SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCER CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF

TIKTOK, INSTAGRAM, AND PINTEREST ON SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION WITHIN

THE FASHION INDUSTRY

by

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ABSTRACT

The traditional fashion industry, known for its mass production and emphasis on profitability, has faced increasing criticism for its environmental impacts. This thesis examines the role of social media in lessening these environmental concerns by promoting the adoption of sustainable luxury fashion (e.g., resale or pre-owned fashion). Through a comprehensive literature review, we explored key concepts such as the circular economy and sustainability initiatives in the fashion industry in addition to the influence of social media on consumer behavior. An experiment was conducted to examine the effect of influencer promotion (in the form of a sponsored post on a social media platform) on the adoption of pre-owned luxury fashion. The findings showed no difference in the purchase of pre-owned luxury items between an influencer-sponsored post and a post promoted by regular consumers (i.e., a non-sponsored post). However, further analysis revealed that individuals who were active users of TikTok and Pinterest were less likely to buy pre-owned luxury fashion when it was endorsed by influencers. We also found that these users perceived a brand as more trustworthy and reliable overall when products were featured in a non-sponsored post. Our work offers practical implications for marketing managers by highlighting the importance of platform-specific strategies and the value of brand authenticity in promoting pre-owned luxury fashion.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional fashion landscape, characterized by fast-paced trends, mass production, and an emphasis on profitability, has come under increasing scrutiny for its adverse environmental impacts and its role in promoting a culture of materialism. In recent years, the fashion industry has undergone a significant transformation, largely driven by the influence of social media, reshaping consumer buying behavior, industry practices, and societal expectations. As the fashion industry navigates an era defined by increased environmental awareness and digital interconnectedness, the role of social media in promoting sustainability will become an important driver of transformative change in this industry. Thus, understanding how social media platforms influence sustainable fashion practices is crucial for shaping the industry's future development in a more ethical manner.

This thesis explores how social media and the fashion industry interact dynamically, particularly regarding the intricate relationship between the rise in social media usage and sustainable consumption within the fashion industry. In the following sections, this paper will first review prior research on the background of sustainable consumption, the circular economy, and sustainability in the fashion industry. Next, the influence of social media in the United States and the intricate dynamics among TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest, and sustainable luxury fashion will be explored, delineating the role these platforms play in fostering materialism and its potential negative impact on the consumption of sustainable luxury fashion. Lastly, the study aims to examine the effect of social media on the adoption of sustainable fashion using experimental design. This research is relevant not only to scholars in the fields of marketing, sustainability, and social media but also to fashion practitioners, policymakers, and consumers who are keen to embrace a more conscientious approach to their clothing choices in the digital age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Consumption and the Circular Economy

Consumers increasingly value firms that engage in sustainable practices. Sustainability in consumption is defined as "the consumption of goods and services that meet basic needs and quality of life without jeopardizing the needs of future generations" (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2002). Sustainability can take many forms. Within the fashion industry, prior research has examined how environmental sustainability efforts like achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 (Kong, 2021; Thomas, 2022), socially responsible practices like using leftover fabrics and materials (Faysal, 2022; Thomas, 2022), transparency in manufacturing like Corporate Social Responsibility and the Global Reporting Initiative (Karaosman, 2020; Thorisdottir, 2019), and innovation for sustainability like implementing virtual reality (VR) to provide consumers with a visual representation of themselves wearing products (Daukantienė, 2022; Heriot-Watt University, 2022) can encourage the sustainable consumption of luxury goods.

The Circular Economy Action Plan is an important initiative introduced to promote and advance the transition from a linear economy with an emphasis on profitability to a circular economy focusing on sustainability in the European Union (EU) (Arranz, 2023). The circular economy is an economic system that aims to reduce waste and maximize resource efficiency by reusing and regenerating materials or products (European Parliament, 2023). Key features and components of this initiative encompass waste reduction and recycling, circular product design (e.g., 'Lululemon Like New' and 'Patagonia Worn Wear' Resale Programs), sustainable consumption (e.g., thrifting), sustainable production (e.g., using recycled and eco-friendly fabrics), addressing the challenges of plastic waste (e.g., creating innovative packaging solutions

using biodegradable materials), extended producer responsibility (EPR) (e.g., full life cycle responsibility ensuring proper collection and recycling of a product and its packaging after its useful life), green public procurement (e.g., supplier engagement and transparency regarding the sourcing of materials, production processes, and compliance with sustainability criteria), and an emphasis on research, development, innovation, monitoring, and reporting of sustainable practices (Arranz, 2023). The plan demonstrates the EU's commitment to promoting a more sustainable economic model, emphasizing the responsible use of resources, reducing waste, and creating a more environmentally friendly and economically viable future.

Although this initiative originated in Europe, it has a significant impact on the fashion industry's sustainability practices since most luxury brands are headquartered in fashion capitals like Milan, Paris, and London and manufacture their products in European regions (Hope, 2017). While efforts are undoubtedly being made globally to encourage sustainable consumption, the influencer culture that drives consumption for many brands on social media seem to negate these initiatives. Among many platforms, TikTok and Instagram hold a more significant impact, which is further elaborated in the latter section.

Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

In the context of luxury fashion, sustainable consumption in the luxury fashion industry refers to the practice of producing, distributing, and consuming high-end fashion products in ways that minimize negative environmental and social impacts while maintaining or enhancing the quality and desirability of the products (Bringé, 2023; Thomas, 2022). In other words, sustainable luxury consumption in the fashion industry involves a commitment to responsible and ethical practices throughout the entire supply chain.

The rise in sustainability within the fashion industry can be attributed to various factors that have gained traction in recent years. Heightened environmental consciousness among consumers, driven by concerns about waste pollution and climate change, has been pivotal in drawing attention to the initiative. Approximately 15% of global fashion consumers prioritize sustainability, a number projected to exceed 50% in the next few years (D'Arpizio, 2022). To seize this market opportunity, fashion brands should employ three key strategies: closing the information gap by increasing transparency, emphasizing durability and impact, and making sustainable choices more convenient and appealing (D'Arpizio, 2022).

