FASHIONFEVER

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- A study on the fashion bloggers' influence on the MeWe-generation's fashion consumption.
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

During the recent years the fashion business has taken huge place on the Internet as a result of the emerging social media tools. One of these tools, which is the focus of this thesis, is the fashion blogs which over the past years become more popular and are today seen as a source of information and inspiration for fashion styles and upcoming trends. The boom of fashion bloggers resulted in less control by the magazines and fashion houses. Furthermore, the shift in generation that the world has faced shows that the people of 1980’s, so called the MeWe’s, are the ones who are taking over the society, such as the labour market.

“The main purpose with this thesis is to examine and analyze the implications of the blog-development for fashion consumers in the MeWe-generation.”

In order to perform my research I chose the qualitative approach where I interviewed ten women within the MeWe-generation. My purpose is to analyze the respondents’ views and opinions in order to afterwards put it in relation to the secondary data collected. My goal has been to, as a result of the empirical materials, gain more understanding of the respondents’ views on in what extent they are being influenced by the fashion bloggers. Furthermore, the empirical study, analysis and the conclusion have been presented on the basis of following concepts within the theoretical framework: The MeWe-generation, Social Media, Blogs, Word of Mouth, Word of Mouth Marketing, Viral Marketing, Reference Groups, and Opinion Leadership.

In conclusion, one could say that this study shows evidence that the MeWe-generation is being influenced by fashion bloggers. Their overall consumption behaviour is being affected by the frequently updated blogs and they are also gaining more trust towards the fashion bloggers since they can relate to them much more than to the models in the magazines. Also, as a result of the interactivity that occurs between the readers and the bloggers, a positive word of mouth is created which also increase the trustworthiness of the bloggers. Hence, one can say that by the way these fashion blogs are taking place in the MeWe-consumer’s everyday life, it is clear that they are here to stay and will remain their power of influencing them in their fashion consumption.
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1 Introduction

In the introduction part the background of the topic chosen will be presented along with the research question and the main purpose of writing it. In the problem discussion part the problems associated with this situation will be presented and looked upon.

1.1 Background

The fashion business have taken huge place on the Internet these days, in form of live streaming fashion shows, successful web shops, various websites, Facebook groups and Twitter accounts. However, above all, the boom of fashion bloggers have led to less control by the magazine and fashion houses on the fashion market.

The concept of fashion blogs can be explained as a blog (an online dairy) driven by a fashion and shopping interested person who chose to write about desired clothes, trends and news in the fashion world. Furthermore, fashion blogging has over the past years faced a rapid increase in popularity and is today seen as a source of information and also inspiration for the newest styles and upcoming trends on the fashion market.\(^1\)

The fashion industry has taken a faster spin because of the frequently updated styles and trends.\(^2\) The fashion industry in Sweden has increased largely over the past years and is seen as a very unique industry because of its high consumption tendencies and the fast changes in the trends. One of the main reasons for why the consumption have been increasing could be a result of the increased emergence of different types of social media through the Internet which are treating fashion and are acting as advertisement for the entire fashion industry.\(^3\) Due to the fact that today’s market consists of an excess of information, consumers have become less interested in a company’s traditionally made campaigns and offerings. The major traditional media no longer has a monopoly on the information and it is hard to control the flows of information that exists on the Internet. Moreover, there is no longer only fashion magazines that comes out once a month, but there are also several magazines that are being renewed every week and consists of new designs and trends to follow. Fashion bloggers emerged in 2002, however, they have been increasing in numbers ever since and during this period of

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1 Heathcote, C., 2009
2 http://www.svd.se/kulturnoje/nyheter/mode-i-kamp-mot-klockan_1573763.svd
3 http://www.aftonbladet.se/sofismode/article1685089.ab?service=print
time, and they have had a huge influence on consumption. The fashion bloggers started their blogs only as a hobby, but today these blogs are being seen as an entire industry which, by its great power of influencing on the commerce, has been competing with magazines such as the editors at ELLE.

With the shift in generation that the world has been facing, the people of 1980’s are the ones who are taking over the in the society, such as the labour market. This generation is called the MeWe-generation and these people possess several characteristics that differ from previous generations. There are three main factors and the first one is that these people use the digital technology to communicate with the surrounding. Secondly, they have erased the geographical boundaries, which in turn have led to them being more globally active. Finally, the MeWe-generation has great confidence in sharing knowledge and information among each other with the help of technological devices, such as blogs.

The fashion bloggers are the most popular among all bloggers. This is since they can be seen as a tool of viral marketing where they are voluntarily marketing a product and spreading the message by sharing it on their blog. The importance of blogging within the world of fashion is an evident factor since it is influencing the trends, which is why great number of companies have these days started to promote their clothing through these fashion blogs. Furthermore, with the help of word-of-mouth, the message is usually being passed on to others with a high speed, hence when it comes to creating more valid consumer awareness the method of word-of-mouth is seen as being more effective than regular advertisement.

It has been said that garments that have been mentioned and presented in these fashion blogs are being sold out and this is as a result of the effectiveness of word-of-mouth. Hence this is why it has been said that fashion bloggers have great power over the newest trends in the fashion industry.

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4 Heathcote, C
5 http://www.svd.se/kulturnoje/nyheter/modebloggar-for-miljoner_1066067.svd
6 Lindgren, M., Lüthi, B., Fürth, T., 2005
7 Bloggtoppen, 2010
8 Solomon, M., R. & Rabolt, N., J. 2009
9 http://www.aftonbladet.se/sofismode/article454225.ab?service=print
Companies have during the recent years realized the power of blogs and the positive and negative effects that they can have on them. Hence, when the companies got familiar with the blog-sphere they started the commercialization of the blogs. Today companies choose if they themselves want to write a blog, sponsor one, or alternatively pay to appear on specific blogs. The latter alternative means basically that the companies either place advertisements on the blog or get the blogger to mention the company and their products in its text. A company can learn a lot by following blogs; one example is that it learns to determine what customers and non-customers alike are saying about the business. Also, a company can earn beneficial factors by using blogs in order to spread the word about whatever it is that they are offering its customers. Another advantage is that the company will receive immediate feedback from these customers through the blog. Hence, it is important for companies to understand how they should work with these blogs in order to not be ousted by the blogs.\textsuperscript{10} One example would be the fashion magazines, which normally are using more traditional Medias. Although fashion blogs have the advantages of offering information more rapidly and also cheaper than the magazines, the magazines have a greater power on their side, and that are the highly educated fashion people behind the scene of fashion magazines. However, in order to be a part of the blogging-sphere, some magazines have chosen to create their own blog, aside from the magazine, such as, \url{http://www.style.com/} which is a part of the Vogue magazine.\textsuperscript{11}

1.2 Problem Discussion

For some period of time, I have been interested in the phenomenon of fashion blogs and wished to examine their importance in the world of fashion today. During the last year of my education within the field of Fashion Management, I have come to understand that the fashion blogs have grown enormously all over the world, more or less because of the generation shift and since the upcoming generation, such as the 1980’s are more attached to the technical devices, such as computers, Hence, as a result of that, these blogs have become more interesting and reliable than ordinary fashion magazines, since the blogs are being updated every day with a wide range of information and inspiration, hence they have gained the power of meeting the same consumer needs that magazines

\textsuperscript{10} Wright, J., 2005
\textsuperscript{11} \url{http://www.style.com}
were satisfying some years ago. When touching the topic of consumer needs, it is also important to highlight the power that these blogs have on influencing their audience. Another interesting aspect is the problem that can arise if fashion blogs will at some point become the only media that customers will turn to. Will fashion blogs at some point become a serious threat to the fashion magazines, and in turn also a threat to the companies which are sponsoring these magazines?

