

The influence of social media on fashion marketing: an analysis of
quantitative evidence from Irish consumers who are Instagram, YouTube,
and Facebook users.

Alisa De Courcy

Master of Science in International Business

National College of Ireland

School of Business

Under the Supervision of Maurice Fitzgerald
Associate Faculty, National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland,

August 2025

Abstract

The rapid growth of social media has significantly changed consumer behaviour and marketing strategies, especially in the fashion industry. This study examines the influence of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and Facebook on Irish consumers' decision-making process and engagement with brands. A quantitative method including literature review, survey, and secondary data analysis is used to reveal users' preferences and attitudes. The findings of the study revealed that both platforms and content preferences of audiences vary by age and gender. Generation Z prefers fast content and visual platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Meanwhile, older generations favour Facebook and are cautious of new technologies, such as AI and virtual influencers. The crucial role of user-generated content in increasing brand engagement is confirmed. Moreover, sustainability and data privacy remain vital aspects in creating a trustworthy relationship between consumers and brands. The research confirms that successful social media marketing strategies require adaptation to the target audience and new technological and behavioural trends. The ethical component is also crucial for building customer loyalty. The thesis provides practical recommendations for optimising social media marketing in the context of the Irish fashion market.

Keywords: Social media marketing, consumer behaviour, influencer marketing, artificial intelligence (AI) influencers, fashion industry, Irish market.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Alisa De Courcy

Student Number: x23347147

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc, in International Business

Material submitted for award

- (a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.
- (b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.
- (c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository NORMA (thesis reports and projects).
- (d) ***Either*** *I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Or *I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of research student: Alisa De Courcy

Date: 15.08.2025

Research Methods

The influence of social media on fashion marketing: an analysis of quantitative evidence from Irish consumers who are Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook users.

Your Name/Student Number	Course	Date
Alisa De Courcy/ x23347147	MSc. in International Business	15.08.2025

This section is a supplement to the main assignment, to be used if AI was used in any capacity in the creation of your assignment; if you have queries about how to do this, please contact your lecturer. For an example of how to fill these sections out, please click [here](#).

AI Acknowledgment

This section acknowledges the AI tools that were utilized in the process of completing this assignment.

Tool Name	Brief Description	Link to tool
ChatGPT	Used for making references, checking the alphabetical order of the bibliography, searching for newspapers, creating part of the research instrument	https://chatgpt.com/
DeepL	Used for both Russian to English and English to Russian translation	https://www.deepl.com/ru/translator

Description of AI Usage

This section provides a more detailed description of how the AI tools were used in the assignment. It includes information about the prompts given to the AI tool, the responses received, and how these responses were utilized or modified in the assignment. **One table should be used for each tool used.**

ChatGPT	
1. Used for referring 2. Used for checking the alphabetical order of the bibliography 3. Used for searching for newspapers 4. Used for creating part of the research instrument	
1. Make Harvard style references	Examples of answers (references received) can be found in the bibliography

2. Alphabetise the list of references	Examples of answers (references received) can be found in the bibliography
3. Find the latest released Financial Times articles on Telegram and Elon Musk	https://www.ft.com/stream/4c3d2045-1df2-4149-9a56-07c77f2c4003?utm_source=chatgpt.com
4. Help me divide my questions (research instrument) into subgroups	An example of a division can be found in the appendix

Evidence of AI Usage

This section includes evidence of significant prompts and responses used or generated through the AI tool. It should provide a clear understanding of the extent to which the AI tool was used in the assignment. Evidence may be attached via screenshots or text.

Additional Evidence:

[Place evidence here]

Additional Evidence:

[Place evidence here]

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Declaration.....	3
AI Acknowledgement Supplement	4
Chapter I: Introduction.....	9
1.1 Background	9
1.1.1 The digital era and the influence of social media.....	9
1.1.2 Social media and marketing in the fashion industry	9
1.1.3 Features of social media in the Irish context.....	9
1.1.4 The purpose of the research and the main research question	10
1.2 Research objectives.....	10
1.3 Research Significance	11
1.4 Working definitions.....	11
1.5 Thesis outline	11
1.5.1 Literature review	12
1.5.2 Research questions	12
1.5.3 Research methodology	12
1.5.4 Findings and Analysis	12
1.5.5 Discussion	13
1.5.6 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	13
1.6 Conclusion.....	13
Chapter II: Literature Review	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Social media and fashion marketing	14
2.3 Consumer behaviour, consumer psychology, and social media marketing.....	16
2.4 Influencer marketing and its impact.....	17
2.5 The emergence of AI influencers.	18
2.6 The role metrics and content in social media	19
2.7 Conclusion.....	21
Chapter III: Research Questions	22
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Research questions and sub-questions	22
3.3 Research objectives and hypotheses.....	22
3.4 Conclusion.....	25
Chapter IV: Research Methodology	26
4.1 Introduction	26
4.2 Philosophical approach and research methodology	26

4.3	Research instrument and structure	27
4.4	Achievement of research objectives.....	28
4.5	Sample and target audience.....	29
4.6	Data collection process.....	30
4.7	Data analysis and visualisation	31
4.8	Ethics.....	32
4.9	Limitations	33
4.10	Conclusion	34
Chapter V: Findings and Analysis		35
Introduction		35
Section 1: Demographics.....		35
Section 2: Social Media Usage and Behaviour.....		36
Section 3: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers.....		42
Section 4: Sustainability and Data Privacy.....		43
Conclusion.....		45
Chapter VI: Discussion		46
6.1	Introduction	46
6.2	Social media used in marketing and prospects for their development	46
6.2.1	Leading social platforms for fashion marketing in Ireland	46
6.2.2	Telegram: Rising user participation	46
6.2.3	Digital partnership and ideological stability of Telegram.....	47
6.2.4	Perspectives and new platforms	48
6.3	Artificial intelligence in fashion marketing.....	48
6.3.1	AI adoption and attitudes	48
6.3.2	AI applications in fashion: from virtual models to online fittings	49
6.3.3	The operational benefits of AI in marketing	49
6.3.4	Smarter decisions for premium brands with AI	49
6.4	Influencers as drivers of digital trends in fashion	50
6.4.1	The growing power of influencers in the fashion industry.....	50
6.4.2	Visual media and its role in accelerating fashion cycles.....	50
6.4.3	Case study: Labubu and the viral power of influencer marketing.....	50
6.4.4	The role of negative engagement in influencer marketing	51
6.4.5	The paradox of self-expression	51
6.5	Types of content and their influence on buying behaviour: UGC and brand content	52
6.5.1	The growing influence of content types in digital marketing.....	52
6.5.2	User - generated content as a trust-building and cost - effective strategy	52
6.5.3	Moving towards authenticity: changing consumer preferences in digital marketing.....	52
6.6	Conclusion.....	53

Chapter VII: Conclusions and recommendations	54
7.1 Key findings.....	54
7.2 Practical recommendations	55
7.3 Limitations of the study.....	56
References.....	57
Appendix.....	64

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The digital era and the influence of social media

We are currently living in a digital era, in which the development of social media has transformed many areas of everyday life. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest have changed the way people communicate and shape consumer preferences. These changes are strongly evident in the marketing industry because audience engagement and trust are critical aspects in this sphere. The previously named platforms touch various aspects of life and have a great influence on buying behaviour (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015). Depending on consumer behaviour, conclusions must be drawn about how marketing should be conducted.

1.1.2 Social media and marketing in the fashion industry

Visual content and trends are an essential part of the fashion industry. Social networks are a tool for creating new trends and a help to monitor consumer taste now. Metrics that reflect the intensity of discussion about certain trends on social media can provide information about consumer preferences (Na & Kang, 2018). That means that social media is no longer just a communication channel but is now a real analytical data source for companies. Earlier, the promotional function was played by television, radio and word of mouth, which was then taken over by social networks. Today, one of the main challenges is the implementation of artificial intelligence in practically every sphere of social life. The emergence of AI-influencers and fully generated content calls into question the existence of traditional marketing on social networks (Jayasingh et al., 2025). Therefore, there is a need to analyse these transformations and develop response strategies.

1.1.3 Features of social media in the Irish context

Social media is widely used around the world. In Ireland, for example, the number of people using social media will continue to grow from 2024 to 2029, according to Statista's database. In 2029, the number of users will be 5.24 million, which will be the peak (Statista, 2020). Despite the trend of social media becoming a promotional tool, the phenomenon is still neglected in the Irish fashion market, and its impact is very limited. Due to the lack of research in this area, fashion brands are unable to optimise their social media marketing strategies. Consequently, Ireland can represent an interesting and unique case study that not only reveals the features of

digitised consumer behaviour but also offers suggestions for the development of fashion marketing in a fast-changing online world.

1.1.4 The purpose of the research and the main research question

The purpose of this research is to investigate the influence of social media on consumer behaviour, focusing on the Irish market as a case study and emphasising platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, as well as the new role of artificial intelligence for influencers, to further develop digital marketing strategies.

The main question of this study is: **What is the influence of social media on fashion marketing?** To achieve the aim of the study, the existing theoretical approaches to the impact of social media on consumer buying decisions are explored, the contemporary concepts of fashion marketing in the digital dimension are examined, and the level of social media significance and penetration in Ireland is assessed. In addition, Irish fashion consumers are analysed, along with the type of content (blogs, reels, influencers, advertisements) affecting the purchasing decision. Based on the findings, recommendations for effective social media marketing strategies for brands in the Irish market are suggested.

1.2 Research objectives

The key objective of this research is to investigate the effect of social media on fashion marketing in Ireland. With a particular focus on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. The research is also necessary to:

RO1: Estimate the efficiency of strategies that are already being used on social media to attract Irish shoppers.

RO2: Explore the role of social media platforms in forming fashion marketing strategies in the Irish market.

RO3: Investigate the impact of influencer marketing on Irish consumers' brand awareness, trust, and purchase intentions in the fashion industry.

RO4: Explore the emergence and effectiveness of AI influencers in fashion marketing by looking at consumer awareness and acceptance of AI-generated content in Ireland.

RO5: Examine the effects of consumer psychology factors which include sustainability, data privacy, and economic instability on the online fashion purchasing behaviour of Irish consumers.

1.3 Research Significance

This study aims to fill gaps in scientific research by analysing the use of social media and the implementation of AI in marketing in Ireland. The results of the study can serve as a basis for improving marketing strategies and attracting Irish consumers who are cautious about AI and careful about the use of their personal data. This thesis attempts to reveal the attitude of Irish people towards a recent but underexplored marketing instrument: AI influencers.

1.4 Working definitions

A few terms that will be used actively in this research include:

AI influencers are digital personalities generated by artificial intelligence software that can engage with users through social networks (Jayasingh et al., 2025).

Consumer behaviour is the decision-making process by which people decide to consume their existing resources on products, which involves acknowledgement of needs, information retrieval, assessment of options, and the resulting buying choice (Fuciu & Şerban, 2024).

(An) Influencer is someone who regularly produces content for a particular community, establishes relationships with that audience, and becomes an authority on social media, affecting their purchasing behaviour towards sponsored goods (Munaro et al., 2025).

Marketing is a set of actions and procedures directed at producing and bringing value to consumers and society at large through exchange. (American Marketing Association, 2013).

Social media is a type of digital interaction that includes platforms such as social networks and blogs that allow users to form virtual communities to exchange ideas, information, direct messages and a variety of other multimedia content, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2025).

Social media marketing is a form of marketing which purpose-driven and individualised and allows marketing specialists to generate and spread content for a brand based on personalised customer choices and audience interaction (Nurlatifah et al., 2025).

UGC or user-generated content is any originally created and posted by the users or customers of some brand themselves (Saxena et al., 2023).

1.5 Thesis outline

1.5.1 Literature review

This chapter of the thesis provides an overview of existing theoretical approaches and research relating to social media marketing, purchasing behaviour, and AI technologies. A particular emphasis is focused on Irish consumers. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the current theory material, which subsequently forms the basis for this study. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section includes the role of social media in fashion marketing. The second section looks at the behavioural psychology of buyers and aspects influencing the purchase decision. The third section is devoted to the development of influencer marketing, describing the role of bloggers in brand recognition and consumer trust. The fourth section examines the emergence of influencers based on artificial intelligence. Both advantages and disadvantages of this marketing tool are analysed. The fifth section touches upon the value of social media metrics and types of content in assessing marketing effectiveness. All these sections create a more holistic picture of the scientific doctrine and help to identify research gaps, forming the core for the analysis in the Irish context of the impact of social media on fashion marketing.

1.5.2 Research questions

This chapter sets out the key research question and the clarifying sub-questions that shape the focus of this research. Technologies are evolving rapidly, and it is impossible to imagine life without social media. It is imperative to examine how social media influences marketing, specifically in the Irish market. For a more in-depth analysis, the main question has been divided into sub-questions that allow for the exploration of different aspects of the subject. Each of the questions has a specific research objective and hypothesis. The methods for achieving each objective are also presented.

1.5.3 Research methodology

This chapter provides the research methodology that is intended to explore the questions and objectives presented in the Research Questions chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to justify the selected methods. The data collection process, the characteristics of the respondents, and the instrument used for analysis are also described. Ethical considerations are an essential aspect of this section. All of these serve as confirmation that the research is conducted transparently and becomes the basis for analysis and discussion of the findings.

1.5.4 Findings and Analysis

The chapter reveals and analyses the results of empirical quantitative research aimed at investigating the impact of social media on consumer behaviour in the fashion industry in Ireland.

It examines respondents' demographic characteristics, platform preferences, the influence of content on purchasing decisions, the level of trust in different content formats, and opinions on modern trends such as virtual influencers and sustainability. The insights provide conclusions for planning marketing strategies for different target groups in the Irish market.

1.5.5 Discussion

This chapter discusses such themes as social media use in marketing and prospects for their development, AI in fashion marketing, influencers as drivers of digital trends in fashion, and types of content and their influence on purchasing behaviour. These topics have been selected from a review of the current research literature, analysis of the findings of the present study and the objectives of the thesis.

1.5.6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the key findings on which platforms and types of content are favoured by users, how users perceive innovations such as AI and virtual influencers, and which factors are most important for effective engagement with target audiences. The chapter provides practical recommendations for brands based on the findings and points out the limitations of the research, emphasising its contribution to both academic and applied fields.

1.6 Conclusion

In summary, the previously noted influence of social media in modern marketing, both worldwide and in Ireland, leads to the necessity of analysing existing theoretical approaches in this area. This is to systematise knowledge related to marketing and social media and to identify research gaps. This will form the basis for the formulation of the research questions.

2.1 Introduction

Modern technologies and the digital revolution created a dramatic change in the way brands and consumers interact with each other. Social media is now part of marketing campaigns. It helps shape demand and establishes brand perception. A growing number of marketing research studies focus on the role of social media in the promotion of fashion products, the influence of consumer psychology, and the introduction of new technologies such as artificial intelligence. This chapter is a review of current research papers and studies. Specifically, it examines the importance of social media for brand promotion, the peculiarities of consumer behaviour in a digital environment, the phenomenon of influencers and the emergence of virtual (AI) opinion leaders, and the role of content and digital metrics in assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Particular attention is paid to the Irish context, which helps to identify the local peculiarities of perception and use of digital tools in fashion marketing.

2.2 Social media and fashion marketing

The power of social media has expanded dramatically over several decades. Social media has changed the consumer decision-making process. By visiting platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, people look for insights about the items they have an interest in and share their shopping experience with others (Workman et al., 2022). This shows that social media is becoming an important tool for user interaction and content sharing. Social media is essential in fashion marketing, as the content created and posted there, including user reviews, helps to build and strengthen the brand.

Instagram, as one of the most popular platforms, actively encourages audience engagement with brands. This is possible due to the visual storytelling centred aesthetic that resonates with many brands. Research shows that marketing activities on Instagram have a positive impact on customers' purchase intentions (Bonilla-Quijada et al., 2023). Additionally, according to Statista's database, the forecast for 2024-2028 suggests Instagram's user base will grow by almost 26 per cent. By 2028, the number of users will reach 1.8 billion – this will be the peak use of the platform. It follows that a huge number of potential consumers of goods can be found in this social network alone. The ability to learn customer preferences is directly related to the number and activity of social media users. The larger and more active the audience, the higher the chances of success of

marketing strategies. Currently, Instagram is the main platform for fashion marketing due to its wide reach and visual focus.

Facebook, on the other hand, remains a more traditional network, although it is still an important platform for marketing campaigns, primarily for community building and communication between users. This emphasises the need for active audience engagement on both Instagram and Facebook in Ireland. Going back to the Statista database, it is worth noting that Facebook in Ireland is the most popular network by frequency of use (2023). This raises an important question: why is Facebook more popular than Instagram in Ireland? Is this information relevant to users of all ages? Perhaps the marketing strategies that overseas brands apply to Instagram should be adapted to Facebook. Or should specific methods be developed to attract more Irish users specifically to Instagram? This research seeks to find answers to these questions.

In addition to the platforms mentioned above, an equally valuable place for modern marketing has become YouTube. It helps brands to establish a close emotional connection with consumers, subsequently strengthening customer interest. According to a study conducted by Martias and Nastiar (2025), it is observed that content that includes reviews, backstages, tutorials, and personal experiences is effective in establishing trust and loyalty of the audience to the brand. Besides, it is mentioned that the perception of a brand as intimate and authentic depends directly on the degree of sincerity of content delivery. YouTube Shorts - quick videos like Instagram Reels and Facebook videos - have become the most popular. Most often the subject of these videos in the fashion industry is fashion tips, variants of looks ('look of the day') with mentioning the brands used, and makeovers. This has transformed YouTube from a video hosting platform into a full-fledged brand building tool.

Additionally, to the more established marketing tools like social media, new modern digital technologies such as artificial intelligence are emerging. Artificial intelligence is being used to identify customer preferences and the level of engagement with content. Moreover, the use of artificial intelligence in marketing helps to save time and improve product personalisation operations for consumers (Beyari & Hashem, 2025). For example, AI makes social media recommendations work and allows us to explore user preferences in advance. As Beyari and Hashem (2025) pointed out in their article, many companies are actively implementing AI in their marketing strategies, which helps to reduce costs and increase marketing efficiency. Also, companies are exploring artificial intelligence products such as AI influencers and digital fashion. Digital fashion is also transforming the marketing process by making it more interactive and

customised (Biliakovich et al., 2024). In the Irish context, the questions arise as to whether it is relevant for companies to actively incorporate AI tools into their marketing strategies and how this implementation affects brand perception.

2.3 Consumer behaviour, consumer psychology, and social media marketing

Consumer psychology plays a significant role in marketing because it is the psychology that helps to explain how emotions, thinking and social processes influence buying behaviour (Simon, 2024). There are various psychological mechanisms that influence consumer activity. These include feedback from customers and the influence of celebrities and influencers.

Social media has greatly modified approaches to product promotion. For example, on Instagram, brands promote their products with the help of bloggers (influencers) with a wide audience, which allows them to reach out to potential customers and encourage them to make a purchase. With the growing number of users on social platforms, marketing specialists are actively looking for new ways to increase brand awareness (Karaman & Yıldız, 2022) and connect with the audience and get feedback through these channels.

In addition, social media facilitates consumers getting more information about products, including reviews from real customers, which makes them more knowledgeable in their choices. This, in turn, influences purchasing behaviour. Decisions are increasingly made not only based on personal preferences but also under the influence of persuasive information available online (Kim & Ko, 2012). The research, conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2024), found that 66 per cent of the Irish residents use social networks to meet emerging brands, and 68 per cent search for customer reviews of a brand before buying online. It implies that a large proportion of the population are actively using social media when making their buying choices. In addition, the customer's attitude to a brand depends on the level of a given company. It was discovered that the consumer's trust in the information source greatly affects the purchasing decision (Gerlich, 2023). Moreover, trustworthiness is also crucial for consumers since they want to perceive information as genuine and impartial (Chung & Cho, 2017).

In the academic environment, there is a growing number of scientific publications devoted to this topic. Particularly, studies related to online shopping, social media and digital marketing strategies are gaining popularity. This is most likely due to the major technological and social changes taking place because of the rapid development of digital platforms (Simon, 2024). These changes have affected both the ways in which brands and consumers interact and the purchase

decision-making process itself. Consumer psychology, in turn, has focused on studying the mechanisms underlying these decisions. Today, the scope of research is expanding to include topics such as digital consumption and sustainable development. This makes it particularly relevant for a deep understanding of consumer behaviour and the formation of effective marketing strategies. Irish consumers, for example, around 84%, are favouring sustainable shopping as they are concerned about climate change and are feeling the effects of climate disruption (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2024). There is also concern among consumers about the privacy of their data on the Internet.

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers (2024), 74% of Irish people are worried about how their information is being shared on social networks, and 83% of respondents believe that protecting their individual data forms their trust in a brand. It also found that 55% of customers find it inconvenient to shop via social media, and 33% of Irish shoppers refuse to share their details for a customised experience. The development of digital commerce has not encouraged Irish buyers to move from in-store shopping to online shopping. In the same survey, 43% of Irish people stated that they prefer to shop in physical shops. This figure is 1% higher than the global mean. Furthermore, a considerable factor affecting consumer behaviour in Ireland is growing inflation, which is reducing nonessential expenditures. Of those Irish consumers, 58% are ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ anxious regarding their finances, and 61% refrain from making unnecessary purchases. There are still unresolved aspects influencing consumer purchasing decisions related to customer trust, their attitudes towards personal data protection, and the role of sustainability.

2.4 Influencer marketing and its impact

Influencers on social media are becoming opinion leaders these days. They post content about their private life and experiences, thus reaching out to a larger audience. Moreover, as they grow their blog, they partner with brands and add sponsored posts to their daily posts (Jayasingh et al., 2025). By having a loyal audience and becoming more well-known, these people can affect people's views and buying decisions.

The modern marketing trend is the increasing value of influencer marketing. In this way, it can be levelled with social media advertising. Bloggers create recommendation posts where they promote products to users to encourage them to buy the product. For instance, 35% of the Irish population claim that an influencer had an impact on their shopping behaviour (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2024). Well-known bloggers can significantly increase brand awareness. Studies show that influencers build brand trust, especially when their content is aligned

with the values of the target audience (Qadeer et al., 2024). Consequently, more companies are beginning to partner with bloggers to promote their products and expand their audience reach. The size of the global influencer marketing market has more than tripled since 2020. It is expected to reach a record high of approximately USD 33 billion in 2025, equivalent to approximately EUR 30.5 billion (Ross, 2025). These figures confirm that social media influencer marketing has become a valuable tool in the fashion marketing.

Moreover, this trend is closely linked to the level of consumer trust. People are more likely to believe their favourite bloggers, whom they follow regularly, than traditional advertising. Such influencers are perceived as more intimate and sincere sources of information, which strengthens their effect on consumer behaviour. According to AnPost's research, 64 per cent of 16 to 24 year olds in Ireland in 2023 have made online purchases based on recommendations from influencers or celebrities, and 43 per cent of 25 to 34 age population in Ireland have also been exposed to influencers in their buying decisions (T.R.A., 2023). Studying this aspect within the Irish market will reveal how well this mechanism is already working in Ireland or how best to use it to maximise the benefits.

