The Impact of Social Media Influencers in Sustainable Fashion on Millennial Consumers

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INTRODUCTION

Social media are all Internet-based technological applications allowing for the creation and exchange of user-generated content, and enabling interaction and collaboration between users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media rapidly evolved from what we now view as simple social networks into hundreds of platforms, enabling users to do things such as microblog, post photos and videos, and share and view social news. Social media gives the public access to virtual interactions, networking, and interpersonal relations (Minton, Lee, Orth, and Kahle, 2012). As of March 2018, the number of social media users worldwide totaled 2.62 billion, and is predicted to reach 3.02 billion users by 2021 (“Number of Social Media Users...”, 2019). With such a vast reach, many businesses and organizations have attempted to capitalize on the opportunity to interact with consumers where they spend a lot of their time: online (Evans and McKee, 2010). Companies and brands are now using social media as a means to promote themselves and their products, as well as communicate with consumers.

Social media marketing is defined as using social media platforms as a means to draw attention toward a specific brand or product (Lamminen, 2018). Brands utilize social media to engage with their consumers and to, among other things, create or increase customer awareness, build customer knowledge, shape customer perception, and, ultimately, motivate customers to purchase their products (Alalwan, 2018). Just as social media gives consumers more knowledge about a company or brand, it also allows for brands to gain a better understanding of the customer. It is easier for marketers to identify prospective customers because users tend to separate themselves into groups based on different attributes, including demographics, interests, lifestyle, etc. (Kahle and Valette-Florence, 2012). Marketers can then use these characteristics to
tailor unique marketing strategies specifically for each segment. With social media marketing, messages are spread via electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Electronic Word of Mouth is defined as “informal communication via the Internet that is addressed to consumers and related to the use or characteristics of goods or services or the sellers thereof (Huete-Alcocer, 2017).” Using social media for eWOM advertising and marketing communications is currently regarded as one of the most effective forms of informal media influencing consumers, businesses, and the general population as a whole (Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

The hottest trend in social media marketing is currently influencer marketing. Simply put, influencer marketing is a relationship between a brand and an influencer in which it is the influencer’s job to promote things such as the brand’s products or services through the influencers’ own respective social media accounts (Joel Matthew, 2018). An influencer is a key individual with the capability of influencing consumer perception and behavior, thus giving them the ability to assist a company in its marketing efforts (Dada, 2017). Influencers operate their accounts independently, creating original and unique content that includes publicity for a brand’s product, service, or the brand name itself (Matthew, 2018). Influencers typically have a large network of followers belonging to a certain niche for whom they set the standards for what is popular or fashionable (Veirman, n.d.). These individuals are usually credible, having some sort of knowledge or background related to what they are promoting (Matthew, 2018). The idea is that consumers will have a more positive response to a message presented by someone they view as trustworthy and personable, rather than the companies themselves (Woods, 2016). Companies using this marketing method have already observed thriving yields (Woods, 2016). It has been determined that influencer marketing can result in a return on investment 11 times greater than
all other advertising methods (Kirkpatrick, 2016). As influencer marketing continues to achieve favorable outcomes, it is predicted to continue to progress further and become even more prominent (Woods, 2016).

First launched in 2010 as a mobile application, Instagram is a first-rate photo-sharing and editing application that has become the preferred method of sharing information and interacting with other social media users (Ting, Ming, Cyril de Run, and Choo, 2015; Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati, 2014). Allowing users to display pictures along with captions rather than sharing words alone, Instagram enables communication and engagement between friends and broader groups of users with like interests (Bakhshi et al., 2013). Instagram has 1 billion active monthly followers and is currently the fastest growing social network (Southern, 2018; Zote, 2019).

Millennials are the biggest generational group in the U.S. today, comprised of more than 83.1 million people with an estimated spending power of $2.45 trillion (US Census report, 2015; Donnelly and Scaff, 2013). Given the enormous size of the millennial population and their immense spending power, it is of interest to understand factors shaping millennial consumer attitudes towards the products they use and purchase. Brands today should be aware that millennials are more affected by the opinions of other people in regard to products they are buying rather than traditional advertisements (Ostensen & Jamshidi, n.d.). Out of the current adult generations, millennials are most active on social media and make up a significant part of e-commerce clientele (Ostensen & Jamshidi, n.d.). Therefore, utilizing influencer marketing on social media appears to be the optimal advertising choice for reaching this consumer segment.