Another important factor in this discussion is the concept of social media, which have increased in value over the past few years. Communities, such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace, have become really famous and are in the same category as the blogs.

Hence, by knowing the importance of social media in today's society, and having a great interest in the overall power of influences that fashion blogs have on consumer, I have chosen to write this thesis based on a study on the influence of fashion blogs on consumer behaviour.

1.3 Research Question

To what extent does fashion blogs influence the MeWe-generation on their fashion consumption?

1.4 Purpose

The main purpose with this thesis is to examine and analyze the implications of the blog-development for fashion consumers in the MeWe-generation.

1.5 Delimitations

In this thesis I have chosen to focus on fashion blogs in the eyes of the reader who mainly do not consider whether or not the bloggers are receiving product samples or an amount of money when they choose to mentioned anything in their blogs. Hence, these situations will not be mentioned through this paper. The main focus is on the MeWe-generation’s consumer behaviour regarding fashion blogs and the influence on their fashion consumption.
2 Methodology

Research method stands for the method which is being used in order to answer questions based on the specific problem that is chosen in the thesis.

2.1 Choice of Method

Below, I present the approach that I have chosen for this thesis and also given an explanation for my choice.

Since this study is based on collecting different interviewee's perspective on blogs and consumption there is nothing that can be generalized based on measurable data collection. My purpose is to analyze the respondents' views and opinions in order to afterwards put it in relation to the secondary data collected. My goal has been to, as a result of the empirical materials, gain more understanding of the respondents' views on in what extent they are being influenced by the fashion bloggers. The focus is on creating an understanding of the social reality by seeing how a certain group of participants in this environment perceive this reality.\textsuperscript{12} The reason why I have decided not to use a quantitative approach is, I believe, that it had requested that I would define the study even more from whose perspective I wanted to do this investigation. I had to establish a sort of study group, for example, by simply interviewing fashion bloggers or only companies to obtain the appropriate response to compile the data. Hence I decided to follow the qualitative approach, where the context is of great importance.\textsuperscript{13}

2.2 Research Approach

Since I have chosen to firstly study literatures and other kind of theories on the concept of fashion and afterwards have interviews based on the topic of fashion, social media and blogs in order to, at the end, conclude the research based on theories and the outcome of the interviews, I have chosen the deductive approach for this thesis. The main focus of the deductive approach is to look at already existing theories, and in order to draw logical conclusion from them, one could question by conducting some kind of theoretical investigation.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2007
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Wigblad, R, 1997
2.3 Information gathering techniques

I have, in this thesis used a combination of both primary and secondary data. The secondary data will be that I decided to conduct an interview with some young women in order to gain more understanding on how these respondents are thinking about fashion blogs. Furthermore, it is also obvious that I have had great use of literatures, articles and electronic sources, which are all a part of the primary data in order to build up knowledge about the topic and also to create a theoretical framework for the thesis.

2.3.1 Literature Review

Literature study is a crucial part in writing a thesis since it justifies the information being presented in the research. Since searching for literature is very much dependent on careful reading of books, journals and other reports related to the subject chosen, I firstly started by looking up topics related to my research by searching in various databases on the website of The Textile University of Borås, in order to find required information. Moreover, I turned to the Internet in search of electronic sources which could enrich my references. Since this topic of social media and in particularly fashion blogs is still new, the possibility to find updated and valid information in books is quite low. Hence, what I have realised during my search for references is that it is crucial to look for electronic sources since they are being upgraded more often. Additionally, afterwards I studied the information founded and selected only the essential parts which could contribute with significant information regarding my chosen topic.

2.3.2 Performance of Interview

There are several ways of making interviews and one should obviously implement the one that suits the research approach the best. Below I have presented the method I chose to work with in this research.

2.3.3 Interview Techniques

In my research I have chosen to use the semi-structured interview technique by constructing several interviews where the interviewees are given the freedom to answer the questions fairly openly. Moreover, I will have, as the researcher, the opportunity

15 Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2007
16 Ibid
17 Ibid.
to ask additional questions based on the answers given by the respondent. Additionally, in order to receive as reliable answers as possible, I have chosen not to send out the questions to the interviewees on beforehand, since if they have access to see the questions before the interview there is a risk that they will think too much when answering. This will as mentioned, decrease the truthfulness of the research.\textsuperscript{18}

Furthermore, in order to have more control and have the ability to go back to the interviews later on when I have to compile and analyze the answers, I chose to record the interviews. Afterwards, I made a transcription out of them, which is beneficial in this case since it translates and gives shape to the spoken languages to written form.\textsuperscript{19} Through the transcriptions I also had the opportunity to follow up interesting points that were made during the interview that I were not able to focus on during the actual interviews.

\subsection*{2.3.4 Target Audience}

I have determined to focus the empirical data collection of this paper on Swedish women that are a part of the MeWe-generation. According to the \textit{World Internet Institute} \textsuperscript{20} are 69 percent of women in the age of 16-25 reading blogs on the Internet and in the age of 26-35 there are 50 percent who are following blogs. These percentages are the highest ones when comparing to other ages and the MeWe's are a part of both these age-groups. For men the situation is different, whereas for men in the same age the percentage range is only 51 percent. In previous year, blog reading was distributed relatively equally between different ages, however, during the past few years, the younger have taken over.\textsuperscript{21} Hence, in order to achieve the best result, I have to match the target audience for the empirical study with the largest group of blog readers.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.  \\
\textsuperscript{20} Findahl, O., 2009  \\
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
2.3.5 Selection of Respondents

I have chosen to interview ten people since I believe this amount will give a good and fair overview of how consumers think, at least during this study. Furthermore, I also believe that the amount give the space to receive different outcome, which will make it more reliable, however, in order to make any final statement one have to have in mind that ten respondents are too less and that the amount should be higher. I have also stressed the fact that the ages have to be spread hence I have chosen to include ten females in the age of 21, 22, 23, 24 and also 25 mainly with the focus that the percentage of blog readers is higher amongst women than men. These women are all considered themselves being a part of the MeWe-generation since their habits confirms well with what has been written about the MeWe-generation. I have chosen to count younger audience in the research also since it will then make it easier to see if the consumer behaviour and influences are because of the low age ranks, since according to some

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22 Ibid.
23 Ekengren, A. & Hinnfors, J., 2006
theories, younger people, such as teenagers, found it easier to be influenced by groups or other references.24

Furthermore, the sample of respondents is done strategically by starting the interview by asking people their age, if they read fashion blogs, and then the rest of the questions are followed.25

2.4 The Trustworthiness of the Thesis

Below follows a short description of the factors deciding the truthfulness of this research.

