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Effects of Instagram influencers on the adoption of secondhand fashion consumption: Case studies of Instagram influencers in Depop

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ABSTRACT

As the use of online marketplaces for second-hand clothing has increased, the effects of social media influencers have become more prominent. However, limited attention has been paid to various types of influencers and their approaches to interacting with their audiences. This chapter aims to identify best practices that social media influencers on Instagram could use to persuade their followers to shop for secondhand fashion on the Depop platform. To identify best practices, comments associated with Instagram posts that mentioned Depop were analysed to assess attitudes towards second-hand fashion. Ten influencers who promoted Depop in their Instagram content were identified, and their visual and textual content were analysed. This chapter provides several recommendations on how secondhand **clothing platforms can best use social media influencers to market to consumers' interests. It can also** *contribute to research within the wider field of marketing in the circular economy.*

Keywords: social media influencers; second-hand clothing; circular economy; second-hand clothing retailers; Depop

INTRODUCTION

Alternative consumption models using peer-to-peer (P2P) marketplaces have recently gained attention for their potential to reduce the number of garments that need to be made to satisfy **consumers' needs. 'Power relationships and the dominant lifestyle'** (Garcia et al., 2021, p. 10) have been identified as factors affecting the uptake of more sustainable consumption habits. As these factors are closely related to the fashion influencer–follower relationship, research on this topic could be significant in increasing our knowledge of how influencers can harness these factors to facilitate rather than prevent sustainable consumption. The findings could establish whether P2P platforms should use influencer marketing to successfully increase consumer awareness and uptake of secondhand-fashion consumption. The results could also help determine

whether influencers could use their platforms to implement and improve sustainability policies within the fashion industry by promoting support among their followers.

The specific P2P reselling platform on which this case study focused was Depop. Depop places a high emphasis on sustainability and inclusivity within its offerings and community. It has 30 million users (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021) and is the tenth-most-visited fashion site for American Generation Z consumers (Theodosi, 2021). Depop was a logical choice because, like Instagram, it has a global audience and is popular among younger generations; therefore, the two platforms are connected due to the crossover of their audiences. Depop fits into the P2P resale category, as it allows users to take on the roles of both buyers and sellers. Users can buy and sell across a wide range of categories, encompassing womenswear, menswear, accessories, beauty and lifestyle. Depop describes its aim as creating a 'more inclusive [and] diverse and less wasteful' (Depop, 2023) fashion industry.

Thus far, there has been no extensive research into how Instagram influencers and Depop are intertwined. Additionally, Garcia et al. (2021) suggested that the consumption stage of the product lifecycle 'remains a largely under-researched topic' (Garcia et al., 2021, p. 2), which suggests that research into secondhand platforms is essential within the wider scope of sustainability research(Hur, 2020; Hur & Faragher–Siddall, 2022). Therefore, this research has the potential to unearth findings that are new, exciting and relevant to the issues and opportunities currently faced in the sector of fashion marketing. The findings have the potential to reveal whether a correlation exists between the exposure of consumers to the promotion of Depop by Instagram influencers and the attitudes of consumers towards Depop.

The results of the case study were obtained through an analysis of influencers on Instagram. Instagram is owned by Meta, a company focused on social connection platforms that also owns fellow social media giant Facebook (Meta, 2023). Instagram is the third-most-popular social media platform and is especially popular among millennials, with 71% of Americans within the 18–29-year-old age range using the app or web browser (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). The stated aim of Instagram is to 'bring you closer to the people and things you love' (Instagram Inc., 2021) by facilitating photo and video sharing. This makes Instagram an ideal platform to analyse for this case study because it has a wide reach and makes it simple for users to discover and interact with other content creators and topics they are intrigued by (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

The aim of this research was to answer the following question: how do Instagram influencers impact consumers' attitudes regarding secondhand fashion consumption through their promotion of Depop? The objectives of this study were as follows: (1) to uncover, through the analysis of Instagram comments, whether there is a correlation between consumers' exposure to the promotion of Depop by Instagram influencers and their opinions of secondhand fashion; (2) to investigate whether influencer partnership marketing techniques could be useful to secondhand platforms by assessing the attitudes of the followers of influencers; (3) to explore, by observing how followers of influencers respond to content highlighting secondhand fashion, whether influencers could use their platforms to improve sustainability policies within the fashion industry by creating support among their followers. The case study allows us to understand how the opinions Instagram users have of Depop are influenced by Instagram influencers. This allows

for suggestions regarding actions that Depop and Instagram influencers could take to create positive environmental changes within the fashion industry.

