

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
BAHCESEHIR UNIVERSITY**

**THE IMPACT OF FASHION BLOGS ON
CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR**

Master's Thesis

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ISTANBUL 2017

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SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE

MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF FASHION BLOGS IN CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

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Marketing Master Program

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Adnan Veysel Ertemel

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Since the emergence of web 2.0, blogs have continued to multiply on the web. Nowadays the phenomenon of blogs is flourishing quickly and will increase more and more in the coming years.

Blogs talks with consumers not to them which is considered a new way of communicating.

Using in-depth interview conducted for women between 18 and 30 years old living in Istanbul-Turkey, finding showed that this young category is aware of the importance of getting informed before proceeding to the buying process and that fashion blogs have an impact on their purchasing behavior.

Keywords: Blog, Blogging, consumer buying decisions, credibility, purchase.

ÖZET

MODA BLOGLARININ TÜKETİCİ ALIŞ DAVRANIŞINDAKİ ROLÜ

Noussaiba Hassini

Pazarlama Master Program

Tez Sorumlusu: Dr. Adnan Veysel Ertemel

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Web 2.0 ortaya ciktikten beri, internet uzerinde bloglar cogalmayi devam etti. su siralar blog fenomenu hizlica gelisiyor gittikce daha da cok artiracak.

bloglar musterilerler konusuyor hetap etmiyor ve bu iltisim kurumak yeni bir yolu.

18-30 yaş arası İstanbul'da yaşayan kadınlar için yapılan derin görüşme kullanarak, bu genç kategorinin satın alma işlemine başlamadan önce bilgilendirilmesinin öneminin farkında olduğunu ve moda bloglarının satın alma işlemlerini etkilediğini gösterdi davranışı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Blog, Bloglama, tüketici satın alma kararları, güvenilirlik, satın alma.

CONTENT

ABBREVIATIONS	viii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. FROM TRADITIONAL WOM TO EWOM	2
2.1 TRADITIONAL WOM.....	2
2.2 EVOLUTION FROM WOM TO EWOM.....	2
2.3 DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN EWOM AND WOM.....	4
3. FASHION INDUSTRY AND SOCIAL MEDIA	6
3.1 FASHION AND FASHION MARKETING.....	6
3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY.....	6
4. BLOGS	8
4.1 HISTORY OF BLOGGING.....	8
4.2 DEFINITION OF BLOGGING.....	9
4.2.1 Blogs: A Response To A Psychological Need.....	10
4.2.2 Types Of Blogs.....	10
4.2.3 The Steps Of Creating A Blog And Its Management.....	11
4.2.4 Profiteable Blogs.....	12
4.3 FASHION BLOGS AND BLOGGERS.....	12
4.3.1 Fashion Blogs As A Marketing Tool.....	13
4.3.2 Different Types of Sponsorship.....	14
4.4 MEGAPHONE EFFECT.....	15
4.5 PARASOCIAL INTERACTION THEORY.....	16
4.5.1 Outcomes of Parasocial Interaction.....	17
4.6 CHIARA FARRAGNI: WORLD'S MOST SUCCESSFUL FASHION BLOGGER.....	18
4.6.1 The Blond Salad: From A Fashion Blog To An 8M\$ Business.....	19
5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY	22
5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN :.....	22
5.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY:.....	22
5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	22
5.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES.....	23
5.4.1 Primary Research Methods.....	23
5.4.2 Secondary Research Methods.....	23
5.5 JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY.....	23
6. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING	24
7. FINDINGS	25
7.1 PRE-PURCHASE AWARENESS:.....	25
7.2 INTEREST IN FASHION BLOGS AND BLOGGERS:.....	26

7.3	SHARED VALUES AND LIFESTYLE WITH BLOGGERS:.....	27
7.4	BLOGGERS AND FASHION BRANDS:.....	28
7.5	TRUST TOWARDS FASHION BLOGGERS:	30
7.6	INFLUENCE OF FASHION BLOGGERS IN THE PURCHASE PROCESS:..	31
8.	CONCLUSION.....	33
8.1	DISCUSSION.....	33
8.2	IMPLICATION	35
8.3	LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES	36
	REFERENCES.....	38
	APPENDICES.....	42



ABBREVIATIONS

WOM:	Word Of Mouth
E-WOM:	Electronic Word Of Mouth
ICTs:	Information and communication technologies
PSI:	Para-social interaction



1. INTRODUCTION

Ignored by brands, long time ago blogs are now attracting more and more interest. They have thus pushed fashion brands to modify their communication strategy.

.Nowadays, brands have a propensity to solicit the most followed bloggers of the fashion blogosphere to promote their products.

That's why I decided to make my research in this particular subject. I wanted above all a theme which combines my passion and interest in fashion and the desire to discover a phenomenon little discussed so far.

Blogs are considered a personal space, the one you want to see, that you can personalize in the smallest details. Design, topics, format, mobile version, adding widgets, animated banner ... your imagination is the only limit. There are no rules you can express yourself about any item and give your advice, sometimes blogger are paid for it and other times it's their own vision and opinion which could be positive and negative for brands and consumers. This make us ask the following question: Are blogs a credible marketing tool where consumer can take advices from before purchasing? Do blogs really have a positive income for brands? Do blogs increase the shopping behavior? This is what this thesis is all about.

To answer these questions I will start with an introduction to blogs, fashion and the phenomenon of fashion in the first chapter, followed by a second chapter which includes the results and analysis of the research.

2. FROM TRADITIONAL WOM TO EWOM

Before the purchasing decisions, consumers collect information about products to reduce unknown risks (Wu & Wang, 2011). Buying behavior is defined by the importance of a product to an individual; when the product significance is high the perceived risk for the potential consumer is also high (ibid). To make a decision about a product from electronic sources and print, the majority of consumers use several channels to communicate with companies and assemble information (Rowley, 2001). In her study, Riegner (2007) determined different sources that influenced customers' buying decision. According to her, browsing retail stores has more influence than recommendations from close ties, or WOM (Riegner, 2007). Brand sites, catalogs, Search engines, user-generated sites and outdoor advertisements represent other influential sources, and she acclaimed that online sources and offline sources were related favorably (Ibid). Even if the research results showed that eWOM is one of the least known sources, Riegner(2007) advise that this is because it is still new, and it only impacts specific products and purchase channels. Yet, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) claimed that eWOM is one of the best sources when it comes to brand attitude influence and judgment.

2.1 TRADITIONAL WOM

The most common definition of WOM is given by Arndt (1967), who describes it as an oral person-to-person communication between a receiver and a transmitter. The receiver perceives a non-commercial message concerning a brand, product, service or organization. Similarly, WOM can be defined as informal communication, person-to-person between a sender and a receiver concerning a brand, product, service or organization (Harrison-Walker, 2001).

We then retain a broad definition of classical WOM as an informal exchange of consumer-to-consumer information.

From 2000 onwards, with the rise of the Internet, social networks (websites that create a network of friendly or professional knowledge and provide tools for interaction, Dwyer, 2007) have emerged. These sites generated researches on new concepts such as eWOM.

2.2 EVOLUTION FROM WOM TO EWOM

The Internet has become one of the most important means of communication and information with online platforms (social networks, discussion forums, and blogs). The latter have the capacity to change perceptions and behaviors in a rapid, wide and

uncontrolled manner (Morissey, 2005). From a managerial point of view, it is important to follow the evolution of the WOM and to identify its particularities (difference between WOM and eWOM).

