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# TikTok's recent deinfluencing trend and its effect on fast-fashion versus slow-fashion brand valuations

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**Title:** TikTok’s recent deinfluencing trend and its effect on fast-fashion versus slow-fashion brand valuations

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## **Abstract**

Social media has revolutionized the marketing environment, creating a huge opportunity for social media influencers. With the recent rise of the social media platform TikTok, it has become even more accelerated and the creation of user-generated content. The algorithm allows various trends to go viral. Recently, a new trend “*deinfluencing*” has emerged and users are appealed by this trend, reinforcing influencers’ power in impacting consumer behavior. To explore the effects of the *deinfluencing* versus *influencing* trends, an experimental study was conducted. Overall, findings show that deinfluencing is more impactful than influencing on brand valuations, namely on sustainability image, consumer perceived ethicality, purchase intentions, and word-of-mouth engagement. This communication effect tends to be enhanced for slow-fashion brands in comparison to fast-fashion brands. The mediating role of perceived influencer authenticity on the relationship between the type of influencer message and brand valuations reveals the importance of meaningful and informative content in influencer marketing. Although deinfluencing presents a powerful communication tool it should be used with care. The study reinforces the power of influencers in shaping consumer behavior, emphasizes the significance of influencer credibility and represents an opportunity for brands to convey their values through transparent and authentic storytelling in collaboration with influencers.

**Keywords:** social media platforms, TikTok, influencer marketing, trends, fashion

**Título:** A recente tendência de desinfluenção do TikTok e o seu efeito nas avaliações das marcas de fast-fashion e slow-fashion

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## **Resumo**

As redes sociais revolucionaram o ambiente de marketing, criando uma enorme oportunidade para os influenciadores das redes sociais. Com a recente ascensão da plataforma de redes sociais TikTok, a criação de conteúdos gerados pelos utilizadores tornou-se ainda mais acelerada. O algoritmo permite que várias tendências se tornem virais. Recentemente, surgiu uma nova tendência "desinfluençar" e os utilizadores são atraídos por esta tendência, reforçando o poder dos influenciadores no impacto do comportamento dos consumidores. Para explorar os efeitos da desinfluenção em relação às tendências de influência, foi efetuado um estudo experimental. No geral, os resultados mostram que a desinfluenção tem mais impacto do que a influência nas avaliações da marca, nomeadamente na imagem de sustentabilidade, na perceção de ética por parte do consumidor, nas intenções de compra e no envolvimento boca-a-boca. Este efeito de comunicação tende a ser maior para as marcas slow-fashion em comparação com as marcas fast-fashion. O papel mediador da perceção de autenticidade do influenciador na relação entre o tipo de mensagem do influenciador e as avaliações da marca revela a importância do conteúdo significativo e informativo no marketing do influenciador. Embora a desinfluenção constitua uma poderosa ferramenta de comunicação, deve ser utilizada com cuidado. O estudo reforça o poder dos influenciadores na formação do comportamento do consumidor, enfatiza a importância da credibilidade do influenciador e representa uma oportunidade para as marcas transmitirem os seus valores através de uma narrativa transparente e autêntica em colaboração com os influenciadores.

**Palavras-chave:** plataformas de redes sociais, TikTok, marketing de influência, tendências, moda

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Problem Definition and Relevance

Influencer marketing is essential to brands' digital marketing strategy to reach their target groups, as influencers impact consumers by creating trusting relationships and higher engagement rates. Many brands and businesses are integrating it into their strategy to promote their brand and products through social media influencers (Lime et al., 2017; Farivar & Wang, 2022). Social media influencers create content and post it on their social media. Their followers identify and relate with them which results in creating an online community (Schouten et al., 2020; De Veirman et al., 2017). Past studies found influencers can impact brand awareness, brand attitudes, consumer behavior and purchase intention (Feng et al., 2020; Low & Yuan, 2019; Lim et al., 2017). Research shows a positive influence if there is a congruency between influencer and the brand. Especially if the influencer is associated with the category and shows expertise in this domain (Feng et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021b). Previous findings also show that influencer marketing is perceived as more credible, with higher potential of reaching desired target audiences and more organic than traditional advertising by the brand themselves (Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, influencer marketing is also facing criticism. In the past, influencers faced challenges with authenticity (Zniva et al., 2023).

The pandemic and social distancing guidelines reinforced the role and usage of digital technologies. Social media was used not only to communicate and interact with one another but as a solution to boredom in the form of entertainment, and even recognition through posting content (Feldkamp, 2021). TikTok became popular rather quickly through its platform's rich content (Xu et al., 2019). The social media platform TikTok gained much attraction and was among the top downloaded apps in March 2020 (Feldkamp, 2021; Clement, 2020a, b). On the app, various trends go viral. One recent trend is the so-called *deinfluencing* trend. Influencers give their opinions on products they didn't enjoy as much. By giving their opinion about products they do not think are worthy of being recommended, they reinforce influencers' initial reputation: honesty. However, the question remains on how it actually influences consumers. What effect does the *deinfluencing* trend spread by TikTok influencers have on their followers? Furthermore, in what relation does it stand to sustainable consumption?

Digital marketing is continuously evolving and the increased interest in influencer marketing and user generated content (UGC) makes additional research crucial (Taylor, 2020). Academic research on influencer marketing is continuously growing, and more and more insights are gained into, for example, how influencer marketing works and its effects (e.g., Lee & Watkins, 2016; Lou & Yuan, 2019). However, there are still lots of interest points that need to be explored.

## 1.2 Objective and Research Questions

The research objective for this study is to explore TikTok's recent *deinfluencing* trend. More precisely, what effect the *deinfluencing* trend has on the consumers and how it influences them. Influencers are sharing their honest opinion about brands and products they do not like and at the same time proposing alternatives (Pearl, 2023; TikTok, 2023). In the past years, social media and influencer marketing received a lot of attention. Through the rise of social media, UGC became increasingly more relevant as it provides honest insight into the value of a brand and its product. Further, users are more likely to trust UGC and consider their recommendations instead of brand-generated communication (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Research on influencer marketing and its effects on consumers is still limited, even though influencer marketing is fully integrated in companies marketing strategies (Ye et al., 2021). Hence, this study aims to enrich the current research knowledge by exploring the effects of influencer marketing on TikTok. As such, the current research aims to answer the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: To what extent do influencers affect consumers' brand valuations (brand image, consumer perceived ethicality (CPE), purchase intention and word-of-mouth engagement (WOME)?

RQ2: What is the differential impact between *deinfluencing* and *influencing* on consumers' brand valuations?

RQ3: Does type of brand alters the impact of type of influencer message on consumers' brand valuations?

RQ4: What influence does perceived influencer authenticity have on the impact of type of influencer message on consumers' brand valuations?

### **1.3 Thesis Structure**

After introducing the research problem, its relevance, and the research objectives as well as research questions are defined, the literature review follows. The literature review contains the theoretical background that is relevant for the purpose of this research study. After that, the conceptual framework and the hypotheses will be explained. The fourth chapter presents the first steps of the empirical study, including the methodology and research framework. In the fifth chapter, the analysis and the results of the study will be discussed. Lastly, conclusions and implications will be drawn from the findings of the study together with limitations and an outlook for future research.

## **2 Academic Literature Review**

### **2.1 The New Era of Social Media Marketing**

#### **2.1.1 Impact of social media on marketing communications**

Social media has revolutionized the way we communicate and interact socially (Obar & Wildman, 2015). It has become an integral part of our daily lives, especially for tech-savvy younger generations (Hallikainen, 2015). It enables active participation in various forms within interactive networks, such as communicating, creating, collaborating, working, sharing, socializing, playing, buying, and selling. Social media platforms have empowered consumers to take active part in the conversation and engage in UGC, sharing their experiences, opinions, and ideas, thus, shifting the power to the consumers. Their participation can be included as an additional P in the marketing mix (Tuten & Solomon, 2017; Sharma & Verma, 2018).

Social media has also transformed the way brands communicate and engage with consumers, offering new opportunities to enhance relationship-building, improve customer service, inform, promote, and influence brand attitudes (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Social media marketing enables brands to actively engage in a two-way communication with their customers in real-time, enhancing transparency and immediacy (Donthu et al., 2021). Further, social media platforms provide brands access to valuable data which allows to better understand consumers' preferences and behaviors, which brands can leverage and expand customer experience and create more meaningful content (Sharma & Verma, 2018). Brands social media communication can have a positive effect on brand equity and loyalty (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Past social media research has explored various topics, including social media characteristics, the relationship between social media and its users and the influence on brand-consumer relationships (Sharma & Verma, 2018; Kim & Ko, 2012). One key area of research has been the role of social media in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Studies have shown that social media can indeed influence consumers' perceptions of brands and products and even impact their purchase decision (Kim & Ko, 2012; Saima & Khan, 2020; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Additionally, social media facilitates word-of-mouth (WOM) communication among consumers, which greatly impacts brand awareness and reputation (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; See-To & Ho, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). Research also explores the characteristics of social media content that increase the likelihood of going viral, such as emotional appeal, novelty, and relevance (Donthu et al., 2021; Berger & Milkman, 2012).

Social media has disrupted the marketing environment, providing a powerful tool to engage with consumers. The influence of social media continues to evolve. It is essential for marketers to understand the dynamics and leverage the power of social media to create effective social media strategies, better engage with their target audience and build strong relationships. With the sheer volume of content being generated on social media it is essential for brands to work harder than ever to stand out from the crowd.

### **2.1.2 Influencer marketing and its power**

Social media platforms and digital marketing have disrupted the marketing environment and the way companies interact with their customers (Donthu et al., 2021). With the rise of social media platforms, social media influencers have become effective brand ambassadors with the ability to reach a large and engaged audience, creating a huge opportunity for influencer marketing (Phua et al., 2017). Influencer marketing has become a popular tool as it is an effective way to reach consumers on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, while they are browsing for inspiration, recommendations, and entertainment. Influencers serve as intermediaries, connecting brands with consumers. The power of influencer marketing lies in the ability of influencers to build relationships and trust with their followers, while creating authentic and relatable content that resonates with their followers (Feng et al., 2020).

The size and value of the industry have grown immensely and continues to grow. By 2022, the global influencer marketing market value reached 16.4 billion U.S. dollars (Statista Research Department, 2023). For 2023, an estimated growth to 21.1 billion U.S. dollars is expected

(Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the relevance of influencers in digital marketing strategies (Kim & Kim, 2021a) as more people turned to social media for entertainment and virtual social experiences during the pandemic (Etzkorn, 2021).

Consumers find the personal storytelling aspect of influencer-created content more engaging and authentic (De Veirman et al., 2017). Particularly, the inclusion of the product reviews in their personal lives creates a more authentic and relatable context for consumers (Schouten et al, 2020). However, influencers are obliged to include a disclosure hashtag, such as #ad, #advertising or #sponsored, to be transparent about paid relationships with brands through the *Federal Trade Commission* (Federal Trade Commission, 2017). Past studies have shown the effectiveness of influencer marketing in reaching consumers and promoting their brand and products. Influencer marketing can help to create awareness and attention among potential customers, impact brand attitudes, generate word-of-mouth, foster engagement and drive sales as consumers tend to trust recommendations from influencers they follow (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Chetioui et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2020; Low & Yuan, 2019; Lim et al., 2017). It is particularly effective to reach and engage with younger target audiences like Millennials and Gen Z as they desire personalized and interactive brand experience (Fromm, 2018; De Jans et al., 2018; Childers et al., 2019). After beauty, fashion is the second popular category of products promoted through influencer marketing (Feng et al., 2020).

Previous research has shown that authenticity and entrepreneurial spirit are essential for the success of influencer marketing (Feng et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021a). Authenticity is a key factor in influencer marketing. Multiple studies have shown that consumers are more likely to trust and engage with influencers who are perceived as authentic and genuine. Moreover, the influencer's personality, their perceived expertise, and the transparency of their disclosures play a role for credibility and authenticity (Lee & Kim, 2019; Feng et al., 2020). Further, other factors such as the relevance of the influencer's content to the brand, brand fit and the nature of the influencer's relationship with their followers play a role in the effectiveness of influencer marketing (Belanche et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Breves et al., 2019).

