



THE ROLE OF INFLUENCERS IN BUYING LUXURY BRANDS OF WOMEN'S HANDBAGS

Review paper
DOI: 10.5937/CT_ITI26398Z

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ABSTRACT: Social networks provide consumers with access to extensive information that influences all stages of the purchasing process, from information search to the purchase itself. The personalization of content, enabled by algorithms and real-time interactions, is a key element that places social networks at the centre of modern marketing. Their potential has also been recognized by fashion influencers, who have become key players between brands and consumers. They play an important role in shaping purchasing decisions themselves, especially for luxury products, because by creating visually appealing content and building relationships with followers, they influence their perception and increase the perceived value and exclusivity of the product. The basic purpose of our research was to determine whether exposure to influencers and following their posts increases interest and the likelihood of purchasing a luxury handbag.

Keywords: fashion influencers, women luxury handbags, social media.

ULOGA INFLUENSERA U KUPOVINI LUKSUZNIH BRENDOVA ŽENSKIH TORBI

APSTRAKT: Društvene mreže pružaju potrošačima pristup opsežnim informacijama koje utiču na sve faze procesa kupovine, od pretrage informacija do same kupovine. Personalizacija sadržaja, koju omogućavaju algoritmi i interakcije u realnom vremenu, ključni je element koji postavlja društvene mreže u centar modernog marketinga. Njihov potencijal su prepoznali i modni influenseri, koji su postali ključni igrači između brendova i potrošača. Oni igraju važnu ulogu u oblikovanju samih odluka o kupovini, posebno za luksuzne proizvode, jer kreiranjem vizuelno privlačnog sadržaja i izgradnjom odnosa sa pratiocima utiču na njihovu percepciju i povećavaju percipiranu vrednost i ekskluzivnost proizvoda. Osnovni cilj našeg istraživanja bio je da utvrdimo da li izloženost influencerima i praćenje njihovih objava povećava interesovanje i verovatnoću kupovine luksuzne torbe.

Ključne reči: modni influenseri, luksuzne ženske torbe, društvene mreže.



1. INTRODUCTION

The luxury handbag market is constantly evolving, reflecting dynamic trends shaped by consumer behavior, technological innovation, and cultural shifts. Trends not only define the aesthetics and functionality of handbags but also influence the very strategies of global luxury brands. Understanding trends is key to understanding the broader development of the luxury fashion industry [1].

Luxury handbags are more than just fashion accessories. They represent a combination of superior craftsmanship, innovative technology and personal expression. They combine functionality and aesthetics, which also reflect the cultural dynamics of today. In the future, they will also symbolize personal stories, social trends and various technological advances, while also reflecting changing social needs and consumer values.

In this paper, we presented, defined and analysed the field of social media and influencers in relation to luxury handbag brands.

2. FASHION INFLUENCERS

Fashion has always been a dynamic reflection of cultural shifts, societal values, and personal expression. For decades, magazines, designers, and celebrities dictated what was considered “in style”. However, with the rise of social media, the fashion landscape has changed dramatically.

The change toward a more sustainable fashion system requires efforts from multiple actors across the fashion market, from fashion designers, brands and retailers to consumers, but also policymakers or fashion associations [2].

Influencers are every day, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following in digital and physical spaces, and monetize their following by integrating “advertorials” into their blog or social media posts [3].

Influencers are winning, their popularity has taken off, and they reach more followers every day. It is impossible to open your Instagram page without seeing at least one Fashion Instagram influencer, they are taking Instagram and influencing to a whole new level and they know exactly what they are doing. They have a strong connection with their millions of followers, their perfect outfits and their perfect lives, and it feels like they are your best friend, the one you go to when you need advice [4].

Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and later TikTok have transformed how people share and consume information since the early 2000s. With the democratisation of content creation, it seemed that anyone with a smartphone could establish a personal brand, showcase their distinct aesthetic, and attract followers from around the world. This shift gave rise to a new class of trend-setters: influencers.