Kozinets, D Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner (2010), present the evolution of the WOM theory in three models: Organic interconsumer, linear marketer and network co-production.

In the first model, WOM is considered a social force. This WOM can be defined as organic because there are no influences from marketers. In a context of weak marketing communication, the purpose of this WOM is to guide and help consumers. In this model, internet technology is non-existent. WOM's motivation is to help and warn other consumers about the poor quality of a product or service.

The second model incorporates marketing actions (promotions and advertisements) to influence the consumer. The WOM theories emphasize the importance of particularly influential consumers (known as opinion leaders) in the WOM process. These opinion leaders are targeted and influenced by Marketers, who recommend to their friends a service, brand or product.

The last stage is developed using information and communication technologies (ICTs, Cova and Cova, 2002, Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Consumers are thus coproducers of value and WOM is idiosyncratic, creative, and resistant (Kozinets, 2001). Communication is no longer unidirectional, but exchanges are now between members of consumer networks. It is this last model that is the most important to define the eWOM.

Several authors attempt to define the eWOM. For Litvin et al. (2008), eWOM represents: "All informal communications directed to consumers through Internet technologies related to the use or characteristics of certain goods and services or their vendors». For Chu (2009), it is "the act of exchanging marketing information with online consumers".

The most common definition used is the one given by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), who define it as: "Any positive or negative statement made by a prospective, actual or former

client, on a product or service who are available to a multitude of consumers through the internet ".

EWOM can then be defined in a general way as the set of informal communications targeting consumers using Internet technology.

2.3 DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN EWOM AND WOM

WOM communication, whether traditional or electronic, involves individuals who share information about products and brands. Despite some similarities, the fact remains that these two types of communication possess a number of unique characteristics. First of all, eWOM is electronic in nature, and does not involve face-to-face, in opposition to traditional WOM, which involves oral communication.

In the context of traditional word-of-mouth, individuals have the opportunity to chat with friends and family instantly and immediately so it is a communication of small groups of individuals while eWOM allows individuals to connect with millions of people around the world (Alba, Lynch, Janiszewski, Lutz, Sawyer and Wood, 1997). EWOM communication is spreading faster and more people. Indeed, communication is bidirectional and multidirectional (Dellarocas, 2003). The Internet makes communications more accessible and enables them to be disseminated throughout the world.

Traditional WOM only occurs when the recipient and source are available and connected, for example, face to face or by telephone. As for eWOM messages, they are easily accessible when a consumer needs information for a purchase decision. Most text-based information is archived and therefore available for an indefinite period of time (Herr, Kardes and Kim, 1991, Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

In the context of traditional WOM, information is exchanged in private conversations, direct observation is difficult. Unlike the eWOM electronic message, which by its presentation and format make it observable (Cheung and Thadani, 2010). As a result, consumers have access to opinions and experiences on different products, services and brands each time they have a decision to make.

In addition, through digital media, individuals are able to search for information in a more restricted way. The information can then be found in different places on the

Internet such as online discussion forums, boycott sites, blogs, social networks (Henning-Thurau and Walsh, 2003, Goldsmith, 2006). In addition, online information is more voluminous than offline information (Chatterjee, 2001).

Another important difference between the classical WOM and the electronic WOM is the fact that the information originating from the first comes from a person known as family, colleagues and friends, whereas in an electronic context the sender of the message is often unknown (Park and Lee, 2009) or anonymous (Dellarocas, 2003). Some authors (Schindler and Brickart, 2004) refer to the weakness of the relationship (Weak of tie) in an online context as opposed to the force of relationships in an offline context (Tie Strength). Brown and Reingen (1987) examine the effect of link strength on the flow of information. According to the two authors, weak links facilitate word-of-mouth, while strong relationships influence consumer decision-making.

In addition, eWOM is generally controlled by a third party, such as the web host or a moderator of the platform. These particularities raise the question of the credibility of the source and the message (Richins, 1983, Bone, 1995, Schindler and Bickart, 2004) and trust (Sen and Lerman, 2007).

Some authors also discuss consumer pro-activity in the context of the electronic word of mouth (Libai, Bolton, Bugel, Ruyter, Gotz, Risselada and Stephen, 2010, Henning-Thurau, Malthouse, Friege, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy and Skiera, 2010). Given this unprecedented capacity to connect individuals, the consumer will abandon his traditional passive role as a simple receiver of information. Indeed, with the arrival of the Internet and more precisely the multiplication of electronic platforms, the consumer now exercises greater control over communication and the literature speaks of consumer empowerment (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). This empowerment has an impact on consumption, for example, on the behavior of choice of consumers to have an active role (through experience, participation, and incentives for advocacy) on online platforms, which helps the company promote its products and brands (Oetting, 2009).

3. FASHION INDUSTRY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Fashion is a social feature, which reflects the manner of living, styles and improvements within the society. Fashion has been influenced through history, minimalistic cuts and clean lines brought by Great Depression, elegance and glamour came along with the birth of cinematography, music styles has also contributed namely Rock and roll in 60's or Disco in 80's. Nowadays, current fashion is influenced by the Internet and digital technologies. Not only did the Internet change the sense of design but has transformed the entire industry (Easey, 2002). It made it worldwide, targeted, direct and interactive.

3.1 FASHION AND FASHION MARKETING

“Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only. Fashion is in the sky, in the street, fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening.” Coco Chanel.

Fashion is changing overtime, and bringing new styles in every aspect of human life. (Easey, 2002). Fashion must be considered inside the cultural context (English, 2009).

Original designing skills and knowledge of customer's needs are essential for fashion. When design depends on talent, knowledge of customers depends on marketing that ensures the talents are being used to the fullest, letting the business grow. The practice of fashion marketing is not the same as other marketing practices (Easey, 2002).

Another important fact is a strong brand image, it is more than a logo, a name or a design, it is a set of unique features and ideas that the customer connects in his mind with the brand.

3.2 TRANSFORMATION OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY

Throughout history, fashion has always reflected the lifestyle of the current era, for example in the 30's and with the cinematography on the rise fashion copied multiple Hollywood divas. Then in the 50's it was time for rock'n'roll to influence fashion. And in the 70's it was the emergence of life style magazines that led to the merge of haute couture with vintage fashion. Now, international issues such as the concern for the environment inspire fashion.

The globalization of fashion requires international brands to use suitable marketing techniques depending on the socio-cultural differences. For instance, H&M in 2011 has

modified his promotional pictures to meet with the etiquette of the Middle Eastern Muslim world.



4. BLOGS

Each one of us exists among his entourage, by the sharing of information. Internet users have well understood that information is much more valuable once shared, than kept for oneself.

Blogs respond to this need to share information. Before the emergence of the Internet, the only reliable sources of information were traditional media. The reason is that it was difficult to acquire the information and to disseminate it. In such a way that traditional methods have reinforced the idea of the value of "control of information". The birth of the phenomenon of blogs, gives the opportunity and the capacity, to each one, to be its own source.

4.1 HISTORY OF BLOGGING

Tim Berners-Lee is the man behind the origin of the blogs, the inventor of the World Wide Web. He would have blogged without knowing it. It is from 1996 that the weblogs appear; then in 1997 John Barger invented the term weblog which means log of the web.