Hence, influencer marketing has become a powerful marketing tool for brands, and its relevance and impact are only expected to grow in the coming years. In addition, for effective influencer marketing it is essential for brands to not only understand the dynamics what drives the effectiveness of influencer marketing but also to identify the right influencer that fit the brand and their target audience and create an authentic partnership.

### **2.1.3 TikTok as marketing platform**

TikTok is a social media platform that was originally launched in 2016 in China under the name Douyin. The international expansion under the name TikTok followed the year after. In 2019 and 2020, download numbers for the app exaggerated due to the pandemic and TikTok become one of the most popular apps. In 2019, the app was downloaded 693 million times and in 2020, 850 million times (Iqbal, 2023). In 2021, TikTok accounted for a revenue of approximately \$4.6 billion. In 2022, the app was able to double the revenue to an estimate of \$9.4 billion. The number of users has increased immense and TikTok had over one billion users by the end of 2021. For the end of 2022, the number was expected to grow up to 1.8 billion. The app has been downloaded over three billion times since its launch. Most users are between 18 and 34 years old (Iqbal, 2023; Curry, 2023).

TikTok has a wide range of users and is an attractive platform for brands to promote their brand and products. The video-sharing platform is a lucrative marketing channel due to its striking download numbers, huge audience reach and promising engagement rates. By collaborating with influencers, brands can enlarge their exposure, stay up to date with viral trends and reach millions of potential customers. Brands can work with mega-influencers such as Alix Earle or Charli D'Amelio but it can be lucrative to also collaborate with micro-influencers (TikTok, 2023; Statista Research Department, 2023; Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023).

The pandemic has led to an increase in influencer-created content. The number of TikTok's shared videos by influencers increased solely in February 2020 to March 2020 by 65% (Schwär, 2020). TikTok has become a lucrative platform for influencers, providing additional reach and marketing opportunities. It allows additional narrative levels and influencers can integrate content besides their normal social media contents (Feldkamp, 2021). Along with Instagram, TikTok is the most commonly used social media platform for influencer marketing campaigns. This year, TikTok takes with 55.5% the first place in the most common channel used by influencer marketing brands, followed by Instagram with 50.8% (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2023).

### **2.1.4 Social media and word-of-mouth communication**

Social media has transformed traditional word-of-mouth communication. Social media platforms can be described as virtual hubs where people share experiences, opinions, and recommendations with their network, extending the reach and speed of word-of-mouth communication. Thus, amplifying the impact of the conversation and reach across the globe

(Donthu et al., 2021; Whitler, 2014; Hung et al., 2023; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014). The platforms facilitate users' interactions through features such as likes, comments, shares, saves, hashtags and UGC, encouraging users to interact with each other but also with brands (Donthu et al., 2021; Chu & Kim, 2011). The ease of sharing content and engaging with others intensifies the rapid spread of information, creating buzz and fueling conversation. Marketers have recognized the importance of leveraging social media and its power to create word-of-mouth conversations as well as the important role of influencer to drive WOM (Barreto, 2014; Donthu et al., 2021). As social media continues to thrive, the influence of word-of-mouth communication is expected to remain a driving force in shaping consumer behavior and brand perceptions in the digital landscape (Donthu et al., 2021).

## **2.2 Fashion, Sustainability and Social Media**

### **2.2.1 Slow-fashion movement and consumer behavior**

The fashion industry is one of the biggest industries worldwide; it contributes \$2.4 trillion to global manufacturing and employs 300 million people worldwide across the value chain. However, it is also one of the biggest contributors in polluting the planet. It is accountable for approximately 2-8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption per year is around 215 trillion liters, annual material loss of US \$100 billion and it is responsible for approximately 9% of annual microplastic losses to the oceans (United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, n.d.).

In recent years, various headlines attracted attention of consumers worldwide about the circumstances in the textile industry. Especially, the tragic incident in Bangladesh in 2013 and the collapse of the Rana Plaza building was a wakeup call (Kent & Amed, 2023). Consumers are nowadays more and more aware of sustainability and environmental impact in the fashion industry. This and the noticeable effects of climate change led to an attempt to change their consumption behavior (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). The shift in societal consciousness put a lot of pressure on companies. Consumers are not only wanting governments to act and take responsibility, but also businesses. Therefore, they are pushed to follow a more sustainable approach (Fortune, 2019). To meet consumer needs, businesses started integrating corporate social responsibility strategies and following environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals. Brands even integrate those into their communication strategy and use green marketing to differentiate from others and integrate sustainability into the core of their marketing practices (Kotler, 2011; BoF Team, 2022; Kent, 2022, 2023).

Nonetheless, even though consumers are calling for conscious consumption and their attitudes is pro environmental, the behavior often does not follow those intentions, especially regarding fashion consumption (McNeill & Moore, 2015). This discrepancy between the attitude towards sustainable fashion and the actual behavior of consumers is referred to as the attitude-behavior gap (Kim, 2016; Magnuson et al., 2017). Various studies within the sustainable consumption behavior domain indicate multiple factors are likely to drive such discrepancy, like individual differences and demographics (Bray et al., 2011), lifestyles (Connolly & Prothero, 2003), values, knowledge, perceived behavioral control (Jager, 2000), social norms (Do Valle et al., 2005) and situational factors likes promotions (Minteer et al., 2004).

### **2.2.2 Consumer perceived ethicality**

Consumer perceived ethicality (CPE) has gained significant attraction as consumers are becoming more aware of the actions of brands and expect them to behave ethically (Brunk, 2012; Brunk & De Boer, 2020). CPE refers to consumers beliefs and perceptions of the ethicality of a brand, product, or business, meaning acting in a social and ethical responsible way (Brunk & Bluemelhuber, 2011; Brunk, 2012). Brunk (2012) introduced a construct how CPE can be conceptualized and operationalized. Consumers nowadays are more aware about environmental issues and the impact of their consumption choices. They seek brands that align with their personal values. Thus, they also consider other criteria when choosing a brand next to price and quality, e.g., innovation and the brands commitment to environmental and social concerns (Bussey, 2006; Maxfield, 2008). Understanding CPE is crucial for businesses as it influences consumer behavior, including attitudes, purchase intention and overall brand evaluation (Brunk, 2010b). Hence, ethical evaluations affect corporate reputation formation (Bromley, 2001) and thus, the ethicality of a business is linked to its overall reputation (Bendixen & Abratt, 2007; Worcester & Dawkins, 2005). Past studies indicate that consumers value brands more that integrate sustainable and ethical practices in their operations. Ethicality can therefore act as a differentiating factor, providing a competitive advantage through fostering trust and building relationships based on shared values and social responsibility (Cheung & To, 2021; Markovic et al., 2018; Patel et al. 2017; Singh et al. 2012; Story & Hess 2010).

### **2.2.3 Slow-fashion on social media**

Social media marketing enables brands to precisely target their consumers and with that, potentially increase their promotion of green marketing by making use of social media's two-way communications, including user interaction, networking, interpersonal relationships and eWOM (Hung et al., 2011). Further, brands can support consumers and help reducing the attitude-behavior-gap and encourage sustainable behavior, e.g., lack of interest, insufficient knowledge, and lack of trust. With the rise of social media and its effects on consumer behavior, it is essential for brands to understand how consumer react to sustainable communications on social media (Kong et al., 2021).

### **2.2.4 Fashion influencers**

Influencer marketing has become an important part of the fashion industry, with brands partnering with influencers to reach their target audience on social media platforms and promoting their brand and products (Lang et al., 2018). The collaborations can be in form of sponsored content, brand ambassadorships and UGC. It showcases, that with the rise of social media platforms, fashion influencers have become powerful opinion leaders and trendsetters (Sokolova et al., 2020; Moslehpour et al., 2021). Fashion influencers generate authentic and engaging content as they are sharing outfit inspirations, styling tips, personal style, product recommendations and more, becoming trusted sources of fashion inspiration for their followers. Depending on the size of their following and social media presence, fashion influencers can be instrumental in setting trends and driving consumer preferences (Chetioui et al., 2020). Fashion influencers are seen as recognized personalities, thus, they have greater impact of eWOM and generate buzz (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Bilal et al., 2021).

Nonetheless, fashion influencers also have a downside. With showing off their latest shopping hauls and showcasing style after style, the lifespan of trends has been shortened and it increases overconsumption in clothes as especially younger generations try to keep up with the latest trends in fashion (Cooper, 2023). But fashion influencers can also use their influence for good purposes concerning slow fashion brands and slow fashion practices. For example, Matilda Djerf: She is a Swedish fashion influencer and entrepreneur known for her distinctive style and strong online presence. She built an inclusive fashion brand, emphasizing quality and sustainability in fashion by creating fashionable clothing ethically produced (Lundberg Toresson, 2022).

### **2.2.5 The impact of TikTok on the fashion industry**

TikTok has quickly become one of the most popular social media platforms, and its impact on the fashion industry is undeniable. Brands have started integrating TikTok in their marketing and collaborating with influencers to reach new audiences. Fashion brands and influencers are using TikTok to showcase new fashion clothing, trends, styles and engage with consumers in new and creative ways.

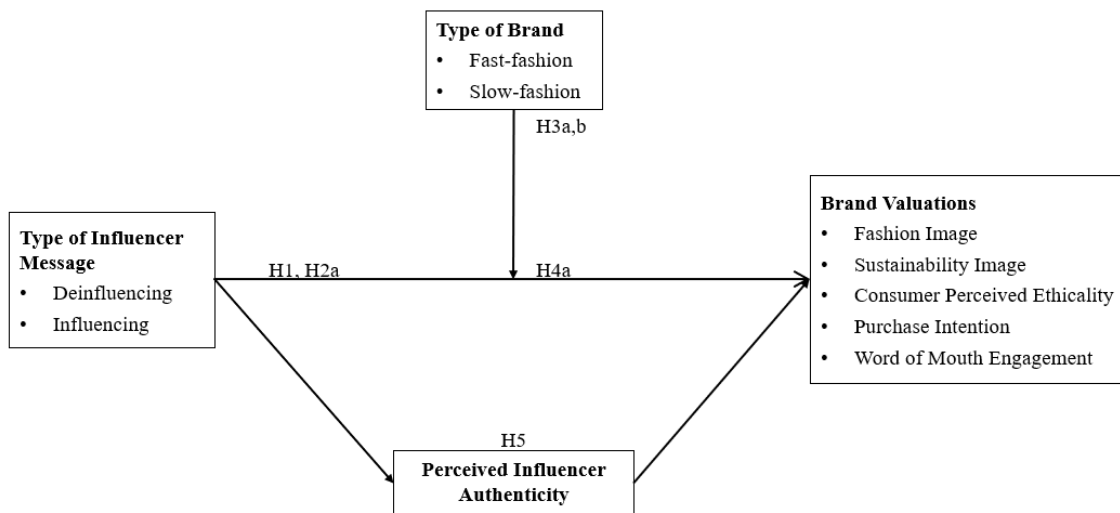
Due to TikTok's algorithm that is designed to prioritize content that is engaging and resonates with users, fashion influencers and brands can quickly gain traction on the platform by creating content that is entertaining and on-trend. Many users create videos that showcase their outfits (e.g., get ready with me, pick an outfit, #OOTD (outfit of the day)), share fashion tips, show latest shopping hauls and more. Moreover, TikTok plays a significant role in shaping fashion trends and driving consumer behavior as well as impact shopping habits. Many popular fashion trends on TikTok have gone viral, with users sharing videos of themselves wearing popular styles and accessories (e.g., oversized blazers and chunky boots), which ultimately led to an increase in demand for these products as consumers seek to emulate the styles they see on the platform. Fashion bloggers that post regularly often link the outfits they wear in their bio so that the consumers can directly shop the styles. Furthermore, TikTok has created a new space for fashion influencers to share their content and grow their following, leading to an increase in the influence of TikTok creators on fashion trend, which also gives micro-influencer a chance to be seen. Besides, TikTok's algorithm encourages the discovery of new content which allows for a more diverse representation of fashion and beauty standards. The platform democratizes fashion by providing a space for underrepresented communities, such as plus-size and black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) individuals to share their fashion styles and ideas. Another area TikTok has impacted the fashion industry is the rise of DIY fashion and sustainable fashion practices. UGC has inspired many individuals to experiment with their own fashion creations, often with thrifted or upcycled materials. At the same time, trends such as "Minimalism" and "Capsule Wardrobe" were going viral on TikTok, leading to an increased interest in sustainable and eco-friendly fashion products and practices (TikTok, 2023; Lieber, 2020; Mondalek & Nanda, 2021; Kennedy, 2022a, 2022b; Sherman et al., 2022; Fernandez, 2022; Zwięglińska, 2022).