THE SECONDHAND CLOTHING MARKET

Fashion is considered a crucial business because it contributes significantly to the global economy. However, the industry is currently experiencing difficult conditions. Declining rates of expansion (as recorded in 2022) are a result of hyperinflation and negatively affected consumer motivations (Imran Amed et al., 2022). There are increasing concerns regarding the disposal of used garments and its negative impacts on the environment. Each year, approximately 5.8 tonnes of clothing are discarded in Europe, of which 75% are either burned or sent to landfills (Strähle & Erhardt, 2017). This causes pollution and the degradation of ecosystems, which ultimately contribute to climate change (Velenturf et al., 2019). It is not only the end–of–life stages of the process in which sustainability needs to be considered. Activities such as rental models, swapping models and resale all aim to prevent garments ending up in landfills by increasing the number of times they are worn (Strähle & Gräff, 2016; Strähle & Philipsen, 2017).

Clothing accounts for 49% of the secondhand market; therefore, secondhand fashion is a topic that requires research so that we can harness its full potential in creating a more sustainable fashion industry (Walker & Stott, 2018). Encouraging consumers to buy secondhand reduces waste and therefore pollution, which helps curb negative environmental impacts (Hur, 2019, 2020). Only 20% of clothes that are thrown away are beyond repair; therefore, 80% of clothes that would normally be thrown away have the potential to be sold on a secondhand basis which would significantly reduce the greenhouse gases emitted as a result of clothing going into landfills – and thus reduce global warming (Strähle & Hauk, 2017). Responding to the benefits of maximising the utilisation of secondhand clothing, various brands offer takeback schemes to facilitate the repurposing of garments and, therefore, counteract their environmental impacts (Strähle & Höhn, 2017). However, there is growing concern that these initiatives are merely **greenwashing, as the brands' main collections often still fall into the fast**–fashion category (Rauturier, 2021; Robertson, 2022). Fast fashion products have few recycling possibilities because several secondhand businesses frequently reject them due to their poor quality and low value when resold. As a result, millions of tonnes of waste clothes have been produced (Nguyen et al., 2020). Despite several fast fashion brands such as Zara, H&M, and Primark trying to improve product durability and quality standards to maximise circular economy practices, there are still challenges involved in the inherent fast business model that is based on facilitating large quantities of production and consumption. Consumers are often skeptical about the take–back system or resale platforms from fast fashion brands and how those collected garments can be ultimately recycled or reused effectively.

Moreover, Hur (2020) identified the several significant barriers that prevented non–secondhand clothing consumers. Consumers often find a lack of accessible local stores, variety, and availability of clothing when seeking a required style, size, quality, and colour, and have concerns regarding cleanliness and value for money. This study also suggests that perceived images of secondhand clothing stores are frequently associated with disorganisation and lacking product information. In order to address the several challenges listed above, multiple circular economy strategies and necessary long–term infrastructure is needed to support secondhand

clothing charities and community organizations, and those who actively redistribute secondhand clothing.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation suggested a **more holistic approach to approaching a garment's lifecycle through the 5Rs: 'recycle, reuse, reduce, re-design and reimagine'** (Strähle & Müller, 2017). **'Recycling and reusing' can reduce garments' environmental impact at the end-of-life stage, whereas 'reducing, redesigning and reimagining' can be used in the design and production** phases to ensure a more sustainable process. The 5Rs framework is closely related to the theory of a closed-**loop supply chain, the aim of which is to let nothing go to waste. The 'recycle, reuse** and rei**magine' aspects of the 5Rs model are especially important to closed-**loop theory because they ensure that garments are repurposed rather than going to landfills and causing environmental harm (Strähle & Philipsen, 2017). Other researchers have extended the 5R framework to promote a circular economy. For example, Kirchherr et al. (2017) conducted a systematic literature review to identify various types of circular-economy approaches, such as 9R models: R0: refuse, R1: rethink, R2: reduce, R3: reuse, R4: repair, R5: refurbish, R6: remanufacture, R7: repurpose, R8: recycle and R9: recover. Although the concept of circular economy (CE) is popular now in the fashion industry, the idea has obtained a lot of public attention. Criticism arises that the true meaning of CE is often diluted and often loses meaning as time goes on. Mainstream CE strategies would go a long way towards preventing environmental issues and more awareness pertaining to the environmental dangers of the use phase and throwaway culture is needed in achieving the best environmental outcomes possible.

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Social media influencers have been growing in popularity as marketing agents because they are **able to drive 'marketing through content'** (Esber & Wong, 2020). Influencers allow brands to reach thousands, sometimes millions, of followers. However, brands are still learning about this form of marketing, such as what can happen if the influencer does not resonate with the intended audience and has a negative effect (Esber & Wong, 2020). One study of social media influencers **suggested that an influencer is essentially a 'personal brand'** (Enke & Borchers, 2019, p. 264). If **brands feel like an influencer's brand aligns with their own, they may use that influencer as a** marketing tool (Enke & Borchers, 2019). Similarly, Sun et al., (2022)**'s research shows that** consumers frequently adapt their views of influencers to the advertised or endorsed goods. Accordingly, when consumers trust the influencers, brands will become more popular.