Fashion influencers gained large followings by sharing photos of their everyday outfits, offering style advice, and providing intimate glimpses into their personal lives. Their relatability and approachability set them apart from traditional celebrities, helping them



forge a closer bond with their audience. As their fan bases grew, brands took notice and began to collaborate with them [5].

Influencers also play a key role in shaping brand identity itself, by humanizing companies, providing a face and personality that audiences can relate to. This relationship-building is crucial in an era where consumers increasingly prioritize authenticity and transparency from the brands they support [6].

To maximize their potential, companies must prioritize ethical practices, ensure transparency in partnerships with influencers, and align collaboration with their brand values and the interests of their target audience [7].

A fashion influencer is a social media personality with a large following who primarily creates fashion-related content and has the ability to influence the opinions and purchasing behaviours of others through their recommendations [8]. Followers typically closely observe the influencer's activities, including their style and product recommendations.

3. WOMEN'S LUXURY FASHION HANDBAGS

Over the past century, the development of luxury women's handbags has been closely linked to broader social, cultural and economic changes, making them not just functional accessories, but powerful symbols of status, identity and personal expression [9].

In recent years, the luxury handbag industry has undergone dynamic changes that reflect broader shifts in fashion, consumer behaviour, and cultural values. Handbags, no longer just functional accessories, have evolved into powerful symbols of status, self-expression, and identity. Several key factors are influencing modern luxury handbag trends, including technological innovation, sustainability, celebrity and influencer endorsements, and a renewed focus on craftsmanship and exclusivity. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have had a major impact on consumer preferences, with fashion influencers and celebrities often showcasing the latest handbag styles, driving demand and shaping trends. In addition to aesthetics, consumers are increasingly valuing ethical considerations, which is driving luxury brands to adopt more sustainable and eco-conscious production methods. Leather alternatives, eco-friendly materials, and transparency in the supply chain are becoming as important as the design and heritage of the brand itself. Additionally, personalization and limited editions are on the rise as customers seek unique pieces that reflect their personal style and individuality [10].

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

We prepared a completely anonymous and short survey questionnaire on the web portal www.1ka.si. We chose a target population where we focused only on women. 58 women participated in the survey, of which 50 women answered the survey in full. The link to the online questionnaire was shared via online social platform Instagram.

First, we wanted to know the age of the respondents.

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
18-24	14	28 %
25-34	25	50 %
35-44	9	18%
45 -54	1	2%
55 and more	1	2%
Total	50	100%

The table 1 shows that 25 people belong to the age group between 25 and 34 years, which represents 50%. 14 people or 28% of the respondents belong to the age group between 18 and 24 years. 9 respondents belong to the age group between 35 and 44 years, which represents 18%. There is only one respondent in the age groups between 45 and 54 years and 55 years or more, so for each group this amounts to 2%.

Then we were interested in which social networks the respondents use most often.

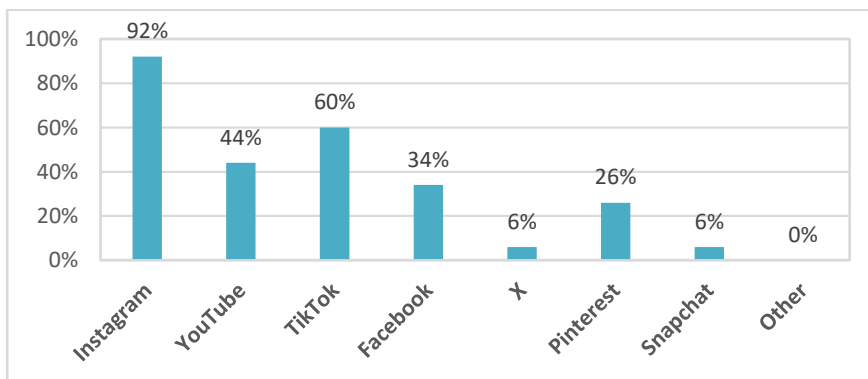


Figure 1: Most used social networks

The figure 1 shows that 46 respondents, which is 92%, use the social network Instagram the most. The second most used social network is TikTok, which is used by 30 respondents, which represents 60%. In third place is YouTube, which is used by 22 respondents (44%). It is followed by Facebook, which is used by 17 respondents, which is 34%. Pinterest is used by 13 respondents (26%), and X and Snapchat are used by only 3 people (6%). We also added the option for respondents to give another answer to the question, which they did not do in this case.

