Fashion bloggers: key actors in the Fashion sector

Patricia SanMiguel

ISEM Fashion Business School, University of Navarra, Spain

patricia.sanmiguel@isem.es

Teresa Sádaba

ISEM Fashion Business School, University of Navarra, Spain

teresa.sadaba@isem.es

Abstract

Purpose - The aim of this study is to analyze fashion bloggers, in order to discover their characteristics and their influence. Thanks to the Internet, they are able to have a global presence, to reach a massive market and they have become a new communication channel for brands. Fashion bloggers are a new phenomenon with a higher perspective to represent the new Influentials.

Design/methodology/approach – First an online questionnaire was designed focused on the three key attributes of an influential, a sample of 253 bloggers was obtained. Secondly, we studied 40 most important Spanish blogs, quantitative study was conducted by looking at one of the most important parameters for the influence that is interaction.

Findings – Findings show de profile of influential fashion blogger: personal characteristics, knowledge criteria and social factors. It also shows that they are very little blogs that really can have a great influence or at least a daily influence.

Research limitation/implication - Future studies may deepen the impact of fashion bloggers at the time of purchase quantifying a company's sales through communication campaigns supported in fashion blogs

Practical implications – The study help fashion companies to indentify influential fashion blogger in order to do successful strategies and communication campaigns in fashion companies.

Originality/value – The study not only confirms previous findings regarding bloggers and the importance for prescription, but it also expands the description of these key actors and how to find them.

Keywords - fashion, Influentials, Internet, bloggers, blogs, social media, communication, brands.

Paper type - Research paper

1. Introduction

The impact of Internet on society has clearly changed the way we communicate, interact and consume. Decentralization, democratization and interaction are key words in this new scenario. Blogs are one of the new tools to make real the web benefits.

In the Fashion communication sector, where meanings and messages are so relevant, these new actors have appeared: fashion bloggers.

Thanks to Internet, they are able to have a global presence, to reach a massive market and they have become a new communication channel for brands. Fashion bloggers are a new phenomenon with a high perspective to represent the new Influentials (Sádaba & SanMiguel, 2014). In the fashion sector, influence is a key topic, as it is directly connected with purchasing decision and consumer behavior.

There is a public controversy about the Fashion bloggers real influence, and the possibility for them to replace traditional communication channels, such as the classic advertisement, or fashion magazines.

The main objective of this study is to analyze fashion bloggers in Spain, in order to discover their characteristics and their influence. To this end, first of all, a questionnaire comprising twenty-one questions was designed, obtaining a sample of 253 bloggers.

Secondly, we focused our work in the most important Spanish blogs, to analyze the different kind of blogs and their impact in Social Media landscape. Qualitative data of these bloggers will complete the study conducted by looking at one of the most important parameters for the influence that is interaction. As a result, we will be able to describe how the Spanish fashion bloggers behave and how their influence is.

2. Literature survey

Bloggers and Influence

The blogging phenomenon has become an important way of communicating and sharing information through its user-generated content in the Web 2.0 scenario. Blogs enable ordinary people to create media, to share it and to receive feedback about it. They are all related to a particular interest (travel, cooking, reading, pets, etc. to mention some of the most popular ones) because "blogosphere provides a conductive platform to build the virtual communities of special interests" (Agarwal et. al., 2008). Therefore, blogging links people with the same subjective interest and creates communities around it.

The connection between influence and subjective interest is especially significant in the context of the blogosphere. Influentials avail of the Internet to find spaces where they can share their interest in issues in which they exert a certain leadership, thus enhancing their influence. As a result, networks of relationships may arise in which subjective interest becomes the focal point for all the members (Jove, 2011).

According to Penttala and Saarela (2012) "Blogging is one of the oldest and most traditional forms of social media, which started to emerge in the late 1990s". The concept and usage of blogs have changed in line with the development of technology.

Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Johnston and Mayer (2006) define web logs or "blogs" as follows: they give an easy method of regularly publishing web pages which are best described as online journals, diaries or news events listings. They may include feedback (trace-back) comments from other sites or contributors to the site. Frequency can be hourly, daily, weekly or less frequently, but daily updates are typical (Penttala and Saarela, 2012).

According to a Nielsen study (2012) the main features of bloggers profiles are as follow:
- Women make up the majority of bloggers, and half of bloggers are aged 18-34
- Bloggers are well-educated: 7 out of 10 bloggers have gone to college, a majority of whom are graduates
- About 1 in 3 bloggers are Moms, and 52% of bloggers are parents with kids under 18 years-old in their household
- Bloggers are active across social media: they're twice as likely to post/comment on consumer-generated video sites like YouTube, and nearly three times more likely to post in Message Boards/Forums within the last month

Little but increasing research has been done about blogs influence in the consumer decision making process, when blogs are related with one topic that affects consumption. Actually, bloggers are in a sense the new version of the traditional WOM (word-of-mouth). "WOM has always influenced consumer behavior but its meaning and importance have increased with the internet" (Lee and Youn, 2009; Park and Lee, 2009).