### 3 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

#### 3.1 Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature review, the study aims to understand whether and how the type of influencer message impacts brand valuations on fashion and sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOM. Type of brand was included to test if there are different effects of the type of influencer message on brand valuations when a fast- versus slow-fashion brand is involved. Besides, the role of perceived influencer authenticity was integrated as a mediator between the relationship of type of influencer message and brand valuations (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



#### 3.2 Hypotheses

Current research shows that influencer marketing has an impact on consumer behavior and their purchase intentions (Brown & Hayes, 2008; Lim et al., 2017; Low & Yuan, 2019). Thus, the deinfluencing versus influencing message is to be explored if an effect occurs:

**H1:** Influencer messages have a communication impact on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, and purchase intention).

After determining that indeed, deinfluencing and influencing messaging show an effect, the difference how it impacts is evaluated. Past research indicates that negative information have a greater impact on consumers than positive (Brunk, 2010a; Ito et al., 1998). As the deinfluencing trend on TikTok describes the atypical behavior of content creators and rather giving negative reviews about their experience with the brand and its products, it can be assumed that deinfluencing will be impacting consumer behavior more strongly than an influencing message:

**H2:** The type of influencer message will have an impact on brand valuations, so that:

H2a: Deinfluencing will be more impactful than influencing on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME).

As a fast-fashion brand is likely to have a more negative image and reputation, it can be assumed that consumers' brand valuations will be lower than for a slow-fashion brand. Slow-fashion brands do have an overall more positive image and reputation since they have ethicality in their nature and meaning (Sayin et al., 2015). Thus, the ethicality and reputation of a brand impact consumer valuations are hypothesized to be higher for slow-fashion brands. More formally:

**H3:** The type of brand impacts brand valuations, so that:

H3a: Fast (slow) fashion brands have a stronger (weaker) effect on fashion image.

H3b: Fast (slow) fashion brands have a weaker (stronger) effect on sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME.

It is hypothesized that the type of brand will have a moderating impact on the relationship between type of influencer message and brand valuations. Considering that negative messages are more powerful than positive ones, a deinfluencing message is likely to impact consumer valuations of a slow-fashion brand more than a fast-fashion brand. Thus, the fourth hypothesis:

**H4:** The impact of type of influencer message on brand valuations will be moderated by type of brand, so that:

H4a: Deinfluencing (vs. influencing) messages about fast-fashion (vs. slow-fashion) brands will have a negative (vs. a positive) impact on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME).

Existing research suggest that influencer authenticity and credibility play a significant role on the effectiveness of influencer marketing and its impact on consumers (Feng et al., 2020; Mainolfi et al., 2021). Hence, perceived influencer authenticity is expected to have a mediating role on the relationship between type of influencer message and brand valuations:

**H5:** Perceived influencer authenticity will mediate the relationship between type of influencer message and brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME).

## **4 Methodology and Data Collection**

### **4.1 Research Method**

After secondary data was gathered and examined, primary data was collected to support answering the research questions of this study. For this, an experimental design study was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire. This method offers time and cost efficiency while obtaining a rather large and rapid number of responses. Further, respondents are given the opportunity to take the survey in their natural environment at the most convenient time (Evans & Mathur, 2005). An online survey provides complete anonymity which not only increases the willingness to participate but also excludes possible answer tendencies that might be caused due to social desirability. Additionally, with an online survey an interviewer effect can be excluded as well.

The survey was conducted using Qualtrics. The platform offers a variety of tools and features to customize the survey and direct data on the server which can be exported directly into SPSS. For statistical analysis SPSS version 28 was used.

### **4.2 Sampling**

For this study a non-probability convenience sampling method was chosen where the sample is collected in a convenient, easy, accessible, and cost- as well as time-effective way (Evans & Mathur, 2005). The questionnaire was distributed via personal social media channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn as well as through work and university channels.

### **4.3 Research Instruments**

For this research, a pilot study and main study were conducted using Qualtrics. In both studies, participants accessed the survey through an anonymous link shared within personal social media channels and workplace's internal contacts.

#### **4.3.1 Pilot study**

Before launching the main study, a pilot study was first conducted to test if respondents understood the scenarios and manipulations (see appendix 1, 2). The pilot study was filled out by 33 respondents of which 17 were exposed to the deinfluencing message and 16 to the influencing message. The manipulation check question first determined if respondents paid attention to the platform the video was shown. All 33 respondents selected TikTok (100.00%). The second manipulation question was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The question aimed to assess whether the purpose of the influencer message (*deinfluencing* vs. *influencing*) was recognized by the respondents. The results show that significant differences were found. Significant mean differences were observed between groups for the influencing message ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 1.90$  and  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 6.50$ ,  $SD = .82$ ,  $F(1,31) = 38.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ). And as well, significant mean differences were observed between groups for the deinfluencing message ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 6.91$ ,  $SD = .60$  and  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 1.13$ ,  $SD = .34$ ,  $F(1,31) = 847.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see table 1).

*Table 1: Manipulation check pilot study: type of influencer message*

	Deinfluencing		Influencing		<i>F-test</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Influencing message (shopping haul and promoting the brand)	3.29	1.90	6.50	.82	38.89***
Deinfluencing Message (Experience and negative impact)	6.11	.60	1.13	.34	847.55***

*Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$*

The pilot study results show that the manipulations were indeed well understood and the main study development proceeded with confidence.

#### **4.3.2 Main study**

The main study was published on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and the data collection ran until May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. 274 answers were collected. After cleaning the data, excluding non-female respondents, and not completed answers, a total of 208 responses were considered for the analysis of the data. It is normal to have relatively high dropout rates when conducting online surveys as respondents tend to be easily distracted and do not finish the survey (Tijdens, 2014). For each of the four scenarios a sample size larger than 50 participants was accounted for which can be considered sufficient for a randomized experimental study design and hypothesis testing (Maxwell et al., 2017; Molnar, 2019).

#### **4.4 Design and Procedure**

After the introduction, respondents were asked if they use social media and have an account on the social media platforms Instagram and TikTok. If yes, it was assessed how much time they spend daily on each platform. Those questions served as screening questions as only respondents were relevant who are active on the social media platforms.

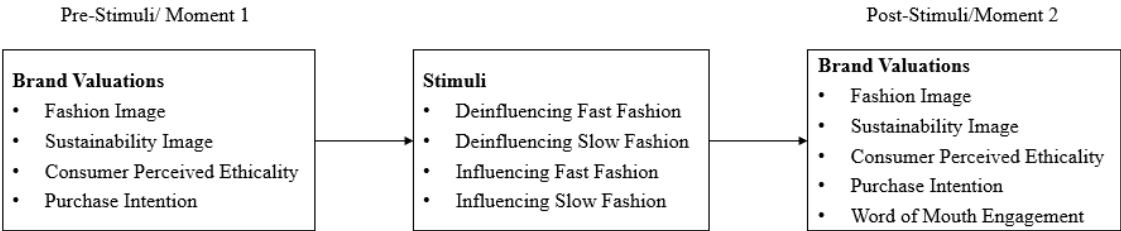
The study followed a 2 (type of influencer message: deinfluencing, influencing) x 2 (type of fashion brand: fast-fashion, slow-fashion) between-within subjects' design. Participants were randomly exposed to one of four scenarios representing the different combinations (see table 2). A before (Moment 1) and after (Moment 2) being exposed to the main stimulus (video) measurement was assessed to understand the impact of type of influencer message.

In Moment 1, participants were introduced to the brand and brand familiarity was assessed together with participants' valuations on the brand's image, consumer perceived ethicality (CPE), and their purchase intention. Then, the stimulus was presented, and participants were shown a TikTok video. In Moment 2, manipulation checks were applied to assess whether the manipulation were clear and understandable. Participants were asked about the used platform, to select which brand was named in the video and what the person in the video was talking about. After that, the participants were asked to evaluate the influencer in the video and to rate the perceived authenticity, followed by their valuations concerning brand image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME (see figure 2). Further, sustainable behavioral questions in relation to fashion were explored. Additionally, those who have a TikTok account were asked about the reason for their usage of the platform and how they perceive promotional content on TikTok. And lastly, respondents' demographics were assessed. For all rating scale questions 7-point Likert scales were used (see appendix 4).

Table 2: Manipulation scenarios

Scenario	Type of Influencer Message		Type of Fashion Brand	
	Deinfluencing	Influencing	Fast-fashion	Slow-fashion
Scenario 1	X		X	
Scenario 2	X			X
Scenario 3		X	X	
Scenario 4		X		X

Figure 2: Pre- and post-stimuli measurement



## **4.5 Stimuli Development**

For manipulations' development purposes research on the social media platform TikTok was conducted to identify a realistic example of how TikTok influencers present their influencing or deinfluencing content. As a result, a shopping haul video was chosen to represent one example of the influencing message versus a reflection of the recent personal experience with the brand for a deinfluencing message. As exemplary of a fast fashion brand SHEIN was chosen since it is amongst the most promoted brands on TikTok. As a slow fashion brand, Reformation was chosen as it is represented by TikTok influencers as a popular brand positioned on slow production and with decent statistics too. It further targets younger audiences, especially Millennials.

After thoroughly research, the filming of the TikTok content started. The creation of new TikTok videos was necessary to ensure that within the groups, differences were reduced as much as possible. Therefore, it was important that in all videos the setting was exactly the same, the same influencer was shown in the video and the same clothes were used. The stimuli can be found in appendix 3.

## **4.6 Variable Description**

### **4.6.1 Manipulation checks**

After being exposed to the stimuli, participants were asked three manipulation check questions, assessing whether the respondents understood the four scenarios. The first question was a simple attention question related to the platform. The second question assessed whether participants paid attention to the fashion brand presented in the video. And lastly, the third question evaluated if respondents correctly understood the type of influencing message. For this, they were asked to rate their level of agreement to two items asking what the influencer in the video was talking about (“Showing her shopping haul and promoting the brand” and “Talking about her experience and the brands negative impact”), using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree).

*Brand Familiarity:* was used as one of the control variables. Participants were asked to rate their level of familiarity with the presented brand (“I am familiar with the brand x”), using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – Not at all, 7 – very much).

#### **4.6.2 Independent variables**

*Type of Influencer Message* – deinfluencing versus influencing – was experimentally manipulated.

*Type of Brand* – fast fashion versus slow fashion – was also manipulated.

#### **4.6.3 Mediator**

*Perceived Influencer Authenticity*: was assessed by asking participants level of agreement to five items concerning the influencer shown in the video, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree) adapted from Saima and Khan (2021).

#### **4.6.4 Dependent variables**

*Brand Image*: was assessed by asking respondents to rate their level of agreement to a list of six items, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree) adapted from Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991).

*Consumer Perceived Ethicality (CPE)*: was assessed by asking participants to rate their level of agreement to six items, using a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree) adapted from Brunk (2012).

*Purchase Intention*: was assessed by asking the participants how likely they would shop from the brand on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – extremely unlikely, 7 – extremely likely).

*Word-of-Mouth Engagement (WOME)*: was assessed by asking participants to rate their level of agreement with five statements, on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree) adapted from Goyette et al. (2010).

All variable descriptions are presented in more detail in appendix 4.

## 5 Analysis and Results

### 5.1 Sample Characterization

At the end of the questionnaire, participants demographic information was assessed. The demographic questions are essential to get a picture of the sample and gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the sample as some factors may impact the results.