The global fashion industry is valued at $1.7 trillion as of 2023, yet it is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions, with 85% of textiles ending up in landfills annually (Geneva Environment Network, 2023). To combat this, initiatives like the UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion aim to halt destructive fashion practices, foster collaboration internationally among UN agencies, and support innovative solutions in fashion design using sustainable materials. These efforts underscore the importance of global cooperation in achieving sustainable development goals and transforming the fashion industry.

Sustainability can manifest in many different forms. Fair Trade Certified identifies five dimensions crucial for understanding sustainability in luxury fashion: environmental sustainability, social responsibility, circular economy, transparency and traceability, and innovation (Fair Trade Certified, 2022).

- Environmental sustainability involves minimizing the footprint of luxury fashion products (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions).

- Social responsibility involves philanthropic efforts, supporting local artisans and craftsmanship, or investing in community development programs (e.g., ensuring fair wages, business conferences to educate the company, and ethical treatment of workers).

- Circular economy refers to ways to extend the lifespan of their products and reduce waste through repair, resale, and recycling initiatives, focusing on minimizing the disposal of clothing and accessories in landfills.

- Transparency and traceability involve disclosing information about a brand's supply chain, including where materials are sourced and how products are made, ensuring that the origin of materials can be verified to ensure they meet sustainability standards.

- Innovation involves experimenting with sustainable textiles, such as adopting eco-friendly dyeing and finishing techniques or exploring new ways to lessen the environmental impact of luxury fashion.

It is important to recognize the consumer desire for luxury product rental services (a form of circular economy), especially in an environment where fast fashion trends often encourage materialism (Barandela, 2017), referring to when consumers use material possessions as a means to signal their social status, success, and prestige (Joung, 2013). Consumers are increasingly gravitating toward demonstrating their social status by renting luxurious apparel through sharing economy platforms, such as Rent the Runway, rather than owning it (Pantano, 2020). Luxury product rental services, such as Rent the Runway (subscription-based), and resale services, such as The RealReal, are part of a new business model that aims to extend product lifecycles within the fashion industry. According to Rent the Runway CEO Jennifer Hyman, the vision was that the "sharing economy could be expanded to the closet" (Harvard Business Review, 2022). By extending the life of clothing, cutting waste, and lessening the environmental impact of fashion

consumption, the sharing economy promotes sustainability. It encourages a shift from disposable fast fashion to a more mindful and conscious approach to dressing (Granskog, 2020).

Moreover, the sharing economy model aligns with changing consumer preferences that prioritize accessibility over ownership and value sustainability in fashion choices, demonstrating how the industry is taking steps to become a more circular economy. The circular economy aims to efficiently minimize waste, maximize resource use, and promote sustainability by creating a closed-loop system where products are reused, repaired, and recycled rather than discarded after a single use (European Parliament, 2023). In the world of fashion, these models encourage accessibility, diversity, and the chance to try out different styles without using excessive amounts of resources, revolutionizing consumer behavior by aiming to reduce overconsumption and extend product lifespan (Jimenez-Fernandez, 2023).

There are five key motivators identified for the consumer desire to adopt rental luxury garments: the need for new clothes for special events, inspiration from products/brands, exploration of new luxury consumption methods, a desire for sustainability, and extending the life cycle of luxury products (Pantano, 2020). With the success of ridesharing platforms like Uber and Lyft (McKane, 2022), it will be fascinating to see how fashion brands utilize this practice to increase sustainability and access to luxury fashion apparel and goods for consumers.

While the fashion industry has long claimed to be moving toward environmentally friendly practices, many challenges still need to be addressed to drive closer to implementing full sustainability (Pucker, 2022). These obstacles are due to various factors, including the relentless pursuit of growth, consumer demand for cheap and fast fashion, and the predominance of non-biodegradable, petroleum-based synthetic materials in clothing production. The fashion industry's negative environmental impact, including carbon emissions, is substantial and poorly

understood, with estimates ranging from 4% to 10% of global emissions (Pucker, 2022). Efforts

to promote sustainability within the industry have fallen short in several ways:

- Transparency: While many fashion companies publish Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports, the lack of standardized language and regulated frameworks makes it challenging to accurately assess their true environmental impact.

- Recycling: Recycling in the fashion industry is limited due to issues such as variability in supply, technological limitations, and low-quality recycled materials. Less than 1% of clothing is recycled into new garments.

- Bio-Based Materials: Innovations in bio-based materials face challenges like high initial costs, resistance to change, and the failure to account for the external social and environmental costs of fossil fuel-based alternatives.

- New Business Models: While new business models like resale and rental have gained attention, they have yet to establish sustainable solutions due to poor-quality fast fashion items and high operational costs.

Furthermore, increased materialism exists within consumer behavior in the United States, heightened by the extreme usage of social media. Comparative lifestyle display, influencer culture, the fear of missing out, social comparison, targeted advertising, instant gratification, social validation, and consumer reviews and recommendations all enable an overt amount of consumer material purchases (Thi Cam Tu, 2022). Additionally, socio-demographic, economic, and psychological factors influence a particular individual's fashion consciousness (Batool, 2021). Contrary to popular belief, millennials, like earlier generations, value sustainability less when purchasing luxury products (Kapferer, 2014). Millennials are more likely to see a conflict between luxury and sustainability since traditional luxury fashion often embodies a culture of

excess, promoting frequent consumption, fast turnover of trends, and conspicuous consumption (Kapferer, 2014). This notion contradicts the principles of sustainability, which advocate for mindful consumption, longevity of products, and minimizing waste.

Social Media's Influence in the United States

The number of social media users in the United States alone is forecasted to increase by over seven percent in the next four years, reaching a record high of 331.09 million users by 2028 (Dixon, 2023). Furthermore, people living in the United States have an average of 7.1 social media accounts each (Wong, 2023). Although social media platforms each have distinct features, they are equally influential for those who engage with app content. High levels of content consumption impact users' daily lives (Holcombe, 2022). Users frequently discover chances for self-expression, creativity, and inspiration through these platforms. They might encounter new interests, fashion trends, do-it-yourself projects, and pastimes that improve their everyday routines. Connections with like-minded individuals and communities can also provide support and foster a sense of belonging (Holcombe, 2022).

