: Exactly, that's what I was going to say.

IS: Even on Instagram, sometimes people share things.

DO: Yes, like those water bottles that were very fashionable. Now there are ones that clean the water and stuff.

IS: Yes!

LC: Yes.

IF: I think from our parents as well. They also give us some information about that and about how we can be more sustainable.

CO: And even on social media, from the smallest of things. For example, those reusable cloth makeup removers. Even today I watched a girl talking about how a lot of us sometimes use a cotton swab to remove makeup, such as a bit of mascara and stuff; and she said that she bought a reusable cotton swab for that, which ends up being a lot cheaper in comparison to the other ones.

RESEARCHER: I didn't know that existed.

CO: Yes. It was Sandra Silva who posted a story about it today. She said it was from a pharmacy.

IA: I see a lot of those shampoos and conditioners that look like soap bars on TikTok. But I still don't feel tempted [to use them].

IS: Yes!

CO: Yes, me neither.

RESEARCHER: Alright then. Next one. **Does any influencer come to your mind when you think of sustainability? If so, which one?**

CO: Sandra Silva. I follow her and, as I mentioned earlier, she talked about the cotton swab. Regarding the reusable cloths, she has her own page where they are sold. Her soap and conditioner to wash clothes is sustainable as well. She addresses sustainability a lot, and I think she's the influencer who addresses this the most, from the ones that I follow.

LC: No one comes to my mind, but there's a show, Big Brother, which I feel like it's also an influencer, even though it's not a person, in which we hear them talking about recycling a lot.

IF: Nothing really comes to mind. I think that the influencers I follow aren't sustainable at all.

DO: What came to my mind was a character, not an influencer, for example Mitchell Pritchett.

[laughter]

RESEARCHER: Anyone else?

IS: I don't remember anyone either.

RESEARCHER: Next question, then. **What is the first think that comes to your mind if you see an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products?** You can read this questions as "What would be the first thing to come to your mind if you saw an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products".

IS: Advertising.

DO: Yes, advertising. But also, that it's good for them to share those kind of habits, since they have power anyway. And another thing would be "where did you buy that?".

[laughter]

IM: Exactly, like "does that really exist?".

RESEARCHER: Okay, so, some surprise and curiosity. Do you think they should do it [adopt or promote sustainable practices and/or products]?

IS: Yes.

IA: Yes.

DO: Yes. For example, I didn't know about the reusable cotton swabs.

CO: Exactly! I learned about them just today.

IA: I wouldn't have known about the shampoos and stuff.

RESEARCHER: Next question, then. **What is your opinion regarding the promotion of sustainability and sustainable practices and/or products by influencers? Why?** Do you think they should do it?

CO: Yes, I think they should [do it], so it will reach a larger number of people.

DO: Yes.

IS: Yes, they can transmit a message to a lot of people.

CO: Although there are some things that... for example, as we were talking about, solid shampoos don't really catch my attention. For example, the cotton

swab catches my attention if I am to use it to remove a bit of makeup; if it is to be used for your ears then I don't care for it at all, nor would I use it.

[laughter]

CO: There are things I would adopt, and others that I wouldn't.

RESEARCHER: But do you think they should do it, despite that?

CO: Yes, yes. Yes, without a question.

IF: I think they should do it, because if being an influencer is considered a job, then that job should be allied to the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. I think it should be an obligation of theirs, despite a lot of them not doing it.

CO: Even because there are people that can agree and others that... for example, the menstrual cup. It's not that I don't agree [with it], but I don't know if I would be capable of using it. I don't know how to explain.

IF: Exactly! But if they talk about it, at least you'll know about its existence.

CO: And there are people who like it. For example, I would use reusable napkins, the cotton swab, the cloths to remove makeup... but there are other things that don't catch my attention as much. But there are people whose attention would be caught.

RESEARCHER: Any other opinion regarding this?

DO: I think they should because, for example, in my situation the menstrual cup was something about which I thought "no, I'm never using that in my life" and "maybe I won't be capable of using it"; but after seeing Zoe's opinion, who is an influencer in whom I trusted, I ended up buying it and the truth is that you don't even feel it [the cup], which was exactly what she [Zoe] said. Now, if she comes along and gives any more sustainable tips, I'll most likely try them.

CO: Exactly, and trying isn't hard to do. You have to try it in order to know if you actually like it or not.

IA: Even if only to let us know that those things exist and whether they are worth it.

DO: Exactly.

IA: Because sometimes they might show a shirt that I don't like but I still see it. So why not talk about something that at least will make me think about it?

DO: Exactly.

IS: Exactly.

CO: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: So they should do it because it's helpful and you think they should have some social responsibility due to their power?

IM: Yes.

CO: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Okay. The next questions will be about the impact that influencers have on your intentions of adopting sustainable products and/or practices. First question: **Have you ever adopted a sustainable behaviour* because an influencer adopted or suggested it? If so, which behaviour was it? And which influencer adopted/suggested it?** A sustainable behaviour can even be the purchase of a sustainable product.

DO: My menstrual cup.

CO: In my case, the reusable cloths to remove makeup which I learned about through Sandra Silva. Regarding the reusable cloth napkins, I use them during festive seasons, but I would like to use them more often, other than buying those normal napkins.

RESEARCHER: Has anyone else adopted [sustainable products and/or practices] because of an influencer?

IS: No, nothing.

IA: I'm not very sustainable, so, no.

RESEARCHER: Alright. Next question. **If an influencer adopts or suggests a certain sustainable behaviour, do you feel (more) compelled to adopt that behavior yourself? Why/why not?**

IF: Yes, that's what I was talking about earlier. I think they should have the duty of talking about it. It depends on each person to follow [the advice] or not. I think that if they talk about it, we will at least think about it.

IS: Yes and we get to hear their opinion before we try it ourselves.

LC: I think it depends on our curiosity to try it.

CO: But I think they have a lot of power on a lot of people. I don't feel completely influenced and I buy things if I like them and think they are interesting. But there are people who are indeed very influenced, in which case they end up reaching a lot of [those] people.

LC: And maybe the more people talk about this subject, perhaps the more we will want to try it.

RESEARCHER: Do you feel more compelled if it's a friend who suggests it?

DO: I don't know.

LC: Yes, someone more trustworthy.

CO: No, I think it depends.

IS: Yes, of course.

RESEARCHER: Someone you trust more?

IS: Yes.

LC: Yes.

DO: Not necessarily for me. Because, for example, the menstrual cup worked for me; but if Zoe tells me "look, this works", I wouldn't even question her. I would think "oh it works? cool, maybe I'll try it."

RESEARCHER: So, for you, is the trust you have on an influencer important?

DO: It depends on the influencer, yes. And it also depends on whether it's an ad. If it's an ad, I won't trust it as much. If it's an ad for which the influencer is being paid, then I won't trust it as much. But if it's a tip, then I'll trust it.

CO: Exactly!

IA: For example, I was once watching a story from Anita Costa, and I could tell that she was reading what she was saying, like from a teleprompt. I know everyone does that and sometimes brands send that to them. But since she would look away, from one side to the other, and her voice sounded like she was kind of reading, I felt like... I don't know. I think she lost her credibility, even though all of them probably do that, but maybe they can disguise a little better, or they are actually more authentic. So, I think the person's credibility and trust are important.

RESEARCHER: So, those characteristics you mentioned earlier, authenticity, humbleness... do they impact what you do?

IA: Exactly.

CO: Yes.

IF: Yes.

RESEARCHER: But, personally... for example, CO said yes, she would feel a bit more compelled to try something sustainable if they suggested it. It doesn't mean she's completely swayed but perhaps she'll want to look for more information and even try it out.

DO: Yes, for example, the makeup removal cloths. CO mentioned them and now I want to buy them.

RESEARCHER: And what about you, IF, IS, LC...? Are you curious about it or not really?

IF: Yes, I'm curious, but...

IS: I'm curious but I don't tend to buy anything. I mean, if one of my friends tells me about it, I think I would be more compelled to buy it than I would be if I saw an influencer suggesting it.

IF: Yes, me too, because I know it's real and from someone I know, while from the influencer it can be just a random ad she's being paid for.

IA: Exactly. And the fact that you can see the product first-hand and even try it is more compelling.

RESEARCHER: The next question relates a bit to what you've already mentioned. The trustworthiness of an influencer is the degree of trust consumers have in what influencers say and/or do. **Does the trustworthiness of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?** You've already answered yes. Would you like to add any other examples or explain why trustworthiness is important for you?

IF: Yes, I think it's like I said. If a person is advertising something and being paid for it... for example, what IA said about that influencer reading what she was meant to say. If that happened to me I wouldn't trust her [the influencer] or anything she would say, because she's being paid for it. It's not something she uses every day, so it won't be a good suggestion for me and I won't follow the advice.

RESEARCHER: So in your opinion their authenticity is important and for you to use it then they should use it as well, otherwise...

IF: Exactly! Yes, because if they don't use it then it's not truly something good, otherwise they would use it.

RESEARCHER: Exactly. You've already somewhat answered this question before, so we'll be moving on to the next one, which is related to the knowledge of the influencer regarding sustainability. The expertise of an influencer is their ability to transmit truthful and trustworthy information. **Does the expertise of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?** For example, Mafalda Sampaio perhaps isn't very knowledgeable about sustainability. So, if you see her adopting a sustainable behaviour, would the fact that her knowledge is limited

dissuade you from adopting that behaviour? Or is it irrelevant, independent from whether she's knowledgeable about the subject or not?

IF: I think so, because if she doesn't know anything about it, then she probably doesn't use it. Because someone who uses something has investigated about the subject. So if she doesn't know anything about it, it's not relevant for her, so I wouldn't use it [the product] or follow it [the advice].

DO: For me it's more about the justification. For example, regarding the reusable makeup removal cloths, if they tell me what they're good for and the advantages of the product... if they don't tell me about the advantages then I'll be disinterested. Because if it doesn't bring me anything other than costs, I won't care for it.

IS: I think that, for me, it's not that important that they share theoretical knowledge, for example, "I bought this because it has these features and stuff", but rather [sharing] the experience, like "I used this for a week and my skin got better".

IF: I actually see that as knowledge, because she has knowledge about the product and she knows how her skin reacted to it.

IS: Yes, it's knowledge as well. I mean that it's not knowledge like the product's theory, but knowledge about her own experience.

IF: Yes, that's what I think.

IS: Their personal experience is important for me.

DO: No. I like to have all the information. Theoretical, non-theoretical, experience, everything.

IA: I don't like it when they receive something and start promoting it and talking about how good the product is without even trying it. I like if they say they'll try it and give feedback on it in like a month, but not without trying it. I like to know their personal experience.

LC: Something that I was going to say that is more related to the question was that I think that someone who has little experience... I'm going to give an example that has nothing to do with this but, for example, a makeup artist talking about decoration isn't as credible for me as... now regarding the actual subject, a person whose theme is sustainability is more credible for me than another person whose theme is different but is trying to add sustainability to the theme they actually address.

RESEARCHER: Exactly, that was the point of the question. Regarding their knowledge I think all of you explained it very clearly. But in this case, experience meant their knowledge about the theme, for example, like my previous example of Mafalda Sampaio. She doesn't mention anything about sustainability, her theme is about fashion and her family. So, if she presented you a sustainable product or practice that she adopted, it might not dissuade you as much as, for example, if it were Greta Thunberg. I don't know if you know her, she talks a lot about sustainability. But if she suggested a sustainable behaviour maybe she would persuade you more than Mafalda Sampaio. It was in this sense.

LC: It's not that I'll feel dissuaded, but there is much more persuasion if the person is an expert in that area.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Moving on to the next question. The attractiveness of an influencer refers to their quality of being pleasant, attractive and/or admired by consumers. **Does the attractiveness of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?**

DO: Yes. I think that if it's a person in whom I'm not very interested, I probably won't even watch their content, I'll skip it.

IM: Yes, I agree with that.

IS: It has to be someone flashy, otherwise we won't pay attention.

IM: Exactly.

LC: I agree.

RESEARCHER: Is there a specific reason why? Why is it important for you?

IS: I think it's more interesting. Even if it's a theme that doesn't interest us, if we like the person and their personality is attractive we will want to watch their story or their post until the end.

RESEARCHER: Does anyone disagree? Does anyone consider that attractiveness doesn't matter?

DO: I don't think so.

LC: No.

RESEARCHER: Okay. next question: **Other than the ones already mentioned, are there any other characteristics of an influencer that impact your intentions of adopting a sustainable behaviour? If so, which ones and why?** Other than the trust you place on the influencer, their attractiveness and their knowledge about the subject, that is.

DO: Yes. Perhaps... I don't know if this fits with your criteria, but perhaps their lifestyle.

RESEARCHER: Yes, it fits.

DO: Perhaps their lifestyle. For example, I would be much more influenced by Gypsea Lust to have a healthier lifestyle, in terms of food or... because all of her content is based on that. It doesn't mean she has more concrete knowledge on the subject because she's not an expert on it, but it's her lifestyle. [I would be much more influenced by Gypsea Lust to have a healthier lifestyle] than if it were Zoe who suddenly turned vegan. I need to believe that person has that kind of lifestyle and isn't faking it.

RESEARCHER: They have to be consistent, is that it? Consistency.

DO: Exactly, exactly.

RESEARCHER: Anyone else?

IS: I don't think I have anything to add.

IF: Being empathetic. But I think we've talked about it a bit already. It's about placing yourself on someone else's shoes. CO mentioned how, when that girl was missing, Rita Pereira shared some helplines, because she thinks like "what if it were my daughter?". And a person follows [an influencer] if they think they are empathetic towards other people, and not those who don't care about others and their lives. I also think that makes us trust the influencer more.

RESEARCHER: So, DO, would you say that in order for you to be more compelled to adopt a more sustainable behaviour, the influencer would need to have a more sustainable lifestyle, is that it?

DO: Yes, exactly.

RESEARCHER: And for you, IF, the influencer has to be empathetic towards other people and towards the environment, and that would make you more compelled?

IF: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Another characteristic, for example, is the [influencer's] number of followers important for you?

DO: No.

IF: No, because I follow influencers with very little followers that interest me more than some who have a lot of followers.

RESEARCHER: The fact that they have less followers is better for you, or is indifferent?

IF: It's indifferent. It won't depend on that for me to follow the influencer's advice. It will depend on the characteristics that we've been mentioning, attractiveness and others.

IS: Exactly, I agree.

DO: I agree.

RESEARCHER: Okay, then. Moving on to the final questions. As the main topics have been discussed, these last questions are the most important for me to

understand your opinion regarding how digital influencers may impact the adoption of sustainable practices. And the first question is: **In your opinion, do influencers promote sustainable practices and/or products enough? Why/why not?**

LC: I don't think so. At least not the ones I follow.

IS: From what I've seen, no.

IA: I don't follow many of them, but when I'm searching for other things I don't find much about sustainability.

IF: I find very little as well.

IS: It's [sustainability] not the focus of any of the ones [influencers] I know.

IA: Or I feel like they only talk it about just for the sake of it, you know? When some tragedy happens, it seems like they share that one [Instagram] story and then [think] "okay, it's done, I've talked about it".

IS: For no one to comment that x influencer didn't give their opinion [on the matter]. I think that's what happens.

IA: Exactly. I think that if they actually wanted to talk more about it, then... no one reminds them to talk more about makeup or clothes, and they still do it. But regarding sustainability, it seems like [they think] "oh I'll talk about this now because someone sent me this product" and then it stagnates.

CO: I agree. I think that, in general, they don't [do it enough]. But, like everything, there are some exceptions. For example, as I've mentioned that influencer that I follow, Sandra Silva, she talks a lot about sustainability and you can see that it's not publicity. I think that... first of all they always have the "pub" [ad] on the side [if it's an ad], and she doesn't do that. She does that with several things but not when it's related to sustainability. Apart from her, who is the only influencer I follow who talks [about it] a lot, the rest of them don't address it or only address it when it's an advertisement.

DO: I agree, but I also think that, on the other hand, it's [due to] the type of influencers we follow. Because if sustainability isn't an interest of ours, then we won't be searching for people [who talk about it].

IS: Exactly.

IA: Exactly.

CO: Exactly. For example, I've never been much interested or searched it a lot. But, initially, I followed her not with that intent, but because I liked her content and her lifestyle. I actually started following her on YouTube first and then searched her on Instagram and she started bringing that kind of content. At least when I started following her I saw some things [related to sustainability] and now she has a lot of stuff about that theme. But in general, I don't think [they promote it enough] so.

RESEARCHER: This question meant that... since this theme is becoming more and more important and , clearly, through the news we can see that the environment increasingly needs our help. So, do you think that they could talk more about it?

CO: Yes.

IF: Yes, completely.

IS: I think so too, that they should talk more about it.

RESEARCHER: Okay, next question: **In your opinion, how could influencers encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and/or products (more) efficiently?** You can take your time to think of an answer.

DO: By adopting these sustainable measures on a daily basis and show them [to people].

IS: Doing it not only for publicity, because many times you can tell that they've done an ad and then on a day-to-day you don't see that product being used anymore.