Consumers often view influencers as opinion readers, and they are likely to trust them rather than other conventional marketing techniques that are facilitated by brands (Enke & Borchers, 2019). One way for social media users to find influencers they wish to follow is through the social media accounts of brands they follow as social media influencers often work in partnership with brands (Gibson, 2012). The relationship could also be established the other way around, whereby an influencer is discovered by following the brand. Social media influencers with vast followings can help firms reach a wider audience. Consumers are likelier to trust social media influencers rather than marketing directly from brands because their content does not have to be approved by **'traditional gatekeepers', and influencers seem authentic and relatable to consumers** (Khamis et al., 2017).

Social media influencers create and share posts, engage with their followers and promote awareness in creative formats, but issues have been found with the role of social media influencers in marketing because occasionally, some followers of an influencer may not be real **and could instead be bots, meaning that a brand's marketing efforts could be unlikely to convert** into the number of customers they expected (Enke & Borchers, 2019). This suggests that influencer marketing is preferable to traditional marketing techniques, which might be less relatable. This trust is further intensified because, as Armstrong and Park (2020) found, followers of influencers feel like they are part of a community with the influencer and other followers. This might be because social media allows for a two-way interaction between influencers and their followers, which is unlike traditional marketing; therefore, consumers may feel as though they personally know the influencers they follow (Strähle & Gräff, 2016). They are also likely to trust other members of the communities they are part of.

Researchers have suggested different ways to classify influencers. Gullstrand Edbring et al. (2016) **suggest three different types of influencers: 'the opinion leader, the micro–celebrity and the social leader'** (cited in Gulamali & Persson, 2017, p. 21). Influencers defined as opinion leaders or social leaders aim to persuade their followers to adopt certain values or beliefs and identify as part of a particular social group – for example, sustainability advocates – and as such, their followers regard them as experts in that topic. A micro–celebrity is an influencer viewed as **aspirational; they conform to society's stereotypical beauty ideals and portray the luxurious** aspects of their lives, which make them appear successful (Gulamali & Persson, 2017).

The criterion for this categorisation is as follows: macro–influencers have over 100,000 followers, micro–influencers have between 10,000 and 100,000 followers and nano–influencers have fewer than 10,000 followers (Nizri, 2022). However, a more in–depth review of the literature suggests that this categorisation may not be as unambiguous as it seems because different authors characterise the follower counts for the categories differently. For example, Ehlers (2021) defines micro–influencers as having 10,000 to 50,000 followers and macro–influencers as having over 500,000 followers. These numbers are very different in Nizri (2022), who does not include the nano–influencer category. Furthermore, the categories proposed by both authors are broad and could encompass a large range of followers. Therefore, it could be beneficial to create smaller categories.

It is commonly thought that influencers are the ones who influence their followers (Strähle & Grünewald, 2017) because they are the ones who bring products and brands to the attention of consumers (Khamis et al., 2017). However, the interaction between influencers and their followers flows both ways (Strähle & Gräff, 2016). In addition, Gullstrand Edbring et al. (2016) note that consumers use their buying power to influence the market. Therefore, could it be **possible that consumers' purchase decisions also influence the influencers' choices about the** topics on which they make content?

THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

While influencers may choose to promote sustainable fashion options, Armstrong and Park (2020) observed that they are also likely to post a large amount of fashion content, therefore encouraging consumers to buy more than they need. Even if products consumers are purchasing are made sustainably or are secondhand, if they are overconsumed, it still creates sustainability

issues (Armstrong & Park, 2020). Gibson (2012) also expressed concerns that influencers may be promoting fast fashion because they can often afford more expensive clothing than their followers. Therefore, if consumers want to emulate the outfits of influencers, they often turn to unsustainable fast-fashion retailers for cheaper versions of garments.

Furthermore, influencers have been criticised for being misleading. Influencers often partner with brands and promote their products in return for payments or free products, and consumers may not always realise when a post is a paid partnership, which may lead to consumers being misled (Strähle & Gräff, 2016). Influencers are not always experts on the topics they discuss in their social media content, which can lead to 'fake news' that consumers take to be true (Khamis et al., 2017). The images influencers share can also be misleading. Photographs and videos can, unbeknownst to consumers, be edited to try and fit in with society's beauty ideals; however, if consumers do not realise that photographs are edited, they may strive to look the same, despite it being unattainable in reality (Gibson, 2012).

There are sustainability issues mentioned in the literature that cannot be rectified by secondhand consumption, such as unethical behaviour. Ethics refer to how people are treated throughout the supply chain, and secondhand fashion may make it harder than even fast fashion to trace the ethics involved in a garment's lifecycle because the garment may have been made a long time ago or the original retailer may not be apparent. This could also mean that consumers are not aware of how sustainable the fabrics, fibres and production processes used to make the garment were.

