Fashion industry:

“New kids on the Blog”
As an AMFI-student I became a keen follower of fashion blogs. Over the years I noticed that this started influencing my buying patterns. Discussions with others confirmed my impression that following fashion blogs can influence one’s personal fashion behaviour. I became intrigued by this phenomenon, and decided that I wanted to learn more about it. My thesis is therefore aiming at people with the same interests, who want to know more about the influence of fashion blogs on the consumers’ selection process.

The process of writing this thesis has not always been straightforward. Luckily, I have had support from many people and in many forms. In that respect I would like to thank my AMFI supervisor Marco Mossinkoff. His positive attitude towards fashion inspired me and guided me through the process of writing this thesis. I also would like to thank Alice and Mark Bouman, who motivated me when I was struggling. My sincere thanks go out to my family and friends. Especially my dear sisters and my boyfriend who support me in everything I do and always made time to listen to my stories. Above all, I would like to thank my parents. Without their years of help and endless support, studying at this renowned fashion institute would have been impossible for me.

Marlous Nieuwland
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Summary

The traditional process of selection by editors and journalists in the fashion industry seems to have changed. A new player recently appeared in the field: the fashion blogger.

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light on the world of fashion blogging and to give an idea of how popular fashion bloggers influence their readers. The main question this thesis therefore tries to answer is: What is the influence of fashion bloggers in the selection process of fashion trends? This core question is addressed through four sub-questions:

1. **What are fashion blogs? And how can they be categorized?**
   Fashion blogs are ‘web logs’, or online diaries, that deal with the topic of fashion. These three categories are used to categorize fashion blogs: personal style blogs, curated fashion blogs and street style blogs. The examples of each category and their formed hybrids give an impression of the blogosphere.

2. **What makes fashion blogs popular? And how credible are they?**
   Blog readers and fashion bloggers have developed a para-social relationship. Literature analysis substantiates that said para-social relationships enable fashion bloggers to become popular.

As fashion bloggers are increasingly turning their blogs into businesses, their credibility becomes questionable. They continuously switch between non-sponsored and sponsored blog posts and therefore cannot straightforwardly be placed in one of the four categories of the fake-real matrix. Fashion bloggers always have some sort of ‘real’ factor in their blog posts. They therefore continuously switch between the following categories: Real-Real, Fake-Real and Real-Fake.

3. **The fashion selection process: how does it work?**
   The fashion selection is a complex system in which different selectors influence consumers’ decision making. This is elaborated using the theories and models of Jacobs (2007). It shows that fashion bloggers are not yet visualised in this selection system. The literature review also demonstrates that the selection process is gradually evolving towards a peer and expert selection, in which fashion bloggers can be seen as both peers and experts.

4. **What influence of fashion blogs can be seen in the two selected product trends?**
   Two selected product trends, the sneakers of Isabel Marant and the tiger sweater of Kenzo, are qualitatively analysed by researching blog posts of a selected group of influential fashion bloggers. These blog posts are categorised based on an indication of degrees of influence. From this qualitative analysis it may be deduced that fashion blogs are in fact influential. Moreover, it can be stated that Instagram and Pinterest might be better indictors of product popularity than the fashion blogs themselves.

It can be concluded that fashion blogs deserve to be included in fashion’s selection system as present time catalysts intensifying product trends. It remains to be seen to what extent fashion bloggers have truly changed the fashion system. They are just new kids on the blog.
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1. Introduction

Fashion designers come up with their collections. They show their collection in fashion shows during fashion weeks. Fashion journalist and editors write about it and come up with their main trends. The trends become available in the shops and consumers buy the clothes that appeal to them most. This is the traditional process of selection in the fashion industry. At least, this is how it was until recently. Now, there is a new player in the field: the fashion blogger.

The purpose of this research is to shed light on the world of fashion blogging and to give an idea on how popular fashion bloggers influence their readers.

Fashion bloggers are people, mostly women, who have a weblog on the Internet about fashion. From expressing personal ideas and thoughts about fashion on a weblog to visiting fashion shows and writing reviews, fashion blogging is growing into a profession. Given the number of fashion bloggers that are invited to fashion shows during fashion weeks it seems that they have been accepted as professionals. With thousands of visitors a day, fashion bloggers potentially have a lot of influence, especially because they are in personal contact with their readers.

Since fashion bloggers started, their popularity in the fashion industry has grown explosively. Now the focus during fashion week is no longer only on the fashion designers and their new collections, but also on the fashion bloggers and the clothes they wear. They have become street style stars caused by the para-social relationship (Colliander and Dahlén, 2011) with their readers. On top of that the fashion bloggers are now, next to the editors, posting about the fashion shows and coming up with their trends.

Furthermore, the Internet is a fast and far-reaching communication medium, stimulating fast fashion. According to Menkes (2013): "If fashion is for everyone, is it fashion? The answer goes far beyond the collections and relates to the speed of fast fashion. There is no

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1 Para-social interaction or para-social relationship is a term used to describe one-sided, "parasocial" interpersonal relationships in which one party knows a great deal about the other, but the other does not. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasocial_interaction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasocial_interaction), retrieved on April 23th 2013)
longer a time gap between when a small segment of fashion-conscious people pick up a trend and when it is all over the sidewalks.”

By posting directly after the fashion shows, information about fashion is spread faster. My hypothesis therefore is that bloggers cause fast fashion to go up a gear. By spreading their opinions, thoughts and inspirations, trends are quickly born and are spread rapidly around the globe.

The main question this thesis tries to answer:

What is the influence of fashion bloggers in the selection process of fashion trends?

The core question is addressed through four sub-questions:

1. What are fashion blogs? And how can they be categorized?
2. What makes fashion blogs popular? And how credible are they?
3. The fashion selection process: how does it work?
4. What influence of fashion blogs can be seen in the two selected product trends?
2. Methods
To answer each of the four sub-questions, a combination of qualitative research methods and literature reviews was used. In summary I have:

I. conducted a literature review on the different types of fashion blogs, the evolving of trends and innovations, and selection processes;

II. conducted netnographic research on approximately 100 fashion blogs, studied/followed about 1/3 of them more closely;

III. used the list The 99 Most Influential Fashion & Beauty Bloggers of signature9.com (2013) combined with the top blogger list from bloglovin.com, to make a selection of the main players in the fashion blogosphere. The ranking list of bloglovin.com, a site that made the following of blogs easier, is based on the amount of followers the bloggers have on bloglovin.com. The ranking of fashion blogs by signature9.com is not only based on views and followers; they also use link data from Google and Majestic SEO for web links, and the Facebook and Twitter APIs for social data (Signature9, 2013);

IV. described multiple case studies of two product trends that have spread quickly. These trends have been studied by netnographic research and discourse analysis in order to find out how consumers think about these two trends and to see if bloggers had influence on this.

2.1 Structure
The structure of this research is based on the funnel model. I first determined the main subjects of the research (sub-questions 1–3). During this research I became more and more specific to get to the core of the research question. Eventually I answered my main question.

2.2 Research delimitations
My research focuses on two specific product trends: 1) Isabel Marant sneakers and 2) the tiger sweater of Kenzo. To analyse these, I have screened bloglovin.com and signature9 for posts about my selected two trends. The blogs featuring on these two lists (see item III above) are recognised as most influential professional blogs. To be able to look at different degrees of influence I have included four blogs that are not sufficiently known/far reaching to be on these lists.
3. Fashion Blogs

To get a better understanding of what fashion blogs are and what kinds of fashion blogs exist, I will take you on a tour through the fashion blogosphere. First it is necessary to fully understand what the terms blog and fashion blogs mean. After that I categorize different types of fashion blogs based on their content, and give examples of each category.

3.1 What is a (Fashion) Blog?

The word blog refers to a “web log”: an online diary of posts that are sorted in reverse chronological order (May, 2003). This means that the most recent post appears at the top followed by older entries. The essential feature of online blogs, as opposed to an actual diary, is that blogs are public documents. And for that reason it can be assumed that blogs are consciously written to be entertaining, or informative (Kent, 2007).

A typical blog combines text, images and links to other blogs, webpages and other media related to its topic. The possibility for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs, because this way the bloggers can interact with their readers. The frequency of blog updates can vary from hourly, daily, to weekly or less frequently, but typically there are several updates a day (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Johnston and Mayer, 2009).

Topics of blogs can be all sorts of information from the author, stories about his or her life, product recommendations, thoughts on the current political situation, anything you can think of, someone has blogged about it (Seaman, 2008). Fashion blogs have fashion as a topic. Which simply means: blogs about fashion and all things related to fashion (Marwick, 2011).

Fashion bloggers nowadays do not limit their activities to blogs. With the rise of Facebook and social media apps and websites like Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest, the reach of fashion bloggers has substantially increased. Fashion bloggers are active now on all kinds of social media and are continuously exposing their thoughts to their readers.
3.2 Categories of fashion blogs

With the continuous increase of fashion blogs and their growing diversity, meaningful categorisation is a challenge. Nevertheless, in this volatile environment some general mechanisms are visible when looking at the content of the fashion blogs.

Marwick (2011) concluded that on the basis of their content, fashion blogs can be crudely divided into three categories: personal style blogs, curated fashion blogs and street style blogs.

- **Personal style blogs**: this category covers bloggers who post pictures of themselves and their outfits. The blog is pure about their personal style.
- **Curated fashion blogs**: resemble industry or fan blogs, and comment on couture collections, review products, and monitor trends.
- **Street style blogs**: within this category fit fashion blogs that contain photographs of stylish people snapped on the street. It gives an idea of what personal styles exist.

Hanssen and Nitzsche (2010) in their book ‘Fashion Blogs’, distinguish five different categories of fashion blogs. Their categories are: News & Views, Seen on the Streets, Personal Style Diaries, Creatures of the Night, and What about the Boys. Clear definitions of these categories are not given. When looking at the chapters (the names of the categories) and the examples they give, the overlaps with the three categories of Marwick (2011) are obvious.

- **News & Views** gives information about the Fashion Industry in general, and can therefore be compared to curated fashion blogs;
- **Seen on the Streets**, as the name indicates can be compared with street style blogs;
- and obviously, **Personal Style Diaries** can be compared with personal style blogs.

Hanssen and Nitzsche identify two additional categories of blogs picturing a specific social situation and a specific group of people. In their category **Creatures of the Night** Hanssen and Nitzsche refer to style pictures taken during parties. When dressing up for a party, people show their personal style. In that sense, in my view these pictures taken during parties are still street style pictures. The ‘**What about the Boys**’ category refers to blogging
by men. These blogs are of all categories mentioned above. The proportion of man blogging in the fashion blogosphere is so small that it is hardly worth mentioning.