IA: Or doing it with products they find themselves and not only with things they receive from people who require them to speak about them.

DO: Exactly. I think that the amount of times you see a product or a habit in the life of a person... if you see that for them it is normal to do that, perhaps it will encourage more.

CO: Exactly.

IS: Exactly. I think that many times... I don't know if it has happened to you, it doesn't make sense, for example, to see a makeup artist, [like] Inês Rochinha or whoever, doing an ad for reusable cloth makeup removers, and then doing a [Instagram] live and you see her using disposable cotton makeup removers.

IA: Exactly!

CO: Exactly.

IS: It's just an example, it could be something else. And it probably happens a lot of times; they do the ad, but then day-to-day, on a [Instagram] live or a story, you see the opposite or don't even see the product ever again.

CO: I consider the one I follow because... in every video that she posts I always see her using the [reusable makeup removal] cloth. I've never seen her use another type of makeup remover other than the reusable one. Even unconsciously during vlogs, while washing clothes and all of that, she grabs the soap that is sustainable, for example. And I think that ends up influencing us.

RESEARCHER: I'm going to give an example. In your opinion, if an influencer posted a challenge, for example, one week of sustainable practices, would you feel motivated to participate?

IS: No.

DO: No.

LC: No.

IS: Because I wouldn't have the products or the minimal things to do it. If you're missing something then you can't [participate]. [indiscernible words] my normal shampoo, for example.

CO: Exactly and I think that I would find it interesting, but I wouldn't do it. I think that's it.

IS: Exactly.

[laughter]

RESEARCHER: Okay, then. Sorry, IS, I didn't understand what you said about the shampoo.

IS: For example, she [the influencer] would tell us what to do during that week, right? I wouldn't be able to wash my hair without my normal shampoo.

[laughter]

IS: It's just an example to show that I wouldn't be able to do it without having certain things. Like reducing water waste, reduce energy waste... those little things like the [solid] shampoos, the [reusable makeup removal] cloths, I wouldn't be able to do it because I would have to invest in those things.

RESEARCHER: Oh okay, makes sense. Alright. Finally, last question: **In your opinion, which sustainable behaviours should influencers promote (more)? Why?**

DO: I think that, depending on the influencer, for example if it's a influencer who doesn't have a habit of sharing that kind of content, perhaps starting by more basic things, and not necessarily things that would make you have to buy a product... for example what CO said: to use the cold water that runs from the shower before it gets warm to water the plants. Those kind of things. And maybe, for the influencers who already have that kind of content and knowledge, it would perhaps be interesting to share gadgets, the reusable cloths...

LC: I also think that... I mean, in my opinion, influencers could have sustainable behaviours in their area. For example, people are interested in makeup so they

could present sustainable behaviours in makeup, decoration... associated with the areas they address and for which they are interested in.

IA: Exactly.

IS: I agree.

DO: Or, for example, those influencers we were talking about, fashion influencers... now there are a lot of brands like Zara and such that have their own ecologic [clothing] line, and I've never seen anyone talking about that.

IS: I didn't even know that existed.

IA: Me neither.

LC: Yes, I knew about that.

IS: And I see a lot of people sharing clothes from Zara, but none of them talked about the...

DO: ... the sustainable part.

RESEARCHER: It's called Join Life.

DO: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Would you like to add anything else?

DO: I don't think so.

IS: Nothing else comes to mind right now.

IA: Me neither.

IF: I'd actually like to add something. I remembered about an influencer who also uses those reusable [makeup removal] cloths, and I think she does in fact use them, because she shows us her nighttime skincare routine and she uses those cloths that you can wash in order to remove her makeup. It's Adri Silva that I remembered.

RESEARCHER: Yes. I think Inês Rochinha does that as well. I remember watching her use it... it's like a glove.

IF: Yes! Yes, it is.

RESEARCHER: She wears the glove, takes it off and washes it.

IF: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Okay. So, if no one wants to add anything else, the focus group ends here. Again, thank you so much for your time and participation, you were very helpful.

Focus Group 2

RESEARCHER: Hello and welcome. I would first like to thank you all for your availability and participation in this focus group. This focus group is fundamental for the development of my master's thesis, which is related to digital influencers and their impact on consumers' sustainable behaviours, more specifically, on Generation Z members like you. The session will take around 60 to 90 minutes, during which I will ask you several sets of questions related to the theme. The aim of the focus group is for me to obtain your thoughts and opinions about the subject, and the answers you give to the questions are supposed to be discussed between all of you. Thus, there are no right or wrong answers. Your identity is completely anonymous and your answers are confidential and will be used only in the scope of my thesis. Before we begin, I need to ask each one of you for your spoken authorization for this focus group to be voice recorded, so that I may later have access to your answers and transcribe them for research purposes only.

MN: Yes, I authorize.

IS: Yes, I authorize.

IN: Yes, I authorize.

CG: Yes, I authorize.

RESEARCHER: Thank you. As already mentioned, the session's theme is related to digital influencers and how they can impact people's sustainable actions and

behaviours. So these are the main focuses: influencers and sustainable behaviours. So, before we begin [with specific topic-related questions], I'll ask you a few more general questions. First question: **Do you use social media? If so, which social media platforms do you use and why?**

MN: Yes, Insta[gram] and Facebook. Insta to have fun and Facebook for university.

CG: I use Instagram for leisure, but I've also had a kind of side business, such as partnerships and stuff, but I've left that part behind. So now I use it to search for brands I like, follow people who inspire me... I usually use Facebook for volunteer work, work groups, university; it's a more professional social media [platform]. And I also use Whatsapp to maintain contact with my family, people from work, and for volunteer groups and well.

MN: Does Whatsapp count as well?

RESEARCHER: Yes.

IN: Yes, I think it's considered [social media].

MN: Ah okay then. I use it [Whatsapp] to talk to family, groups of friends, and that's mainly it. And I also use Insta to share content related with psychology, with my area, which I like.

IN: I think I'm the same. I use Instagram for leisure. I rarely use Facebook; I used it mostly during my bachelors for university stuff. And [I use] Whatsapp to talk friends, family members, and people who aren't from Portugal.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Anyone else?

IS: I do pretty much the same as IN. I use Facebook mainly for university groups... but, no one here talked about Twitter and I use it a lot, mainly due to Kpop. There's always a lot going on and I follow a lot of accounts.

RESEARCHER: Do you use it to check up on news then?

IS: Yes! To check the news. Not only Kpop news, but also regular news. I use Whastapp to talk to family members because it's a bit easier [to use]. And...

which am I missing? Facebook as well. No, I've mentioned Facebook already. I use Instagram to check on things I like, to follow actors and such.

CG: There's also another social media that I use and forgot to mention, which is Pinterest.

MN: Me too!

CG: And TikTok, of course! How could I have forgotten this one? I use Pinterest to... I have it organized by topics... to search for inspiration for any area of my life, for anything that interests me. [I use] TikTok mostly for content creation.

IN: Regarding Pinterest, I make CG's words my own.

RESEARCHER: Alright!

MN: Telegram as well.

RESEARCHER: Oh, it's quite like Whatsapp.

MN: Yes! I use it because I [usually] sign up for free online courses and a lot of them use that app to communicate.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Next question. **Do you follow any influencers on social media? If so, what kind of information do you expect and/or like to receive from them?**

IN: Yes, I follow several actually. But they are all related to lifestyle. That good and healthy life, makeup stuff as well, like Helena Coelho... I also follow others for their content; I like to see their feeds a lot, when they have pretty feeds which I like.

MN: I also follow [influencers], but related to dancing, [I follow] a lot of professional dancers; either from ballet, hip-hop, everything related to dance. I follow some who advertise trips and show the places they travel to, how to travel... everything, they have information about everything, spending, places to stay... And also everything that has to do with psychology; actual psychologists who have their own accounts; I follow almost all of them. If you know any more, tell me.

[laughter]

IN: Regarding trips, I also like to see those things; places and travelling advice, those kinds of things.

CG: In my case it's the same. I follow a lot of lifestyle influencers, travelling, fitness and nutrition as well. Like IN, there are some accounts from smaller influencers, not the kind of influencers we're used to see, which are inspiration accounts at the aesthetic level, but [related to] photography only and exclusively. And normally, those photography accounts have motivational descriptions, which I like as well. [I also follow] Some accounts related to psychology, plants, gardening... and I think that's mainly it.

RESEARCHER: What about you IS?

CG: Oh! And regarding the second question down here, in my case, for example from accounts from people who are influencers, I like to see interaction content such as polls and... for example when the person goes somewhere, I like to watch them interact and asking us to guess where they're going, or when they let us ask questions related to our doubts regarding what the person is promoting or such. I think that's the main content that I like.

IN: I agree.

MN: [Instagram] Reels.

CG: Yes, reels.

IN: Reels as well.

IS: In my case it's quite alike too, but are you also considering actors and singers as influencers?

RESEARCHER: Yes.

IS: Okay, in that case, my favourite areas are makeup, actors, singers and youtubers. I follow some very interesting youtubers and they, like CG said, they also make polls through which you can interact and choose what you want to watch on their channel, which is interesting.

RESEARCHER: Okay! Anyone else would like to add something? No? Let's move on to the next theme then, which is only related to digital influencers. **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about influencers?** It can be a word, a sentence, anything you want.

CG: For me, the word that instantly pops up in my head is "creative".

IN: For me, despite their influence and how "good" it is, a lot of times it isn't real. They only show the good side... there are accounts which also show the bad side, and show what is real for them, but I think a lot of accounts are a bit fake, which probably isn't the best kind of influence. They try to influence well, but at the same time they're not influencing correctly.

MN: I think it's basically what IN said. It depends a lot of the influencers we're talking about, because there are some who are very real and show exactly what a lot of us go through, which is why I like psychology accounts so much, because you really identify yourself with what is happening; but then there are those... for example, nothing against those dancers who show all their bodies or... for example nutrition is a disaster, because what they show isn't real. Some people might have that kind of body, but then... and we're in a society which, unfortunately, still places a lot of value on body image, social media, especially Instagram, gives a lot of emphasis to thinness, and then to eating disorders but like "oh it's amazing, let's lose weight", that's completely counter-productive. So, the word that comes to my mind, I've always had a bad image of influencers, so, it's a bad image and not positive. It's getting better now, thank god. But still, it's not that positive.

CG: I've actually never had that negative perception of influencers. I'm aware that a lot of times, and even thinking about ourselves, it's a lot easier to share what is good and when we are fine, when we're okay, the positive side of our lives... and when we're not fine we even struggle, not only to share on social media, but also sharing with other people, it's more complicated. But, usually,

having in mind that “okay, people are like that on social media, but this isn’t a real and total representation of people’s lives”, or of the influencer, in this case. [This way] I can have a more positive perspective about what the person is sharing. But, for example, the influencers and content I follow are mainly based on inspiration. So I have a very positive opinion about digital influencers. I think that, according to what MN said, I think the matter of transparency regarding the different phases of life, whether we’re doing good or bad, is really very important, because it’s very easy for us to fall in this “web” of comparison. But if we work on that, which is something influencers have a lot of power upon, I think it ends up being a good tool either for brands or for the people who consume the content.

RESEARCHER: So, there are good and bad parts.

IN: Like what CG was saying, when I think about myself, I’ll easily share what is good about my life rather than what is bad, because I think that [the bad] is a bit more intimate and personal. But it’s not like people have to talk about everything, even influencers have their privacy. I think the problem is transmitting something that isn’t true like what MN was saying regarding bodies and thinness; it looks easy and they start saying things and people on the other side try to copy and notice they can’t do the same and go crazy over it. I think that, while we spent most of our teenage years on Instagram, we didn’t really have that influence from social media like today’s teenagers have. I think we are a bit [more] aware of what is true, what is real and what is not. But the children who are now growing up and are now going through adolescence don’t understand that and see social media as ideal, which ends up being a bit more dangerous. But at the same time, I think social media are good to communicate with people; they’ve really facilitated getting to know people who aren’t from your city, from your school... I think that’s a good side of social media.

IS: IN said a word which has to do with a word I thought about, which is “imitation”; she said “copy”. And I think that’s what people do most of the times. They see something that everyone likes and try to copy it to the maximum. For example, that’s what TikTok is about; people see a trend and follow it immediately in order to gain followers and likes, because that’s basically what matters.

MN: There’s a lack of genuineness. It seems like people are scared of being themselves and need to have an idol to follow in order to be accepted within society. Social media is a bit bad because of that; they imply that you’ll only be accepted in society if you do exactly what everyone else is doing there.

CG: I’m just going to add something else very quick. I sound a bit like a defender of social media. [laughs] But I think that it depends a lot on how we as users decide to use social media.

IS: Yes, that too.

MN: Of course.

CG: It’s very true what everyone said, we see that happening with us and with people who are close to us, with people who even share that negative experience on social media. It’s true, but I also know a lot of people who have a positive and healthy experience with social media. It has a lot to do with what we choose to follow, what we choose to use to get inspired, but defining a limit regarding where we can go with our inspiration. Because inspiration is one thing and copying is another.

MN: I think we were referring to the younger people who are more influenced, and not us as much. Because, as IN said, we can better distinguish reality from what is being shown on Insta. For example, we can tell which accounts and content is worth following and which are not due to fake content, or content with which we don’t identify ourselves. So, what you’re saying is true, you can use Insta in a healthy way, but, unfortunately, nowadays you can see that there are a

lot of younger people especially who are completely swayed by what they see and aren't being themselves. This regards younger people and not us. Although it can happen to us as well.

CG: I understand what you mean and I agree but I don't associate it with younger people, because I know a lot of people our age who suffer a lot from low self-esteem and lack of confidence due to this unhealthy comparison they do with social media. That's why I don't associate it much with younger people, although I don't have a lot of contact with them. So, I can't talk a lot about them, but I've noticed some people our age have also suffered from the impact of social media. We have grown with these platforms as well.

MN: And we let ourselves be influenced as well.

IN: In my case, I don't really have that point of view, because I don't really know people who have felt affected by social media, but I do have my sister, so I have contact with younger people. That's why I said that from the start, because I have a more direct contact with them.

RESEARCHER: Would you like to add anything else or can I move on to the next question?

MN: You can move on.

RESEARCHER: **Who is the influencer that first comes to your mind? What do you like most about that influencer and why?**

MN: Explorersaurus. They talk about trips. I can't deal with it, I love their content.

[laughter]

MN: From videos, reels, whatever they want, I check them out every day. It's a way of leaving my world and be able to travel through them. Someday it will be me, but for now I don't have the money, so I travel through them.

CG: The first influencer that came to my mind, I don't know if you know her, was A Tripeirinha. She's a gardening and plant influencer and she has such a

great personality. Her content isn't just informative, she mixes humor with content related to plants. And it's that conjugation... I don't know, we don't think a lot about that, I mean, how are you going to make humor out of plants? But she can do it and her content stands out a lot because of that.

RESEARCHER: Anyone else? IN, IS?

IN: I have more than one, I was trying to see which of them to choose.

IS: Can we mention two? Or three?

RESEARCHER: Yes, yes you can.

[laughter]

IN: In my case, I would say Helena Coelho who I check on a lot due to her lifestyle, though not so much now because she has become a mother so she talks a lot about motherhood. I watched her more last year, for example, when she was trying to lose weight and was very active regarding nutrition, fitness and makeup. Another one is Sofia Oliveira whose content is more or less the kind of life I'd like to have and I feel like she's really herself, she's not afraid of showing who she is. And [I also like] her aesthetic, she really likes photography and she's creative person and I like that about her as an influencer.

RESEARCHER: IS?

IS: Two people that came to my mind immediately were a youtuber who makes videos about crime, which is very different from what has been said until now [laughs], who is Eleanor Neale. And the other one was Jennie from Blackpink, because she posts a lot about makeup.

IN: Now that IS talked about YouTube I remembered, regarding the issue of social media, I think it is also considered a social media platform and I use it a lot.

MN: Obviously, YouTube!

CG: True! [laughs]

MN: I'm there all the time.

CG: Me too.

IN: I use it [YouTube] for a lot of things. One minute I'm watching something and the next I'm watching a completely different thing.

MN: I even use it for yoga, to play those calming songs, and for sleeping as well. It's great to exercise.

CG: True, I even have playlists and all. I also watch YouTube for like... for example, "how to get motivation and be consistent to exercise and be healthy?"

IN: I think we all need those kinds of videos from time to time.

CG: And then, for example, it's not just for that... [imagine] I have a plant that is getting very sick, I go on YouTube because I know a plant youtuber who's called Planterina. She's Australian. But her content is much heavier, it's a very technical content about plants and such. But I also follow another influencer who I was obsessed with some time ago when I was in the first year of my masters, and she makes videos which are called "study with me", in which she's working for an hour and pauses every 25 minutes; it's the pomodoro method; and you're working or studying alongside her. It's like you have a kind of study buddy on the other side. She made a lot of those videos. Her name is Elloitsangela. She also has other contents, such as "get ready with me", some where she talks about life, body confidence problems or recipes. It's really about lifestyle and it's very interesting as well. I've noticed that the influencer content I consume on Insta isn't from one or two or three specific influencers, it's more about the style of the content. The style of the content is very similar but the influencers are very different.