Influencers are now utilising AI tools to create videos, improve the quality of pictures, and even generate photos based on their appearance. Although this boosts the quantity of content and makes it better, it may also reduce the level of emotional connection and perceived honesty. The audience may view such content as less real or less emotionally meaningful, leading to a reduction in the trust on which the relationships between influencers and consumers are built. Feeling that AI-generated content is missing humanity can potentially lower the total value in the followers' eyes.

2.5 The emergence of AI influencers.

Every day artificial intelligence is evolving more and more. It is actively penetrating the market and will be used more intensively. A new form of interaction with consumers is the emergence of AI influencers - digital avatars that were created artificially but have realistic characteristics as humans, behave like real users, have their own social media accounts, post content, and collaborate with brands (Gerlich, 2023). These influencers are created with the help of AI, but it is the human who sets down the key characteristics in the programme that one expects to see in the end.

As Gerlich (2023) noted, AI influencers started to appear in the 1990s, although it seems to be a novelty to many people. A more modern variant of AI influencers is, for example, Lil Miquela, which was created in 2016. Today, her followers reach a total of 3 million. This is the most successful AI model, and it is she who inspired people to create new AI influencers. In addition, the photographer Cameron-James Wilson created ShuduGram in 2017. This model collaborates with such brands as Balmain, Fenty Beauty, and Samsung. The other first Japanese AI model, Imma, works with H&M and is active on social media. In other words, though AI influencers seem to be something new and unexplored, many brands are closely cooperating with them.

The increasing visibility of AI influencers can be explained by the fact that they are more predictable and manageable than real people (Gerlich, 2023). Since they are subject to algorithms, it is more favourable for companies to partner with them, as it gives them more control over the content. Furthermore, AI influencers are timeless, they do not get old, and they are strangers to human needs and weaknesses. They do not get involved in scandals, and they do not need to be paid for accommodation while creating content. In the long term, AI influencers become a profitable investment for firms (Thomas & Fowler, 2020). In addition, companies adopting AI influencers can increase content and adapt it easily to new markets.

However, the matter of trust towards AI influencers remains controversial. As mentioned earlier, in general, people tend to be cautious about the use of AI. Thus, if this content is perceived as ‘untrustworthy’, it can lead to an erosion of brand loyalty. According to a study conducted by Sands et al. (2022), people consider AI influencers to be less credible, but for some users it is still a mystery whether a real influencer or an AI is appearing in front of them. This also suggests finding out how aware people are about AI influencers and AI content.

The research revealed that there is a reduced level of awareness of AI in Ireland, compared to global figures. For example, 23% of Irish people, which is one quarter of the population, completely mistrust AI (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2024). This can spark a debate about the use of AI influencers by brands in the Irish market.

2.6 The role metrics and content in social media

In the modern world of social media, the success of marketing campaigns depends directly on the ability of brands to analyse and use metrics, or performance indicators. This data becomes a kind of compass that helps to navigate the vast digital space and choose the most effective ways

to interact with the audience. Metrics reflect user behaviour, reactions to content and preferences, and are not just numbers. Some of the major metrics include reach, engagement, CTR (click-through rate), conversion and subscriber growth rate. Each one of the metrics assists in understanding various aspects of audience engagement. For example, reach indicates how many unique users have seen a post, although this number by itself is not a guarantee of interest or purchase. It is engagement that distinguishes social media from traditional marketing channels: it reflects not just reach but active audience reaction and level of interest. At the same time, high engagement does not always correlate with direct sales. Therefore, metrics analysis should be comprehensive. Thus, metrics provide an understanding of how much a brand is ‘noticed’ and perceived by its target audience.

In the Annual Social Media Industry Benchmark Report 2024 from social media analytics company Rival IQ, it was noted that the fashion industry has seen an average engagement rate of 0.02%, which is significantly lower than the median for other industries (0.62%). Moreover, it is emphasised that fashion brands have noticed a decrease in engagement on all major platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, compared to 2023. This implies that the traditional approach of marketing strategies is no longer valid and requires a change, focusing on a personalised and technologically new approach to fashion marketing on social media.

Likewise, it is notable to pay attention to the role of content in today’s realities. Recent studies suggest that different types of content have different impacts on engagement and purchase intentions. For example, Yang et al. (2021) argue that the visual aesthetics of content (e.g., attractiveness of graphics or composition) have a direct impact on increasing the perception of content as beneficial and subsequently enhancing buying behaviour on social media. This is particularly relevant for Instagram, Facebook and YouTube – visual-orientated platforms. Moreover, short-form videos have a serious influence on engagement due to their rapid and emotionally intense format. Research by Manic (2024) underlines that short-form videos are perfectly matched to the fast content consumption and help to immediately capture attention and boost engagement. Furthermore, the role of user-generated content (UGC) in combination with firm-created content (FCC) is increasing. For instance, Niu (2025) points out that UGC is perceived by other users as more trustworthy. It can increase brand loyalty as well as strengthen purchase intentions. Brands which actively support user-generated content and engage in the generation of such content become closer to consumers. However, there is still insufficient data for the Irish market regarding the way UGC and FCC are viewed in society and the impact they

have on buying behaviour. Therefore, it is important for fashion brands operating in Ireland not only to monitor metrics but also to understand the types of content that can effectively attract and retain the attention of their target audience.

2.7 Conclusion

The literature review explored the role of social media in fashion marketing, the features of consumer behaviour in the digital environment, the impact of influencers, the rapid development of artificial intelligence, including the emergence of AI influencers, and the role of metrics and types of content. Particular attention was paid to the Irish context. During the analysis of existing studies, gaps were identified, which confirmed the need for further empirical research. To this end, the following chapter formulates research questions, objectives, and hypotheses that will shape the framework of the entire thesis.

3.1 Introduction

The analysis of existing literature carried out in the previous chapter helped to identify some research gaps, particularly in the Irish context. Such issues as consumer awareness of the introduction of artificial intelligence and AI influencers, the effect of different types of content on user perceptions, and the role of psychological factors have not been studied in the Ireland landscape, which makes this study relevant and beneficial to explore. Based on the gaps identified, which the study aims to fulfil, the main question, sub-questions, objectives, and hypotheses of the study were stated and are used as a guideline for the research.

3.2 Research questions and sub-questions

To start with, the chapter seeks to formulate the main research question, sub-questions, objectives, and hypotheses at the core of this study. First, the main research question is identified as follows: **What is the influence of social media on fashion marketing?**

Secondly, based on the review of the existing literature, the following research sub-questions can be specified:

- 1) What influence do social media have on fashion marketing in Ireland?
- 2) How much time do Irish users spend on social media on a daily basis?
- 3) What impact does the integration of artificial intelligence (including AI influencers) have on brand perception and consumer trust in the Irish fashion market?
- 4) How does influencer marketing affect brand perception, trust, and purchasing decisions among Irish consumers in the fashion industry?
- 5) How do consumer psychology factors such as concerns about sustainability, data privacy, and economic conditions affect Irish consumers' online purchasing behaviour?
- 6) What are Irish consumers' perceptions of AI, and how does this affect purchase decisions and brand trust?

Accordingly, to answer these sub-questions, a research instrument is created, which is a survey conducted among Irish respondents. This survey provides relevant and reliable quantitative data necessary for the further analysis.

3.3 Research objectives and hypotheses

The objectives of the study were mentioned earlier, but in this chapter of the dissertation, each of the objectives should be discussed in detail. To begin with, the primary objective of this study is to comprehensively explore the impact of social networks on fashion marketing in Ireland. In addition, the main objectives of the study were formulated.

Based on sub-question 1, which looks at how social media affects fashion marketing in Ireland, the research objective 1 and hypothesis 1 are defined.

RO1: *Estimate the efficiency of strategies that are already being used on social media to attract Irish shoppers.*

Nowadays, brands are utilising many different social media strategies. However, there is a question as to whether certain strategies are effective in the Irish market. The current research seeks to explore which tools are most likely to achieve the highest exposure within the Irish population. This will enable brands to select the best online marketing strategies and optimise sales. To achieve this, the questionnaire for this research asks about the type of content that has the strongest influence on a customer's purchasing decision. In addition, the content of Irish brands on social media should be analysed using engagement metrics that are publicly available. Furthermore, current literature and studies relevant to this issue need to be reviewed.

H1: Not every social media strategy is equally effective in the Irish market, and it is certain types of content and methods of engagement that can achieve the best reach and impact on consumers in Ireland.

Also, taking sub-questions 1 and 2 as a basis, which consider the impact of social media on fashion marketing in Ireland, and the time Irish users spend on social media, the objective and hypothesis 2 of the study emerge.

RO2: *Explore the role of social media platforms in forming fashion marketing strategies in the Irish market.*

Social networks are no longer only a channel for product promotion but also a means to create and maintain a brand image, as well as a way for the company to interact with its audience. This objective can be achieved by examining how brands adapt their content to various social media platforms. Also, existing case studies are helpful.

H2: Instagram and Facebook are the leading platforms shaping the marketing strategies of fashion brands in Ireland.

Moreover, sub-question 4, which examines how influencer marketing impacts Irish consumers' perceptions, trust, and purchasing decisions in fashion, contributes to the emergence of research objective 3 and hypothesis 3.

RO3: *Investigate the impact of influencer marketing on Irish consumers' brand awareness, trust, and purchase intentions in the fashion industry.*

Influencers have become an essential and very powerful channel to reach consumers. This research intends to reveal the extent to which influencers affect purchase decisions and the attitude of Irish people in relation to them. This is achieved by surveying Irish consumers to find out how effective it is as a marketing mechanism and to find out their perceptions of influencers. Besides this, available surveys and statistical data will be used in this research scope.

H3: The content promoted by influencers is presumably more recognisable and demanded among Irish consumers than products presented through sponsored advertising.

In addition, sub-question 3, which addresses the impact of artificial intelligence integration, on brand perception and consumer trust in the Irish fashion market, as well as sub-question 6, which examines Irish consumers' perceptions of AI, and how this affects purchase decisions and brand trust, directly influences research objective 4 and the corresponding hypothesis.

RO4: *Explore the emergence and effectiveness of AI influencers in fashion marketing by looking at consumer awareness and acceptance of AI-generated content in Ireland.*

The development of technology, specifically artificial intelligence, has led to the emergence of a new marketing tool – AI influencers. This research aims to find out the Irish people's awareness of virtual influencers and the use of AI in content generation by brands. This is crucial to understand the impact of these innovations on purchasing decisions. To fulfil this objective, a survey is being conducted which includes questions about AI and virtual influencers. Also, current research and case studies of companies using AI technologies need to be examined.

H4: Irish consumers have a low familiarity with AI influencers and are cautious about them, not accepting them as a marketing mechanism.

Furthermore, based on sub-question 5, concerning consumer psychology factors affecting Irish consumers' online shopping behaviour, research objective 5 and hypothesis 5 arise.

RO5: *Examine the effects of consumer psychology factors which include sustainability and data privacy on the online fashion purchasing behaviour of Irish consumers.*

People are becoming increasingly concerned about sustainability and data protection, which is a global trend, and Irish people are not an exception. The global economic tensions are also affecting people's purchasing ability. This research objective is realised by conducting a survey amongst the Irish population which consists of questions regarding their views on sustainability and the sharing of personal data. At the same time, it is necessary to examine existing literature and statistics as well as to analyse the current economic situation in Ireland.

H5: Irish customers have strong concerns about sustainability and the privacy of personal data, which consequently has an impact on online shopping.

3.4 Conclusion

To sum up, the objectives of the study are clear and achievable. It is possible to make digital marketing recommendations for brands operating in the Irish market by reaching them. It is required to use a questionnaire amongst Irish consumers which includes questions relevant to these objectives to fulfil most of the research objectives, as mentioned above. This is a research instrument which can be found below in the appendix. Each question correlates to a specific objective aimed at examining the relationship of social media to the marketing of the fashion industry in Ireland. It is essential to apply appropriate methods that can ensure the completeness and security of the data to obtain accurate and reliable conclusions. Therefore, the following chapter – research methodology – provides a detailed discussion of the approaches used to achieve the objectives of the study.

4.1 Introduction

Based on the research questions and objectives formulated in the previous chapter and the gaps identified in the literature review, this chapter formulates the methodology chosen for the research. The methodology seeks to ensure a complete and reliable analysis of the impact of social media on fashion marketing in Ireland. The main instrument was a survey. It was conducted among Irish consumers, and covered various sections (demographics, social media usage, perceptions of artificial intelligence and virtual influencers, and psychological factors that affect purchasing behaviour). The original research proposal contained a tentative methodology, which later evolved. As a result, research methodology became more detailed and better aligned with the evidence and context, enhancing the overall depth and clarity of the findings.

4.2 Philosophical approach and research methodology

This research is organised according to the positivist approach, which is based on the belief that reality is objective and can be measured through empirical observation and logical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted that positivism involves the reduction of ideas to variables consisting of hypotheses and research questions which need to be tested. It is assumed that the researcher begins the study with a theoretical assumption, then collects data which either supports or refutes the theory. Throughout the study, additional modifications may be made, and new tests may be conducted. As a result, the knowledge gained becomes positive: useful, accurate, reliable and valid. However, as Phillips and Burbules (2000) argued, ‘Knowledge is conjectural – absolute truth can never be found.’ Therefore, the results of a research study may contain inaccuracies. It is necessary to be critical of these results. In other words, a hypothesis cannot be proved conclusively – it can be concluded that the hypothesis has not been disproved at this point, and this assumption requires further study, as it may be disproved one day. All knowledge is temporary and can be changed as new evidence emerges.

Since the positivist approach involves collecting empirical data and analysing it statistically, the quantitative method is the most appropriate for this purpose. Quantitative methods such as experiments and surveys allow complex social phenomena to be represented in numerical terms and to identify patterns, which corresponds to the basic principles of positivism – objectivity, verifiability, and replicability of results (Saunders et al., 2019).

In addition, quantitative methods allow measurements and relationships between variables. It is particularly useful in marketing research where metrics, numbers and exact figures play a significant role. The reasoning for favouring a quantitative method is that numerical data, as Figl and Remus (2023) and Cialdini (2021) discovered, is often perceived as more objective and more trusted by the audience. The researchers highlighted that accurate data increase the impression of credibility and authority of information. Therefore, numerical evidence is a convenient and understandable instrument for both interpretation and visualisation of results. In this way, the use of a quantitative method will ensure robust testing of hypotheses and enable valid conclusions to be drawn, considering the need to be critical of the data.

Besides, the quantitative method chosen for this study is justified by the fact that previous studies reviewed in the literature, similar to this study, also chose the quantitative method. For example, Karaman and Yıldız (2022) in their study used quantitative methods for examining the effect of social media on consumer behaviour. Similarly, Bonilla-Quijada et al. (2023) in their article used quantitative analysis to explore consumer engagement on Instagram. In addition, the quantitative method is suitable for this study because the research sub-questions can be assessed in quantitative terms. This requires the collection and analysis of statistical data. At the same time, the qualitative method was excluded because the main goal is to obtain measurable and comparable data that allow identification of patterns and statistical relationships. However, it should be noted that a qualitative approach could have provided deeper insights, but due to time limitations and the specific nature of the study, it was not considered appropriate.

The research uses a survey as the primary instrument for obtaining data, which is appropriate to the deductive research approach of moving from theory to evidence. The questionnaire helps to test hypotheses by gathering quantitative data. Surveys correlate with positivist philosophy, capturing accurate data and allowing later statistical analysis. Therefore, increasing the reliability of the results. In addition, a survey is an irreplaceable tool in marketing research. They allow collecting data quickly from many people, revealing opinions and behaviours. In other words, the survey strategy is not only a logically valid method for a deductive approach but also corresponds to the objectives of the research.

4.3 Research instrument and structure

The principal data collection tool in this research is the Google Forms survey. This platform was chosen because, for most of the interviewees and researchers, it is understandable. Moreover, the survey can be conducted anonymously, as there is a feature to disable the collection of

recipients. Additionally, the convenience of this platform is that there is an automatic export of the survey data into Excel spreadsheets, which makes it convenient to analyse in the future. And finally, the survey can be easily distributed to respondents. The survey itself was divided into 5 sections (see Appendix 1):

Section 1: Consent to participate

Section 2: Demographics

Section 3: Social media usage and behaviour

Section 4: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers

Section 5: Sustainability and data privacy

The survey has 14 closed-ended questions, which allows the survey to be completed in 5-7 minutes – minimising the chance of losing concentration, becoming fatigued and leaving the survey prematurely (see Appendix 1). The questionnaire is presented as a set of various types of questions which provide quantitative data on respondents' opinions. For example, there are dichotomous two-choice questions. The question about residence in Ireland is exactly the kind of question that allows to determine fast whether the interviewee is a resident of Ireland or not. Additionally, there are multiple-choice questions. Participants are required to select only one of the most relevant options. There are also multi-choice questions which are designed to identify a range of preferences. For instance, the question on the usage of specific social media platforms. In some questions, respondents have the possibility to write their option in the 'other' box, helping to reveal new alternatives. Lastly, the survey has questions with graded responses (like a Likert scale). Such as to measure the importance of certain aspects while shopping online. The combination of different kinds of questions ensures comprehensive data collection, making it easier to analyse and providing the most accurate knowledge of the topic of the study.

4.4 Achievement of research objectives

As stated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), each of the research objectives or hypotheses should be reflected in the research instrument. Therefore, the survey was designed in such a way that it covered all the previously identified objectives. It consisted of four thematic blocks.

'RO1: Estimate the efficiency of strategies that are already being used on social media to attract Irish shoppers' and *'RO2: Explore the role of social media platforms in forming fashion marketing strategies in the Irish market'* objectives were implemented in *'section 3: Social media*

usage and behaviour'. This section included questions about content types, preferred platforms, and social media behaviours. Data were analysed using descriptive and comparative statistics and frequency analysis.

'RO3: Investigate the impact of influencer marketing on Irish consumers' brand awareness, trust, and purchase intentions in the fashion industry' and *'RO4: Explore the emergence and effectiveness of AI influencers in fashion marketing by looking at consumer awareness and acceptance on AI-generated content in Ireland'* were presented in *'section 4: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers'*. Descriptive analysis, graphs, and comparative analysis were used to assess the impact of these factors on brand trust and purchase intentions.

'RO5: Examine the effects of consumer psychology factors which include sustainability, data privacy, and economic instability on the online fashion purchasing behaviour of Irish consumers' is disclosed in *'section 5: Sustainability and data privacy'*. It analysed attitudes regarding sustainability and data protection. The methods of descriptive statistics and comparisons by demographic groups were used.

4.5 Sample and target audience

The target audience of the study consisted of Irish residents aged 18 to 56. This age range was chosen for several reasons. First, people between 18 and 56 are the most active users of social media. In addition, minors (under 18) were not included in the sample for ethical reasons, as well as due to limited legal capacity – parents are legally responsible for their decisions. The age range classifies interviewees according to generational theories (Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X), resulting in a more profound analysis of the behavioural characteristics of different age groups. Additionally, respondents were categorised by gender (male and female) and residency (living in Ireland). It was initially planned to collect data from more than 100 people. Before the main launch, a pilot test was conducted on 10 participants to ensure that the questions were clear, the structure was logical, and the length of the survey was appropriate.

The study used a non – probability sampling strategy which combines both purposive sampling and 'snowball sampling' methods. The first stage involved selecting participants according to basic criteria: Irish residents aged between 18 and 56 years.

The research involved:

- Master's students at National College of Ireland (NCI) and other universities in Ireland, including Griffith College and Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI)

- Employees of Tokyo Electron (TEL) Ireland
- Members of the ‘Women’s Territory of Ireland’ Facebook community
- Wicklow county residents engaged through the Wicklow Forum (Facebook)
- The researcher’s personal followers on social media (Instagram and LinkedIn)
- Family members of the researcher living in Ireland

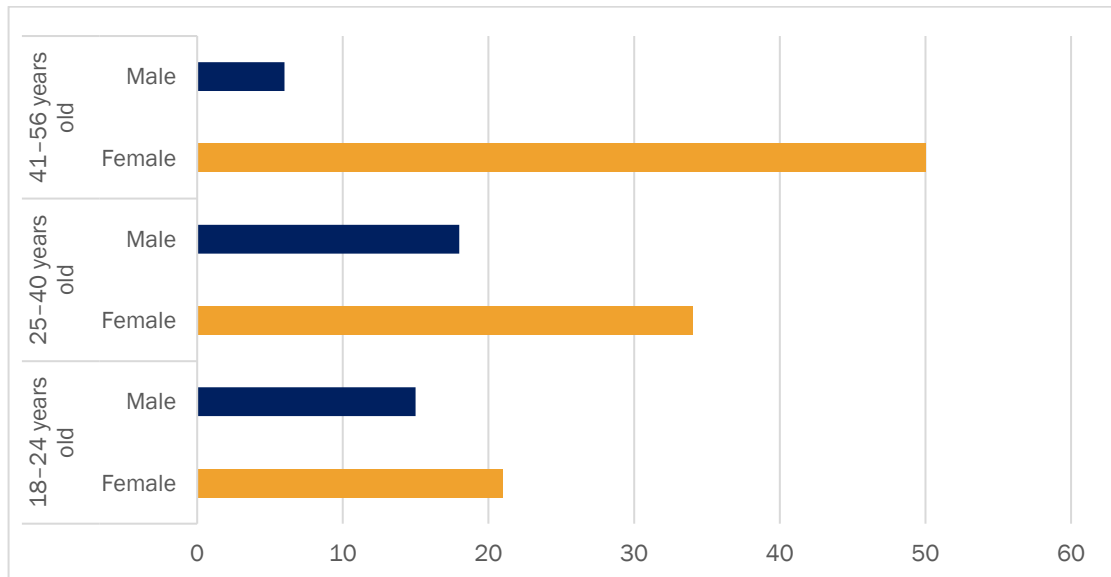


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age group and gender, *All respondents* (Author’s own data, 2025).

Furthermore, the process was extended through recommendations - each respondent could invite acquaintances who fulfil the sampling criteria. This approach makes it possible to reach the necessary groups that are difficult to access through traditional sampling channels (Hiram Ting et al., 2025).

4.6 Data collection process

The pilot launch took place between 3 and 16 June 2025 and included 10 respondents. The purpose of this phase was to identify possible weaknesses in the question wording and logic, as well as to evaluate the survey design generally. During the pilot testing process, feedback was received, and remarks were made on some aspects, namely:

- A. In the pilot questionnaire, the question ‘Do you currently live in Ireland?’ had three options: ‘yes’, ‘temporarily’, ‘no’. Some participants in the pilot run noticed that the ‘temporarily’ option should be removed as this wording is very vague. For example, international students studying in Ireland at the time could not determine whether they would stay or return home. Therefore, it was decided to exclude option ‘temporarily’ and retain only ‘yes’ and ‘no’.

- B. It was also pointed out that in the Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers section there was no definition of AI Influencers, which could cause confusion amongst interviewees. Therefore, in the final version of the survey, a definition explaining what exactly AI Influencers are, in combination with images of AI Influencers, was added.
- C. As a final touch, after the pilot run, a 'Consent to participate' section was added in the beginning. It explained that before starting the survey, participants were informed that they were doing the survey on a volunteer basis. They were also notified that all responses were anonymous. Besides, they were authorised to stop and not participate in the survey at any time. This was to reassure all participants that their data would be secured, and their privacy protected.