That might be considered as the start point of the era of blogging that would follow less than a year later, when blogging-specific platforms began to debut. The blog, contraction of the term weblog, therefore corresponds to a logbook on the web. This will lead to the creation, in 1999, of a first blogging solution making the creation of blogs much easier and free of charge.

Later in the nineties an increase of resources emerged for bloggers. One of them, Open Diary, launched in October 1998 and became one of the most pivotal blogging platforms.

In 1999, the programmer Peter Merholz shortened the term "weblog" to "blog."

It was part all during a period that represented many blogging opportunities, given that each platform was attempting to boast its own unique set of features for a particular audience. In 1999 alone, Blogger, LiveJournal, and Xanga all launched. (Amanda, 2016)

This is also when the first rumoured video blogs emerged. In January 2000, a man named Adam Kontras added to a written blog post a video that updated friends and family on what he was doing. That November, Professor Adrian Miles posted what some speculate to be one of the first video blogs, as well, calling it a “vog.”

2002 was the year for blogging, blogger Heather B. Armstrong was fired for writing about her colleagues on her personal blog, Dooce.com.

Newsweek expected the replacement of traditional media by blogs, in December 2002, it partially came to fruition.

In June 2003, Google launched AdSense, which helped pairing blogs with related advertisements. Being able to advertise on blogs was a major milestone for bloggers, as it created the opportunity to monetize their work. It set the stage for blogs to be sponsored by major brands that fit their respective credos, or receive free products in exchange for endorsements or reviews. Blogging started becoming a business and soon after that community of bloggers started making money of what they for so long, considered a hobby. (Can, 2014)

4.2 DEFINITION OF BLOGGING

Throughout the years blogging was defined by many specialists. Herring, Scheidt, Wright, and Bonus (2005) define a blog as a “frequently edited webpage whose main use is recording individual articles and displaying them in chronological order”. Saxton (2008), studying content, notes that “Most blogs tend to act as information filters with commentary from the author.”

Blogs were one of the first inventions in the Web 2.0 flow and have continued to attract attention (O’Reilly, 2005). In traditional media, the flow of information is one way, yet blogs have created a new pattern of interactivity that some businesses made a smart move by taking advantage of it. (Chiang, and Chung 2011)

Blogs today represent one of the most important phenomena in the latest developments of web 2.0 (KLEIN, 2007, p.125).

The emergence of blogging coincides in time with important events such as the 11th of September 2001, the war in Iraq, and the tsunami in Asia in 2004. People wanted to

know what the whole world thought and felt and what were the ideal means of transmitting these impressions. The blogosphere was gradually established and was therefore fuelled by news, in fact bloggers wanted to share comment on information and debate on topics.

A blog is defined as a web site similar to a logbook. It consists of tickets classified in an ante-chronological order and its content may be textual, graphic, video or audio. It can focus on a specific topic or on different topics related to the interests of the blogger. It is one of the first web supports that offers an interactivity between the blogger and his readers. (Krishnamurthy, 2002)

4.2.1 Blogs: A Response To A Psychological Need

We can find many psychological reasons that would explain the abundance of bloggers. In his book 'Blogs new media for all', the author Benoit desavoie cites the most significant reasons.

First, the blog is a way for its author to attract the attention of others. By making his opinions, thoughts, and gestures public, the blogger satisfies his ego by receiving comments from other people, by observing the number of visits, the author satisfies his need to feel that he counts in the eyes of the other.

This ego satisfaction is directly related to the need to assert oneself within society. In order to prove that we exist, we feel the need to stand out. The blog is an effective way to achieve it.

4.2.2 Types Of Blogs

Blogs represent a new media for communication, they are means of expression and they "start conversations" unlike traditional media. They respond today to an expectation of customers who are looking for a personalized and authentic speech: "to link the real and the virtual" Krishnamurthy (2002)

- i. Introspective blogs or "diaries":** Views and impressions are explained. Travel logs are included in this category, knowing that they record the journey of a traveller every day via testimonials, photos and videos.
- ii. Opinion blogs:** Where people can talk about current events and debate them
- iii. The blogs of educational knowledge**

- iv. **Corporate blogs:** internal blogs to track the progress and management of a project

4.2.3 The Steps Of Creating A Blog And Its Management

The creator of the blog must first of all create a digital identity in his own right and develop a real and frank communication with its readers and partners. He must take the position of an expert on the chosen subject and dedicate his / her blog around his or her theme (s) of predilection.

- i. **Define an editorial line:** it will be the conductive line of the blog, it reveals the theme of it and the values that the blogger wishes to put forward in the writing of his articles, his photos and videos...
- ii. **Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** They are the measure of an important piece of information in a web site, enabling you to give as much information as possible by being understood by all its users. For a blog, this can be the number of unique visitors or the frequency of visits of the net surfers.
- iii. **Interesting the Internet user:** The blogger must develop articles related to his theme, for indeed the blog serves to establish a dialogue with its readers.
- iv. **Creating quality content:** The blogger positions himself as an expert in his field, and must therefore provide relevant articles of good quality but also information useful to the community of Internet users. The blogger must generate valuable content that the community will appreciate and want to share.
- v. **Publish regularly:** The blogger has to keep his blog up to date; publishing articles and photos several times a week seems necessary.
- vi. **Use the right CMS (content management for creating a blog):** There are several platform providers like Blogger, Wordpress, Typepad and Movable Type. The most used one is Wordpress, this platform is free, solid and infinitely customizable with themes (designs) plug-in and widgets.
- vii. **Choosing your domain name:** By choosing an external hosting, the domain name will look like an unprofessional image because it will include the mention of BlogSpot or wordpress. While choosing hosting on its own server, the blog will have a professional look and will be fully customizable with the use of a large number of plug-in and widgets.

- viii. **Promote the blog:** Through social media, the practice of SEO on search engines to increase its visibility or even press relations.
- ix. **Respect the Internet and its laws:** The blog must comply with the laws and rules of Internet and will give Internet users a reassurance and a confidence in this platform.
- x. **Make the blog alive:** Regularly propose new content, share its publications on different platforms and social media for more visibility on the web.

4.2.4 Profitable Blogs

Bloggers have gradually become more professional. Some of them created their blogs for a personal purpose, they simply wanted to share their passion and adventures with family or friends. Then after knowing a big success over the months, with more and more visitors, a few bloggers decided to work full-time which can be remunerated in many ways

- i. **Sponsored articles:** being paid to write an article for a brand, an agency, a hotel...;
- ii. **Advertising inserts:** being paid to put an ad banner at a place on the blog for a given time;
- iii. **The affiliation:** a partner gives a commission to the blog for the purchases made by the net surfers sent by this same blog. The more Internet users click on the links provided by the blog and make purchases on the merchant sites, the more the percentage of commission is interesting for the blogger;
- iv. **Advertising or partnerships:** specialized companies allow managing, organizing and advertising campaigns as an intermediary between advertisers and publishers. The blogger works in collaboration with a brand or a destination such as Luxury brand for example.
- v. **Sale of products:** sale of books, guides, mobile applications or tablets;
- vi. **Training:** training a group of people to teach them different skills

4.3 FASHION BLOGS AND BLOGGERS

“Fashion blogs are an example of the web phenomenon to be explained.” (McQuarrie, Edward, Jessica, and Barbara, 2013) Today, fashion blogs are very commonly used. In every 100 blog, 55 belong to the fashion segment. Fashion blogs are written by both

fashion professionals and normal people who have an interest in the field. Fashion bloggers keep their followers updated and new trends and fashions and inspire them by sharing their own personal style. Since the emergence of the first blogs, a number of fashion bloggers have generated large readerships and a huge number of both Instagram and Facebook followers. The top fashion blogger for 2016 is CHIARA FERRAGNI, the 28 years old LA based Italian with more than 8 Million followers on Instagram, 1.8 Million Facebook subscribers and a website enormously famous in both USA and Italy (Lauren, 2016). According to Allen (2009), “Fashion blogs have changed the face of fashion communication through control being shifted from sender to receiver.” Their Journal of Global Fashion Marketing 213 popularity can also be explained through the nature of fashion itself, which encourages endless discussion (Allen, 2009).