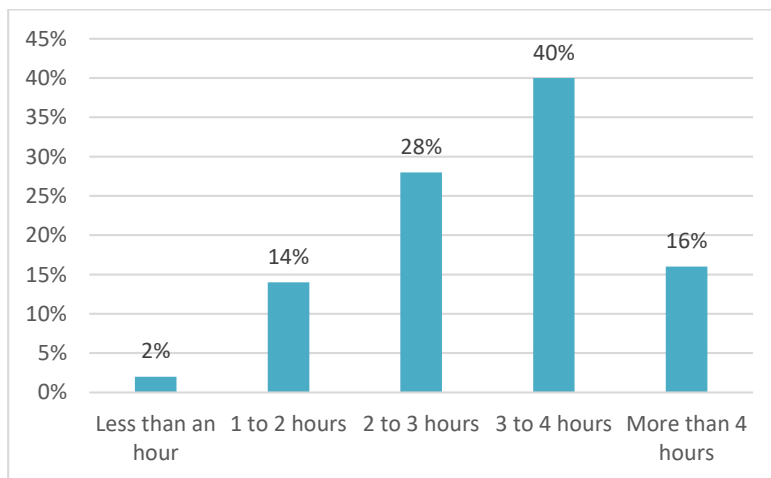


Figure 2: Time spent on social media

For this question, we were interested in how much time respondents spend on social networks. We found that 20 respondents spend 3 to 4 hours a day on social networks, which represents 40%. 154 respondents (28%) spend 2 to 3 hours on social networks, and 8 respondents (16%) spend more than 4 hours. 7 respondents (14%) use social networks only 1 to 2 hours a day and only one respondent (2%) uses them less than an hour a day (Fig 2). In the next question, we asked respondents how often they follow influencers on social media (Figure 3).

Most respondents (22), representing 44%, follow influencers on social media daily. 17 respondents (34%) follow them several times a day, and 8 respondents (16%) follow them weekly. Only two respondents (4%) follow them monthly and only one (2%) follows them rarely. No respondent answered that they never follow influencers on social media.

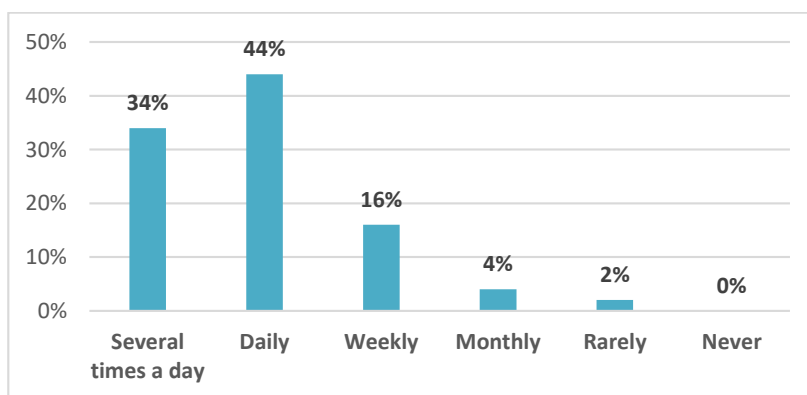


Figure 3: Influencers on social media

The next question asked us how many influencers the respondents follow on social media.