The data collection was for the study was from April 22<sup>nd</sup> until May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. A total of 274 responses were collected, however, only 208 were valid and used for data analysis. As the target audiences aims at women, 100% of the respondents were female. More than half of the sample is between 25 and 34 years old (54.81%), followed by 18 to 24 years old (41.35%). Most participants live in Germany (61.54%), followed by smaller portions spread rather internationally: United States (12.50%), Portugal (5.29%), France (4.81%), United Kingdom (3.37%), Italy (1.44%), Canada (1.44%) and Netherlands (0.96%). The 8.65% are living in Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Mexico, Austria, Poland, and Russia. In terms of current employment status, the majority are students (54.33%), followed by a third working full-time (34.13%) and a minor part working part-time (5.77%) or being unemployed (2.88%). The monthly net income of participants is well-diversified: The majority of participants earn between 500€-1000€ (19.23%) and 1000€-1500€ per month (20.19%). 12.98% earn less than 500€ per month. A third of the participants are equally spread to the income ranges of 1500€-2000€, 2000€-2500€ and 3000€ or more. Only 8% have a monthly income between 2500€-3000€ and 8% preferred not to answer.

All respondents use social media. Every respondent has an Instagram account (100%) and more than two third of respondents spend daily either up to 1 hour or 2 hours on Instagram. Almost two thirds of respondents (65.87%) have a TikTok account. The daily TikTok usage is mainly either less then 30mins (29.93%), up to an hour (24.82%) or up to two hours (26.28%). The main reason for the usage is the entertainment factor ( $M = 5.97$ ), followed by the source of inspiration ( $M = 5.14$ ), trend updates ( $M = 4.74$ ) and socialize with others ( $M = 3.74$ ). The least used reason is to actually upload content themselves ( $M = 2.56$ ) (see appendix 5).

## 5.2 Scale Reliability and Factor Analysis

Even though the scales used in the study were adapted from previous research, factor analysis and scale reliability tests were conducted to verify the most accurate results. For reliability tests, the Cronbach's alpha method is a commonly used statistical measure for Likert-scales. It measures the internal consistency of interconnected items. Thus, it reveals whether all items reliably measure the same latent variable and should be averaged into one single scale. In the literature is no universal minimum acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha. Often, values should be at least above .5 to be somewhat acceptable, preferably above .7 to be considered good (DeVellis, 2003; Streiner, 2003; Taber, 2018).

A factor analysis is conducted for scales with three or more items. For the variables brand image (pre- and post-stimuli), CPE (pre- and post-stimuli), influencer authenticity and WOME a factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted as well as reliability analysis. For pre and post CPE, influencer authenticity and WOME one component was extracted, thus no item was deleted from those scales. The reliability show that Cronbach's alpha is high with values for each scale: Pre CPE .96, Post CPE .96, influencer authenticity 0.88 and WOME .91. Additionally, with the deletion of one item, the improvement for the Cronbach's alpha would have been minimal to none and because the value is already quite high, no item was deleted. Hence, for each of the scales all items were averaged into one scale for the later data analysis. However, for pre and post brand image two components were extracted and thus, the scale was divided into two clusters –item 1,2 and 3 for fashion image (1) and item 4,5 and 6 for sustainability image (2) – as the brand image scale was adapted by Keller and Aaker and measures multiple dimensions. With this, for both variables the Cronbach's alpha was calculated. For the pre fashion image, only a slight improvement could be seen when one item is deleted, therefore it was decided against deleting it and keeping the three items with a Cronbach's alpha of .64. For the post fashion image, no improvement was seen with deleting an item from the scale and the Cronbach's alpha is .55. Thus, for pre and post fashion image scale, the scale consists of the same averaged items. For pre and post sustainability image, only a slight improvement could be seen and because the Cronbach's alpha is already high for both cases (pre sustainability image: .86, post sustainability image: .87), it was decided against deleting one item (see table 3).

Table 3: Reliability tests for multi-item scales

	Initial number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if deleted	Items deleted	Final number of items
Pre Fashion Image	3	.64	.66	-	3
Post Fashion Image	3	.55	.52	-	3
Pre Sustainability Image	3	.86	.91	-	3
Post Sustainability Image	3	.87	.92	-	3
Pre CPE	6	.96	.96	-	6
Post CPE	6	.96	.96	-	6
Influencer Authenticity	5	.88	.88	-	5
WOME	5	.91	.92	-	5

### 5.3 Results Manipulation Check

For the experimental study design, it is crucial that the manipulated conditions had the expected effect on respondents. For this, manipulation check questions were integrated into the study and analyzed.

The first question asked the respondents on which platform the video was shown. As for all four scenarios the platform was the same, all results are the same, therefore, only descriptive results will be used. For all 208 cases, TikTok was selected. The second manipulation check question determined whether consumers paid attention to the brand that was named in the video. To test for a relationship between two categorical variables, the Pearson Chi-Square tests can be conducted. As the results show, that within the two groups SHEIN was recognized as the fast-fashion brand named in the video and for the slow-fashion group people indicated the named brand Reformation. The Pearson Chi-Square confirms the relationship between the variable for the groups and the manipulation check question (Chi-Square = 208.00,  $p < .001$ ) which verifies the manipulation (see table 4).

Table 4: Manipulation check: type of fashion brand

		Fast-fashion		Slow-fashion		Pearson Chi-Square
		N	%	N	%	
Manipulation check brand	SHEIN	104	100%	0	0%	208.00***
	Reformation	0	0%	104	100%	

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$

The third question was tested via a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The manipulation aimed to assess whether the purpose of the type of influencer message was understood by the respondents. The results show that significant differences were found. Significant mean differences were observed between groups for the influencing message ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 2.13$ , SD

= 1.71 and  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 6.43$ ,  $SD = .92$ ,  $F(1,206) = 503.41$ ,  $p < .001$ ). And as well, significant mean differences were observed between groups for the deinfluencing message ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 5.91$ ,  $SD = 1.41$  and  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 1.49$ ,  $SD = .98$ ,  $F(1,206) = 681.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see table 5).

Table 5: Manipulation check: type of influencer message

	Deinfluencing		Influencing		F-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Influencing message (shopping haul and promoting the brand)	2.13	1.71	6.43	.92	503.41***
Deinfluencing Message (experience and negative impact)	5.91	1.41	1.49	.98	681.03***

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$

Brand Familiarity was explored to determine respondents' knowledge. The results show that the fast fashion brand is more known than the slow fashion brand. The difference between the two brands on familiarity shows significant mean differences ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 1.71$  and  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 2.47$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ,  $F(1,206) = 127.77$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (see table 6).

Table 6: Brand familiarity

	Fast-fashion		Slow-fashion		F-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Brand familiarity	5.26	1.71	2.47	1.84	127.77***

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$

## 5.4 Main Results and Discussion

After having described and validated the variables of the model and after having checked for the successful manipulation of both experimental conditions, the hypotheses' testing was proceeded with confidence.

### 5.4.1 The communication impact of influencer message

*H1: Influencer messages have a communication impact on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, and purchase intention).*

To test the first hypothesis, a paired samples *t-test* was conducted on the dependent variables before and after the stimuli to test whether the deinfluencing (vs. influencing) message had an impact on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, and purchase intention).

The results show that, with the exception of fashion image (Deinfluencing:  $M_{\text{Pre Fashion Image}} = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.07$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Fashion Image}} = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .99$ ,  $t(105) = .00$ ,  $p > .1$ , Influencing:  $M_{\text{Pre Fashion Image}} = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.11$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Fashion Image}} = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ,  $t(101) = -.87$ ,  $p > .1$ ), significant differences emerged between the pre- and post-measures. In the case of the deinfluencing message, it is noteworthy that significant mean differences were obtained for sustainability image ( $M_{\text{Pre Sustainability Image}} = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.67$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Sustainability Image}} = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ,  $t(105) = 5.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), consumer perceived ethicality ( $M_{\text{Pre CPE}} = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.61$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post CPE}} = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ,  $t(105) = 6.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and purchase intention ( $M_{\text{Pre Purchase Intention}} = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 1.83$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Purchase Intention}} = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ,  $t(105) = 8.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For the influencing message, significant mean differences were obtained for CPE ( $M_{\text{Pre CPE}} = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.48$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post CPE}} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ,  $t(101) = 2.77$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and purchase intention ( $M_{\text{Pre Purchase Intention}} = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.87$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Purchase Intention}} = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ,  $t(101) = 3.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A marginally significant mean difference was observed for sustainability image ( $M_{\text{Pre Sustainability Image}} = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 1.57$  vs.  $M_{\text{Post Sustainability Image}} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ,  $t(101) = 1.69$ ,  $p < .1$ ). Concluding the results, hypothesis 1 can partially be supported (see table 7).

Table 7: Paired samples t-test moment 1 and 2

	Deinfluencing			Influencing		
	Mean	SD	t-test	Mean	SD	t-test
Pre Fashion Image	5.03	1.07	.00	5.07	1.11	-.87
Post Fashion Image	5.03	.99		5.13	1.05	
Pre Sustainability Image	3.37	1.67	5.20***	3.42	1.57	1.69 <sup>+</sup>
Post Sustainability Image	2.86	1.55		3.32	1.55	
Pre CPE	3.47	1.61	6.08***	3.44	1.48	2.77**
Post CPE	2.94	1.46		3.32	1.50	
Pre Purchase Intention	3.51	1.83	8.43***	3.62	1.87	3.54***
Post Purchase Intention	2.42	1.52		3.23	1.81	

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , <sup>+</sup>  $p \leq .1$

To further analyze the results in more detail, the analysis was performed according to both, the type of influencer message (deinfluencing vs. influencing) and type of brand (fast- vs. slow-fashion brand).

The further analysis reveals that deinfluencing is generally more impactful than influencing, independently from the type of brand. It shows, that for the deinfluencing message the same significant mean differences were found as before for both type of brands (Pre and Post Sustainability Image, Pre and Post CPE, Pre and Post Purchase Intention), however, the effect on slow-fashion brands is more impactful than on fast-fashion brands. For the influencing

message there are slight differences between the type of brands. The main difference is on Pre and Post CPE. For fast-fashion brands significant mean differences were found ( $M_{Pre\ CPE} = 2.34$ ,  $SD = 1.13$  vs.  $M_{Post\ CPE} = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ,  $t(50) = 2.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ), whereas for slow-fashion brands no significant mean difference were found for Pre and Post CPE ( $M_{Pre\ CPE} = 4.55$ ,  $SD = .80$  vs.  $M_{Post\ CPE} = 4.46$ ,  $SD = .82$ ,  $t(50) = 1.29$ ,  $p > .1$ ). Concluding the results, hypothesis 1 can partially be supported (see table 8).

Table 8: Paired samples *t*-test moment 1 and 2 with brand separation

	Deinfluencing						Influencing					
	Fast-fashion			Slow-fashion			Fast-fashion			Slow-fashion		
	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -test	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -test	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -test	Mean	SD	<i>t</i> -test
Pre Fashion Image	5.77	.87	.76	4.28	.64	-1.11	5.78	.94	.59	4.35	.73	-1.97 <sup>+</sup>
Post Fashion Image	5.69	.75		4.36	.73		5.72	.90		4.54	.85	
Pre Sustainability Image	2.07	1.18	2.96**	4.67	.88	4.37***	2.14	.93	.42	4.70	.86	1.91 <sup>+</sup>
Post Sustainability Image	1.75	1.09		3.97	1.08		2.11	.99		4.54	.93	
Pre CPE	2.28	1.24	3.28**	4.66	.89	5.45***	2.34	1.13	2.79**	4.55	.80	1.29
Post CPE	2.02	1.21		3.85	1.06		2.18	1.11		4.46	.82	
Pre Purchase Intention	2.66	1.97	4.54***	4.36	1.18	7.58***	2.94	2.02	2.20*	4.29	1.43	2.89**
Post Purchase Intention	1.94	1.43		2.91	1.46		2.73	1.93		3.73	1.54	

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , + $p \leq .1$

The results indicate that both, the deinfluencing and influencing message can impact consumer behavior. Deinfluencing messages have a negative effect, particularly on purchase intention and sustainability valuations. Unexpectedly, influencing messages, except for fashion image, also appear to have a negative impact. However, previous research suggests that for the effectiveness of influencer marketing, promoting messages are not as appealing to consumers, or in this study to the respondents, when they lack personal involvement and trust in the influencer, especially regarding purchase intention. The influencing message was a shopping haul video that focused on promoting the brand and its product rather than discussing sustainability. With this in mind, it may explain why sustainability image and CPE valuation did not improve and rather weakened when the respondents lack in trust in the influencer and had no information on sustainability context.