A third way of categorizing would be professional versus recreational blogs. Since the fashion industry started noticing the influence of fashion bloggers, a group of fashion bloggers has had the possibility to generate income from their blogs. Fashion bloggers who blog professionally, are not necessarily trained as journalists or fashion experts (Dominguez, 2011).

While there are many bloggers who make a living out of blogging, there is still a larger group who blog just to share their opinions and ideas with others for fun. The credibility of both types of bloggers lies in the un-biasedness of their posts. Why this un-biasedness is so important for bloggers will further elaborated later in this thesis (chapter 4, page 18).

For the purpose of this investigation therefore the distinction between professional and recreational bloggers is not considered relevant. Nevertheless, in my research I will focus on professional bloggers. The reason for that is that the professional bloggers have the largest amount of followers and views.

In conclusion, the categorisation of Marwick (2011) groups the variety of blogs in a structural and meaningful way. Therefore, I will base my research on the three categories; personal style blogs, curated fashion blogs and street style blogs of Marwick (2011).

3.3 Examples of fashion blog categories
Below the examples are given of blogs that fit each of the three categories and blogs that clearly are a hybrid between curated fashion blogs, personal style blogs and street style blogs. For an overview of the blogs I have selected, see figure 1.
**Personal Style Blogs**

Despite the fact that these bloggers occasionally post about other things than their out-fits - for instance product reviews, beauty products, or food recipes - the posts remain connected to their personal lives; the additions actually make the blogs even more personal. By reading these kinds of blogs, the readers have the possibility to take a peek into somebody else’s life. These blogs therefore make the perfect examples of the earlier mentioned (3.1, page 7) online diaries (May, 2003).

*Man Repeller*, the blog of Leandra Medine, a 25-year-old woman born and raised in New York, is a good example of a personal style blog. The blog has been ranked number 20 of Most Influential Fashion & Beauty Bloggers (Signature9, 2013). It has more than 40.000 followers on bloglovin.com, over 300.000 followers on Instagram and more than 2.6 million page views a month (Kansara, 2012). Because of this popularity Leandra managed to turn her blog into a business using different streams of incomes. She says to *Business of Fashion* (Kansara, 2012): “I have a storefront but that generates no more than 10 percent. Ads must be 30 percent. Collaborations bring in 60 percent.”
Man Repeller is about trends that women love and men hate. The idea started during a conversation with a friend about her dating status. The friend said that she had no boyfriend because of the fact that Leandra was repelling man with her clothes. After that moment she thought: “This is a brilliant blog idea.” (Leandra Medine, cited in Kansara, 2012). What probably makes Man Repeller a popular blog is that Leandra has a great sense of humour, which she incorporates in her blog posts. The way Medine combines the impeccable high fashion aesthetics with a comedic approach can literally make you laugh out loud (Kansara, 2012). A typical Man Repeller blog post, see figure 2, is about how an outfit can be turned in a man repelling outfit or a outfit for special occasions. Where other personal style bloggers have a minimum amount of text next to the pictures, Man Repeller typically contains long texts written in a humorous way.

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2013

NIGHT TO DAY

This weekend is important things and subsequent questions worth mentioning: Reese Witherspoon in jail. Was anyone else under the false impression that Reese Witherspoon’s high level of immunity to the dramatic antics indigenous to Hollywood could inoculate the prospect that she could, or would ever end up in jail? Ditto—which ultimately demonstrated how very, very wrong making sweeping assumptions can be. This now brings me to the thick of today’s post, which is a lesson of sorts in not dressing for day and transcending said outfit to night. Why? Because that is an exhausted outfitting editorial and because, in sparing ourselves a hoey of new assumptions, I am pretty positive that you are adventurous women. And you know what adventurous women do? They get dressed, go out, and then don’t come home (all the next day, I guess.)

Figure 2: Blog post ‘Night to Day’ of Man Repeller
Curated Fashion Blogs

In the definition of Marwick (2011) curated fashion blogs resemble industry or fan blogs, and comment on couture collections, review products, and monitor trends. In my research this definition has been expanded to include shopping pages.

While curated fashion blogs reflect the bloggers interest in fashion and personal taste, they almost never show the bloggers’ personal life. For these bloggers it is just about sharing their findings and interests in fashion and being creative.

An example of a typical curated fashion blog is the blog Le Fashion curated by Jenn Camp, who besides completing her grad school course work, runs four other sites and is also a regular contributor to the celebrity fashion website ‘Who What Wear’ (Say Daily, 2013). Le Fashion is a blog about fashion and beauty and contains many pictures of editorials, street style, look books, beauty and also a lot of shopping pages. For an example of a shopping page see figure 3. Each product that is visualised on these shopping pages has a link to a web shop where readers can buy the specific product. This is probably how Jenn has created a business out of blogging, but she claims that her daily dedication and continued search for something new and different is her secret (Say Daily, 2013).

As said above Jenn owns four other blogs, which are all examples of curated fashion blogs. For example one of her four other blogs called Olsen Anonymous, is completely dedicated to the personal styles of actresses Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen. With all these blogs Jenn has become ‘Internet famous’ amongst blog readers. She says that: “As for getting recognized, since I am not a personal style blogger, I remain under the radar when I am out. I am pretty private, so I really appreciate this.” (Say Daily, 2013). This example shows and reinforces the fact that curated blogs are not about someone’s personal life but just about their interests and the possibility to share with their readers.
Street Style Blogs

The category street style blogs is probably the most distinct of the three categories, due to the fact that these blogs merely contain photographs of stylish people ‘snapped’ on the streets. In addition, during fashion weeks also pictures from fashion shows and collection presentations and of course pictures of people attending the fashion shows are shown. As a result the fashion weeks have become like circuses (Menkes, 2013). One of the characteristics of street style blogs is that they do not contain long texts in addition to the pictures; most of the time only a picture title, location, and name of the person in the picture are shown.

*The Sartorialist*, the blog of Scott Schumann is one of the first, most known and influential street style blogs. Looking at the ranking of Most Influential Fashion & Beauty Bloggers of Signature9, *The Sartorialist* has been ranked number 1 since the start of these rankings in 2009. With around 13 million page views a month it has a large global coverage. Any fashion minded person, would regard an appearance on the *The Sartorialist* as the ultimate badge of honour (Amed, 2011).
Besides his blog Scott Schumann also published two books, in which photographs of his blog as well as exclusive pictures are published. He also made high-profile campaigns for Burberry and DKNY Jeans and had an exhibition during which he sold more than fifty prints (Amed, 2011). “You can really make a living out of this,” said Schuman in an interview with Business of Fashion, “It's tough, but if you work really hard you can create a business, if you're smart about it and have something real to say.” (Amed, 2011).

This idea of creating a business out of a street style blog has spread amongst photographers. A couple of years ago there were just a few street style photographers in the blogging industry. Now there is a lot of competition. Garance Doré, a fashion and street style blogger whom I will cover later in this chapter, says in a video Pardon My French that, a couple of years ago, when she started taking street style pictures, she had the opportunity to take her time when she took picture of someone. At that time the street style photographers respected each other and had a silent agreement that they wouldn’t take the same pictures (Doré 2013). Now there are so many photographers fighting over the same pictures of the same persons; it isn’t a treasure anymore (Doré, 2013). This created the circus already mentioned above.

On the other hand all the editors, buyers and personal style bloggers attending the shows are feeling more and more pressure to ‘dress up’ (Doré, 2013). The original idea of street style that stood for swapping, sharing and engaging in conversation about the joy of dressing with other people is now converted in something we can al be part of (Wang, 2012). The exclusiveness of the once unique street style pictures seems to disappear.

**Combination of all three categories**

*Carolines Mode*, a blog by Caroline Blomst, is an example of a fashion blog that combines the categories personal style, curated fashion and street style. This is possible because she has several categories within her blog which all have a different subject. By combining the three different blog categories within her blogs, *Carolines Mode* offers a full package to her readers. The categories are named: *Carolines Mode*, Caroline, Loves it, Get the Look, Editorial, Same Same, Beauty, Look Book, Mode Man and Street Style. To make these categories more clear a short explanation of each is described below:
• **Carolines Mode:** this is the main page of the blogs, which shows all the blog posts that are placed in each different category.

• **Caroline:** this is the category that fits in personal style blog segment. Caroline shows in this subcategory her personal style looks, her cravings concerning clothes and accessories and all other things concerning her personal style and taste.

• **Loves it:** this category shows clothes and accessories that Caroline likes for the current season and which she thinks are on trend. To give her readers the opportunity to instantly buy the products, which she recommends, she gives a link to a web shop where the product is sold. It is questionable to what extent these products are shown because she really likes those, or a company sponsors these posts.

• **Get the Look:** the name of this category already gives a hint of the subject of this category. Caroline shows looks, which her readers can imitate by buying the products she recommends in this case as well with links to web shops.

• **Editorial:** this category shows pictures of editorials from fashion magazines.

• **Same Same:** within this category Caroline shows designer products that are imitated by high street brands. This way her readers can get the high fashion look for less.

• **Beauty:** in this category Caroline reviews all products that are linked to the beauty industry; from make-up and perfume to beauty products.

• **Look Book:** this category obviously shows look books of different brands. Whether these blogs post are sponsored is not clear, but despite that it is a great opportunity for Caroline to show her readers the collection of brands and also brands that her readers not know yet.

• **Mode Man:** this category shows product, same as in the category Loves It, posted by her photographer Daniel Troyse.

• **Street Style:** Caroline shows in this category the street style pictures with her photographer Daniel Troyse. In the past they showed these pictures under the name *Stockholm Street Style.* Still they make a lot of their street style pictures in Sweden, besides pictures they take all around the world. This differentiates them from other street style blogs.
By offering this full package of different types of blog categories and thus different types of blog posts during the day, *Carolines Mode* remains interesting to read for her readers.

**Combination of Personal Style and Curated Fashion blogs**

*Style Bubble*, the blog of Londoner Susie Lau, is probably one of the fashion blogosphere’s most original and influential voices (Kansara, 2011). Susie combines all kinds of different elements in her blog, from personal style posts, to posts about up-coming designers till blog posts about books she likes and recommends. This combination of different elements makes *Style Bubble* a combination of a personal style and curated fashion blog.

Susie launched *Style Bubble* in 2006, posts three times a day, has over 25,000 visitors each day (Kansara, 2011) and is ranked number 43 in the ranking of Most Influential Fashion & Beauty Bloggers of Signature9.