MN: Me too.

IN: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: That's a bit related to the next question, which is: **What characteristics do you think are most important in an influencer? Why?** I think that what you just mentioned is their content.

MN: That's more about content but not as much their characteristics.

IN: The way they interact with us. I think that if they're people who like to interact with the public, allowing them to answer their questions... By the way, regarding the previous question, if I had to choose only one... I don't know how I had forgotten about this influencer. Eryn Krouse. She literally has the life I wish I had. She travels, surfs, has a very chill lifestyle even regarding what she eats, physical exercise, all of it. And it's like MN said, I leave my own world and go into hers when I watch her YouTube videos. I love watching her videos in the morning and I feel like my day gets a lot better.

RESEARCHER: Okay! Regarding characteristics, they can be like the ones MN has mentioned, which is being genuine.

MN: Yes, transparency and genuineness. And another thing, the design of the influencers page. The dynamic they have on their page is important for me to follow [them], because if the page isn't well organized or appealing to the eyes...

IN: The visual part? It's about aesthetics.

MN: Yes, aesthetics! I couldn't remember the word, thank you!

[laughter]

IN: You're welcome.

CG: Yes, I agree with MN. Interaction, transparency, aesthetics... for example, I really like pages that use the descriptions of the pictures for content that adds something of value. For example, there are some influencers who use the descriptions to talk about their lives, and then there are others who use the descriptions to give tips and I really like that kind of content. I even save it.

MN: Me too. [laughs]

RESEARCHER: You save it and then never see it again.

CG: Exactly! [laughs]

MN: I do! And then I share it.

CG: I share it as soon as I see it. But do you mean sharing on [Instagram] stories?

MN: Yes. I save them [the posts] to share them later on for everyone to see.

RESEARCHER: Any other characteristic?

IS: Yes. I think it was IN who mentioned interaction, and you see a lot of that on YouTube because, for example, you might have a small channel but if you interact with people who comment, they might... maybe they won't subscribe right away, but if they see that you're a chill person who answers them and such, they might subscribe just because of that. So, they start commenting on your videos and a relationship forms. The interaction between the influencer and the audience is very interesting. If it's a person who never answers anyone, it's quite boring.

IN: Speaking from my own experience, the last time I commented on that youtuber Eryn Krouse she answered me and I was so happy that she did that. And the same happened with Helena Coelho. She was filming a video and needed questions to answer and she chose mine and my Insta [account] appeared on her YouTube video, I even took a picture of it! [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Alright, next question then. **Have you ever followed an influencer's suggestions or mimicked their behaviours? Why/why not? If so, please exemplify.** And I should mention that mimicking behaviours can even be purchasing the same products as the influencer.

MN: I've already done that, and I've done it recently as well. They were promoting a product, anxiety rings, and I bought them because I want to try them. So, I copied them in order to try the product. Another thing, those more spiritual pages that tell us to do rituals, I've also done that. [laughs] Burning a candle, burning papers... I've done a lot of those things. And I think... sometimes clothes. Sometimes I see someone wearing clothes that I really like and so... I waste my money. [laughs]

CG: For me, what I mostly do has to do with fitness and nutrition influencers. It's basically those pages... it's not just nutrition, it's those influencers who are

very dedicated to the gym and healthy eating habits, according to their goals. And I try recipes they suggest or, for example, when they make a video, a reels, which is something fast and easy to watch, of themselves making, for example, a smoothie, that's why I started making smoothies, I saw them do it, so I copied. And for example, Pamela's workouts; I always do them at home. [laughs]

MN: I always do that as well. I see exercises and I add them to my gym plan.

CG: Exactly. Oh, and for example... but it all has to do with fitness, because if that person or influencer uses a certain elastic band or weights during her workouts I try to find... I've never specifically bought them, but I try to recreate them at home with stuff I already have access to.

IS: I also have two examples. The first one is, for example, I follow some youtubers who talk about makeup, so I watch them use it first in order to see what it looks like, and then I buy it [laughs] to check their quality. And another example... I was younger, so please don't judge me.

RESEARCHER: Don't worry, no one's judging here.

IS: When I was younger there was this group of youtubers, they used to be Viners but then they moved to YouTube, and there was a time when they were presenting a TV show and one of them used a shirt from H&M I think, so then [their] fans decided "let's all buy the same H&M shirt", so then everybody bought it and shared it on their Twitter feeds, and I bought it as well. [laughs] I was influenced in that aspect, I bought it in order to share it.

IN: I won't judge at all because I've done worse things.

[laughter]

RESEARCHER: What about you, IN?

IN: Regarding the matter of copying a behaviour and such... there's this youtuber slash influencer, Valeria Lipovetsky, and I follow her because of her fashion.

RESEARCHER: Oh, I love her. Almost no one knows her.

IN: Yes! And she influences me a lot in what regards to fashion, all the outfits she wears, and even the makeup she does is very simple and easy to copy. And another youtuber whose lifestyle I've started copying a bit is Sofia Oliveira, [I copied] the part of her lifestyle of going out more. I started going more to parks, to the beach, getting out of the house, living the days without being at home. [laughs]

IS: A thing that also happens a lot is that influencers are sponsored sometimes, and a lot of them share discount codes at the beginning of their videos and I use them. I don't use them because of the influencer, but because they are good discounts. [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Okay! The next topic is about sustainability. First question: **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about sustainability?**

MN: Ecological footprint.

CG: Environment.

IN: Health, recycling, plastic.

CG: Animal protection as well.

MN: Cruelty-free.

CG: Exactly.

IN: And related to skincare too... I mean, products which aren't harmful not only for the environment but also for our skin.

MN: Biodegradable.

CG: Another thing is also local or regional production. Using local resources, basically.

RESEARCHER: Helping local businesses and such?

CG: Yes, exactly.

IS: Regarding this last thing CG mentioned, about local products, there is also a seal which basically tells us the product was made... I don't know how to explain it. The people who worked on the product were decently paid.

CG: Oh, I know.

RESEARCHER: It's the Fairtrade one, perhaps.

CG: Yes, fair trade, fair human labour...

IS: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Okay, next question. **Do you consider yourselves to be sustainable people? If so, which sustainable practices/products do you adopt/consume? And what motivates you to be sustainable? If not, what is stopping you?**

MN: Plastic bags [are a] no. [I use] those made of cloth or even my backpack.

RESEARCHER: You reuse bags, then?

MN: Yes, reusing.

IN: Those tote bags which are very in now, supposedly. It's very cool to walk around with those now. [laughs] Adopting what was mentioned earlier as well, cruelty-free, more biological [products], as in not as chemical, but with more natural ingredients.

MN: Biological products.

IN: I have, for example, a cutlery and straw set for when I have to eat out, rather than using plastic forks and stuff. I always take my [reusable] water bottle, instead of buying several of them. And regarding what is stopping me, there are a few things, for example, regarding clothes and fast fashion, nowadays people are constantly buying a lot of cheaper clothes which they throw away later and it ends up polluting somehow. There are brands whose materials they use [are better] and they pay their workers more, but their clothes end up being more expensive. So, a person wants to stop buying fast fashion but can't because they don't have the money to do that.

CG: I think that sometimes it's not about the money. It is in some situations, but there's also second-hand clothes which are a good and cheaper solution. The problem, for me, has to do with... I'm a very small person, so it's hard for me to find clothes that fit me and that I like at the same time. Therefore, most second-hand clothes aren't really in the style that I like. But usually, overall, I'm a bit indecisive about whether I'm a sustainable consumer or not, because there are practices that I consider I've changed for the better, regarding environmental protection, and there are others which I haven't been able to do, mainly due to convenience reasons. If I alter those practices... for example, I could stop using my car and ride public transports, but the time I take to get to a place by car and by public transports is ridiculously different. But, for example, I've already adopted those [reusable] cloth bags; when I go shopping for clothes I take a big bag from Continente or Pingo Doce, or I take a bigger backpack... I mean, now you have to pay for the bags, right? [laughs] But I always have my [reusable] water bottle with me, reusable cutlery that you can wash, we also recycle here at home... so, we are careful regarding some things, but there are others which we're not so careful about due to convenience. And I think this problem is a good opportunity for brands, and even for influencers who work with brands and stuff, to explore that opportunity of trying to find sustainable solutions without neglecting convenience.

RESEARCHER: Alright. But did you adopt reusable bags before the normal ones had to be paid for?

CG: Yes, yes.

RESEARCHER: Because you could have adopted them due to the price of the other bags and not due to sustainable reasons.

CG: No, we started doing it when these environmental concerns, such as climate change and pollution, started appearing, it was one of the first practices [we adopted]. We've been recycling ever since I was born, so that has always been

done here at home. My parents are quite conscious regarding the environment in this sense. Regarding the bags, we started with [reusable] grocery shopping bags. Pingo Doce started providing those reusable bags, then Continente started doing it [too]. And something else I've seen little people do, which we've already adopted here at home, regards the purchase of fruit. For example, people usually take food in bulk in supermarkets' plastic bags, we've bought cloth bags which are also available in supermarkets but are more expensive.

IN: I don't see a lot of people doing that.

CG: I don't think there's a lot of inconvenience regarding this. What sometimes happens to us is that we forget about the bags at home.

IN: I'm constantly forgetting about them. I buy them and then I forget to take them.

[laughter]

IN: And then I have to buy plastic ones.

RESEARCHER: So, those things you mentioned regarding environmental concerns, climate change... is that what makes you adopt those practices?

CG: Yes. The matter of pollution is what worries me the most right now.

MN: Global warming.

CG: Yes. Or the matter of plastic. It really shocks me especially when I see, for example, a picture which never left my mind since, was seeing sea animals, seagulls and turtles, suffocating and dying because of plastic objects and stuff. This kind of communication that is shown to us and makes us more aware of this problem is what encourages me the most to change my behaviours.

MN: I make everything CG said my own words and I want to add something else that I do as well. For example, the gym I go to is about half an hour to 45 minutes from my house, so I choose to walk there instead of using my car.

IN: That matter of [using] the car, in my case, because I don't have one I necessarily have to use public transports. I don't have a choice. [laughs]

MN: But I can choose to go by bus, but I still walk there.

IN: And regarding why I adopt those behaviours is not only because of what they mentioned, but also because I worry about future generations. One thing that happened to us is that previous generations didn't really care, and now it's our turn and somehow it has to be us to do all the work. They didn't worry about us, so I think worrying about future generations is also something that makes me apply those sustainable practices.

RESEARCHER: Okay. If no one wishes to add anything to this question, let's move on to the next one: **Where have you heard or found information regarding sustainability or sustainable practices?**

MN: In clothing shops. Now there's a lot of information about clothes with that recycled symbol or something like that. Information on outside posters. I've received a flyer about sustainable practices. And sometimes there are ads on Insta.

IN: At school.

MN: I actually didn't get much information about the environment at school.

IN: I even had classes where only those things were approached. And now that you mentioned Insta there are some things in which I see them encouraging, for example, there's an initiative by EDP, which is EDP Zero, and I see influencers talking about it.

CG: Yes, usually what I see is on social media, ads. On TV as well. But, usually, the contact I have with sustainability practices and information comes from brand advertisements the most.

IS: Also... like CG said, there's [information] on the news and sometimes they even have segments in which they only talk about sustainability; there's ads on the internet and actual physical ads as well; and another thing are youtubers who promote a few sustainable practices. I don't really know what it consisted of, but I've heard about TeamSeas which was basically some American youtubers... not

only American, who came together to collect money to remove garbage from the oceans. Garbage, in this case, plastic. That was a very interesting initiative.

RESEARCHER: Okay! Next question: **Does any influencer come to your mind when you think of sustainability? If so, which one?** If not, it's totally okay obviously.

MN: Only a brand comes to my mind: Garnier, solid shampoo.

CG: Ah, yes! Organicup as well. But those are brands.

MN: Yes, it was the first thing that came to my mind, I don't remember any influencer.

CG: I'm trying to remember an influencer I know... I'm just going to search because I can't remember her name.

MN: And I just remembered something else regarding the last question. Cruz Vermelha, where I'm volunteering, talks a lot about sustainability.

RESEARCHER: Oh, okay. Institutions.

IN: I remembered Alice Trewinnard. She's the one who talked about EDP Zero, and Carolina Loureiro as well. Both of them talk about that initiative.

IS: I've recently watched a video from Eleanor Neale who I've mentioned here and she was talking about... she's sponsored by Casetify which is a company that produces phone cases. And she was very happy because one of the cases they sent her was from a new variety of cases which are compostable. They're eco-friendly. So, she was very happy because now she has a case that looks the same as the one she already had but is sustainable.

RESEARCHER: I didn't know that existed.

MN: Me neither but it sounds very interesting.

CG: It's Catarina Barreiros! Her description even says "over here we talk about sustainability and a lifestyle with less waste". Her Insta is very interesting. It's not aesthetically pretty, in my opinion, but regarding content and tips it's very good.

MN: Is food waste also included in sustainability?

RESEARCHER: Yes, it is, as well as the waste of... saving water, saving energy, all of those things.

MN: Okay then. Regarding food waste, sometimes in Continente there are baskets with loose bananas which might be a bit more creased or dark and literally go to the garbage, I go and get them.

RESEARCHER: Yes, sometimes there's even a sign saying "take me, please".

MN: Yes! So, I go there and take them because I think it's a total waste. And something else to which I haven't adhered yet but would like to try is Too Good To Go, it's an app for that [to avoid food waste]. I don't if anyone has tried it yet.

CG: My uncle tried it and you can get excellent meals...

MN: Excellent and at a low price!

CG: But they don't take the food to your house yet, you have to go get it, it's takeaway.

MN: Okay, but I think it's a good initiative.

CG: Yes!

IN: Something that MN made me remember was that in some supermarkets, when something is close to its expiry date, their price is lowered so it won't go to waste. Or so they can earn some money with that as well, but okay, it's still good.

MN: Yes.

CG: If it's food that you can't accumulate for a long time.

RESEARCHER: That happened at Starbucks this week. They were selling food that was about to expire for 50% less.

MN: Oh, at Starbucks, wow.

IS: When MN talked about getting the bananas that didn't look as good, I remembered that Continente has zero waste boxes in which they place fruit... I think it's fruit that is still in a good state but is separated from their bunch...

CG: Fruit that is riper as well.

IS: Yes, that too. So, they place it in a box. Oh, and I just remembered those cases that I mentioned from Casetify are made of bamboo.

CG: Oh, there are also those bamboo toothbrushes. And I use bamboo straws as well.

RESEARCHER: Alright, next. **What is the first think that comes to your mind if you see an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products?** You can read this as “What would be the first thing to come to your mind if you saw an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products”.

CG: For me, my reaction is “very well”. I mean, I’m somehow pleased.

IN: Proud.

CG: And with more interest in the person’s content because they pay attention to sustainability.

IN: I think that if those people have the means to reach other people, I think it’s valuable of them to try to promote those practices so more and more people can adhere.

IS: I’m also pleased, but I also think “do they really do this?” or...

IN: Or is it just for making money? I think a person always gets that idea.

MN: The first thing I think of is that they are receiving money to promote that kind of product. Or it can be because they are people who are actually interested and really want to change their lifestyle and are using the product.

RESEARCHER: So, you would have to check their page first?

MN: Yes, in order to check whether it’s actually a common practice. Or, if they have, for example, ads for several different products, they’re more likely to work for brands, so...

CG: For me, I think that doubt happens more if it’s a celebrity like Cristiano Ronaldo, for example. Or like Cristina Ferreira.

RESEARCHER: A person with more followers?

CG: Yes.

IN: Or Kim Kardashian.

[laughter]

CG: We don't have to go that far, but yes. [laughs] I immediately think "they're doing this or the money and that's it" and I don't take it as seriously as if it were an influencer with less followers and notoriety.

RESEARCHER: What if it is advertising?

CG: I think it's always good if an influencer is involved with those practices. In my perspective it looks good on them whether that means that the person uses a certain product or has a certain attitude which are more sustainable, I don't know. I'm not too focused on that, even if it's for the money, I'm more focused on the fact that the person wants to promote that behaviour. I think that, whether it's genuine or not, it's always important to reach more people with these sustainable practices.

IS: I think that if it's publicity the doubts get even bigger, because you know the person is being paid to say that, so you think "is it really true what they are saying or not?".

RESEARCHER: You doubt their credibility, is that it?

IS: Yes, because imagine that it's someone who never talks about sustainability and all of a sudden there's an ad about it, you start thinking "they've never shown any sustainable behaviour and are only sharing this now, and on top of that are receiving money for it?". It's a bit dubious.

RESEARCHER: There are two sides. It's good because people see it but at the same time it's sneaky.