2.4.1 Reliability and Validity

Reliability stands for in which degree a research result can be repeated if the study is being done under similar or even identical conditions.26 Since I have chosen a qualitative approach, the concept of reliability is not in focus. Reliability is more relevant for quantitative studies because it aims more at measurement surveys. If I would conduct the same interview with the same people today I would most probably receive the same answers. However, I believe that if the interview would be conducted later in time the responses would have a different outcome because the updates in the area can change and affect a person’s perceptions. Furthermore, I also believe that if the same interview questions were given to other persons who are a part of fashion blogging, the answers would be varied depending on the person’s attitude to the subject. In terms of reliability I have used various theoretical concepts from different researchers in the topics I intend to raise in order to gain a broader understanding of my analysis and the interaction with additional information from my empirical material. Furthermore, if the connection between theories and empirical information will not hold, the research will lose its purpose.27

Validity stands for the fact that whether or not the conclusions that the author have come to actually does fit together.28 I consider the validity to be significant in this study,

24 Solomon, M., R. & Rabolt, N., J. 2009
25 Ekengren, A. & Hnifors, J., 2006
26 Christensen, L., 2001
27 Bryman, A. & Bell, E., 2007
28 Ibid.
since I have interviewed people with different relations to the fashion blogosphere and about the possibility of different perceptions and reflections on the subject.

2.5 Methodological Critique

One weakness of this chosen approach is the time frame that I have been given during the thesis writing. I would of course appreciate if I had the opportunity to verify my empirical data with more interviews and more respondent’s, and of course, as a result of that the outcome would be more trustworthy.
3 Theoretical Framework

In the Theoretical Framework relevant theories are being presented which are the starting points in this research.

3.1 The MeWe-generation

The MeWe-generation includes those who are born in the 1980’s and which acquires some characteristics that distinguishes them from previous generations. MeWe's has three characteristics that essentially speak for their generation. The first one is, using the digital technology to communicate with the whole world. Secondly, this has also erased geographical borders, which has led to this generation being more globally cultured. The third characteristic that stands out for them is that they also have great confidence in sharing knowledge and information.\(^{29}\) Furthermore, this generation is not defined by age, gender, socio-demographic or geographic factors. Instead, their general behaviour, attitudes and interests are being spread to virtual environments.\(^{30}\)

Individualization is a concept connected with this new generation and these people like to put the focus on themselves and separate themselves from the mass of people. Furthermore, they put the emphasis on self-expression and value the quality of life as a crucial factor in their life. The concept of MeWe is a combination of two short words; “Me”- people who are borne as individuals who want to fulfil themselves, and “We”- they value friends and relations as a primary priority. Moreover, these people are being seen as different kind of individuals, these individuals not only stand out from the crowd, but they want the attention, praise, acknowledgment and popularity, they want to be someone and want to achieve status. Another characteristic of MeWe generation is that they consider themselves able to choose how they want their life to be. They feel that their lives are more dependent on their own choice rather than circumstances. Moreover, the Internet offers people the ability to constantly change their identity because they at any time of the day can have their needs for consumption and enjoying life satisfaction.\(^{31}\) Furthermore, the MeWe-generation are being inspired from other people rather than institutions based on rules and governed by representatives.

\(^{29}\) Lindgren, M., Lüthi, B., Fürth, T., 2005
\(^{30}\) http://www.gartner.com/it/page.jsp?id=721008
\(^{31}\) Lindgren, M., Lüthi, B., Fürth, T., 2005
closer the source of inspiration, the greater impact it has. They are inspired by friends, parents, teachers, writers and scientists, but also by people in general.\textsuperscript{32}

Finally, the MeWe-generation is seen as being consumer-oriented and believe that they should buy whatever they wish to buy. To them, consumption is an instrument for self-fulfilment and an opportunity to experiment with their identity. Furthermore, they believe that consumption belongs to the new society and that people can through shopping and consumption create and build their own self-image. This believes erases since consumption is seen as a part of the life of MeWe-generations. They have been brought up believing that consumption is a natural behaviour and they are thus born to consume.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{3.2 Social Media}

Social Media is designed to be distributed through several types of social interaction tools. The Internet and web-based technologies are being used in order to transform broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. The concept of Social Media Marketing can be described as using social networks, online communities, blogs or any other online collaborative media for sales, marketing, public relations and customer service and as the technology is developing, and the concept of social media is also expanding. Familiar social media marketing tools today are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia Flickr, etc. Blogs are also seen as a social media tool where people are interacting with each other and share information, advices and thoughts through their own blog.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{3.2.1 Blogs}

The word blog is originated in the word Web log, which stands for a log in the network and the phenomenon can be traced back to the late 1990’s. Blogs are defined as a personal homepage on the Internet open to all, where the author expresses his feelings and opinions about a particular topic. The central part of the blog is the comments or posts that are being published by the author; however, readers are also given the opportunity to comment on the author’s blog. In recent years, blogs have become an

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Kaplan, A. M & Haenlein, M., 2010
\end{flushright}
obvious action taken by a huge amount of people and the reason for why blogs have become so popular is because they are simple to operate. Today, ordinary people can bring their message to a higher mass and create views. Earlier journalists were considered as the only mediators of truth however today even some bloggers can be considered as truth bearer and reliable sources. A concrete example is fashion in which the blogger blogs about her clothes and posts pictures of her in different outfits and write about general observations related to fashion. Furthermore, fashion bloggers have taken over the usual fashion pages on the Internet and blogs are facing a rise. Moreover, fashion blogs have become important for apparel sales since they have the enormous power of distributing the information. These bloggers does not always come up with new ideas or trends to recommend, but often they themselves are being influenced by other blogs or medias around them. However, their power increases whenever they can influence a reader by the word of mouth.35

Blogs bring together similar groups of individuals which may lead to self-belief, hence blogs can be viewed as a social network where users share ideas, trends and information. Furthermore, it can be said that the purpose of blogs is for people to share their information with readers who may be interested in that specific topic. Also, they fulfil the deeper needs of people who search for confirmation and having the need of being at the centre and that they feel good to share their personal interests with others.36

3.3 Word of Mouth

Word-of-mouth can be described as verbal communication from one individual to another and also as one of the most important topics in consumer behaviour research. This concept have evolved into being a marketing tool for companies in order for them to understand what and how the consumer feels about their products and is often also seen as a more effective tool than regular advertising such as campaigns. Word-of-mouth communication has through the years received much attention from both academics and practitioners and researchers have since the 1950s, found that word-of-mouth not only affect consumers’ purchasing behaviour, but also shape their