*Style Bubble* isn’t a standard style blog, not only because of the fact that she is dressing quite originally - with often a combination of vibrant colours -, but also since she focuses on young and unknown talent, in addition she has great writing skills. This is not surprising since she studied journalism and has worked for *Dazed Digital*, the website of *Dazed & Confused* magazine (Kansara, 2011). Her style of writing, often with elements of humour, makes the blog very personal and causes readers to really get to know Susie.

Susie, as well as the other studied bloggers, managed to make a living out of her blog and she actually is one of the first bloggers to be recognised by the industry (Wiseman, 2009). With projects carried out for *Dr. Martens, Giorgio Armani, Selfridges* and Hong Kong boutique Joyce, Susie appears to be extremely busy (Kansara 2011). She says: "I’m always amazed when the blog has an effect on designers, when they call me to say that after appearing on the site they’ve sold out of stock, or that Vogue have called in the collection." (Wiseman, 2009).

With expanding economic opportunities for bloggers, they have been criticised for not being transparent about the role of their blogs play in commercial projects. Susie states about the projects in which she was involved, that she was not obliged by the companies to
write about it on her blog. In addition Susie says: “They were almost automatically expecting you to write about it because it’s something you would be proud of.” Although Susie has been writing about the projects she has carried out, they are not overly promotional and are written according to the authentic style Susie is known for. The brand undoubtedly knew, that this would have a positive impact on her readers (Kansara, 2011).

**Combination of Personal Style and Street Style blogs**

The last example of a fashion blog is the blog *Garance Doré*, named after Garance Doré. It contains a combination of personal style elements and street style pictures, made by herself. She also shows her own illustrations and she also addresses other themes in her blog, for instance in the videos ‘Pardon my French’. In these videos she talks about different subject concerning the fashion industry, with different distinguished people working in the fashion industry.

As Garance wanted to become an illustrator, she started to show her illustrations to others in her blog. She then realised that people would not respond at illustrations only. Therefore she decided to add text to these illustrations. This started discussions with readers about the way they dress and issues generally not covered in magazines. Consequently her blog now evolved into a fashion blogs that matters. These discussions with her readers are what she loves most. Everything you put online leads to feedback and shows people’s views (Amed, 2013).

Garance’s boyfriend, i.e. before mentioned Scott Schuman of The Sartorialist actually stimulated her to start making street style photographs. *Garance Doré* is ranked number 14 in the ranking of the Most Influential Fashion & Beauty Bloggers of Signature9 and her blog is being visited over hundreds of thousands times monthly (Amed, 2013). Due to this popularity, Garance managed to create a living out of her blog by collaborating with companies in the fashion industries. As such she became in a way independent from sponsors and ad-sales. These collaborations are Garance’s main source of income. To illustrate this, she made a video for *Dior* and she is writing for *Vogue* Paris (Amed, 2013),
In an interview with *Business of Fashion* (Amed, 2013) Garance demonstrates that she has positive about the future of blogging: “I think that we’re just at the beginning of the big shift; it’s very early and, yes, people are still thinking when is it going to end? But it’s never going to end, it keeps growing and evolving, and I think that print magazines are going to have a totally different mission in a few years,” she says. “We’re living in a revolution, we’re lucky, and that doesn't happen a lot.” (Amed, 2013).

Based on above information the following can be concluded:

- Fashion blogs are best categorized into three categories, i.e. personal style blogs, curated fashion blogs and street style blogs as proposed by Marwick (2011). Hybrids can be formed from these three categories (see figure 1).
- Personal style blogs and hybrids that contain personal style elements establish personal relationships with their readers. This is hardly the case with street style and curated fashion blogs.
- The exclusiveness of the once unique street style pictures seems to disappear.
- Bloggers have created business out of their fashion blogs by using adds and most importantly establish collaborations with companies.
4. Selection processes in Fashion

The image of the influential fashion editors seems to be in jeopardy, since the fashion bloggers are smoothly taking over their tasks in the industry. Despite the fact that there are lots of assumptions and statements about the influence of fashion bloggers on both the fashion industry and consumers, there is not a lot of research done as yet on this matter. To get an impression of the possible influence of fashion bloggers on the industry and consumers, I have investigated the theory of selection systems. Firstly I will give an overall insight in how selection processes work and secondly I will show how these selection processes are applied in the fashion industry. In this chapter I will also look at the credibility and authenticity of fashion blogs.

4.1 Fashion bloggers impact on the fashion industry

According to Kawamura (2005) two influential groups of people can be distinguished in the fashion industry. He refers to them as main diffusion agents. The first type consists of fashion designers and the second type of the fashion media industry. This latter type plays a key role in supporting the fashion industry, as they are not only key players in the communication of events in the fashion world, but they also represent the industry (Dominguez, 2011).

The fashion media industry is mainly controlled by fashion journalists and editors. They have the power to make or break a certain fashion style as they form the publicity link between designer and ‘public’, the latter of which not necessarily consisting of fashion professionals (Kawamura, 2005). This power of creating immense publicity is based on global networks of well-established relationships and roles. Designers need editors of fashion magazines to help them showing their products and make them famous; Retail stores need fashion editors to tell the readers about new fashion and styles and to assist them in finding the goods (Kawamura, 2005).

According to Constance White, style director of eBay and former fashion journalist, fashion used to be very dictatorial (Corcoran, 2006). However, since the arrival of Internet and associated fashion blogs, the door to the fashion world is wide open. Fashion professionals do not have the solemn ownership over the fashion world anymore. Due to the impact of
the fashion blogs this ownership is now shared with the ‘entire fashion-dedicated world’ (Corcoran, 2006). This can be explained by the fact that for fashion bloggers ‘the sky is the limit’. When forming their opinions they are not affected by hidden agendas of editors and advertisers. They are opinionated instead and have their own specific styles. They are typically extremely passionate and ambitious (Ordelmans in Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010). Since a number of them are also starting careers as editors, stylists and photographers bloggers can be seen as the perfect examples of ‘professional amateurs’ (Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010).

Ordelmans, in Hanssen and Nitzsche, 2010 describes in Fashion Blogs the impact of fashion blogs as follows: “There is a group of a lucky few, which surprisingly consists mainly of style bloggers that has started a chain reaction. By being an even greater source of inspiration than the Anna Wintour-dressed models in VOGUE they have managed to turn fashion bloggers into a phenomenon and we are all reaping the benefits. Traditional media are thrust from their front row seats by fashion bloggers; designers use them as a soundboard and marking predators employ them to promote their products. With the immediacy of this personal medium the large blogging community is now worth a fortune, and the fashion world is all too aware of it.”

4.2 What is a selection system?

“Where there is a competitive process there is a selection system” (Wijnberg, 2004, cited in Jacobs, 2007). To understand how the value of a product is determined is essential for understanding how firms compete. To successfully compete, products have to be valued and acknowledged as valuable. So called selectors carrying out this valuation are using a specific selection system, in which the competing companies are referred to as ‘the selected’ and those who determine the value of the goods from the competing companies the ‘selectors’ (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007).

The role of the selectors, who determine the value of a product, is much more applied in cultural industries than in other industries. This is because of the fact that value of most cultural products is hard to identify (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007). Jacobs (2007) gives the following example from the fashion industry: “In the case of an haute couture dress the
selectors will also include primarily experts, such as the editors of women’s magazines. The difference these selectors are able to perceive will determine the value the dress has for the customers and consumers, who will do their best to perceive the same differences to enjoy some of this aspect of the value of a dress” (Wijnberg, 2004). This perception of difference (or innovation) that Wijnberg is referring to is in cultural industries strongly linked to the products value. These new products and innovations only gain value if they are considered valuable by those selectors who control a selection system (Gemser and Wijnberg, 2000).

With respect to economic selection a distinction can be made between internal and external selection. The selection system within an organisation determines the outcome of the internal process of distribution. The external selection can be subdivided in three distinct selection systems, described by Mol and Wijnberg (2007) as: market selection, peer selection and expert selection.

- **Market selection**: in this case the producers are the selected and the consumers the selectors. Customers are able to determine the value of a product themselves, before making a transaction.
- **Peer selection**: when the opinions of other producers or peers provide the information customers use to estimate the value of the product.
- **Expert selection**: here the success or failure is determined by the opinions of a group of people who are neither consumers nor producers, but who have particular knowledge and expertise.

It is important to note that the three types of selection systems described above are ‘ideal world’ types of selection. In reality the processes are often combinations of the different selection systems. However, in many cases one dominant type can be distinguished (Gemser and Wijnberg, 2000). Besides acting as selectors in competitive processes of other actors, the selectors can also be involved in their own competitive processes. For instance the women’s magazines like *Vogue* and *Elle* are considered important selectors for the fashion industry, but at the same time they are competitors, both aiming at attracting more readers and advertisers (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007).
4.3 Niches and Tribes

Looking at the way people influence each other it can be said that this is typically taking place within people’s own social environments or ‘clusters’. This can be compared with the before mentioned selection type, peer selection. Dany Jacobs (2007) explains in his book *Adding Values* that humans, just like many other species, are on the constant look out for clusters – tribes – in which they fit best. He explains, using the network theory, that most people only know a limited number of other people and that these are mostly sharing the same clusters. On the other hand, a few people, (i.e. ‘connectors’) know many people in a variety of clusters and form connections between all different clusters. This way most people in the world can be connected up in only six steps.

As mentioned above people are mostly influenced within their own clusters, but the more people we know the less influence each individual will have on us – except for a few who are especially valued, such as close friends and opinion leaders within peer groups (Jacobs, 2007). In the fashion industry such clustered network structures can also be found. In fashion people are mainly influenced by their direct environments, but within broader frameworks; fashion can be at the same time local and global. People are influenced by global fashions, which get, however filtered by their direct environments (Jacobs, 2007).

Since the ‘connectors’ are making the connections between the different clusters they may play an important role in spreading information. If many connectors reinforce the same message, a hype may arise. These hypes behave in a way like epidemics; so can also be named ‘social contagion’ (Jacobs, 2007). As explained above the more individuals we know the less influence each of them has. Consequently ‘social contagion’ works best in strongly clustered social environments, with only a limited number of people making the connections between the clusters (Jacobs, 2007).

Bloggers can be regarded as the ‘connectors’ of our times. They make the connections between the clusters, through all their different readers who comment on their blogs. They thus play an important role in the dissemination of information and innovations. If many connectors, in this case bloggers, are reinforcing the same message, a hype may occur (Jacobs, 2007). Despite the connections that bloggers are establishing with their readers,
they almost remain strangers to each other. This way the influence level will not be affected as long as followers consider bloggers as reliable opinions leaders.