4.3.1 Fashion Blogs As A Marketing Tool

The huge amount of information diffused has led consumers to become less interested in brand messages delivered through traditional advertisement. Nielsen’s findings show that 89% of European consumers trust recommendations from others and 64% trust consumer opinions posted online, but only a minority of 28% trust ads in magazines and 29% ads on TV. (Nielsen, 2011) Blogs and social networks are becoming an alternative communication tool that has an impact on consumer purchase decisions (Kim, 2011). Blogs are different from traditional marketing channels because they engage customers in conversation which allowed them to change the process of marketing from exposure to active participation (Wright, 2006). Through blogs, marketers can build a relationship with their customers, to collaborate and learn from them in an interactive way not possible through traditional marketing channels. (Parise and Guinan, 2008)

Bloggers’ influential impact on their readers is, according to Belch (2011), due to their unique position – they are regarded as fashion idols, while at the same time the readers show care for and personal engagement in the bloggers’ everyday lives, which indicates that they are also considered as friends. Belch (2011) explain that “Many companies feel that the best way to connect with consumers is by using regular looking, everyday people with whom the average person can easily identify.”

Burberry was the first luxury fashion brand to use social media marketing, and as a result saw profits increased by 40%. (Phan, Thomas and Heine, 2011).

Luxury brands' use of social media began to emerge in 2009. Gucci came up with a multicultural social network site, "Guccieyeweb.com," coinciding with the launch of a new sunglasses collection having as a main target customers from the generation of social media and digital gadgets. Gucci updates its Facebook site up to three times a day and is constantly tweeting on the blue bird. Burberry started a social network site, "Artofthetrench.com," in November 2009, its main objective was being non-commercial: but instead shed the light on the admiration for the design of their trench coats and while communicating its culture with passionate customers. Online sales remarkably increased after the site was launched and the participation of customers online was a good plus as Burberry creates more stories of the brand. (Samsung Design Net, 2009)

Dolce & Gabbana mainly uses social media to get feedback with no intermediate from its customers. Dolce & Gabbana sends invitations to fashion bloggers to have them at the front seats of its fashion shows, and the bloggers automatically upload feedback from the show on Facebook and Instagram. This way, customers get to see their favourite brands models directly without the interfering of fashion editors, and the company builds instant purchase intentions. Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent, and Stella McCartney now have accounts on all the social media platforms, snapchat included.

4.3.2 Different Types of Sponsorship

There are different types of sponsorship in fashion blogs:

- i. The sponsored ticket:** very concretely, the blogger must write an article about a product, a brand or a website and is remunerated financially for it.
- ii. Affiliate:** the blogger receives a commission on each sale generated via her blog. To do this, it can display an advertising insert on its blog directing to a particular merchant site or make regular shopping selections - or wish lists - in its articles.
- iii. The gift:** the blogger receives a free gift. A priori free because often, the blogger, in the joy of having received a new pair of shoes, enthusiastically mentions the brand that generously spoiled him.
- iv. The operation:** the blogger participates in a very often unpublished experience (a visit, a trip); reserved for some other selected lucky ones with whom she will share the adventure. Generally, transactions bring nothing more to the bloggers

than the experience in itself, sometimes a small gift or a gift voucher. Obviously, brands are waiting (without directly forcing) bloggers to devote an article to this experience and then have a special relationship with the brand, a relationship that the brand hopes will also develop with readers.

- v. **The giveaway:** the blogger makes a gift to a reader drawn among the comments (or the right answers if there is a question), a gift that the blogger has previously received for her or not. In the latter case, she sets up the giveaway either to advertise a brand she enjoys, to spoil a reader, or to make her readers want to return to her blog, or all three.

4.4 MEGAPHONE EFFECT

One of the first fashion bloggers to grab the megaphone was a 13-year-old girl (Rosman, 2009); by 2010 this blogger had been profiled in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Guardian*, and other publications, and her blog posts were read by tens of thousands. This blogger's hold of the megaphone is the fruit of her actions not by birth or through institutional position. The phenomenon is not limited to the fashion context or blogging. *Chocolate and Zucchini* is a food blog of which the author was not trained as a chef and did not work for a food magazine before starting the blog, instead, she was employed in the computer domain. Her posts yet receive over 100,000 views. (Rosman, 2009) *Tight Ass Little Apartment*, a blog about interior design and home decoration. This blogger was never trained in design or employed as a designer before starting the blog. Blogging aside, Yelp.com, a site that hosts reviews of local businesses, each year deems some of its most active reviewers to be Yelp Elite. A multiyear member of the Elite may post hundreds of restaurant reviews, receive thousands of compliments, and be read by tens of thousands, without ever having owned a restaurant, worked for a food publication, or been a chef; these online reviewers have got hold of the megaphone. Likewise, "user generated content" on YouTube and elsewhere, such as haul videos, provides ordinary consumers opportunities to grab the megaphone (Burgess and Green 2009; Snickers and Vonderau 2009).

The megaphone effect, as treated here, is specific: it occurs when ordinary consumers, defined as individuals lacking professional experience and not holding an institutional or family position, post to the web about consumption and acquire a mass audience for these posts.

Consumer bloggers achieve an audience that historically was only available to institution-ally located professionals (McCracken, 1986), but they achieve this audience by means of publicly consuming: choosing, evaluating, and engaging with clothing and posting accounts of this consumption that garner a large audience of strangers. (Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian 2011)

Turner (2010) provides a conceptual framework that situates the megaphone effect within a larger cultural movement that he terms the “*demotic turn*,” which embraces such phenomena as talk radio and reality television (Rose and Wood 2005), in addition to various forms of online behaviour. The demotic turn is defined as an increase in opportunities for ordinary people to appear in the media. Normally only media professionals, other occupants of powerful institutional positions (e.g., government officials or business leaders), and designated celebrities appear on television or otherwise gain a mass audience. Moreover, celebrities became that way by prior successful performances in a credentialed institutional setting (entertainment, sports, etc.). Until very recently, ordinary individuals lacked access to the mass media and could only gain that access by successful performances in specified institutional settings—however extraordinary their individual motivation or skill. (McQuarrie, Edward, Jessica and Barbara 2013)

4.5 PARASOCIAL INTERACTION THEORY

The para-social interaction explains the development of consumer relationships with mass media, such as radio and television. PSI is considered as an illusionary experience, where consumers interact with personas (celebrities, characters or bloggers) as if they are present and engaged in a mutual relationship. In such situations, people believe they are engaged in a direct two-way conversation where they believe that the celebrity or the person reaching them is addressing them directly with no mediums.

PSI relationships can sometimes reach the point where consumers consider the persons on the other end as their real friends (Stern, Russell, and Russell 2007).