Penttala and Saarela (2012) show how "things like friends opinions, the economic situation and the age

group of the consumer can have a huge impact on whether the consumer decides to trust the blogger's recommendation and buy the product from an online store". Also, they conclude that "The consumer buying decision differs from the traditional purchasing model when it is influenced by a blog. The consumer may use several blogs as a tool to find information about the product and or online company of their interest. If the buyer is not following a specific blog but is motivated to find one with hopes of finding purchasing suggestions, they first need to search for the most suitable one that corresponds to their interest in terms of style, price point and other similar qualities. After finding the favored blog, the reader will read the blog with hopes of finding inspiration and specific products to buy, after which they follow the links often provided by the blogger to the product, or if no such links exist, do research of their own to find a similar product from an online store".

According with this, blogs are more a source of inspiration than a direct prescription tool. Is this phenomenon applicable to the fashion blogs?

Fashion Bloggers

Today the largest segment of the blogosphere consists on fashion blogs, i.e. blogs that focus on fashion brands, fashion products, street style, and personal style (Halvorsen et al., 2013). Fashion Blogs can usually be located at:: 1) a fashion magazine 2) a fashion platform 3) sites about fashion 4) Communities fashion bloggers 5) individual sites. They could be individual or community blogs (multi-authored blogs) (Akritidis et al., 2009). The bloggers can be: 1) ordinary people interested in fashion 2) fashion professional 3) celebrity 4) brands.

Topics covered by those fashion blogs are: 1) Personal style (outfit of the day, street style, celebrity style, trends); 2) Brands, designers, and retailers (collections, history and other company details); 3) Tips and advice (Experience, sales, product alternatives, favorite shops, product details, buying procedures, shopping events); 4) Purchases (new products, stories, online, desired products); 5) Products received (outfit of the day, purchase' like stories, product details); 6) Competitions (product prizes, gift vouchers).

Fashion blogs location	Types of blogs	Types of blogger	Topics covered by fashion blogs
Fashion magazines	Individual	Ordinary people	Personal style
Fashion platforms	Community of Bloggers	Fashion professional	Brands, designers and retailers
Sites about fashion		Celebrity	Tips and advice
Communities fashion bloggers		Brands	Purchases

Individual sites			Product received
			Competitions

Table: Classification of Fashion blogs and bloggers

Source by the authors

As the 2012 Sociological Study of Fashion and Beauty Blogs undertaken by the Truendy platform in conjunction with the Spanish Association of Fashion Blogs has shown, the proliferation of fashion-related blogs and platforms (networks and communities) is also a notable development. In that study, Manuel Serrano stated that "fashion bloggers have revolutionized the industry"; his view is that such bloggers inspire the clothes choices made by many people, work with publishers and designers, and have begun to play an increasingly important part in catwalk shows, showrooms and other fashion events. According to Serrano, fashion bloggers draw on a position of leadership, influence and power; his view is that more readers may now trust the opinions expressed by bloggers, rather than the established fashion magazines (Study Fashion Blogs Truendy, 2012).

Among the most significant findings of this sociological study are that most fashion and beauty bloggers are women between the ages of 20 and 30; they tend not to be fashion industry professionals; they like to swap tips and inspire one another's styles; their main source of information is fashion magazines (especially online editions); and most interact with other bloggers online (Study Fashion Blogs Truendy, 2012). Fashion brands also make use of new modes of communication for publicity purposes (Vinyals et al., 2011).

Bloggers' influential impact on their readers is, according to Belch and Belch (2011), due to their unique position; they are regarded as fashion idols, while at the same time the readers show care for and personal engagement in the bloggers' everyday lives, which indicates that they are also considered friends.

According to Rogers (2003), mass media channels reach out to more people, but interpersonal channels such as blogs are much more effective in changing attitudes and influencing the decision to adopt or reject a new product. Fashion blogs have the ability to influence purchase decisions because they are likely to be viewed as a credible source by their readers (Haugtvedt, 2005).

In fact, a study of luxury products concluded that 75% of consumers consult a blog before purchasing a luxury item, while 87% ask for other readers' comments about a given brand (Okonkwo, 2010). So, it is not just about inspiration. Maybe, bloggers take another step, and they have an influence on their readers.

Influentials had been studied from public opinion field. Can we apply some of their features to fashion influentials?

Fashion Bloggers as Influentials

According to Lazarsfeld's research, the distinctive features of influentials in this field are an interest in fashion information and a commitment to being 'in fashion'; the profile yielded by that study described such influentials as young women, and also encompassed social status as a determining factor (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1966).