CG: Yes, I understand that perspective. I mean, if you see the person buying or receiving a lot of fast fashion clothes, if you see them shopping and they buy a lot of stuff in plastic bags, and then all of a sudden "buy things with cloth bags", I mean, yes, I get it. But I think there might be a context. Like, if the person knows

how to make that transition... because all of us, before adopting these sustainability practices, have also done things wrong before and have had pollutant behaviours...

IN: Even nowadays we don't adopt them sometimes.

CG: Exactly.

IN: You don't adopt it 100%. There are a few times when you either forget the [reusable] bag or whatever and have to buy [plastic ones].

CG: Exactly. That's exactly it. But I understand that if it's an ad and it's completely adrift from what people are used to seeing from that person... then the person or influencer can give a context, like "look I've been thinking about this at home and I think it would make sense to change the way we manage the trash we produce" for example. I think it's a matter of contextualizing.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Next: **What is your opinion regarding the promotion of sustainability and sustainable practices and/or products by influencers? Why?** Do you think they should do it? Why or why not? I think you've already somewhat answered this question with what you've said before.

CG: Yes, I think so.

IN: I would say what I've already said.

CG: Yes, me too. I think it's always important [for them to do it], no matter how genuine it is. Of course, genuineness aids in encouraging people to adopt that practice as well, but doing it and reaching other people, I think that's the most important thing.

MN: I think they should do it because nowadays social media are the most used means of communication worldwide and I think that the bigger the promotion of sustainable products, more people will be able to copy or get to know [them]. Half the sustainable products I know are products that I see influencers using. That is, [products] that I had no idea existed and that I got to know through influencers and it's a good way to get people to know and use those products.

RESEARCHER: Okay then. Let's move on to the next topic which is related to the impact of influencers on sustainable behaviours. So, **have you ever adopted a sustainable behaviour because an influencer adopted or suggested it? If so, which behaviour was it? And which influencer adopted/suggested it?** A sustainable behaviour can also be the purchase of sustainable products promoted by the influencer. It can be a practice, such as recycling, or a product.

IN: Tote bags. Completely, tote bags. Those that Sofia Oliveira is always using and it looks really good. Regarding makeup, instead of using cotton which ends up making more trash, [I use] those cloths that you can wash. You take it [the makeup] off, wash it [the cloth] and use it again.

CG: It's those reusable "cottons", right?

RESEARCHER: Do you use them?

IN: Yes. I mean, not all the time, because sometimes I get lazy and don't want to wash it.

RESEARCHER: But was it because of an influencer?

IN: Yes. It wasn't those [cloths] exactly, but they influenced me to buy that kind of product to take the makeup off. It wasn't exactly that product or brand, but the product.

RESEARCHER: Okay, I get it.

CG: The same exact thing happened to me with the exact same product, the reusable cottons. I bought them at Primark recently. It was something that I had wanted to adopt earlier, [but] I didn't do it because I still hadn't found them at the stores I usually visit, [but] I found them at Primark. Another thing... and this was influenced by influencers and ads on social media, it was the reusable menstrual pads. I haven't purchased them yet, because I haven't found them. The ones I found were expensive.

IN: You have underwear at Primark, but I think it's a bit unsanitary.

CG: I mean pads. They're cloth pads which have the same shape of the disposable menstrual pads, but it's made of cloth and you can wash it.

IN: Do you have to wash them by hand or can you throw them in the washing machine?

CG: In the machine. I also wash the reusable cottons in the washing machine. I use soap and water on them before I put them in the washing machine. Another thing that I just remembered and that I do use is the Organicup, the menstrual cup. I was influenced a few years back by an influencer on social media. I spent a bit of time studying it because I was a bit skeptical and I still didn't use tampons and such. So, I was a bit reluctant, but I decided to adopt it. I did it mainly thinking about the environment, because I have a lot of flux, and I was shocked by the quantity of menstrual pads that I used. So, it was really a change brought on by my environmental concerns. Also, because the brand promotes... this was told to me by the influencer, but the brand advertises for this as well; it promotes the reduction in plastic we are engaging in by adopting the menstrual cup. That is, if you adopt the cup, in a year you will stop wasting x kilos of plastic.

RESEARCHER: They show you the real consequences.

CG: Exactly! And that was something that motivated me a lot. Like "what? I use all of those pads?". And on top of that they have this kind of calculator which helps us estimate, for example, how many pads I usually use in a month and then... it's real, you have the estimate according to what you usually waste, and what you are going to save. It motivated me a lot.

RESEARCHER: What about you MN and IS?

MN: No, I haven't. I'm not really one to copy what influencers do. Something that influencers do that I've already copied was physical exercise, but it has nothing to do with sustainability. [laughs]

IS: I don't remember having adopted anything because of influencers, but I had actually searched for the cloths to remove makeup already. A lot of people have already talked about them, so...

RESEARCHER: Alright then. Next question. **If an influencer adopts or suggests a certain sustainable behaviour, do you feel (more) compelled to adopt that behavior yourself? Why/why not?**

IN: For me, I think it depends on the behaviour and on the way they [influencers] would do it. I think it has to do with what we've mentioned earlier. If they are genuine, and if it's something they really do and that I feel I can adhere to or do... because there are a lot of things going around which are sustainable but I'm like "okay, but I don't have this or that, so I can't do it". I feel like if it's something I can do and if the person is genuine, then I think so. I think I'm more compelled to adopt that behaviour.

CG: Yes, absolutely. I think exactly as IN said. Especially relating to certain behaviours which I would really like to adopt but I truly don't have the conditions in my life and my lifestyle to be able to adopt them, at least right now. But if it is one or two influencers talking about the subject and it's not something... I mean, I feel more motivated to adopt a sustainable behaviour if it is encouraged by several people and not just one or two influencers.

IN: If it shows up more times on your feed then you'll think more about it. If it's constantly there, you'll be thinking like "fine, I get it. You're annoying".

[laughter]

CG: Sometimes it's not even because of desperation like "fine, I'll do it". No.

IN: Yes, it was a just a way of putting it.

CG: It gets stuck in your head, like "look, it's this again". And sometimes, the more it shows up, whether it's on the phone or on TV, my curiosity increases more and more. So, it ends up motivating me to adopt it if I see it more often.

MN: I think I would feel more compelled if it were through people I know. If they tell me “look, this product works very well and is good for the environment”, then I’d say “okay, let’s try it.” If it works for me, then I’ll obviously use it.

IS: I completely agree. It’s not because an influencer tells me that I should do something, that I will do it. We really have to check our life circumstances and see whether we can adopt it or not.

CG: Because adopting something once is one thing, but if we want to adopt a behaviour in a consistent manner it needs to be aligned with our own lives and with what we believe in as well.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Next question, then. It has to do with the trust you have in influencers. The trustworthiness of an influencer is the degree of trust you have in what influencers say and/or do. So, **does the trustworthiness of an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?**

CG: Yes. I think so.

IN: I think it depends on the brand. If we already know the brand, it helps. If it’s a brand we don’t know then we’ll think about it and search for information. But if it’s something I know, then I’ll consider adopting it quicker.

CG: I honestly think it has to do with the brand as well, because even if I trust the influencer and then I check the brand that is selling the product and the brand’s communication doesn’t convince me, then it will be more difficult for me to adopt the behaviour or to buy the product. But if it’s the influencer, I think that, in general, this kind of promotion regarding sustainability that I see is usually from people and influencers that I already know, so it’s easier to accept and even be interested in that promotion.

MN: Yes, definitely. For example, imagine it’s a person that I’ve been following for a long time now and you can tell what they show you is really in their element

and what they say and do is because they want to show something or improve something in their lifestyle; [then] I'll have more trust in them and be more compelled to do what they do. However, I trust friends, acquaintances and people I already know more. So, for example, one of my friends tried Garnier's solid shampoos several times and I have the intention of trying them because of her and not because of influencers.

IS: I think that the trust we have in an influencer influences me a lot, especially if that influencer has already shown that they have other sustainable behaviours. For example, another ad that Eleanor Neale brings to her [YouTube] channel is of shampoos which are made from natural products and I don't remember what is the brand, but I know it's a socially responsible brand and such. Knowing this, and also knowing that she advertises for those biodegradable phone cases, it shows that she truly cares about sustainability and we end up trusting her more because of that; because it's not just one behaviour, it's several.

IN: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Alright. Moving on. The expertise of an influencer is their ability to transmit truthful and trustworthy information. **How does this impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?**

IN: I think it makes a lot of difference.

RESEARCHER: This regards their expertise on sustainability.

MN: If they don't know anything about it, then they don't. So... the knowledge of an area, of a content or of a theme is always very relevant for me, either for me to follow the page, or to adopt a behaviour.

IN: If they show that they know about it, it will motivate me to adhere to it more because it means that the person is really committed to that. If they only do an ad and don't even explain things or show their importance, then we think "this is only for advertising, not because the person actually believes this". And

somehow, for example what CG mentioned about the Organicup, knowing how much she wasted... this influences [people] and it makes a person immediately think twice. If they know how to use the correct information in order to make people adhere, I think that will make a huge difference in the amount of people who adopt that practice or not.

CG: I even think that this matter of having knowledge regarding what it is they are talking about influences the trust that the person who is watching has in the influencer a lot. For example, an influencer who knows how to thoroughly explain what they are promoting or defending and, for example, if you have any doubts, you go talk to the person and they master the theme and are able to answer your questions. I think this is the main aspect that influences me to adopt the behaviour.

IN: And even if they don't know how to answer, they try to inform themselves.

IS: It even gives more credibility to the influencer.

CG: Yes.

RESEARCHER: Okay, okay. Next. The attractiveness of an influencer refers to their quality of being pleasant, attractive and/or admired by you. **How does this impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?**

CG: It depends on what we are talking about.

IN: When I think of this, I think about the aesthetic part.

CG: Me too. And about fashion as well.

RESEARCHER: You can also be attracted to their content or their account's aesthetics.

CG: Okay. I don't think this influences me much. I mean, obviously, an aesthetic page... I think it's the content. The actual content that the person posts, not at an aesthetic level, physical or verbal... I think that if the person masters and transmits information they know in a way that is easy to understand, I think that

influences more than how attractive their account, content or the person themselves are.

RESEARCHER: I think this question relates more to whether you like the influencer and if you do, then does that influence you more? An attraction that means liking them.

CG: Yes, I get it. But I don't think so, not in my case.

RESEARCHER: Okay!

IN: Liking the influencer in general, liking their content... I think it wouldn't influence much. I think it's more the way the influencer shows the [sustainable] practice rather than "okay, I already follow this influencer, so I'm going to do this only because I follow them". No.

CG: Exactly. I think that happens more, for example, with fashion or...

IN: Skincare and stuff like that.

CG: Exactly. With aspects that are related to the physical part, which is the case of fitness, nutrition. But regarding sustainable practices which aren't very related to the physical appearance, and are something which brands actually struggle to show people and consumers, their [sustainable] practices, because it's not something palpable. I don't think the attractiveness you feel towards the influencer is a very important factor.

MN: Me neither. If it's about their niceness, then that's one thing, because they should be nice and know how to communicate. But being attractive or admired by other people, having a lot of followers... it's not relevant for me because it doesn't make a lot of difference in the promotion of something.

IS: I don't think so either. I think that their attractiveness is what makes you want to follow them, but it's not necessarily what is going to make you change something in your life.

IN: That's it.

CG: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Okay! For the last question of this topic: **Other than the ones already mentioned, are there any other characteristics of an influencer that impact your intentions of adopting a sustainable behaviour? If so, which ones and why?** We've already mentioned attractiveness, expertise and trust. You've also mentioned transparency earlier...

CG: Interaction.

RESEARCHER: Is that something that influences you?

IN: Knowing how to communicate.

CG: Yes, I think that's it, you're right. Regarding the adoption of behaviours, I think it's their communication and the way they communicate information, rather than interaction. You're right.

IN: For example, before talking about any practice they can do a poll on their stories such as "do you do this?" or a question like "did you know about this?" and then introducing something. It's a way of interacting that makes you more attached.

RESEARCHER: Yes, I get it. Anything else?

CG: Nothing else comes to mind.

IN: No, I don't think so.

MN: I think it has to do with what I mentioned earlier, if the influencer is genuine and pure and really shows me their genuineness throughout time, there is a higher probability of me trusting them and of wanting to use the product.

RESEARCHER: Alright, let's move on to the next one then. As we approach the end of this focus group and after having discussed the main topics, the last questions are important for me to understand your opinion regarding the role that digital influencers have played and may play in the adoption of sustainable practices and also how they can better encourage people to adopt those practices. As such, **in your opinion, do influencers promote sustainable practices and/or products enough? Why/why not?**

MN: I think that's a bit of a difficult question, because, for example, if I go through Instagram and the pages I follow... I mean, there can be a lot of influencers promoting sustainable practices and products, but if I don't follow them, then that content won't reach me, but it's not their fault. It's not my fault either, because I have no knowledge that they promote those practices, so... it's not about sharing it enough or not, it's about whether people follow them or not and about where that information is published. So, I think influencers are very important, of course, but I think these practices and products should be promoted in a way that it reaches every person worldwide, whether children, teenagers, our generation, adults, old people... everyone. But it doesn't, and that's a flaw. So, I think they're doing the best they can.

CG: I mean, there are some influencers whose content is completely focused on that, and of course that the content they share is frequent. If you follow those pages, you'll probably see it [sustainability content] often. However, there are a few influencers from other areas who could also include sustainable practices but don't do it as much. And, in that case, I think there's a lack of promotion and a lot of opportunity to improve.

MN: If it's something they would adhere to, then sure. But there are influencers who don't adhere to sustainability because it's not what they are promoting in their pages. If we were to put every influencer to promote sustainable practices, that would obviously have a huge reach, but we would need them to work on that content other than the content they already have to work on.

IN: And I also think that brands are only now starting to adhere to influencers in order to convey that publicity in a way...

IS: That message.

IN: Exactly, that message. I think this matter is still a bit recent and there aren't many influencers to adhere. Perhaps due to their own choice of not doing it, but also because brands are still starting to do it.

IS: Most influencers don't focus on this area, so they end up not talking about it as much. Because, as I've already mentioned Eleanor Neale, she doesn't talk about these two brands that are sustainable all the time. She also talks about other sponsors, because her focus isn't to talk about sustainability but true crime. They focus on what they want to sell. They won't spend their whole video talking about sustainability when that's not their focus.

IN: I also think influencers study their audience. For example, if they post something related to sustainability and see that there isn't much adherence... they also have to make their own money, right?

[laughter]

IN: So, they end up adopting other things other than sustainability.

CG: I think that both things are possible to conciliate in some themes. For example, regarding makeup, you can adopt new products in accordance to that environmental concern. A person who has a page about makeup and promotes certain products can also promote vegan products, cruelty-free [products], products that come in paper boxes, I don't know! But, basically, I think there's the opportunity of including sustainable practices within other areas.

IN: Applying sustainability according to their content.

CG: You don't need to have a page about sustainability to talk about it.

MN: That's it. In the areas in which you can introduce sustainability I'm all for it, for people to introduce it in their theme, because it doesn't harm them, it's just a simple indication. Like "here, this [indiscernible words] is vegan or cruelty-free" and that's it, they've said what they had to say and promoted it, so it's easy. And regarding fashion and clothes I'm also all for it as well. So, in this sense, I agree.

RESEARCHER: Okay, I get it. Onto the penultimate. **In your opinion, how could influencers encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and/or products (more) efficiently?** I think this is also a bit related to what CG just said.

IN: Yes, that's what I was going to say. Trying to adopt sustainability measures that make sense and can be connected to what they already communicate.

CG: For example, a way of helping people to adopt those behaviours in their day-to-day is for those influencers to share ideas of how to do it. How can you, who are used to using your car every day, work out an alternative that is less pollutant but that also doesn't affect your convenience and speed. This is just an example, I'm improvising. [laughs] And then they give you tips, for example. I think it's easier for people to adopt a behaviour... I've been studying that in a book that has nothing to do with sustainability, but it has to do with habits. And we can adopt a habit more easily if we make it easier to accomplish it. If the habit is very difficult for our lifestyle then it will be easier for us to implement it [like this]. It's the same thing with this sustainability matter and influencers have the power to help people make those habits easy and practical for their day-to-day.

MN: Before and after pictures. And especially videos, because pictures can be manipulated. I mean, videos can be as well, but, for example, a real-time [Instagram] reels. Imagine it's a shampoo, you can wash your hair and record it. I'm only thinking about the shampoo because it's the easiest example. I think this would be a good way to encourage us because it shows transparency, it shows them using the product and it would be more credible.

IN: One thing I also remembered, for example, were youtubers who do weekly vlogs or something like that. They could show themselves adopting sustainable practices during the vlogs. For example, regarding recycling, they grab their garbage and recycle it, like "don't forget [to recycle]".

[laughter]

IN: Or regarding clothes. There are those youtubers who show their outfits, they could say "this outfit is second-hand" or "it's from this store where all their clothes are made in Portugal" and stuff like that. I think including this on YouTube and vlogs is also a good way.