The main stage of data collection took place from 20 to 30 June 2025. During this period, 144 valid responses were collected and processed. At the early stage, there were difficulties in attracting many participants. For example, although almost all master's students (about 900 people) were sent a request to participate in the survey via university mail, only about 25 people filled out the questionnaire. Therefore, it was decided to expand the outreach and use larger online communities, such as Facebook forums, which proved to be more effective in attracting a diverse audience.

4.7 Data analysis and visualisation

Initially, it was planned to conduct data analysis using the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics. The choice of this tool was because the programme is widely used for academic purposes and has been studied as part of a university module. Moreover, SPSS has varied functions for processing large data sets, including analysis by subgroups (for example, by gender, age and other demographic characteristics). However, at the stage of starting the analysis, a technical difficulty arose: the SPSS licence had expired. Therefore, it was decided to find alternative tools. Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets were chosen. Google Forms, which was used to collect the questionnaires, was particularly useful for automatic data export. Participant responses were automatically uploaded into an Excel spreadsheet, optimised for further formatting. Google Sheets functions were used to structure the combined responses from multiple-choice questions.

The final stage was conducted in Microsoft Excel. Excel turned out to be an effective tool for visualisation purposes and basic quantitative processing. Graphs were manually generated to show the distribution of responses overall and by core demographic subgroups: by gender (male/female) and by age groups categorised according to generational theory: 18-24 years old

(Generation Z), 25-40 years old (Millennials), and 41-56 years old (Generation X). This approach, although less automated, ensured sufficient accuracy of interpretation and allowed for flexible adaptation to the specifics of the data collected. All graphs were done manually, providing a high level of focus on the evaluation and detail of the results. Therefore, despite having to depart from the originally chosen method of data analysis and visualisation, reliable and valid results were achieved.

For better perception of data, all graphs were created using different colours, which allows for clear differentiation between categories of survey participants, such as all respondents, male respondents, female respondents, and age groups according to the generational theory (18–24, 25–40, 41–56 years old). The graphs consist of linear scales, which provide a clearer distribution of responses to each question in the survey. This approach increases the accuracy of interpretation and reduces the risk of misunderstanding. It was decided to include most of the graphs in the appendix to make the analysis clear and avoid overloading the text. The main text contains only graphs demonstrating specific features or general data obtained. The Appendix section at the end of this research contains all the graphs mentioned in Chapter V: Findings and Analysis

4.8 Ethics

Compliance with the principles of personal data protection in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union (EU) was an integral part of this study. It is critical to ensure the security of data collection and processing of survey respondents. According to Article 4, paragraph 1, personal data is information that can be used to identify an individual (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016). The survey did not collect personal data, as it was conducted anonymously. Therefore, the risks related to the protection of personal data were minimised.

Furthermore, Article 5, paragraph 1(f) specifies that data must be processed and provided with proper protection such that, even in the event of loss or damage, they are protected against illegal processing (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016). Likewise, Article 32 defines technical and organisational measures to ensure data security (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016). In the current study, the obtained data is stored on a password-protected medium to guarantee the requirements mentioned earlier. Also, to comply with Article 5 paragraph 1(c), and the previously mentioned Article 32, only the researcher has access to the data to prevent any unauthorised use of the data (Regulation (EU) 2016/679, 2016). Finally, the collected data were used only for the purposes of research and analysis within the thesis and were not passed on to third parties, as required by

Article 5 paragraph 1(b). Article 89 defines the requirements for data processing in scientific research. Therefore, this study fulfilled the current legislation on the protection of personal data and the ethical standards for academic studies.

As outlined by Bryman and Bell (2015) in their book *Business Research Methods*, participation in research should be on a volunteer basis, and every respondent should be informed in advance about the nature of the research and about the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time without negative consequences for them. Information emphasising these principles was included in the survey for the current study. Therefore, each interviewee was able to review these provisions before taking the survey and decide whether to take the survey. Research participants were informed about the purpose of the survey as well as that their data would remain confidential. To continue with the survey, questioners had to confirm their informed consent by filling in a mandatory field. This ensured that the principles of voluntariness and awareness were realised. The principle of anonymity was maintained. Each participant was automatically assigned a unique, depersonalised number. In addition, all data obtained is stored in encrypted form with restricted access. Only the researcher has access to the results, and they were used exclusively for the purposes of analysis within this thesis.

Respondents were seen not simply as a source of data but as contributors to the research process, whose opinions deserved to be recognised and respected. Besides, the study strictly followed the principle of scientific integrity. Data were not falsified or changed to fit desired conclusions. As Bryman and Bell (2015) declare, even if the results are not 'extraordinary', the researcher is obliged to be unbiased and honest. The use of AI tools (including linguistic checking, wording correction, and assistance in coding open-ended questions) was of a supportive nature. None of the analysis steps were fully delegated to AI – all interpretations and conclusions were made by the researcher personally. As a result, modern technologies served as technical tools in the research process.

In this way, the present study is based on established ethical principles accepted in the scientific community and in society in general and involves the protection of the rights and freedoms of research participants.

4.9 Limitations

Like any empirical social research, this study has certain limitations, which need to be considered when interpreting the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Firstly, the research reflects the present state of public opinion at a particular time. It was conducted within a limited time span,

which makes it a ‘snapshot of the moment’. Once the survey is repeated, for example, six months later, the data may differ due to changes in external circumstances – social, economic or media context. Secondly, another limitation was that it was not possible to fully control that the survey was exclusive to Irish residents. However, based on the analysis of the data, it appears that 96.5% of respondents answered that they reside in Ireland, which is the vast majority of the sample (see Figure 2). Given the nature and purpose of this research, this is an acceptable level of bias and does not significantly affect the validity of the findings. Thus, though some limitations exist, the results of the study retain scientific value and allow to draw valid conclusions within the scope of the set objectives.

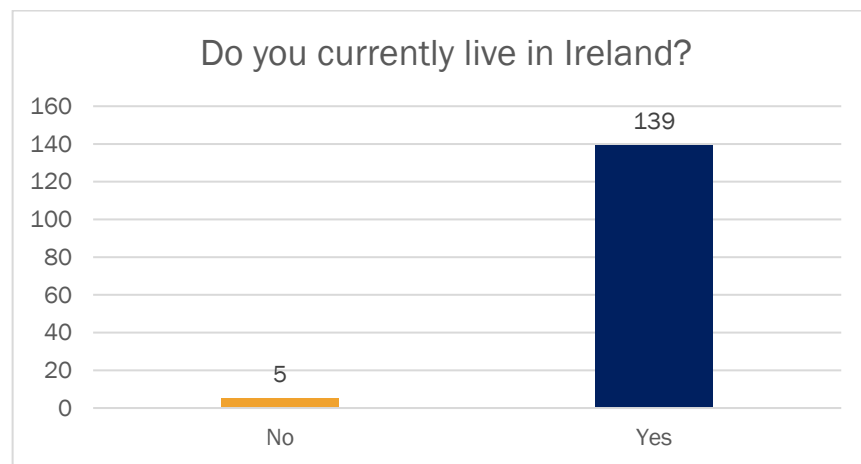


Figure 2: Residence in Ireland, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter explained the methodology of the research intended to investigate the effect of social networks on fashion marketing in Ireland. The philosophical approach and quantitative method, research instrument, achieving the objectives of the research, sampling and target audience, data collection and analysis process, ethical matters, and limitations were described. As a result, the chosen research methods and tools provided the comprehensive and ethical data collection required to achieve the outlined objectives. The use of a variety of analytical approaches provided a trustworthy foundation for further analyses. The next chapter is intended to present the results of the study and their interpretation based on the described methodological principles.

Chapter V: Findings and Analysis

Introduction

In the previous chapter, Methodology, the research design and data collection procedure were described in detail. This chapter focuses on the presentation and interpretation of the findings. Data was collected from the survey to capture the attitudes, behaviours and preferences of Irish consumers in the context of fashion marketing on social media. The analysis is divided into main areas: demographics, social media usage and behaviour, attitudes towards artificial intelligence, and sustainability and data privacy. The presented results allow the hypotheses to be tested and provide a foundation for further discussion in the following chapter.

Section 1: Demographics

The study involved 144 respondents, of whom 96.5% were resident in Ireland. This was in line with the aim of the study, focusing on the Irish market. Relevant data for the analysis of consumer behaviour in Ireland were obtained. The age distribution based on the theory of generations was as follows: 25% of respondents belong to the 18-24 age group (Generation Z), 36.1% to the 25-40 age group (Millennials), and 38.9% to the 41-56 age group (Generation X) (see Figure 3). This relatively balanced distribution makes it possible to assess opinions of digital marketing and social media across generations equally.

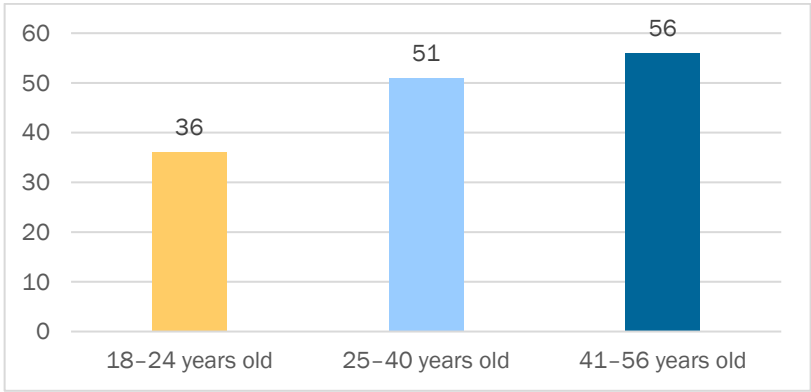


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by generational cohort (Generation Z, Millennials, Generation X). (Author’s own data, 2025).

In terms of gender, 72.9% of respondents were women and 27.1% were men (see Figure 4). This ratio may be because women traditionally show more interest in fashion and are more actively involved in communications about it both in life and on social networks.

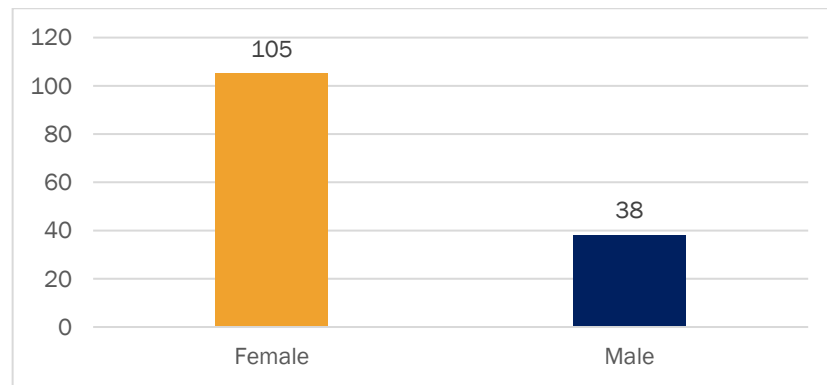


Figure 4: Gender distribution, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

For example, Yang et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of visual content in digital marketing. Considering that the majority of respondents were women, it can be assumed that visual platforms such as Instagram are particularly effective in reaching female audiences.

These demographic data allow for considering the features of the dominant groups who participated in the survey, which is crucial in interpreting the following results and formulating practical recommendations.

Section 2: Social Media Usage and Behaviour

Among Irish users (see Figure 5a), it was discovered that the vast majority use Instagram, with 113 respondents (78.5%). The second position is taken by YouTube – 97 respondents (67.4%). Facebook closes the top three with 85 respondents (59%). This data was a discovery, as while reviewing literature and statistics – it was noted that the most popular social network was Facebook (Statista, 2023). In July 2025 – it did not even rank second. As a result, there is a noticeable shift in user preferences. It was also a partial confirmation of H2's hypothesis that Instagram and Facebook are the most popular platforms, though YouTube was also found to be a valuable platform for the Irish. Instagram, which has become the most popular platform among respondents, is a visually orientated network, which is of particular importance in the context of the fashion industry. Its leadership may be related to the fact that visual content is a key instrument in the recognition of fashion, style and brands. The earlier mentioned study by Yang et al. (2021) refers to the impact of appealing content on purchase intention. Thus, Instagram being a platform focused on eye-catching content, which is especially important for promoting fashion products, as well as being the choice of most Irish people, leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to focus on this platform while developing digital fashion marketing strategies.

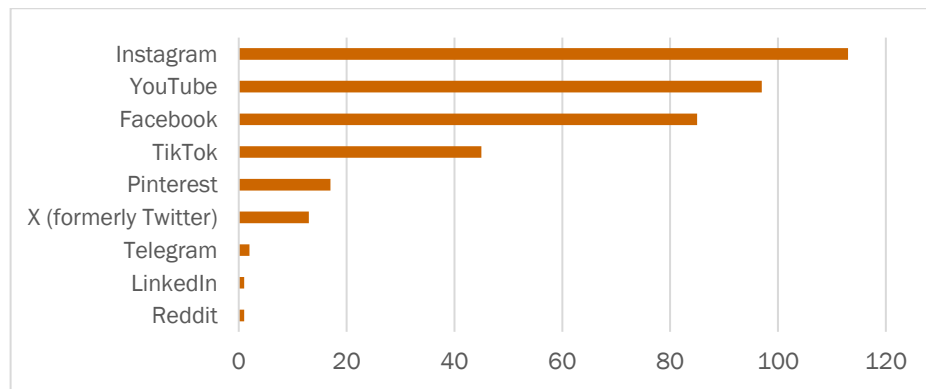


Figure 5a: Social media platforms used regularly, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

A particular interest is found within the gender and age analysis of preferences. Among men, YouTube was the most popular platform, which may be due to the dominant role of video content, video reviews and analytics (see Figure 5b).

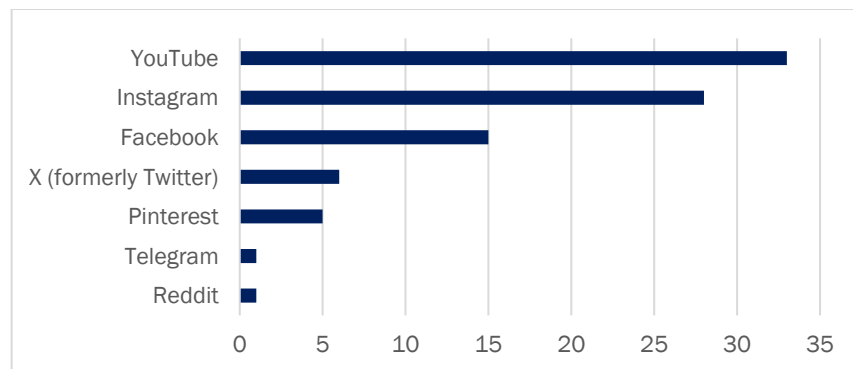


Figure 5b: Social media platforms used regularly, *Male respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

Among women, Instagram was the leader, which supports the assumption that visual platforms are more effective in the female segment – especially in fashion, where aesthetics and personalisation are of high value (see Appendix 2).

Analysis of age groups also revealed obvious differences:

- Generation Z (18-24) actively uses Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Pinterest. Facebook is barely represented here (only 5 out of 36 respondents) (see Figure 5d).

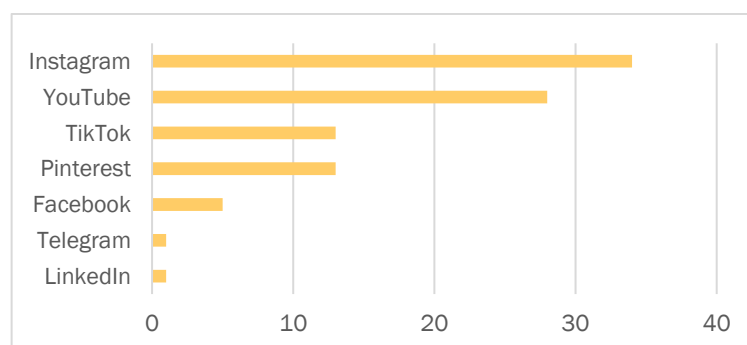


Figure 5d: Social media platforms used, *Age group 18–24*. (Author's own data, 2025).

- At the same time, Generation X (41-56 years old) remains loyal to Facebook. This generation formed their digital habits during the formation of Facebook, and their social circle is actively represented on this platform (see Figure 5f).

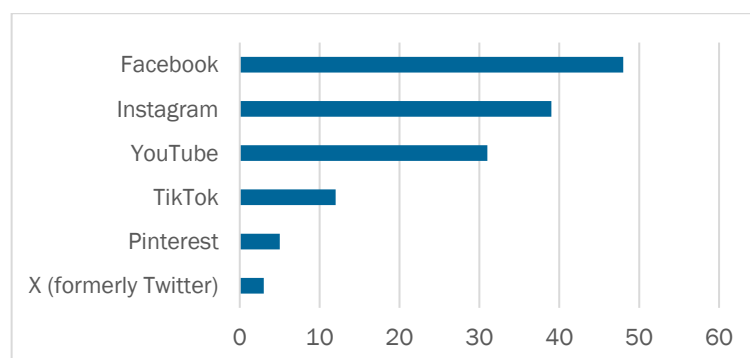


Figure 5f: Social media platforms used, *Age group 41–56*. (Author's own data, 2025).

These findings correlate with RO2's objective, which reviews the role of social platforms in forming marketing strategies. For brands, this means that there is a need for a differentiated approach: to promote engaging content through Instagram and TikTok for a younger audience, while for a more mature segment, to keep a presence on Facebook with more informative and trustworthy content.

Analysis of all participants showed that most users (42.4%) spend between 2 and 4 hours a day on social networks (see Figure 6a). This is a significant period during which a large volume of content is consumed, including adverts and reviews. The time spent on social media was similar for men and women, ranging from 1 to 2 hours per day (see Appendices 4 – 5).

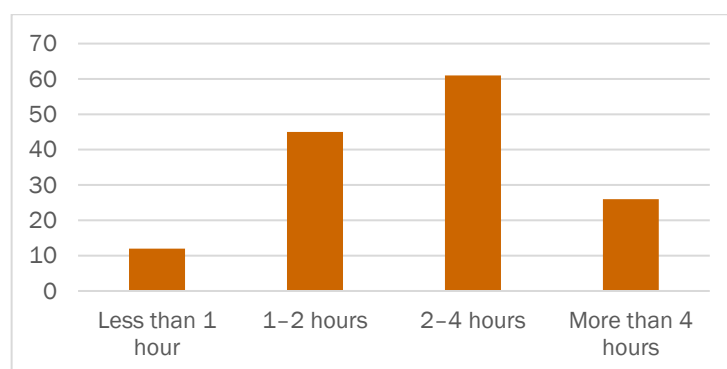


Figure 6a: Daily time on social media, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

Age analysis showed differences between generations. Respondents aged 18-24 and 41-56 most often spend 2-4 hours on social networks, while Millennials (25-40 years old) mostly indicate the interval of 1-2 hours but in second place also 2-4 hours (see Appendices 6 – 8). The smallest number of respondents – both in the total sample and in each age group – spend less than 1 hour a day on social networks. Longer usage of social media increases the likelihood of exposure to

branded or user-generated content. Greater engagement with content, as a result, influences the purchase decision. Therefore, the performance of Irish users in terms of time spent online is a positive for social media marketing.

Upon a question of whether social media influences fashion purchases, 41% of respondents said they are ‘sometimes’ affected, and 31.3% said they are ‘yes, frequently’ affected (see Figure 7a). Therefore, in total, 72.3% of Irish users admit to being impacted to some degree by social platforms when considering fashion-related buying decisions. Such findings indicate a high level of audience engagement and emphasise the opportunity offered by digital marketing for the Irish fashion industry. Only a small number of participants indicated that they had never felt the effect of social media on fashion purchases.

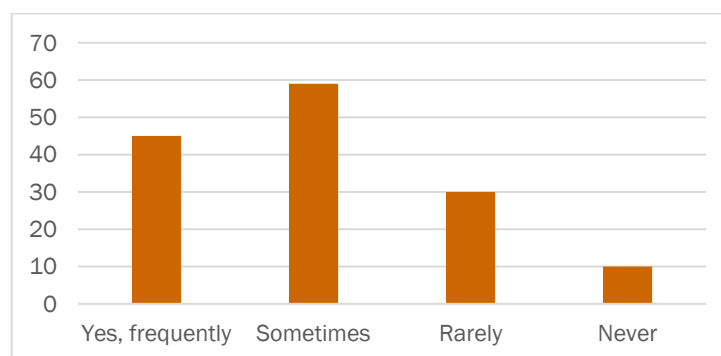


Figure 7a: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, *All respondents*. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Through Irish respondents' answers to the question about the type of content that most influences their fashion preferences, it was possible to identify three key forms of content: short video formats (reels, YouTube shorts, etc.), influencer/blogger posts, and brand content, which is almost on par in terms of effect with user-generated content (UGC) – the difference between the two was only one vote (see Figure 8a). Differences in content perception by gender were also identified. In addition to the previously mentioned content, women highlighted the influence of content from fashion shows and events, while men more often react to sponsored content (see Appendices 14 – 15). Regardless of age, respondents indicated that it was short videos (Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, Facebook videos) that had the greatest impact. This confirms that dynamic and rich content has a greater impact on purchasing behaviour in Ireland. Consequently, all the above makes it possible to conclude that H1’s hypothesis, which states that not all social media strategies and content types are equally effective, is correct. The findings also support H3’s hypothesis that content created by influencers leads to greater reaction and trust than sponsored advertisements. Moreover, it confirms the position of Qadeer et al. (2024), who stated that influencers become opinion leaders and build trust in brands. According to an article in The Irish

Times, the profession of influencer is becoming one of the most desirable among young people in Ireland (2024). This also confirms the power of influencers on social media users.

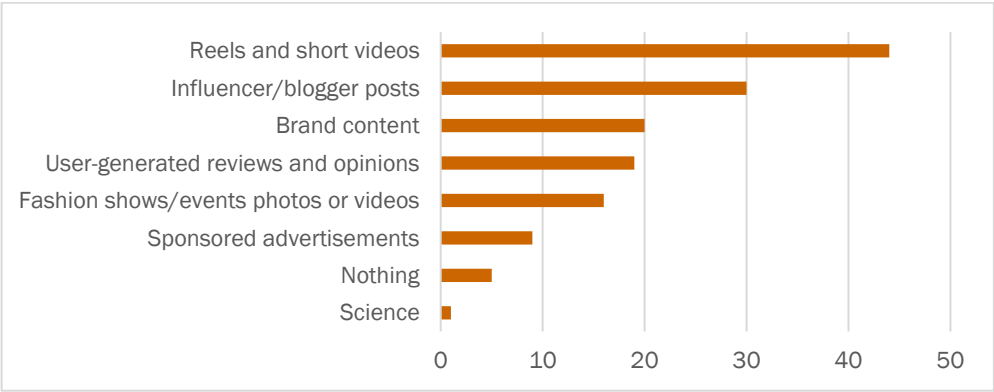


Figure 8a: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, *All respondents*. (Author’s own data, 2025).