Subsequent research confirmed this hypothesis (King, 1963; Summers, 1970; Schrank and Gilmore, 1973), highlighting the fact that fashion opinion leaders tend to be more interested in clothes, draw on more sources of information and belong to a higher socioeconomic class (MiKyeong et al., 2003). Moreover, the correlation between fashion leadership and the inclination among influentials not only to talk about their subjective appearance, but also to encourage others to take an innovative approach to personal fashion, has also been explored (Schrank and Gilmore, 1973). In other words, opinion leaders regard being fashionable as important and change their wardrobes so as to follow fashions more closely, as well as to influence others to do likewise.

The impact of fashion influentials on consumer behavior has also been analyzed: "Fashion leadership is an important concept in marketing because the fashion leader plays a key role in the diffusion of new fashions" (Goldsmith et al., 1993). Studies of this kind note that fashion leadership is linked to younger age groups: that is, fashion leaders are usually younger than non-leaders. However, no clear evidence has yet been found as regards a link between such leadership and income levels.

According to Summers's paper (Summers, 1970), research into fashion opinion leaders may be classified into one of three basic categories: demographic, social and attitudinal, and topic-based research (a classification system that parallels the aspects analyzed by Lazarsfeld):

- Demographic research: a number of studies have found that marital status, income level and education correlate positively with opinion leadership. Young women seem to predominate in the field of fashion, whereas mothers are more prevalent in relation to shopping.
- Social and attitudinal research: studies have also shown that there is a positive association with leadership, although to a significant extent research into interpersonal communication has tended

to overlook personality and attitudinal factors. "Sociological characteristics provide an effective means of locating concentrations of women's clothing fashion opinion leaders" (Summers, 1970).

- Topic-based research: studies concerning interpersonal influence have concluded that there is a consistent interest in exposure to the media, which correlates positively with opinion leadership.

Summers's research concluded that fashion opinion leaders comprise the target audience: they have high sales potential in fashion marketing and are important agents of change in spreading information about fashion from one season to the next.

Fashion opinion leaders were 28% of the total sample. This group has also a higher potential need for fashion products since they are more likely to engage in social activities requiring a larger, more up-to-date wardrobe.

A research project carried out in France concluded that the standard profile of a fashion influential in that country was a person between the ages of 15 and 35, who was either a student or an office worker (Vernette, 2004).

In a recent study carried out by our research team in Spain (Sádaba & SanMiguel, 2014), fashion influentials are also related with the three traditional types of influential attributes: personal characteristics, knowledge criteria and social factors. Those attributes will be considered in this paper.

3. Objectives and methodology

Currently fashion bloggers have a great influence power, which is determined by the capacity to be able to advise, prescribe, and influence readers and followers. Because of that, they have become key players for the fashion companies, which try to identify those bloggers that can bring their brand closer to the consumers.

As it has been stated, there are many studies that talk about the bloggers and their capacity of leadership in public opinion, their influence on readers, the word of mouth (WOM), and the influence at the time of purchase.

The primary aim of the present study is to analyze the Spanish blogger profiles and identify which ones are really influential in the blogosphere. Opinion leadership is reflected in three types of attributes: personal characteristics, knowledge criteria and social factors; a profile of the characteristics of the influentials fashion bloggers may be described in terms of such features.

The first line of inquiry is comprised of personal characteristics, which include sex, age, the level of educational achievement, marital status and social class.

The second focus relates to knowledge criteria, which comprises the level of knowledge influentials may have in relation to a particular topic or area of interest (in this case, fashion). Such knowledge enables individuals to become experts in the field and, as a result, an influence in the social circle that looks to them for guidance. Therefore, the expertise of influentials in a given field must be socially recognized; that is, the influential's circle of friends must both ask for and follow their advice. Knowledge criteria do not limit the role of the influential to that of compiler of information; in addition to looking for information, influentials also engage in the dynamic activity of sharing it with others.

The final area of interest is shaped by social factors, which provide influentials with the strategic social situation that enables them to influence those around them via their personal relationships. Influentials are individuals whose conversations center on the topic or field in which they have influence, and who tend to have wide social circles made up of many contacts.

Regarding the methodology this, the primary objective of the study, draws on quantitative statistical research based on the so-called "key informer" methodology – that is, the survey respondents and the degree of influence they have over others are assessed (King and Summers, 1970).

For the purposes of this study, a survey of the Spanish population was carried out via the online fashion platform Stylelovely.com.