Furthermore, the role of social media in influencing sustainable consumption extends beyond the fashion industry and can encompass various sectors. For example, the impact of major media outlets (e.g., television networks, newspapers, magazines, online news portals) on the hybrid vehicle market in the United States has had a positive overall effect on sales (Chen, 2019). Social standards that support ecologically conscious consumption have been established in part due to the media's presentation of eco-friendly decisions, such as the general coverage of climate change or global warming; thus, the market for hybrid vehicles has seen an overall increase in sales. Media coverage of climate change and global warming has not only raised

awareness, but significantly impacted consumer purchase behavior regarding social norms that support environmentally friendly consumption (Chen, 2019).

Regarding product development, social media has been pivotal in promoting sustainable innovation, strategy, and transparent approaches within the global supply chain (Bstieler, 2016; Hoang, 2023). Companies employing social media channels to convey their dedication to sustainability and highlight environmentally conscious projects can effectively interact with consumers who are becoming more conscious of the environmental impact of the supply chain and logistics industry. Because consumers are more likely to support firms that share their values and show a commitment to sustainable practices (Reichheld, 2023), this involvement promotes a sense of openness and accountability. While social media may contribute to promoting materialistic culture, its usage has also played a pivotal role in the sustainability initiatives of schools. In India, the Green School Program helps utilize land, water, air, light, and space methods that are environmentally friendly within every building (Verma, 2022). The program uses Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to connect students with nature by instilling values of environmental protection via these platforms. These platforms can be incredibly useful in expanding the conversation about green school ideas, discussing the necessity of sustainable practices in educational institutions, and touching on the role of organizations such as the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) and the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to further promote sustainable practices (Verma, 2022). Due to the algorithmic nature of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, many social media users find themselves exposed to a homogenized array of content, shaping their consumption patterns based on what they repeatedly encounter online. This phenomenon can significantly influence people's tastes and purchasing decisions, which in turn can affect how sustainable their behaviors are (Simeone, 2020).

TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest, and Sustainable Luxury Fashion

TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest are social media platforms with substantial consumer engagement in fashion-related content (Maguire, 2023; Sherman, 2023), making them ideal platforms for studying the effect of social media usage on sustainable fashion consumption. Specifically, the central research question of this thesis is: "What is the impact of social media usage, specifically TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest, on sustainable consumption in the fashion industry?" TikTok, with over 150 million active users in the United States as of 2023, is known for its fast-paced video content that focuses on individual expression, authenticity, and creativity (TikTok, 2023). Instagram, with over 143 million active users in the United States as of January 2023, serves as a platform for sharing visually appealing images and videos (Dixon, 2023). Pinterest, with 90.1 million active users in the United States as of April 2023, is a platform for sharing, saving, and shopping ideas like recipes, home decorations, inspiration, and more (Kemp, 2023). The allure of TikTok and Instagram as platforms for discussing and influencing fashion and sustainability lies in their unique blend of short-form video content, photo content, creative expression, and its vast and diverse user base. Despite having fewer active users than the other two platforms, Pinterest has become a popular destination for young consumers to curate and shop for fashion (Maguire, 2023). As fashion influencers, brands, and consumers actively engage with TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest's dynamic environment, it is important to examine how these platforms shape awareness, perceptions, and consumption of sustainable luxury fashion.

Influencer culture is the term used to describe the practice of people, often referred to as influencers, using their social media platforms to promote products, produce content, and connect with their respective audiences. Influencers can be ordinary people who have amassed a significant following, celebrities, or professionals in the social media industry, evolving beyond

being one-hit wonders based on viral videos. Today's well-known content creators are expected to be multi-talented, capable of writing, performing, public speaking, and entertaining. They are no longer limited to a single skill, which reflects a more diverse and dynamic creator landscape and adds to influencers' true impact on social media.

Moreover, the rise in influencer culture has transformed the marketing landscape and changed the overall approach to social media usage globally (YEC, 2023). People use social media to discover trends and research products – marketers leverage this to promote a brand and drive action toward product recognition and making a purchase (Facebook IQ, 2019). A brand's utilization of content creators helps create viral trends, thereby influencing consumers' product perceptions and their buying behavior. From fashion and beauty to technology and lifestyle, influencers are often endorsing a wide array of products, encouraging their followers to make purchases. When making online purchases, 65% of TikTok users claim to rely on creator recommendations (McLachlan, 2023), 54% of people said they purchased in the moment after seeing a product or service on Instagram (Bramley, 2023), and 85% of weekly Pinterest users have purchased a product or service from a brand based on the pin they saw (West, 2024).

The power that content creators possess in shaping consumer behavior, promoting purchases, and creating trends all play a role in the fashion industry's overall level of sustainability. With brands increasingly turning to these individuals to promote their products or services, influencer public relations (PR) gifts, particularly through sponsored posts, have become a powerful marketing tool (Kim, 2022). Influencer PR is a form of marketing where a brand strategically gifts products to content creators. While a post or unboxing video is not expected, many influencers share their extravagant packages online, bringing immense brand recognition and sales toward a company's campaign or new product launch. Although this may

appear harmless on the surface, this promotional strategy has significant negative effects on the environment and has massively shortened the life of trends from twenty years to ten, fueling a rapid overturn of products and impulse purchasing (Khan, 2023). To stay relevant and maintain their relationships with brands, many fashion, beauty, and lifestyle influencers are consistently seen with new clothing, accessories, and cosmetics. They showcase a seemingly endless stream of products online, which creates a culture of disposability and contributes to the already serious problem of fast fashion and excessive waste.

According to the Friedkin-Johnsen model, people frequently consider the opinions of others to be of greater significance, placing a lower importance on their own (Shah, 2023). In a society heavily impacted by social media content creators, individuals base many purchasing choices on these influencers' opinions rather than personal tastes or experiences. Furthermore, the concept of consumer-product congruence suggests that a product not only represents a consumer but also assists them in becoming the ideal version of themselves (Belanche, 2021). The influencer who recommended the product serves as a role model, and the advertised product acts as a conduit between the actual and ideal image a person is trying to attain based on their social media usage (Boerman, 2019). This phenomenon can contribute to a convergence of preferences and a culture of conformity as individuals contribute to product overconsumption, materialism, and buying unnecessary items for the primary reason of remaining "on trend."