4.4 Selection systems and authenticity
In the fashion industry a high degree of continuous innovation takes place. Most brands deliver four different collections per year; some brands, like Zara, even considerably more than that. In no other industry cultural values can be seen changing so obviously. The selection in fashion has traditionally been described on the basis of three social mechanisms, referred to as: trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-across (Jenky Jones, 2002, Solomon and Rabolt, 2004, cited in Jacobs, 2007).

Trickle-down: ‘lower’ groups are looking at and are imitating the status symbols of the groups and role models ‘above’ them. Consequently these two groups have to continuously adopt new innovations in order to distinguish themselves; this is one of the driving forces fashion innovation is built on (Jacobs, 2007).

Trickle-up: at times ‘higher’ classes are adopting innovations from subcultural groups or ‘lower’ classes. Most of the times these adoptions are mediated by fashion designers who are inspired by these innovations and make more stylised versions of them. Examples are the blue jeans, overalls, hippie styles, styles from music subcultures, such as punk, grunge, hip-hop (Jacobs, 2007).

Trickle-across: a considerable amount of adoption is taking place within peer groups. Whether these are based on class, profession, age or other subcultures, many consumers are typically influenced by those opinion leaders, that are similar to themselves. Reason is that people tend to select the opinion leaders they like or admire. Opinion leaders for their part are taking the opinions of their followers into account. This creates a process of mutual selection and co-evolution (Jacobs, 2007).

It is obvious that selectors are key players in the outcomes of the competitive processes. In an attempt to win their favours and distract them from their competitors firms are offering them goods or services. This can be called direct competition. It is also possible that firms
try to establish a relationship with selectors within their market-segment to create a competitive advantage. This can be in the form of ‘ownership relations, revenue-sharing schemes, or bribes’ (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007).

When looking at blogs, it can be observed that companies are regularly trying to create relationships with fashion bloggers, and especially, with their readers. Sometimes these ‘relationships’ or agreements as they are also called, are very obvious. For instance, in an effort to promote their newest chocolate bar, two brands in the food industry: i.e. Milka and Tuc have recently used the Dutch fashion blogging scene. They provided the product to several Dutch fashion bloggers with the request to promote it on their blogs. All of a sudden four fashion bloggers \(^2\) independently started referring to their favourite Milka/Tuc chocolate bar, advising their readers to try them as well. These kinds of collaborations may come across as unbelievable and can have a negative impact on the credibility of both fashion bloggers and brands, see figure 4. Since readers find it important that information is unbiased and genuine (Allsop et al., 2007). The message therefore is that if companies wish to start a relationship with (e.g. fashion) bloggers this preferably needs to be done in a more subtle way than illustrated in the above example.

\[\text{Figure 4: Example of a blog readers’ opinion of sponsored blog posts and the reaction of the Dutch blogger The Fashionguitar}\]

As demonstrated in the example, authenticity is thus regarded as a key factor for selectors. Mol and Wijnberg (2007) state that authenticity touches upon the relation between producer and products; if the product is (non) authentic, the producer is also considered (non) authentic and vice-versa. The relationship between the authenticity of a product and/or producer on one hand, and the authenticity of the selector on the other is equally interesting. In order to be perceived as successful selectors certifying authenticity (of someone or something) must come across as authentic. However, consumers do not necessarily have to be authentic themselves (or regarded as authentic, for that matter) to recognise the authenticity of a selector (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007).

Gilmore and Pine II (2007) are co-authors of *Authenticity; what consumers really want*. In this book they state that with the upcoming ‘experience economy’ people are increasingly longing for authenticity. People want to buy the ‘real thing’ and are not interested in any phony products; authenticity is thus becoming the new consumers sensibility. Companies have to start (in their words) ‘getting real’ and therefore Gilmore and Pine II formulated two questions that companies will have to be aware of with respect to their own authenticity:

- Are you true to yourself?
- Are you what you say to others?

![The Real/Fake Matrix](image)

*Figure 5: The Real/Fake Matrix (Gilmore and Pine II, 2007)*
Based on the answers to these two questions Pine and Gilmore II (2007) assign companies to one of four categories as shown in their real/fake matrix (see figure 5). The categories are:

- **Real-Real**: A company is what is says to others and is genuine about it.
- **Fake-Fake**: A company is not what is says to others and is not genuine about it.
- **Real-Fake**: The company is what is says to others, but is not genuine about it. It is about creating a world in which people can believe, e.g. Disneyland. The park is ‘real Disney’ but their main street is by no means a typical American street.
- **Fake-Real**: A company is not what is says to others, but is genuine about it. Customers get what the company is promising, but they don’t show their real identity.

According to Gilmore and Pine, **Fake-Fake** doesn’t necessarily have to be considered a bad thing. As long as you remain honest about your own fake identity it can even give you some real authenticity. **Real-Real** appears to be the preferred situation. However, Gilmore and Pine II (2007) state that this image is hard to maintain. Every single flaw will be noticed by the customer and subsequently criticised. Following the same reasoning, *The Fashionguitar* (see figure 4) should be placed in the **Fake-Real** category. The blogger admitted that the post was sponsored, and thus can be regarded as fake, but at least she is genuine about it to her readers and herself.

Mol and Wijnberg (2007) state that authenticity is similar to innovativeness, such that it can only be assessed in case of knowledge of the product and its history. The average consumer usually lacks sufficient knowledge of the product to truly evaluate it. Consequently the importance of a products authenticity or innovativeness will cause the selection system to gradually deflect from a market selection and move instead toward a peer and expert selection (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007).

**4.5 Popularity and credibility of fashion blogs**

When studying the different types of blog categories and their examples it is observed that fashion bloggers are dressing up to impress their followers. Hanssen and Nitzsche (2010) call this phenomenon, the shameless voyeurism of the readers and the boundless exhibitionism of the bloggers. The fact that the fashion bloggers have created businesses
out of their blogs raises the question how credible the fashion bloggers actually are. To find out to which category of the Fake/Real matrix of Pine and Gilmore II (2007) fashion bloggers belong, I studied the reasons for the popularity of fashion blogs and the reasons for readers to see fashion bloggers as credible.

Colliander and Dahlén (2011) state in their article Following the Fashionable Friend that the popularity of fashion bloggers is due to the para-social interaction between bloggers and their readers. Blog readers are getting insight in details from the blogger's personal lives. As a result, the followers feel that they are privileged to follow somebody’s life (Van Tilburg, 2012). Interaction between the two parties takes place through the comment function on the blog. This also creates a sense of familiarity between bloggers and readers. Hanssen and Nitzsche (2010) concluded that this sense of familiarity is most probably the reason for fashion blogs’ popularity.

Another reason for fashion blogs’ popularity is their general lack of any corporate identity. Readers find it important that the information is unbiased and coming from people like themselves (Allsop et al., 2007). Companies showing a product online, have the intention to sell. Bloggers on the other hand, show products mainly because they like it. This is probably why bloggers’ opinions may come across as more genuine and credible (Van Tilburg, 2012).

The modern consumer is increasingly critical and does not trust brands anymore at face value. Before they decide to actually buy they will look online for information. Social media help consumers in their decision-making as the latter go by recommendations from friends (The Economist 2009). Fashion bloggers, in this case can be regarded as ‘friends’ advising their readers. Corcoran (2006) states that fashion bloggers consider themselves as truth tellers in a world where truth is hard to find. This confirmed by Scott Shuman (The Sartorialist) in the article by Corcoran The Blogs That Took over the Tents: “What we offer is a personal point of view. I love magazines, but they can come across as corporate.”

However, looking at the example of The Fashionguitar given in chapter 4.4 it seems that fashion bloggers do not always tell the truth. Behind their personal styles and personal beliefs, hide sponsorships and collaborations. Looking at the examples given in chapter 3
and from my own experiences it can be said that most of the time fashion bloggers are their true selves. Even when they do collaboration with brands or have sponsorships they still claim to be themselves. For instance Susie from *Style Bubble* answers the following to a question about what she is selling to companies (Kansara, 2011): “My eye, my point of view, a certain taste, a certain way of documenting and presenting fashion; that’s supposedly what I’m selling.”

The switches fashion bloggers make between sponsored and non-sponsored posts causes that the readers not always know when the fashion bloggers are completely real or not. Which makes that fashion bloggers not typically fit in to one of the four categories of authenticity of Pine and Gilmore II (2007). Still, from observations and my own experiences, it can be said that fashion bloggers always have a ‘real’ factor in their posts. Which makes fashion bloggers continually switch between three out of the four categories of Pine and Gilmore II (2007): *Real-Real, Fake-Real* and *Real-Fake*.

**4.6 How does selection process work in fashion?**

The theory of fashion selection and influence niches should be clear by now, but how do these theories work in real-life and most importantly in fashion? In the present chapter the selection processes in fashion will be elaborated upon and with the help of the figures Jacobs (2007) used in his book *Adding Values* the processes will become visible.

Figure 6 shows an overview of the selection mechanisms in fashion. The cycle starts with new designs that emerge from the creative subsystem and are selected by the managerial subsystem in order to be produced and presented to the world. The cultural gatekeepers: e.g. buyers from retail industry, experts, critics, editors and journalists on the one-hand and opinion leaders and peers on the other hand, select the products they value. Eventually, consumers select the items of their liking and thus can be considered the ‘ultimate selectors’ (Jacobs 2007). Also the earlier explained terms, trickle-down, trickle-up and trickle-across are visualised.
Figure 6: Overview selection systems in fashion (Jacobs 2007)

Fashion experts may co-determine the value of products, but as they do not belong to the group of buyers themselves, they are not in direct control of actual purchasing. What the experts do, however, is drawing customers’ attention to certain innovations; in this sense they are sometimes becoming important ‘preselectors’ (Jacobs, 2007) as they are giving expert advice on the possible value of innovations in their fields. However, whether this will be successful or not remains in the hands of the consumer who may or may not be convinced. In the end of the day it remains the buyers individual decision to either buy or not-buy (Jacobs, 2007).

In these modern times individuals’ identity is most intimately linked to the decisions they make concerning consumption, especially decisions regarding the consumption of cultural products (Mol and Wijnberg, 2007). This is clearly visible in fashion; people tend to show their identity through fashion. The decisions buyers make concerning purchase of fashion products are generally influenced by other buyers belonging to different selection systems. Those, interested in fashion, find it generally important to be positively evaluated by
reference groups positively evaluates the combination (Cosenza and Rickman, 2007).