Stylelovely is an online fashion platform that was set up in June 2011. In less than one year, it was ranked in the top twenty most visited fashion and beauty websites in Spain, according to comScore, along with such renowned media titles as Vogue or Elle. The webpage comprises a number of different sections that are of interest to dedicated followers of fashion: blogs; general information about fashion (catwalk shows, events, trends); beauty; street style; celebrity (analyzing fashion trends among celebrities); etc.

The survey, administered via Stylelovely.com, was live online for two weeks (4–18 June 2012). 253 fashion bloggers responses were collected during this time period.

The survey questionnaire comprised a total of 21 variables drafted in light of the work carried out by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966), Jove (2011) and Vernette (2004).

The second aim of the study is to make a first approach into whether the fashion bloggers that detect the blogosphere as the most important, are consistent with the key features of the profile fashion blogger an their influential.

For this aim we analyzed the 40 Spanish fashion blogs that were the most read in 2013 according to Ebuzzing.

Ebuzzing is a consulting firm about blogs that make a monthly ranking of 100 blogs by specific topic. To perform the ranking of blogs, Ebuzzing is based on numerous parameters, links, network links to blogs from other blogs, followers on social networks. The position of a blog in this ranking depends on the number and value of the links pointing to it. For this study, data was obtained in May 2013.

For the analysis of these fashion bloggers a quantitative study was conducted by looking at one of the most important parameters for the influence that is interaction. For this, first we analyze post average weekly and average receiving post comments; and secondly, we analyze the number of followers of the blogs / bloggers in social networks.

4. Influentials fashion bloggers
Preliminary quantitative account of survey
This section of the paper offers an overview and interpretation of the results obtained in relation to the 21 variables that comprised the survey. The overview is structured in line with the features attributed to the profile of fashion influential. A common framework is required in which the related attributes may be traced so as to distinguish influentials from non-influentials. Hence, the data for the total sample of fashion bloggers may first be used for comparative purposes with the responses of those who regard themselves as influential fashion bloggers.

a) Personal characteristics
In light of the socio-demographic variables listed above 89.3% of the surveys were completed by women. As regards age, the ranges covered by the sample were as follows: under 17.3%; 18–23, 26.1%; 24–29, 36.1%; 30–35, 18.2%; and over 35, 16.6%. As the graph shows, the 24–29 range was the most prevalent and these results concur with other studies (Spanish Blogs Report, 2012).

With regard to marital status, 85.4% of respondents said that they were single. In relation to the level of educational achievement, 43.1% responded that they are university-educated; 30.0% have done some form of postgraduate study; and the rest have high-school diplomas. These figures confirm the findings of other studies, which conclude that individuals with an interest in fashion tend to have higher levels of education.

b) Knowledge criteria

24.5% of those surveyed responded that they had spoken and shared information at fashion-related conferences and roundtable discussions. 21.2% said that they read fashion magazines every day; 27.3% do so four times a week; 24.9% do so about twice a week; and 10.7%, once a month. In fact, given the publication of new weekly fashion magazines, such reading is on the rise.

As regards reading fashion-related blog-posts, 67.2% of survey respondents said they do so daily; the proportion rises to 87% if those who read blogs four times a week are included. This data is really interesting, because it shows how bloggers read more posts from other bloggers than from more conventional sources of information such as the fashion magazines. That's why bloggers tend to influence each other through their readings as Agarwal claimed (Agarwal et al. 2008).

63.2% of the sample responded that they read at least one fashion-related website every day. Therefore, websites and online platforms that aggregate fashion-related contents tend to have a high readership rate and frequency.

In relation to writing a fashion blog and the frequency with which it is updated, only 22.9% update it every day and 32.8% four times a week.
This result is also very interesting, because the activity that a blog has through the new posts and the use of links, is one of the key elements that has always been considered to realize the influence that a blog can have (Agarwal et al., 2008).

In addition to the knowledge criteria discussed, three further variables were also taken into consideration: with respect to work with the media, only 9.5% of those surveyed said that they contribute to a media outlet every day. With regard to website hits, 65.2% of survey respondents said that they visit websites every day, and 24.1% do so about three times a week. The final variable in this category is online fashion video viewing, an especially important communications outlet given the increasing number of subject-

specific channels on the social network YouTube. The data from this survey discloses that 30% of respondents view such videos daily, 38.7% three times a week.

Daily fashion media consumption	Percentage of total	nº
Magazines	32.2	84
Blogs	67.2	170
Webs	63.3	170
Video	30.0	76

Description of the media consumption sample (253 n)

c) Social factors

The social factors are relevant to this study, because this is the way that bloggers have to interact with their readers and also with other bloggers. One of the variables highlight is the importance to belong to a fashion-related platform. It has been shown in other studies (Jove, 2011; Sádaba and SanMiguel, 2014) that the platforms are places where influentials are concentrated, that means that most of them belong to a platform. In the case of blogs we can also stress that even though the blogger may belong to a platform, many blogs are linked to fashion platforms, so the domains of that blog belongs to that platform.