Social Media and Materialism Culture

Materialism is defined as "the belief that having money and possessions is the most important thing in life" (Cambridge English Dictionary). TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest are important mediums for brand promotion and communication, but they also contribute to a materialistic culture that can pose challenges for sustainable luxury fashion. It has been

documented that consumers' consumption of content from numerous influencer-sponsored posts and advertisements on social media is one of the prominent sources of increased materialism (Pennsylvania State University, 2016). Consumers often exhibit a higher desire for material possessions when their social media usage increases (Kamal, 2013; Pellegrino, 2022), since influencers may inadvertently promote a materialistic lifestyle in their attempt for profitable brand collaborations, encouraging excessive spending by displaying a continuous exhibition of new products. Furthermore, the mediating function of hedonic enjoyment in this relationship indicates that consumers' pleasure with sponsored social media content is a significant factor in determining how they respond (Kim, 2021). Individuals who value materialism and have a strong desire for social belonging tend to derive enjoyment from and show greater intention to purchase products or services featured in sponsored content posts (Kim, 2021). The subliminal message that material possessions determine one's worth can result in the purchase of items that consumers do not genuinely need.

Social networking sites, like TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest, allow users to access, share, and exchange various product and experience-related information (Kemp, 2023; Pellegrino, 2022). As these platforms continue to gain popularity, marketers leverage them to connect with potential consumers and, in turn, may benefit from increased sales of new products (Pellegrino, 2022), resulting in negative consequences for sustainability within the fashion industry. This is because the core concept of sustainability, which advocates for ethical manufacturing practices, long-lasting products, and thoughtful consumption, is undermined by the influx of new trends and an emphasis on owning the newest product.

Furthermore, research has shown that materialism is often linked to less empathy and an increased inclination toward manipulative, competitive, and selfish behavior. The average person

typically does not value such behavior despite certain elements of our capitalist economic system promoting it (American Psychological Association, 2014). Social media serves as a platform for individuals to amass material possessions to signal wealth and social status to others, partly driven by societal pressures to appear attractive, intelligent, or well-liked (Pennsylvania State University, 2016). Moreover, individuals who value materialism often create identities that deviate from their actual selves, hoping to garner engagement from others (Haferkamp, 2011). Hence, the focus on immediate gratification, trends, and conspicuous consumption resulting from social media inadvertently fostering materialism may deter consumers from considering the ethical implications of their fashion purchases.

Despite the negative consequences of social media usage on overconsumption and materialistic attitudes, it is worth recognizing the role these platforms play in facilitating the adoption of products or services, especially through the use of social media influencers in product or service promotion. This prompts an exploration into whether the benefits of using social media influencers extend to the promotion of sustainable consumption, such as the consumption of resale or second-hand items. In the following section, we delineate our research methodology for examining this research question.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

We planned to recruit two hundred and fifty female undergraduate students from Texas Christian University to participate in this study. Two hundred fifty-one female participants (M_{age} = 19.82) completed the study. We recruited female participants because the company was a female handbag brand. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: sponsored and non-sponsored posts. In the sponsored-post condition, participants viewed an influencer's

post about a pre-owned designer handbag received from a fictional luxury company, The Luxury

Renew. Specifically, participants read (see Figure 1, panel A, for the Instagram post):

> *Thank you @theluxuryrenew for sending me the most gorgeous pre-owned designer*
>
> *handbag 🤎 I'm so excited to start incorporating it into my everyday wardrobe. Cannot*
>
> *recommend this company enough – use code SOPHIAWILDE20 for 20% off your first*
>
> *purchase! #LuxuryRenewAmbassador #Sponsored*

By contrast, in the non-sponsored post condition, participants were presented with an

identical pre-owned designer handbag, except that the person who posted it was not an

influencer. Participants read (see Figure 1, panel B, for the Instagram post):

> *It's finally here!!! Just received the most gorgeous pre-owned designer handbag order*
>
> *from @theluxuryrenew 🤍 I'm so excited to start incorporating it into my everyday*
>
> *wardrobe! Cannot recommend this company enough for pre-owned luxury goods.*
>
> *#LuxuryRenew*

Figure 1: Stimuli

(A) Sponsored Post

(B) Non-sponsored Post

To ensure engagement, participants were asked to describe the text mentioned in the post. Next, participants rated purchase intention: I would be likely to purchase pre-owned products from The Luxury Renew (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = S*trongly Agree*). They then rated perceived trustworthiness and perceived reliability as follows: I think the brand, The Luxury Renew, is trustworthy *(1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)*; I think the brand, The Luxury Renew, is reliable *(1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)*.

Participants were then asked to share their social media usage habits: How often do you use TikTok? *(1 = Not At All Often; 7 = Very Often)*; How often do you use Instagram? *(1 = Not At All Often; 7 = Very Often)*; How often do you use Pinterest? *(1 = Not At All Often; 7 = Very Often)*; How often do you post your content using Instagram Stories, where your content will disappear from your profile after 24 hours? *(1 = Not At All Often; 7 = Very Often)*. They were also asked to indicate their engagement with fashion-related content: How often do you engage with fashion-related content on social media? *(1 = Not At All Often; 7 = Very Often)*; How influential do you perceive social media content in shaping your fashion preferences? *(1 = Not At All Influential; 7 = Very Influential)*; Have you ever participated in a fashion trend after seeing it on social media? *(Yes/No)*; Have you made any fashion-related purchases based on influencer recommendations in the past six months? *(Yes/No)*.

Participants also indicated their attitudes toward sustainable fashion: Sustainability in fashion is important to me when making purchasing decisions *(1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)*; I often purchase products from companies that sell fast fashion *(1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)*; A company's commitment to sustainability practices influences my decision to purchase fashion products from the company *(1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)*. Lastly, participants answered some demographic questions, including age, what

is your age?, gender: what is your gender? (*Male/Female/Other*), and their online shopping frequency: I shop online frequently (*Yes/No*).

RESULTS

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products did not differ between the non-sponsored condition ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.76$) and the sponsored condition ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.68$; $t(249) = -1.61$, $p = .11$). In the following analyses, we examined whether this result varied by social media usage, fashion content consumption, and sustainability concerns.