Further analysis comparing fast- and slow-fashion brands in terms of deinfluencing and influencing messages reveal that deinfluencing has a significant effect on both types of fashion brands. However, since the fast-fashion brand already had a lower rating compared to the slow-fashion brand, the negative effects were stronger on the dependent variables for the slow-fashion brand.

## 5.4.2 The impact of influencer message and type of brand

To test hypotheses 2,3 and 4, a two-way type of influencer message x type of brand multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the dependent variables.

*H2: The type of influencer message will have an impact on brand valuations, so that:*

*H2a: Deinfluencing will be more impactful than influencing on brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME).*

To test the second hypothesis, where it is suggested that type of influencer message will impact brand valuations more when consumers are exposed to the deinfluencing rather than the influencing message, interesting results emerged. The MANOVA results show a significant main effect of influencer message on sustainability image ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.55$  vs.  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ,  $F(1,204) = 10.41$ ,  $p < .01$ ), CPE ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 1.46$  vs.  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ,  $F(1,204) = 6.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ), purchase intention ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.52$  vs.  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 3.23$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ ,  $F(1,204) = 13.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and WOME ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.23$  vs.  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ,  $F(1,204) = 6.38$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Overall, findings suggest that the deinfluencing message is more impactful than the influencing message, despite a non-significant main effect that was observed for the fashion image dependent variable ( $M_{\text{Deinfluencing}} = 5.03$ ,  $SD = .99$  vs.  $M_{\text{Influencing}} = 5.13$ ,  $F(1,204) = .89$ ,  $p > 0.1$ ), thus partially validating H2a (see table 9).

*Table 9: Type of influencer message: main effects*

	Deinfluencing		Influencing		<i>F-test</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Fashion Image	5.03	.99	5.13	1.05	.89
Sustainability Image	2.86	1.55	3.32	1.55	10.41**
CPE	2.94	1.46	3.32	1.50	6.81*
Purchase Intention	2.42	1.52	3.23	1.81	13.04***
WOME	2.65	1.23	3.12	1.52	6.38*

*Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$*

H3: The type of brand impacts brand valuations, so that:

H3a: Fast (slow) fashion brands have a stronger (weaker) effect on fashion image.

H3b: Fast (slow) fashion brands have a weaker (stronger) effect on sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME.

To test the third hypothesis where it is suggested that type of brand impacts brand valuations when consumers are exposed to a fast fashion versus slow fashion brand, the results show clear findings. The MANOVA results indicate a significant main effect of type of fashion brand on fashion image ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 4.45$ ,  $SD = .79$  vs.  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 5.71$ ,  $SD = .82$ ,  $F(1,204) = 125.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), thus, supporting H3a. The results also show a significant main effect of type of fashion brand on sustainability image ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 1.05$  vs.  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ,  $F(1,204) = 266.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ), CPE ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 2.10$ ,  $SD = 1.16$  vs.  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 4.15$ ,  $SD = .99$ ,  $F(1,204) = 195.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ), purchase intention ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 2.33$ ,  $SD = 1.73$  vs.  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ,  $F(1,204) = 19.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and WOME ( $M_{\text{Fast-fashion}} = 2.51$ ,  $SD = 1.33$  vs.  $M_{\text{Slow-fashion}} = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ,  $F(1,204) = 16.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ), fully supporting H3b (see table 10).

Table 10: Type of brand: main effects

	Fast -fashion		Slow-fashion		F-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Fashion Image	5.71	.82	4.45	.79	125.24***
Sustainability Image	1.93	1.05	4.25	1.04	266.79***
CPE	2.10	1.16	4.15	.99	195.34***
Purchase Intention	2.33	1.73	3.31	1.55	19.57***
WOME	2.51	1.33	3.26	1.36	16.65***

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$

H4: The impact of type of influencer message on brand valuations will be moderated by type of brand, so that:

H4a: Deinfluencing (vs. influencing) messages about fast (vs. slow) fashion brands will have a negative (vs. a positive) impact on brand valuations.

To test the fourth hypothesis where it suggested that the impact of type of influencer message on brand valuations will be moderated by type of brand, the two-way MANOVA results show a non-significant type of influencer message x type of brand interaction effect on all the dependent variable:  $F_s < .01$ ,  $p's > .1$ , thus rejecting H4a (see table 11).

Table 11: Results two-way MANOVA

	Deinfluencing		Influencing		Type of influencer message main effect	Type of brand main effect	Type of influencer message x type of brand
	Fast F N = 53	Slow F N = 53	Fast F N = 51	Slow F N = 51	<i>F-test</i>	<i>F-test</i>	<i>F-test</i>
Fashion Image	5.69 (.75)	4.36 (.73)	5.72 (.90)	4.54 (.85)	.89	125.24***	.49
Sustainability Image	1.75 (1.09)	3.97 (1.08)	2.11 (.99)	4.54 (.93)	10.41**	266.79***	.52
CPE	2.02 (1.21)	3.85 (1.06)	2.18 (1.11)	4.46 (.82)	6.81*	195.34***	2.29
Purchase Intention	1.94 (1.43)	2.91 (1.46)	2.73 (1.93)	3.73 (1.54)	13.04***	19.57***	.01
WOME	2.40 (1.23)	2.91 (1.18)	2.62 (1.43)	3.62 (1.45)	6.38*	16.65***	1.83

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$ ; standard deviations are presented in parentheses

Deinfluencing messages have a strong effect on brand valuations whether sustainability image or CPE, but it also alters the purchase intention and word-of-mouth engagement negatively. After being exposed to a negative message about a brand, respondents were likely to retain a more negative picture about the brand regarding the brand's perceived sustainability and were less likely to recommend this brand to a friend and to purchase it. Yet, it does not impact the fashion image as much.

Additionally, the type of brand by itself has a significant effect on all brand valuations. Fast-fashion brands are clearly winners when it comes to fashion image. Those brands are adapting rather quickly to fashion trends and bringing out collection after collection mainly targeting younger audiences and offering affordable prices. Whereas slow-fashion brands are not as strongly recognized as fashionable. When it comes to sustainability, sustainability image and consumer perceived ethicality are clearly in favor of the slow-fashion brand due to its reputation and communication from the slow-fashion brands. One could also assume that the less pricy it is, the less sustainable it is and vice versa, consumers connect higher prices with sustainability.

Despite the strength of the two main effects independently, no interaction effects were observed. One may assume that the type of influencer message impacts brand valuations for both, fast- and slow-fashion brands, in general. It is a powerful technique yet risky one since it can alter important perceptions of consumers, e.g., regarding ethicality and sustainability perceptions.

#### **5.4.3 The mediating role of perceived influencer authenticity**

*H5: Perceived influencer authenticity will mediate the relationship between the type of influencer message and brand valuations.*

To test the fifth hypothesis, a mediation analysis was performed using Model 4 of Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS to analyze whether perceived influencer authenticity mediates the relationship between the type of influencer message and brand evaluations. The aim of using a mediation model is to comprehend how an independent variable impacts a dependent variable. The impact can be either full, when the direct effect is no longer significant, or partial, when direct and indirect effects are significant and thus, significantly altering the relationship between independent and dependent variable when a mediator intervenes the impact (Hofmann et al., 2020). Additionally, the results of the bootstrap analysis reveal that a mediation effect is not significant when the confidence intervals straddle zero (Hayes, 2015, 2018).

First, when testing the mediating effect of perceived influencer authenticity on the relationship between type of influencer message and sustainability image, results show that the effect of both, the influence of type of influencer message on perceived influencer authenticity ( $b = -1.23, SE = .16, p < .001, 95\% CI [-1.54, -.93]$ ) and the effect of perceived influencer authenticity on sustainability image ( $b = .29, SE = .09, p < .01, 95\% CI [.11, .48]$ ), are significant. A significant but negative indirect effect was also found (*indirect effect* =  $-.36, SE = .12, p < .05, 95\% CI [-.62, -.13]$ ). Despite, the direct effect remained significant (*direct effect* =  $.82, SE = 0.24, p < .01, 95\% CI [.35, 1.30]$ ), indicating partial mediation (see Table 12). This finding suggests that deinfluencing messages are negatively correlated with sustainability image.

Table 12: Perceived influencer authenticity as mediator on the relationship between type of influencer message and sustainability image

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
1	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH	-1.23***	-1.54	-.93
2	I AUTH → Sustainability Image	.29**	.11	.48
3	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH → Sustainability Image	-.36*	-.62	-.13
	Direct Effect Path	Direct Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
4	Type of Influencer Message → Sustainability Image	.82**	.35	1.30

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , + $p \leq .1$

Further, when assessing the mediating role of perceived influencer authenticity on the relationship between type of influencer message and CPE, the results reveal that both, the impact of type of influencer message on perceived influencer authenticity ( $b = -1.23$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-1.54, -.93]) and the effect of perceived influencer authenticity on CPE ( $b = .23$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [.055, .41]) are significant. In addition, the direct effect was also found significant ( $direct\ effect = .67$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ , 95% CI [.22, 1.13]). Hence, perceived influencer authenticity partially mediates the relationship ( $indirect\ effect = -.29$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [-.54, -.050]) (see table 13).

Table 13: Perceived influencer authenticity as mediator on the relationship between type of influencer message and consumer perceived ethicality

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
1	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH	-1.23***	-1.54	-.93
2	I AUTH → CPE	.23*	.055	.41
3	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH → CPE	-.29	-.54	-.050
	Direct Effect Path	Direct Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
4	Type of Influencer Message → CPE	.67**	.22	1.13

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , + $p \leq .1$

Moreover, it was determined if perceived influencer authenticity also mediates the effect of type of influencer message on purchase intention. Both, the influence of type of influencer message on perceived influencer authenticity ( $b = -1.23$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-1.54, -.93]) and the effect of perceived influencer authenticity on purchase intention ( $b = .42$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.22, .61]) are significant. Also in this case, the direct effect is significant ( $direct\ effect = 1.31$ ,  $SE = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.81, 1.82]), thus a partial mediation occurs ( $indirect\ effect = -.30$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [-.46, -.16]) (see table 14).

Table 14: Perceived influencer authenticity as mediator on the relationship between type of influencer message and purchase intention

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
1	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH	-1.23***	-1.54	-.93
2	I AUTH → Purchase Intention	.42***	.22	.61
3	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH → Purchase Intention	-.30*	-.46	-.16
Direct Effect Path		Direct Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
4	Type of Influencer Message → Purchase Intention	1.31***	.81	1.82

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , + $p \leq .1$

When testing whether perceived influencer authenticity has a mediating role on the effect of type of influencer message on word-of-mouth engagement, the results indicate that both, the influence of type of influencer message on perceived influencer authenticity ( $b = -1.23$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-1.54, -.93]) and the effect of influencer authenticity on WOME ( $b = .48$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.33, .64]) are significant. The direct effect ( $direct\ effect = 1.06$ ,  $SE = .20$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.67, 1.46]) was also found significant. Thus, it can be concluded that perceived influencer authenticity partially mediates the relationship between type of influencer message and WOME ( $indirect\ effect = -.60$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [-.85, -.37]) (see table 15).

Table 15: Perceived influencer authenticity as mediator on the relationship between type of influencer message and word-of-mouth engagement

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
1	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH	-1.23***	-1.54	-.93
2	I AUTH → WOME	.48***	.33	.64
3	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH → WOME	-.60*	-.85	-.37
Direct Effect Path		Direct Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
4	Type of Influencer Message → WOME	1.06***	.67	1.46

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ , + $p \leq .1$

Lastly, the possible mediating effect of perceived influencer authenticity on the relationship between type of influencer message and fashion image was tested. The indirect effect was not significant ( $indirect\ effect = -.15$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p > .05$ , 95% CI [-.32, .0096]), thus, there is no mediating effect of influencer authenticity on the relationship between type of influencer message and fashion image (see table 16).