68.4% of survey respondents said that they belong to a fashion-related platform; that is, more than half of the total sample.

As regards the second variable (importance attributed to trends), 23.7% of respondents said that trends are extremely important to them, and 72.7% responded that they regarded them as very important or important.
Changing one's look was another variable to be taken into account: 70.8% said that they had changed their appearance in some way within the previous fortnight.

In response to the question of whether their friends and acquaintances take their fashion advice on board, 49% of those surveyed said that friends and acquaintances almost always follow their tips, and 32% responded that they always do so.

A further variable analyzed in this regard was whether fashion comprised the main topic of conversation. 12.6% of respondents said that fashion is always their main conversation topic, and 47.4% that it was a frequent topic of conversation for them.

The prominence of fashion as a conversation topic is closely linked to the amount of information shared by means of such conversations and the number of people with whom an individual may talk about fashion. 34.4% of survey respondents said that they share all the fashion-related information they have, and 51.4% that they share a lot (though not all) of such information. These results show that the blogger does not only influence in the topics of the conversations in the online environment, they also maintained their leadership in the fashion in an off-line setting among friends, familiars and acquaintances.

In relation to question regarding with how many people fashion was discussed (in the preceding month), 19% of survey respondents said that they had talked about fashion with almost everyone, 65.6% with many people.

As regards interaction via fashion websites and blogs, 48.6% of respondents said that they do so every day, 25.7% do so three times a week. This variable is also important because it shows that readers are not the only ones to post comments, retweet or press like in Facebook, also the bloggers interact with other bloggers and their readers through the same way.

Finally, regarding attendance at fashion events, only 12.6% responded that they always attend such events.

In short, the overall sample suggests certain respondent behaviors and characteristics that reflect the distinctive features of influentials. Nevertheless, further analysis is required to identify the variables within this general overview that may be attributed to fashion influentials as such.

Social factors	Percentage of total	n⁰
Belong to a fashion platform	68.4	173
Trends extremely important	23.7	60
Change look	70.8	179
Acquaintances take fashion advice (always)	32.0	81
Fashion main topic conversation (always)	12.6	32

Description of the social factors sample (253 n)

Features of influentials fashion bloggers

In light of the overview of the general results obtained from the sample, the purpose of this section is to identify those who may be defined as influentials in accordance with the criteria outlined above. To this end, from the sample of 253 fashion bloggers, we selected the cases in which the determinant variables for the influence had obtained the higher score. These variables are focused on social attributes and knowledge features, which are definitively significant in relation to the profile of influentials:

- Knowledge criteria: read magazines, blogs, websites; watch fashion videos; visit fashion website; update your blog frequency.
- Social factors: interact on fashion websites, blogs and platforms; friends take their advice; fashion as a main topic of conversation; how much information do you share; speak with a large number of people about fashion; attribute great significance to trends; change their look (in part) every two weeks.

In this regard, it should be carefully noted that all those respondents who registered scores of 3 or over 3 were excluded from the design of these three categories, which was limited to individuals who gave scores of 1 or 2 on questions measured on a five-point scale and a score of 1 on questions offering mutually exclusive responses (See appendices).

From this selection, the result was that only 42 fashion bloggers fulfilled these features. Therefore, from a sample of 253 fashion bloggers only 16% can be classified as influentials fashion bloggers. Below we would like to highlight some of the most relevant data from this sample of influentials fashion bloggers.

As noted above, media consumption is one of the most important indicators of influential status. Without consuming media contents, such individuals could not become experts in their chosen field of interest and, as a consequence, fashion would not be their main topic of conversation, they would not speak to a lot of people about it, they would not share what information they may have, and their friends would not usually take their advice.

As regards media consumption, the following results were obtained for the total sample based on the

responses of those who said that they read fashion-related material every day: read fashion magazines 59.5%; 81% blogs; 76.2% websites. So we can state that for a fashion blogger influential, reading fashion blogs is the most important reading.

Daily fashion media consumption	Percentage of total	nº
Magazines	59.5	25
Blogs	81.0	34
Webs	76.2	32
Video	52.4	22

Description of the media consumption influential fashion bloggers sample (n=42)

As regards how frequently they talk about fashion, 42.9% of respondents stated that they speak about it with almost everyone. In relation to the amount of information they share with others, 42.9% responded that they share all they have. Another of the variables taken into consideration here concerned whether or not fashion was the main topic of conversation: 31% said that fashion was always their main conversation topic.

In relation to question importance attributed to trends, 52.4% of respondents said that trends are extremely important to them, and 47.6% responded that they regarded them as very important or important. As regards how frequently they had changed their appearance in some way within the previous fortnight 100% answered yes.

