Exploring the Influence of Micro-Influencers: Can They Affect Purchase Intentions for Sustainable Fashion Brands?

Image source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvygctufUlU

Considering the significant contribution of the fast fashion industry to textile waste, many clothing brands are now adopting sustainable and ethical practices. Despite a growing awareness of sustainable fashion, effective marketing strategies within this industry are still largely uncharted. Previous studies indicate that consumers' sustainable consumption behaviours and purchase intentions can be influenced by social media messages.

With the rise of digital marketing and social media platforms, influencer marketing has taken centre stage in the fashion industry. Micro-influencers, who typically have a social media following of 10,000 to 100,000, provide brands with a valuable opportunity to engage niche communities and raise awareness of their sustainability initiatives. This indicates that micro-influencer marketing could be a more effective strategy than traditional influencer marketing.

Despite the growing research on sustainable consumption behaviour and influencer marketing, there remains a gap between intention and behaviour. The limited understanding of how South African consumers engage with and perceive marketing sources and sustainable brands highlights the need for further research.

A research study was conducted by Nickyla Naidoo, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), aimed to investigate the influence of micro-influencer marketing on consumers' purchase intentions of South African sustainable retail in-house clothing brands, through comprehensively examining consumer brand engagement (CBE) and influencer credibility (IC).

The online survey collected a sample of 151 adult respondents who had an active Instagram account and followed a South African lifestyle micro-influencer. Additionally, respondents should have purchased from any of the identified sustainable retail in-house clothing brands in the past year, like Woolworths, Foschini, Mr. Price and more.

The study's results indicated that fashioning affection through CBE is a significant predictor of purchase intentions. Proving that it's all about the "like, share and comment" when it comes to engaging with consumers. Fashioning consumers' affection overshadows their cognitive evaluations, but potentially alters their purchasing behaviour through brand loyalty. The findings further suggest that consumers follow micro-influencers primarily based on self-identification rather than the credibility of the source.

The findings of the study address the knowledge gap on how consumer-brand relationships can influence sustainable consumption. Additionally, offering valuable insight into the role of CBE and IC on consumers' purchase intention through the lens of social identity theory. The implications of the study suggest that by fashioning affection through authenticity and value-aligned micro-influencers, brands can drive sustainable consumption.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2024 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Nickyla Naidoo under the supervision of [Dr Thinkwell Ndhlovu](#).