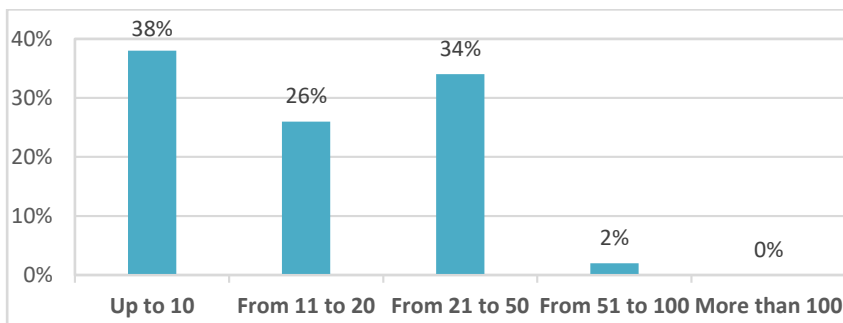


Figure 4: The number of influencers they follow

Most respondents follow up to 10 influencers, representing 38%. 17 respondents (34%) follow 21 to 50 influencers, and 13 respondents (26%) follow 11 to 20 influencers. Only one respondent (2%) follows 51 to 100 influencers, and none follows more than 100 influencers (Figure 4).

Then we were interested in what type of influencers the respondents follow, i.e. what kind of content they publish (Figure 5).

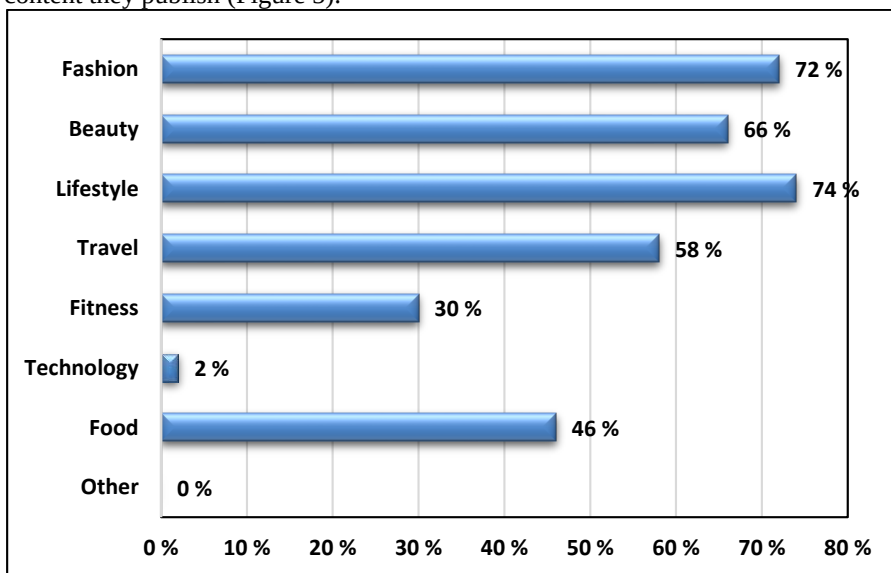


Figure 5: Types of influencers they follow

The most respondents follow influencers with lifestyle content, 37 of them, representing 74%. They are followed by fashion influencers, followed by 36 respondents (72%). In third

place are influencers who post content about beauty, followed by 33 respondents (66%). Influencers who post content about travel are followed by 29 respondents, representing 58%. They are followed by influencers with food content, followed by 23 respondents (46%). Influencers with fitness content are followed by 15 respondents (30%), and influencers with technology content are followed by only 1 respondent (2%). None of the respondents answered the answer with the option "other".

We were also interested in how often respondents see content about luxury handbags on their social networks. Most respondents, 18, see them on their networks weekly, which represents 36%. 16 respondents see them daily, which represents 32%. 6 respondents rarely see them (12%). 3 respondents answered several times a day, monthly, and never, each answer representing 6% (Figure 6).