CG: Ah! I also remembered that there are a lot of times in which I'm on YouTube playing playlists and such, and one advertisement that is always showing up is from Vinted and what appears a lot is an influencer of sustainable fashion, I don't remember her name, but she's always showing up and she's promoting the way she uses the Vinted app to buy second-hand clothes, sell second-hand clothes... but this is basically encouraging people to use Vinted, and not as much as buying second-hand clothes.

IS: But it's interconnected.

RESEARCHER: Yes, because when you use Vinted you're being sustainable, because you're either buying or selling second-hand.

IN: It doesn't directly encourage. It's a bit more indirectly.

CG: Exactly.

IS: I'd just like to add something that has to do with YouTube. For example, I'm going to give you Eleanor Neale's example again. Her channel is mostly related to true crime, but she has other social media like Instagram and she can post stories showing her day-to-day and sustainable practices.

RESEARCHER: Getting sustainability content across every social media.

IN: Exactly.

IS: Because a lot of her audience also follows her on Instagram.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Last question. **In your opinion, which sustainable behaviours should influencers promote (more)? Why?**

MN: Plastic bags, I think it's very obvious and everyone knows about them. Some people don't use them for self-indulgence, but okay. Maybe keeping on encouraging this, because eventually there will be less plastic in the oceans and such. Those easy practices like saving water, closing the tap while brushing your teeth... Simple things which are behaviours that people usually think are automatic, but they're not. Influencers could use those small sustainable habits and introduce them on their social media. And because kids nowadays are

constantly on their phones and tend to copy more, at least they would watch something educational. [laughs]

CG: I think that, right now, consumers are a bit tired of the plastic theme. It sounds like sustainability is only about plastic reduction. But it isn't. There are a lot of practices which are very important and even a lot easier to do that we can implement every day and that brands and influencers can influence [people] to adopt as well; such as the consumption of seasonal products, local products, such as fruit... I mean, avoiding bringing fruit from all the way across the world. It isn't sustainable at the economic level.

IN: I think that... adopting something that is different and which is easy to adopt. For example, with Covid, people are tired and done listening to the same. So, if it's something easier which we think "okay, I can easily adopt this in my routine", it increases our attention and willingness to adopt it.

MN: I think they should start with what is simpler and then start progressing, because it's a process. We can't expect them to start with something big when we still have small ones to work on.

RESEARCHER: Would you like to add anything else?

IS: I have nothing to add, they've said it all.

[laughter]

CG: I was trying to remember something else, but... I was thinking about fairer labour conditions, but that has more to do with brands than with influencers.

RESEARCHER: Yes, I suppose it has more to do with social responsibility or...

CG: Yes, but for example, encouraging people to choose brands that have that concern. But this still needs to be worked on, even by the brands themselves which don't pay much attention to that yet.

RESEARCHER: One thing could be, for example, what you mentioned about encouraging people to buy, for example, chocolate that has the Fairtrade certificate.

CG: For example, yes!

RESEARCHER: It's an indirect way of being socially sustainable, but it's achievable.

CG: Yes, exactly. And it's not that difficult either. But something else that I remembered about that gardening influencer I mentioned, A Tripeirinha. Although she's very connected to plants, she also has a very sustainable side, which makes sense regarding her theme; a person can associate [gardening and sustainability] immediately. For example, she saves water... she has to water more than 200 plants at home, so on rainy days she places pots and buckets outside on her yard in order to accumulate rainwater to water the plants and save water.

RESEARCHER: I thought you were going to say that she gathered the cold water that runs before...

IN: In the shower, before it gets warm!

RESEARCHER: Yes!

CG: Ah! My grandmother already does that! She's lived in the same house for a very long time and it takes a long time for the water to warm up. And ever since I've known her she's had a bucket inside her bathtub under the tap to save water. That's another practice, for example, yes. Or... I can't talk about this because I don't remember the details very well, but, basically, A Tripeirinha also does something similar to that with the toilet's water. But I don't know...

RESEARCHER: I think it's the same thing, you can flush the toilet with water from a bucket.

IN: Yes, you don't have to press the flush.

CG: Ah! I get it! Yes, it's most likely what she does.

IN: Or using it [the water] to wash the dishes or the clothes and such.

RESEARCHER: Yes.

CG: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Okay, so, this was the last question. Would you like to add anything else?

CG: No, I don't think so.

IS: I think that's it.

IN: No.

MN: No.

RESEARCHER: Thank you again so much for your time and participation!

Focus Group 3

RESEARCHER: Hello and welcome. I would first like to thank you all for your availability and participation in this focus group. This focus group is fundamental for the development of my master's thesis, which is related to digital influencers and their impact on consumers' sustainable behaviours, more specifically, on Generation Z members like you. The session will take around 60 to 90 minutes, during which I will ask you several sets of questions related to the theme. The aim of the focus group is for me to obtain your thoughts and opinions about the subject, and the answers you give to the questions are supposed to be discussed between all of you. Thus, there are no right or wrong answers. Your identity is completely anonymous and the gathered data are confidential and will be used only in the scope of my research. Before we begin, I need to ask each one of you for your spoken authorization for this focus group to be voice recorded, so that I may later have access to your answers and transcribe them for research purposes only.

MT: Yes.

IP: Yes, I allow.

LG: Yes, I authorize.

FS: I authorize.

CR: Yes, I authorize.

RESEARCHER: Thank you. So, starting with a more general them, the first question is: **Do you use social media? If so, which social media platforms do you use and why?**

LG: Of course. [laughs] I use Instagram a lot more than any others. Ah, and Whatsapp. They are both indispensable. Sometimes I go on LinkedIn, but I don't really care for it. On Facebook I check people's birthdays but I don't use it. And I think that's it. Instagram is very addictive and I use it to talk to everybody, to check what people are doing if they have Covid or not.

[laughter]

LG: And that's it. What about you?

FS: Me too. The only thing I use more is TikTok. And I also use Twitter to say stupid things.

[laughter]

LG: I go on TikTok sometimes but I don't use it as much now.

CR: On Instagram I basically talk to family. I always use WhatsApp to speak to friends. Instagram is an addiction and I also use it to check out clothes and stuff. And it's so addictive, I could spend hours on it; it's dangerous. [laughs] I swipe, swipe, swipe and when I realize it's been already an hour and I've done nothing [else].

[laughter]

MT: I also use Instagram and WhatsApp the most. Now I've started using LinkedIn more, although I don't visit it every day, obviously. But mainly Instagram and WhatsApp. I use Instagram less than I did before, I've been reducing it a bit.

FS: Me too, same.

IP: I use social media a lot, but that's because I have a post in my internship in which I manage social media. I use Instagram a lot, I use Facebook a lot, and I use LinkedIn for personal purposes. I do the exact same for my company, but spend twice the time [on social media]. Taking into account that I use social media for personal purposes and leisure; in order to see other people's pictures, tips for your home, decoration, clothes. I use LinkedIn to check out where everyone else is doing and where they work. And Facebook is for my family to comment on my pictures; whenever I need to increase my self-esteem, my family always goes there to comment.

[laughter]

IP: It's also a social network to check people's birthdays, I agree.

RESEARCHER: Okay, then. Next question. **Do you follow any influencers on social media? If so, what kind of information do you expect and/or like to receive from them?**

FS: If I follow any? I follow all of them.

[laughter]

FS: I follow Portuguese ones.

MT: I've cleaned up a bit, because I followed so many people, that it didn't even interest me anymore.

FS: I've done that too. But regarding Portuguese ones, I even follow some who have sustainability content like Catarina Gouveia; then I follow those that post about healthy things so I eat healthier; and then I follow those fashion bloggers in order to check out their clothes, which I can't wear because they're too expensive.

[laughter]

FS: And then I follow those actors that become influencers as well.

LG: I start following influencers when they get pregnant, in order to watch that whole process and see the baby when it's born. [laughs] but now I consume it

more to see fashion, which is something I never used to do before, but now I like to see it. I like to see, like IP said, decoration, rooms, etc. Architecture... in fact, now I follow an influencer who is an architect, I think she's called "home stories", and she teaches a lot of things like more sustainable architecture, how to have more sustainable households, but it also revolves a lot around her children, which is why I started following her. [laughs] and that's it. And, in fact, I'm starting to like fashion influencers more and more, as well as more sustainable things, such as clothes and architecture, as I've mentioned.

RESEARCHER: Anyone else?

CR: I actually follow more travel bloggers, because I think that when I'll be able to do it I'd like one of those huge trips like Raquel and... those Explorer...

IP: Explorersaurus, I was going to say the same thing CR.

CR: I've watched them a lot, I've been following them and I think their content is excellent. And also those bloggers who share Zara's clothes, in order to check new clothes on sale. And I think that's it.

RESEARCHER: Fashion, lifestyle, decoration...

MT: Exactly, I think that's the kind information I look for. I also look for... when they are actors and things like that. I think that gossiping about other people's lives is part of it. [laughs] Before, I used to watch travel content, but now not so much, but rather things about fashion and decoration as well. I also follow a lot of things about food, but not so much about healthy stuff. It's usually about greasy foods, food with chocolate, you know?

[laughter]

IP: I really like to watch travel content, tips on travel routes and, it's not because the theme is about sustainability, but there is a page, which is Pegada Verde, that is amazing because it has sustainable tips about everything. How to make a pantry more sustainable, tips on how to make Christmas gift-wrapping more sustainable... they give a lot of tips about everything that is around us in a way

to make it more sustainable, which I think is more and more important. So, I like to see those kinds of things as well, they are original.

RESEARCHER: The first theme that is related with a specific topic is about digital influencers, and this is the first question: **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about influencers?** It can be a word, a sentence, anything you want.

FS: Instagram, immediately. Should I continue or should we only say one word?

RESEARCHER: You can say whatever and as much as you want.

MT: Giveaway. [laughs] Partnerships.

FS: Followers.

IP: I'm going to be a bit mean, but when I think about influencers I also think of the word "futile". It's a two way street. I see originality, I see that they are very funny, I think they have beautiful content and a very fun life, but at the same time they are very futile, I think. Unfortunately, most of them live for appearances.

CR: I also think like that. When I think about influencers, I think about pictures, work, but I think it was more fun before. Now it is very focused on content creation.

IP: I think that now "influencer" carries a negative connotation. It's like "look at that influencer" or "she's acting like an influencer", it has a negative weight, I think.

MT: Someone said "consumption" earlier and I remembered that some time ago I was watching something... it happened this week, I think it was Mafalda Sampaio, and someone asked her if she would recommend the purchase of a Louis Vuitton [bag]. And I think the girl didn't even like the bag, but she wanted to buy it and she asked if it was a good investment. And I started thinking about it, like... I think this is a bit of what ends up happening. The negative connotation associated with influencers comes from this as well.

IP: The negative connotation is associated with them being very consumerist and futile.

MT: They encourage consumerism.

RESEARCHER: Okay, next question: **Who is the influencer that first comes to your mind? What do you like most about that influencer and why?**

IP: Carol Curry. I'm always thinking about her. She's very connected to fashion and she owns one of the most highly regarded boutiques from Porto. I really like her content, although people say she's a bit unfriendly, because she thinks very highly of herself for being an influencer. It is what it is.

CR: Steph Williams, I don't know if you know her. She's connected to fitness and stuff.

IP: No, but I'll check her out. [laughs]

CR: I like her a lot and, in fact, her products have become so famous in the last two years that now she has a clothing line and it's produced in Guimarães.

IP: Is she Portuguese?

CR: No, she's from England, but she came here to produce her clothing line.

FS: I remembered Catarina Gouveia, because she was the first one I mentioned here. I started following her after Covid started, because of her healthy recipes and because I was doing her workouts. She then started annoying me a bit, because she was way too positive, but fine.

LG: I thought about the one I mentioned earlier which is homestoriespt, her name is Tânia Martins, and I loved following her. She's not one of the most well-known influencers who we probably automatically think about like Mafalda Sampaio. I think she's a bit different and her content is about lifestyle, motherhood, architecture... I don't know how to explain, but she's very different. She's not like "I'm here to sell you this product", you know? She's like "I want to teach you something" or "share something with me" and stuff like that. But she's very, very, very sustainable and has influenced me in a lot of things, in a positive way.

MT: I remembered Maria Pombo, she was the one that came to my mind. She's Spanish and she's one of those influencers that I like... I like her style and such, I love her baby, I think it's the cutest baby there is. And because there's another part of her life that she showed us a lot and which I liked to watch and was curious to know about... her mom has a disease, and so does she. So, it's a different lifestyle which is still fun and I started learning Spanish from her.
[laughs]

RESEARCHER: Next question: **What characteristics do you think are most important in an influencer? Why?** You can think of this question as "What is the most important thing in an influencer for you?".

LG: Authenticity. It's ridiculous whenever I see an influencer advertising for something that she has trashed before, or something we know she doesn't actually use but does it only for the money. I don't think that's interesting.

IP: So, that's honesty, for you?

LG: Yes, authenticity...

FS: Consistency.

LG: Exactly, consistency.

CR: Creativity as well.

IP: For me, it's being energetic. I like energetic and creative influencers. And one of them is Amber Clark, I don't know if you know her. She's a mother to four kids, has an amazing house which was built from scratch... I really like her lifestyle and she's very creative. She even has baby content like "how to entertain children during quarantine".

RESEARCHER: Next one. **Have you ever followed an influencer's suggestions or mimicked their behaviours? Why/why not? If so, please exemplify.** These behaviours can even be purchasing the same clothes as the influencer.

CR: Yes, a lot of times I see ideas and copy them.

FS: Yes, I've copied clothes, recreated recipes, recreated workouts. I'm very influenced. [laughs] So, yes, I've copied them.

CR: Me too. When I have to buy new shirts and I see an influencer using one I like...

FS: Then you go check it out and it's already sold out.

[laughter]

CR: Exactly. I've even bought that stripped sweater from Zara.

[laughter]

IP: I've done three things. First, I started watching stories in which they write a curiosity and then post it with a picture of a tea cup. I liked this ideology and bam there you go, I copied it exactly the same. I added a macaroon, I found it fun. Another thing was trying the orange pancake recipe from Catarina Gouveia and it was disgusting, she puts no sugar, it sucked. And another thing, I'm always checking out Zara outfits, so when they appear I go and recreate them at Zara. So I value creativity but I don't have any. [laughs]

[laughter]

MT: What I do is like... okay, I've obviously already bought something I saw on Instagram, but sometimes I try to recreate some things that I see with things that I have at home instead of buying them. But I was thinking, and a lot of things that are related with sustainability which now I apply more at home, came from me learning and watching other people talking about it, because I don't remember being younger and doing these things at home. I think it was a bit because of these influencers that I learned more about it. But I don't like fundamentalisms.

RESEARCHER: That's nice, because it has something to do with the next topic, which is about sustainability. And this is the question: **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when talking about sustainability?**

IP: Good practices, recycling...

CR: Environment.

MT: Conscience.

FS: It reminds me of fast fashion, which we consume a lot.

CR: Yes. It sucks.

FS: We want to buy sucky clothes all the time. I've been trying to reduce this. It doesn't seem like it, but fast fashion sucks, but because it is cheaper we always buy it and the less we buy, the better.

IP: I also associate sustainability with fashion, because sustainability is very fashionable now and brands try to be more sustainable, and I really believe that some of them do it not because they care, but to look good in the eyes of consumers.

FS: It's a trend.

RESEARCHER: I was wrong. It wasn't actually this question that had something to do with what MT said, it's this one: **Do you consider yourselves to be sustainable people? If so, which sustainable practices/products do you adopt/consume? And what motivates you to be sustainable? If not, what is stopping you?**

CR: I could be more, because I consume a lot of fast fashion.

LG: I recycle at home.

FS: I never recycle.

IP: I don't consider myself to be sustainable.

FS: I used to take a new water bottle to classes every day. [laughs] I bought one before going to college every day. And I was always very thirsty so sometimes I used two water bottles.

[laughter]

FS: But I don't do that anymore.

LG: I bought a glass water bottle purposely from Equa, because of that.

FS: I forget about mine sometimes, but I try.

IP: I'm not very sustainable. For example, some people use those reusable cloth "cottons" to remove makeup, but I don't do any of those things.

LG: I actually use that, it was a Christmas gift that I asked for because of that, in order to stop using cotton. It's from Body Shop.

FS: Is it like a glove?

LG: No, it's like a bottle... I don't know how to explain.

FS: Is it like an oil?

LG: Exactly! It's an oil that melts the makeup and that's it.

FS: And then you rinse with water.

IP: Does it work?

LG: Yes!

IP: I'm not sustainable at all and I can explain why. I think those reusable cottons aren't convenient at all. It's really a question of convenience. I am already used to that.

LG: But this isn't difficult at all. You only have to wash your face normally.

IP: I know and I would very much like to do that, really. For example, water, it's not that I'm lazy, but grabbing a bottle of water and buying it or having several of them in your pantry at home and you just grab it and go is a lot easier and convenient than having to grab a bottle, fill it with water... this doesn't work in my day-to-day rush. It's very difficult for me to be sustainable, also because I don't own my own house and on top of that no one recycles at home. So it's very difficult for us to have those habits every day, because all we want is for everything to be done quickly. And regarding the cottons, not that oil, you need to be careful to wash them and stuff. And then you reach the end of the day and all you want to do is to get it over with in order to go to sleep without makeup.