While some research suggests that PSI is developed with multiple interactions, others have evidence that the length of the relationship does not have a direct impact of the PSI and that feelings of PSI can be seen from the very first exposures.

PSI can then be created from initial interactions although a more intensive exposure is meant to strengthen these relationships and make them deeper.

Recent research shows that PSI is no longer restricted to traditional mass media but is also widely fostered via online messages that are aiming to bring the viewer closer to a person, which can be either a brand or a celebrity.

For a better PSI, brand representatives often base their responses on a script that has been approved before. That is why most of the time representatives are not identifiable so the consumer cannot tell who is answering its questions or comments but instead believes that all responses are coming directly from the brand. Further, when the interactions with the consumer are multiple generally it is not the same employee answering but the unification of the messages makes it seem like they are all coming from one person. In addition, the remarkable development of social media made it possible for marketers to manage these responses without staining human resources.

Automated Social Media's software can even analyze content and generate the right responses for each situation. Verbal and nonverbal message cues have been used to foster PSI, it is argued that message cues can be used to preserve the feelings of a two-way interaction between the persona and the brand for a better PSI experience.

4.5.1 Outcomes of Parasocial Interaction

The two message components that feed PSI: interactivity and openness in communication are also crucial for relationship marketing for building trust and for the development of interpersonal relationships. (Belch, 2011)

The relationship marketing literature supports the notion that timely and relevant communication is a major precursor for the development of perceptions of trust and encourages the expansion of committed relationships, which increases both loyalty intentions and cooperation (Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Not only is two-way communication important, the perception of openness in communication is critical for establishing strong relationships. PSI experiences are considered as resembling interpersonal relationships, to the point that individuals “feel that they know and understand the persona in the same intimate way they know and understand flesh-and-blood friends” (Perse and Rubin 1989, p 60).

As a result, outcomes of PSI experiences ought to be similar to those of “real” interpersonal relationships and Studies examining the effects of PSI are there to support this notion.

PSI can increase engagement and those engaged in PSI aim to affirm their relationship with the mediated persona (Grant, Guthrie, and Ball-Rokeach 1991; Horton and Wohl 1956) through behaviours such as increased viewing and purchasing from the programs they are fans of.

4.6 CHIARA FARRAGNI: WORLD’S MOST SUCCESSFUL FASHION BLOGGER

When it comes to building a career as a fashion blogger, there's no preferred business good example over Chiara Ferragni. Since propelling The Blonde Salad as an individual style blog in 2009, the 27-year-old has extended her group to 16 individuals, inked associations with extravagance brands like Burberry and Dior, and end up noticeably one of the most generously compensated bloggers continually, getting roughly 7 million euros a year (or about \$8 million). As a result of the blogger's business-sagacious practices, Harvard brought Ferragni and The Blonde Salad fellow benefactor Riccardo Pozzoli to take an interest in the Ivy League college's initially form blogger contextual analysis in 2015.

Ferragni makes her own choices and has always had a signature style which has formed her identity as a fashion blogger (Keinan et al.2015). She describes her way of dressing as “effortlessly chic” (Keinan et al. 2015), which she presents through her blog entries and her Instagram posts. As Chiara explains: *“I used to mix and match Chanel bags with Zara or H&M clothes. My followers always liked this because they could see how cool a cheap sweater can look when you wear it well. It was something they could really relate to”* (Keinan et al. 2015). As she suggests, it is very important for a follower to be able to relate to her personal style which shows her as a wearer of both high end and high street labels. By showing her audience typical output, she gave her followers tools to recognize her personal style and thus creates a relationship with them.

4.6.1 The Blond Salad: From A Fashion Blog To An 8M\$ Business

Just a few years ago Chiara Ferragni was a fashionable Italian law student with a passion for posting photos of her personal style online.

Now, she sits atop two companies worth \$8 million. She's been on the covers of magazines all over the world, earned the attention of the Harvard Business School, and just sat front row at two dozen New York Fashion Week shows.

As CBS News' correspondent Michelle Miller reports, Ferragni is not a model, she's not an actress, not even a traditional celebrity. But the 27-year-old is a brand, and a lucrative one.

She's the co-founder and editor-in-chief of fashion blog-turned-lifestyle-website, "The Blonde Salad." She founded it in 2009 -- for \$10 -- with her current CEO Riccardo Pozzoli.

"When I started... I was doing it just to share," Ferragni said. "Like, because I love sharing my photos. But that was about it. My intention was to create something that people loved to look at, and they could find inspiration from, and that was it."

The Blonde Salad now has more than 500,000 unique visitors every month and brings in more than \$1.5 million in advertising and referred sales.

"My secret has always been to be true to myself," Ferragni said. "I've never tried too hard."

Ferragni and her team of 16 have become so successful, the Harvard Business School has made her the first blogger ever selected for a case study. Professor Anat Keinan and her students have analyzed every aspect of the start-up business.

"She is the most successful fashion blogger," Keinan said. "She was very creative in monetizing her blog and turning it into a real business, a multi-million dollar business. One of the main reasons for her success is this ability to be relatable but also aspirational at the same time."

She is relatable, aspirational, and popular. Today she has 9.4 million followers on Instagram, with posts regularly earning 400 000 likes.

"For someone like Chiara to have 9.4 million-plus Instagram followers is incredible," the editor-in-chief of Yahoo Style, Joe Zee said. *"I mean today, your followers is your currency. She was really there at the very beginning, and when you are sort of a trailblazer in a new medium, you really grow your fans fast, quickly, and really with a lot of loyalty."*

"Besides being such a gorgeous woman, you know, she is also so global. She really communicates the image of the brand so well," Calvin Klein Women's Creative Director Francisco Costa said.

Calvin Klein and other major labels like Chanel, Louis Vuitton, and Steven Madden want to tap her online network of potential customers through collaborations, both paid and unpaid.

Chiara thinks she is transparent in how she operates her business.

"You can totally work with brands. People love seeing that, but you have to build stories. You have to build credibility, and those brands have to really be the perfect fit for yourself," she said.

"What they bring to her is cache, and what she brings to them is that sort of halo of what social media is," Zee said. "At the same time, her personal look and her personal, sort of, persona is very on-brand for them. So it's a win-win for both companies."

The stylish influencer has earned a seat front row at fashion shows in New York, Milan and Paris. Nearly a month-long schedule packed with hair, makeup, costume changes, and runways.

Designers send her clothes and accessories to wear, some on loan and some as gifts. She makes as much as \$50,000 for appearances and hosting gigs.

But Chiara makes most of her money with her own line of shoes. The Chiara Ferragni collection brought in nearly \$5 million 2 years ago.

The girl who started blogging about fashion is now creating and inspiring it by gracing the covers of the international magazines she used to read.

"I feel right now we are in the best moment for the fashion industry for what I do"
Ferragni said. *"Because it's, like, all the rules have changed so much, and so now there
are no rules."*



5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this part we will be discussing the tools methods and techniques we used in this project to carry out the research and derive the findings and analysis.

5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN :

To be able to gather the necessary data, in depth interviews took place using qualitative approach since the qualitative research can offer the capacity to gain an accurate understanding and insights behind the reasons that push people to engage in particular action and behaviors (Rosenthal, 2016). It provides a path in order to acquire a deep comprehension of the factors, stimulus and attitudes behind the different human behaviors (Kaae and Traulsen, 2015).