Table 16: Perceived influencer authenticity as mediator on the relationship between type of influencer message and fashion image

Outcome	Indirect Effect Paths	Indirect Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
1	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH	-1.23***	-1.54	-.93
2	I AUTH → Fashion Image	.12+	-.0017	.28
3	Type of Influencer Message → I AUTH → Fashion Image	-.15	-.32	.0096
	Direct Effect Path	Direct Effect	Lower CI	Upper CI
4	Type of Influencer Message → Fashion Image	.26	-.06	.57

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , +  $p \leq .1$

In sum, the findings suggest that perceived influencer authenticity partially mediates the relationship between type of influencer message and the four dependent variables (sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOME). Solely in the case of fashion image, no mediating effect was found. Thus, H5 is partially supported. A negative indirect effect was found for the four dependent variables mentioned above, suggesting that, as deinfluencing messages increase so does perceived sustainability image, CPE, purchase intentions and WOME decrease. The negative correlation observed shows the powerful effect of deinfluencing messages. An interesting phenomenon emerged related to the fact that fashion image was not impacted by perceived influencer authenticity. This behavioral effect suggests that, when it comes to fashion image there are a set of attributes that cancel out other factors more in line with ethicality perceptions. This effect corresponds to the attitude-behavior gap (Herédia-Colaço & Coelho do Vale, 2018) often seen with sustainable consumption behaviors.

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the recent *deinfluencing* trend on TikTok and its impact on consumer behavior. For this, the impact of a *deinfluencing* message versus an *influencing* message was assessed to determine how different types of influencer messages alter consumers' brand valuations regarding brand image, consumer perceived ethicality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth engagement. Additionally, the study integrated a fast and slow fashion brand to consider the influence of type of brand. Further, the role of perceived influencer authenticity was considered and the influence on the relationship between type of influencer message and brand valuations through perceived influencer authenticity was explored.

To answer RQ1, existing research has already shown that influencers affect consumers. Influencers do have power in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors. With the recent *deinfluencing* trend, it just shows further evidence of that power. The study's findings show that a *deinfluencing* message has an impact on brand valuations, that is a negative one on brand image, CPE, and purchase intention. The *influencing* message in this study reveals also a negative impact on the brand valuations and indicating that respondents lack trust and personal involvement with the influencer. Hence, supporting existing research on the effectiveness of influencer marketing depending on various factors such as influencer authenticity, the influencer's personality, relationship with their followers and attractiveness of the content. When differentiating by type of brand, it shows that *deinfluencing* has a significant effect on the fast- and slow-fashion brand. However, as fast-fashion brands compare weaker to slow-fashion brands, the effect of *deinfluencing* is more impactful on slow-fashion brands.

Moreover, to answer RQ2, the study shows that in general an *influencing* message has a higher rating than a *deinfluencing* message. However, *deinfluencing* has a stronger negative impact on brand valuations regarding sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOM. It doesn't impact fashion image as much.

To answer RQ3, the study reveals that the effect of type of influencer message on the consumers' brand valuations does not depend on the type of brand. The interaction between those two was found not significant in all five consumer's brand valuations. But when examining the type of brand on its own, it has a significant effect on all brand valuations (fashion image, sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOM). Fast-fashion brands have a high rating regarding their fashion image whereas slow-fashion brands are not

seen as fashionable as much. However, they rate rather weakly in the other brand valuation dimensions, for instance, more related to sustainability and ethicality perceptions. Whereas slow-fashion brands have a higher rating on sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOM. Therefore, consumers have different perceptions and intentions depending on the type of fashion brand. It highlights the importance of brand image and reputation in shaping consumer behavior and preferences in the fashion industry, but the results should be interpreted with caution and the phenomenon of consumer paradox, the attitude-behavior gap and social desirability should be considered.

Furthermore, to answer RQ4, the study further discloses that perceived influencer authenticity plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between type of influencer message and brand valuations for sustainability image, CPE, purchase intention and WOM. Perceived influencer authenticity is highly important and dedicates to a stronger or weaker brand valuation. The results for the influencing message show that when influencer authenticity is rather low, it weakens consumers' brand valuations which confirms previous findings from studies that explore the effectiveness of influencer campaigns revealing that authenticity is a huge success criteria. The *deinfluencing* trend seems like a controverse way of influencer content and reinforces the origin of influencer marketing: honesty. The respondents felt more connected to the presented *deinfluencing* message. It further gives information that they prefer video content with more meaningful and informative content rather than just showing what was shopped, they appreciated when the influencer talks about their experience and gives genuine feedback.

## **7 Implications**

### **7.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the current research knowledge on social media platforms and influencer marketing in the fashion industry. In particular, it devotes further learning on the effect of TikTok trends and its meaning for the fashion industry. This study explores the differential effect of deinfluencing and influencing messages by influencers for a fast- and a slow-fashion brand and measures the effect on brand valuations on brand image, consumer perceived ethicality, purchase intention and word-of-mouth engagement.

First, the study supports existing research that show the power of influencers on consumer behavior (e.g., Brown & Hayes, 2008; Chetioui et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2020; Low & Yuan, 2019; Lim et al., 2017). This study reinforces how much impact influencers can have. Results of this study reveal that the recent *deinfluencing* trend has a significant impact on consumers. It further adds proficiency on the importance of influencer credibility in influencer marketing whether it is an influencing positive message or a deinfluencing negative message. It strengthens the current understanding on influencing factors when it comes to the evaluation of influencers, such as authenticity, expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, and attractiveness (e.g., Feng et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021a; Lee & Kim, 2019; Belanche et al., 2021; Breves et al., 2019). Influencer marketing has become a growing area of interest for research purposes as it is beneficial to understand the dynamics what drives the success of influencer marketing.

Moreover, the study's findings underline the importance of brand image and reputation in shaping consumer behavior and preferences in the fashion industry when it comes to fast- and slow-fashion brands.

### **7.2 Managerial Implications**

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior for marketers.

First, it emphasizes the importance of understanding the characteristics of influencer marketing to leverage the power influencer marketing can provide. Whether or not brands actively seek out influencer marketing, with the rise of UGC and the viral effect on TikTok, there is going to be talk online. Social media influencers share their personal life online, that includes content

about basically anything – from showing how they get ready, what outfit they pick, what they ordered online, what brands sent them, unboxing packages together to sharing positive and negative experiences, clothes they didn't like, weren't satisfied and more.

Brands can seek out fashion influencers that are popular for their target audiences and send them packages. However, as the study underlines how crucial influencer authenticity is, brands should make sure they pay attention to the brand fit and the relationship the influencer has with their followers to ensure effective influencer marketing. Especially slow-fashion brands can profit from increasing the awareness and popularity of their brand.

The results indicate that influencing messages do not really affect consumers sustainability associations with the brand. Slow-fashion brands could therefore ensure that the influencing message contains information, however, they should be able to back-up their sustainable practices, so it does not backfire. The study further reveals that the respondents seek out more meaningful and informative content rather than just showcasing. The deinfluencing message shows a higher level of authenticity and thus, indicating consumers appreciate the new freshness of honesty in the deinfluencing message and sharing a more honest and relatable message. Hence, influencer marketing should act as more than just a promotional tool and offer genuine feedback and insights to consumers, e.g., fashion brands could show behind the scenes in collaboration with an influencer.

The recent *deinfluencing* trend on TikTok impacts consumers' brand valuations. It has a negative impact, thus, brands should pay attention that their brand image and perceived ethicality do not suffer. This study assessed short-term impacts, time will tell how much of an impact the *deinfluencing* trend will have on actual consumer behavior. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see, if the *deinfluencing* trend will impact fashion brands to practice more sustainable practices.

The deinfluencing trend presents an opportunity for slow-fashion brands to differentiate themselves and build a more authentic and transparent image. By embracing the trend, brands can proactively address consumers concerns about ethical and sustainable practices. Brands can show what sustainable practices they embrace and create consumer trust and loyalty. Together with TikTok, brands can use storytelling to convey brand values. They can share their story in a creative and engaging way and use the platform to share the story behind the products. Additionally, they can collaborate with influencers. Important for slow-fashion brands is that

they seek out authentic influencers that align with their brands value and sustainability beliefs. They focus on quality over quantity and have an engaging relationship with their followers. Brands can further experiment with new formats and content to create content that is informative, educational, and entertaining at the same time and resonated with their target audience. All in all, the deinfluencing trends shows that authenticity and transparency are major key success factors.

## **8 Limitations**

The findings of this study provide interesting insights on influencer marketing and TikTok. However, when interpreting the results, there are certain limitations that should be considered regarding the scope of the research study.

In this study, the target audience covers women who are using social media, mainly between the age of 18 and 34 years old. Therefore, no male respondents were considered as the provided stimuli show a female influencer. Time and money constraints should be accounted. To avoid likes and dislikes with actual influencers, a fictitious influencer was invited to create the videos. However, this also affected the perceived influencer authenticity as respondents lacked trust and a personal connection with the influencer, which is especially important for purchase intention and WOM. Further research could test actual perceptions toward well-known influencers, where test sets of variables would be tested to evaluate the valence of opinions towards the influencers. The study was designed solely in English which can limit the responses to English-speaking participants. For future research and global insights, it is beneficial to conduct the survey in multiple languages, depending on the research scope.

Further, using an online survey does provide lots of advantages but the method also has its disadvantages. An online survey relies on voluntary participation which can lead to a biased, non-representative sample, especially when sharing the survey through personal social networks. More than half of the respondents are from Germany, therefore, it is rather difficult to conclude an international interpretation as TikTok usage differs from person to person but also might be influenced where the respondents live. It would be interesting to see if for example social media influencers impact is different in Europe than in the US. Online surveys occur to have a nonresponse bias, meaning that participants might not complete the survey. With online surveys, there is a lack of control regarding survey environment but also it limits

the depth of insights. Even though, confidentiality and anonymity are given with an online survey, still, effects of social desirability and attitude-behavior gap can occur, especially, regarding sustainability related content.

The study focuses solely on the effect of type of influencer message and for an influencing and deinfluencing message one exemplary scenario was filmed. However, on TikTok there are multiple possible ways how users tell their messages. For this study, a shopping haul video was used as most videos on TikTok are either get ready with me, outfit of the day, showing how to style and shopping hauls, however it does not precisely promote sustainability or the brand in-depth. Hence, for future research, a broader and more comprehensive study could reveal differences in the impact of different types of influencer messages within their groups. Even though type of fashion brand did not have a significant interaction with the type of influencer message on the brand valuations, with a more representative sample a different outcome might occur. Further, different possible factors that might influence the effect of type of influencer message on the brand valuations should be considered as well.

## **9 Future Research**

Social media has become an important tool for marketers to engage with consumers and the influence is expected to continue growing. Continuous evolvement of social media platforms, e.g., new emerging platforms, new developments on existing platforms, new technological possibilities such as augmented reality or virtual reality, will make future research necessary to leverage the power of social media and its impact on consumer behavior.

With the rise of social media, influencer marketing has become a powerful marketing tool as well. For influencer marketing there are varies factors influencing the effectiveness and what drives influencers' successes. There have been already lots of research, however, as the relevance is expected to grow, also the body of research is going to continue to increase. New influencing factors or connected factors might be revealed in future research processes.

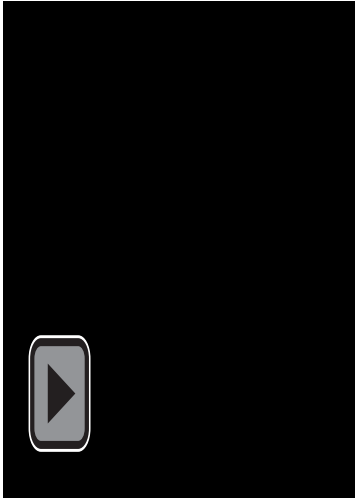
There hasn't been a lot of research on TikTok's influence yet, which leaves great potential for future research, especially with the rise of UGC. In this study, the scenario only included one example how a deinfluencing message can be transmitted, but there are various ways TikTok users tell their story, e.g., deinfluencing while promoting an alternative, deinfluencing while

addressing over-consumption, deinfluencing and promoting sustainable practices, solely deinfluencing and sharing their experience and more. It would be interesting to explore the different impacts of the different ways of deinfluencing as well as comparing the deinfluencing trend for different types of influencers, e.g., macro, micro and nano. Further, potential research can determine long term effects of the deinfluencing trend and explore actual behavior. Additionally, the impact of deinfluencing on different types of fashion or occasion, e.g., sports fashion, swimwear, can be explored or different target groups, e.g., male, as this study focused on female social media users and every-day fashion.