Purchase Intention by Social Media Usage

TikTok. When participants used TikTok very often, they were marginally more likely to purchase pre-owned luxury products in the non-sponsored condition ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.72$) than in the sponsored condition ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.67$; $t(200) = -1.73$, $p = .09$).

When participants used TikTok moderately, there was no difference in the purchase of pre-owned luxury products between the non-sponsored ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.79$) and the sponsored conditions ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 2.12$; $t(5) = -0.45$, $p = .67$). The same pattern was observed when participants did not use TikTok often ($M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 3.50$, $SD = 1.76$; $M_{sponsored} = 3.41$, $SD = 1.62$; $t(40) = -0.17$, $p = .86$).
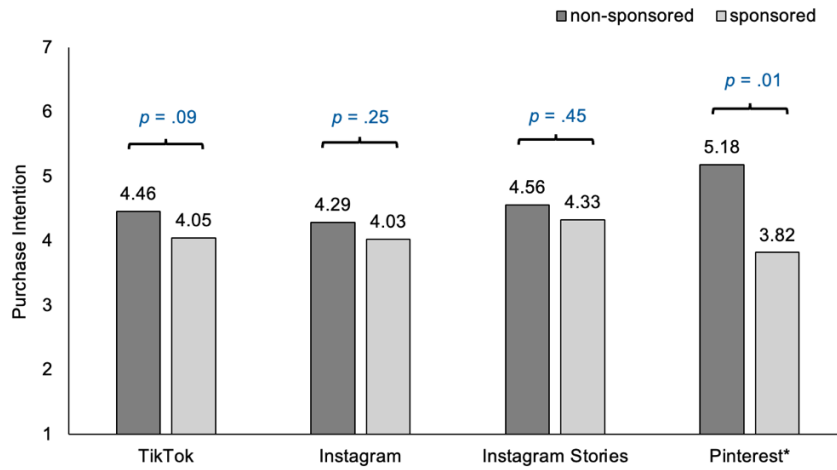
Pinterest. When participants used Pinterest very often, purchase intention of pre-owned luxury products did not differ between the non-sponsored ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.74$) and sponsored conditions ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.68$; $t(110) = -0.34$, $p = .73$). The same pattern was observed when participants did not use Pinterest often ($M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.03$, $SD = 1.83$; $M_{sponsored} = 3.59$, $SD = 1.61$; $t(98) = -1.21$, $p = .23$).

However, when participants used Pinterest moderately, they were significantly more likely to purchase pre-owned luxury products in the non-sponsored ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.29$) condition than in the sponsored condition ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.76$; $t(37) = -2.67$, $p = .01$).

Instagram. There was no difference in purchase intention between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram usage (low: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 3.56$, $SD = 1.74$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 2.50$, $SD = 1.23$; $t(13) = -1.28$, $p = .22$; moderate: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.63$, $SD = 2.00$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.29$, $SD = 1.98$; $t(13) = -1.30$, $p = .22$; high: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.29$, $SD = 1.75$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.03$, $SD = 1.65$; $t(219) = -1.16$, $p = .25$).

Instagram Stories. There was no difference in purchase intention between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram story usage (low: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.11$, $SD = 1.90$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.77$; $t(92) = -1.07$, $p = .29$; moderate: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 3.88$, $SD = 1.62$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.32$, $SD = 1.52$; $t(45) = -1.22$, $p = .23$; high: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.56$, $SD = 1.68$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.33$, $SD = 1.58$; $t(108) = -0.76$, $p = .45$).

These analyses revealed that purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products from a non-sponsored (vs. sponsored) post varied across different levels of social media usage (see Figure 2 for results of purchase intention when participants exhibited a high level of social media consumption, with the exception of Pinterest in which the consumption was moderate).

Figure 2: Purchase Intention by High Level of Social Media Consumption

*This is the result when participants moderately used Pinterest. When the consumption level for this platform was high, there was no difference in purchase intention.

Purchase Intention by Fashion Content Consumption

Fashion Content Engagement. When participants engaged with fashion-related content very often, they were marginally more likely to purchase pre-owned luxury products in the non-sponsored condition ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.69$) than in the sponsored condition ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.62$; $t(177) = -1.90$, $p = .06$).

When participants engaged with fashion-related content moderately, there was no difference in the purchase of pre-owned luxury products between the non-sponsored ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.31$) and the sponsored ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.58$; $t(25) = -1.20$, $p = .24$) conditions. The same pattern was observed when participants did not engage with fashion-related content very often ($M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.03$, $SD = 1.61$; $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 2.50$, $SD = 1.46$; $t(43) = -1.10$, $p = .28$).

Influence of Social Media Content in Shaping Fashion Preferences. When participants perceived social media content as highly influential in shaping their fashion preferences, purchase intention was marginally higher in the non-sponsored (vs. sponsored) condition ($M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.67$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.03$, $SD = 1.62$; $t(200) = -1.86$, $p = .06$).

When the perceived influence of social media content in shaping participants' fashion preferences was low or moderate, there was no difference in purchase intention between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.33, SD = 1.84 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 2.71, SD = 1.53; $t(30)$ = -1.05, p = .30; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.60, SD = 2.12 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 5.14, SD = 1.35; $t(15)$ = 1.69, p = .11).

Fashion Trend Participation. Purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants participated in fashion trends (participation in fashion trends: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.31, SD = 1.70 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.97, SD = 1.65; $t(228)$ = -1.52, p = .13; no participation in fashion trends: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.86, SD = 2.25 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 2.86, SD = 1.95; $t(19)$ = -1.00, p = .33).

Fashion Purchases Based on Influencer Recommendations. When participants made fashion-related purchases based on influencer recommendations in the past six months, they were marginally more likely to purchase pre-owned luxury products in the non-sponsored condition (M = 4.51, SD = 1.64) than in the sponsored condition (M = 4.05, SD = 1.63; $t(188)$ = -1.93, p = .06). Purchase intention did not differ when participants did not make fashion-related purchases based on influencer recommendations in the past six months ($M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.55, SD = 1.92; $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.43, SD = 1.77; $t(59)$ = -0.25, p = .81).