One approach in addressing the above challenges and facilitate secondhand clothing consumption is to further promote the idea that sustainability marketing could play an important role in promoting secondhand clothing to a mainstream audience (Hur, 2020; Hur & Cassidy, 2019). However, the full range of advantages of employing secondhand clothing is not widely known. By maximising offline and online visual merchandising tactics, including curated secondhand clothing window displays, focusing on certain fashion trends, and promoting nostalgic narratives, clothing fashion retailers and charities can optimise hedonic experiences to attract consumers (Claridge & Hur, 2021; Hur, 2020). Recent research on influencer marketing has discovered that the quality and attributes of an influencer's material has a substantial impact on their followers' engagement levels and purchasing inclinations. Influencers often reveal details about their private lives and share their personal preferences for particular styles, options, and products that link with their lifestyle (Zheng et al., 2023). Although several studies have recently explored the roles of influencers in social media marketing, there is limited research on how to effectively promote secondhand clothing in various emerging peer-to-peer marketplaces and how different groups of consumers will require different messages within secondhand fashion marketing.

CASE STUDY: DEPOP
Influencers were chosen as the focus of the case study because past research shows that they have been growing in popularity as marketing agents in recent years (Gullstrand Edbring et al., 2016) and marketing has the potential to correct misconceptions that provide a barrier to secondhand clothing consumption (Strähle & Kreuzhermes, 2017). Primary research was conducted in the form of a case study in which the social media content of nine Instagram fashion influencers was investigated to understand the impacts of their promotion of Depop and

their followers' attitudes towards Depop. **The ca**se study focused specifically on the social media platform Instagram and the P2P resale platform Depop. To carry out this research, keyword searches were carried out in the Instagram search bar to identify social media posts in which influencers promoted P2P secondhand reselling platforms. **The keywords included 'secondhand clothes', 'secondhand fashion', 'sustainable fashion', 'secondhand fashion influencer', 'sustainable fashion influencer', 'thrifting', 'secondhand outfit', 'resale' and 'circular economy'**.

From the keyword search, 10 fashion influencers on the Instagram platform were identified as the focus of the case study. Their follower counts ranged from 4,440 to 367,000 followers, and they all posted consistently. These were important factors to consider because it is important to research a range of different categories of influencers to understand how the different types of influencers may exert different types or levels of influence. It was also important that they posted consistently to prove that they were active on their accounts, as otherwise, followers may lose interest and therefore be less easily influenced. The ten influencers were @acteevism, @emsladedmondson, @hannahxelliman, @izzy_manuel, @nevereverpayretail, @onestylishmoo, @slow_fashion_lottie, @sunsetsaraid, @theflippside and @trashisfortossers. All the influencers identified focused on secondhand fashion within their Instagram feeds. This was identified by reading the posts within the chosen timeframe and assessing whether they mentioned secondhand platforms. Influencers were chosen who posted at least five posts that included mentions of at least one secondhand platform. After the influencers were identified, the names of the secondhand platforms they mentioned and the number of times they mentioned them within the timeframe were recorded. This was achieved by reading each post and recording each secondhand platform mentioned. A tally was kept of the number of times they were mentioned. This was repeated to increase reliability.
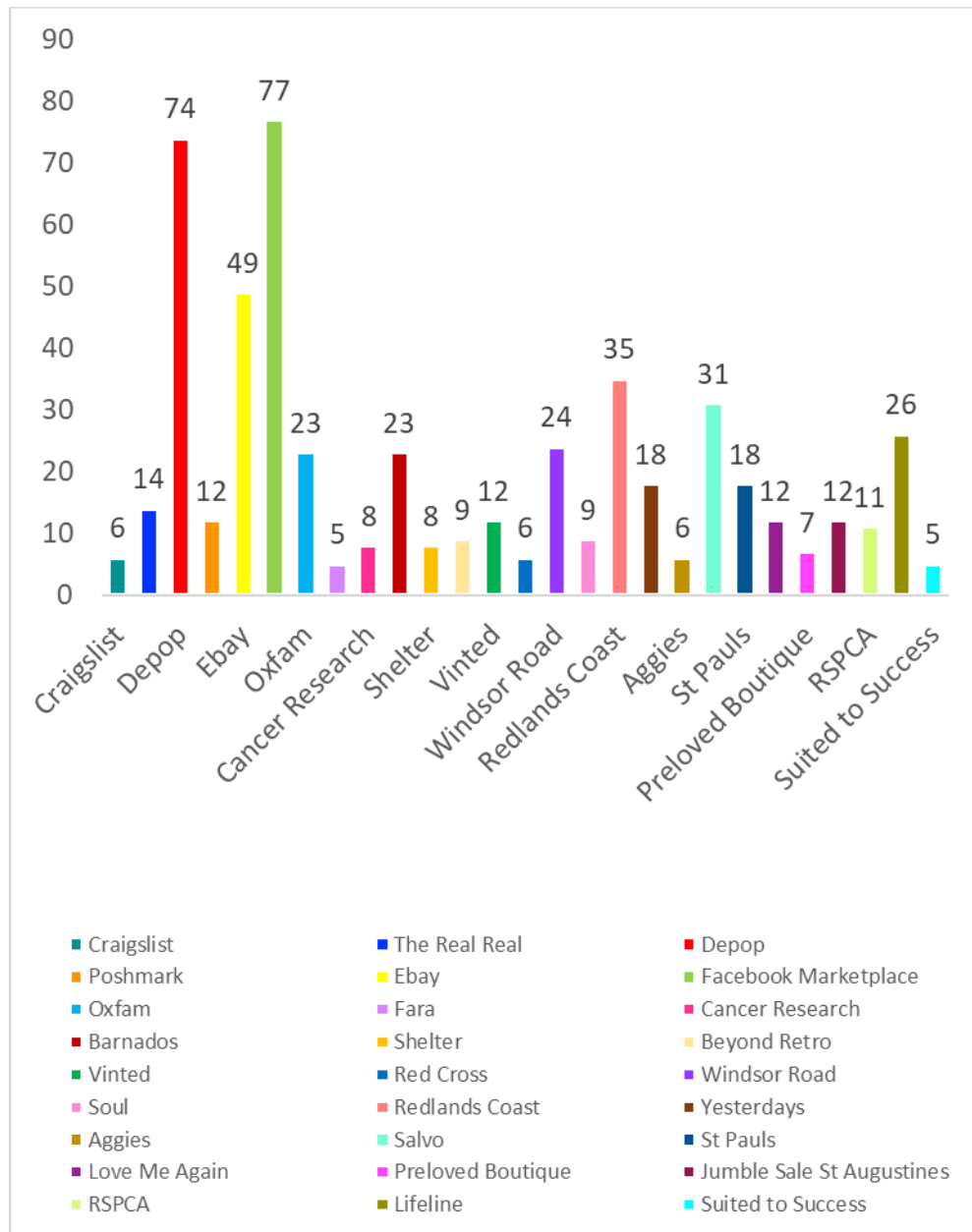
Figure 1. Number of mentions of secondhand platforms