Presently, environmental and social issues are important determinants affecting consumer behavior and have led to changes in their purchasing decisions (Hosseinpour, Nezakati, Sidin,
and Yee). These concerns have led to the concept of sustainability. Sustainability, analogous with the terms “green” and “environmentally friendly,” is defined by the United Nations as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987; Horvath, Stewart and Shea, 2013).” Most definitions of the term involve the long-term orientation and maintenance of the world’s resources, (Beattie, 2017; Johansson, Winroth, and Julianose, 2017).

There are several different interpretations of sustainability, and the one this research study focuses on is sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion is a production paradigm that fosters long-term relationships, builds local production, and focuses on transparency (Ertekin and Atik, 2014; Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates, 2016). Once consumers were exposed to the negative effects that apparel factories have on our ecosystem, they began prioritizing sustainability practices (Henninger, Alevizou, and Oates, 2016). Sustainable fashion values quality over quantity, promotes ethical conduct, and reduces fashion production (Fletcher, 2010; Ertekin and Atik, 2014). For this research, the term “fashion” refers to popular styles as well as behaviors. Millennial consumers care about sustainable fashion and use social media to discuss sustainable fashion related topics.

Looking specifically at Instagram, this study aims to explore the effects sustainable living influencers have on consumers belonging to the millennial generation, understand how these influencers engage social media users, and determine whether or not there is a consequential response. This study offers a new perspective on the influence of digital and social media marketing on consumers and contributes to the current knowledge and education on social media influencing and marketing to millennials.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The utilization of contemporary social media as a means to influence consumer behavior is a modern trend that is still growing and anticipated to dominate for years to come (Mangold, 2009). The main consumer group that companies are attempting to reach through these digital channels are millennials. This age group, born between the years 1980-2000, has been referred to as the “Digital Generation” because of exposure to digital technology during the initial stages of their development, making them particularly susceptible to being targeted through digital and social media platforms (Toussaint, 2017). Accompanying the digital and social media trends of millennials is the tendency of consumers belonging to this generation to have notable concern regarding sustainability. This concern has been correlated with the digital tendencies of the era, and social media outlets are currently being used as methods of communication, employing key influencers and major themes relating to sustainability to impact consumers. Due to the relevance of social media marketing and sustainable business practices today, it is important to understand the effects sustainable fashion influencers have on millennials’ buying behavior. Guided by the concept of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), topics related to the stated research questions were examined.

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is a framework that evaluates a company’s performance not only in terms of monetary profit, but considers ecological and social measures as well (Hall and Slaper, 2011). Lead consultant at Sustainable Business Strategies, Andrew Savitz, gave a more theoretical definition of the term, stating that the TBL “captures the essence of sustainability by measuring the impact of an organization’s activities on the world (Hall and Slaper, 2011).” The TBL can also be characterized by using the 3 P’s: people, planet, and profit
(Slaper and Hall, 2011). This framework is used to interpret how a customer perceives a brand’s sustainability (Park and Kim, 2016). TBL is very important to sustainable fashion because consumers are becoming more conscious of the negative effects supply chains can have on the environment (Shen, 2014). As consumers are demanding more sustainable products, it is crucial for businesses to adopt this framework in order to appeal to millennials. Because of the significant impact the TBL framework is having on the appearance of a brand to millennial consumers, it is in a brand’s interest to employ the sustainable aspects of TBL, as well as use it as a measure of performance.

Previous research has been undertaken with respect to consumers’ use of the TBL framework to evaluate a company or brand. A study completed by Hyejune Park and Youn-Kyung Kim validated the use of TBL as a structure for understanding consumers’ perceptions of fashion brand sustainability. Their findings affirmed the idea that consumers perceive economic, environmental, and social sustainability, indicating the importance of satisfying the 3 P’s to reach a high level of sustainability (Park and Kim 2016, and Molthan-Hill 2014). Previous research done on businesses using the sustainability framework supports the notion that incorporating TBL into the business model increases the appeal of a company to its customers (Brien, Golicz, Mishra, Mishra, 2015). Another study done on the TBL component in the management of fashion companies also confirms a strong correlation between a business’s TBL and its company evaluation and brand image (Na, Lee, and Na, 2014).

Social psychologists concur that the majority of human behavior is goal directed, indicating that there is some sort of plan in place (Ajzen, 1985). TPB is the idea that we can predict an individual’s intention to perform certain behaviors based on their attitudes toward the
behavior, their perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991). TPB considers individual motivational factors to determine the probability of carrying out specific behaviors (Glanz, Rimer, and Viswanathan, 2015). TPB is a function that illustrates how persuasive communication influences consumer attitude, affecting their behavioral intentions, and thus resulting in behavior (Rodgers and Thorson, 2017).