It is important to note that UGC is perceived equally to branded content. This is meaningful, as a few previously reviewed studies in the literature review explained the value of a combination of brand and user-generated content, which together reinforce fashion purchase intention. Since, in Ireland, the same numbers of people said that UGC and FCC influenced them, companies need to focus on the integration of these types of content. Consequently, it is paramount for fashion brands to consider what formats and sources of content the target audience responds to and to build a marketing strategy based on users' preferences.

The majority of Irish respondents (43.8%) indicated that they had purchased fashion products at least once or twice after seeing them on social media (see Figure 9a). A significant proportion (29.9%) also confirmed that they regularly make purchases influenced by social media. Even among those who have not yet bought products directly after seeing them, many are considering doing this in the future (15.3%). Only a small proportion (11.1%) of the participants across all age and gender categories said they had never bought products inspired by social media content (see Appendices 19 – 23).

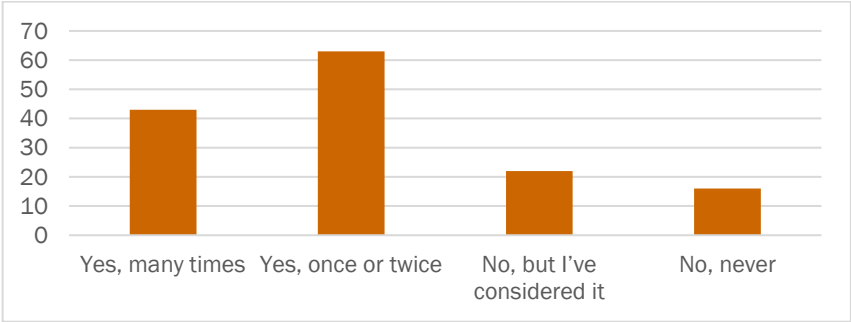


Figure 9a: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, *All respondents*. (Author’s own data, 2025).

These results support the idea that social media platforms have a great impact on consumer behaviour in the Irish fashion industry. This aligns with RO1's objective, which aims to evaluate the effectiveness of current social media strategies. It can be concluded that certain engagement techniques and content types have a better impact on most people. These and the data analysed above suggest that even non-sponsored, but visually appealing or trending content can encourage users to purchase, especially when presented on platforms which are popular with them, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

Besides, survey participants were asked to outline the factors that influence the level of trust in fashion content on social media (see Figure 10a). Honest and clear recommendations were found to be the most impactful element for most respondents. People perceive content as trustworthy also depending on how good a brand's reputation is. Users also pointed to the aesthetics and overall quality of the account.

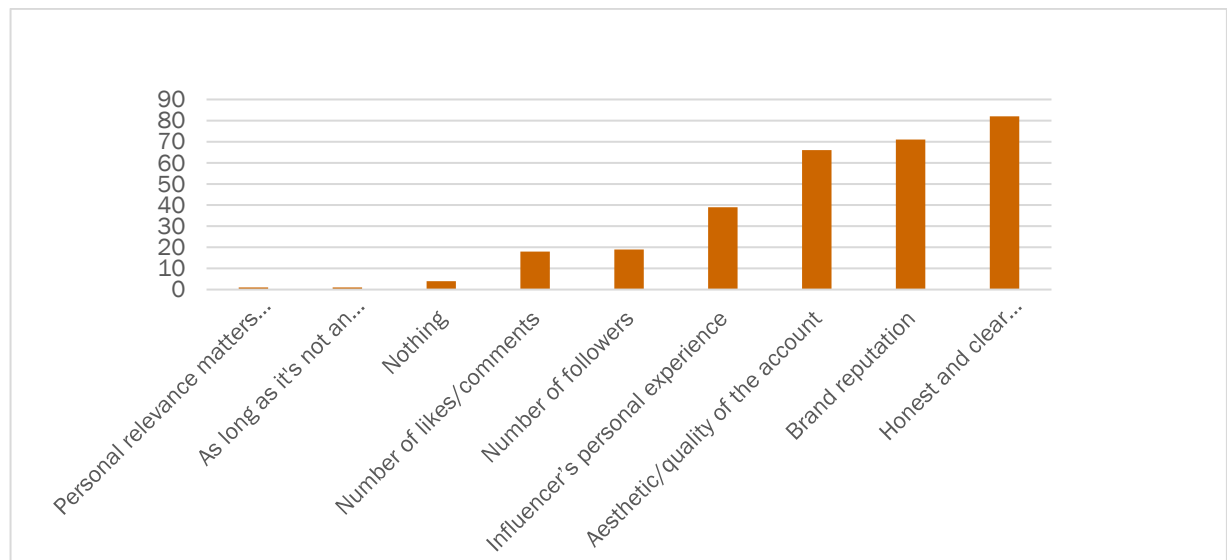


Figure 10a: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

Remarkably, even though the order of importance of these factors varied slightly between the different groups (by age and gender), these three variables remained constant (see Appendices 24 – 28). This suggests that there are established trust criteria among Irish consumers. This data is necessary for evaluating the performance of content strategies, which correlates to RO1's objective. Moreover, elements such as honesty, visual appeal, recognisability do have an impact on building consumer trust in Ireland. Although influencers were mentioned to a smaller extent, they are the ones that are often associated with personal recommendations and visually appealing content. This may indirectly support H3's hypothesis focusing on the greater value of influencers compared to sponsored advertising.

Section 3: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers

For the study objectives, it was integral to assess the level of awareness regarding such a modern phenomenon as AI influencers. The survey showed that the vast majority (43.7%) of respondents did not know what virtual influencers are, while 33.3% of participants said they were familiar with the concept (see Figure 11a).

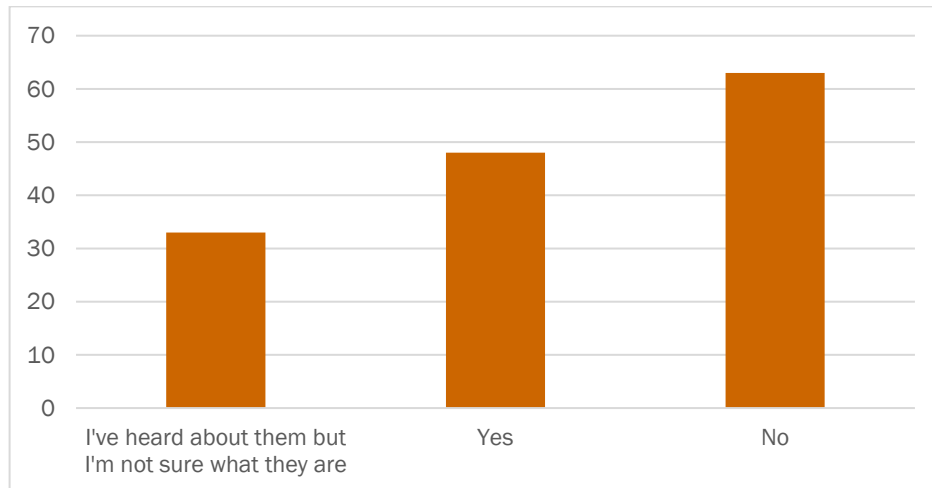


Figure 11a: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, *All respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

Notably, male participants showed a distribution of opinions (aware and not aware) with a slight bias towards those who know the concept (see Appendix 29), while women were mainly uninformed about virtual influencers (see Appendix 30). In addition, the highest knowledge of AI influencers was observed among 18-24 year olds, which may be related to their greater use of digital technologies and their curiosity about new virtual communication forms (see Appendix 31). In contrast, the 25-40 and 41-56 cohorts are mostly not familiar with the occurrence of it (see Appendices 32 – 33).

This data verifies a part of H4's hypothesis that Irish customers have a low understanding of AI influencers. The lack of awareness may indicate not only the weak acceptance of virtual influencers in the Irish market but also a potential mistrust of such content and accounts, especially if average users cannot distinguish it from the usual format involving real people.

Broadly speaking, the attitude of Irish users regarding the use of artificial intelligence in fashion can be characterised as sceptical. According to the survey results, only 20.1% of respondents have a positive attitude towards AI, and 20.1% admit that they have not thought about it. At the same time, 22.2% expressed a negative attitude towards the application of AI technologies. This correlates with figures from PricewaterhouseCoopers (2024), according to

which 23% of Irish people completely reject AI. However, the most widespread position was that everything depends on the context and area of application (37.5% of respondents) (see Figure 12).

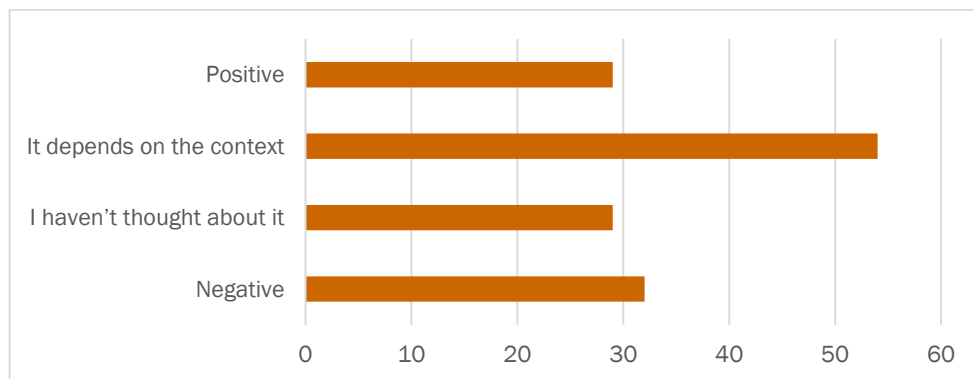


Figure 12a: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, All respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Gender statistics showed that men more often express negative attitudes towards AI. At the same time, female respondents in the majority of cases expressed a neutral position, with the number of positive responses among them exceeding the number of negative ones (see Appendices 34 – 35). Generation Z (18-24 years old) showed the greatest openness to AI, with a much higher percentage of those who have a positive attitude regarding the application of AI technologies compared to other age groups (see Appendix 36). In parallel, Millennials (25-40) and Generation X (41-56), despite similar distribution, demonstrated a more reserved and neutral opinion, confirming the general wariness in the usage of AI (see Appendices 37 – 38).

These results, combined with the previous ones, support H4's hypothesis that Irish consumers have a low familiarity with AI influencers and are cautious about them, not accepting them as a marketing mechanism, as they express reluctance to use AI. Although prevailing reactions to AI are not negative, levels of confidence and acceptance of artificial intelligence remain very low, especially in the more mature generations. In addition, this part of the analysis realises RO4's objective, which aims to explore the degree of recognition, endorsement, and trust of AI content and virtual influencers in Ireland. The observed responses and limited understanding of such technologies reveal the need for the phased integration of AI into brands' marketing strategies. A rapid transition to fully AI-generated content or the replacement of human influencers with virtual ones may be received warily or even rejected. At this time, companies should use AI as a supplementary tool, not as the main marketing instrument.

Section 4: Sustainability and Data Privacy

As part of the research, it was crucial to find out Irish respondents' current views on sustainability and ethical practices of fashion brands (see Figure 13a). The results demonstrated

that sustainability plays a significant role in the dominant proportion of consumers' perceptions of brands, with 29.2% stating that it is 'very important' to them and 27.8% choosing 'somewhat important'. Therefore, a total of 57% of the interviewees value brand sustainability and ethical brands, which makes this a critical characteristic for fashion companies targeting the Irish market.

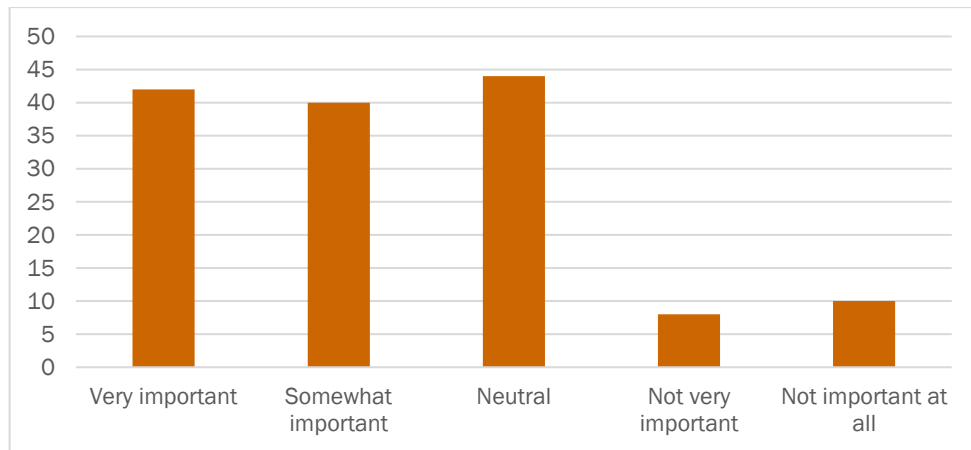


Figure 13a: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, All respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Only a small proportion of respondents (about 18% in total) indicated that they were not very concerned, or it was not important to them at all. Interestingly, 30.6% of survey participants took a neutral position on this question, which may suggest a low level of knowledge of this topic or the absence of motivation to act according to moral norms. Overall, male participants expressed more concern about sustainability and ethics than women, with more female respondents choosing a neutral position (see Appendices 39 – 40). A similar neutrality was noticed among Generation X (41-56 years old) (see Appendix 43). Millennials (25-40 years old) were more likely to consider sustainability and ethical practices very important (see Appendix 42). Generation Z (18-24 year olds) tend to perceive these aspects as 'somewhat important' rather than critically important (see Appendix 41). These findings are linked to H5's hypothesis that Irish consumers express concerns about sustainability and ethics, which may further influence their online shopping behaviour. In other words, as Irish consumers are found to be mostly concerned about sustainability and ethics, they are more likely to choose companies that support environmental and social initiatives. They will also choose brands that are not involved in ethical scandals. The brand and the customer should share the same views and values.

Another equally fundamental element of the survey was to identify Irish users' approach to sharing personal data with brands on social media. According to the questionnaire results, almost half of respondents (47.9%) do not want to share their data, even if it may enhance the individualised experience of interacting with a brand (see Figure 14a). This confirms the

previously studied statistics in the literature review and corresponds to H5's hypothesis that Irish clients express strong concerns about sustainability and data privacy, which, as a result, has an impact on online shopping.

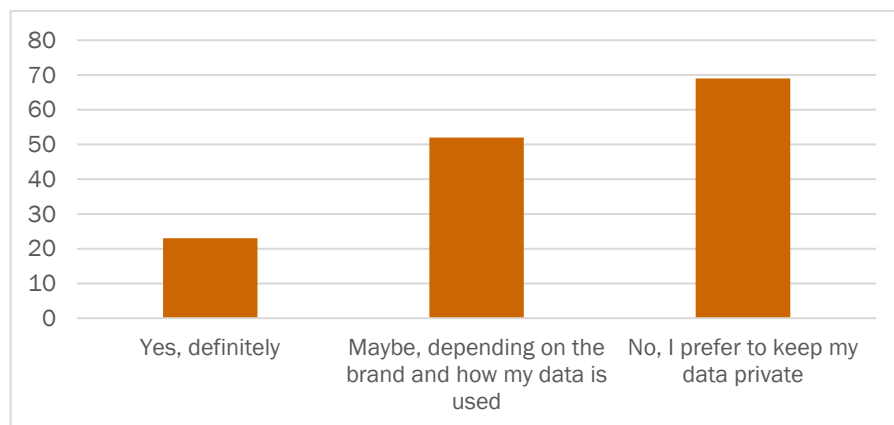


Figure 14a: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, All respondents.
(Author's own data, 2025).

While 36.1% of respondents indicated that they might be willing to share data – depending on the brand and purposes of use – only 16% expressed full readiness to share personal information. In no demographic group (by gender or age) does the desire to share data stand out. Nearly all respondents in each group are cautious and unwilling to disclose individual data (see Appendices 44 – 48). However, members of Generation Z (18-24) demonstrated the most flexibility. A dominant share of them expressed a conditional willingness to share data if it was clear how it would be used (see Appendix 46). This may be because this generation is generally open to digital innovation and less concerned about privacy issues, especially if they receive a quality user experience in return. Consequently, although there is rising interest in customised offers, high levels of concern about data protection continue to be a barrier to closer interaction between brands and consumers in Ireland.

Conclusion

The observations from the study indicate the main trends in the online behaviour of Irish fashion consumers. Most respondents are actively using platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Besides, they are interested in blogger content and short video formats. Irish users remain concerned about data privacy and are not enthusiastic about the use of new technologies, including AI and virtual influencers. At the same time, values such as sustainability and ethics are playing an increasingly important role in brand choice. These discoveries form the basis of further discussion in the next chapter, where empirical evidence will be compared with theoretical concepts.

Chapter VI: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a compilation of data from the survey conducted among Irish residents as well as existing academic literature. Based on this, themes emerged which open new directions for discussion. Based on the objectives and analysis of the findings, there are four main themes that have been identified. First, the most popular social platforms and their prospects for marketing are outlined. Second, the use of artificial intelligence in marketing is debated. Moreover, it is crucial to assess the role of influencers who are trend drivers. Besides, the types of content and their influence on the buying decision are analysed.

6.2 Social media used in marketing and prospects for their development

6.2.1 Leading social platforms for fashion marketing in Ireland

One of the primary research objectives of this study was to identify the leading social media platforms that can be utilised for fashion marketing in Ireland. The review of the data from the survey confirmed that social media plays a vital role for marketing in Ireland. According to the research data, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook are the most widely used platforms currently used among the population. Instagram is the leading platform, confirming the importance of visually orientated content in the fashion industry. In addition to Instagram, YouTube and TikTok are also quite impactful platforms among different demographic groups. These platforms provide attractive functionality for video marketing. For brands, the networks have become indispensable for broadcasting new collections and related content (e.g., customers' reviews). For example, in October 2025, Ireland will host its first Fashion Week. Its founder, Ashley McDonnell, actively promotes the official Ireland Fashion Week Instagram account and posts content related to the fashion week regularly. Well-known Irish fashion influencers are invited to these events, contributing to increased awareness of the audience.

6.2.2 Telegram: Rising user participation

Lately, it has been observed that young Irish users (especially those from Generation Z and younger) have started to include links to Telegram channels in the captions of their TikTok videos. This could indicate a potential increase in the popularity of the platform in the future. According to Demandsage (2024), Telegram has 1 billion active users worldwide as of March 2025 and continues to expand, mainly in countries where privacy is valued (see Figure 15).

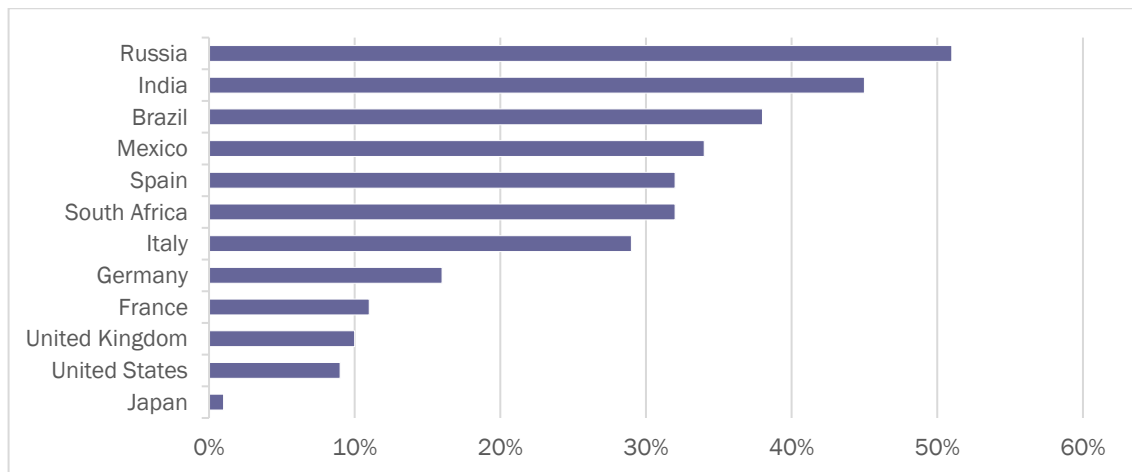


Figure 15: Global Telegram user growth statistics. (Source: Demandsage, 2024).

The functionality that Telegram offers can be used effectively for marketing purposes. For example, it is possible to create channels where you can post news, announcements, and any content. There is a discussion under each publication where users can interact with each other and with the brand and share feedback. An important aspect is chatbots, thanks to which the time to answer frequently asked questions or process orders can be reduced. Furthermore, there are groups that users can create as closed communities. Additionally, the platform provides an opportunity to set up targeted advertising, which helps to attract new customers.

6.2.3 Digital partnership and ideological stability of Telegram

At the end of 2023, Elon Musk announced xAI's Grok. Later, in March 2025, it was announced that xAI's Grok chatbot is going to be integrated into the Telegram messenger (Abboud et al., 2025). This partnership opens new horizons for both users and businesses. Among the main features are expected to be the integration of chat with AI for fast access, AI-driven contextual search, AI-powered editing of messages, moderation of groups and the generation of AI avatars and stickers. At launch, all functions will be available at no charge to premium subscribers, of whom there are now around 10 million (Demandsage, 2024). The functionality of Grok for businesses is that it automates customer support by providing constant answers to typical queries. Also, Grok can become an assistant in content marketing. For example, the AI edits and creates texts directly in the chat room. In addition, inbuilt moderation ensures safety in communities. Finally, personalised customer interactions may increase audience engagement and loyalty.

Furthermore, Pavel Durov, the founder of Telegram, continues to focus on his principled position on the protection of personal data, rejecting cooperation with government agencies on retrieving the user's information (Partz, 2025). In the context of growing concerns about privacy

in social networks (in particular, after numerous data leaks on Meta platforms (Murphy & Indap, 2025)), this becomes a competitive advantage for Telegram. However, refusal to cooperate with government agencies may be criticised by some users, as it may be perceived as an attempt to conceal illegal and prohibited content (Hosch & Morris, PLLC, 2024). This also leads to discussions about the possibility of balancing freedom of speech and user actions with public safety. Nevertheless, considering the growing attention to data security and brands' desire for more narrowly focused, meaningful communication with customers, Telegram is becoming an increasingly relevant platform in marketing.

6.2.4 Perspectives and new platforms

Digital technology and the integration of artificial intelligence are changing the way users perceive social networks. Currently, users, especially Generation Z and younger, value authenticity, confidentiality, and the opportunity to openly express their opinions. For example, there is a decentralised platform called BlueSky, founded by the former CEO of Twitter, Jack Dorsey, which promises to solve problems with censorship and protection of personal data (Bluesky, 2025). Many users, who are disappointed with platform X, say excitedly that Bluesky is like the classic Twitter. Security problems and data leakages have undermined the user confidence in X. This led to an outflow of the audience, especially among the younger generation, who started to seek new platforms for communication. As a result, BlueSky is considered a potential alternative. The platform is critical to marketing because, given the growing trend towards privacy and freedom of expression, it could become a central place for young users to communicate.