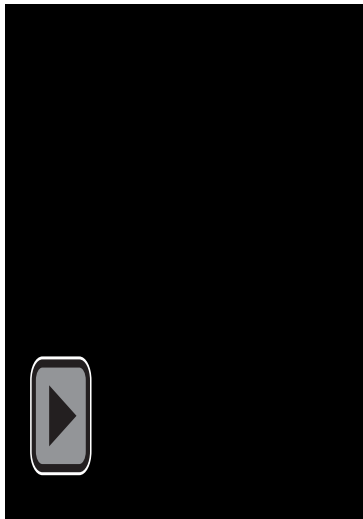
## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Manipulations – Pilot Study

Influencing Message:



Deinfluencing Message:



## Appendix 2: Pilot Study

### Introduction

Dear participants,

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to complete this survey which explores the social media platform TikTok and its influences within the fashion industry.

The survey is part of a Master Thesis in its final stage. Your participation is very important and contributes to its completion.

This survey is expected to take about 5 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. This survey is anonymous, and data collected will be kept strictly confidential, only aggregated results will be used in any report on the survey.

Your experience is important to us. If you're willing to fill out the survey, please click on the next button below. Should you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at s-jwallbaum @ucp.pt.

Thank you!

Q1) Do you use social media?

- Yes
- No



Q2) Do you have an Instagram account?

- Yes
- No

Q3) Do you have a TikTok account?

- Yes
- No

Q4) On average, how much time do you spend on the following social media platforms daily?

	Less than 30mins	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours or more
 Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On the next page you will see a short TikTok video.

Please take a moment to have a careful look. Feel free to watch it a second time.

*Stimuli Exposure*

Q5) On which platform was the video published?

- Instagram
- YouTube
- TikTok

Q6) What was Dani talking about in the video?

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
Showing her shopping haul and promoting the brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking about her experience and the brands negative impact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In this section, we are going to ask you questions about demographics. Remember, all answers are strictly confidential.

Q7) Please specify the gender you identify with:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/Third gender
- Prefer not to answer

Q8) What is your age?

- Under 18 years old
- 18 to 24 years old
- 25 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 to 64 years old
- 65 years old and over

Q9) Where do you currently live?

- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Portugal
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States
- ★ Other (please specify):

Q10) What is your current employment status?

- Student
- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Unemployed
- Retired
- ★ Other (please specify):

- Prefer not to answer

Q11) What is your average net monthly income (after taxes being deducted)?

- Less than 500€
- Between 500€ and below 1,000€
- Between 1,000€ and below 1,500€
- Between 1,500€ and below 2,000€
- Between 2,000€ and below 2,500€
- Between 2,500€ and below 3,000€
- 3,000€ or more
- Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

## Appendix 3: Manipulations – Main Study

### *Brand Introduction:*

#### Fast Fashion Brand Introduction

# SHEIN

SHEIN is an international B2C fast fashion e-commerce platform that focuses on women's wear, but also offers men's apparel, children's clothes, accessories, shoes, bags and other fashion items. It upholds the philosophy that everyone can enjoy the beauty of fashion.

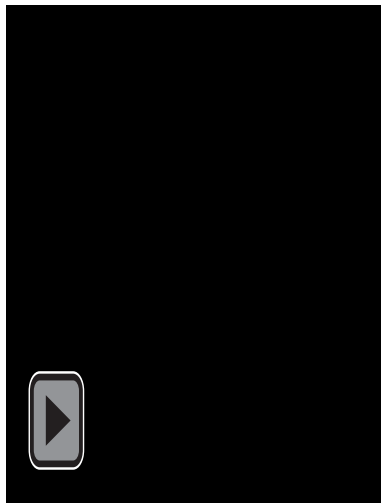
#### Slow Fashion Brand Introduction

# REFORMATION

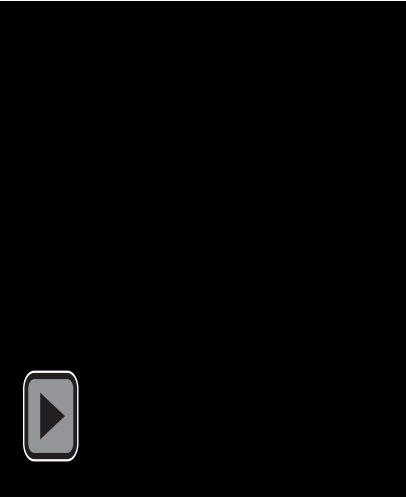
Reformation is a sustainable fashion brand that creates stylish and eco-friendly clothing, focusing on using recycled and environmentally-friendly materials and practices. The brand aims to reduce the fashion industry's impact on the environment and promotes ethical production standards, while still offering fashionable and trendy designs. Reformation's clothing line includes women's dresses, tops, bottoms, and accessories, all made with sustainability in mind.

### *Stimuli:*

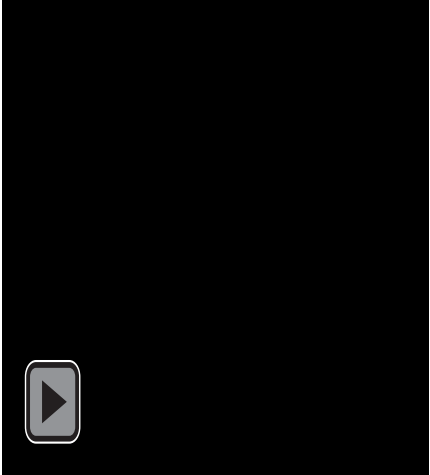
#### Influencing Message SHEIN:



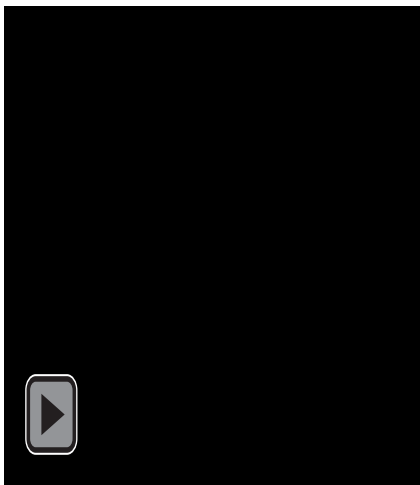
Deinfluencing Message SHEIN:



Influencing Message Reformation:



Deinfluencing Message Reformation:



## Appendix 4: Main Study

### Introduction

Dear participants,

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to complete this survey which explores the social media platform TikTok and its influences within the fashion industry.

The survey is part of a Master Thesis in its final stage. Your participation is very important and contributes to its completion.

This survey is expected to take about 5 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. This survey is anonymous, and data collected will be kept strictly confidential, only aggregated results will be used in any report on the survey.

Your experience is important to us. If you're willing to fill out the survey, please click on the next button below. Should you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at s-jwallbaum@ucp.pt.

Thank you!

Q1) Do you use social media?

- Yes
- No



Q2) Do you have an Instagram account?

- Yes
- No

Q3) Do you have a TikTok account?

- Yes
- No

Q4) On average, how much time do you spend on the following social media platforms daily?

	Less than 30mins	Up to 1 hour	Up to 2 hours	Up to 3 hours	Up to 4 hours or more
 Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Brand Introduction

Q5) Please take time to think what you have heard, seen or experienced with SHEIN. On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much), rate your level of familiarity with SHEIN.

	1 - Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 - Very much
I am familiar with the brand SHEIN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding SHEIN:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
Offers trendy and stylish clothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Known for its affordable prices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Targets younger audiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prioritizes sustainability and eco-friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides good value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Known for its higher price point and premium quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7) On a scale from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely), how likely would you shop from SHEIN?

	1 - Extremely unlikely	2 - Unlikely	3 - Slightly unlikely	4 - Neither likely nor unlikely	5 - Slightly likely	6 - Likely	7 - Extremely likely
I would shop at SHEIN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
SHEIN respects moral norms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN always adheres to the law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN is a socially responsible brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN avoids damaging behavior at all cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN is a good brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN will make a decision only after careful consideration of the potential positive or negative consequences for all those involved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On the next page you will see a short TikTok video.

Please take a moment to have a careful look. Feel free to watch it a second time.

*Stimuli Exposure*

Q9) On which platform was the video published?

- Instagram
- YouTube
- TikTok

Q10) Which brand was Dani talking about?

- SHEIN
- Reformation

Q11) What was Dani talking about in the video?

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
Showing her shopping haul and promoting the brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talking about her experience and the brands negative impact	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12) How likely are you to explore the fashion brand’s website or social media pages after seeing the TikTok video?

	1 - Extremely unlikely	2 - Unlikely	3 - Slightly unlikely	4 - Neither likely nor unlikely	5 - Slightly likely	6 - Likely	7 - Extremely likely
I would explore the fashion brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements in regard to the influencer shown in the TikTok video:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
The TikTok influencer comes across as genuine and authentic in the content presented in the video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel a sense of similarity with the TikTok influencer and can relate to their experiences and opinions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The TikTok influencer's appearance and personality are appealing and engaging	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that the TikTok influencer is honest and trustworthy in the content presented in the video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The TikTok influencer appears to have a high level of knowledge and expertise on the topic presented in the video	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q14) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding SHEIN:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
Offers trendy and stylish clothing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Known for its affordable prices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Targets younger audiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prioritizes sustainability and eco-friendliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides good value for money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Known for its higher price point and premium quality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q15) How likely are you to consider purchasing a product from the fashion brand after seeing the TikTok video?

	1 - Extremely unlikely	2 - Unlikely	3 - Slightly unlikely	4 - Neither likely nor unlikely	5 - Slightly likely	6 - Likely	7 - Extremely likely
I would shop at SHEIN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
SHEIN respects moral norms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN always adheres to the law	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN is a socially responsible brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN avoids damaging behavior at all cost	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN is a good brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SHEIN will make a decision only after careful consideration of the potential positive or negative consequences for all those involved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17) Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
I would be willing to recommend this brand to a friend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be likely to talk to others about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be willing to tell others about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would encourage others to try this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would be likely to post comments online about this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q18) Again, please answer the following statements with your level of agreement:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
When shopping for clothes, it is important for me to consider the ethical and environmental impact of my purchases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I actively seek out sustainable clothing options when shopping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to minimize my impact on the environment through sustainable fashion practices such as recycling and upcycling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often seek out information about a brand's sustainability practices before making a purchase	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19) Please answer the following statements concerning TikTok to your level of agreement:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
I use TikTok as a source of entertainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use TikTok as a source of inspiration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use TikTok to express myself and upload content	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use TikTok for trend updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use TikTok to interact and socialize with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	1 - Strongly disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Somewhat disagree	4 - Neither agree nor disagree	5 - Somewhat agree	6 - Agree	7 - Strongly agree
I see brands that promote their products/services on TikTok as trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find TikTok advertisements informational and effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use TikTok to find authentic product reviews	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I look for brand/product recommendations on TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have discovered new products/brands on TikTok	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe product reviews from people who share their experiences on TikTok more than actual advertisements from brands	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I see people using a particular product on TikTok, it immediately catches my attention	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lastly, we are going to ask you questions about demographics. Remember, all answers are strictly confidential.

Q21) Please specify the gender you identify with:

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary/Third gender
- Prefer not to answer

Q22) What is your age?

- Under 18 years old
- 18 to 24 years old
- 25 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 to 64 years old
- 65 years old and over

Q23) Where do you currently live?

- Canada
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Portugal
- Spain
- United Kingdom
- United States
- ★ Other (please specify):

Q24) What is your current employment status?