In depth interviews represent a way to introduce open-ended questions to respondents so that they can freely provide their opinions in regard to a specific subject, with the interviewer's ability to follow up the interviewees, which can lead to a deep understanding of respondents' opinions, experiences, perceptions, and knowledge (Patton, 2002). The respondents who have been chosen in the study were engaged in face to face in depth interviews to examine to which extent fashion blogs can influence consumers buying behavior.

5.2 THE AIM OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the impact of fashion blogs on consumers. This study is conducted in order to examine to which degree fashion blogger can influence consumers decision making when it comes to buying fashion related items the secondary aim of this study is to see if fashion blogs are a good marketing tool that brands can use to market their product and represent their brand.

5.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To address this study, we have established the following objectives of research that we have attempted to respond:

The first research question is: Are blogs a credible marketing tool where consumer can take advices from before purchasing?

The second one is: Do blogs really have a positive income for brands?

And finally do blogs increase the shopping behavior?

5.4 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Data collection techniques are very important in a research study, we have to choose it correctly or else it will lead us to false results which can make our study not reliable. We can make a difference between primary research method and secondary research method (two data collection techniques a qualitative one and a quantitative).

5.4.1 Primary Research Methods

Quantitative research is concentrated more in the accounts and classification of characteristics and the construction of statistical models and figures to explain what are observed it provides the researcher with a clearer picture of what to expect in his research. Quantitative research uses tools such as questionnaires, surveys, measurements and other equipment to collect numerical or measurable data.

5.4.2 Secondary Research Methods

The main objective of qualitative research is to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of the research topic. It is generally of a more exploratory nature. It is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and that seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places.

5.5 JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

The main reason behind the use of in-depth interviews is its ability to evoke responses that are rich, meaningful and unanticipated by the researcher.

6. DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

The credibility of findings and conclusions depends on the quality of the research design, data collection and data analysis. In this regard and since this study targets fashion interested persons, a preliminary test was conducted to test the dependability and reliability of the selected respondents. For that purpose the interviewees were shown three pictures of the most popular international and Turkish fashion bloggers. The interviewees were asked about the bloggers names. Those who knew them and are interested by the fashion world generally and the fashion bloggers especially were selected to participate in the study.

Fifteen interviews with 18-30 year old Turkish females who showed a high interest in fashion were conducted.

The table below shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Name	Age	Profession
Eylul	19	Student
Asli	22	Student
Nilufer	29	Marketing specialist
Irem	22	Student
Derya	22	Student
Elif	19	Student
Bahar	30	Brand professional
Ceyda	25	Makeup artist
Kubra	23	Student
Tugce	20	Student
Buse	18	Student
Nehir	26	Online brand owner
Leyla	25	Community manager
Cansu	21	Student
Aleyna	18	Student

7. FINDINGS

Fashion arouses general interest in all respondents and is considered a way to express one's mood and personality. They see it as an important element in their daily lives and part of their leisure time is devoted to any activity related to it. - They consider following fashion bloggers to be a key element and consult their news and updates almost daily.

7.1 PRE-PURCHASE AWARENESS:

The knowledge and awareness of the costumers before proceeding to the buying process was largely noticeable through the opinions of the interviewees. They all agreed that the search for information process has changed a lot since the presence of fashion bloggers in all platforms.

The majority of them agreed that they like to mix technology and in-store visits for any purchases. They note that they like to do their research online because it is easier, it can be done at home or at work from any device, but they actually prefer to buy in store in person.

After seeing a product they like on a platform the majority of the interviewees claimed important to look online before any purchase and the main reason is to get more information about the products from price, items availability, and available sizes to the way it looks on other people and how they style it. Then they can look for the product in store and see how it would fit them and decide either to buy it or not.

One of the interviewees doesn't share the same opinion, after seeing a product she likes on a platform she looks for it directly in store. *"As long as it's sold in a shop nearby, I check the products in stores. Unless the brand isn't available in the country I am, then I check it online and choose the websites based on the availability of international shipping service"* Tugce.

When it comes to online research and especially when it has to do with fashion, interviewees refer to brands website and to social media platforms mostly to instagram and some related pages: such as "liketoknowit" which actually posts regularly pictures of bloggers in beautiful outfits with the possibility to directly shop the outfit in question

by simply clicking on the link that comes with the post; to know about the new offerings that fashion apparel brands had for the consumers.

7.2 INTEREST IN FASHION BLOGS AND BLOGGERS:

Regarding fashion blogs, interviewees state that fashion interest them in general for some interviewees the main role they see for following fashion bloggers is related to entertainment, for Deria it is a way to relax and forget about her long day in school, quoting *“it takes me to another place it’s like I was traveling but online”*, as soon as she get home she takes her phone, open her applications and navigate to follow the latest updates of her favorite bloggers.

For others it was the kind of information it contains that interests them and to get to know the blogger closer for Cansu she reads fashion blogs for several reasons. Sometimes it’s to get advices about a specific topic, like how to build a blog, how to get great photos, how to pose well for the camera. She also reads them to get to know more the blogger, because sometimes they share their private life, so it’s great to feel that she really knows the real person behind the photo. There are also tons of articles about how each blogger started their journey so it’s usually interesting and funny.

The third party agreed that the main reason for following fashion bloggers was to learn about the new trends and certain brands, for Irem it’s a way to get instant access to her favorite blogger, and to get to know new brands and new designers, from bloggers with similar taste to hers, sharing the same opinion as Irem, Cansu quotes *“I follow my favorite fashion blogger daily to be aware of newly released products and brands I should maybe discover”*

All the interviewees showed a high interest in fashion, the research proved that bloggers have a very important influence on their readers; they are seen as entertaining, fun, informative and very fashionable. However I was a bit surprised when the majority of respondents state that they were more likely to follow their favorite fashion bloggers on instagram rather than on their web blog, most of the interviewees admitted that they only check blogs once a month or less and explained it by the fact that Instagram is much easier to use and more attracting.

As Elif explains, it has to be very interesting to actually create the curiosity to open someone's blog, she adds that she rarely check blogs and that she is only interested in seeing what they share daily. She thinks that instagram is enough to see what they are doing during their days and how they style their daily outfits.

Cansu shares the same opinion as she follows hundreds of fashion bloggers for various reasons as she follows them all on instagram for it is the only social media that she uses on a daily basis. Asli also confirms this theory.

Nilufer, a 29 years old marketing specialist who also owns a sunglasses' blog prefers following her favorite bloggers on instagram rather than blogs:

“People love visuals, short and clear information. It's getting hard to read a long post. Therefore, Instagram is exactly the platform that meets the needs of the consumer. Those who want to get detailed information can meet their needs by clicking on the link given on instagram.”

Eylul adds

“Instagram is now part of my daily life; I would not be lying if I say that I check instagram first thing when I open my eyes? If there is anything that would affect me or get stuck in my head, it should be on instagram because where else can I see it? My favorite bloggers post a lot on instagram, otherwise they wouldn't have been my favorite since I rarely check blogs.” Eylul.