6.3 Artificial intelligence in fashion marketing

6.3.1 AI adoption and attitudes

In today's world, the adoption of artificial intelligence can be compared to the emergence of the Internet in the 20th century. AI is changing all the usual approaches to marketing and is becoming a truly revolutionary phenomenon. A survey of Irish consumers shows that so far users are largely wary of using AI. Among Generation Z, there is a growing interest in these technologies. This generation is open to exploring a digital environment, making them a prime target audience for brands utilising AI. The findings of this research are especially valuable for assessing the effectiveness of virtual influencers, which was one of the objectives of this study. Based on the obtained results, the conclusion can be made that it is still too early to introduce AI influencers on a large scale and widely use AI content in Ireland, but the increasing popularity is

evident. Furthermore, it is obvious that in today's realities, companies that successfully adapt to new technologies gain a competitive advantage.

6.3.2 AI applications in fashion: from virtual models to online fittings

For instance, the Swedish retailer H&M is actively integrating AI technologies into marketing. Recently, the company presented its first advertising campaign with a virtual model, which is a digital twin of the real model Matilde Guarliani (Lucas, 2025). This example demonstrates the potential of AI to reduce costs, as companies do not have to spend money on stylists, photographers, and so on. The models who give the right to use their image will sign a licensing agreement and receive payments. In future, AI models will become more like ordinary people to increase the trust of the audience. Moreover, modern experiences such as virtual fitting using AI are being adopted. A customer is more likely to make a purchase online if it is possible to try a product on. Consumers may also share their online fitting experience on social networks, resulting in a positive effect on brand awareness. As studies have shown, virtual fitting technologies reduce the number of returns by 20% and boost sales by 30% (Kamau, 2024).

6.3.3 The operational benefits of AI in marketing

It is essential to learn and utilise the opportunities of AI in marketing, instead of ignoring it. Businesses must adapt to fast-changing trends and innovations. For example, artificial intelligence already offers great possibilities for improving customer experience. By analysing data with the help of AI personalised offers and recommendations are being generated on social media. Personalisation in marketing, as stated in a McKinsey report (2021), can increase customer engagement and brand loyalty. Certainly, it is necessary to comply with GDPR in this strategy (Hovsepian, 2024). Besides, AI helps to automate marketing processes. For instance, it can assist in creating new ideas, generating advertising texts and designing content, or analysing the audience and the market (Singla et al., 2025). This is especially significant for small and medium-sized businesses which are trying to keep costs down as much as possible, while still being concerned about efficiency. Businesses that have already implemented AI are observing better results and utilising more marketing instruments.

6.3.4 Smarter decisions for premium brands with AI

One example of the successful use of AI in marketing is Luxurysight, a french company that focuses on luxury brands. It combines market analytics, competitor monitoring, and AI-powered tools to help brands make decisions on pricing, distribution, media visibility, and global

positioning (Heuritech, 2025). This approach allows brands to manage effectively their market and maintain a competitive advantage. In this way, artificial intelligence is reshaping marketing practices, and its role will only continue increasing.

6.4 Influencers as drivers of digital trends in fashion

6.4.1 The growing power of influencers in the fashion industry

The objective of the study was also to investigate the impact of influencer marketing on Irish consumers. The findings of the survey confirmed that Irish people rely on bloggers in fashion-related choices. Which also reflects the findings of Qadeer et al. (2024), who consider influencers as opinion leaders who shape attitudes and brand trust. This means that the power of influencers, especially in fashion, has grown to an extraordinary scale, in which they are able to shape consumer preferences and fashion cycles.

6.4.2 Visual media and its role in accelerating fashion cycles

Analysing the content on Instagram, it can be concluded that the most popular accounts translate reviews and unpacking of clothes. This kind of content has a larger engagement than a regular lifestyle blog. Today's consumers, especially Generation Z and younger, have become hostages to trends. While watching unpacking format videos, people have a desire to buy the products shown in the video. However, often the purpose of purchasing a product is not to use the product for its intended purpose but only to create more content to fit in with trends and become part of a certain community (e.g., the 'Clean Girl' trend).

This approach accelerates the product lifecycle. Influencers, in their turn, contribute to this. Their content must be made daily, thereby speeding up the introduction, peak and obsolescence of the product. This aligns with the trend lifecycle model, in which:

- Innovators – launch the idea (most commonly artists, startups, and designers).
- Influencers and early adopters – pick it up and spread it.
- Mass consumers – come later and accelerate market saturation.

Afterwards, there is a need for something new, and the cycle starts all over again.

6.4.3 Case study: Labubu and the viral power of influencer marketing

One of the recent examples of how influencer marketing works is the popularisation of the Labubu toy. It was originally a local art project by Hong Kong artist Kasinglung in 2015, but later Pop Mart turned the character into a commercially successful product. The toy gained popularity in 2023 after the publication of stories with Labubu from band member Blackpink (Vanderhoof, 2025). Social media exploded, and Popmart's net profits rose 186%. Labubu became massively famous worldwide with the help of celebrities and influencers (e.g., Kim Kardashian, Rihanna, David Beckham, and others) who also posted their toys on social media (Singh, 2025). The demand for the toy grew as the product was initially associated with uniqueness and differentness for users. The success of Labubu is also explained by the fact that when buying the product, the customer does not know what kind of toy he or she will get, which creates a surprise effect. Users on TikTok actively posted unboxings and other content with these toys, fuelling interest. This example illustrates how influencers are shaping not only fashion but also ways of self-expression.

6.4.4 The role of negative engagement in influencer marketing

Remarkably, users were divided into two opposites: those who admire Labubu and those who consider it 'tasteless'. Consumers by identifying the toy as an anti-trend and expressing this position on social networks, thus, on the contrary, stimulate more discussion and interest in the product. This is connected to the boomerang effect (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2025), where an effort to criticise causes a reverse reaction and increases engagement. Likewise, the concept of the deviant reinforcement spiral (Cohen, 1972) works, where open discussion and critique of a phenomenon in a media space only encourage it to further spread. In this way, even (using a term from TikTok) deinfluencing, i.e., opposing influencers, the user automatically becomes part of the influencer economy. Influencer marketing is no longer limited to just positive advertising. Even negative discussion can play to the brand's advantage.

6.4.5 The paradox of self-expression

As young people strive for self-expression and exclusivity, a paradox is being formed: by following even the most unusual and protesting trends (e.g., chǒu méng style – 'cute ugliness'), people still become similar to each other. In the pursuit of 'unusualness', a new mainstream is being created, which triggers the urge to seek a fresh and unique trend. This reinforces the cyclical nature of consumption, and brands are obliged to constantly update their products. In this regard, on the wave of Labubu's popularity, there is already a new trend of Wakuku. The appearance of the new toy on Chinese social networks demonstrates how quickly visual images go viral. Like

Labubu, Wakuku is distributed through influencers (Sun, 2025). This confirms that a product's success in the digital era is largely determined by its ability to become part of online culture.

6.5 Types of content and their influence on buying behaviour: UGC and brand content

6.5.1 The growing influence of content types in digital marketing

In digital fashion marketing, content types are becoming increasingly influential. Firm-created content (FCC) and user-generated content (UGC) are particularly prominent. The findings of this study indicate that both branded and user-generated content have almost the same impact on Irish consumers. Both types can have a positive impact on consumer behaviour and enhance engagement. UGC improves credibility and the reputation of the brand as more genuine and 'close' to the audience. Everything people do themselves is appreciated more, and consumers want to see sincere opinions and honest reactions.

6.5.2 User-generated content as a trust-building and cost-effective strategy

Today, user-generated content is becoming the modern 'word of mouth' (Saxena et al., 2023). The increasing visibility of this type of content is because more people want to be part of their favourite brand and experience being an influencer. Moreover, this type of content is more trustworthy as it is created by the customers themselves. For businesses, UGC format turns out to be an effective mechanism to promote the product without additional expenditure. Therefore, it is essential for small and medium-sized companies as well as new entrants in the market to support this kind of content. In this way, such companies can lower the costs of advertising campaigns and promote themselves in an affordable way with the help of customers. Additionally, UGC is not just a strategy to get content from consumers. It should generally align with the brand's goals. This makes UGC not only a marketing tool, but also a form of self-expression for customers. Brands can improve engagement by supporting this content format. Consumers share their experiences, thereby increasing brand awareness and building trust in the brand.

6.5.3 Moving towards authenticity: changing consumer preferences in digital marketing

In the era of rapidly expanding AI and the overabundance of visually perfect content, customers are starting to favour more organic forms of expression. Users are tired of the 'filtered reality' created by brands and are looking for authentic, 'live' experiences and opinions from others. In 2024, social media platforms including Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok transformed their content promotional algorithms to focus on user-generated content (Criterion B, 2025). This led to that content created by brands, while it may look better, loses engagement in comparison to

UGC. In addition, user-generated content spreads faster because regular users adapt more quickly to fast-changing trends. Meanwhile, brands are less dynamic due to content approval processes. Therefore, UGC content works well in social networks and users rely on such content. This makes it a powerful promotional instrument.

6.6 Conclusion

To summarise, it was discovered that both Instagram and YouTube remain the leading platforms for advertising products. However, there is a rising interest in other social media platforms that offer more privacy to users. Likewise, a platform like Telegram provides many diverse marketing features. In addition, it is valuable to integrate artificial intelligence into marketing processes, thereby lowering costs and improving the customer experience. Moreover, influencers have been proven to have an impact on purchasing behaviour. They also form opinions and trends. Besides, the content created by both brands and users has a great effect on purchasing intentions. Together, these types of content can improve consumer engagement with a brand. Therefore, modern technologies such as AI and current trends in customer attitudes to brands, such as sustainability and privacy, are changing the fashion marketing landscape, and creating new business opportunities.

Conducted research helped to identify how Irish consumers interact with fashion marketing on social media, which platforms and types of content they prefer, and how ready they are to accept new technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual influencers. Concluding the study, it can be stated that the understanding of this theme has deepened. In the beginning of the research, social media marketing was considered only as one of the ways to promote a product, while it turned out to be much more complex, including consumer psychology, values, and application of modern innovations.

7.1 Key findings

Audience segmentation is essential

One of the main conclusions is that companies must clearly segment their audience according to age and gender. The younger generation (especially Generation Z) is orientated towards visual and fast content, which is also confirmed by Manic (2024). They use a lot of Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, trust bloggers, and value authenticity. In contrast, Irish respondents aged 41 to 56 are more likely to use Facebook and are very wary of new technologies. For marketers, this means that success can only be achieved by adapting marketing strategies to specific target audiences, considering their preferences. In other words, there is no one-size-fits-all strategy.

AI and virtual influencers are not yet widely accepted

The attitudes of consumers towards AI and virtual influencers were another concern of this study. According to the conducted survey, the average Irish consumer is largely unfamiliar with them and is rather sceptical. This was observed especially among women, millennials, and Generation X. At the same time, younger people (18 - 24 years old) are curious about AI content, which indicates a potential transformation of the future market. Only if the target audience is solely Generation Z, brands can consider more intensive use of AI and AI virtual influencers as part of pilot initiatives, with mandatory feedback analyses. Therefore, in Ireland, the introduction of AI requires caution, transparency, and prior communication with the audience.

User-generated content drives engagement

The discovery was that user-generated content influences purchase decisions almost as much as official brand content. Those brands which share stories of real people, gather user

reviews, and repost posts of their customers generate more engagement. This is why future marketing strategies should involve audiences more in content creation. A fashion brand strategy in Ireland should combine quality branded content representing the values, sustainability, and aesthetics of the brand, as well as encourage user-generated content, especially through contests, hashtags, and reposts, which helps consumers feel that they are part of the brand and that they are being noticed.

Sustainability and ethics matter

Sustainability and brand ethics also appeared to be important. Over half of respondents (57%) indicated that these aspects influence their choice of brand on social media. This suggests that brands need to implement sustainability initiatives, including transparent supply chains, and support eco-friendly practices. In other words, when marketing on social media, it is also necessary to broadcast that the brand takes an active stance on such issues and to promote its values. However, while such strategies are likely to be financially costly, they can increase the loyalty of Irish consumers.

Data privacy concerns remain high

Despite users spending significant time in the digital world, data privacy remains a concern (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2024). Almost half of Irish respondents (47.9%) are not ready to share personal information with brands, even when it comes to personalised experiences. It is a problem for companies and requires them to develop more transparent data collection mechanisms. Brands should explain which user data is needed, how exactly it is used, and how it is protected.

7.2 Practical recommendations

Based on the obtained results, the following recommendations for the practical application are proposed:

1. Companies should develop online marketing strategies that address specific audiences (according to age and behaviour). For example, Generation Z is more receptive to rapid visual content. If this is the desired target audience, it is advisable to use TikTok and Instagram to promote the product. Generation X prefers more informative content, and Facebook remains a popular platform among these users, where it is recommended to publish such content.

2. Brands should support user-generated content by integrating various contests and hashtags. It is also advisable to repost UGC content. It will boost engagement and also create a sense of brand affinity among users.
3. Artificial intelligence and its related technologies should be used wisely in Ireland. It has been found that Generation Z is more open to innovation. If a product is targeted at this audience, AI technologies should be used experimentally, and feedback should be collected from users after implementing these technologies.
4. Advance environmental, ethical, and socially responsible initiatives. This not only meets the expectations of Irish consumers but also builds long-term trust.
5. Businesses should implement transparent data collection mechanisms. Since Irish users are concerned about the personal data safety, it is necessary to explain what data is required by organisations, how it will be used, and how it will be protected. A personalised experience should be desired, not imposed.

7.3 Limitations of the study

Looking at the research from a critical perspective, it is worth noting its limitations. The quantitative approach did not allow for a deeper understanding of respondents' motivations and attitudes, which could have been achieved through qualitative research. Furthermore, the sample was slightly shifted in favour of a female audience, which may have influenced the overall perception of the theme. In addition, the study was framed within Ireland, while a comparison with other countries could have provided a broader view. Nevertheless, the findings are valuable for both theorists and practitioners. From an academic point of view, the research has expanded the understanding of online shopping behaviour. It also confirmed the importance of visual platforms. In practice, the study provides advice to marketers on the choice of platforms and content, as well as ways to engage influencers in their strategies. Importantly, social media marketing is not just about algorithms and content. It reflects public attitude, values, and the ethical considerations of consumers. Considering these factors, it is possible to develop a truly working strategy that will succeed.

References

Academic sources:

- Beyari, H. and Hashem, T. (2025) ‘The role of artificial intelligence in personalizing social media marketing strategies for enhanced customer experience’, *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(5), p. 700. doi:10.3390/bs15050700.
- Biliakovich, L., Derman, L., Oborska, S., Naumenko, O. and Vovk, A. (2024) ‘Genesis, Features and Prospects for the Development of Digital Fashion’, *Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture*, 53(1), pp. 5–14. doi:10.1515/pdte-2023-0043.
- Bonilla-Quijada, M., Olmo, J., Andreu, D. and Ripoll-i-Alcon, J. (2023) ‘Customer engagement on Instagram for luxury fashion brands: An empirical comparative analysis’, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9(1). doi:10.1080/23311886.2023.2235169.
- Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2015) *Business research methods*. [online] Academia.edu. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/35725749/Business_Research_Methods_by_Bryman_A_and_Bell_E_2015_1 [Accessed 8 July 2025].
- Chung, S. and Cho, H. (2017) ‘Fostering parasocial relationships with celebrities on social media: Implications for celebrity endorsement’, *Psychology & Marketing*, 34, pp. 481–495. doi:10.1002/mar.21005.
- Cialdini, R.B. (2021) *Influence: New and Expanded – The Psychology of Persuasion*. New York: Harper Business. Available at: <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=a39dde1e-f622-34f5-8c3c-83e7020ef82c> [Accessed 15 June 2025].
- Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* [online]. London: MacGibbon and Kee. Available at: <https://criminologiacabana.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/stanley-cohen-folk-devils-and-moral-panics.pdf> [Accessed 19 July 2025].
- Creswell, J.W. and Creswell, J.D., 2018. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Figl, K. and Remus, U. (2023) ‘Thinking fast and thinking slow: Digital devices’ effects on cognitive reflection’, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 40(2), pp. 580–623. doi:10.1080/07421222.2023.2196769.

- Fuciu, M. and Șerban, A. (2024) 'Some Considerations about the Change in Consumer Behaviour of the Last Decade', *Revista Economică*, 76(3), pp. 84–91. doi:10.56043/reveco-2024-0027.
- Gerlich, M. (2023) 'The Power of Virtual Influencers: Impact on Consumer Behaviour and Attitudes in the Age of AI', *Administrative Sciences*, 13(8), p. 178. doi:10.3390/admsci13080178.
- Gunawan, D.D. and Huarng, K.-H. (2015) 'Viral effects of social network and media on consumers' purchase intention', *Journal of Business Research*, 68(11), pp. 2237–2241.
- Jayasingh, S., Sivakumar, A. and Vanathaiyan, A.A. (2025) 'Artificial Intelligence Influencers' Credibility Effect on Consumer Engagement and Purchase Intention', *Journal of Theoretical & Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 20(1), p. 17. doi:10.3390/jtaer20010017.
- Karaman, D. and Yıldız, A. (2022) 'The Effect of Social Media Tools Effectiveness at the Purchasing Process on Consumer Behavior: Mediating Role of the Generations', *Journal of Business Research - Turk*. doi:10.20491/isarder.2022.1372.
- Kim, A.J. and Ko, E. (2012) 'Impact of luxury fashion brands' social media marketing on customer relationship and purchase intent', *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 3(3), pp. 158–163. doi:10.1080/20932685.2012.10593044.
- Manic, M. (2024) 'Short-form video content and consumer engagement in digital landscapes', *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov, Series V: Economic Sciences*, 17(1), pp. 45–52. doi:10.31926/but.es.2024.17.66.1.4.
- Martias, D. and Nastiar, M.F. (2025) 'The influence of video marketing content strategy on YouTube on consumer loyalty to fashion brands', *International Journal of Digital Marketing*, 3, pp. 796–807.
- Munaro, A.C., Flores, E., Silva, T.M. and Cavalcanti, A.L. (2025) 'Influencer profiling: a comprehensive categorisation of social media influencers and their association with digital engagement', *Journal of Marketing Management*, 41(5/6), pp. 555–587. doi:10.1080/0267257X.2025.2500571.
- Na, Y. and Kang, S. (2018) 'Sustainable diffusion of fashion information on mobile friends-based social network service', *Sustainability*, 10(5), p. 1474.
- Niu, Y. (2025) 'The Impact of User-Generated Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Loyalty', *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 161, pp. 141–146. doi:10.54254/2754-1169/2025.19906.

- Nurlatifah, F., Ariyanti, M. and Iskanto, D. (2025) 'The Effect of Social Media Marketing On Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Brand Image and Brand Trust', *Quality - Access to Success*, 26(205), pp. 443–450. doi:10.47750/QAS/26.205.45.
- Phillips, D.C. and Burbules, N.C., 2000. *Postpositivism and Educational Research*. Philosophy, Theory, and Educational Research Series. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Qadeer, R., Tariq, T. and Aleem, N. (2024) 'The Persuasive Impact of Social Media Influencers on Consumers' Buying Decisions: A Case Study of Instagram', *New Horizons (1992-4399)*, 18(1), pp. 57–81. doi:10.29270/NH.18.1(35).05.
- Rosenberg, B.D. and Siegel, J.T. (2025) 'Psychological reactance theory: An introduction and overview', *Motivation Science*, 11(2), pp. 133–138. doi: 10.1037/mot0000376.
- Sands, S. et al. (2022) 'Unreal influence: leveraging AI in influencer marketing', *European Journal of Marketing*, 56(6), pp. 1721–1747. doi:10.1108/EJM-12-2019-0949.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. *Research methods for business students* [electronic book]. Pearson. Available at: <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=839462cc-e467-3fb3-a605-33d8bc04dcc4> [Accessed 1 July 2025].
- Saxena, N., Kumar, A. and Dadas, A. (2023) 'Social media user-generated content and customer-based brand equity', in Smith, J. and Brown, L. (eds.) *Marketing Insights 2023*. New York: Routledge, pp. 125–137. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.11076617.
- Simon, B. et al. (2024) 'Exploring Consumer Psychology: A Visual Analysis of Research Trends', *Library of Progress-Library Science, Information Technology & Computer*, 44(2), pp. 966–978. Available at: <https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=5965072f-a187-3c22-bb76-d24185383827>.
- Thomas, V.L. and Fowler, K. (2021) 'Close Encounters of the AI Kind: Use of AI Influencers As Brand Endorsers', *Journal of Advertising*, 50(1), pp. 11–25. doi:10.1080/00913367.2020.1810595.
- Ting, H., et al. (2025) 'Snowball Sampling: A Review and Guidelines for Survey Research', *Asian Journal of Business Research*, 15(1), pp. 1–15. doi:10.14707/ajbr.250186.
- Workman, J.E., Lee, S.-H. and Liang, Y. (2022) 'Gen Z's social media engagement, fashion innovativeness, need for variety, and gender', *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 16(1), pp. 1–9. doi:10.1080/17543266.2022.2126015.

Yang, Y., Tang, Y., Zhang, Y. and Yang, R. (2021) 'Exploring the relationship between visual aesthetics and social commerce through visual information adoption unimodel', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 700180. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.700180.

Non-academic sources:

Abboud, L., Levingston, I., Murphy, H. and Massoudi, A. (2025) *Musk's xAI agrees Telegram tie-up as billionaire 'bromance' blooms*. *Financial Times* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/205568fa-8a99-424c-9fb3-191087adc8bd> [Accessed 14 July 2025].

American Marketing Association (2013) *Definition of marketing*. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140709204356/https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx> [Accessed 25 May 2025].

Bluesky: the tech hotshot that's old, new, borrowed and blue (2025) *Financial Times* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/024adfff-bebd-4026-ae98-11b815eba0c7> [Accessed 14 July 2025].

Criterion B (2025) *Why user-generated content is more valuable than ever*. [online] Criterionb.com. Available at: <https://criterionb.com/blog/the-power-of-user-generated-content-in-2015/> [Accessed 21 July 2025].

Demandsage (2024) *Telegram statistics and user data*. Available at: <https://www.demandsage.com/telegram-statistics/> [Accessed 10 July 2025].

Grandviewresearch.com (2024) *Virtual Influencer Market Size & Outlook, 2030*. [online] Available at: <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/virtual-influencer-market-size/global> [Accessed 28 May 2025].

Heuritech (2025) *Luxuryinsight & Heuritech: AI data intelligence for luxury & fashion*. [online] Available at: <https://heuritech.com/luxuryinsight-group/> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Hovsepian, T. (2024) *The power of personalization: Crafting tailored marketing campaigns for maximum impact*. [online] *Forbes*, 12 Aug. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2024/07/22/the-power-of-personalization-crafting-tailored-marketing-campaigns-for-maximum-impact/> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Hosch & Morris, PLLC (2024) *Telegram's weakening privacy*. Hosch & Morris, PLLC [online]. Available at: <https://www.hoschmorris.com/privacy-plus-news/telegrams-weakening-privacy> [Accessed 4 August 2025].