Individuals obviously are striving for union and acceptation. Therefore fashion products are mostly acquired for their social value and for their potential to impress others or, alternatively for getting acknowledgement from popular social groups (Kuksov and Wang, 2012). Without this need for union and the need for isolation, there can be no fashion says Barnard (2002). People have conflicting needs; on the one hand constituted by the desire to adapt to society but on the other to be separated from it. Individuals, thus, need to be social to some degree, so that they can both be ‘in style’ and at the same time maintain their individuality (Cosenza and Rickman, 2007). This ‘social part of fashion’ is mostly controlled by the experts, because they are instrumental in deciding what the main trends will be. This gives them an important status despite the fact that they don’t control the actual purchasing processes.

Analogous to medical doctors prescribing medicines for their patients, the experts in the selection system theory are not necessarily the buyers of the products (Jacobs 2007). However, in the fashion industry this is different. Experts such as editors and buyers may well review collections in a positive manner but nevertheless refrain from buying these collections, as they may not fit in their own lifestyles (Dore, 2013). However, in case they do fit their lifestyles they may purchase the products. They are then ‘pre selectors’ and consumers at the same time.

Fashion bloggers can also be regarded as fashion experts, as they control a type of fashion media that is read on a global scale and in which they show their personal styles and value the products. Consequently these fashion bloggers are experts and at the same time both producers and consumers of fashion content (Marwick, 2011).

Jacobs (2007) states that the possibility exists that consumers are convinced of the value of certain innovations without actually buying them. Individuals may in principle appreciate the value of an innovation but nevertheless decide to not spend money on it. They may even be frustrated that they are not able to buy the product. This happens a lot in fashion. For instance luxury goods that are often shown in fashion magazines have a high likeability factor, but only a few people are able to pay for these luxury goods. An example of this likability factor of designer goods, are the so named ‘it bags’ from high priced designer brands such as Chanel and Hermès. They gained a lot of popularity a couple of years ago.
and were deemed to be must-have products (Kuksov and Wang, 2012). Despite the fact that these bags were so popular, only a small group of people were able to buy them – also because of the fact that they were most of time sold out (Kuksov and Wang, 2012).

Despite this significant interest and desire to buy products, in economic selection only the actual buying plays a role. So these desired products can be referred to as a subjective valuation, i.e. valuation without economic selection. In other words paying attention to an innovation and appreciating its values is necessary but does not constitute sufficient conditions for selection in economic terms. Therefore, in those cases where experts provide a valuation without having the power to make customers buy, this should be referred to as ‘expert influence’ and not expert selection. Peer influence can also be looked at in a similar way. Customers are continuously influenced in their buying behaviour by various kinds of peers (Jacobs 2007). This makes it questionable if there is ever any economic selection in the fashion industry. From the above it follows that in fashion no single selection system appears to have a decisive influence on buying behaviour and thus will remain random.

In general customer behaviour is difficult to predict, as many customers do not precisely know what they want or need. Customers have many needs and preferences, which sometimes they acknowledge but often are not aware of. Therefore they are continuously developing their tastes and preferences by doing, trying, listening. By listening to the comments of other people we might learn to what extent we have to change our tastes and values (Jacobs 2007). Fashion is an industry without statistics and constitutes an unpredictable market in which the success or failure of any new products is a matter of chance (Barnett et. al, 2010). Fashion hits appear to emerge randomly and no one seems to be able to predict who will create the next hit (Kuksov and Wang, 2012).

Figure 7 shows the selection process of fashion within a broader culture. This is important in the fashion industry because people are continuously developing their own tastes and values as a result of their environments and subcultures. All valuation happens in a broader cultural context (Jacobs, 2007). The model of fashion selection lies within both the fashion and peer subcultures (see figure 7). It is based on two value systems, i.e. fashion firms and fashion magazines. Jacobs marked both systems as hierarchical selection, with which he means selection by authorised selectors.
When looking at figure 7, it becomes clear that critics, magazines and peers influence consumers buying behaviour. The consumers select these factors themselves. They have preferences for certain brands and magazines and find the valuation of certain peers more important than from others. The model shows a complex interaction between all kinds of selectors, which are continuously influencing or trying to influence each other.

Fashion blogs aren’t visualised in this model yet, which makes room for thoughts about the place of fashion blogs in this model. It isn’t clear yet what kind of influence these fashion blogs have on both consumers and industry, as fashion blogs can be seen as both peer influencers and experts.
Based on the information in this chapter some conclusions and assumptions can be made concerning the influence and role of fashion blogs in the selection system of fashion. The summary below may illustrate this.

- According to Constance White (Corcoran, 2006) fashion used to be dictatorial. It is actually questionable whether and to what extend fashion bloggers have changed this fashion system. They seem to take over the roles, of e.g. editors, in the fashion industry.

- Looking at the example given by Milka and Tuc, it can be concluded that a subtle way of cooperation is necessary in order to maintain the credibility of both brand and fashion blog.

- When making buying decisions consumers rely more and more on advice and opinions from friends. The popularity of fashion bloggers is due to the para-social interaction between bloggers and their readers. In this sense fashion bloggers can be regarded as ‘friends’ and hence are likely to influence consumer decisions.

- If a lot of connectors reinforce the same message, a hype may develop. Fashion bloggers can be regarded as the connectors of the present times and as such might influence the occurrence of hypes.

- According to Pine and Gilmore II (2007) ’being fake’ does not necessarily imply that one comes across as being non-authentic. As long as one remains sincere about the fake identity it may even augment authenticity.

- Since the fashion bloggers have created businesses out of blogging, it is questionable how credible the fashion bloggers actually are. It can be concluded that fashion bloggers always have a real factor in their blog posts. Therefore it can be said that fashion bloggers are continually switching between the different types of authenticity Real-Real, Fake-Real and Real-Fake (Pine and Gilmore II 2007).

- The selection system will gradually deflect from a market selection and move toward a peer and expert selection. In which fashion bloggers can be seen as both peers and experts.
5. Linking trends to fashion blogging

In the previous chapters I have explained different types of fashion blogs and how the selection process works in fashion. In this section the focus lies on the degree of influence fashion bloggers might have on their readers.

Trends are growing faster and faster and also go globally in a short period of time with help of the Internet. Such quick growing trends are not general global movements, but product trends, so called “it products”. I have narrowed down my descriptive analysis to the influence of fashion bloggers on “it products”.

5.1 Determining the degree of Influence

It is evident that the degree of influence in the blogosphere is connected to the amount of followers and views per day. On top of that, it is also seemingly important what the visitor of a blog does with the information afterwards. People do not only view or read something online, but they like, share, comment, ‘tweet’, and post on it (Burman, 2012). When people for instance blog about a story they have read for their own audience, or share a photo they loved across social networks, the influence of a site expands (Signature9, 2013).

To give a qualitative indication of the degrees of influence, I created the table below. Five degrees of influence have been distinguished ranging from the product being unknown to being actively promoted by readers and/or consumers. The likes and reactions of readers are used as a qualitative indicator for these categories.

The categorisation is based on my idea of the development of trends and the steps trends undertake: First a product is unknown; if it gets noticed, it can become appreciated, bought and eventually people may promote a product themselves.

In an attempt to capture the influence bloggers have in the selected “it products”, the table in figure 8 will be used to categorise the netnographic research of blogs. The categorization is based on the reaction a blog post causes with the readers, which can be expressed in likes, comments and sharing the post online. This can also happen on other media such as on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Degree of influence</th>
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<th>High Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualification</strong></td>
<td>Product is unknown</td>
<td>Product gets noticed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Indicators**      | - No reactions  
|                     |   - No likes  
|                     |   - Reader comments  
|                     |   - Post is liked  
|                     |   - Readers show interest in the product  | - Many readers comment  
|                     |                      | - Many likes  
|                     |                      | - Readers appreciate the product and/or admit buying intention  | - Many readers comment  
|                     |                      | - Many likes  
|                     |                      | - Readers respond that they bought the product  | - Consumers and readers have an active and positive attitude regarding the product |

**Figure 8: Degree of Influence of Blogs**

In summary:

- **Influence degree I:** In this category the blog is not visibly influencing the readers, the readers do not respond with a reaction. The product remains unknown.

- **Influence degree II:** The blogger has a few readers who react on the blog post about the product, this way it is visible that the product is noticed.

- **Influence degree III:** A blog post about the product causes predominantly positive reactions from readers; they even admit that they want to buy the product or wished they owned the product; the product is obviously appreciated. The lower limit of positive reactions is approximately 20;

- **Influence degree IV:** People react and admit that they have bought or own the product. The post has many reactions and likes.

- **Influence degree V:** Consumers who bought the product start to promote the product with reference to the blog post and on top of that people, who not necessarily have to own the product, are starting conversation about the product. People have positive and active attitude regarding the product.
It is important to realise that the influence of fashion blogs has to be looked at in a broader context. People are most of the time not influenced by one fashion blog only, but by a couple of fashion blogs. On the other hand, not every fashion blog is attractive to everybody. In the case of personal style blogs readers first have to like or be interested in a fashion blogger. They have to see and choose this person as an opinion leader.

5.2 Wedge heel sneakers and Tiger Sweaters
Let me introduce the two product trends that I am going to elaborate. Both trends became very popular in a short period of time. First I will tell the story behind the Wedge Heel Sneaker of Isabel Marant and secondly about the Tiger Sweater of Kenzo.

5.2.1 Isabel Marant – Wedge Heel Sneaker
Isabel Marant started her label in 1994 and the lower priced Etoile by Isabel Marant in 1999 (Vogue US 2013). When she was 16 years she started to make her own clothes. She never had an interest in becoming a fashion designer, but people started to ask her to make the clothes for them. She then discovered fashion (Finningan 2013).

In the past decade Isabel Marant has grown from cult Parisian designer to international commercial brand. The signature look of Isabel Marant is clearly recognisable: a skinny, leggy silhouette, feminine but also bits of masculinity, a little bit of rock ’n’ roll and a bit of bohemian. It is a simple look, not minimalistic and many women want to dress this way. As result, her designs have been much imitated by other labels and the high streets (Finningan 2013).
The **Isabel Marant** sneakers (figure 9) were unveiled for the first time for Fall/Winter 2010-2011 and were an immediate success. Therefore the designer now re-releases them every year in new colours and materials (Vogue France 2013). The clothes of **Isabel Marant** are often imitated by high streets brands; this is also true for the sneakers, see figure 10. Isabel Marant, in an interview with the *Telegraph* (Finningan 2013) says that she is disgusted by labels that copy her bestselling wedge trainers without attribution: “Everybody who has the wrong ones looks quite bitchy, very vulgar, when mine are not at all”.