35 Nicola et. al, 2009
36 Ibid.
expectations and attitudes to the product before and after. The tool is highly effective since it can spread due to several factors, which is either because the consumers are very satisfied or dissatisfied with the product, if they gain confidence in the company and build a long-term relationship with it or if the product is brand new.37

Furthermore, the communication form of word-of-mouth has impact in three different steps. Step one is when consumers go from being unaware of a product that they through this communication will become aware of, later on, second step is when they hear about the product from a source and thirdly, depending on the type of the information, the consumer will act differently. Hence, if the information was positive, the consumer would most probably buy the product, however, if the information received would be negative, the consumer will lose interest in it and will not buy it.38

Furthermore, this tool is today being used by companies in their marketing strategy. However, although this marketing tool is being used successively more and more, companies must have this in mind that this powerful tool cannot directly be controlled by them, since the main power is in the hand of the consumers. Although word-of-mouth can have this strong impact and can influence the outcome, honesty behind the messages and information is required. This strategy influences consumers’ opinions about brands and products and has therefore a major impact on consumer’s purchasing behaviour. The greatest failure with using Word-of-mouth marketing is the disadvantage of the fast spreading negative reputation which is hard to stop. Negative word-of-mouth can thus be very damaging for businesses.39

There are two crucial factors in the word-of-mouth theory which are opinion leaders and general managers. The opinion leaders often provide information within a specific area while the overall leaders, as it sounds, gives general information about the entire market. Consumers can use word-of-mouth in order to get attention, social status, power or superiority, at the places where they show what they bought or what they have done.40

37 Solomon, M., R. & Rabolt, N., J. 2009
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
3.3.1 Word of Mouth Marketing

Word of mouth marketing is based on ordinary people's honest references and based on two-way conversation, transparent communication and above all customer satisfaction. The basic concept is to create various marketing techniques which will facilitate the exchange of views between consumers.\(^{41}\)

As mentioned before, since the significant influence of word of mouth theory have been scientifically supported by many researchers, the interest for using this method in company’s marketing strategy have increased enormously. However, although this marketing tool is being used successively more and more, companies must have this in mind that this powerful tool cannot directly be controlled by them, since the main power is in the hand of the consumers.\(^{42}\) Although word of mouth can have this strong impact and influence the outcome, honesty behind the messages and information is required. This strategy influences consumers' opinion about brands and products and has therefore a major impact on consumer's purchasing behaviour. The greatest failure with using word of mouth marketing is the disadvantage of the fast spreading negative reputation which is hard to stop. Negative word of mouth can thus be very damaging for businesses.\(^{43}\)

3.3.2 Viral Marketing

Since consumers are showing an increase in resistance to traditional forms of advertising such as TV or magazine ads, marketers have turned to alternative strategies and one of these are viral marketing. Viral marketing utilizes already existing social networks by encouraging customers to share information about products with their friends on the Internet. It can be said that viral marketing is a form of word of mouth which also takes place Online on the Internet, however, word of mouth seems slower and does not reach as huge mass as viral marketing does. The positive effects of viral marketing would be if it would result in positive word of mouth but on the other hand the negative effects would be that it would be perceived as a disturbing message, like spam. Furthermore, in order to be successful, viral marketing does not have to result in

\(^{41}\) http://womma.org  
\(^{42}\) Solomon, M., R & Rabolt, N., J. 2009  
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
increased sales for the company, however, a successful viral marketing that has integrated its brand message could be stuck into consumer's mind unconsciously, which is seen as being more effective in the long-run.\textsuperscript{44}

3.4 Reference Groups

The influence of reference groups on consumer decisions on mainly the fashion market, have been observed by marketers over the past decades. Earlier studies have shown the importance of knowing what the consumers are influenced by in order to communicate to the consumer efficiently. Purchase decisions are made upon the importance of selecting products that are associated by the reference group of the consumer. A reference group can be defined as a group of people or a person that notably influences the behaviour of an individual. Furthermore, consumer behaviour is influenced by its associations made with certain groups. Consumer's decision making process is influenced by the stereotypes of the general consumer of the product that the consumers have formed themselves. Consumers are encouraged by positive reference groups to consume in a certain way. On the other hand the consumers' consumption of certain products is discouraged by negative groups, since consumers make negative associations of the negative reference groups. Consumer's personality is shown through their rejection of certain fashion products and brands. It is proved that what we choose not to consume is an essential aspect of both individual and group identity.\textsuperscript{45}

The products that the consumers purchase reflect who they are and the products are used as instruments to improve the self image of the individuals. At the same time they try to maintain their self concepts by buying items identified to be similar with their identity. When consumers make consumption decisions regarding fashion products and brands it is often based upon their opinions about the stereotypical consumer of those products. If a consumer make a purchase they are most likely to choose a brand or retailer that represents a positive image for them. This positive image is formed on the basis of the characteristics of the stereotypes that are associated with the brand.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} Balter, D., 2008  
\textsuperscript{45} Hines, T. & Bruce, M., 2007  
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
3.4.1 Reference Group’s affect in varying degrees and in different ways

A reference group influence consumers in different degrees and in three different ways: by providing information, in general and through value expressions. Consumers tend to seek for information on various products which they cannot get as easily, from experts or independent groups, independent test results or observing what the experts use themselves. This can in turn result in that consumers listen to the reference groups and change their relationship to certain products. Consumers are generally affected by the same selected brand or product that others have in their social community, or by choosing something that they believe will realize their expectations on themselves and something that they can identify themselves with the reference group. Through value expression consumers are being influenced to buy products in order to receive the right image, as someone they want to be; respected and admired, and further on, the reference group's views will also be the consumer's opinions.47

Reference groups are not equally significant for all types of products. Products associated with luxury rather than necessity tends to be more likely to be affected by reference groups. Social power refers to the ability any person has to affect someone else's decision whether she knows it or not. If a person admires a person or group she will copy the reference group's behaviour, such as the choice of clothing. Despite the influence of reference groups and individuals, there are those who are not affected by these groups and prefer to have their own style. These should be distinguished from those who refuse to buy something that reference groups have proposed just to go against the grain.48

3.4.2 Different types of Reference Groups

Informal reference groups, small groups with friends or other persons, who are close, tend to affect consumers easier, since these are easier to identify one-self with, easier to reach and a part of the consumers’ daily lives. Some reference groups are composed by people who are familiar to the consumer, while others consist of such persons that the consumer can identify itself with or admire. A reference group that has influence on other consumers so that they want to imitate the reference group is called aspiration

47 Solomon, M., R. & Rabolt, N., J. 2009
48 Ibid.
groups. The opposite is a so-called anti-association (dissociation) group where people do not want to be associated with the reference group.\textsuperscript{49}

\subsection*{3.5 Opinion Leadership}

An opinion leader is someone who people seeks for advice and is able to influence people in their decision making and also their attitudes. Typical characteristics for fashion opinion leaders are for example that they have big knowledge about it, are social and are among the first to buy a new product or adapt a new fashion trend.\textsuperscript{50}