Instagram.com, n.d. *fit_Aitana* [online]. Available at: https://www.instagram.com/fit_Aitana/ [Accessed 20 May 2025].

Instagram.com, n.d. *shudu.gram* [online]. Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/shudu.gram/?hl=en> [Accessed 29 May 2025].

Kamau, K. (2024) *Virtual try-ons will change fashion jobs forever*. [online] *Forbes*. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zengernews/2024/07/11/virtual-try-ons-will-change-fashion-jobs-forever/> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Lucas, L. (2025) *Strike a pose: AI takes to the catwalk*. [online] *Financial Times*. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/a9416d75-9ebd-46a1-ae31-0c60545070d0> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Maguire, S. (2024) *Age of influencers: how content creation has become the toughest of dream jobs*. *The Irish Times* [online]. Available at: <https://www.irishtimes.com/life-style/people/2024/09/21/age-of-influencers-how-content-creation-has-become-young-peoples-dream-job/> [Accessed 1 August 2025].

McKinsey & Company (2021) *The value of getting personalization right—or wrong—is multiplying*. [online] *McKinsey & Company*. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-value-of-getting-personalization-right-or-wrong-is-multiplying> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Merriam-Webster (n.d.) *Social media*. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/social%20media> [Accessed 24 May 2025].

Murphy, H. and Indap, S. (2025) *Meta trial becomes test of board culpability over corporate scandals*. *Financial Times* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/19a5187f-1026-4559-a5bd-a04e1e255973> [Accessed 14 July 2025].

Partz, H. (2025) *Pavel Durov says Telegram would exit markets before betraying users*. *Cointelegraph* [online]. Available at: <https://cointelegraph.com/news/telegram-will-exit-markets-before-adding-backdoors-durov> [Accessed 14 July 2025].

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2024) *Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024 — Press Releases | PwC Ireland*. [online] Available at: <https://www.pwc.ie/media-centre/press-releases/2024/voice-of-the-consumer-survey-2024.html> [Accessed 25 May 2025].

Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L119, pp. 1–88. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679> [Accessed 3 July 2025].

Rival IQ. (2024). *2024 Social Media Industry Benchmark Report*. [online] Available at: <https://www.industryreports.co.za/sites/default/files/2025-03/2024%20Rival%20IQ%20Social%20Media%20Industry%20Benchmark%20Report.pdf> [Accessed 26 June 2025].

Ross, C. (2025) *Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2015 to 2025* [online]. Statista. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1092819/global-influencer-market-size/> [Accessed 20 June 2025].

Singh, N. (2025) *Labubu mania goes global: Celebs and fans queue for China's monster doll*. *Business Standard* [online]. Available at: https://www.business-standard.com/world-news/labubu-popmart-chinese-doll-blindbox-celebrity-fashion-toy-cool-china-trend-125062300606_1.html [Accessed 19 July 2025].

Singla, A., Sukharevsky, A., Berteletti, E., Yee, L. and Chui, M. (2025) *The next innovation revolution—powered by AI*. [online] McKinsey & Company. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-next-innovation-revolution-powered-by-ai> [Accessed 20 July 2025].

Statista (2020) *Ireland: social media users 2020–2029*. [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1146739/social-media-users-in-ireland> [Accessed 27 December 2024].

Statista (2023) *Instagram users in the World 2025*. [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1138856/instagram-users-in-the-world> [Accessed 28 December 2024].

Statista (n.d.) *Social network usage by brand in Ireland 2023*. [online] Available at: <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1389100/social-network-usage-by-brand-in-ireland> [Accessed 27 December 2024].

Sun, J.-N. (2025) *Labubu faces new rivals! Why are these ‘ugly-cute’ toys driving designer toy world crazy?* *DotDotNews* [online]. Available at: <https://english.dotdotnews.com/a/202507/08/AP686cb242e4b01f3361158298.html> [Accessed: 19 July 2025].

T.R.A. (The Reputations Agency) (2023) *An Post eCommerce Index reveals impact of influencers on Irish consumer online spend*. [online] Available at: <https://thereputationsagency.ie/latest/news-and-thinking/2023/07/30/an-post-ecommerce-index-reveals-impact-of-influencers-on-irish-consumer-online-spend> [Accessed 23 May 2025].

Vanderhoof, E. (2025) *Inside the monstrous, charmed rise—and rise—of Labubu*. *Vanity Fair* [online]. Available at: <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/story/inside-the-rise-of-labubu-trend-pop-mart> [Accessed 19 July 2025].

Appendix

Appendix 1. Research instrument.

Survey: The Impact of Social Media and Artificial Intelligence on Consumer Behaviour in the Fashion Industry (Ireland Case Study)

Section: Consent to participate

Before you begin, please confirm that participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Your responses will be anonymised, and you may stop participating at any time without explanation.

- I confirm my consent to participate in this survey

Section 1: Demographics

1. Your age:

- 18–24 years old (Generation Z)
- 25–40 years old (Generation Y / Millennials)
- 41–56 years old (Generation X)

2. Your gender:

- Male
- Female

3. Do you currently live in Ireland?

- Yes
- No

Section 2: Social Media Usage and Behaviour

4. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Select all that apply)

- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Other (please specify): _____

5. How much time do you spend on social media daily (on average)?

- Less than 1 hour

- 1–2 hours
- 2–4 hours
- More than 4 hours

6. Do social media platforms influence your fashion-related purchases (clothing, shoes, accessories)?

- Yes, frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

7. What type of social media content affects your fashion preferences the most?

- Influencer/blogger posts
- Sponsored advertisements
- Reels and short videos
- User-generated reviews and opinions
- Fashion shows/events photos or videos
- Brand content
- Other: _____

8. Have you ever purchased a fashion item after seeing it on social media?

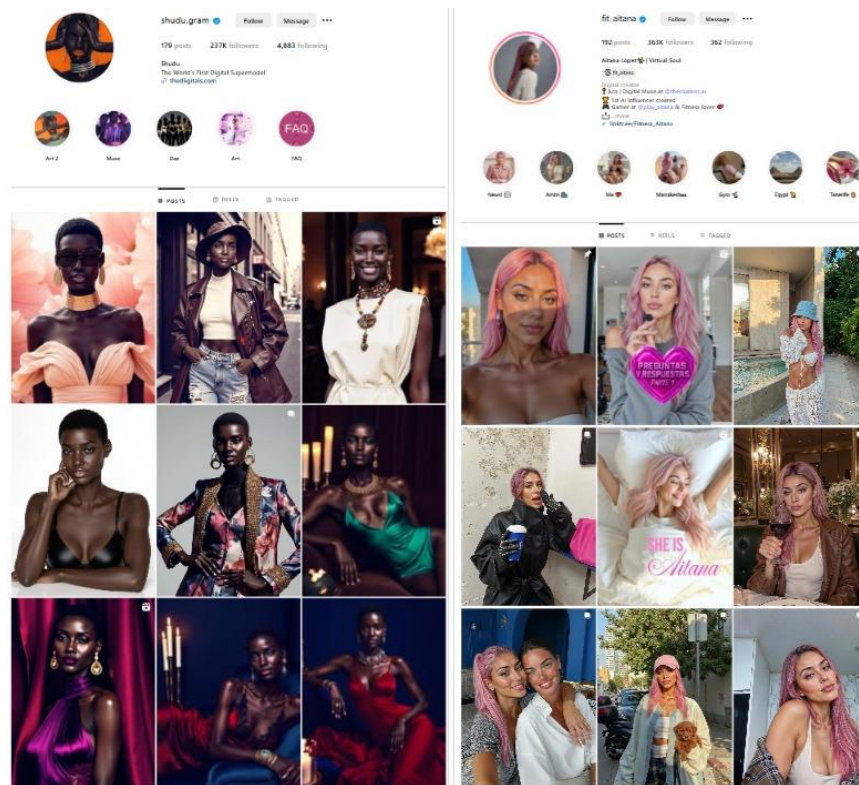
- Yes, many times
- Yes, once or twice
- No, but I've considered it
- No, never

9. What makes you trust fashion-related content on social media? (Select all that apply)

- Number of followers
- Aesthetic/quality of the account
- Honest and clear recommendations
- Influencer's personal experience
- Brand reputation
- Number of likes/comments
- Other: _____

Section 3: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Influencers

These images represent AI Influencer accounts. *(AI influencers are digital personalities generated by artificial intelligence software that can engage with users through social networks (Jayasingh, Sivakumar, Vanathaiyan, 2025)).



Sources: Instagram.com, n.d. fit_Aitana; Instagram.com, n.d. shudu.gram.

10. Are you familiar with virtual influencers (AI-generated personalities)?

- Yes
- No
- I've heard about them but I'm not sure what they are

11. What is your opinion on the use of AI in the fashion industry?

- Positive
- Negative
- It depends on the context
- I haven't thought about it

Section 4: Sustainability and Data Privacy

12. When choosing fashion brands on social media, how important is it to you that the brand follows sustainable and ethical practices?

- Very important

- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Not very important
- Not important at all

13. Would you be willing to share personal information (e.g., preferences, location) with fashion brands on social media if it meant receiving personalized recommendations?

- Yes, definitely
- Maybe, depending on the brand and how my data is used
- No, I prefer to keep my data private

Appendix 2. Figure 5c

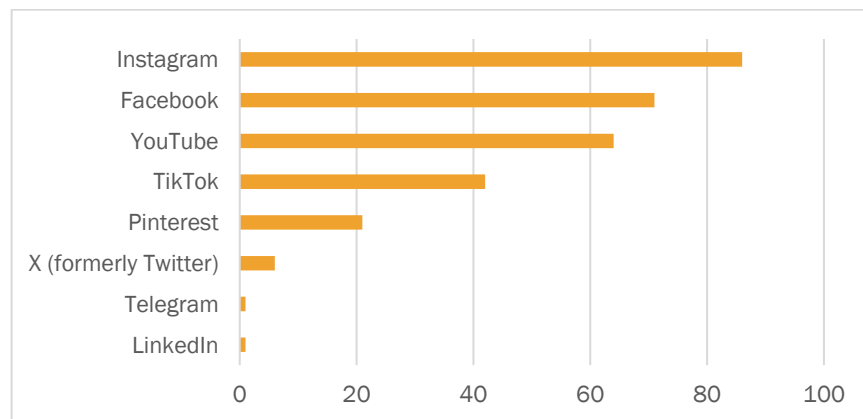


Figure 5c: Social media platforms used regularly, *Female respondents*. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 3. Figure 5e

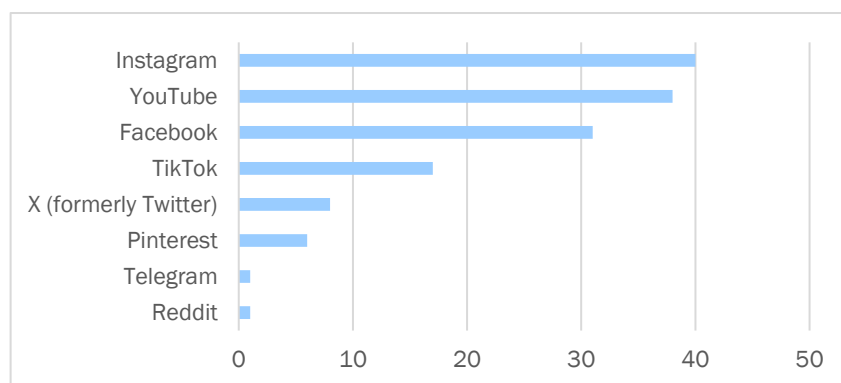


Figure 5e: Social media platforms used, Age group 25–40. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 4. Figure 6b

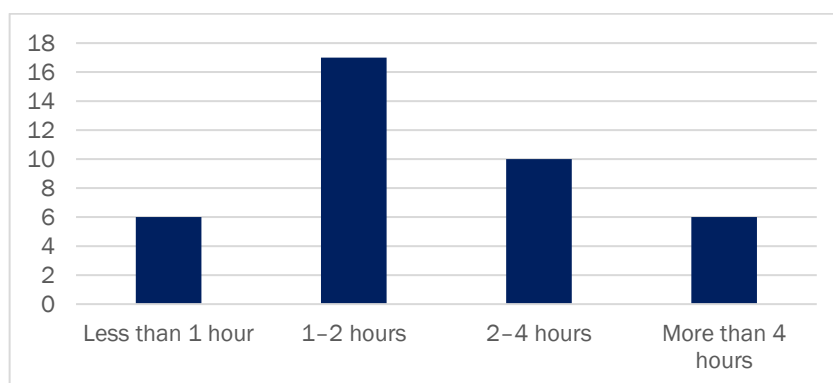


Figure 6b: Daily time on social media, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 5. Figure 6c

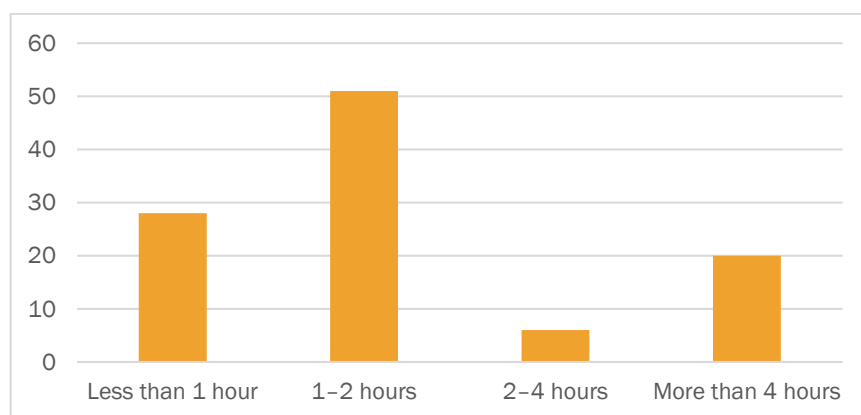


Figure 6c: Daily time on social media, Female respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 6. Figure 6d

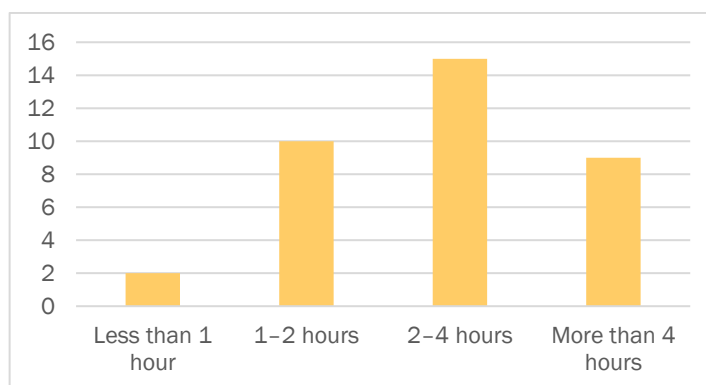


Figure 6d: Daily time on social media, Age group 18-24. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 7. Figure 6e

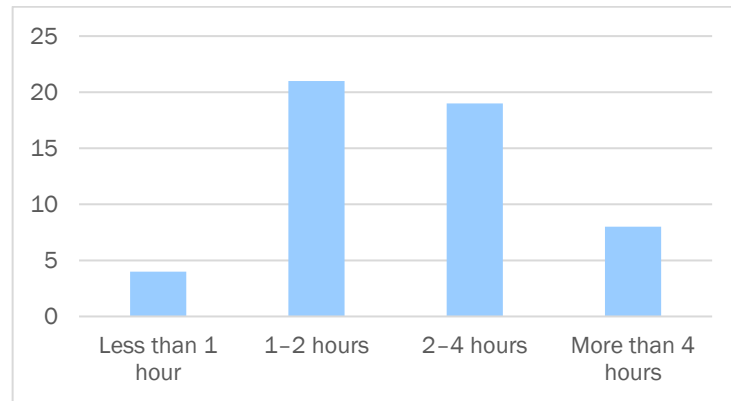


Figure 6e: Daily time on social media, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 8. Figure 6f

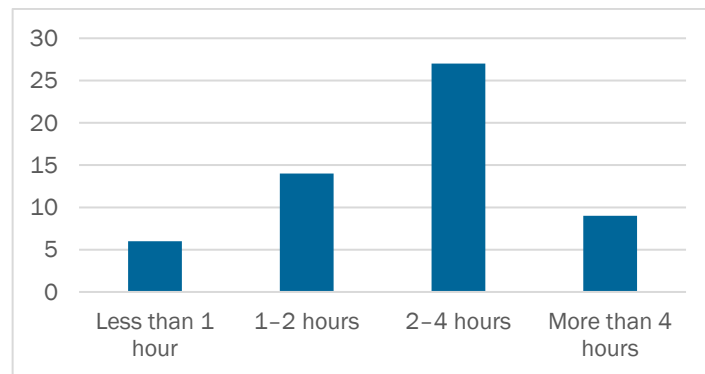


Figure 6f: Daily time on social media, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 9. Figure 7b

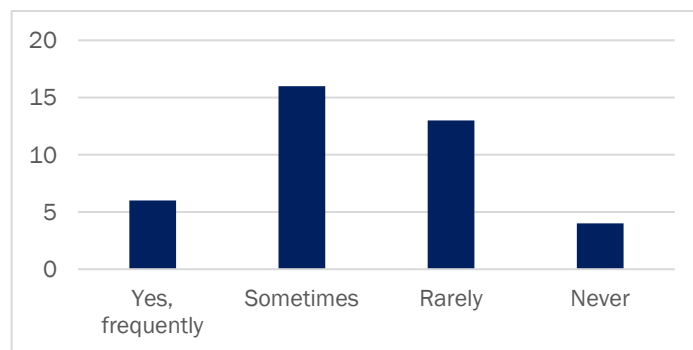


Figure 7b: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, Male respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 10. Figure 7c

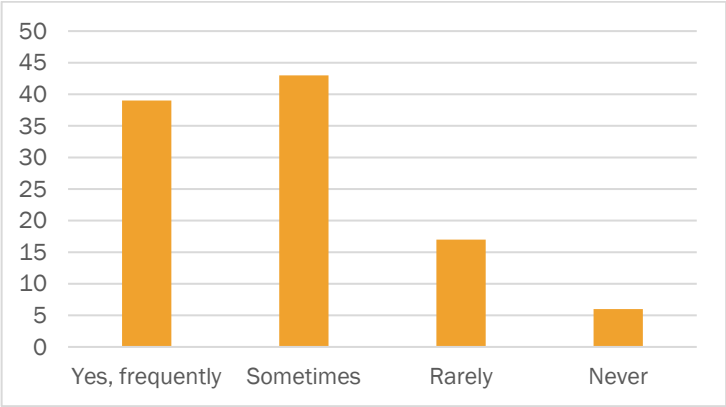


Figure 7c: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, Female respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 11. Figure 7d

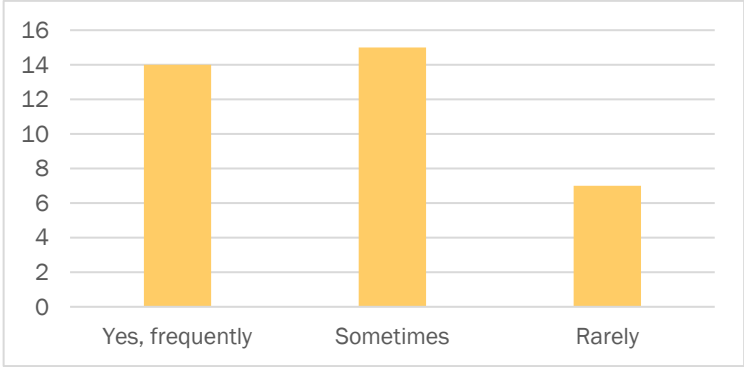


Figure 7d: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, Age group 18–24. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 12. Figure 7e

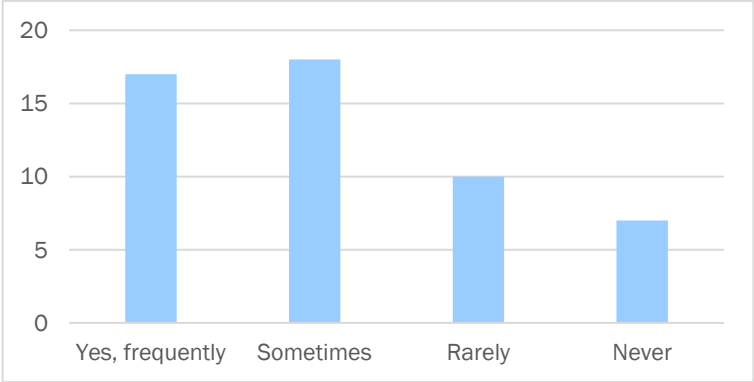


Figure 7e: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 13. Figure 7f

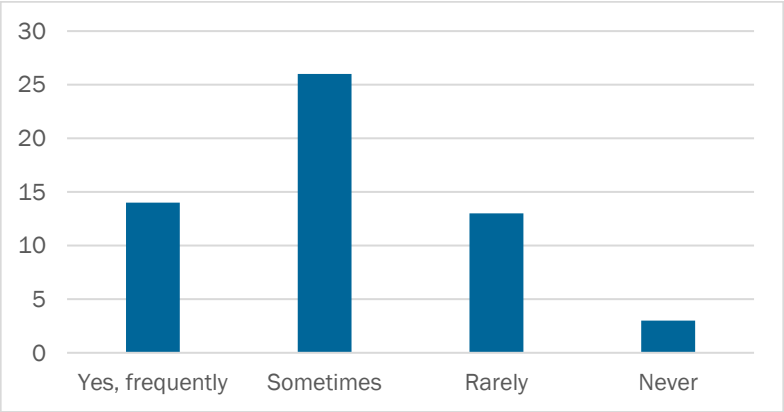


Figure 7f: Influence of social media on fashion-related purchases, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 14. Figure 8b

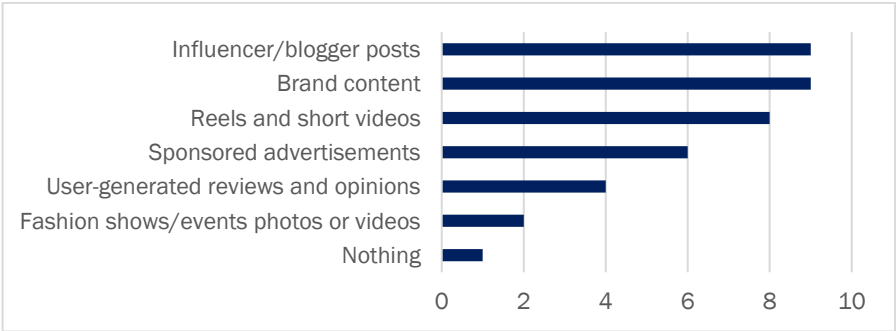


Figure 8b: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, Male respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 15. Figure 8c