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**Figure 9: Wedge Heel Sneakers by Isabel Marant**

**Figure 10: Isabel Marant look-a-like sneakers from the brands (from left to right): Steve Madden, Nike and Ash**
5.2.2 Kenzo – Tiger Sweater

The brand Kenzo was founded in 1970 by Takada who opened a boutique called Jungle Jap in Paris. He had a great imagination and was famous for mixing cultural reference points, jumbling high fashion with street style, and working with clashing prints and bright colours. Kenzo had its heyday in Paris during the ’70s and ’80s. When the designer Takada left the brand in the late ’90s, the brand went slightly off track (Cavanagh 2013). Humberto Leon and Carol Lim, the cofounders of New York label Opening Ceremony, have been hired to re-create the cool at Kenzo (Weir 2013).

In just 18 months Leon and Lim managed to bring Kenzo back on point (Cavanagh, 2013). This is mainly caused by the immense popularity of the tiger-motif sweater, see figure 11, from their second collection; it became one of the must-have pieces of the season (Walker, 2013). Leon and Lim say that they were on the hunt for new iconography for the brand. Flowers used to be the brand’s main symbol, but they felt that the tiger motif, a reworked tiger print from the Kenzo archive (Weir, 2013), was more right for the brand (Asome, 2013).

Figure 11: Sweaters by Kenzo
Suzanne Pendlebury, buyer at Matches, an English web shop, says: ‘Logo sweatshirt are having a revival and Kenzo has led this trend, which we don't see going away soon.’ (Asome, 2013). Since they launched the tiger-head sweatshirt last year, Kenzo has sold more than 20,000. "We've never reordered one item so many times," says Stephen Ayres, the head of fashion at Liberty a department store in London (Weir, 2013).

5.3 What is the role of fashion bloggers in the growth of these product trends?
It is interesting to find out if fashion blogs have had an influence on the immense popularity of the above two items, and how they possibly influenced the selection process in fashion.

Five blog posts have been selected per product: four blog posts from fashion blogs with Signature9 ranking, and one fashion blog that does not appear on this list. In addition, for each of the two ‘it products’ I have analysed an example of a fashion blog that refers to one of the five selected blog posts (is a category V blog post). The latter blog post has intentionally been added to give some impression of secondary propagation.

These (12) blog posts and the reactions of the readers have been categorized using the degrees of influence described in figure 8. Furthermore, examples are included of the popularity of the two trends on social media, with a focus on Instagram and Pinterest.

5.3.1 Blog posts featuring the Isabel Marant sneakers
The examples are given in chronological order to show the growth in popularity of the sneakers.

Garance Doré
The fashion blog of Garance Doré can be considered as a popular and influential blog. She ranks number 14 in the signature9 (2013) list of The 99 Most Influential Fashion and Beauty Blogs. I was curious to find out what the effect is when such a popular fashion blog posts something about the sneakers of Isabel Marant. With the ‘search’ option on the blog I found a post about the Isabel Marant sneakers placed on 5th of August in 2010. In the blog post ‘Push Up’ (figure 12) Garance describes a conversation about the sneakers, which she
had with a couple of girls during a photo-shoot. They all came to the conclusion that they liked the sneakers and that everything Isabel Marant does they will take it (Doré 2010).

The post gained 259 comments, which is a lot of reactions for a fashion blog. From my own experiences and comparisons it can be said that most blogs generate around 20 comments. The reactions on the blog post are mostly positive, but sometimes people are not convinced about the sneakers yet. In the example in figure 13 it shoes that the blog post of Garance generates positive reactions of her readers. Based on the amount and the type of reactions the blog post can be ranked as a category III.

Figure 12: Blog post ‘Push Up’ of Garance Doré

![Image of Isabel Marant sneakers, New York August '10](image)

Figure 13: Examples of reactions on blog post ‘Push Up’ of Garance Doré

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Reply Type</th>
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<td>they’re amazing!!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.modedamour.com">http://www.modedamour.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FREDDIE</td>
<td>August, 5 2010, 12:02</td>
<td>Reply</td>
<td>ohhh so cool!! hiphop chic!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Man Repeller

The blog Man Repeller, an example of a personal style blog, posted a couple of blog posts about or showing the Isabel Marant sneakers. This gives the opportunity to see if the reactions of the readers increase and become more positive about the sneakers over time. Therefore I analysed the first and the last blog post Leandra posted about the sneakers on Man Repeller.

The first time Leandra posted a post about the sneakers was on 12th of December in 2011, which was called “The Great Isadebate”. In this post Leandra expresses her doubts about buying a pair of the sneakers or not. The post is clearly focused on the shoes and thus only shows a picture of the shoes and texts. The blog post received 62 reactions of the readers and 104 people shared the post on Facebook. Most of the reactions were positive about the sneakers; some readers acknowledge the popularity of the shoe but do not like them personally. Some people give Leandra advice to buy, which indicates that they like the sneaker themselves as well. Other people say that they own a pair of the sneakers. See figure 14 for examples of these different reactions on the post. When looking at the comments on the blog post and the amount of shares it can be said that the degree of influence of this post is III.

Figure 14: Reactions on the post ‘The Great Isadebate’ of Man Repeller
The last blog spot on *Man Repeller* showing the Isabel Marant sneakers is named ‘‘Ch-Ch-Changes’’ and was posted on 27th of April in 2012. Four months later than the first post about the Isabel Marant sneakers. This time the post was not only showing the sneakers but a complete outfit, see figure 15. Again the post received a lot of reactions, namely 102 comments and it was shared 60 times on Facebook. Because of the fact that the post not only showed the sneakers, the readers also commented on the rest of the outfit. Which is common on fashion blogs and therefore does not make the blog post less influential concerning the sneakers.

![Figure 15: The outfit Leandra shows in blog post ‘Ch-Ch-Changes’ on the Man Repeller](image)

When looking at the reactions the blog post ‘‘Ch-Ch-Changes’’ received most of the readers are positive about the sneakers. The most striking reaction was the following:

‘‘Dude awesome! U make me wear my IM sneakers different every time. Thanks for the inspiration!’’

Which clearly shows that the blog *Man Repeller* influences her readers. The analysis also indicates that a couple of her readers own a pair of the sneakers. Based on the amount of reactions and the amount of shares the influence degree of the post can be ranked III to IV because a couple of readers admit that they own a pair of the sneakers.
The Fashionguitar

The Fashionguitar, earlier mentioned in this thesis, is a Dutch fashion blog of Charlotte who is currently living in London. This fashion blogger can be placed in the category personal style blog, since almost all of her posts are about her personal style. This specific fashion blog hasn’t the amount of followers on bloglovin.com as for instance Man Repeller and Garance Doré has, but this doesn’t mean that the blog has less influence on her readers. Figure 16 shows the blog post of The Fashionguitar about the Isabel Marant Sneaker.

The text in the blog post clearly shows the excitement of the blogger Charlotte about the fact that she finally owns a pair of the sneakers. Which gives the feeling that the shoes she has bought are special. She also mentions that: ‘You either love them or hate them, but for me, true love’, which can give readers the feeling that you have get used to shoes but when you do see the beauty of the shoe you will love them.

Figure 16: Blog post 'Long Longed Love' of The Fashionguitar

When looking at figure 17 the reactions, both in Dutch and English, are really positive. One reader admits that she didn't like the shoes at first, but that she now is considering the
shoes in black and another reader says that she wished that she owned a pair of the shoes. Looking at these comments it can be said that the influence of *The Fashionguitar* is influence degree III.

![Image](image1.png)

**Figure 17:** Reactions on blog post ‘Long Longed Love’ of *The Fashionguitar*

**The Marant Philes**

The curated fashion blog *The Marant Philes* is completely about Isabel Marant products and shows pictures of fashion bloggers, street styles pictures and look book pictures. Charlotte of *The Fashionguitar* is featured with several pictures wearing the Isabel Marant sneakers (figure 18) on the blog with the following text: “*I shouldn’t even write how WONDERFUL Charlotte’s style is because her pictures already speak for themselves. Pairing these Willows with so many different looks in such a flawless way is beyond resourceful. Major style inspo and major love!*” (Aliyah, 2012).

![Image](image2.png)

**Figure 18:** Charlotte of *The Fashionguitar* featured on *The Marant Philes*
The post about Charlotte received 12 comments, which can be considered as a small amount. Although when looking at the reactions it is visible that they all are positive about Charlotte’s style and the sneakers she wears. By featuring Charlotte on the blog, The Marant Philes increases the degree of influence of The Fashionguitar. This clearly shows the effect of when one fashion blogger writes about another fashion blogger. Therefore, when considering this blog post secondary propagation, this post is an example of V degree of influence.

**Jak and Jil**
The street style blog Jak & Jil, with photographs from the in the fashion industry famous Tommy Ton, is an popular street style blog and is not surprisingly ranked number 16 in the signature9 (2013) list of The 99 Most Influential Fashion and Beauty Blogs. Also Jak & Jil posted a picture of the Isabel Marant Sneakers, see figure 19.

![Figure 19: Woman wearing Isabel Marant sneakers on Jak & Jil](image)

The picture featuring the sneakers received 680 likes, which can be considered as a high amount. Because from my observations the average amount of likes the pictures receive are around 200. From this high amount of likes it can be said that the blog visitors love the Isabel Marant Sneakers. Unfortunately there is no option to place comments on this blog. This makes that degree of influence can only be based on the amount of likes. Therefore the influence degree of this blog post, based on the amount of likes, can be ranked III.
5.3.2 The Isabel Marant sneakers on Instagram and Pinterest
Fashion bloggers also post pictures and stories about themselves on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Instagram, which is based on sharing pictures with friends and everyone else who wants to see it, has gained a lot of popularity since it was launched in 2010. Instagram has now 100 million monthly active users and 40 million pictures are placed on Instagram each day (Instagram 2013). Fashion bloggers often use this platform to show their daily activities and stay connected to their readers. For instance, Leandra of the fashion blog Man Repeller has over 300,000 followers on Instagram. With these large amounts of followers it is interesting to see how people react on the Isabel Marant sneakers on Instagram.

![Figure 20: Pictures of Isabel Marant sneakers on Instagram posted by Man Repeller](image)

Figure 20 shows four images of the Isabel Marant Sneakers posted by Man Repeller. They are placed in chronological order from left to right and are named picture 1 to picture 4.