Opinion leaders are a powerful force in the market when they are reaching out to the right audience in an effective manner also, a typical opinion leader can be defined as an expert in a specific product category and it spreads information and provides advices about a specific product. Furthermore, there are three important criteria, both personal and social, that must be fulfilled for an opinion leader. These are that their values, skills and knowledge related to the product, and in which social networks they belong, is shown. Opinion leaders represent social values and have the opportunity to stand out from the crowd, they adapt to the social norms and values that exist. Opinion leaders rely on their social networks to gather information and update their knowledge of new trends, brands and innovations. It is the close contact between opinion leaders and followers which is the source of credibility and trust. Moreover, they also possess social attributes as they are sociable, central to social networks, operating in social activities, are socially recognized and that they represent credibility. Opinion leaders are not a separate group of people who have qualities that no one else can get. It is rather a give-and-take situation through everyday relationships, where opinion leaders can be seen as a team member who acts lead role in a communication.\textsuperscript{51}

Opinion leaders are said to be generally more inventive, however, this does not have to mean that they can be called innovators. A clear link can be seen in the fashion world in which development takes place quickly, which means constant renewals. Opinion leaders get their information from primary sources, such as personal experiences, and therefore reduce the risk of the recipients to feel reluctant to buy new products. People

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Nicola, E., et al, 2009
are everyday being exposed to 200-1000 messages, but still they consider recommendations from friends since the decision-making process is experienced to be hard. Hence, the opinion leader's task is to convey a message in a way so that the business purpose does not shine through.\textsuperscript{52}

Opinion leaders can convey both positive and negative message, compared with marketers who constantly communicate positive information about their products.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} Weimann, G., et. al, 2007
4 Empirical Study

In this part the compiled result of the implemented interview with the chosen respondents is presented.

4.1 Information on the respondents

As mentioned before, I choose to include ten women from the MeWe-generation as respondents for this research. This can be seen since they are all interacting either through communities or other kind of technical devices on the Internet, they prefer to live their life just as they wish and think of today than of the future. These women are in the ages 21-25 years and they all see themselves as fashion followers, to that extent that they are reading one or several fashion blogs more or less on a daily basis. Furthermore, some of these women have or have had their own fashion blog, however they still like to read other blogs in order to receive more ideas and influences.

4.2 Background

One thing that all the respondents have in common is that they are interested in fashion and that they regularly visit fashion blogs. Some are really interested in fashion and have it as their main interest, while others have it as a minor interest which does not occupy their time too much. Furthermore, some respondents read fashion blogs several times a week while some of them update fashion blogs numerous times a day, "I sometimes read 7-8 blogs daily! It sounds a lot but it is not. Given that I follow these blogs every day, there are only a few posts that I read on each blog, (21 years old). Commonly for all respondents, they have read fashion blogs for over a year; however the timeline goes from 1-5 years. The respondents stated that they started reading fashion blogs after receiving tips from friends; some of their friends actually had their own blogs, "My friend started a fashion blog and have one now and through it I became interested", (22 years old). Some mentioned that they had found the fashion blogs because they usually tend to surf the Internet and was used to look at different websites for fashion. Another respondent mentioned that she started reading fashion blogs after having started her own fashion blog, others answered that they started to read their friend’s blogs first and then found out about other blogs also.
Furthermore, the respondents have in some occasion bought one or several garments or fashion products that have been mentioned in the fashion blogs, one respondent stated “I have done it several times! Since I am always looking for the latest and also buy the latest in the stores, and this is what is being mentioned in the fashion blogs”, (21 years old).

Another respondent said “Yes I have. One of the reason for why I read these blogs is just to find out what is new on the market, and where I can find the things I like, (23 years old).

4.3 How does fashion blogs influence choice of clothing and consumption?

“I want to express myself and my personal expressions with my style and I like to make standpoints with my style”, (22 years old).

The respondents explained in the interviews that they want to express their personal style with their choice of clothing, but also they wish to feel beautiful and trendy. Some answered that they also wish to fit in the society, while one said that she wish to show her personality through her clothing:

“I like to show that I am a strong and independent women who dare taking risks, I am not a confused girl, but I am pretty determined and know what I want”, (21 years old).

Some respondents also said that their choice of clothing gives them more confidence and can create the mood for the whole day. They stated that they had a fairly typical style but still like to mix it with their personal style, “For me it is a mix of being trendy and fitting in the society but also to express my personality through my clothing”, (22 years old).

Another respondent said that “I like to express my personality, show who I am and sometimes what I stand for with my style. I also likes to look good and somewhat trendy”, (23 years old).

Furthermore, when I asked whether or not the respondents are being influenced by the bloggers and their recommendations on fashion trends, I received many different answers. Some said that they did not follow trends and fashion tips from bloggers;
however, they could still absorb advice on certain products. “No, this doesn’t happen often either, since when I don’t follow the trends, my personal style cannot be influenced that much”, (22 years old). Another respondent stated “Well, whenever I follow their recommendations and I get influenced by the bloggers and as a result of that my personal style gets influenced also”, (23 years old).

The respondents only accept the tips and recommendations that they believe suits them, and they are very keen on highlighting that they do not like to copy anyone, but they just absorb the influences. They wanted to find something that suits them more personally, rather than to duplicate, “Maybe to some point, but not too much. I get the recommendations, but sometimes I can mix it with my own thoughts and style in order to make it more personal”, (22 years old). Another respondent said that “I would like to have the blogger’s style, but since I read international blogs I find it hard to find everything that those bloggers use”, (21 years old).

The respondents answered that they have bought too expensive fashion clothing or products, and mostly because the product have been from a designer collection or something really trendy, “Yes I have, designers accessories, because they turn into an IT-product and in order to be fashionable I buy them”, (23 years old). Another respondent stated

“That would be during the Cavalli-collaboration with H&M, when I saw the beautiful golden dress on the blog before it came out in the store. I bought it although I really could not afford it, (24 years old).

The respondents admit that they have felt stressed about the time of purchasing a garment or product mentioned in a fashion blog before it runs out in the store,

“Yes, since when a garment becomes very trendy in a short matter of time, and the bloggers talk about it on their blogs, one have to make sure to buy it if it is something that is really desired, (23 years old).

Also, another factor that the respondents had in common was that they all believed that the “outfit of the day” and the reading of people’s thoughts and ideas on fashion were the two most interesting aspects of the fashion blogs. As one respondents said
“I like the “outfit of the day” since they are very inspiring and inspirational. It is also interesting and fun to read what the person behind the blog thinks about fashion”, (25 years old).

They did also think that the comparison between luxury and budget garments and products is inspirational and interesting.