The influencers' Instagram posts from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 were analysed in the case study. This timeframe was chosen because it is recent enough to represent how Instagram users are currently being influenced and how Instagram influencers currently choose to create content. It also provides a large enough timeframe to assess whether the trends and patterns discovered were flukes. The comments sections for each post that mentioned Depop were analysed to determine the effect that promoting Depop has on the followers of the influencers. To achieve this, comments referring to secondhand fashion, sustainability or the outfit the influencer was wearing were recorded. These three categories were chosen because the aim of the research was to create a more sustainable fashion industry through secondhand

fashion, and the comments about the outfits may suggest whether the audience finds secondhand fashion visually appealing. During the analysis, the comments on the posts, the visuals of the posts, the captions of the posts, the differences between the content and comments in 2020 and 2021 and the number of likes on each post were studied according to the criteria identified in Table 1.

Table 1. Criteria for the analysis

Aspect being analysed	Criteria for the analysis
Commenters' response to posts	What was said? Was their reaction positive, neutral or negative? Did they ask any questions, and if so, what topics were they enquiring about? Which features/topics were mentioned most frequently? Which topics were they most positive and most negative about?
Visual content of posts	Was it a photo or a video (and what type of video, such as a reel or tiktok video)? The general aesthetic – for example, the types of fashion trends portrayed, colour palette, and what the photos and videos consisted of (including outfits and infographics)
Topics included in the captions	Subcategory of secondhand clothing Positive aspects of secondhand clothing Challenges to secondhand clothing Was secondhand clothing directly mentioned? Did the caption directly ask the audience a question about their opinions?
Differences between 2020 and 2021 posts	Type of content Focus of the caption Attitudes portrayed in the comments

CONTENT CHARACTERISTICS

The case study involved an analysis of the comment sections, content, visual appearances and **numbers of likes of the influencers' posts that mentioned Depop. The analysis of this data** allowed for a derivation of real-world mechanisms that could be put in place to increase the uptake of secondhand fashion consumption.

Table 2. Content characteristics

Influencer	Visual characteristics of the account	Type of content of depop posts
@trashisfortossers (Singer, 2022)	• Neutral colour palette • Minimalist	• Outfit photos • Reels (form of short video) showcasing various secondhand outfits
@hannahxelliman (Elliman, 2022)	• The backdrops of her photos are mostly outdoor locations • Heavy focus on fashion content	• Outfit photos (some in outdoor locations and some mirror selfies)
@onestylishmoo (onestylishmoo, 2022)	• Varied poses • Pops with colour • 90s-inspired	• Outfit photos • TikTok videos
@acteevism (McSherry, 2022)	• Heavily fashion-focused • Captions and quotes edited onto the photos themselves • Infographics	• Outfit photos • Reels
@sunsetsaraid (sunsetsaraid, 2022)	• Use of very bright colours • Fashion-focused • Influenced by 60s and 70s trends and aesthetics • Captions edited onto the photos themselves • Attention-grabbing backdrops (using props to create a theme that matches the outfit or editing a pattern onto the background that matches the outfit)	• Outfit photos • Reels (showing the editing process of her posts)
@theflippside (Fabella, 2022)	• Bright colours • Mostly outfit photos • Formal outfits (lots of tailored pieces and luxurious fabrics)	• Videos • Tiktok videos • Outfit photos
@izzy_manuel (izzy_manuel, 2022)	• Bright colours • Eye-catching prints • Unique poses	• Outfit photos
@slow_fashion_lottie (Hanson-Lowe, 2022)	• Mellow colour palette • Airy and feminine outfits • Includes slides with written information about sustainability in fashion on some posts • Uses some posts to promote items for sale on her own Depop account	• Outfit photos • Videos • Reels • Written information slides
@emsladedmondson (Edmondson, 2022)	• Mix of fashion, lifestyle and interiors content • Pops with colour throughout • Includes written information slides about sustainability in fashion on some posts	• Outfit photos • Written information slides