A study titled “Predicting Green Product Consumption Using Theory of Planned Behavior and Reasoned Action” by Justin Paul, Ashwin Modi, and Jayesh Patel, examined TPB in connection with ecological purchasing decisions. Their findings validated a relationship between environmental concern and consumers’ decision to purchase sustainable products (Modi, Patel, and Paul, 2016). Using a Likert scale and factor analysis, their findings presented evidence that a positive attitude and sense of behavioral control regarding sustainability accurately predict a consumer’s intention to make sustainable purchasing decisions (Modi, Patel, and Paul, 2016). Previous researchers have also focused on TPB in connection with sustainability consumer purchase behavior. A study by Rambalak Yadav and Govind Pathak validated TPB’s direct relation to consumers’ sustainable purchasing behavior by using TPB as well, using the convenience sampling approach and coding 620 survey responses.

In this study I am using TPB and exploring the effects influencers have on their followers’ attitudes toward sustainable consumption, their perceived behavioral control of the situation, and subjective norms. I will be examining whether or not sustainable Instagram influencers have an impact on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying intentions toward sustainable fashion. Aligning with the framework of TPB, this study will be consider if the persuasive communication of sustainable living influencers results in purchasing outcomes.
A study performed by Xin Jean Lim, Aifa Rozaini bt Mohd Radzol, Jun-Hwa Cheah, and Mun Wai Wong examined the impact social media influencers have on consumer purchasing intentions supports the claim that social media influencers affect consumer attitude. Using the social learning theory, these researchers explained that consumers are affected by source credibility, source attractiveness, product match-up, and meaning transfer.

A previous study on fashion followers on Instagram and their influence on purchase intention by Amanda Nilsson Angelstedt & Johan Friberg Spetz showed a positive correlation between fashion followers on Instagram and their purchasing intentions. Using descriptive research, they found social media to be effective in encouraging participation in social movements (Angelstedt and Spetz, 2017).

Environmental and social issues have become important determinants affecting consumer behavior and have led to changes in their purchasing decisions (Hosseinpour, Nezakati, Sidin, and Yee, 2015). Notably, it is becoming more critical in the global fashion industry to incorporate sustainable, ethical production practices as consumers are demanding more sustainable products. Previous studies have explored the theory of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) in relation to a consumers’ impression of a brand, and looked at using TBL in business practices, as well as using it to measure the company’s performance. Research has also been done on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and its role in social media influencing and marketing to millennials. Past researchers have recognized the necessity of social media for marketing to millennial consumers. However, there is little literature addressing social media and its potential impact on consumers’ sustainable buying behavior, specifically through sustainable living influencers as a means of communication. The proposed research question for this study is
whether or not sustainable Instagram influencers have an impact on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying intentions toward sustainable fashion. To answer this question, it is critical to understand the digital tendencies of the era and major themes relating to sustainability that influence consumers. It is important to gain a greater understanding of how and to what extent consumer behavior is influenced by social media influencers. Building on the above discussion, I will collect and analyze data to explore whether or not sustainable fashion influencers impact millennial followers’ attitudes and buying behaviors towards sustainable products.

Understanding what affects consumer sustainable purchasing decisions/intentions can help fashion businesses better understand marketing to millennial consumers and offer insights on sustainable fashion consumption.

METHOD

Due to the limited research available on sustainable influencers’ impact on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying behavior towards sustainable fashion, additional investigation into the topic was conducted. This study used the qualitative method of in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to analyze the effects sustainable influencers have on millennial consumers. Given the significance of Instagram in today’s fashion industry, we chose Instagram as the major social media platform for this study.

First launched in 2010 as a mobile application, Instagram is a first-rate photo-sharing and editing application that has become the preferred method of sharing information and interacting with other social media users (Ting, Ming, Cyril de Run, Choo, 2015; Hu, Manikonda, and Kambhampati, 2014). Allowing users to display pictures along with captions rather than sharing words alone, Instagram enables communication and engagement between friends and broader
groups of users with like interests (Bakhshi et al., 2013). Instagram has 1 billion active monthly followers and is currently the fastest growing social network (Southern, 2018; Zote, 2019).

This study uses the qualitative method of in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to analyze the effects sustainable influencers have on millennial consumers. This research technique was selected because it provides beneficial insights, experiences, and perspectives regarding how influencers engage social media users (Creswell, 2012). I used purposive sampling to answer my research question, interviewing 6 prominent sustainable Instagram influencers focusing on sustainability and targeting a millennial audience, as well as 6 Instagram users belonging to the millennial generation who follow and engage with sustainable influencers. The collected interview data were then analyzed to see whether there appeared to be a consequential response to sustainable influencers in terms of purchasing behavior.