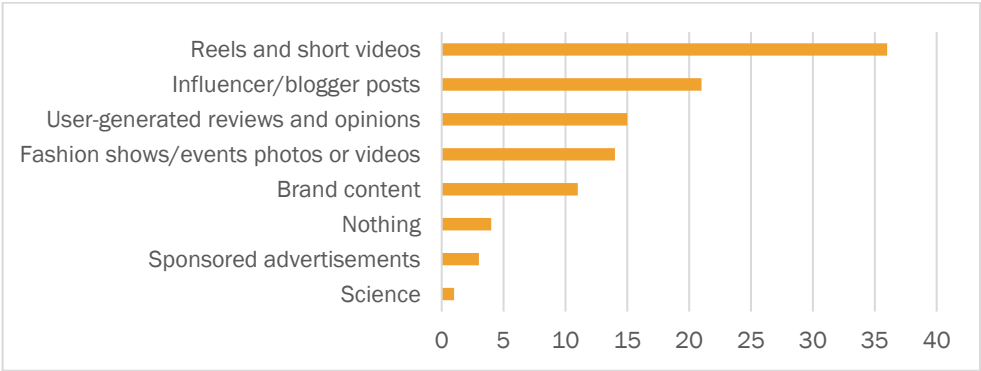


Figure 8c: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, Female respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 16. Figure 8d

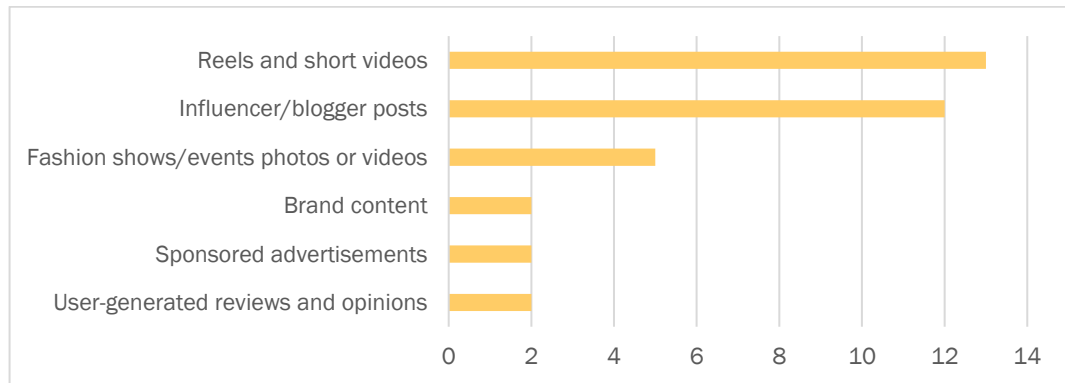


Figure 8d: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, Age group 18–24. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 17. Figure 8e

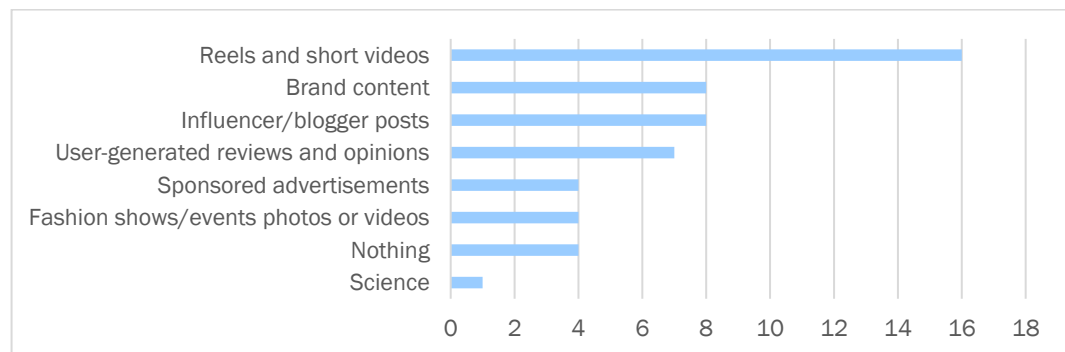


Figure 8e: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, Age group 25–40. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 18. Figure 8f

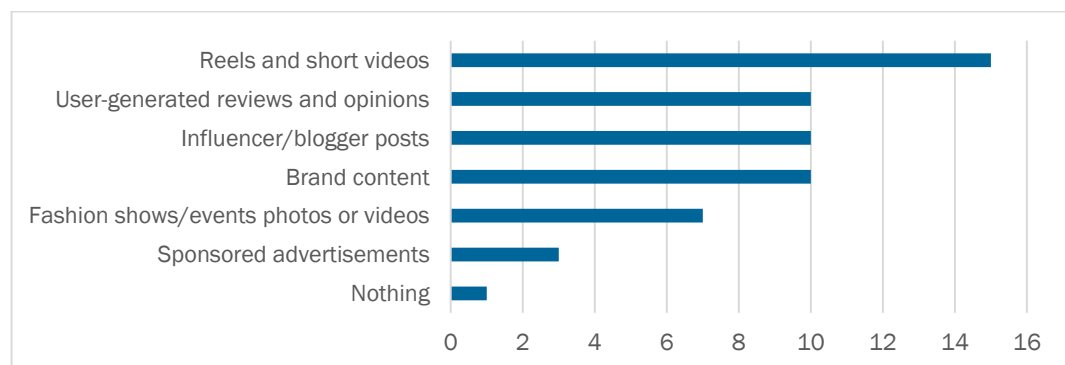


Figure 8f: Types of social media content most influencing fashion preferences, Age group 41–56. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 19. Figure 9b

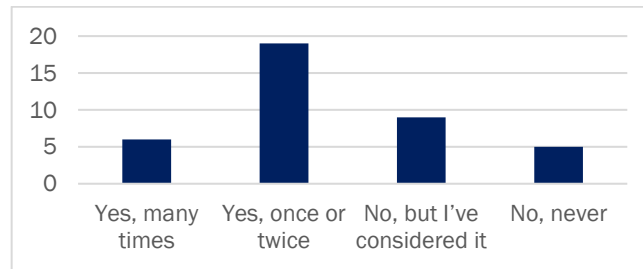


Figure 9b: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 20. Figure 9c

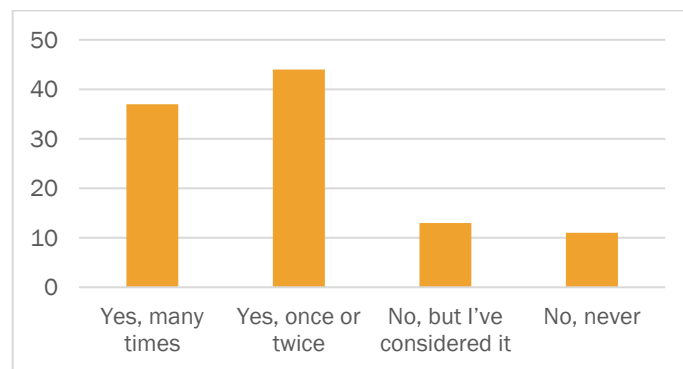


Figure 9c: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, Female respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 21. Figure 9d

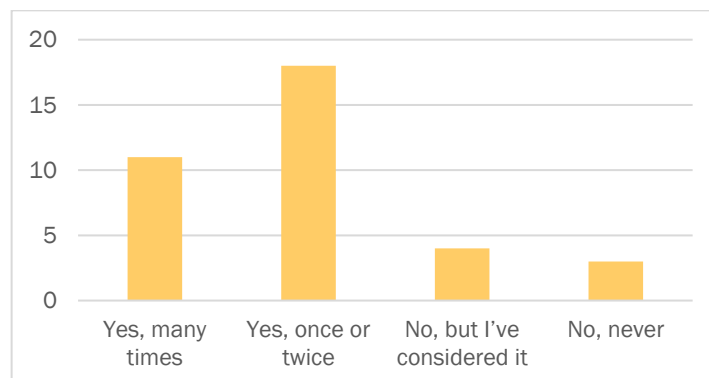


Figure 9d: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, Age group 18–24. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 22. Figure 9e

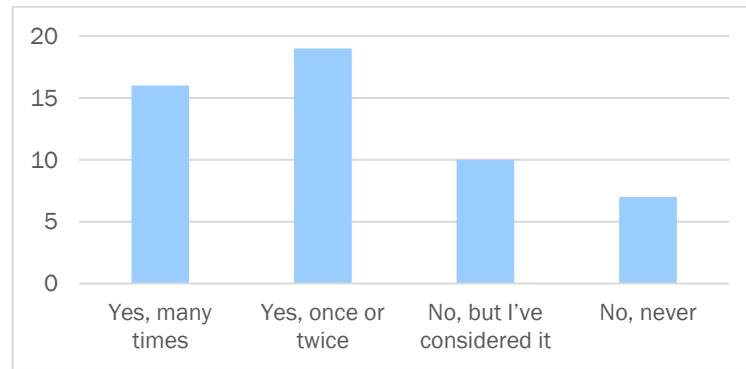


Figure 9e: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, Age group 25–40. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 23. Figure 9f

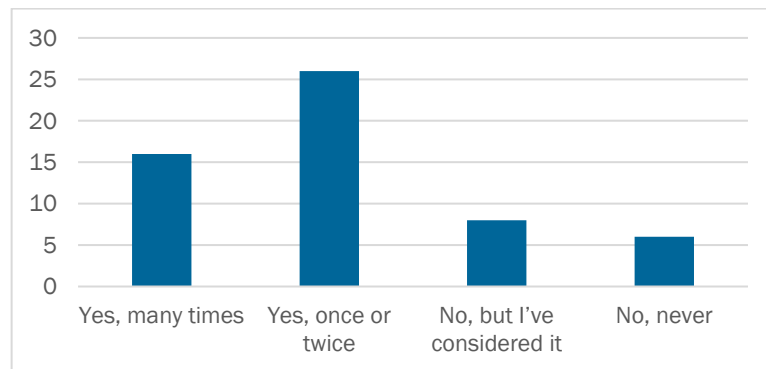


Figure 9f: Purchase behaviour after seeing fashion items on social media, Age group 41–56. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 24. Figure 10b

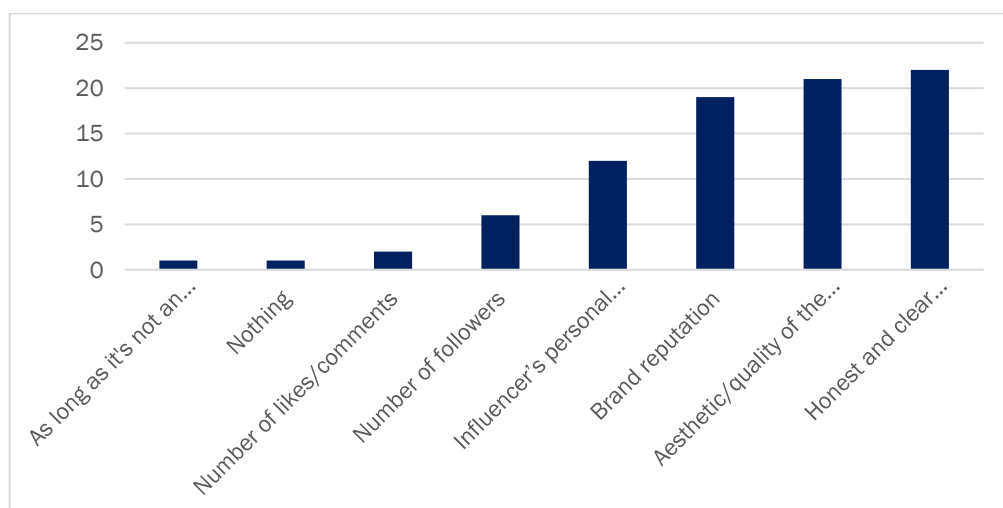


Figure 10b: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 25. Figure 10c

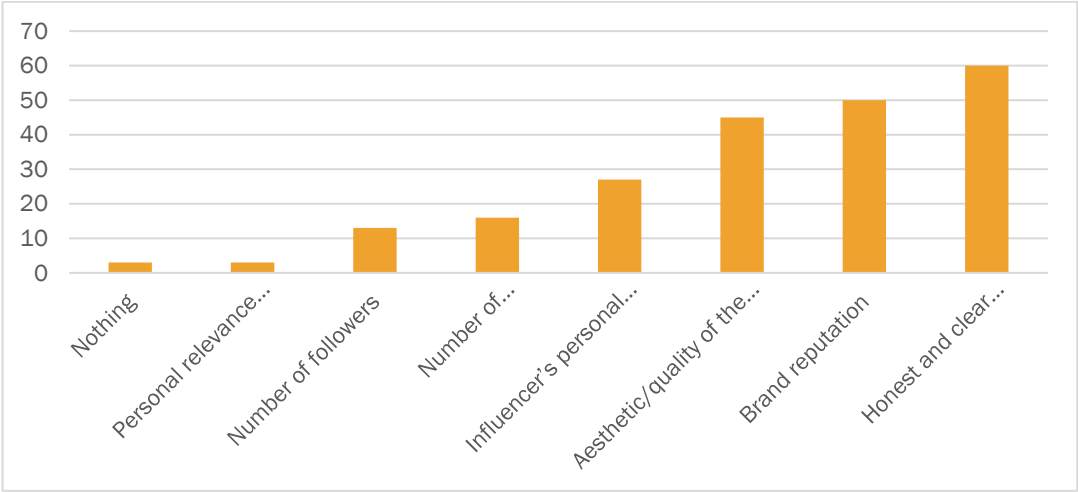


Figure 10c: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, Female respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 26. Figure 10d

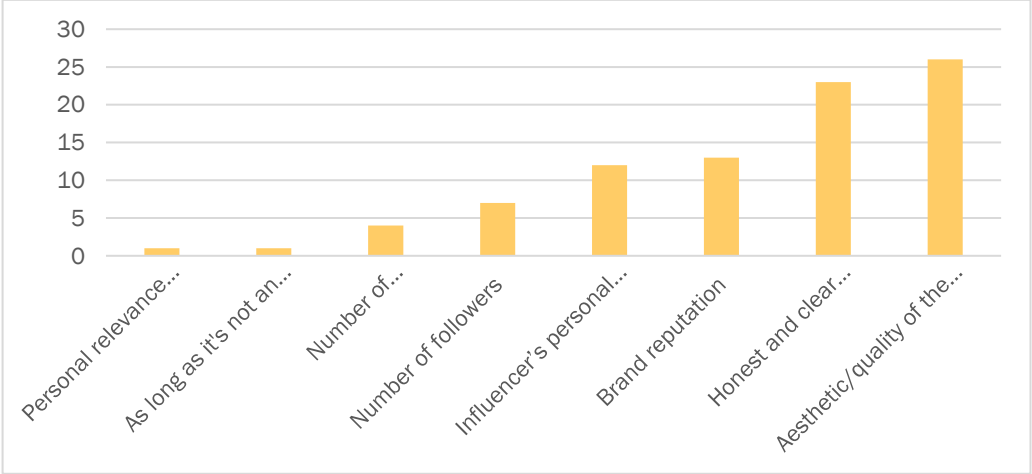


Figure 10d: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, Age group 18–24. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 27. Figure 10e

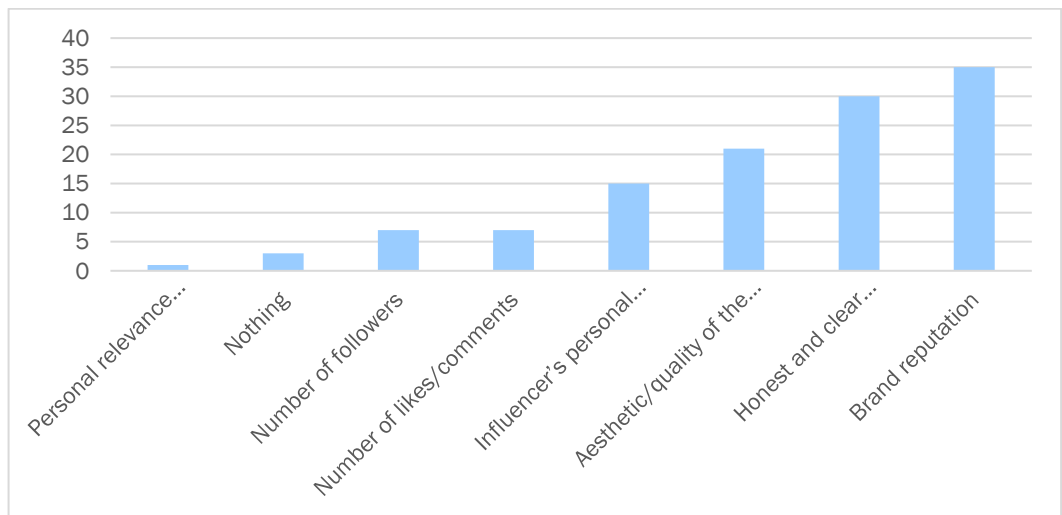


Figure 10e: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 28. Figure 10f

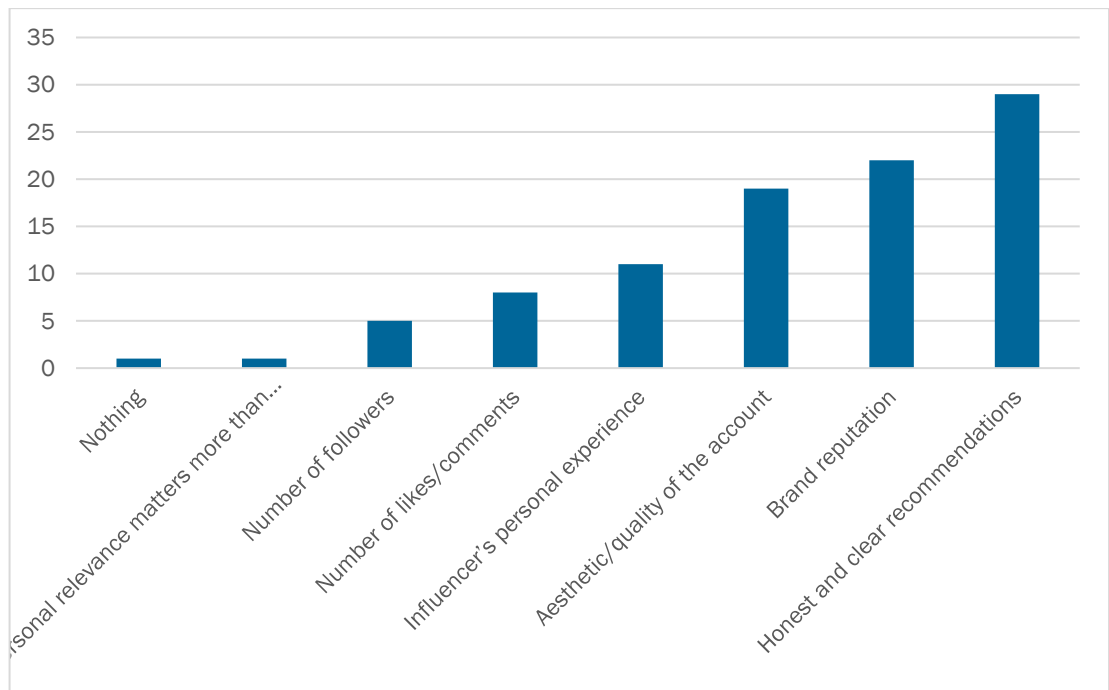


Figure 10f: Factors influencing trust in fashion-related social media content, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 29. Figure 11b

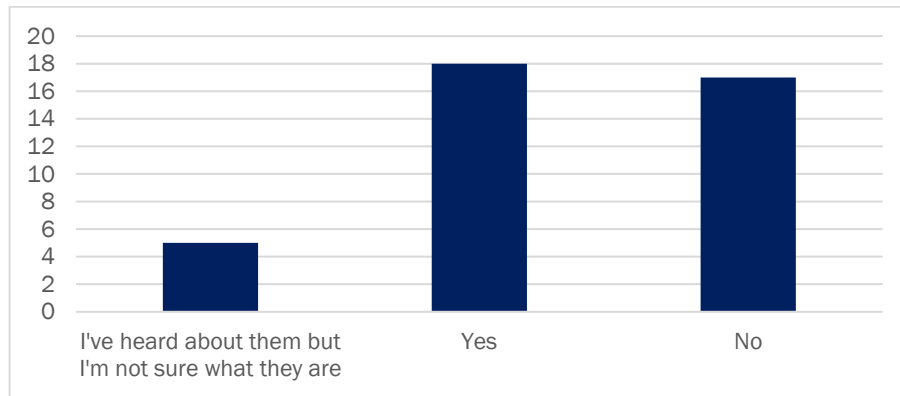


Figure 11b: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 30. Figure 11c

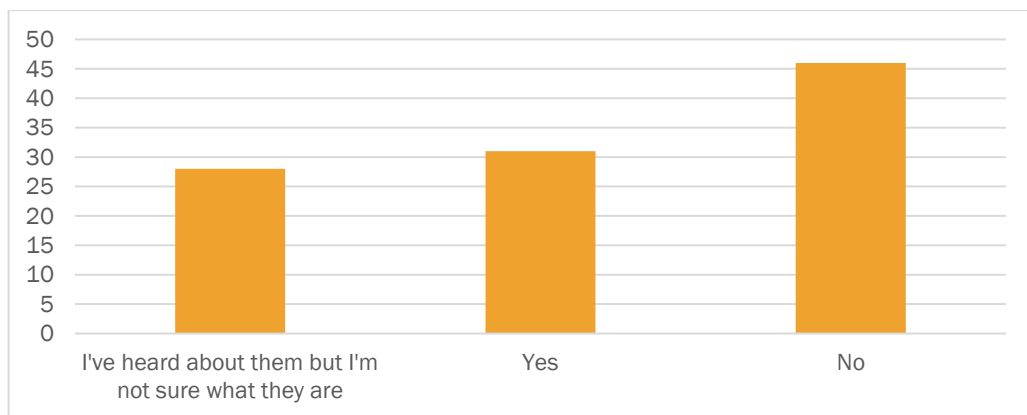


Figure 11c: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, Female respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 31. Figure 11d

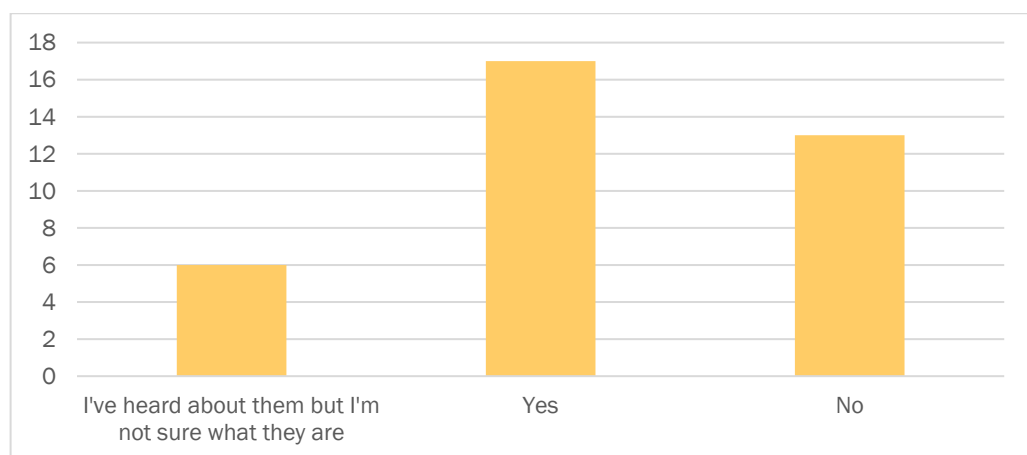


Figure 11d: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, Age group 18–24. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 32. Figure 11e