@trashisfortosser's posts about Depop and the secondhand fashion industry in general garnered a very positive response from her followers. The posts also seemed to lead her followers to think about sustainability. The comments suggested that the posts regarding Depop were educational and promoted the sustainable and environmentally friendly benefits that shopping from secondhand platforms, such as Depop, offer. In addition, one comment used the word 'pride',

which suggests that the post was successful in presenting secondhand fashion websites, such as Depop, in a positive light. Such a comment may also cause others to reflect on the reasons the commenter was proud of her secondhand wardrobe and possibly feel shame if they are not shopping secondhand. Many followers were involved in a discussion on how best to recycle old clothing, and many suggestions about methods and locations for doing so were provided by fellow followers. One of the posts promoted a Depop jumper that the influencer had upcycled, provoking a discussion among the followers in the comments section about how they could also upcycle their own clothing. This is encouraging, as the post not only promoted secondhand fashion but also encouraged followers to repair or upcycle their clothing, therefore preventing waste and providing two levels of sustainability.

When analysing the Depop posts on @acteevism's account, it was again clear that the followers were very complimentary about the outfits. However, in addition, it seemed that the followers had also been provoked to consider sustainability aspects as a result of the Depop posts, suggesting that followers would like to see more content in which influencers are transparent about where they have obtained their outfits and how the outfit choices they make impact the environment. It is evident that @acteevism's followers felt inspired by her promotion of Depop's secondhand platform because many of the comments were made by followers sharing their own positive experiences of shopping secondhand fashion and attempting to increase their awareness of sustainability while making more sustainable choices. Comments such as these built upon the information and awareness raised within @acteevism's original post and further encourage Instagram users to shop from secondhand platforms such as Depop because, as studies have shown, people are likelier to make sustainable decisions (such as shopping from secondhand platforms) if they perceive others in their peer group to also be doing so (White et al., 2019). This is because people feel more comfortable participating in a particular behaviour if they consider it to be a social norm (White et al., 2019).

Within the comments section, it was also apparent that @acteevism took the time to reply to most comments received on the posts. This could improve the awareness and adoption of secondhand shopping and more sustainable behaviours among her followers. For example, one commenter asked about how @acteevism learned to repair her clothing to make it last longer, and @acteevism's reply gave the commenter as well as other readers the information they needed to try out clothing repair and upcycling themselves, therefore lending an educational dimension to the account.

In the comments section of most of @sunsetsariad's Depop posts, there was no mention of the secondhand or sustainability aspects of the posts, with the attention instead focusing on the visual appeal of the outfits. However, in one of her posts, @sunsetsaraid posed a direct question to her followers that enquired about their own secondhand shopping habits. This post received a significantly higher number of comments than @sunsetsaraid's other Depop posts, and these comments were also much more heavily focused on the specific topic of secondhand fashion. This suggests that if Instagram fashion influencers were to make a conscious effort to directly engage their followers about secondhand fashion through the content used in their posts, more awareness could be raised about the topic, and there could be greater potential for higher uptake of secondhand shopping. The discussions also prompted followers to get involved by sharing their own online secondhand shopping experiences and tips, such as useful apps to help organise

and source a secondhand shopping wishlist. These findings imply that if Instagram fashion influencers were to promote secondhand fashion through open discussions within the comments sections of their posts and in the posts themselves, the awareness and consequent uptake of secondhand shopping behaviours could be significantly increased.

In one post, @theflippside asked her followers about their tendency to rewear garments. This combines two forms of sustainable fashion consumption in one post by referring to both Depop and the habit of rewearing in the same post, resulting in a heavier focus on the importance of sustainability within fashion. The comments implied that Instagram fashion influencers can play a part in encouraging consumers to adopt more sustainable fashion consumption behaviours. This presumption suggests that secondhand fashion influencers on Instagram play an important role in making secondhand shopping less daunting for consumers and giving them the tools that they require to feel confident in making secondhand purchases. Studies have shown that consumers increasingly turn to Instagram when seeking out information (Madzunya et al., 2021). Thus, the existence of secondhand-fashion Instagram influencers is important for spreading information that could lead to a more sustainable fashion industry.