4.4 How does fashion blogs affect consumers in relation to other media and the people around them?

The respondents believed that in today’s situation, the fashion blogs are the main media who are being more influential since they are updated more often with new information, and are something that you read every day, unlike fashion magazines that are not updated as often. Fashion blogs are more widely available and it is fun to help each other in the fashion that can be done on a blog by a conversation through comments. One respondent said

“Blogs are influencing me the most, because they are easier to access than magazines, but also more updated than TV-shows. TV-shows seem very often very fake and unreal, and magazines are fun to read but they are too commercial”, (25 years old).

Fashion blogs are even more personal than magazines as we often do not know who the person is behind a story or an opinion of a newspaper. Several also thought that the newspapers have been replaced by fashion blogs and one can even just as easily check out the fashion magazine’s website which usually also have a blog linked to themselves. Moreover, those who felt that fashion magazines have greater influence over them, said they feel more reliable since the people behind them are educated within the field of fashion and the sources that they give information from, such as, ELLE and VOGUE, are being seen as more serious sources. Another respondent also added that fashion TV-programs are interesting and influential.

Furthermore, there were respondents who either turned to their friends or blogs in order to get influence and recommendations. Some said that they usually look up the trends on the blogs and then when they are out shopping they turn to their friends for their opinion.
“It is a mix of both. I can see something on a blog that I think is nice and then when I am out shopping with my friends I would of course also ask them if they think that the garment suits me”, (24 years old).

Other respondents were putting a lot of focus on the fact that they in the first place turn to themselves since they value their own taste, and then afterwards they could ask their friends for their opinion if it would be necessary,

“First of all, I listen to myself obviously, since I am the one who will wear the clothes. If I need recommendations, I rather turn to my friends, since they know me more and would know what I suit in the most, (22 years old).

4.5 Where does the fashion bloggers get their inspiration from and are they being counted as experts in their area?

The respondents believed that fashion bloggers are being influenced from each other and also other fashion blogs, since they mostly talk about similar products.

“They are being influenced from other bloggers, not only Swedish, but also international bloggers. Also, they gain inspiration from reading various fashion magazines, other sites on Internet and also by ordinary people on the street, (21 years old).

Furthermore, the respondents saw the bloggers as random people only sharing their view on fashion and also an insight into their personal style. Some thought that it depends; however, there are those who are really experts within their field. Another respondent said that “there can be both random people and experts, depending on what blog one visits”, (21 years old). However, what the respondents shared the same opinion about is that those who are being pointed out as experts are the ones with biggest blogs who works almost fulltime with the blog and spend a lot of time on the blog.

4.6 Have fashion blogs changed the consumer’s consumption habits?

The respondents in the study indicated that the fashion blogs have increased their consumption of fashion, however only one of them stated that she does not see an increase in her consumption, she said that
“I have always bought lots of clothes since I love shopping, but I don’t think I have been affected by the blogs”, (22 years old).

Among those who have seen an increase in their consumption due to the fashion blogs, the majority believed that this action depends on all the opportunities given by the blogs. Another respondents stated

“I find it easier to buy garments or other accessories when I read blogs, since then I do not have to look for something too much but, if I see something on the blog that I like, I will easily buy it, either by going to the specific store or ordering from their website”, (23 years old).

Some of the respondents believed that they find it easier to discover new products or garments when the bloggers present them on their blog, either buy “the outfit of the day”, or only when they talk about the products. What all the respondents agreed upon is the fact that it is easier to find anything that they either need or only desire when the blogs are being updated frequently. Also, what some of the respondents said, was that their whole consumption regarding fashion had changed, and that some of them now, because of the blogs, dared to explore various styles.

There were also those respondents who have drawn attention to new brands and companies since they started reading fashion blogs. They have learned of the new brands because the fashion bloggers are so familiar with the market and often have new products to be launched sent to them. Some said they have taken note of both new international brands and companies to visit or to order from on the Internet. Another one said that she has drawn attention to more classic brands that she had no knowledge of before and although she cannot buy everything from these brands, mostly because of the high prices, she gained a lot of inspiration from these brands,

“I have had my eyes on many Swedish brands and some big brands such as Gucci, Versace, Burberry, Mulberry and many more. But, thanks to the blogs, I have discovered other great brands such as Proenza Schouler, Haider Ackermann, Rick Owens and many more”, (21 years old).
5 Analysis

In this chapter I will discuss and analyze the empirical material on the basis of the Theoretical Framework chapter.

The respondents are all showing a clear behaviour that suits those of the MeWe-generation, where they are frequently using technological devices, such as the computer, they visit international websites and blogs, which is a sign of them being more globally cultural, and the main characteristic they have is that they are all sharing information with each other.\textsuperscript{54} As a result of answers such as, that they want to express themselves or other feelings, stand out, and make some kind of a stand point, one can also recognize that they wish to be someone and achieve status. Furthermore, they all love to consume and they are rather searching for inspiration among themselves and bloggers, than from institutions and rules by representatives.

It is clear that fashion blogs share information about trends and fashion in much greater extent than what has been done before based on the information gathered and the trend of increasing bloggers and blog readers, and also the respondents are being given the freedom to spread both negative and positive word of mouth. Through fashion blogs, bloggers are able to send a message to hundreds of thousands of readers with only one click. Furthermore, fashion blogs are able to link businesses and organizations that interest them to their own page which generates more hits on search engines which makes the blog more visible on the Internet. This is of course an influential force that gives the bloggers the opportunity to influence a broader group of audience. It has been shown that the more the respondents are updating themselves with the blogs, the more they feel for purchasing the products or garments that they have seen on the blog.

Before the respondents are going for shopping, they tend to turn to someone like the fashion bloggers in order to gather information, ask for advice or read an expert's opinion. After a purchase has been done, they can communicate their own perception of the product or experience for other audiences on the blog, through comments. This results in a process in which consumers are being influenced by online word of mouth. Online, the people are sharing their interest in the field of fashion and that blog’s specific content. Hence the outcome of these actions will be that bloggers will maintain on the

\textsuperscript{54} See chapter 3.1
market as a powerful tool when searching or information and recommendations, which in this case is about fashion.

5.1 Blogs

The reason for why the blog audience has increased dramatically over the past years may depend on the blogs interactive nature where a reader has the opportunity to comment and participate in discussions that are released rapidly. The emergence of social media in today's society has given people the opportunity to interact through web-based technological tools and share media monologues over the Internet. The respondents are all taking part of this and using blogs, both reading blogs, and some have also their own blogs. The interactivity goes about that people have the freedom to communicate with both the blogger, and also other readers of that specific blog, by leaving comments with the message they want. This will hence benefit the consumers since they become more aware, and gain more knowledge about the subject that they have discussed.