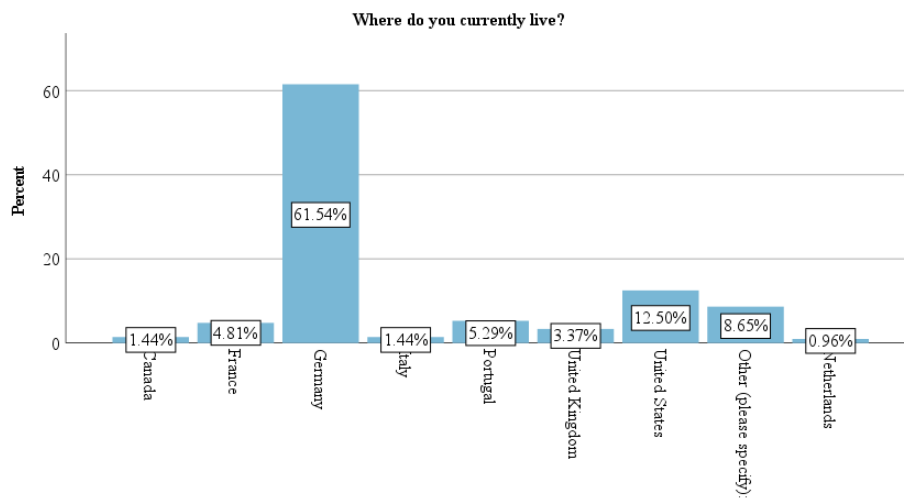
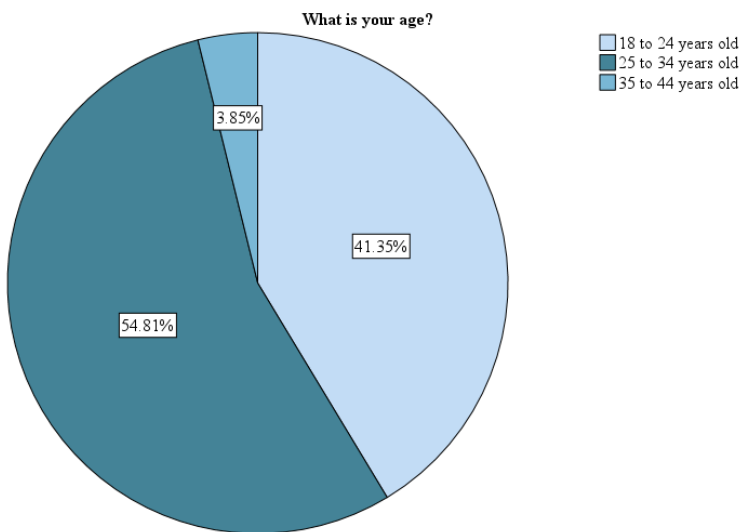
- Student
- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Unemployed
- Retired
- ★ Other (please specify):
- Prefer not to answer

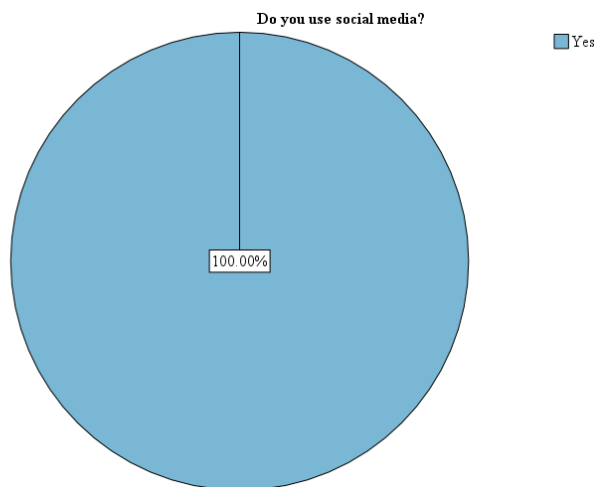
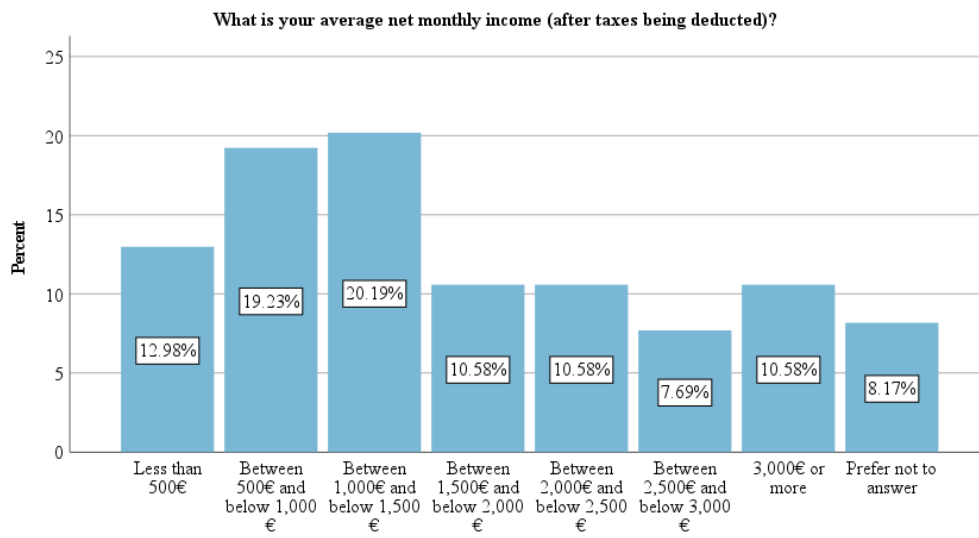
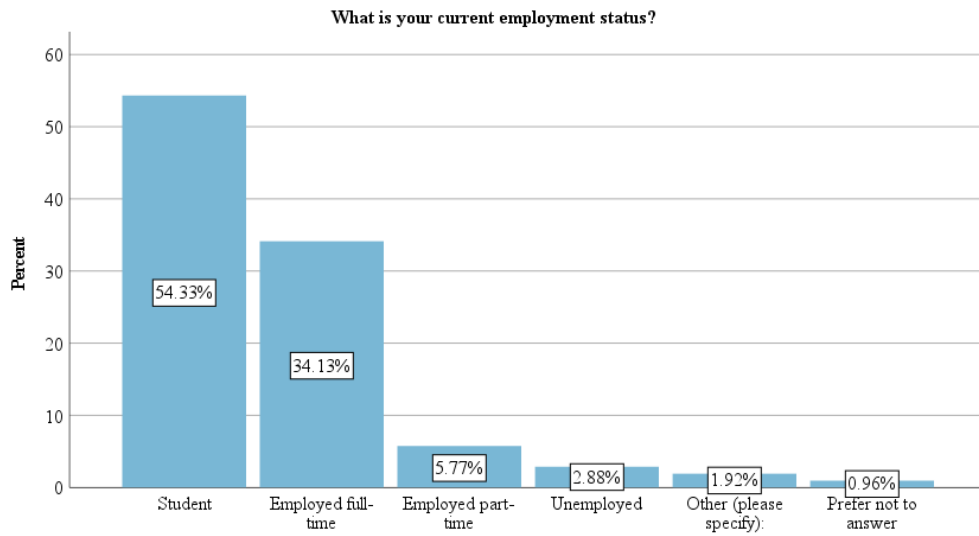
Q25) What is your average net monthly income (after taxes being deducted)?

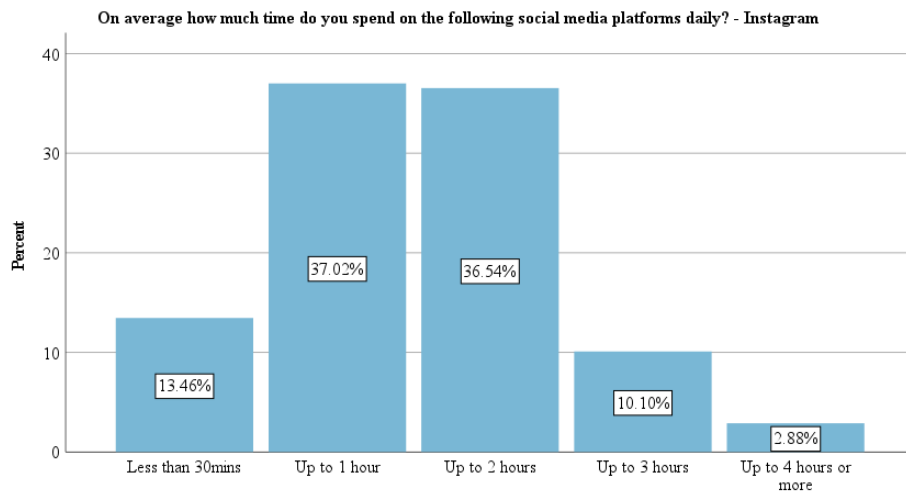
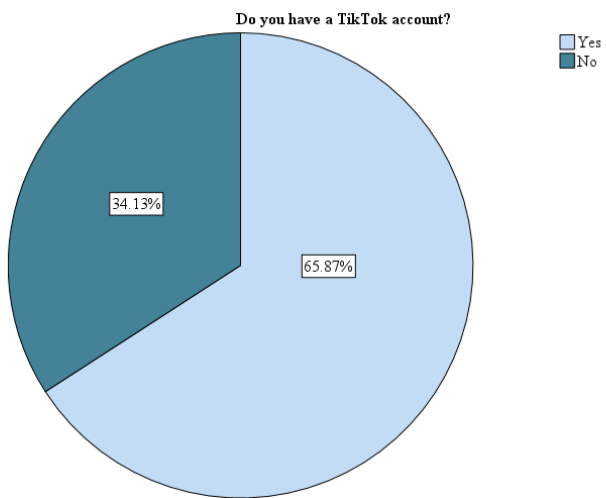
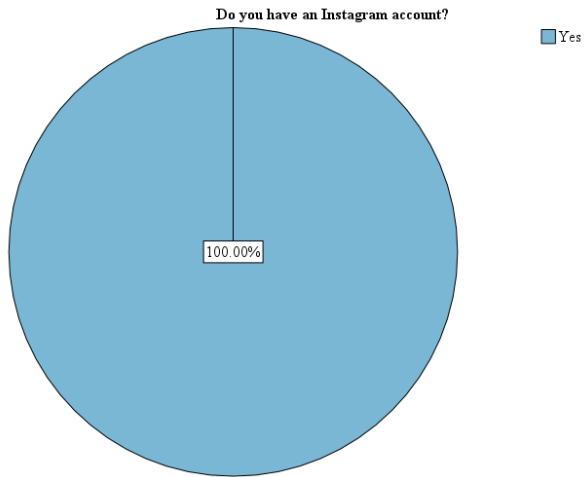
- Less than 500€
- Between 500€ and below 1,000€
- Between 1,000€ and below 1,500€
- Between 1,500€ and below 2,000€
- Between 2,000€ and below 2,500€
- Between 2,500€ and below 3,000€
- 3,000€ or more
- Prefer not to answer

Thank you for your time spent taking this survey. Your response has been recorded.

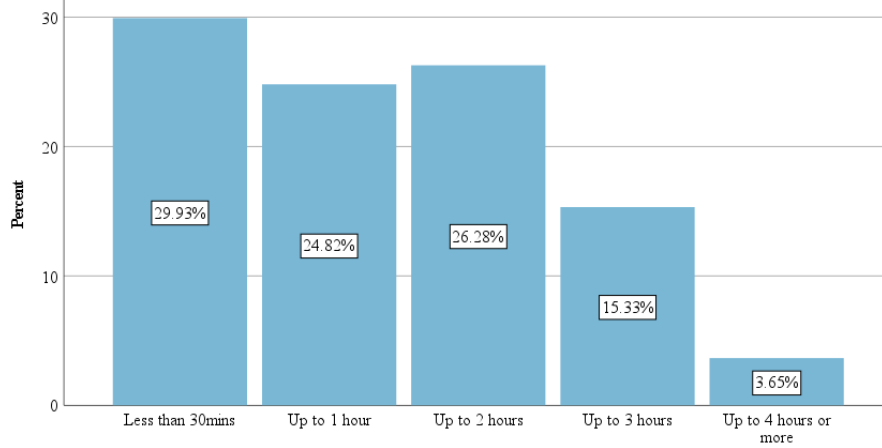
## Appendix 5: Demographics – Main Study







On average how much time do you spend on the following social media platforms daily? - TikTok



**Statistics**

		I use TikTok as a source of entertainment	I use TikTok as a source of inspiration	I use TikTok to express myself and upload content	I use TikTok for trend updates	I use TikTok to interact and sozialize with others
N	Valid	136	136	136	136	136
	Missing	72	72	72	72	72
Mean		5.97	5.14	2.56	4.74	3.74
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		7	7	7	7	7
Percentiles	25	5.25	5.00	1.00	4.00	2.00
	50	6.00	5.00	2.00	5.00	4.00
	75	7.00	6.00	4.00	6.00	5.00

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