Once approval from the Institutional Review Board was received, 12 interviews were conducted - either in-person, via phone call, or through written correspondence. Due to difficulties in recruiting participants willing to participate in an in-person or telephone interview, 4 interviews were conducted through email correspondence. Measures were taken to ensure these interviews were of value, including asking follow up questions and encouraging participants to expand upon any answer or question they deemed important. All participants received a modest gift card for their participation. The interviews took place from December 2018 through January 2019 and were conducted directly between each participant and the author. The interviews typically lasted between 10 to 30 minutes, depending on the amount of useful response data being collected. Once an interviewee’s ideas became repetitive, the interview process was ended. The data obtained from the interviews were then transcribed and coded for recurring themes.
using the Guidelines for Constant Comparison Techniques (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Over 50 pages of primary source data were compared and analyzed in an effort to identify patterns and connections.

RESULTS

Guided by the theory of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), I thoroughly analyzed the data obtained from the interviews conducted and found that the data supported the proposed research question of whether or not sustainable Instagram influencers have an impact on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying intentions toward sustainable fashion. Interpretation of this data presents valuable information on the effects sustainable living influencers have on millennial consumers, provides insight on how these influencers engage social media users, and reveals that there is indeed a consequential response. As I analyzed the data, I explored 2 major themes: how both influencers and followers perceive sustainability, and factors that influence consumers’ sustainability mindset and buying intentions.

Perceptions of Sustainability

The 6 Instagram influencers I interviewed had similar perceptions on the topic of sustainability, the term sustainability in the sense of these interviews referring to the negative environmental impacts generated by the fashion industry. Each influencer indicated a passion for sustainability and the inspiration to make positive changes towards the cause. Illustrating this, P2 stated that, “After learning the fashion industry is the 3rd most polluting industry, I knew then I needed to make it a mission of mine to help change that.” Each influencer perceived sustainability as a crucial issue affecting us all. The influencers had the commonality of using their accounts to educate consumers on sustainability issues and show them ways in which they
can make changes in their lives to live a more sustainable lifestyle. For example, P4 stated that she “wanted to show people that you could be self-expressive and fashionable and then also be sustainable.” P4 also wanted to “show people that you can still be on a budget making purchasing decisions.” P3 stated they started their account “to inspire people to adopt a more eco-conscious lifestyle.” Aligning with these responses, P1 was compelled to help after noticing that there “wasn’t really anyone, at least in the Midwest that I know of, that was trying to talk about sustainability on the consumer side and the lifestyle side of business,” similar to P5 who stated she saw “so little inspiring people to be more sustainable,” and “wanted to change that and start that type of positivity in the social world.” P3 highlighted environmental friendliness in her interview but also included the social aspect of sustainability as something that provoked her to start her sustainable Instagram account following Rana Plaza factory collapse. With similar reasoning to P1 and P5, P3 noticed at the time that, “There were a lot of sustainable lifestyle websites and a lot of thrift shopping websites. But I didn't see that alchemy of sustainability and fashion together,” and thus began her account to write about and make people more aware of the appalling working conditions many garment workers face.

The 6 followers interviewed all approached sustainability in the environmental aspect as well. For example, P9 stated, “I care about sustainability because I care about the world I live in,” and P11 saying “When people have the option to contribute to a better carbon footprint, they should.” P8 said that she incorporates sustainability behaviors into her lifestyle, “because I want future generations of the world's to be able to enjoy the environment. I don't want it to get worse.” The followers interviewed all perceived the topic of sustainability issues as a serious, perpetual problem and something that their actions could help. P12 stated “my actions have
long-term consequences and I want to ensure that generations to come are able to enjoy the world as I am able to, as well as ensuring the longevity of our natural resources.”

Out of the 6 followers of sustainable influencer accounts interviewed, 5 agreed with the statement that the Instagram posts they view have affected their level of concern regarding sustainability. P9 said, “The more I see posts about sustainability the more it stays top-of-mind, and the more conscientious I am to make sustainable buying decisions and lifestyle choices.” P12 claimed that, “a good portion of what I consider to be a sustainable part of my life has been from simply viewing content posted by these influencers.” P11 agreed that these influencers have an effect on her views of sustainability and she really enjoys “seeing how these influencers style ethical fashion pieces, the various brands they have discovered, and various methods they utilize sustainable practices in their lives besides in shopping responsibly.” This type of influencer content like this causes her to implement sustainable fashion practices into her own life.