As noted above, one of the key variables explored was if friends and acquaintances generally took their fashion tips and advice. 59.5% stated that their advice was taken always and 40.5% almost always.

Last two key variables were analyzed: interaction and blog update frequency. About interacting on websites and blogs 73.8% of respondents stated that they interact every day. As regards update blog frequency, 52.4% update it every day and 47.6% four times a week.

Social factors	Percentage of total	nº
Belong to a fashion platform	78.6	33
Trends extremely important	52.4	22
Acquaintances take fashion advice (always)	59.5	25
Fashion main topic conversation (always)	31.1	13
Daily interaction websites and blogs	73.8	31

Description of the social factors influential fashion bloggers sample (n=42)

Other variables that were not crucial for the selection of the influentials fashion bloggers but provide interest information are: platform, fashion events, collaboration with the media and sharing information in round tables.

Concerning fashion platforms 78.6% said that they belong to a fashion-related platform. So this score confirms that the majority of influentials fashion bloggers are associated with platforms to learn, share and interact about fashion.

Regarding the fashion events 54.8% affirm that they participate in events at least once a week. Regarding the collaboration with the media 21.4% said that they did so every day and 33.3% every 15 days. Finally 42.9% reported to have participated in a round table. In the light of this data, we can affirm that the fashion influentials bloggers have a high prestige, not only through the blog and its readers, but also through the media, which with they collaborate frequently, and the institutions that organize conferences where they are invited to discuss topics related to fashion.

Once the fashion influential bloggers were selected we analyzed all results in relation to the criteria knowledge and social factors, and we conducted a profile based on personal characteristics:

97.6% were women, between 24 and 29 years old (24–29, 45.1%; 18–23, 23.8%; and over 35, 19%). 50% university-educated; 33.3% have high-school diplomas. Finally 81% of the respondents were single.

Profile influential fashion blogger	Percentage of total	nº

Sex (women)	97.6	41
Age (24-29)	45.2	19
Educational level (university)	50.0	21
Marital status (single)	81.0	34

Description of personal characteristics influential fashion bloggers sample (n=42)

5. Analysis of 40 fashion blogs

After presenting the results of the survey to 253 bloggers, and having obtained the profile of a influentials fashion bloggers, in this section we will analyze a sample of the 40 top blogs in Spain during May 2013.

At the time to determine the influence of a fashion blogger through his blog, it has always been paid special attention to the number of links and the number of post. This said, the problem is that the number of post that a blog has or their activity through links is not a reliable indicator that behind this blog there is an influentials blogger (Agarwal et al., 2008). Because of that, we can conclude that having an active blog is necessary to influence, but not always behind an active blog you could find an influential fashion blogger.

As Agarwal et al. explained, based on the book The Influentials (2003), a influential is recognized by fellow citizens, can generate follow-up activities, has novel perspectives or ideas, and is often eloquent, i.e. Recognition, Activity generation, Novelty or Eloquence (Agarwal et al., 2008) are characteristics that make a Blogger / Blog influential.

For the analysis of 40 Spanish blogs, we decided to go deeper in the recognition and generation activity. Those are two key variables that stand on an Influential fashion blogger:

Activity generation

As we mentioned previously, the activity is mainly shown through the number of inlinks and outlinks that a blog has (Akritidis et al., 2009). In this study we are not only going to analyze this variable through those indicators, because the rank used to select the 40 blogs (Ebuzzing) is based on them. To study the activity generated we will look at the average of weekly posts. This content is largely developed through the consumption of media (magazines, blogs, websites, videos), as we have seen in the section of the previous survey.

From the sample of 40 blogs, only 16 of them did more than 10 post per week, which is 40% of the sample. The mean of post (entries of contained in the blog) is 11.9 per blog. Furthermore we noted that the most repeated publication frequency is 7 post per week; followed by a post frequency of 8 and 15 per week.

It is important to note that when we analyze the blogs with more entries, those with the higher number of them are those with more than one blogger (editor). For example Fashionisima, which has the first position in the ranking, has a team of at least seven people.

The blogs that are shown in the blogosphere at the top, usually offer a large number of post per week. That is because the rankings often take as a reference the amount of content the blog produces and inside that content, the number of links. One of the problems that we found in the analysis is that most of the blogs that are in the first positions do not have a single editor. In addition they are at the top mainly because they perform many posts. Those factors make it difficult to identify who is a influential fashion blogger in the blog because the content is produced by the influence of many people and the power of that influence is diluted among many bloggers.