Purchase Intention by Sustainability Concerns

Importance of Sustainable Fashion. Purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not vary across each level of the perceived importance of sustainability in participants' purchasing decision (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.14, SD = 1.69 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.67, SD = 1.76; $t(87)$ = -1.28, p = .20; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.16, SD =

1.92 vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.88$, $SD = 1.60$; $t(63) = -0.63$, $p = .53$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.43$, $SD = 1.74$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.17$, $SD = 1.65$; $t(95) = -0.75$, $p = .46$).

Fast Fashion Purchase. Purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not differ across each level of fast fashion consumption (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.00$, $SD = 1.92$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.77$, $SD = 1.66$; $t(99) = -0.64$, $p = .53$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.29$, $SD = 1.58$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.64$, $SD = 1.75$; $t(54) = -1.44$, $p = .16$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.49$, $SD = 1.69$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.26$, $SD = 1.63$; $t(92) = -0.68$, $p = .50$).

Importance of a Company's Commitment to Sustainability Practices. Purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not vary across each level of the perceived importance of the commitment of the company to sustainability (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.07$, $SD = 1.78$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.92$, $SD = 1.78$; $t(93) = -0.40$, $p = .69$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.06$, $SD = 1.76$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.61$, $SD = 1.50$; $t(65) = -1.13$, $p = .26$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.56$, $SD = 1.74$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.15$, $SD = 1.68$; $t(87) = -1.11$, $p = .27$).

The study also measured the effects of sponsored vs. non-sponsored posts on the trustworthiness and reliability of a brand selling pre-owned luxury fashion. Please see the Appendix for the full report on these measures.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Prior research has documented the key role that social media influencers play in facilitating the adoption of products and services (e.g., Leung et al., 2022; Wies, Bleier, and Edeling, 2023). Despite this benefit, our findings revealed no increase in purchase intention for pre-owned luxury products in the presence of social media endorsement. Instead, we found that participants were more inclined to purchase these products when they were promoted in a non-sponsored post (i.e., in the absence of a social media influencer) than in a sponsored post (i.e., in

the presence of a social media influencer). This happened among participants who were highly active on TikTok and moderately active on Pinterest. For participants who were active users on Instagram and Instagram stories, we did not find purchase intention varied across the sponsored and non-sponsored posts. We found that participants who used Pinterest moderately thought that the brand was more trustworthy and reliable when the pre-owned luxury products were promoted via a non-sponsored post rather than a sponsored post. These results highlight the need for a platform-specific approach and the value of authenticity in promoting resale or pre-owned luxury goods. In the following section, we discuss the potential implications derived from this study.

Managerial Implications

Our findings suggest that consumers who are well-versed in social media may perceive the use of influencers to promote products as a persuasive technique or marketing gimmick. This, in turn, makes them less likely to purchase pre-owned luxury products featured in sponsored posts. As a result, brand managers and marketing experts may take into account the following suggestions to optimize their strategies for pre-owned luxury products.

Authenticity over promotion—Our findings suggest that consumers value brand authenticity (that is, the brand's actions truly embody the values of a certain cause) and transparency when deciding to purchase pre-owned luxury fashion. Therefore, we recommend that, rather than depending exclusively on sponsored content, brands prioritize a genuine approach in their marketing campaigns to establish credibility and trust. This could include employing user-generated posts, sharing behind-the-scenes photos, and featuring customer testimonials in marketing campaigns.

Value-based initiatives—Relatedly, to further enhance the perceived brand authenticity, brands may consider integrating sustainability into the brand's identity and messaging. By

highlighting a commitment to ethical consumption, companies can appeal to socially conscious consumers and stand out in the industry (i.e., fashion) that is often criticized for its contributions to excessive waste.

Platform-specific strategies—Our results demonstrated that preferences for pre-owned luxury fashion vary not only by the content types (i.e., sponsored versus non-sponsored) but also by consumers' familiarity with specific social media platforms (i.e., TikTok, Instagram, and Pinterest). In the instance of TikTok and Pinterest, users who were active on these platforms were less likely to be influenced by sponsored posts. In fact, they were more likely to purchase pre-owned luxury fashion featured in non-sponsored posts. This finding indicates that brands should target their audiences differently on these platforms, incorporating unique and genuine content to drive organic engagement and, in turn, consumer purchases.

Future Research

As the intricate relationship between social media influencers, sustainability, and the fashion industry continues to evolve, brands must remain authentic in their marketing efforts. Our research demonstrates the potential of social media platforms such as TikTok, Pinterest, and Instagram in shaping the overall perceptions of sustainable fashion, helping combat the ethical dilemma and the negative impacts of fast fashion and large clothing hauls.

By leveraging social media effectively, fashion brands can communicate their sustainability initiatives and create genuine connections with consumers. This can cultivate a culture of responsible consumption and guide the industry toward a more circular economy. Furthermore, influencers can embrace innovative strategies and utilize their platforms through a non-sponsored approach (e.g. sharing unpaid online posts about products that influencers support

as a result of their love for the brand's mission and values) to create a lasting impression and drive consumers toward brands that are committed to a sustainable fashion landscape.

Future research could extend this investigation into the use of sponsored and non-sponsored social media posts on the consumption of fast fashion and pre-owned fast fashion items. This research will provide us with a comprehensive understanding of how different types of content on various social media platforms affect the consumption of luxury fashion versus fast fashion. Specifically, this investigation will allow us to examine whether certain social media platforms are more conducive to promoting fast fashion and whether the use of social media influencers exacerbates or mitigates fast fashion consumption.

Prior work has documented that emphasizing product durability can encourage consumers to opt for luxury items over purchasing multiple cheaper alternatives (Sun, Bellezza, and Paharia, 2021). Future research could examine whether highlighting durability enhances purchases of pre-owned luxury fashion and whether this effect varies between sponsored versus non-sponsored posts and across different social media platforms. Moreover, it would be interesting to explore how these effects evolve as consumer attitudes toward sustainable fashion and sustainable fashion practices continue to change over time.

Lastly, future research could also investigate how factors such as self-expression (Smith, VanDellen, and Ton, 2021), perceived social norms (Melnyk, Carrillat, and Melnyk, 2022), and beliefs about contagion (Argo, Dahl, and Morales, 2008) shape fashion consumption. It would be beneficial to investigate whether consumer purchases of pre-owned luxury fashion are influenced by their self-expression identity and whether concerns about contagion lessen the appeal of pre-owned luxury fashion. These additional future studies would further shed light on more effective marketing strategies to promote sustainable luxury fashion.