As it turns out, all the interviewees prefer to use instagram daily rather than checking blogs, since it offers them the possibility to check various bloggers at the same time, and discover new ones through hashtags and tags. Reading blogs is more time consuming and not as simple as instagram since you have to search through various categories and archives. Eylul adds

7.3 SHARED VALUES AND LIFESTYLE WITH BLOGGERS:

The respondent's answers to the question: Do you share the same values or lifestyle with the bloggers you follow? Was divided, some of them had at least something in common with their favorite bloggers, liked more than just their dressing and accessorizing style and perceived their relationship with them as more than just Blogger/Reader one. I quote: *“Watching a blogger's snapchat every day, interacting with*

them in more than one way, watching their videos and reading posts that include details about their lives makes me feel very close to that person” Elif

Which supports the study by (Stern, Russel Russel 2007) showing that viewers share some of the felt connections with the personas as they do with their real-life friends.

Belch (2011) explains that “Many companies feel that the best way to connect with consumers is by using regular looking, everyday people with whom the average person can easily identify.

Even if Elif describes herself as a very open minded person who can get along with everyone she explains that when it comes to bloggers she follow, she always finds herself following bloggers that do modest fashion or hijabis simply because she is a hijabi and it is way easier for her to get inspiration from someone who dresses like her.

Other respondent state that they don’t share the same lifestyle with all the bloggers they follow since some of them have dreamy lives, wear only designers clothes and go only to fancy restaurants.

On another hand, some of the interviewees assert that there is no need to share the same lifestyle with the bloggers they follow since they share the same love for fashion, photography, culinary and other hobbies which make them recognize themselves on some of them even though.

7.4 BLOGGERS AND FASHION BRANDS:

With the vast amount of information available online, more and more companies are considering new ways to catch the attention of their customers. Building buzz; creating authentic content; and elevate the power of community in social media are crucial for maximizing brand management efforts in today’s marketing scene (Christodoulides, 2009; Fournier & Avery, 2011). These features have contributed to create new platforms, one of which is fashion blogs.

When bloggers and brands reunite, digital influencers have the power to introduce the company to brand new audiences.

Fashion bloggers are followed by audiences across a variety of platforms, from blogs to Instagram and other social Medias. They can garner thousands of likes and comments

by posting a single picture of their outfit of the day. And they use the hashtag often to mention, the brand or retailer where she got her outfit from.

Sometimes the blogger just happens to be wearing a company's clothing, and the brand receives a free shout-out. And sometimes the collaboration is planned, with companies reaching out to the bloggers.

The study shows that bloggers are seen to be a good opportunity for brands to market their products. The fact that they are both affordable and very influencing is considered to be an opportunity to cease.

Bahar 27 years old, a business wise and a brand professional thinks that fashion bloggers are the key success of all the campaigns nowadays, whether it's fashion, beauty or hotels & leisure and that's mainly because of the effective targeting of the audience and the fact that they reach a vast network of different ages, cultures and gender. But as a consumer she thinks that brands should pay attention to how they are promoting through fashion bloggers to avoid losing their credibility, they have to be careful about what kind of product they are showing for instance if it's a luxury product the collaboration shouldn't be with a random blogger they have to be very careful who they collaborate with because the style and the idea the blogger is delivering has to match with the image and the spirit of the brand. Brands are also winners in term of depenses, instead of organizing a real photo-shoot, and pay a numerous staff (photographer, creative director, model...), one single blogger can promote the product and share with a large public and this cost less than the usual marketing strategy. Nehir confirms the theory and adds *"I thinks that it's a relationship that has mutual benefits, for brands and bloggers to build each other up especially when we're talking about new designer"*.

This trend of consumers turning to blogs for shopping advice and inspiration is a big opportunity for fashion brands as concluded from the previous research "fashion bloggers and brands. But still, the brand should make sure that the brand image portrayed on the fashion blogger is the same as the image that the fashion brand itself presents, the messages that consumers receive on these different platforms have to match to give an image of a transparent brand.

7.5 TRUST TOWARDS FASHION BLOGGERS:

The research shows that credibility and trust are the most important factors in bloggers' influence on their reader's purchase decisions. When asked about the impact a positive review or a recommendation by bloggers have on them, all readers admitted that their purchase decision mostly depends on it. And since readers do have a personal connection with the bloggers, these findings can be linked to Engel's theory assuming that influence on a personal level generally has a greater impact on behavior than commercials (Engel, 1995).

When I asked the interviewees if they trust fashion bloggers to give them their honest review and opinion about any product the majority of them put in light the importance of both negative and positive side of bloggers review. They claimed that they will be more influenced by the bad reviews, because it takes a lot for bloggers to say that they don't like a product in public, so if they say they so, it means they really don't recommend it. Most of the time when they see a blogger giving a positive review about a product it would tease their curiosity and then look for other bloggers reviews about the same product, so they definitely take more than one opinion or one review into account. Nowadays the majority of fashion bloggers are doing both the positive sides and also what they don't like about a certain product or a brand, which makes them more reliable and make the followers trust them to give them their honest opinions about it.

The interviewees also put in light the fact that When the blog is sponsored it makes it a little less reliable because the brands are paying the bloggers to write or film positive reviews about a certain product of their line. But they still trust bloggers to give them their honest opinion, according to Ceyda no blogger will give a review about a product if he is not convinced of or believe in, because after all he has some followers in the community so in order to keep his community he has to be honest about the review he is giving.

Finally some interviewees explained that the emergence of fashion bloggers made life more easier for them I quote: *"I think we all need a third eye right? Before I started following bloggers I would ask my friends what they think about a specific product, the thing is they would answer hours later that if I'm lucky enough to find one who actually*

tried it. Now, whenever I am not very sure about a product I just look for a vlog reviewing it, or an Instagram post shared by one the bloggers I follow, one should definitely make the most of the things out there that simply make our lives easier”.

Consumers today are critical and aware of the marketing tactics of brands. Blog posts that are too evidently sponsored by a company can not only negatively affect the purchase intentions and decisions of consumers, but also hurt the credibility of the blogger. Influencers should then always give their honest and genuine recommendations to help increasing their trustworthy and to shape a good brand image.

7.6 INFLUENCE OF FASHION BLOGGERS IN THE PURCHASE PROCESS:

The influence of fashion bloggers in the consumption process is considerable. Interviewees think that there is a huge difference in their shopping behavior after the arriving of bloggers.

Kubra as an example recognize that the use of fashion blogs increase in her a higher desire for purchase. Since she daily follow blogger’s news, she thinks that she is much more exposed to many more brands which significantly increase her desire to purchase.

Nowadays consumer need much more than just a review of a product or a recommendation by his favorite blogger to buy a product, aware of this, brands created a lot of alternatives to make the buying process much more easier and faster as confirmed by Leyla who reveals that since following fashion bloggers were part of her daily routine and her number one reference when it comes to getting inspiration, she felt as a busy women that they made it faster for her to buy the items she likes, now it only takes her 20 minutes.

Besides the fact that they made the buying process fast, brands are now collaborating with bloggers and made a discount associated with a code called “promotional code”.

This technic consists of providing fashion bloggers with a code that will be exclusive to their followers. It’s a great way to keep the followers happy and to make great profit for the brand. *One of the interviewees who tried this before explained the situation: “i was on the profile of a fashion blogger and she shared a promotional code to get the jacket she was wearing. The minute later, i was on the brand’s website to purchase the same jacket, because I have been looking for the same model since a while, and the*

promotional code was a great plus. It was an oversized borg trucker jacket from Missguided” Cansu.