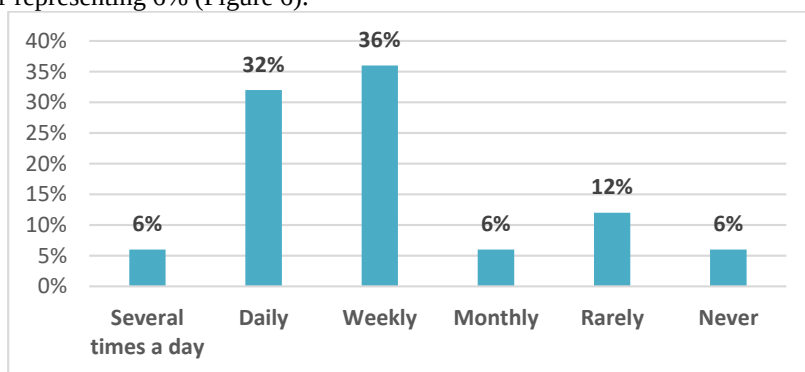


Figure 6: Frequency of seeing content about luxury handbags on social media

The last question asked us how likely it is to buy a luxury handbag based on an influencer's recommendation. 15 respondents, representing 30%, would likely buy a luxury handbag based on an influencer's recommendation. 13 respondents, representing 26%, are unlikely to buy a handbag based on an influencer's recommendation. 12 respondents (24%) are neutral about the decision. 9 respondents (18%) are very unlikely to buy a handbag based on an influencer's recommendation. 2 respondents, representing 4%, are very likely to follow the recommendations (Figure 7).

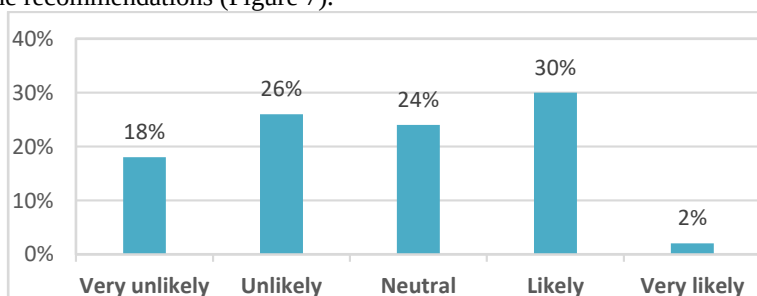


Figure 7: Probability of purchasing a luxury handbag after being recommended by an influencer



5. CONCLUSION

Influencers and social media have fundamentally transformed the way brands communicate with consumers over the past two decades, helping to change consumer culture and fashion trends. The transition to the digital age and the development of Web 2.0 have enabled the rise of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, where influencers reach millions of followers around the world with their content. They have become key intermediaries between brands and consumers, creating long-term relationships that go beyond traditional forms of advertising.

The fashion sector is one of the most important areas where influencers play a key role in spreading trends and shaping various cultural norms. Modern social media platforms have democratized fashion, allowing everyday individuals to share their personal style, set trends and influence their audiences. Fashion influencers have proven through their successful careers that it is possible to build strong personal brands that go beyond simply promoting products.

The success of influencers in the modern digital age is determined by authenticity, credibility and adaptability. Consumers, especially millennials and Generation Z, value the direct communication that influencers offer, which makes their decisions more thoughtful and personally relevant. They have become key players in modern marketing and culture, as they shape consumer preferences and behavioural patterns with their content. With their role, they are not just a tool for promotion but have become important players shaping the future of consumer culture.

Through research, we found that influencers have a positive impact on the purchase of luxury women's handbags, as well as that greater exposure to influencers is positively associated with increased interest in purchasing luxury handbags. The development of luxury handbags throughout history has reflected broader social, cultural and technological changes that have shaped women's lifestyles and attitudes towards fashion.

With their authenticity and carefully curated content, they successfully build trust and thus influence consumer behaviour. Their recommendations are based on personal experience, and through their connection with followers, they influence the perception of luxury products themselves, making them more desirable in the eyes of consumers. Frequent contact with content increases awareness of luxury brands and stimulates desire for them. Consumers who follow social media posts and follow fashion trends are looking for ways to imitate, which only increases the desire to purchase luxury handbags, as they perceive them as a status symbol and exclusivity. Influencers with a larger number of followers reach a wider audience, but of course it is not a key factor in the purchase decision.

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