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APPENDIX

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Perceived Trustworthiness

Perceived trustworthiness for pre-owned luxury products did not differ between the non-sponsored condition ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.37$) and the sponsored condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.21$; $t(249) = -0.64$, $p = .52$). We then examined whether this result varied by social media usage, fashion content consumption, and sustainability concerns.

Perceived Trustworthiness by Social Media Usage

TikTok. There was no difference in perceived trustworthiness between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of TikTok usage (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.45$, $SD = 1.23$; $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.68$, $SD = 0.95$; $t(40) = 0.69$, $p = .50$); moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.40$, $SD = 0.55$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 2.50$, $SD = 2.12$; $t(5) = -1.01$, $p = .36$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.15$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.98$, $SD = 1.23$; $t(200) = -0.90$, $p = .37$).

Pinterest. When participants used Pinterest very often, perceived trustworthiness of pre-owned luxury products did not differ between the non-sponsored ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.25$) and sponsored conditions ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.06$; $t(110) = 1.38$, $p = .17$). The same pattern was observed when participants did not use Pinterest often ($M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.42$; $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.46$, $SD = 1.19$; $t(98) = -1.60$, $p = .11$).

However, when participants used Pinterest moderately, the brand was perceived as more trustworthy in the non-sponsored ($M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.29$) condition than in the sponsored condition ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.44$; $t(37) = -2.06$, $p = .047$).

Instagram. There was no difference in perceived trustworthiness between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram usage (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 2.89$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.00$, $SD = 1.10$; $t(13) = 0.17$, $p = .87$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} =$

3.88, $SD = 1.13$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.43$, $SD = 1.40$; $t(13) = -0.69$, $p = .51$; high: $M_{non-sponsored} = 4.11$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.98$, $SD = 1.18$; $t(219) = -0.74$, $p = .46$).

Instagram Stories. There was no difference in trustworthiness between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram story usage (low: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.68$, $SD = 1.34$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.68$, $SD = 1.25$; $t(92) < 0.001$, $p = 1.0$; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.64$, $SD = 1.15$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.64$, $SD = 1.26$; $t(45) = -0.01$, $p = .99$; high: $M_{non-sponsored} = 4.45$, $SD = 1.39$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.20$, $SD = 1.10$; $t(108) = -1.07$, $p = .29$).

Trustworthiness by Fashion Content Consumption

Fashion Content Engagement. Trustworthiness for pre-owned luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants engaged with fashion-related content (low: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.24$, $SD = 1.09$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.19$, $SD = 1.05$; $t(43) = -0.16$, $p = .87$; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.92$, $SD = 1.56$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.53$, $SD = 1.13$; $t(25) = -0.74$, $p = .47$; high: $M_{non-sponsored} = 4.28$, $SD = 1.34$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.09$, $SD = 1.20$; $t(177) = -1.02$, $p = .31$).

Influence of Social Media Content in Shaping Fashion Preferences. Perceived trustworthiness between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants perceived social media content as influential in shaping their fashion preferences (low: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.67$, $SD = 1.45$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.12$, $SD = 0.99$; $t(30) = -1.26$, $p = .22$; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.60$, $SD = 1.71$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.86$, $SD = 0.90$; $t(15) = 0.36$, $p = .72$; high: $M_{non-sponsored} = 4.10$, $SD = 1.32$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.04$, $SD = 1.21$; $t(200) = -0.33$, $p = .75$).

Fashion Trend Participation. Perceived trustworthiness between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants participated in fashion trends (participation in fashion trends: $M_{non-sponsored} = 3.96$, $SD = 1.36$ vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.94$, $SD = 1.21$;

$t(228) = -0.14$, $p = .89$; no participation in fashion trends: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.36$, $SD = 1.50$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.29$, $SD = 0.95$; $t(19) = -1.71$, $p = .10$).

Fashion Purchases Based on Influencer Recommendations. Perceived trustworthiness

between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants

made fashion-related purchases based on influencer recommendations in the past six months

(participation in fashion-related purchases: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.10$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.03$,

$SD = 1.23$; $t(188) = -0.34$, $p = .74$; no participation in fashion-related purchases: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} =$

3.76, $SD = 1.28$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.46$, $SD = 1.04$; $t(59) = -0.97$, $p = .33$).

Perceived Trustworthiness by Sustainability Concerns

Importance of Sustainable Fashion. Perceived trustworthiness between non-sponsored

and sponsored conditions did not vary across each level of the perceived importance of

sustainability in participants' purchasing decision (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.91$, $SD = 1.27$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.69$, $SD = 1.29$; $t(87) = -0.81$, $p = .42$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.13$, $SD = 1.48$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.13$; $t(63) = -1.32$, $p = .19$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.02$, $SD = 1.41$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.26$, $SD = 1.10$; $t(95) = 0.93$, $p = .35$).

Fast Fashion Purchase. Perceived trustworthiness between non-sponsored and

sponsored conditions did not differ across each level of fast fashion consumption (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.83$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.91$, $SD = 1.06$; $t(99) = 0.29$, $p = .77$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.04$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.64$, $SD = 1.28$; $t(54) = -1.10$, $p = .28$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}}$

$= 4.16$, $SD = 1.33$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.07$, $SD = 1.32$; $t(92) = -0.32$, $p = .75$).

Importance of Company's Commitment to Sustainability Practices. Perceived

trustworthiness between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not vary across each level

of the perceived importance of the commitment of the company to sustainability (low: $M_{\text{non-}}$

sponsored = 3.95, SD = 1.33 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.87, SD = 1.31; $t(93)$ = -0.32, p = .75; moderate: M_{non-}

sponsored = 3.88, SD = 1.37 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.58, SD = 0.97; $t(65)$ = -1.06, p = .29; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$

= 4.14, SD = 1.43 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 4.23, SD = 1.18; $t(87)$ = 0.32, p = .75).