8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, as we live today in a world where the whole of humanity has migrated online, where technology is present daily and transforms our way of life, the world of fashion could not remain distant. As we have seen throughout this study, the Internet has revolutionized the world of marketing, and the behavior of the connected consumer is no longer governed solely by criteria such as the type of product and the purchasing situation, but also by the influence of opinion leaders and digital influencers.

8.1 DISCUSSION

The in-depth interviews allowed us to dissect the impact of communication via blogs on the marketing and commercial plan.

This study adapted qualitative research method in order to dissect the impact of communication via fashion blogs on the marketing and commercial plan and to study the relationship between blogging and brands' consumption. Qualitative research was proven suitable and adequate for such subjects.

Nowadays fashion lovers are more into following their favorite bloggers on platforms like Instagram, according to the interviewees the main reason for following them on Instagram is that it's easy and less time consuming.

This research showed that it's getting more and more difficult for people to check out their favorite blogs whether they are about fashion, beauty or lifestyle. They feel like time has changed, before they were all the time on their computer navigating on blogs to check the latest posts. Yet, quite paradoxically, they do not feel less aware of what is happening because even if they do not open their favorite links every day, they are still well informed of what their favorite bloggers do almost daily or even instantly; thanks to Instagram-stories which is a new feature almost an exact replica of Snapchat stories where you share images and videos in a slideshow format, and they're visible for a 24-hour period of time, bloggers use it to share what they are doing instantly. As concluded, if people are not anymore taking the time and the habit of reading blogs daily, it is because they took a whole new form of habit: that of going on Instagram to see the daily blogs they adore.

Bloggers or even brands also tend to go directly on this social network to discover and share; without having to make the effort to get to the blog itself. Automatically, more and more readers tend to do the same. It is necessary to say that Instagram allows discovering in 2 minutes a summary of the daily life of the blogger without needing to click 10 times, to open a page on the Internet, to land on a chair or in front of the computer. The comments are sent far more quickly than on a blog, the users answer each other, there is a real interaction, a real community and the proximity with the blogger is often more palpable.

Credibility means that the information is taken into account by the individual in his / her process of treatment. Consumers question the credibility of information sources based on their perceptions of data from the business and social environment. A credible or non-credible source creates a change in the customer's attitude.

The more the blog and its information are considered credible by the Internet users, the more the evaluations of the blogger are positive.

In relation to the first research question, this research proved that fashion bloggers are considered a credible marketing tool, since bloggers give their honest opinions and review about any product. Interviewees claimed that the more the blogger gets bigger and famous he starts to lose his credibility, they follow this kind of bloggers to get inspiration and stay informed but when it comes to advice they prefer to read or watch reviews of fashion bloggers who are not very famous.

In relation with the second research question, the study showed that the fact of following fashion bloggers is an important tool for brands. More particularly, it is proven useful for developing customer trust and loyalty and establishing relationships with consumers. It also showed that the need for external opinions has a significant relationship with the engagement with bloggers with multiple types of blogs.

In relation with the third research question, this research proved that consumers who view bloggers as similar to them will most probably develop the same positive brand evaluations and perception as the blogger. Blogger's reviews on a product or service are also proven to be very influencing and play a huge role in the buying process. In other words, the purchase process, for people interested and/or following bloggers is largely influenced by the reviews and opinions of their favorite bloggers.

Brands are creating a long-term relationship with the consumer to increase the chances of repetitive purchasing behavior. Interviewees unanimously recognized that fashion bloggers have influenced considerably their process of deciding to purchase fashion products. They emphasize that the fact of following fashion bloggers daily arouses in them a greater desire to purchase as they are exposed to many more stimuli. Also brands are now offering many facilities for fashion bloggers follower for instance the promotional code.

Finally as regards the influence when seeking information, they recognize that the search process has changed much. Now the first step is to check the new trends on Instagram also the time between desires and buying has been accelerated since the advent of blogging. Now they can access products faster and easier, they can find all the brands tagged in the picture so that they can easily know from where the blogger got the item they like, more than this now we can see that a lot of bloggers are working with brand and offering exclusively to the fashion bloggers follower a special code called promotional code so that they can shop online with a less price.

This study supports the use of blogging as a tool to increase consumption and the stimulation of purchase behaviors.

So, if fashion blogger influence so much fashion trends and people buying behavior, either thru their web blog or other social media the question arises as to how much does it generate gains for fashion companies?

8.2 IMPLICATION

Our main aim in this study was to highlight to which degree fashion blogs can influence consumers buying behavior and if it really helps to build a brand and increase its visibility.

Despite its limitations, this study showed the powerful role that fashion bloggers can play in today's marketplace; as opinion leaders they can be very influential during the product diffusion process.

Our study revealed that nowadays people get to follow fashion bloggers on their social media especially on Instagram rather than following them on their blog, a thing that was not considered before.

Depending on this, bloggers should focus more on their instagram pages, and make them more attractive and entertaining, and one of the most important things is to have a brand image that is instantly recognizable; as an example making all your feed cohesive by choosing to do the same filter to all the picture; having a brand image will make your followers recognize you in the middle of the crowd since it's a very competitive sector. Branding doesn't always mean sharing the same type of content; they should make their page diversified by sharing funny stories, posting motivational quotes, asking questions to engage with the followers, and let them know you closely as a person not only as a fashion blogger. They should stay professional but without hiding their personality.

More than this fashion bloggers should always give their honest opinion about a product and tell what they like and what they don't like about it to keep the trustworthy with the follower and push him to buy. Bloggers should also find a way to make their blog easier to navigate for their followers since what made them run to instagram blogs instead of web blog is the fact that they have to go through many archives and categories to find what they want.

With regards to brands they should make sure that consumers can easily convert the blogger's recommendation into a purchase decision, they should make sure that the sponsorship is revealed in an ideal way in the post. Since today's consumers are aware of the marketing tactics of brands and that a post that is too evidently sponsored can affect the brand, the blogger and the purchase intentions, honesty is the best thing to do, if a blogger is paid to feature a product on their blog, they should share it openly with the followers and let them take the decision to either buy or not without feeling forced.

Brands should also attract the blogger's followers by making giveaways and many more promotional codes especially for new brands to introduce it to people who may hesitate to buy items from it.

8.3 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

As this was an exploratory study, further research, such as a quantitative study, is needed to test whether these findings can be generalized to a larger population, it would also be better, as future research lines, to deepen the subject and investigate what happens in the case of men. Since this study focused on female, it would be more interesting to see if fashion bloggers affect men and women in the same way.

Our study was conducted with women aged between 18 and 30 years old so for the coming research it will be interesting to see how blogs influence older population.

The study is also conducted depending on Turkish women, the latter represent a small market segment with a unified language, similar culture and same social structure which is totally different from the other one countries and cultures. So the results of this study cannot be generalized.



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APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1

- 1) Do you research online before making any purchase? If yes in which platform.
- 2) Do you follow fashion bloggers? If yes, which blogger do you follow and in which platform.
- 3) Why do you follow fashion bloggers?
- 4) Do you think brands should turn to fashion bloggers to market their product? Why?
- 5) Would you be influenced by a positive review of a product communicated by a blogger? If yes how?
- 6) Do you share the same values and lifestyle with the bloggers you follow?
- 7) When you see a fashion article in a platform do you search for it online or in a store?
- 8) Would you purchase a product recommended by your favorite blogger?
- 9) Do you trust bloggers to give you their honest opinion about a product?
- 10) Have you ever bought a specific product after seeing it on a blog?