@izzy_manuel (2022) spread further awareness of Depop by replying to complimentary comments about specific garments and explaining that they were purchased from Depop. This behaviour spread awareness to followers who may not have been initially interested in the sustainability/secondhand credentials of a garment, therefore giving them a second and more direct opportunity to learn about secondhand fashion (when replying directly to a comment, the author of the original comment is directly notified). It is also interesting to note that izzy_manuel (2023) was the only one of the influencers studied that featured a comment from the official Depop account on one of their Depop posts. This comment from Depop suggests to followers that the Depop community is a close-knit one, which may encourage them to become a part of it.

The resulted in the comments sections of @slow_fashion_lottie's posts being some of the most relevant to sustainability out of all the influencers in the case study. Not only that, but the discussions also encompassed a wide range of sustainability subcategories that reflected the breadth and depth of the informative content that @slow_fashion_lottie included in her posts. Examples of such subcategories included discussions about the least environmentally harmful way to wash clothing (specifically swimwear), the arm holes in vintage clothing being smaller than those in more modern clothing (this discussion even resulted in one commenter offering to fix the problem for @slow_fashion_lottie by sewing the garment for her), wearing clothes more often rather than just saving them for certain occasions, reselling items people do not wear often, upcycling garments to make them more wearable for the owner, becoming a good seller on Depop, sustainable menstruation products, the struggle of people who require clothing in larger sizes to find these sizes in the secondhand market (which resulted in retailers with secondhand clothing in larger sizes also commenting to make people aware of their offerings) and made-to-order clothing models. The general consensus from the consumers was that it is impossible to consume fashion in a completely sustainable manner, but it is better to take at least some steps towards consuming fashion more sustainably than none at all and that every sustainable choice counts. One theme that was apparent in the content and tone of the comments on **@slow_fashion_lottie's posts was that she had created a non-**judgemental platform for people to

share and learn about secondhand and sustainable fashion choices, whatever stage of the sustainability journey the followers might be on.

@emsladedmondson's first post to mention Depop focused in detail on the use of secondhand platforms in the advertisement breaks on television shows such as Love Island, compared to the use of fast-fashion brand advertisements in such slots. Followers then took the initiative in an attempt to promote this idea by suggesting the creation of a petition to campaign for Depop or similar secondhand platforms to replace the fast-fashion brands commonly seen in these slots. The second post by @emsladedmondson regarding Depop focused on the topic of rewearing clothing rather than constantly striving to buy new pieces. Interestingly, social media was mentioned by commenters as a forum that has discouraged the habit of rewearing. This is interesting since, while making these comments, they were simultaneously using social media to promote the opposite. The commenters making this point suggested that social media has a negative impact on rewearing due to its promotion of unrealistic expectations, yet by leaving the comments on @emsladedmondson's post about how often they are likely to rewear, they are encouraging a more realistic image.

VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

The influencers each had their own unique visual identities, which increased interest in their feeds. The main form of content for the influencers was outfit photos, which suggests that the main goal of promoting Depop was to get their followers to like the clothes they purchased from that platform. Many of the influencers also made use of TikTok videos or Reels, which allowed them to feature multiple garments in a short period of time. For example, @acteevism made use of a Reel to show followers the process of mending the buttonholes of a jumpsuit she was able to get for a very good price on Depop due to the fault. This video was highly informative and could lead her followers to learn a skill that allowed them to behave more sustainably (McSherry, 2022). In addition, one video @theflippside (2022) posted was a tutorial on how to tie dye garments, which established her Instagram account as a forum for learning a new skill. Reels and TikTok videos require considerable editing and thus showcase the creativity and dedication of the influencers.

Some of the influencers also provided infographics, captions edited onto their photos or written information slides in their content. This positioned their accounts as places to go to learn more about secondhand and sustainable fashion. One such written information slide by @emsladedmondson read, "1 in 3 16-24-year olds will not wear an outfit more than once on social media" (Edmondson, 2022) This highlighted the problems with fast-fashion attitudes and helped to establish her account as focused on sustainable rather than fast fashion. This influencer enjoyed and recognised the environmental benefits of rewearing garments, which encouraged users to follow her over fast-fashion influencers.

NUMBER OF LIKES

In general, the posts that earned the most likes provided tips and advice on how to consume fashion more sustainably. However, an exception to this generalisation was one of @slow_fashion_lottie's posts, which offered advice on sustainable swimwear options and was the least liked of all her posts that mentioned Depop (Hanson-Lowe, 2022). However, this could be because, when it was posted, there were still many travel restrictions in place worldwide due

to the coronavirus pandemic, and people may not have been planning holidays and needing swimwear (Charumilind & Lamb, 2020). **Tutorials also received many likes, with @acteevism's** post showing her followers how she mended frayed buttonholes (McSherry, 2022) and **@theflippside's (2022) post showing the process she used on a tie dye project being their most** liked. These findings suggest that Instagram users want more information on sustainable fashion and value the accounts of the influencers because they allow them to learn more about a topic in which they are interested. This further suggests that it would be beneficial not only for the environment for influencers to post tips on sustainable fashion consumption but also for the influencers, as it would increase their engagement levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The comment analysis revealed very positive comments from the followers of all the influencers studied. In fact, there were no comments that were negative towards either the influencer in question or their outfit choice. This suggests that the promotion of Depop by fashion influencers creates a positive response among consumers and is therefore beneficial to the influencer. The other type of comment that was frequently left by followers could be described as educational. This type of comment consisted of followers asking the influencer or other followers for advice on a certain aspect of secondhand shopping or sustainability or sharing their own experiences of shopping secondhand. These types of comments suggest a sense of community, where followers feel empowered to share their experiences and ask any questions, they may have in the **comments section in order to increase the group's knowledge regarding secondhand fashion and** shopping. This also implies that it is the influencer who facilitates the creation of this community, as the community consists of their followers.