FS: I have something in common, which is, as CR was talking about clothes, I can't be sustainable when it comes to clothing because, with my money, I can't buy expensive clothes. And a lot of times I'm not sustainable because, for

example, an influencer posts an outfit which I wanted already, and when she does that, that's when I say "fine, I can't handle this anymore" and then I buy it. And, maybe, if she hadn't shown the outfit I already wanted once again, then maybe I wouldn't have bought it. And, in this sense, I'm not as sustainable, I'm a bit consumerist.

LG: I end up being more sustainable because I don't want to waste my money on clothes. [laughs]

MT: [laughs] That's what I was going to say. Being cheapskate helps.
[laughter]

LG: Exactly. But that's not as much because of the environment, rather because of not wanting to spend money.

IP: And another thing I wanted to say which is important is that I'm not sustainable, but what makes me think twice and feel sorry for not being [sustainable] is watching influencers and people having sustainable practices. This reusable cottons matter, I saw it on social media, I saw it through influencers. And this is very important because this appeal is increasing. Each of us can take their own time to get there, but I think that social media has increasingly opened our eyes to sustainability issues.

RESEARCHER: Yes. I was also thinking about other sustainable practices such as reusable shopping bags. Do any of you do that?

LG: Yes.

IP: I do that.

RESEARCHER: But do you do it in order to be more sustainable, or because the other bags have to be paid for?

LG: True, you have to pay for them now, which is why I take my own. [laughs]

IP: That's true. [indiscernible words]

MT: That's true. The last time I went to the mall no one asked me whether I wanted a bag or not, I never thought about that, so they handed me the clothes and I had to leave with the clothes in my hands. [laughs]

CR: Me too.

MT: But from then on I always take a bag in my purse.

RESEARCHER: What about for the supermarket?

CR: Yes, yes.

IP: Yes, always. I leave it in my car, it's a good technique.

LG: Yes, always having them in your car.

FS: Sometimes I forget about them, but yes.

IP: Turns out I'm sustainable in this case. [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Another example is purchasing more sustainable products, such as biologic products...

IP: Yes!

LG: No, I don't do that.

FS: As a matter of fact, one thing that happened to me was that I needed to buy a shampoo because I had to change shampoos, so I was looking for one and one that caught my attention said "bla bla, sustainable, doesn't harm animals, has no plastic" and I was like "okay, I'll take this one, since I didn't know what to choose anyway". The fact that it was sustainable made me buy it and I still use it to this day.

RESEARCHER: Okay.

FS: But I don't remember anything else.

RESEARCHER: Next question, then. **Where have you heard or found information regarding sustainability or sustainable practices?**

IP: On social media, definitely.

LG: At college.

[laughter]

CR: What? What did she say?

FS: At college.

CR: I actually think the most I've heard about sustainability was during my masters. [laughs]

IP: Me too. I heard about it because it's something brands are working on now.

FS: True.

IP: But a lot on social media as well, more and more.

CR: At companies as well.

IP: At work.

LG: I think I hear about it everywhere.

MT: That's what I was going to say. I was going to say that now you hear about it on news, or even on soap operas, for example, or movies or TV shows. They've been mentioning these kind of subjects a lot more. And I was also thinking that one of the ways through which I learn about sustainability, other than social media and such, is actually through friends. I remember being with a group of friends and we were talking about some things they were doing, from the menstrual cup to the reusable makeup cottons, to deodorants... and that's also how I get to learn some things. Not that I do them, but I learn about them and I try to research more about it.

RESEARCHER: Okay! The next topic is about the promotion of sustainability by influencers. So, first question: **Does any influencer come to your mind when you think of sustainability? If so, which one?** You've already mentioned this subject a bit. FS has already talked about Catarina Gouveia; LG has talked about... was it Tânia?

LG: Yes, Tânia [Martins].

RESEARCHER: But if you can't recall any please tell me that as well.

FS: I can't think of anyone else.

CR: From what I follow, I don't think so. They all talk about it in a general way, but none of them... I can't think of which one.

MT: I remembered Manzarra.

[laughter]

MT: He's very into those things now. But I don't follow him, actually. But I remembered him.

FS: Actually, even Catarina [Gouveia]... I don't know. Because then there's the matter of... those things such as healthy food and earth... it may not seem like it, but it has something to do with sustainability. I also follow one who is a mother, but I don't remember her name. I bought her book and she's all about plants and living in Hawaii.

IP: Who? Catarina Duarte?

FS: No. It's Andreia... let me check. It's earthyandy.

IP: Not Catarina Duarte. I meant Joana Duarte.

FS: No. This one's really Hawaiian.

IP: But I remembered Joana Duarte and Carolina Loureiro.

FS: Joana Duarte is more [related to sustainability], in my opinion.

IP: They're both sustainable, because they're also very into yoga, peace and love, you know? And I relate this to sustainability a lot as well, I don't know why. And they're very into that, recycling, not throwing trash into the ocean, they're concerned with ocean pollution...

RESEARCHER: We have a few of them now. Moving on: **What is the first think that comes to your mind if you see an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products?** You can read this as "What would be the first thing to come to your mind if you saw an influencer adopting or promoting sustainable practices and/or products".

FS: I immediately think "is it cheap so that I can buy it?". [laughs]

[laughter]

MT: That's what I was going to say. The first thing I think about is that it's probably expensive and I research the price to check.

IP: I also associate it with expensive. I remembered that Tommy Hilfiger has a sustainable coat collection at double the price [of their normal coats] and I thought "people want to help the planet but then their products..." which might even be recycled and not have as good a quality, I don't know... "are much more expensive". I think the actual business should lower the prices in order to encourage clients to buy sustainably.

FS: It's normal.

IP: And one thing that annoys me now are paper straws.

CR: They're awful.

IP: You can't even pierce the juice box with those.

[laughter]

LG: I hate paper straws. I bought metal ones, those are good.

CR: Or wood.

LG: No, I hate wood ones too. McDonald's...

CR: I was going to say that with a wood spoon you don't even taste the food.

LG: Yes, McDonald's ice creams now come with a wood spoon and it tastes awful.

CR: I also think "is it practical?". Has it ever happened to you for a straw to get all soggy and you can't even drink?

LG: Yes, exactly.

CR: It's not practical.

IP: No, not practical at all. But the first thing that comes to my mind when I see an influencer adopting sustainable practices is that "they're either being fake or they only want more followers because it [sustainability] is trending" or I already relate that person to sustainability and think "okay, they're trying to reach more people relating to sustainability" and that's great. It depends on the influencer.

RESEARCHER: Okay, I get it. Next question: **What is your opinion regarding the promotion of sustainability and sustainable practices and/or products by influencers? Why?** Do you think they should do it? Why or why not?

FS: I think it's about what IP is saying, it depends a lot. Like, if Helena Coelho started saying "look, I bought this for my home because it's sustainable" I would think "Helena, go away".

[laughter]

FS: I wouldn't believe it genuinely, because she might be getting paid. But when Catarina Gouveia posts something... she's posted something about dishwashers and I even told my mom "look, this is a bit more expensive, but the machine will waste a lot less water" so we bought it for our house. But I think we need to be careful. If Helena Coelho comes up with sustainable clothing, then maybe I would... I mean, I think it depends on their content and what they usually "sell", and add sustainability to it slowly. I won't refuse to buy it just because it's sustainable. I think they should do it bit by bit and it should be related to what they do.

REASERCHER: Do you agree?

LG: Yes, I think so.

MT: Yes.

IP: Yes, yes, I agree with FS and I don't have anything much to add.

CR: Me too.

MT: I think it has to do with what FS was saying regarding the lifestyles they promote. If a person radically changes their lifestyle from one minute to the other I find it strange. But when it's like "I'm over here trying to adopt more [sustainable] things"...

RESEARCHER: Gradually.

MT: Exactly. I can identify with that situation. But if it's a person who has never talked about the subject and all of a sudden has become super "eco", it's odd.

IP: It's trending, so what do you think? They're seizing this opportunity to get more followers, obviously.

FS: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Okay then. The next topic is related to how influencers may impact your sustainable behaviours. **Have you ever adopted a sustainable behaviour because an influencer adopted or suggested it? If so, which behaviour was it? And which influencer adopted/suggested it?** A sustainable behaviour can also be the purchase of a sustainable product.

FS: I've mentioned the dishwasher tablets. She [Catarina Gouveia] posted a huge description explaining that instead of pre-washing the dishes in the sink we can place the dishes directly in the dishwasher with those tablets and you waste a lot less water. So we adopted that. It was Catarina Gouveia. And other than that, the reusable cottons came indirectly from Helena Coelho. It wasn't her who talked about it, but I subscribed to lookfantastic.com and that's where I found them. And I think that's it.

IP: For me it was Pantene. They now have a package that helps save the oceans from plastic. They sell a kind of refill package for shampoo in which you buy a shampoo bottle made of tin, which is very pretty, you buy the [shampoo] refill, and then you don't have to buy the plastic package. I saw that through an influencer, I think it was Catarina Maia, who is an ambassador for the brand, and that made me buy it.

RESEARCHER: Has anyone else seen anything?

MT: I don't think I can say that it was an influencer that made me adopt something. It's more that I've been hearing a lot about it from several people and then I start thinking about it and then perhaps adopt it.

LG: Exactly.

MT: I can't say that it was an influencer who showed it to me and I bought it.

LG: Me too. I was also thinking about that.

RESEARCHER: Alright, next question then. **If an influencer adopts or suggests a certain sustainable behaviour, do you feel (more) compelled to adopt that behavior yourself? Why/why not?**

IP: Yes, absolutely.

LG: Yes.

MT: Yes.

FS: Yes.

MT: Because it makes us think about the subject.

IP: Exactly.

FS: Because maybe you don't know about it, or you know but you don't remember it.

IP: Out of curiosity, if I take the influencer seriously in this subject. That is, I take what Catarina Gouveia says very seriously, because I think that what she does, she does well. Unlike Helena Coelho how FS mentioned. So I think it's also a matter of seriousness. If they do it then [we think] "okay, let's do this because it's really important".

RESEARCHER: Regarding these kind of characteristics, next I will present three characteristics of influencers and I will ask you how each of those characteristics influence you. So, the first characteristic is the trust you have in influencers. **How does the trust you have in an influencer impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?** You've somewhat answered this already. But I think you spoke a bit more about consistency rather than trust.

LG: I think that what IP just said can be applied here.

FS: Exactly, what IP just said and what I said earlier was about this, about trust. If we don't believe they are a sustainable person, are we really going to adopt it? Because it will even pass us by. If it's a person I follow and it's their nature... not their nature, but it's on their Insta that she's a sustainable person, I will check it

out and pay attention. But if it's someone else I'll probably let it pass me by because I'm not used to it, so I just keep scrolling.

IP: Also regarding what LG said when you asked what were the characteristics we valued the most in an influencer I also considered trustworthiness, because other than the person having to have a certain degree of trustworthiness for the theme of sustainability, the person themselves... like Mafalda Sampaio with Louis Vuitton... it has nothing to do with sustainability... but being who she is, a person who's not trustworthy in other themes, then she surely won't be trustworthy regarding sustainability, which is a serious matter. Trust is extremely important. It's how you perceive the person.

CR: If you like the influencer, then you're also influenced in a certain way and you may trust them more. Because, let's suppose that they post things about sustainable products once in a while, but it isn't a regular content, if you trust them and they are credible you'll trust their word more even if that's not their regular content. Since you like them and have some admiration, then you end up believing what they say.

MT: Exactly. It's those people who we can tell know about the subject or who aren't talking about it just because. They're talking about it because they know and researched and have knowledge about it. Unlike those people who have posted about a product but then it turns out it wasn't actually good, then maybe I won't trust what they post as much.

RESEARCHER: So, are you telling me you trust an influencer more if he knows more about the subject?

FS: Yes.

IP: Absolutely.

LG: Yes.

RESEARCHER: That's great, because the next question is about the influencer's expertise, so you've already given some insights. And the last characteristic is the

influencer's attractiveness. Not only physical attractiveness, but also the fact that the influencer is pleasant to you, or admired by you. **How does this impact your intention to adopt (or not) the sustainable behaviours presented by them? Why/why not?**

ES: Completely. That influencer who talks a lot about Earth and sea and food from the earth... I love her food, but I started giving her more and more attention because she has a beautiful family. They are all blonde, pretty and cute, and she's always smiling when she speaks. And empathy binds us to them, which makes me copy her behaviours more and more.

MT: Exactly. I remember that I followed one, I don't know if you know her, it's Mafalda Luís de Castro.

IP: Yes.

MT: She's friends with Inês Aires Pereira. And she's vegan and defends animals and sustainable practices, and I unfollowed her. I believe she knows a lot about the subject, but her content didn't attract me at all, because she wasn't nice, she was fundamentalist, she judged others a lot instead of trying to encourage them to think about the subject. And that got under my skin.

CR: There are influencers who are more like... they force it on us, like "you're an awful person". I mean, "calm down, we're all learning here". [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Okay. So, if no one wants to add anything else, we'll move on to the next question, which is... I think you've also answered this one already.

[laughs] **Other than the ones already mentioned, are there any other characteristics of an influencer that impact your intentions of adopting a sustainable behaviour? If so, which ones and why?** You've already mentioned authenticity, genuineness, credibility, consistency, empathy... so, I think we'll move on to the next one. Final questions; these questions are important for me to understand your opinion regarding the role that digital influencers have played and may play in the adoption of sustainable practices. First question: **In your**

opinion, do influencers promote sustainable practices and/or products enough? Why/why not?

MT: I think so. More and more. If the reasons that lead them to promote it are genuine, that I don't know. But I think they've been increasingly promoting it.

IP: It's not a question of... here it's whether it's sufficient. I think I agree with you MT, they're promoting it more and more, but I also think that if we look at the quantity of "noise" we have on social media...

MT: That they could do more, yes.

IP: I would like them to promote it more. Because more than half of their accounts are used for clothes, for appearance, lifestyle, and they forget about sustainability. I think that, for example, if I go on Instagram here all I see is clothes, clothes, clothes... it's very rare to see a post about sustainability, you have to search for specific accounts and specific content.

MT: I agree.

FS: That's what I was going to say. There is some [promotion], but it's not enough, and it will never be enough, because the more the better.

MT: Even because new things that are harmful and polluting are found every day. And this is increasingly becoming an important subject, so their contents should be adapted to it. And if they have some kind of influence, then they could at least use it to do good.

LG: It has improved and increasingly talked about, but it's not enough, because we still have a long way to go.

IP: Yes. And, in a consumerist world, it's very hard for sustainable practices to be enough to cover people's excessive consumerism. But influencers and Instagram, and social media in general have helped a lot to take this step and I'm sure it will only get better.

RESEARCHER: Okay! Next question: **In your opinion, how could influencers encourage the adoption of sustainable practices and/or products (more) efficiently?**

CR: In a subconscious manner. But, regarding what you said, IP, you see clothes, clothes, clothes, but social media is technology that is never automated, so Instagram is basically your preferences. If you start searching for more ecological products, I'm sure they'll start appearing. So, what do people do? "I'm always watching the same thing", so I think it has to be a bit subconsciously and this subconscious is, perhaps, changing your habits, which is difficult, but also creativity and creating content and other things that have to do with psychology and marketing.

LG: I agree with what you're saying, but my intuition was to answer "more consistency", because you can say... for example, I've heard a girl, I can't remember her name, I don't follow her, but she said something like "I'm betting more on high-quality clothing, in order to avoid buying fast-fashion so many times". However she films a haul every month. That's not consistent, and people are like "yes, sure, I'm really going to invest in something with more quality when you're buying so many cheap clothes".

CR: Exactly. It's about their behaviour.

FS: What I was going to say about changing behaviour was, instead of always accepting partnerships to talk about something sustainable, they could like "look, I bought this bag from Stradivarius, it's huge, it's made of cloth" and genuinely tell people they adopted a sustainable practice because they wanted to, and not because a company is paying them.

CR: I think they need to be more creative.

LG: I know I'm always talking about the same influencer, but that influencer I mentioned, homestories, she nearly has no partnerships, only for architecture.

She doesn't do it, and she's always giving us useful tips that, like IP said, are not going to affect the speed of my quotidian. And that's important as well.

MT: I think that partnerships are important...

LG: I'd rather watch how they live without being paid to... you know? But I also think partnerships are important.

RESEARCHER: Do you trust them less if they post ads?

FS: I can still trust them, but if it's something genuine in which they say "I bought this and I loved it" and that's not advertising, then obviously I'll believe it's something genuine.

IP: The person is a consumer themselves.

FS: Exactly, they're just like us.

LG: Perhaps this is something they do and it might not even be true, but personally I like when they say "you know I've been using this for years, so the brand contacted me for us to do a partnership". They already liked it before, you see? [laughs] I might be a bit naïve, but it's okay.