Blogs are also free, unlike printed publications, and read voluntarily. The increase in Internet use and the various categories of blogs that are available out there, where you can find something of interest, may also explain why the bloggers' succeed as they do. Some of the respondents in this study answered that they had by accident noticed the fashion blogs on the Internet, while some others were actually looking for inspiration when they had found various fashion blogs. These statements can be related to the characteristics of people of the MeWe-generation who are characterized by communication through digital technologies, such as computer and the Internet. Furthermore, what was common for all the respondents was the fact that they preferred blogs much more than magazines and TV-programs, since they believed that the blogs were updated more frequently and they could easily access the information they needed. Some of the respondents believed that the bloggers had higher credibility than fashion magazines, since they were showing the actual product or garment on their blogs, also they felt that they had more trust in the bloggers since they were, just like them, random people who were sharing their stories. One respondent also felt that she could feel more

55 See chapter 3.2
56 See chapter 3.2.1
close to the bloggers since they were no models and they showed the exact fitting of the
clothes without making her feeling bad over herself. This is a sign of how the social
media and, in this case the blogs, work, where by having the fashion bloggers who are
sharing their own pictures and messages, they are gaining much more trust among their
readers, than magazines or any other kind of media tool.\(^57\)

Furthermore, as mentioned before, since the bloggers also are seen as random people by
these respondents, their word of mouth is being perceived as more credible.\(^58\) The only
negative factor of credibility that could occur is when a blogger is earning profit on her
word of mouth. This is something that all the respondents agreed on. However, since
this mainly is for the bigger blogs, the respondents still think that they know which one
to trust.

### 5.2 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth spread, whenever consumers are either satisfied or dissatisfied with a
product or when it is new.\(^59\) Fashion bloggers write mostly about new products, as they
usually are the first to test new products and embrace trends. If they then are satisfied
with the products they will upload that post to their blog and a positive or negative word
of mouth will spread to the blog’s audience. The opinions of the fashion blogger and
their word of mouth are changing expectations and attitudes around certain products.
This research shows that the trends and garments will be accepted more easily if they
are being presented by a fashion blogger who is considered credible enough or that the
blogger is someone who people look up to.

Furthermore, word of mouth is said to be more effective than advertising\(^60\), which is also
what is shown in this study. The majority of the respondents prefer to visit fashion blogs
than following any other advertising tools and also, they stated that the blogs are the
one tool that really affects them since they in one way or another rely on the fashion
blogger’s personal opinions. Word of mouth is said to be used by the source to get
attention and to convey a feeling and expression of a fashion blogger towards a product,

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\(^{57}\) Ibid.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
\(^{60}\) Ibid.
in a way that they are seeing themselves as experts within the field.\textsuperscript{61} However, few respondents in this study perceive fashion bloggers as experts, but they see them only as random people with a bit, or some, knowledge within the field of fashion. Fashion bloggers have many readers and therefore gain the ability to spread messages by word of mouth about fashion.

Moreover, the interviews show that fashion bloggers aware consumers about new products and garments and make them conscious about these things, either by showing a product in their blog or basically through word of mouth when the blogger chose to talk about that specific product or garment. Through this, consumers become interested in the products and in several cases, this has lead to the consumer purchasing the product. During the interviews it becomes clear that several of the girls choose to buy products after seeing them appear in a fashion blog. Many of the respondents have noticed new products and brands through the fashion bloggers, hence it can be said that the word of mouth have been effective. What is also noticeable is the fact that the negative aspects of word of mouth does not show much in these blogs, however, this is understandable since the bloggers only bring up to discussion the things that they like, and they do not usually mention the other products.

\subsection*{5.2.1 Word of Mouth Marketing}

As a result of the concept of word of mouth, comes also the concept of word of mouth marketing which is based on regular people's true references on that specific product or garment.\textsuperscript{62} Hence, by having bloggers who have the power of reaching hundreds of audiences with their messages on different products, the companies that are being mentioned within these messages can both face advantages and disadvantages.\textsuperscript{63}

\subsection*{5.2.2 Viral Marketing}

Viral marketing works with already existing social networks by encouraging consumers to share with others, through messages on the Internet, information about chosen products that they have bought. This concept have increased in value and use since consumers recently are choosing blogs and other social media tools over the more

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} See chapter 3.3.1
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
traditional advertisements. Hence, if the outcome of the viral marketing is positive word of mouth, this will gain the companies in the long-run, as mentioned in the text above. It is undeniable that viral marketing is what is being used in these fashion blogs. A positive effect of viral marketing could be, as in this study, where the majority of the respondents felt that their consumption habits have increased due to the amount of information they are receiving everyday from these bloggers. This is of course a great outcome for the companies which products have been mentioned in the blogs.

5.3 Reference Groups

Fashion bloggers can be seen as a form of reference group, which is defined as a person to refer to and compare themselves with in order to assess their own attitudes and behaviour. In this study, some searched for information on new trends through the fashion blogs in order to observe what those with more knowledge was wearing or what they were advocating. A few of the respondents were also searching for information, but these people were not to be affected equally. The majority did not think that they were being influenced in general by choosing some products in order to fit in or to receive the right image. However, when looking at this more deeply, some of the respondents actually believed that they were being influenced unconsciously when in fact their personal style did not differ too much from the crowd, and as they said in the interviews, they still wanted to look trendy and good. Nevertheless, there were some of the respondents who answered that they are striving to look different in their clothing style, and these people therefore belong in an anti-association group where people does not like to be associated with reference groups. These people do not allow the fashion bloggers and people around them to influence their decisions.

Furthermore, the majority if the respondents claimed that they, through their clothing style, are trying to achieve self expression and stand out by showing their personal style. However, in another way, they all wished to fit in different social contexts, and although they answered that they wish to be different, they still highlighted the fact that they want to look good in relation to their reference groups. The fashion bloggers can as

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64 See chapter 3.3.2
65 See chapter 3.4
66 See chapter 3.4.1
mentioned before, have a great social power on the consumers, where they influence their decisions whether the consumers are aware of this or not. The majority of the respondents were insecure when they were going to answer the questions on “if” and “how” they were being influenced by the fashion bloggers. However, in the end of each interview they had actually realised that they were being influenced much more than they really had expected. Since, although these respondents does not have a direct contact with the fashion bloggers, the fashion bloggers have a great influence on their preferences regarding fashion, since they are offering information on which products and garments that are being used by admired people in the fashion world and this interactivity is important for the consumers.

5.4 Opinion Leaders

The fashion blogger can be considered as a kind of monotonous opinion leader which is active in the specific area of fashion. Most of the respondents mentioned that they follow Elin Kling, Kenza and Sofi Fahrman, who are all successful fashion bloggers between the ages of 19-30 years. Their opinions are important and are being counted as credible since they are successful, considered knowledgeable and more or less live on their blog. Furthermore, as mentioned before, fashion bloggers affects consumers both directly and indirectly and in this study this is being shown. Directly, by having some of the respondents who said that they actually had bought something that a fashion blogger had mentioned in their blog. However, even indirectly, since the respondents are looking at the fashion bloggers as opinion leaders and are listening to what they have to say about new trends, and they like to imitate or are being influenced by their style.

As mentioned before, bloggers are themselves being influenced by other bloggers within the same topic. This was something that also was clear for the respondents, who were aware of the fact that the bloggers that they followed were usually receiving the information from other bloggers and companies.