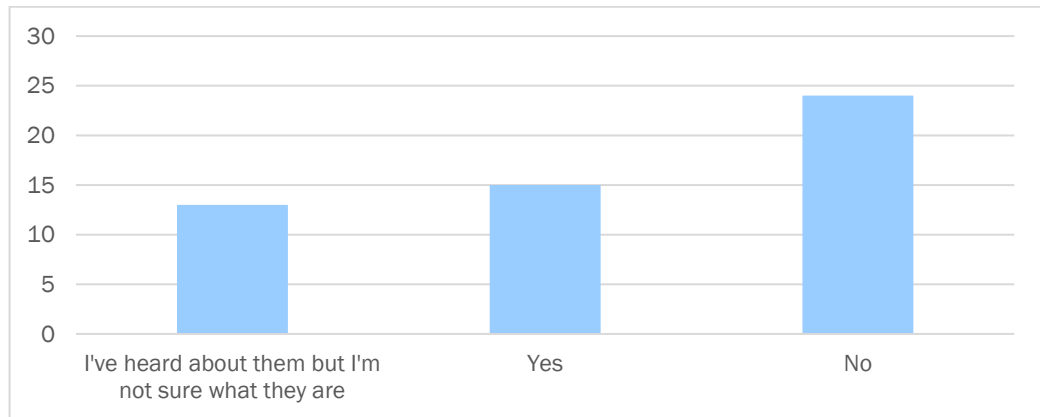


Figure 11e: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, Age group 25–40. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 33. Figure 11f

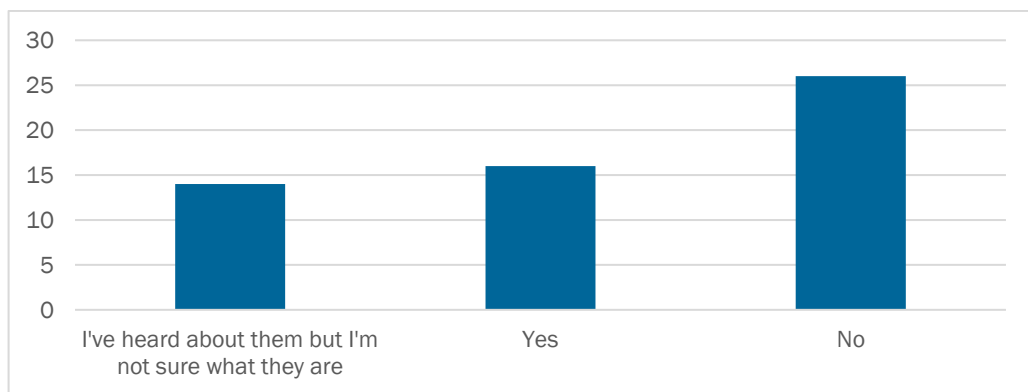


Figure 11f: Familiarity with virtual (AI-generated) influencers, Age group 41–56. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 34. Figure 12b

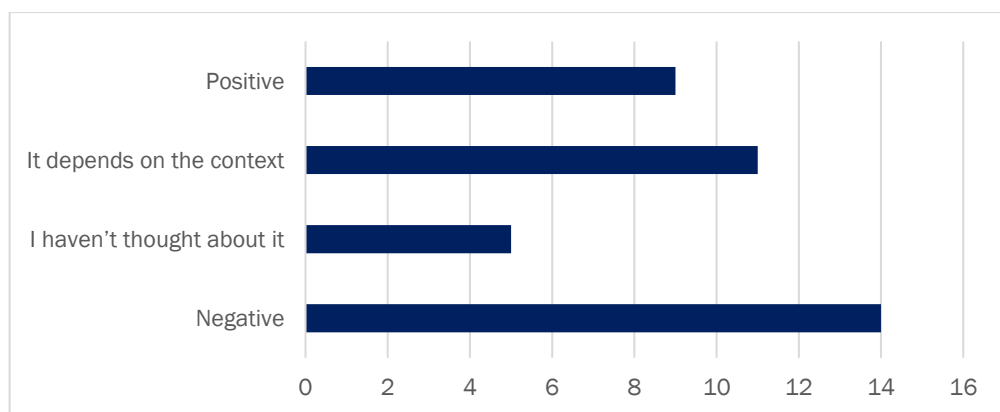


Figure 12b: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 35. Figure 12c

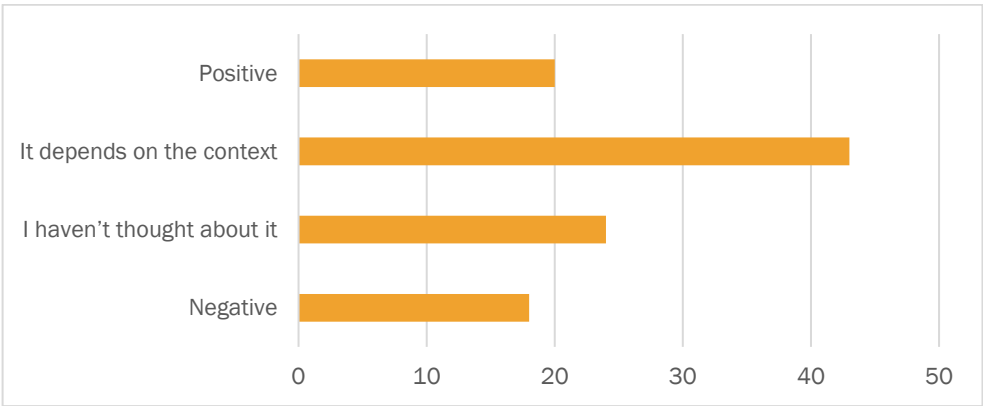


Figure 12c: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, Female respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 36. Figure 12d

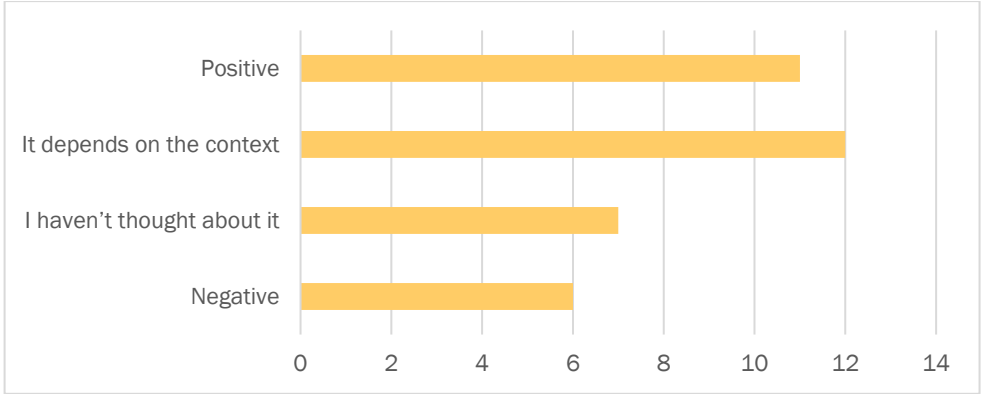


Figure 12d: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, Age group 18–24. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 37. Figure 12e

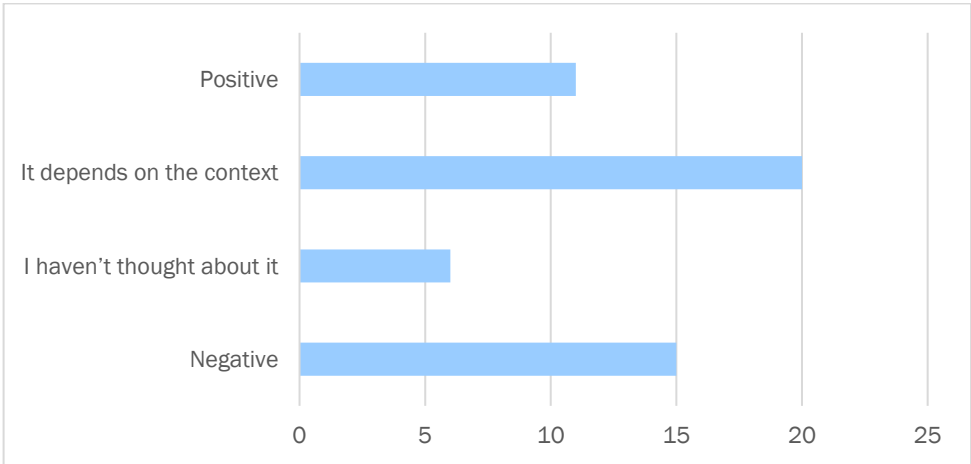


Figure 12e: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 38. Figure 12f

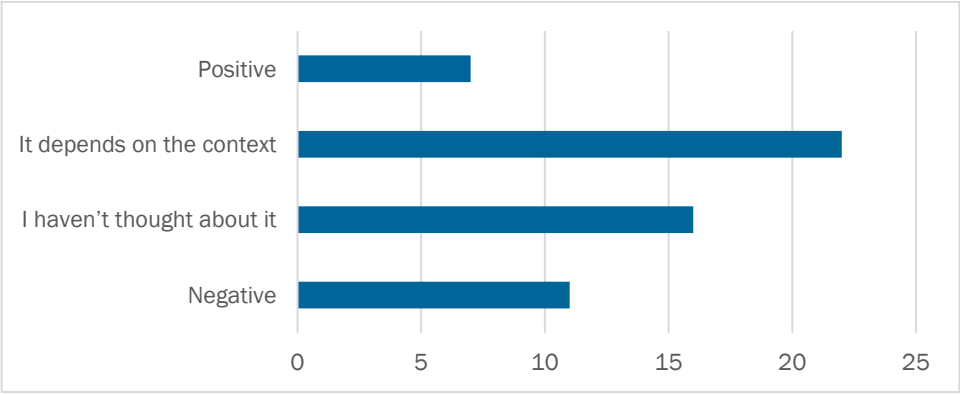


Figure 12f: Opinions on the use of AI in the fashion industry, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 39. Figure 13b

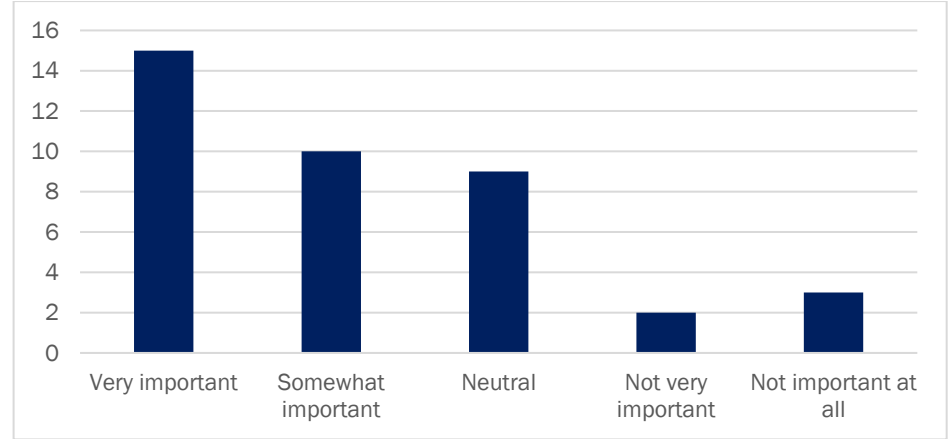


Figure 13b: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, Male respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 40. Figure 13c

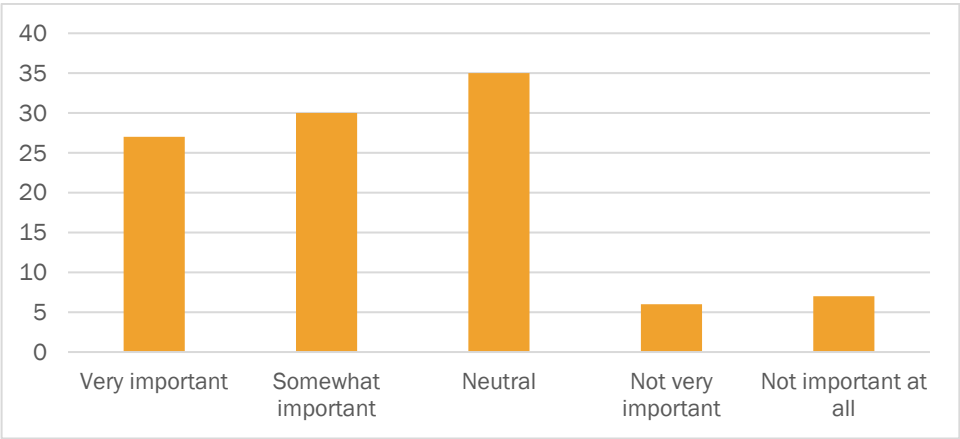


Figure 13c: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, Female respondents. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 41. Figure 13d

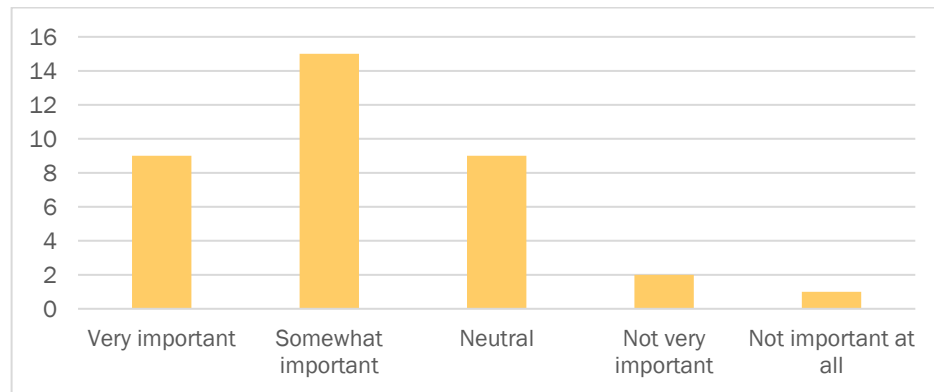


Figure 13d: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, Age group 18–24. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 42. Figure 13e

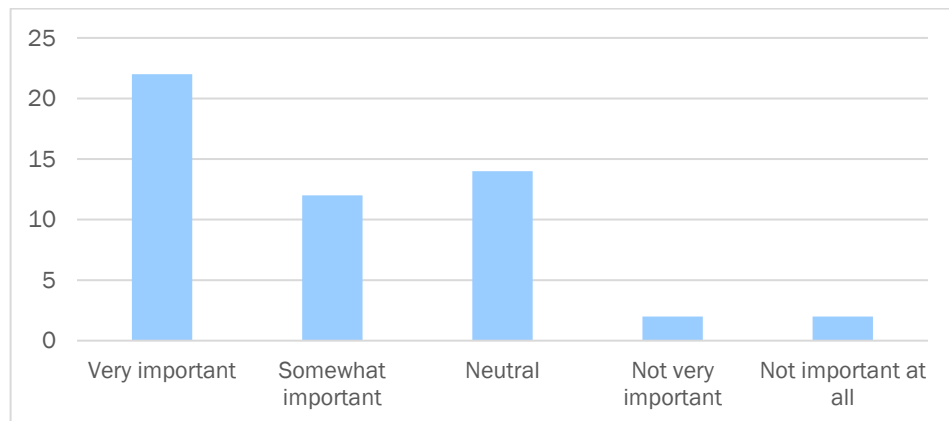


Figure 13e: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 43. Figure 13f

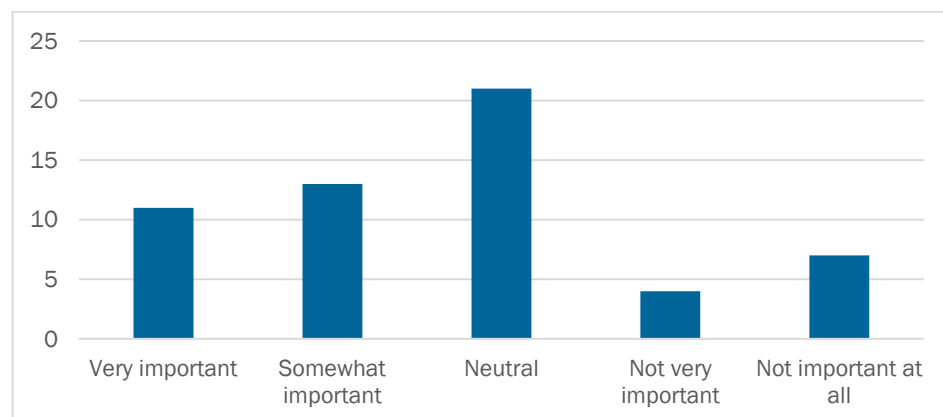


Figure 13f: Importance of sustainability and ethics when selecting fashion brands on social media, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 44. Figure 14b

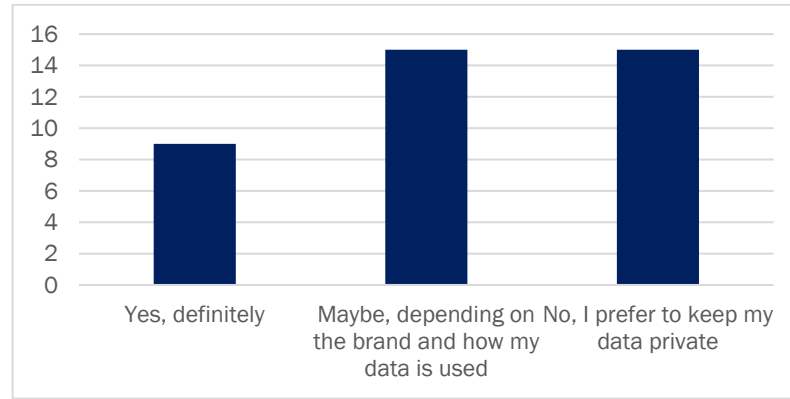


Figure 14b: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, Male respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 45. Figure 14c

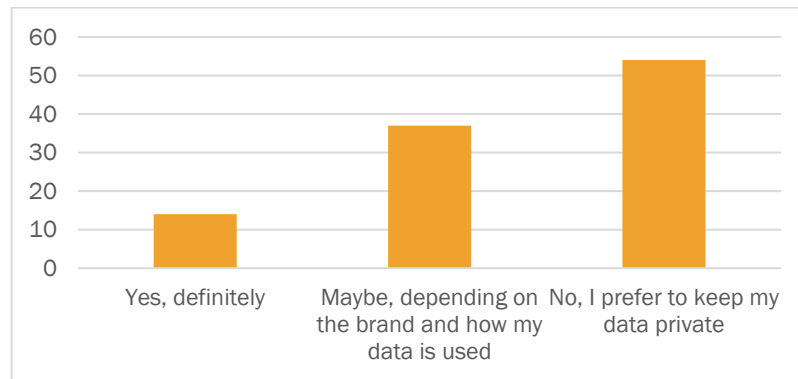


Figure 14c: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, Female respondents. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 46. Figure 14d

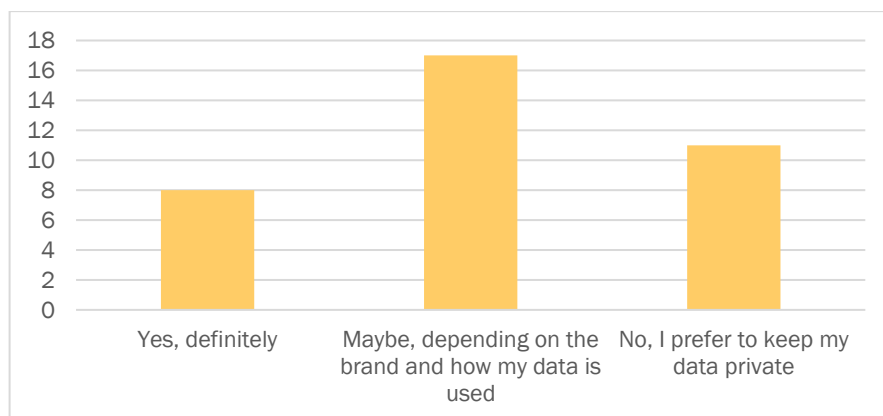


Figure 14d: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, Age group 18–24. (Author's own data, 2025).

Appendix 47. Figure 14e

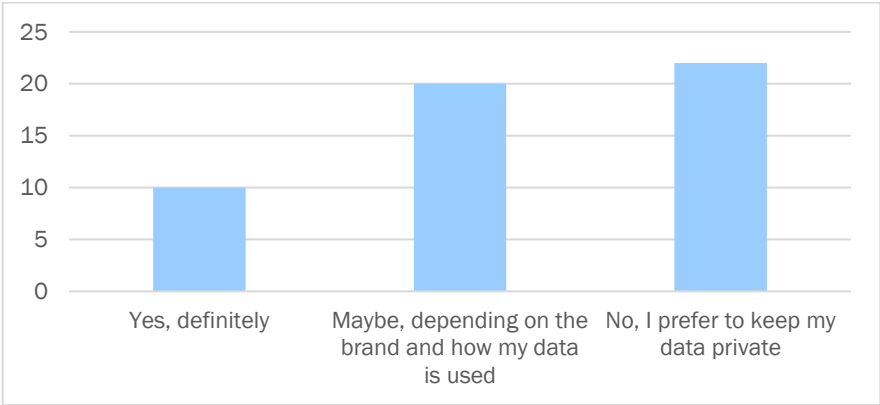


Figure 14e: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, Age group 25–40. (Author’s own data, 2025).

Appendix 48. Figure 14f

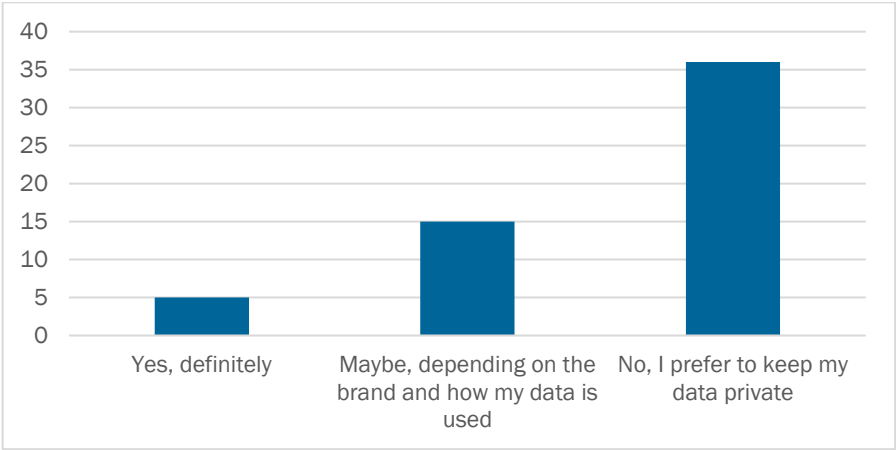


Figure 14f: Willingness to share personal data for personalised fashion recommendations, Age group 41–56. (Author’s own data, 2025).