MT: Even when they say "the brand sent me this, so I'm going to test these products and then I'll give you some feedback", they're not saying it just because. What I was going to say about this is that the consistency we've been talking about is very important and it bothers me when they talk about, for example, the reusable makeup remover pads, and then show us their three-story closet. This bothers me a lot, because they should be consistent, if you do some things, then... okay, we can't do everything at the same time, rather step-by-step, but...

CR: Exactly. There has to be consistency, otherwise people won't... I mean, they should pay more attention to their behaviour, because if there is no credibility, people might think it's a good idea but will they keep that habit in the long-term? Perhaps not.

RESEARCHER: In order to promote these behaviours and products, do you think it would help if they were simpler things in the beginning? So that people

would adopt them gradually. Or things that wouldn't require the person to buy something.

ES: Of course! The first thing I do when I see something sustainable is to check the price. So if I don't have to check the price, because it's a simple action it will be much easier for me to do the same. Yes, absolutely.

IP: I think demonstrations are very important as well. Demonstrations of how the product works, I think it would be cool and they don't do it much.

RESEARCHER: Okay. If no one wishes to add anything else, let's move on to the last question: **In your opinion, which sustainable behaviours should influencers promote (more)? Why?** We've mentioned simpler behaviours that don't require people to buy things...

IP: The adoption of the products in their day-to-day, that is, showing that their use is simple, you know? I think that's important, at least for me, because I feel it's very difficult to use those products; I have to wash them all the time, it takes a lot of my time, so I think the demonstration of the product also helps in the simplification of how they work.

MT: I think that, other than simpler steps, steps that are more affordable. I'm thinking that, in my generation or at least speaking for myself, not being a financially independent person, I can't push it with the things I buy. Also because it's not me who decides the things that are bought for my house, and so when I want to buy something for myself that is more sustainable, I still don't make enough money for some things they [influencers] promote.

RESEARCHER: Earlier, when you are talking about the first thing that came to mind when talking about sustainability, you spoke a lot about the environment. Do you think they should also encourage more sustainable behaviours which are more related to the economy? For example, supporting local businesses, or [behaviours] related to social responsibility? For example, encouraging people

to, instead of buying a normal chocolate bar, buying the ones which have the Fairtrade certificate?

FS: I wanted to mention an influencer, because one of the things she's always saying is... she's one of the few who actually says she buys few clothes and buys second-hand things; she's always referring small shops like "I go to this local store, they have second-hand clothes", and it doesn't seem like it, but it's a sustainable practice that is very handy. Unfortunately, I don't live in Lisbon, but if I did, I know I would adopt it. And this is something cool, because it's something that is physical, so I can go there and consume without having to waste 60€ to be sustainable.

RESEARCHER: Even fast-fashion, which you've mentioned, it's not only not environmentally sustainable, it's also not sustainable regarding social responsibility, because of child labour and etc.

FS: Exactly.

RESEARCHER: Does anyone want to add anything else?

IP: I don't think so.

MT: I think that the behaviours they should share have to be with knowledge of cause. You were talking about those behaviours which are more about social economy and I think that when I see someone talking [about it] without understanding the subject, it loses credibility and doesn't interest me as much. It has to be someone who I know thought and studied about the subject, etc.

IP: I also think brands could host giveaways of sustainable products. I never see giveaways of sustainable products.

CR: Me neither.

FS: They never do it.

IP: But I know why. They [sustainable products] are more expensive and brands would lose money.

[laughter]

LG: You're not wrong. It wouldn't be the same for them. [laughs]

IP: I think that if brands want to bet on sustainability, their [sustainable products'] prices should be lower, number one. And number two, they should also promote their [sustainable products'] purchase. And in order to promote their purchase, they could also have giveaways and give products for free, so that people will like and buy them, because it's something unknown. Vegan products, etc., are unknown products. So I think brands should bet on communication in this sense.

FS: It's Inês Gonçalves, I remembered.

RESEARCHER: This was the last question. Would you like to add anything else?

IP: No.

FS: No.

RESEARCHER: Then, once again, thank you so much for your time and participation.

Appendix 3: Thematic Analysis Table

THEMES	CATEGORIES	CODES	QUOTES (e.g.)
Influencers and Social Media	Social Media Usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Use of each social media platform for different reasons; – Preference for modern/trendy social media platforms. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Instagram is more modern.”</i></p> <p><i>“I use it [Facebook] for Messenger, in order to chat. I don’t use Facebook itself as much.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We use Twitter to check what is happening around the world.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I use Instagram for leisure.”</i></p> <p><i>“Instagram is very addictive and I use it to talk to everybody, to check what people are doing.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I use Whatsapp to talk to family, groups of friends.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“ I use Instagram a lot more than any other social media.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I also use Instagram and WhatsApp the most.”</i></p>
	Preferences regarding influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Following influencers whose content relates to their interests; – Following influencers for inspiration and useful tips; – Preference for interactive influencers; – Preference for Portuguese influencers; 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I really like to watch travel content, tips on travel routes.”</i></p> <p><i>“I follow a lot of lifestyle influencers, travelling, fitness and nutrition.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I like to see interaction content such as polls.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I follow Portuguese ones.”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I follow those that post about healthy things so I eat healthier.”</i></p> <p><i>“I follow those fashion bloggers in order to check out their clothes.”</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preference for female influencers; – Preference for influencers who are authentic and relatable; – Preference for easy-going and funny influencers; – Following influencers for entertainment and leisure; – Preference for influencers with good qualities and personalities; – Preference for influencers with valuable content; – Preference for empathetic influencers; – Preference for influencers who communicate well. 	<p><i>“There are some who are very real and show exactly what a lot of us go through (...) you really identify yourself with what is happening.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) Helena Coelho! She gives a lot of makeup tips.”</i></p> <p><i>“The one I like the most is Inês Aires Pereira (...) I don’t know why but she’s very funny and I like her content because it’s very fun.”</i></p> <p><i>“Another one is Sofia (...) I feel like she’s really herself, she’s not afraid of showing who she is.”</i></p> <p><i>“I prefer humble people.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like energetic and creative influencers. “</i></p> <p><i>“(...) they should be nice and know how to communicate.”</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Opinions about influencers and social media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Twofold image of influencers and social media (positive vs. negative) – Influencers are toxic, fake and futile; – Influencers are original and creative; – Influencers seen as role models; – Influencers only show the good side of life; 	<p><i>“(...) it isn’t real. They only show the good side (...) I think a lot of accounts are a bit fake, which probably isn’t the best kind of influence.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think it’s a problem of a lot of influencers. They only show the good side [of things].”</i></p> <p><i>“The word that instantly pops up in my head is “creative”.”</i></p> <p><i>“I have a very positive opinion about digital influencers.”</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Understanding of influencers’ flaws and faults; – Influencers can be persuasive; – Influencers seen as a good source of information; – Social media and influencers are useful to diffuse messages; – Pressure to be accepted within society; – Influencers can lead to a web of comparison. 	<p><i>“(...) it’s a lot easier to share (...) the positive side of our lives (...) and when we’re not fine we (...) struggle (...) to share on social media (...) having in mind that (...) this isn’t a real and total representation of people’s lives, or of the influencer (...) I can have a more positive perspective about what the person is sharing.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think social media are good to communicate with people.”</i></p> <p><i>“I was also thinking of the word ‘role model’.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s a two way street. I see originality, I see that they are very funny, I think they have beautiful content and a very fun life, but at the same time they are very futile (...) Unfortunately, most of them live for appearances.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think that now “influencer” carries a negative connotation.”</i></p> <p><i>“There’s a lack of genuineness. It seems like people are scared of being themselves and they need to have an idol and follow them in order to be accepted within society.”</i></p> <p><i>“Social media is a bit bad because of that; they imply that you’ll only be accepted in society if you do exactly what everyone else is doing there.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think the matter of transparency regarding the different phases of life, whether we’re doing good or bad, is really very important, because it’s very easy for us to fall in this “web” of comparison.”</i></p>
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	<p>Definition of Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability associated with the environment; - Sustainability associated with pro-environmental behaviours; - Sustainability associated with pro-environmental products; - Sustainability associated with cruelty-free products; - Sustainability associated with the use of local resources and production sources; - Sustainability associated with a good conscience; - Sustainability seen as fashionable and trendy; - Sustainability seen as expensive; - Sustainability seen as a very recent matter. 	<p><i>"Recycling."</i></p> <p><i>"I thought of vegan, vegetarian and electric cars."</i></p> <p><i>"I thought a lot about saving. Saving energy, saving water."</i></p> <p><i>"I thought of environment."</i></p> <p><i>"Ecological footprint."</i></p> <p><i>"Health, recycling, plastic. "</i></p> <p><i>"Cruelty-free."</i></p> <p><i>"Biodegradable."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) local or regional production. Using local resources (...)"</i></p> <p><i>"Conscience."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) sustainability is very fashionable now."</i></p> <p><i>" There are brands whose materials they use [are better] and they pay their workers more, but their clothes end up being more expensive. So, a person wants to stop buying fast fashion but can't because they don't have the money to do that."</i></p> <p><i>" "I can't be sustainable when it comes to clothing because, with my money, I can't buy expensive clothes."</i></p> <p><i>"The first thing I think about is that it's probably expensive and I research the price to check."</i></p>
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			<p><i>"I also associate it with expensive. I remembered that Tommy Hilfiger has a sustainable coat collection at double the price [of their normal coats...]"</i></p> <p><i>"(...) it [sustainability] is trending (...)"</i></p> <p><i>" I think this matter is still a bit recent (...)"</i></p> <p><i>"(...) in my generation or at least speaking for myself, not being a financially independent person, I can't push it with the things I buy (...) so when I want to buy something for myself that is more sustainable, I still don't make enough money for some things they [influencers] promote."</i></p>
<p>Sustainability</p>	<p>Sustainability Awareness and Communication</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of sustainability's importance; - Awareness of environmental problems; - Negative image of fast fashion; - Good recall of sustainable practices adopted by brands and companies; - Sustainability communication is growing; - Sustainability communication from numerous sources. 	<p><i>"(...) fast fashion sucks, but because it is cheaper we always buy it and the less we buy, the better."</i></p> <p><i>"The matter of pollution is what worries me the most right now."</i></p> <p><i>"Global warming."</i></p> <p><i>"Or the matter of plastic. It really shocks me especially when I see... sea animals, seagulls and turtles, suffocating and dying because of plastic objects..."</i></p> <p><i>"This reusable cottons matter, I saw it on social media (...) through influencers. And this is very important because this appeal is increasing... I think that social media has increasingly opened our eyes to sustainability issues."</i></p>

			<p><i>"(...) by watching the news we see a lot of things related to sustainability, and I think that's the main source."</i></p> <p><i>"Even on Instagram, sometimes people share things (...) like those water bottles that were very fashionable. Now there are ones that clean the water and stuff."</i></p> <p><i>"At school (...) I even had classes where only those things were approached. And now that you mentioned Insta there are some things in which I see them encouraging, for example, there's an initiative by EDP, which is EDP Zero, and I see influencers talking about it."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) the contact I have with sustainability practices and information comes from brand advertisements the most."</i></p>
	<p>Sustainable Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of certain sustainable practices; - Adopting sustainable practices to save money rather than to save the environment; - Guilty feeling when engaging in non-sustainable practices; - Guilty feeling for not engaging in more sustainable behaviours; - Purchase of certain sustainable products; 	<p><i>"I recycle."</i></p> <p><i>"I try to be careful with [saving] the water when having a shower."</i></p> <p><i>"I've been trying to opt for glass Tupperware's instead of the plastic ones."</i></p> <p><i>"I was thinking about going shopping and taking bags. But I think that was mainly because the bags have to be paid for now (...) I think people opted [to take their own bags] not because of sustainability but for the price of the plastic bags."</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unconsciously adopting sustainable practices; – Plastic waste reduction; – Food waste reduction; – Paper waste reduction; – Reduction of single-use period products; – Reduction of single-use cotton products. 	<p><i>“What makes me adopt them [the practices] is listening to my mom complaining about how much she has to pay for energy.”</i></p> <p><i>“I end up being more sustainable because I don’t want to waste my money on clothes (...) that’s not as much because of the environment, rather because of not wanting to spend money.”</i></p> <p><i>“I stopped using normal water bottles; it doesn’t sit right with me to buy a plastic water bottle.”</i></p> <p><i>“I do that too, but it’s unconsciously.”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t consider myself to be sustainable at all, really, at all. Even [regarding] the water bottles you were talking about, I’m not even sustainable with those. I buy the plastic ones. I don’t recycle. And when it comes to sustainability regarding clothes, there are a lot of things now that [allow us to] sell clothes; trying to buy second-hand, I don’t do that either. I always buy things that are new and I frequently go shopping. I know it’s wrong. And what is stopping me is that there are pretty clothes.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve donated [clothes] and sold as well.”</i></p> <p><i>“Plastic bags [are a] no. [I use] those made of cloth or even my backpack.”</i></p> <p><i>“Adopting (...) cruelty-free, more biological [products].”</i></p>
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			<p><i>“I always take my [reusable] water bottle, instead of buying several of them.”</i></p> <p><i>“I could be more [sustainable], because I consume a lot of fast fashion.”</i></p> <p><i>“I actually use that (...) in order to stop using cotton. It’s from Body Shop (...) It’s an oil that melts the makeup and that’s it.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) I’m not sustainable, but what makes me think twice and feel sorry for not being [sustainable] is watching influencers and people having sustainable practices.”</i></p>
	<p>Obstacles to becoming more sustainable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Little adherence to certain sustainable practices or products due to lack of convenience, scepticism and little knowledge; – Lack of financial capacity to adopt/buy more expensive sustainable practices/products; – Difficulty resisting fast fashion purchases; – Difficult time finding sustainable products; – Previous bad experiences with sustainable products. 	<p><i>“(...) what stops me from having an electric car is not having money.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) [regarding] a vegan diet, what stops me is the stigma.”</i></p> <p><i>“I always buy things that are new and I frequently go shopping. I know it’s wrong. And what is stopping me is that there are pretty clothes.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) regarding clothes and fast fashion, nowadays people are constantly buying a lot of cheaper clothes which they throw away later and it ends up polluting somehow. There are brands whose materials they use [are better] and they pay their workers more, but their clothes end up being more expensive. So, a person wants to stop buying fast fashion but can’t because they don’t have the money to do that.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) there are others which I haven’t been able to do, mainly due to convenience reasons (...) for example, I could stop using my car and ride</i></p>