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67 See chapter 3.4.2
68 See chapter 3.5
69 Ibid.
Some fashion bloggers have more influence than others, where the majority of the respondents in this study preferred to read fashion blogs by more famous people since they gave more credibility and also a broader view on fashion. Those who were not influenced by whether or not the fashion blogger was known reported that they found that the small blogs have the same effect as the bigger ones, and that they often were able to demonstrate a more interesting specific style, such as, vintage fashion. Depending on who writes the fashion blog, receiving the information have different effects. This study showed, for example, a person who turned to the big international fashion blogs to have expert knowledge of the future trends while she gladly took the tip and the outfits of fashion blogger Elin Kling who she could identify herself with. The big bloggers show up the courage and the broad interest is to find narrower blog readers with a specific focus.

70 Ibid.
6 Discussion and Conclusion

In this concluded chapter I will discuss and present my final comments. Conclusions which have emerged during previous analysis will be presented.

Fashion bloggers are hardly a new phenomenon; however, what has occurred in recent times is that blogs are now becoming a part of the respected establishment. Not only will some of them reach hundreds of thousands of readers on a daily basis but, they have become stars in their own way and style icons for the young audiences. Fashion blogs have become a separate category, in addition to the press and stylists, and they are very important.

To conclude I wish to go back to my research question which was “To what extent does the fashion blogs influence the MeWe-generation on their fashion consumption?” and below I have presented the outcome of this research.

This study shows behaviour that the MeWe-generation is being influenced by fashion bloggers to some extent and that their overall consumption behaviour is being affected by this influence. Since the MeWe’s are communicating more on the Internet and through the Social Media, such as blogs, they have the freedom to share messages about fashion with others, and also, at the same time, the fashion bloggers have the possibility to frequently update them with fashion related information and trends which makes the MeWe’s more eager to go shopping. As a result of that it also shows that these people feel the stress of having to buy stylish products that they have seen in a fashion blog before they are being sold out. Furthermore, what is also shown in this study is the feeling of credibility that the bloggers are communicating with their audience when they show a garment that they bought or want to wear. Hence, since the bloggers are usually random people, the reader will feel more comfortable with the styles and trends they are wearing. This credibility will then receive a higher level compared to other channels that show a fashion that is difficult to absorb. Fashion magazine does also often show trends and images, however, because of the models and the layout of the style, they are not as understandable for the reader which will in turn lead to a lower possibility of identification. Furthermore, comparing to fashion magazines, does fashion blogs affect even more because they often come out with new information and is constantly updated. Also, they are offering a kind of fashion that is already available in stores, unlike many
fashion magazines. Moreover, as a result of the interactivity that occurs between the readers and the bloggers, a positive word of mouth is created which also increase the trustworthiness of the bloggers. Hence, this is another reason for why the MeWe’s are being influenced by the fashion bloggers.

Furthermore, although the MeWe’s are very independent and proud, and despite the fact that they like to express themselves as individuals and be in the spotlight, they still also like to turn to friends, both real friends and friends on the Internet, in order to ask for recommendations and inspiration. Nowadays, they also turn to fashion bloggers for the same reason. The fashion bloggers who are because of this being counted as opinion leaders have by the content of their blog, developed reference groups. Readers have the opportunity to choose which fashion blogs they like to read.

Consequently it is important to realize the power that the bloggers have. The majority of the respondents in this study have answered that they usually follow the recommendations that they read on the blogs and in some cases, some have answered that they rather listen to a blogger’s recommendations than their friends. This is of course a warnings signal to the companies, which if they do not update themselves within, will risk losing consumers in the long-run. Also, updating themselves could mean that they would have a clear and honest idea of what consumers really feel for their company and their products. Hence, if the companies start from today to realize the importance and power of the fashion bloggers, they will face a much easier way of handling them in order to make sure that the bloggers’ word of mouth regarding their company is positive and beneficial. Of course, the lack of control may be seen as negative from the fashion magazines and companies’ point of view, but not necessarily to the consumers. Since, the traditional fashion press had often a well-known close relationship with the fashion magazines and companies which in turn would result in that they thus has not the same scope for criticism, Hence, one could conclude that blogs are more independent in their views, at least those who do not accept ads on their pages.

With the recent knowledge that I now have of the blogs, I believe it is too early to predict how the future will be for this new social media tool. However, what can be said is that by the way these fashion blogs are taking place in the MeWe-consumer’s everyday life, it
is clear that they are here to stay and will remain their power of influencing them in their fashion consumption.

6.1 Finishing Comments

During the journey of writing this thesis I have come to realize the true significance of fashion bloggers and how young women in my generation perceive them. Their power of inspiring and affecting is huge on this generation, they are informative and in some cases, they also make shopping easier for these consumers. Also, it is interesting to see how globalization and the development of technological devices are creating opportunities for people to communicate and be interactive on more specific levels such as fashion. Furthermore, it is interesting to understand how individuals behave towards this development and from a marketer-to-be perspective; it is fascinating to see how fashion blogs are influencing individual’s consumer behaviour.

6.2 Proposal for Further Studies

For further studies I recommend another qualitative investigation however on a larger quantity of respondents since it would give a deeper understanding of the pattern that has been touched upon in this research. Another suggestion would be to conduct a quantitative survey on a large group and see the differences that may occur through this. Furthermore, one could also put the main focus on the companies instead of the consumers in order to go more deeply into how they are being affected by the bloggers today.
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Appendix I

Interview Questions

✓ Age
✓ What does fashion mean to you?
✓ How and when did you start reading fashion blogs?
✓ Why do you read fashion blogs?
✓ How often do you read fashion blogs?
✓ What do you consider being the most interesting aspect of a fashion blog and why?
✓ Name max. three of the fashion blogs you read the most, and also justify why?
✓ Do you follow the trends and recommendation by the fashion bloggers?
✓ Does your personal style get influenced by the fashion blogs?
✓ What do you want to achieve with your choice of clothing? (personal expressions, being trendy etc.)
✓ Have you ever bought a product/garment that you have seen and read about on the fashion blogs?
✓ Have you ever bought a product/garment only because it is being talked about on the fashion blogs?
✓ Have you ever felt the stress to buy a product/garment before it has been sold out in the stores after being mentioned in the fashion blogs?
✓ Have you ever bought a garment that actually have been too expensive in comparison to your income, however, since you saw it in the fashion blogs you had to buy it?
✓ Which of the following medias does influence you the most when it comes to fashion? Magazines, Blogs or TV-programs? Explain why?
✓ What do you consider about the fashion bloggers? Do you consider them as experts within the area or do you see them as random people sharing their personal style?
✓ Do you think that the fashion bloggers always are sharing their own personal believes or are they sharing the trends from other sites? Where do you think that the fashion bloggers get their inspiration from?
✓ Do you look up to the fashion bloggers?
✓ Do you rather listen to the fashion bloggers than people around you?
Have you noticed any new brand since you started reading fashion blogs, thanks to these?

Are you consuming in a different way since you started to read fashion blogs? (increased, decreased etc.)