In figure 21 below the amount of reactions and likes the pictures received is visible. The figure shows that the pictures of the same Isabel Marant sneakers received a lot more reactions and likes over time. Looking at the reactions it can be said that they are positive about the sneakers. From this analysis it can be concluded that the influence degree of these Instagram pictures is III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture 1</th>
<th>Picture 2</th>
<th>Picture 3</th>
<th>Picture 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
<td><strong>Likes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reactions</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72 weeks ago</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 weeks ago</td>
<td>1273</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 weeks ago</td>
<td>2571</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 weeks ago</td>
<td>6354</td>
<td>132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 21: Amount of likes and reactions on pictures posted by Man Repeller on Instagram](image)
Not only fashion bloggers are active on Instagram; many people have an account and place pictures of their daily lives. In these pictures people can place hash tags with which they categorize their pictures. All pictures that have the same hash tag can be found when searching for that particular hash tag. I searched for Isabel Marant. The two most popular hash tags where: #Isabelmarant and #Isabelmarantsneakers. Figure 22 shows examples if the total of 85.794 pictures with #Isabelmarant and 5.710 pictures having the hash tag #Isabelmarantsneakers. This clearly shows the popularity of the brand and the sneakers. Therefore these examples can be given degree V of influence bases on this research.

![Figure 22: Pictures with the hash tags #Isabelmarant and #Isabelmarantsneakers on Instagram](image)

Another example of a degree V influence is the amount of pictures that people pinned on Pinterest of the Isabel Marant sneakers. Pinterest is a social media platform on which people can create digital mood boards and share these with their followers. When I looked ‘Isabel Marant sneakers’ on Pinterest using the search option a huge amount of pictures became visible. This shows that the popularity of the shoes and that people feel the need to share the shoes with each other and find them so pretty or cool that they want to place them in their mood boards on Pinterest, see figure 23.
5.3.3 Blog posts featuring the Kenzo Sweater

Now we have seen the fashion blogs’ part in the spreading of the Isabel Marant sneaker trend, it is interesting to see if this is also visible for the spreading of the Kenzo sweater trend. In this chapter the examples will as well be given in chronological order to show the, potential, growth in popularity of the sweater. The fashion blogs that will be shown are chosen with the help from the earlier mentioned list of signature9.com. Except from a couple of examples that aren’t have the influential and prominent at this moment.

*Style Bubble*

The blog Style Bubble, earlier mentioned as an example of a combination between a personal style and curated fashion blog, posted a blog post about the A/W 12-3 show of Kenzo. Suzy attended the show and made pictures of the items she liked. Her post therefore shows also other products besides the tiger sweater. As visible in figure 24 she put an emphasis on the tiger sweater by typing the following:

“The tiger motif here was lifted from the early work of Kenzo Takada in reference to his store “Jungle Jap” on Rue Vivienne. There’s already been a drop of Kenzo logo sweaters in Colette and these tiger faced pieces will definitely go like hot cakes....”
From this quote it can be deducted that Susie expects the sweater to become a big trend. It is interesting to see that the readers of Susie reacted positively to whole post and expressed their positive feelings about the collection, but not specifically on the sweater. Just one reader reacts that she likes the sweater and that she needs the sweater ‘right now’.

The influence of this post of Style Bubble on the Kenzo Tiger Sweater can therefore be ranked as degree II. A possible explanation is that the show was on the 4th of March and therefore almost nobody has seen the sweater yet. This post of Style Bubble can thus be seen as the start of the development of the trend.

**Style Scrapbook**
Andy Torres, a Mexican girl living in Amsterdam, created the personal style blog *Style Scrapbook* in 2007. Since then the blog became popular all around the world resulting in *Style Scrapbook* getting ranked number 32 in the signature9 (2013) list of The 99 Most Influential Fashion and Beauty Blogs.

The clothes Andy wears are mostly a combination of high-street brands mixed with designer items and she often experiments with trends. Also the *Kenzo* Tiger Sweater is an
item with which Andy experimented. In the first post in which the Kenzo Tiger Sweater was featured on her blog she wore the sweater with a sequin skirt, see figure 25. Quite logically the blog post was called “Green Lantern”.

![Image of Andy Torres wearing the Kenzo sweater](image)

**Figure 25:** Andy Torres wearing the sweater of Kenzo in blog post ”Green Lantern” on Style Scrapbook

The blog post received a large amount of reactions, namely 247. Most of these reactions where positive about the outfit and about the sweater, except for a few who don’t like the outfit but say that they still love Andy’s style. Figure 26 shows a couple of examples of these positive reactions. Looking at all the reactions it can be said that the influence degree of this blog post is III, the product is clearly appreciated and people express that they would love to own the sweater.

**sequin said...**
I love kenzo jumper <3
SEPTEMBER 10, 2012 AT 9:00 AM

**Fabiola Tinelli said...**
Love your sweater and skirt! xo xo
Fabiola

**wildflowergirl**
SEPTEMBER 10, 2012 AT 9:03 AM

**Laura said...**
Damn, now I'm a bit jealous - I want this jumper so badly! And the skirt is perfect with it.
SEPTEMBER 10, 2012 AT 9:04 AM

**Figure 26:** Reactions on blog post “Green Lantern” of Style Scrapbook
**Jak and Jil**
Looking at the archive of the street style blog Jak and Jil it was clear that they spotted a lot of Kenzo sweaters in a short period of time. They placed the first picture featuring a Kenzo sweater on 22th of September in 2012 and the fourth picture on 29th of December in 2012, which is not common on street style blogs. From my own experience it is normal on street style blogs to place unique outfits and it is rare to see a couple of pictures featuring the same products. Figure 27 shows these four pictures featuring the Kenzo sweater posted on Jak and Jil. The picture in the upper left corner is the first picture they placed on the blog and the in lower right corner the fourth picture is visible. The average amount of likes on these pictures was 250; the first picture scored considerably higher receiving 759 likes. This considerable difference between the first and the other three makes it questionable what makes people like the one picture more than the other. Despite the fact that there is difference in likes between the four images, they can all be ranked III in the degree of influence.

![Figure 27: Four pictures of people wearing a Kenzo sweater on jak and Jil](image)

**This is how we Rule**
I wondered if there were blogs that talk about the Kenzo sweater referring to another blog. Therefore I searched the Internet using keywords such as: “Style Scrapbook wearing Kenzo”. These keywords made me find the fashion blog This is how we Rule, a personal
style blog of a German girl Mia studying in Vienna. This fashion blog, with 470 followers on bloglovin.com is, in my opinion, not a big player in the blogosphere. Still a blog with relatively small amount of followers can be influential to her readers.

The blog post ‘“Spotted. Sweat it. The Sweatshirt:”’ features a couple of street style pictures of women wearing sweatshirts and also shows a picture of Andy of Style Scrapbook. Mia talks about the sweatshirts she has spotted on fashion blogs and the ways to wear these sweatshirts. About Andy she says the following: "I would choose the way Andy from Style Scrapbook is wearing. I love the sweater, obviously it is from Kenzo, and the skirt to it, well it is a statement. She seems to love the clash, so do I." (Engel 2012) From this quote it can be analysed that Andy of Style Scrapbook inspired Mia. By sharing the picture of Andy and sharing a link to Style Scrapbook, Mia expands the influence of the Style Scrapbook and this therefore makes this a perfect example of a V degree of influence.

The Blonde Salad
Chiara Feragni, the blogger from The Blonde Salad lives in Italy and managed to create a living out of her blog whilst studying. Her blog gained a lot of popularity over time and has won the bloglovin.com award for Blogger Business of the Year in 2012 (Feragni 2013). Signutre9 looked the amount on influence the Blonde Salad has and ranked the blog number 18 in their list of The 99 Most Influential Fashion and Beauty Blogs.

Figure 28: Chiara Feragni wearing the tiger sweater of Kenzo in the blog post 'Saturday during Fashion Week' on the Blonde Salad
Figure 28 shows Chiara wearing the tiger sweater of Kenzo. This blog post received 247 reactions from the readers and 28 people tweeted about the post. Because this blog post is not only showing the sweater, the reactions are also about the other products that are visible on the picture. The reactions that are about the sweater are positive, for example see figure 29. From the amount of the reactions and the types of reactions it can be said the influence degree of this blog post is III to IV.

**Bonnie, Clyde and Marni says:**
2 October 2012 at 9:59 AM

Love love love your outfit!! I just got the same sweater in grey!!
http://bonnieclydemarni.blogspot.gr/

---

**nini says:**
2 October 2012 at 9:59 AM

I absolutely adore the jumper!!!!! looking good in paris

Figure 29: Reactions on blog post ‘Saturday during Fashion Week’ of the Blonde Salad

**Inside Am-lul’s Closet**

The personal style blog *Inside Am-lul’s Closet* is the blog of Gala Gonzales, a Spanish girl living in London. The blog is, from my observations, well known in Europe and has with over 20.000 followers on blogloving.com. In December 2012 Gala writes about her visit to the Kenzo store in London. She says the following:

‘At 8.30 am we got picked up from my place and taken to the Bruton street Kenzo store
*London, and there was already a huge queue outside the store. The new tiger jumpers had
arrived fresh from Paris and everyone wanted a piece after the success of the last collection.’

From this quote it can be analysed that the tiger sweater was popular amongst consumers in December 2012. This popularity can be confirmed when looking at the reactions the blog post “The Tiger strikes again”, see figure 30 for some examples. From these positive reactions it can be said that this blog post can be qualified with III.
Figure 30: Reactions on blog post “The tiger strikes again” on Inside Am- I ul’s closet

5.3.4 The Kenzo tiger sweater on Instagram and Pinterest
As said before, fashion bloggers aren’t only active on their blogs anymore. In chapter 5.3.2 I showed the popularity of the Isabel Marant sneakers on Instagram and Pinterest. It is interesting to see if the Kenzo sweater is also that popular on Instagram and Pinterest.

When looking at the two personal style bloggers Style Scrapbook and the Blonde Salad it is visible that they have a lot of followers on Instagram. Andy of Style Scrapbook has over 170,000 followers and Chiara of the Blonde Salad has over 870,000 followers on Instagram.