Perceived Reliability

There was no difference in perceived brand reliability across the non-sponsored condition

(M = 4.02, SD = 1.31) and the sponsored condition (M = 3.94, SD = 1.25; $t(249)$ = -0.50, p =

.62). Next, we again tested whether this result varied by social media usage, fashion content

consumption, and sustainability concerns.

Perceived Reliability by Social Media Usage

TikTok. There was no difference in perceived reliability between the non-sponsored and

sponsored conditions across each level of TikTok usage (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.40, SD = 1.14;

$M_{sponsored}$ = 3.64, SD = 1.00; $t(40)$ = 0.71, p = .50); moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.40, SD = 0.55 vs.

$M_{sponsored}$ = 3.00, SD = 2.83; $t(5)$ = -0.35, p = .74; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.18, SD = 1.33 vs.

$M_{sponsored}$ = 4.03, SD = 1.27; $t(200)$ = -0.80, p = .42).

Pinterest. When participants used Pinterest very often, perceived reliability did not differ

between the non-sponsored (M = 3.85, SD = 1.08) and sponsored conditions (M = 4.14, SD = 1.21;

$t(110)$ = 1.30, p = .20). The same pattern was observed when participants did not use Pinterest

often ($M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.92, SD = 1.37; $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.57, SD = 1.21; $t(98)$ = -1.30, p = .20).

However, when participants used Pinterest moderately, the brand was perceived as

marginally more reliable in the non-sponsored (M = 4.88, SD = 1.41) than in the sponsored

condition (M = 4.00, SD = 1.35; $t(37)$ = -1.99, p = .05).

Instagram. There was no difference in reliability between the non-sponsored and

sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram usage (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.11, SD = 1.05;

$M_{sponsored}$ = 3.00, SD = 0.89; $t(13)$ = -0.21, p = .84; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.00, SD = 1.60 vs.

$M_{sponsored}$ = 3.43, SD = 1.40; $t(13)$ = -0.73, p = .48; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.10, SD = 1.29 vs.

$M_{sponsored}$ = 4.03, SD = 1.24; $t(219)$ = 0.43, p = .67).

Instagram Stories. There was no difference in perceived reliability between the non-sponsored and sponsored conditions across each level of Instagram story usage (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.72, SD = 1.35; $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.72, SD = 1.30; $t(92)$ < 0.001, p = 1.00; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.72, SD = 1.10 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.64, SD = 1.26; $t(45)$ = -0.24, p = .81; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.42, SD = 1.29 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 4.25, SD = 1.16; $t(108)$ = -0.70, p = .49).

Perceived Reliability by Fashion Content Consumption

Fashion Content Engagement. Perceived reliability between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants engaged with fashion-related content (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.31, SD = 0.97 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.19, SD = 1.17; $t(43)$ = -0.38, p = .71; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.92, SD = 1.38 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.80, SD = 1.15; $t(25)$ = -0.24, p = .81; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.28, SD = 1.33 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 4.10, SD = 1.24; $t(177)$ = -0.95, p = .34).

Influence of Social Media Content in Shaping Fashion Preferences. Perceived reliability between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants perceived social media content as influential in shaping their fashion preferences (low: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.60, SD = 1.45 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.00, SD = 0.87; $t(30)$ = -1.44, p = .16; moderate: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 3.30, SD = 1.16 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 4.29, SD = 1.11; $t(15)$ = 1.75, p = .10; high: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.16, SD = 1.28 vs. $M_{sponsored}$ = 4.08, SD = 1.25; $t(200)$ = -0.43, p = .67).

Fashion Trend Participation. Perceived reliability between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or not participants participated in fashion trends (participation in fashion trends: $M_{non-sponsored}$ = 4.00, SD = 1.28; $M_{sponsored}$ = 3.99, SD = 1.24;

$t(228) = -0.05$, $p = .96$); no participation in fashion trends: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.21$, $SD = 1.63$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.14$, $SD = 1.22$; $t(19) = -1.54$, $p = .14$).

Fashion Purchases Based on Influencer Recommendations. Reliability for pre-owned

luxury products between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not depend on whether or

not participants made fashion-related purchases based on influencer recommendations in the past

six months (participation in fashion-related purchases: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.12$, $SD = 1.34$ vs.

$M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.05$, $SD = 1.27$; $t(188) = -0.34$, $p = .73$; no participation in fashion-related purchases:

$M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.76$, $SD = 1.20$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.57$, $SD = 1.14$; $t(59) = -0.62$, $p = .54$).

Perceived Reliability by Sustainability Concerns

Importance of Sustainable Fashion. Perceived reliability between non-sponsored and

sponsored conditions did not vary across each level of the perceived importance of sustainability

in participants' purchasing decision (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.84$, $SD = 1.18$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.82$, SD

$= 1.39$; $t(87) = -0.07$, $p = .95$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.25$, $SD = 1.34$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.73$, $SD =$

1.15; $t(63) = -1.69$, $p = .10$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.04$, $SD = 1.40$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.22$, $SD = 1.15$;

$t(95) = 0.68$, $p = .50$).

Fast Fashion Purchase. Perceived reliability between non-sponsored and sponsored

conditions did not differ across each level of fast fashion consumption (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.92$,

$SD = 1.38$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.89$, $SD = 1.05$; $t(99) = -0.12$, $p = .90$; moderate: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.00$,

$SD = 1.33$ vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 3.71$, $SD = 1.24$; $t(54) = -0.83$, $p = .41$; high: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 4.14$, $SD =$

1.25 vs. $M_{\text{sponsored}} = 4.16$, $SD = 1.46$; $t(92) = 0.09$, $p = .93$).

Importance of Company's Commitment to Sustainability Practices. Perceived reliability

between non-sponsored and sponsored conditions did not vary across each level of the perceived

importance of the commitment of the company to sustainability (low: $M_{\text{non-sponsored}} = 3.93$, $SD =$

1.20 vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.94$, $SD = 1.45$; $t(93) = 0.04$, $p = .97$; moderate: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 3.91$, $SD =$

1.33 vs. $M_{sponsored} = 3.67$, $SD = 0.92$; $t(65) = -0.87$, $p = .39$; high: $M_{non\text{-}sponsored} = 4.18$, $SD = 1.40$

vs. $M_{sponsored} = 4.18$, $SD = 1.19$; $t(87) = -0.002$, $p = .999$).