The number of followers on social networks, in our study on Facebook (through the number of "likes") and Twitter (number of followers) also shows the activity that a blogger produces. In relation with the social networks we want to highlight that more and more often the bloggers may use this channel to advertise their likes and dislikes and influence the way in which certain brands or products are presented and experienced (Penttala and Saarela, 2012). As explained by Evans (2010) in "The buying cycle. Consumer Influenced by Social media", it is through the social media that bloggers share their posts, comment news, and feature things relating to their life, capturing in this way the attention of his followers and raising the interest of the products and topics they talk about.

In the case of Facebook, we found 11 blogs that exceed the number of more than 10,000 likes. Some of them reaching the number of 20,000 and one of them reached 120,000 likes.

From the 11 blogs with more than 10,000 likes, just three of them were receiving more comments per post, and only two of them are among those who published more than 10 entries per week. Therefore we can state that there is not a clear relationship between the amount of likes in a blog and the number of entries and comments. A blog can have many fans on Facebook and very little interaction through their blog (with their followers).

Regarding Twitter, the social network, we found that 13 blogs had over 10,000 followers. Six of them exceeded the number of 20,000 followers and one of them almost reaches 70,000 followers. In the variable twitter followers, we found that seven of the ten blogs with most comments were over 10,000 followers and 4 of the blogs with more than 10 post per week had also more than 10,000 followers. Summing up in the variable followers on twitter we find more relation than in the variable followers on Facebook with respect to the number of weekly post and number of comments.

It is observed than in the social networks there are blogs that stand out from others, like iMujer on Facebook or Street Style on twitter, and these blogs are below the average on the other variables. This may be because the blogger focuses on the interaction in that social network.

Activity generation: general data	Percentage of total
More than 10 post per week	40
Blogs with more than 10,000 Facebook page "likes"	27.5
Blogs with more than 10,000 Twitter followers	32.5

Sample of the 40 top Spanish bloggers

Recognition

One of the biggest indicators of an active and influential Blogger is the number of comments per post. Through the comments, the readers interact with Bloggers and establish closer relationships. The fact that a blog has a good recognition means that readers trust and believe in what the bloggers write. "Trust and credibility have been shown to be important factors in blogger´s influence on their readers" (Halvorsen et al., 2013). As a result, many consumers say that they buy something because it was recommended in a blog, or that they make decisions about the purchase of a product based on their trusted blogs (Doyle et al., 2012). Therefore this variable is particularly important, as we explained in the previous section. One of the survey questions to identify the Influentials was if "their friends or acquaintances followed his advice." Through the comments from the readers they make contact with bloggers, ask them for their opinion, thank them for the information, and they largely show how they follow on their advice.

From the sample of 40 blogs, seven of them do not receive any comments on their inputs and 4 of them do not show their comments. The mean of comments per post in the sample, excluding those who do not show their comments, was 17.6.

The more repeated frequency of comments is between 1-5 comments per entry, 11 blogs were found in this range. Among 5-15 comments per post we found in 6 blogs and a further 6 blogs had between 15 and 35 comments per post. We want to note that 5 of the analyzed blogs had between 35 and 60 comments by input; and two blogs exceeded the average of 100 comments per entry.

Given the importance of this variable we wanted to focus on those blogs that had more than 20 comments per entry. We found 10 blogs with this characteristic. When we analyzed them, we realized that these 20 blogs were written by a single blogger, who could be identified at all times and that took a great role in the blog. We also observed that from these 10 blogs, 8 of them published their entries in English and in Spanish, which facilitates a wider audience.

When we analyze the variable comment per post attached to the variable number of weekly posts, we show that the 10 blogs with most comments made no more than 10 inputs per week, being the frequency of seven post per week the more repeated number.

Being the entries a key variable that shows the ability to influence, the credibility and the trust that the readers have on that blogger, based on our data we can say that the blogs that produce more content are not those that have more interaction with their readers and therefore those bloggers probably have less influence on their readers.

Supplementary data

Other features that we would like to highlight are: from the 40 blogs most of them were created between 2007 and 2010, the former being the year in which more blogs were created. So the bloggers who are in the top positions of the ranking have existed for between 3 and 6 years.

From the total sample, only 8 blogs (20%) write their entries also in English. As we had seen earlier the blogs that received most comments were mostly those who were written in both languages.

Finally we note that in the sample of 40 blogs, 92% (all except 3 blogs) had advertising on their page. This data shows how brands know how the blogs can bring them closer to their customers and help them at the time of sale. In this line we could also say that brands do not generally make a good selection of blogs for making their campaigns, because they do not identify who the Influentials fashion bloggers are.

6. Conclusions

Once we analyzed the data from the 253 bloggers survey and the 40 blogs from the Ebuzzing ranking, the following conclusions are highlighted:

- From a sample of 253 only 42 bloggers, 16%, are influentials fashion bloggers. Thus determine that a careful selection of bloggers by the brands is necessary in order to make a success marketing campaign, to reach changes in the consumer and not just brand awareness.