The value-creation process involves both influencers and followers. Past studies have shown that followers can contribute knowledge by interacting with accounts in a form of cocreation. Consequently, the total number of followers could increase if followers endorse the account to others, increasing the value of the influencers, which is a crucial and dominant contemporary social media marketing mechanism (Casaló et al., 2020; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Some of the influencers specifically asked questions in which they encouraged followers to reply in the comments, and some also replied to comments and contributed to the conversations in the comments themselves. When this was the case, the conversations often appeared to be more fruitful. If Depop or similar secondhand platforms were to use social media influencers as part of a marketing campaign, it would be beneficial for them to encourage the influencers to create questions in captions and reply to comments.

The most popular posts in terms of likes were those that had an educational element. This implies that followers are interested in finding out more about Depop and secondhand fashion. It could, therefore, be beneficial for influencers to provide information, as this appears to be what their followers are searching for. The comment analysis also revealed that commenters responded positively when the influencers acknowledged that constantly making sustainable clothing decisions can be difficult and unattainable for everyone and that it is better for everyone to try their best and do what they can rather than attempting perfection in terms of sustainable wardrobe choices. Commenters even expressed this view themselves in the comments. This suggests that influencers need to be careful that their tone does not come across as patronising or

pedantic to their audience, as this may alienate followers, devalue their opinions and ultimately deter them from purchasing items from Depop. This suggests that if Depop were to make use of social media influencers as marketing partners, they need to pick which influencers they work with carefully to ensure that they have tones and mindsets that match those of their audiences. With regard to the visuals of the influencer accounts, no single visual style garnered a more positive response than others. The visual styles ranged from very simplistic, with a neutral colour palette, to very bright and quirky. Yet all the influencers earned positive responses from followers. This suggests that consumers who shop secondhand have multiple styles. In turn, this could imply that if secondhand platforms were to employ influencers in marketing, it would be important for them to research the different style characteristics and trends possessed by large groups of their audience and find influencers to work with who represent those styles and trends, as they would then be relatable to the audience of the secondhand platforms.

Strähle and Klatt (2017) found that consumers enjoyed the social aspect that shopping secondhand provided compared to shopping for fast fashion. The findings of the case study support this, as they suggest that the followers of influencers feel like part of a community due to the discussion of secondhand platforms, such as Depop. The case study also found that Instagram users look to influencers for information and to gain knowledge, suggesting that they do not already possess that knowledge. It was found that the language used to describe the secondhand clothing of the influencers in the comments sections was highly positive. This suggests that **seeing how influencers style their secondhand garments changes consumers' perceptions. In turn,** this implies that it would be useful for Depop and other secondhand platforms to use social media influencers to help consumers realise the potential of secondhand fashion. The suggestions provided in this discussion section answer the research question because suggestions have been provided for use by Depop to make the most of social media influencers as marketing representatives. This research has, therefore, contributed to an understudied niche of the secondhand fashion sector. Therefore, this study not only provides suggestions for how secondhand clothing platforms can best employ social media influencers in marketing to gain consumers but also contributes to research within the wider field of secondhand fashion and provides a basis for further inquiries.

CONCLUSION
Aiming to inform influencer marketing activity, this chapter aimed to uncover the best methods social media influencers could use to increase positive attitudes towards secondhand fashion. To achieve this, the comments of Instagram posts that mentioned Depop were analysed to assess attitudes towards secondhand fashion. The main finding of the research was that, for influencers to promote a positive attitude towards Depop among their followers, they should be informative **yet relatable. The study shows that resellers asking direct questions to resellers' followers in their** captions encourages engagement and provokes deeper thinking about the topic among their audience. Creating posts that are informative yet relatable in terms of sustainability expectations has also been found to garner a positive response from Instagram users. The study also discovered that it is important for secondhand retailers to research which trends are most popular amongst their audiences and choose influencers who express those trends in their personalities and posts. This research focused on improving the purchase stage of the product lifecycle by researching methods of encouraging consumers to purchase secondhand garments. However, it

would be beneficial for further research to focus on how Instagram influencers can encourage consumers to behave more sustainably during the use phase of the product lifecycle. Finally, while this research focused on encouraging consumers to buy from Depop, further research focusing on encouraging consumers to sell on Depop should address the end-of-life stage of the product lifecycle.

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