Figure 31: Pictures of the Kenzo tiger sweater on Instagram posted by Style Scrapbook
Figure 31 shows four images featuring the Kenzo tiger sweater posted by Style Scrapbook. They are placed in chronological order from left to right and are named picture 1 to picture 4 also from left to right. In the model below, figure 32, the amount of reactions and likes the pictures received is visible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Picture 1</th>
<th>Picture 2</th>
<th>Picture 3</th>
<th>Picture 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>35 weeks ago</td>
<td>26 weeks ago</td>
<td>17 weeks ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>2180</td>
<td>7649</td>
<td>2474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 32: Amount of likes and reactions on pictures posted by Style Scrapbook on Instagram

It is clearly visible that the pictures received large amounts of likes. The amount of reaction is not striking. Looking at the number it shows that picture 2 was the most appealing to the followers of Style Scrapbook, perhaps the environment Andy is in causes this. From the reactions it can be analyses that they like the sweater, but a lot of people reaction with comments like “nice” or “cool”, which can refer to the sweater, the outfit or the picture itself. Looking at the reactions of the other three pictures, the reactions are much more about the sweater. People for instance say that they like the sweater, that they wished they had the sweater and say that the sweater is the must-have item of the season. Based on the amount of likes and the types of reaction it can be said that the degree of influence of these four pictures can be qualified with III.
Figure 33 also shows four images featuring the Kenzo tiger sweater, which are posted by *the Blonde Salad*. They are placed in chronological order from left to right and are named picture 1 to picture 4 also from left to right. In the model below, figure 34, the amount of reactions and likes the pictures received is visible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29 weeks ago</td>
<td>14073</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 weeks ago</td>
<td>16134</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks ago</td>
<td>17221</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 weeks ago</td>
<td>19908</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 34: Amount of likes and reactions on pictures posted by Chiara Ferragni on Instagram*

The amount of reactions and likes are quite high comparing to the amount of likes and reactions on the pictures of Style Scrapbook. It is likely that this difference is caused by the difference in the number of followers between the two blogs. Looking at the amount of likes the four pictures of *The Blonde Salad* received, it is visible that the pictures featuring the Kenzo sweater increased in their likability. From the reactions the pictures received it can be said that people like the Kenzo tiger sweater. In most of the reactions the followers express how much they love the sweater and that they wished they had the sweater. From this analysis it can be said that the influence degree of these pictures can be qualified with III.

As explained in chapter 5.3.2 people place hash tags in the comments below the pictures, because this way the pictures become categorized. This time I searched for Kenzo and the following popular hash tags became visible: #Kenzo, #Kenzotiger, #Kenzosweater and #Kenzoparis. Figure 35 shows what kind of pictures have these hash tags and the amount of pictures that belong to the hash tags, namely 92.372 belong to #Kenzo, 2.733 belong to #Kenzotiger, 598 pictures belong to #Kenzosweater and 3.352 pictures belong to #Kenzoparis. The amount of pictures that received this hash tags show the popularity of the brand Kenzo and the popularity of the tiger sweater. Therefore these examples can be given degree V of influence bases on this research.
I already explained that people pinned a lot of pictures of the Isabel Marant sneakers on Pinterest. To find out if this also counts for the tiger sweater of Kenzo I searched for ‘Kenzo Sweater’ on Pinterest. From this search it became visible that a lot of people pinned pictures featuring the Kenzo tiger sweater. I even found some pictures showing people wearing the Isabel Marant sneakers combined with the Kenzo sweater, see figure 36.

The amount of pictures featuring the Kenzo tiger sweater pinned on Pinterest shows the popularity of the sweater. The fact that people feel the need to share the sweater with each other and like the sweater so much that they want to place it in their mood boards on Pinterest confirms that popularity. From this analysis it can be said that the pictures featuring the Kenzo sweater pinned on Pinterest are all examples of degree V of influence.
5.4 Summary of the analysis
To conclude the information given in this chapter, I created the schemes below in which the information given from the analysis of the blog posts is summarized per product and ordered in a chronological order. The examples of type V degree of influence blog posts are shown separately.

Figure 37 shows a summary of the information of blogs that posted about the Isabel Marant sneakers.

![Figure 37: Blog posts featuring Isabel Marant sneakers](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>05-09-2010</th>
<th>12-12-2011</th>
<th>23-12-2011</th>
<th>27-04-2012</th>
<th>21-05-2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>Garance Doré</td>
<td>Man Repeller</td>
<td>The Fashionguitar</td>
<td>Man Repeller</td>
<td>Jak and Jil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking on Signature 9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>259 comments</td>
<td>62 comments</td>
<td>37 comments</td>
<td>102 comments</td>
<td>No comment option on the blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes or Shares</td>
<td>83 likes</td>
<td>104 shares on Facebook</td>
<td>5 likes</td>
<td>60 shares on Facebook</td>
<td>681 likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Blog</td>
<td>Combination of Street Style and Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Street Style Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Influence</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III-IV</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 38 shows a summary of the information of blogs that posted about the Kenzo sweater.

![Figure 38: Blog posts featuring the tiger sweater of Kenzo](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>05-03-2012</th>
<th>10-09-2012</th>
<th>22-09-2012</th>
<th>02-10-2012</th>
<th>10-12-2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>Style Bubble</td>
<td>Style Scrapbook</td>
<td>Jak and Jil</td>
<td>Blonde Salad</td>
<td>Amlul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking on Signature 9</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>35 comments</td>
<td>247 comments</td>
<td>No comments option on the blog</td>
<td>247 comments</td>
<td>47 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes or Shares</td>
<td>40 likes on Facebook</td>
<td>No shares and likes</td>
<td>759 likes</td>
<td>28 tweets</td>
<td>14 tweets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Blog</td>
<td>Combination of a personal style and curated fashion blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Street Style Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Influence</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>III-IV</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at both figure 37 and 38 it shows that the degree III of influence is most common.
The two category V blog spots (see figure 39 below) have been difficult to find. When looking at the first-degree influence of these two category V blog spots, they both have low direct influence (= they qualifying as category II at best).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>08-05-2012</th>
<th>01-10-2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blog</strong></td>
<td>Marant Philes</td>
<td>This is how we Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ranking on Signature 9</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comments</strong></td>
<td>12 comments</td>
<td>15 comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likes or Shares</strong></td>
<td>2 shares on Facebook</td>
<td>No shares and likes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Blog</strong></td>
<td>Curated Fashion Blog</td>
<td>Personal Style Blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of Influence (secondary – degree)</strong></td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree of Influence (first-degree)</strong></td>
<td>II</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 39: Type V blog posts
6. Conclusion thesis

The objective of this thesis was to investigate how fashion bloggers influence the selection process of fashion trends. To answer this question, I used the following four sub-questions:

1. What are fashion blogs? And how can they be categorized?
2. What makes fashion blogs popular? And how credible are they?
3. The fashion selection process: how does it work?
4. What influence of fashion blogs can be seen in the two selected product trends?

From the three types of fashion blogs, the personal style blogs and its hybrids establish greater personal relationships with their readers than the other two types of blogs.

According to Hanssen and Nitzsche (2010) these personal relationships are important aspects of the popularity of fashion blogs. The para-social relationships of these blogs create a sense of familiarity, which enlarges the amount of influence bloggers have on their readers. As described in chapter 4, consumers increasingly rely on opinions and recommendations of friends when making buying decisions. As bloggers have para-social relationships with their readers, they can be viewed as friends and thus assist consumers in their buying decisions.

Companies increasingly consider creating relationships with their consumers to be important. In creating these relationships, bloggers may come in handy. The present research demonstrates that a lot of companies already work closely together with fashion bloggers. An example is provided which demonstrates that collaborations between brands and fashion blogs should be carried out subtly, in order to protect the credibility of both company and blogger.

An analysis of fashion’s selection process leads to the conclusion that the selection process is gradually evolving towards a peer and expert selection. The research shows that bloggers can be seen as both peers and experts. Literature also shows that people choose their own opinion leaders. Fashion bloggers who come across as credible and authentic are more likely to be chosen as opinion leaders by their audiences. This reinforces the
importance of personal relationships between blogger and their readers.

Fashion bloggers are increasingly turning their blogs into businesses. This endangers their credibility. Readers have no way of knowing whether a fashion blogger is truly genuine in a blog post or whether she/he is perhaps sponsored. Fashion bloggers switch back and forth between sponsored and non-sponsored blog posts and therefore cannot straightforwardly be placed in one of the four categories of Pine and Gilmore II (2007).

Fashion bloggers always have some sort of ‘real’ factor in their blog posts. They therefore continuously switch between three out of four different types of authenticity: Real-Real, Fake-Real and Real-Fake (Pine and Gilmore II, 2007).

The fifth chapter’s analyses demonstrate that fashion bloggers do influence their readers and thus consumers. Most of the blog posts are ranked as degree III of influence (i.e., products get positively noted). Fashion bloggers sensitise their followers to specific products (e.g., get many likes), and provoke predominantly positive reactions. Realising that the present sample is rather small, it is nevertheless remarkable that almost all 10 of the originally analysed blog spots end up in category III.

The qualitative analyses associated with the blog posts (chapters 5.3.1. and 5.3.3) show that even when readers are indicating a certain willingness to buy a product, they do not necessarily do so. Also, there are hardly any instances where readers indicate an actual purchase. If a reader indicates he or she has bought a product, the influence of the fashion bloggers in this particular buying process is not mentioned. Category IV blog posts were therefore hard to determine. This may be explained by the fact that in fashion hardly any economic selection occurs. The present literature review demonstrates that no single selection system in fashion appears to have a decisive influence on buying behaviour.

Future research on the degree of influence of fashion blogs may result in an adjusted category IV degree. Possible examples are cookies and other internet analysis programs like Google Analytics. This creates possibilities to further investigate the amount of sales actually generated by fashion bloggers. Similarly, the extent of internet traffic prior to buying could be measured.
The analyses in chapter 5 indicate that real influence is the domain of professional top bloggers (as defined in the list of bloglovin.com and Signature9). Non-professional bloggers simply do not have the same amount of followers as the professional top bloggers. From the analyses it can also be concluded that social media like Instagram and Pinterest may be better indicators of product popularity than fashion blogs. If consumers are posting pictures and promoting certain items, companies can easily observe the popularity of their products. The companies can also use these media themselves to promote their products.

By using the abovementioned conclusions it is possible to answer the main question: *What is the influence of fashion bloggers in the selection process of fashion trends?*

Fashion blogs definitely deserve to be included in fashion's selection process. The research shows that they may be regarded as the current catalysts, intensifying product trends. Due to the increasing influence of the internet as a far-reaching communication medium, fashion bloggers have the ability to quickly create trends and at the same time spread these globally. One fashion blog alone does not create a trend. It is when many fashion blogs reinforce the same message that a trend may arise. The precise influence of fashion bloggers could not be measured in this analysis. However, the research did show that fashion bloggers are sensitising their followers to specific products and as such are provoking predominantly positive reactions.

Finally, in chapter 4 Constance White states that fashion used to be dictatorial and that fashion bloggers have changed this system. Fashion bloggers seem to take over the roles of, for instance, editors in the fashion industry. And there is increased commercialisation of fashion blogs. I therefore believe it remains to be seen to what extent fashion bloggers have actually changed the fashion system. They are just *new kids on the blog.*
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**Fashion Blogs**


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