- Bloggers read more other blogs than fashion magazines. Internet is their main source of information through web pages and especially fashion blogs. 87% read fashion blogs at least 4 times a week compared to 48.5% reading magazines. That means fashion bloggers feed off each other, using as a source of information more blogs than conventional sources such as magazines or books.

- According to our data, activity in blogosphere is not enough to be an influential, and more content doesn't mean more interaction. As we noted a blogger that generates a lot of activity doesn't mean that it is an influential blogger. Although there are influential blogs that publish more than 10 fashion-related post a week, the average of an influential blog are 7 per week. The number of blog comments is really a key variable. We can conclude that there are very few blogs that get a large number of comments per fashion-related post. These blogs are written by a single blogger and the vast majority in English and Spanish, and these blogs are at least three years old.

- Bloggers are very active in the online environment, 74% said they interact in fashion webs at least 3 times a week. Bloggers do not just get their readers to interact with them in addition they are the ones that interact, sharing content, commenting news and other fashion-related posts. They not only influence the online environment, they become opinion leaders and prescribers also offline, especially through conversation about fashion.

- Presently fashion brands are aware that bloggers are the key to access to its consumers. There are many brands that have already made marketing campaigns with bloggers. A fact that shows the use of bloggers as a marketing tool is that 92% of the most important bloggers have advertising on their blogs.

- The profile obtained of influentials fashion bloggers is: female, between 24 and 39 years old, single and university-educated.

Our first approach to the blogger analysis tries to explain some of the key questions about bloggers relationships. But many questions arise when talking specifically about bloggers relationships with brands: Are the brands influencing bloggers or is it the bloggers who are influencing brands? What relationship exists between brands and blogger collaboration, influence or inspiration? Ultimately there

are many relationships established between blogger-brand-consumer, some interested and planned, and other disinterested and spontaneous.

There is a real influence between these three actors-blogger-brand consumers. Blogger are those that produce a more daily and close influence on consumers at the time of purchasing decisions, by creating a trust relationship with their posts, comments and social networks. But as we have discussed throughout the paper, this influence does not exist in all bloggers, only for those we have defined as influentials fashion bloggers.

7. Implications for practice and opportunities for future research

This study aims to help fashion brands, communication agencies, researchers and professionals in the field of fashion, to analyze the characteristics of an influential blogger and know how to detect these blogs in the blogosphere, where there is now a widespread growth of blogs. Thanks to the identification of influential bloggers/blogs may improve strategies and communication campaigns in fashion companies.

Future studies may deepen the impact of fashion bloggers at the time of purchase, quantifying a company's sales through communication campaigns supported in fashion blogs. It will also be interesting to compare the profiles of influential fashion bloggers from different countries because today we live in a globalized world.

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Appendices:

1. Do you belong to a fashion-related network, platform or community (Stylelovely.com, Trendation, etc.)?
Yes / No

2. Have you exchanged information about fashion at a conference or roundtable discussion?
Yes / No

3. How important do you think trends are?
extremely important / very important / important / not very important / unimportant

4. Have you changed your look to seem as fashionable as possible in the last fortnight?
Yes / No

5. Do your friends and acquaintances take your fashion advice?
always / almost always / sometimes / almost never / never

6. How often do you read fashion magazines?
every day / 4 times a week / twice a week / once a week / once a month

7. How often do you read fashion blogs?
every day / 4 times a week / twice a week / once a week / once a month

8. How often do you read fashion websites?
every day / 4 times a week / twice a week / once a week / once a month

9. How often do you update your fashion blog?
every day / 4 times a week / twice a week / once a week / once a fortnight /

10. Are you involved in the media (websites, magazines, radio, etc.) in relation to fashion?
every day / once a fortnight / once a month / once a year / never

11. Is fashion a main topic of conversation with your friends and acquaintances?
always / often / sometimes / infrequently / never

12. Do you usually go to fashion-related events?
always / once a week / once a month / once a year / never

13. How often do you visit fashion websites?
every day / 3 times a week / once a week / once a fortnight / once a month

14. How often do you watch online fashion videos?
every day / 3 times a week / once a week / once a fortnight / once a month

15. How often do you interact on your favorite websites/blogs?
every day / 3 times a week / once a week / once a fortnight / once a month

16. When you speak about fashion with your friends and acquaintances, how much information do you share?
everything I have / a lot / some / a little / none

17. In the last month, with how many people have you spoken about fashion? (CPH)
almost everyone / many / some / few / none

18. Age
under 17 / 18-23 / 24-29 / over 35

19. Sex
male / female

20. Marital status
single / married

21. Education
second level (high school) / third level (university) / postgraduate (Master's Degree)