			<p><i>public transports, but the time I take to get to a place by car and by public transports is ridiculously different.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think those reusable cottons aren’t convenient at all. It’s really a question of convenience.”</i></p> <p><i>“Another thing (...) was the reusable menstrual pads. I haven’t purchased them yet, because I haven’t found them. The ones I found were expensive.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) it’s not that I’m lazy, but grabbing a bottle of water and buying it or having several of them in your pantry at home and you just grab it and go is a lot easier and convenient than having to grab a bottle, fill it with water (...) this doesn’t work in my day-to-day rush.”</i></p> <p><i>“I can’t be sustainable when it comes to clothing because, with my money, I can’t buy expensive clothes.”</i></p> <p><i>“I see a lot of those shampoos and conditioners that look like soap bars on TikTok. But I still don’t feel tempted [to use them].”</i></p> <p><i>“And one thing that annoys me now are paper straws (...) I hate paper straws.”</i></p> <p><i>“I once purchased a bamboo toothbrush because it’s very in now, and it was awful.”</i></p>
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			<p><i>"(...) there are a lot of things going around which are sustainable but I'm like "okay, but I don't have this or that, so I can't do it"."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) certain behaviours which I would really like to adopt but I truly don't have the conditions in my life and my lifestyle to be able to adopt them, at least right now."</i></p>
<p>Influencers' role in sustainability promotion</p>	<p>Influencers' sustainability promotion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influencers have increasingly been promoting sustainability; - Influencers' promotion of sustainability seen as something good; - Influencers seen as responsible for communicating and educating people on sustainable practices due to their power and reach; - Difficulty recalling influencers related to sustainability; - Difficulty finding influencer content related to sustainability; - Good recall of sustainable brands rather than influencers; 	<p><i>"Sandra Silva (...) She addresses sustainability a lot, and I think she's the influencer who addresses this the most, from the ones that I follow."</i></p> <p><i>"Nothing really comes to mind. I think that the influencers I follow aren't sustainable at all."</i></p> <p><i>"I remembered Alice Trewinnard. She's the one who talked about EDP Zero, and Carolina Loureiro as well. Both of them talk about that initiative."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) Catarina Barreiros! Her description even says "over here we talk about sustainability and a lifestyle with less waste"."</i></p> <p><i>"Only a brand comes to my mind: Garnier, solid shampoo."</i></p> <p><i>"Organicup as well. But those are brands."</i></p> <p><i>"And something else to which I haven't adhered yet but would like to try is Too Good To Go, it's an app for that [to avoid food waste]."</i></p> <p><i>"I can't think of anyone else."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) it's good for them to share those kind of habits, since they have power anyway."</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Little interest in following influencers whose content is related to sustainability; – Influencers don't talk about sustainability enough; – Female influencers as the most recalled sustainable influencers; – Interest in the sustainable practices and products that influencers promote. 	<p><i>"I think that if those people have the means to reach other people, I think it's valuable of them to try to promote those practices so more and more people can adhere."</i></p> <p><i>"I think they should do it, because if being an influencer is considered a job, then that job should be allied to the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. I think it should be an obligation of theirs, despite a lot of them not doing it."</i></p> <p><i>"And another thing would be "where did you buy that?"."</i></p> <p><i>"I immediately think "is it cheap so that I can buy it?"."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) nowadays social media are the most used means of communication worldwide and I think that the bigger the promotion of sustainable products, more people will be able to copy or get to know [them]. Half the sustainable products I know are products that I see influencers using. That is, [products] that I had no idea existed and that I got to know through influencers and it's a good way to get people to know and use those products."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's always good if an influencer is involved with those practices (...) whether that means that the person uses a certain product or has a certain attitude which are more sustainable (...) even if it's for the money, I'm more focused on the fact that the person wants to promote that"</i></p>
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			<p><i>behaviour. I think that, whether it's genuine or not, it's always important to reach more people with these sustainable practices."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) Sandra Silva, she talks a lot about sustainability and you can see that it's not publicity (...) Apart from her, who is the only influencer I follow who talks [about it] a lot, the rest of them don't address it or only address it when it's an advertisement."</i></p> <p><i>"I also think that, on the other hand, it's [due to] the type of influencers we follow. Because if sustainability isn't an interest of ours, then we won't be searching for people [who talk about it]."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) there can be a lot of influencers promoting sustainable practices and products, but if I don't follow them, then that content won't reach me"</i></p> <p><i>"(...) there are some influencers whose content is completely focused on that, and of course that the content they share is frequent. If you follow those pages, you'll probably see it [sustainability content] often. However, there are a few influencers from other areas who could also include sustainable practices but don't do it as much. And, in that case, I think there's a lack of promotion and a lot of opportunity to improve."</i></p> <p><i>"It's [sustainability] not the focus of any of the ones [influencers] I know."</i></p>
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			<p><i>“I think that both things are possible to conciliate... A person who has a page about makeup and promotes certain products can also promote vegan products, cruelty-free [products], products that come in paper boxes... I think there’s the opportunity of including sustainable practices within other areas.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think they’ve been increasingly promoting it.”</i></p> <p><i>“I would like them to promote it more. Because more than half of their accounts are used for clothes, for appearance, lifestyle, and they forget about sustainability.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) it’s very rare to see a post about sustainability, you have to search for specific accounts and specific content.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) this is increasingly becoming an important subject, so their contents should be adapted to it. And if they have some kind of influence, then they could at least use it to do good.”</i></p>
	<p>Influencers’ Trustworthiness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Increased trust in influencers whose advice was truthful and useful; – Influencers who are more knowledgeable about their content are more trustworthy and credible; – Liked influencers are more trustworthy; 	<p><i>“It’s ridiculous whenever I see an influencer advertising for something that she has trashed before, or something we know she doesn’t actually use but does it only for the money. I don’t think that’s interesting.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think that if it’s publicity the doubts get even bigger, because you know the person is being paid to say that, so you think “is it really true what they are saying or not?”(...) because imagine that it’s someone who never</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Empathetic influencers are more trustworthy; – Increased likelihood of trusting an influencer if they are genuine; – Friends and acquaintances seen as more persuading and trustworthy than influencers; – Negative connotation of advertisements; – Ads reduce influencers' credibility and trustworthiness; – Celebrities seen as advertisers and less genuine; – Little trust in influencers' intentions when promoting sustainability; – Regular sustainability content from the influencer leads to more trust in them. 	<p><i>talks about sustainability and all of a sudden there's an ad about it, you start thinking "they've never shown any sustainable behaviour and are only sharing this now, and on top of that are receiving money for it?". It's a bit dubious."</i></p> <p><i>"I think that doubt happens more if it's a celebrity like Cristiano Ronaldo, for example. Or like Cristina Ferreira."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) the first thing that comes to my mind when I see an influencer adopting sustainable practices is that they're either being fake or they only want more followers because it [sustainability] is trending or I already relate that person to sustainability and think "okay, they're trying to reach more people relating to sustainability" and that's great."</i></p> <p><i>"The first thing I think of is that they are receiving money to promote that kind of product."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) in my situation the menstrual cup was something about which I thought "no, I'm never using that in my life" and "maybe I won't be capable of using it"; but after seeing Zoe's opinion, who is an influencer in whom I trusted, I ended up buying it and the truth is that you don't even feel it [the cup], which was exactly what she [Zoe] said. Now, if she comes along and gives any more sustainable tips, I'll most likely try them."</i></p>
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			<p><i>“If it’s an ad for which the influencer is being paid, then I won’t trust it as much.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) I was once watching a story from Anita Costa, and I could tell that she was reading what she was saying (….) I felt like (….) I think she lost her credibility (….) So, I think the person’s credibility and trust are important.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) if one of my friends tells me about it, I think I would be more compelled to buy it than I would be if I saw an influencer suggesting it.”</i></p> <p><i>“ Yes, me too, because I know it’s real and from someone I know, while from the influencer it can be just a random ad she’s being paid for.”</i></p> <p><i>“Trust is extremely important. It’s how you perceive the person.”</i></p> <p><i>“If you like the influencer, then you’re also influenced in a certain way and you may trust them more.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) let’s suppose that they post things about sustainable products once in a while, but it isn’t a regular content, if you trust them and they are credible you’ll trust their word more even if that’s not their regular content.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think that the trust we have in an influencer influences me a lot, especially if that influencer has already shown that they have other sustainable behaviours (….) it shows that she truly cares about sustainability</i></p>
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			<p><i>and we end up trusting her more because of that; because it's not just one behaviour, it's several."</i></p> <p><i>"It's those people who we can tell know about the subject (...) They're talking about it because they know and researched and have knowledge about it. Unlike those people who have posted about a product but then it turns out it wasn't actually good, then maybe I won't trust what they post as much."</i></p> <p><i>"I even think that this matter of having knowledge regarding what it is they are talking about influences the trust that the person who is watching has in the influencer a lot."</i></p> <p><i>"Being empathetic (...) It's about placing yourself on someone else's shoes (...) And a person follows [an influencer] if they think they are empathetic towards other people, and not those who don't care about others and their lives. I also think that makes us trust the influencer more."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) if the influencer is genuine and pure and really shows me their genuineness throughout time, there is a higher probability of me trusting them and of wanting to use the product."</i></p>
	<p>Encouraging the adoption of sustainable behaviours</p>	<p>– Influencers should adopt sustainable practices and products to encourage others to do the same;</p>	<p><i>"I understand that if it's an ad and it's completely adrift from what people are used to seeing from that person (...) then the person or influencer can give a context, like "look I've been thinking about this at home and I</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Influencers should include sustainability within their content areas/themes; – Influencers should adapt their content areas/themes to sustainability; – Influencers should carefully introduce sustainability to their content not to seem so dubious; – Influencers should propose useful ideas and tips on how to easily adopt sustainable practices/products to encourage people to do the same; – Influencers should show themselves adopting/using sustainable practices/products and show their results to encourage others to do the same; – Influencers' words and actions should be consistent with their sustainability content and practices; – Influencers should be creative when promoting sustainability; 	<p><i>think it would make sense to change the way we manage the trash we produce" for example. I think it's a matter of contextualizing."</i></p> <p><i>"I think it has to do with (...) the lifestyles they promote. If a person radically changes their lifestyle from one minute to the other I find it strange. But when it's like "I'm over here trying to adopt more [sustainable] things" (...) I can identify with that situation. But if it's a person who has never talked about the subject and all of a sudden has become super "eco", it's odd."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) this is increasingly becoming an important subject, so their contents should be adapted to it."</i></p> <p><i>"Doing it not only for publicity, because many times you can tell that they've done an ad and then on a day-to-day you don't see that product being used anymore."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) a way of helping people to adopt those behaviours in their day-to-day is for those influencers to share ideas of how to do it (...) And then they give you tips (...)"</i></p> <p><i>"Imagine it's a shampoo, you can wash your hair and record it (...) I think this would be a good way to encourage us because it shows transparency, it shows them using the product and it would be more credible."</i></p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Influencers should start by introducing easier/simpler sustainable practices/cheaper sustainable products to their followers; – Influencers should talk more about sustainable brands; – Influencers should introduce less obvious sustainable practices/products; – Influencers should introduce not only environmentally but also economically and socially sustainable practices/products; – Influencers should promote more affordable sustainable products; – Influencers should avoid posting ads of sustainable products if they don't actually use them; – Influencers should educate themselves before talking about sustainability; – Influencers and brands should host giveaways of sustainable products. 	<p><i>“They could show themselves adopting sustainable practices (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) instead of always accepting partnerships to talk about something sustainable, they could like “look, I bought this bag from Stradivarius, it’s huge, it’s made of cloth” and genuinely tell people they adopted a sustainable practice because they wanted to, and not because a company is paying them.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think they need to be more creative.”</i></p> <p><i>“What I was going to say about this is that the consistency we’ve been talking about is very important and it bothers me when they talk about, for example, the reusable makeup remover pads, and then show us their three-story closet. This bothers me a lot, because they should be consistent (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“I think demonstrations are very important as well. Demonstrations of how the product works (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) if it’s a influencer who doesn’t have a habit of sharing that kind of content, perhaps starting by more basic things, and not necessarily things that would make you have to buy a product (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) influencers could have sustainable behaviours in their area. For example, people are interested in makeup so they could present sustainable behaviours in makeup, decoration (...) associated with the areas they address and for which they are interested in.”</i></p>
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			<p><i>“(...) those influencers we were talking about, fashion influencers (...) now there are a lot of brands like Zara and such that have their own ecologic [clothing] line, and I’ve never seen anyone talking about that.”</i></p> <p><i>“Those easy practices like saving water, closing the tap while brushing your teeth (...) Simple things which are behaviours that people usually think are automatic, but they’re not. Influencers could use those small sustainable habits and introduce them on their social media.”</i></p> <p><i>“There are a lot of practices which are very important and even a lot easier to do that we can implement every day and that brands and influencers can influence [people] to adopt as well; such as the consumption of seasonal products, local products (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“I think they should start with what is simpler and then start progressing (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) fairer labour conditions (...) for example, encouraging people to choose brands that have that concern.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) other than simpler steps, steps that are more affordable (...) in my generation or at least speaking for myself, not being a financially independent person, I can’t push it with the things I buy (...) I still don’t make enough money for some things they [influencers] promote.”</i></p>
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			<p><i>“I think that the behaviours they should share have to be with knowledge of cause (...) I think that when I see someone talking [about it] without understanding the subject, it loses credibility and doesn’t interest me as much. It has to be someone who I know thought and studied about the subject.”</i></p> <p><i>“I also think brands could host giveaways of sustainable products. I never see giveaways of sustainable products.”</i></p>
<p>Sustainable Behavioural Intentions</p>	<p>Influencers’ impact on behavioural intentions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Frequent imitation of influencers’ behaviours and purchases; – Influencers’ sustainable actions as a driver for behavioural change; – Increased likelihood of adopting a sustainable behaviour/product promoted by an influencer if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the influencer also does it/uses it; ○ the influencer shares its advantages, information about it and their own experience with it; ○ the influencer is more interesting, flashy and have a good personality; 	<p><i>“I’ve copied clothes, recreated recipes, recreated workouts. I’m very influenced.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m always checking out Zara outfits, so when they appear I go and recreate them at Zara.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think it’s always important [for them to do it], no matter how genuine it is. Of course, genuineness aids in encouraging people to adopt that practice as well, but doing it and reaching other people, I think that’s the most important thing.”</i></p> <p><i>“In my case, the reusable cloths to remove makeup which I learned about through Sandra Silva.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) tote bags. Those that Sofia Oliveira is always using and it looks really good. Regarding makeup, instead of using cotton which ends up making more trash, [I use] those cloths that you can wash (...) It wasn’t</i></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the influencer is an expert, trustworthy, knowledgeable, genuine, credible, consistent and empathetic; ○ they know the influencer; – Influencers’ attractiveness and likeability influences the decision of following them, but not the decision to adopt a sustainable behaviour/product they promote; – Mixed views of how influencers’ attractiveness impact their decision to adopt a sustainable behaviour/product promoted by them; – Less motivation to adopt sustainable practices/products if the influencers who promote them are paid to talk about them; – Increased likelihood of being influenced by an influencer with good communication skills; 	<p><i>those [cloths] exactly, but they influenced me to buy that kind of product to take the makeup off. It wasn’t exactly that (...) brand, but the product.”</i></p> <p><i>“Another thing that I just remembered and that I do use is the Organicup, the menstrual cup. I was influenced a few years back by an influencer on social media.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m not really one to copy what influencers do. Something that influencers do that I’ve already copied was physical exercise, but it has nothing to do with sustainability.”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t remember having adopted anything because of influencers, but I had actually searched for the cloths to remove makeup already. A lot of people have already talked about them, so (...)”</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t think I can say that it was an influencer that made me adopt something. It’s more that I’ve been hearing a lot about it from several people and then I start thinking about it and then perhaps adopt it. I can’t say that it was an influencer who showed it to me and I bought it.”</i></p> <p><i>“(...) if one of my friends tells me about it, I think I would be more compelled to buy it than I would be if I saw an influencer suggesting it.”</i></p> <p><i>“ Yes, me too, because I know it’s real and from someone I know, while from the influencer it can be just a random ad she’s being paid for.”</i></p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopting sustainable practices and products because of other people but not influencers; - The more sustainability is talked about, the more they feel compelled to adhere to it. 	<p><i>"(...) the dishwasher tablets. She [Catarina Gouveia] posted a huge description explaining that instead of pre-washing the dishes in the sink we can place the dishes directly in the dishwasher with those tablets and you waste a lot less water. So we adopted that."</i></p> <p><i>"If they are genuine, and if it's something they really do... I think I'm more compelled to adopt that behaviour."</i></p> <p><i>"I feel more motivated to adopt a sustainable behaviour if it is encouraged by several people and not just one or two influencers."</i></p> <p><i>"And sometimes, the more it shows up, whether it's on the phone or on TV, my curiosity increases more and more. So, it ends up motivating me to adopt it if I see it more often."</i></p> <p><i>"I think I would feel more compelled if it were through people I know."</i></p> <p><i>"I think that, in general, this kind of promotion regarding sustainability that I see is usually from people and influencers that I already know, so it's easier to accept and even be interested in that promotion."</i></p> <p><i>"(...) imagine it's a person that I've been following for a long time now and you can tell what they show you is really in their element and what they say and do is because they want to show something or improve something in their lifestyle; [then] I'll have more trust in them and be more compelled to do what they do."</i></p>
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			<p><i>“I think that the trust we have in an influencer influences me a lot, especially if that influencer has already shown that they have other sustainable behaviours... it shows that she truly cares about sustainability and we end up trusting her more because of that; because it’s not just one behaviour, it’s several.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) if she doesn’t know anything about it, then she probably doesn’t use it. Because someone who uses something has investigated about the subject. So if she doesn’t know anything about it, it’s not relevant for her, so I wouldn’t use it [the product] or follow it [the advice].”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) regarding the reusable makeup removal cloths, if they tell me what they’re good for and the advantages of the product (..) if they don’t tell me about the advantages then I’ll be disinterested.”</i></p> <p><i>“I like to know their personal experience.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) there is much more persuasion if the person is an expert in that area.”</i></p> <p><i>“(…) the knowledge of an area, of a content or of a theme is always very relevant for me, either for me to follow the page, or to adopt a behaviour.”</i></p> <p><i>“If they show that they know about it, it will motivate me to adhere to it more because it means that the person is really committed to that.”</i></p>
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	<p>Concern for the planet's future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environmental issues as a driver for behavioural change; - Concern regarding future generations as a driver for behavioural change. 	<p><i>"(...) we started doing it [being more sustainable] when these environmental concerns, such as climate change and pollution, started appearing (...)"</i></p> <p><i>"Or the matter of plastic. It really shocks me especially when I see (...) sea animals, seagulls and turtles suffocating and dying because of plastic objects (...) This kind of communication that is shown to us and makes us more aware of this problem is what encourages me the most to change my behaviours."</i></p> <p><i>"And regarding why I adopt those behaviours, it's not only because of what they mentioned, but also because I worry about future generations."</i></p>

			<p><i>One thing that happened to us is that previous generations didn't really care, and now it's our turn and somehow it has to be us to do all the work. They didn't worry about us, so I think worrying about future generations is also something that makes me apply those sustainable practices."</i></p> <p><i>"Another thing that I just remembered and that I do use is (...) the menstrual cup (...) I did it mainly thinking about the environment, because (...) I was shocked by the quantity of menstrual pads that I used. So, it was really a change brought on by my environmental concerns."</i></p>
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