The respondent who disagreed with the statement reported that, “sustainable living influencers do not necessarily affect my level of concern, but rather just confirm it.” With the exception of this this statement, the responses I gathered validated the theory that sustainable living influencers are affecting their social media followers’ attitudes and opinions toward sustainable fashion.

**Influencer Engagement**

From the interviews conducted I was able to examine various ways in which sustainable living Instagram influencers are successful in engaging with their followers. Each influencer provided feedback on ways in which they achieve high engagement and deem successful for shaping mindsets? Influencers collectively highlighted the importance of reciprocating
engagement with followers. For example, P5 stated she does this through commenting, “I comment on everything, I comment back on my pictures, and I comment on other people’s pictures.” Similarly, P2 said “I try to like and comment my followers post as well, to show support for their content. Whenever I get comments I reply as much as possible to create dialogue and interest.” Coming off as personable also appears essential to achieving high, genuine engagement. P5 accomplishes this by, “talking to people on Instagram as though they are a big community of friends.” P3 notes that this can also be achieved through Instagram stories, stating, “I think there is something about being on video that is actually personable and you know, I try to keep a conversational distance between me and my followers. I've seen this as a great way to engage my audience.” P1 also provided helpful insight, stating, “I try to ask questions and to get to know my audience, a question definitely brings it (engagement) to the forefront.” She also tries to “pick topics that are very relatable and relevant to my followers.” P6 noted that using hashtags to increase visibility and running giveaways for followers to participate in are additional ways to achieve high engagement.

The influencers also expanded upon different qualities that they have found to and believe contribute to an influencer’s success, and thus leading to changing the mindsets and buying intentions of their followers. P2 stated, “I would recommend to be unique and authentic as much as possible. People want to be relatable to others and see personalization.” P3 shared that she believes good content is “high quality and genuine,” and added that “consistency is really powerful.” P5 pointed out the importance of honesty in terms of staying true to yourself. P4 said consistency and frequency. P6 highlighted the importance of finding a certain “niche” in order to appeal to your followers.
Factors Influencing Sustainable Mindset and Buying Intentions of Millennial Consumers

From the perspective of the consumers, they prefer content/influencers that is/are authentic, posted consistently, and aligns with his or her own personal values. Earlier mentioned as important by P6 in the above results, P9 highlighted “staying true and authentic to their topic/niche & audience,” matching earlier mentioned above by P6. Again authenticity was brought up, P10 says she likes influencers who, “provide you with the realities, they want nothing more than to make people aware.”

Further examining why these influencers appeal to the followers revealed important factors that cause millennial consumers to like and dislike an influencer. P12 responded, “these influencers appeal to me because they have similar interests, they’re women, and are within my generation. P9 said, these influencers appeal to me aesthetically, because we have similar values, because they represent a lifestyle I aspire to,” and again in reference to age, “because they are 30-something-year-old women like myself.” P11 also noted values and aesthetics, responding, “I also love to follow them because it is nice to see people who align with your values and to know about the things they are doing to act on those values.” P8 says that for her, it’s “it's more the personality of the person.”

Next looking at the relationship between subjects who follow sustainable fashion Instagram influencers and the resulting sustainable mindset and buying intentions of millennial consumers. As a result of following these influencers, P12 stated, “As a whole, a good portion of what I consider a sustainable part of my lifestyle has been through simply viewing posts from sustainable users (food, waste, energy, etc).” P9 reports that as a result of following these accounts, she has “Significantly reduced the number of clothing purchases I make in a year,” and
now “seeks out local companies to purchase more sustainable products from.” She also reports as a result, “prioritizing new purchases, and sometimes spending more on items that are higher quality and/or are made from natural materials.” P9 says, “The more I see posts about sustainability the more it stays top-of-mind, the more conscientious I am to make sustainable buying decisions and lifestyle choices.” P11 says that she really enjoys, “seeing how many of these influencers style ethical fashion pieces, the various brands they have discovered, and various methods they utilize sustainable practices in their lives besides in shopping responsibly,” and thus implements these things into her life accordingly.

Followers collectively report being more conscientious of their buying decisions as a result of their sustainability motivations. However, when it comes to actual effects on purchasing decisions, answers were more varied. Only 2 respondents, P12 and P10 claimed that sustainability greatly affected their purchasing decisions. Respondents report actively trying to shop for clothes more sustainably, however reasons keeping them from doing so include higher prices, the main deterrent, and selective availability. Supporting this, P8 stated she, “would like to say sustainability affects my purchasing decisions more than it does, but often higher prices makes it unreasonable economically, and a lot of places sell fast fashion.” P11 responded that sustainability affects her purchasing decisions “Almost always, but sometimes my prices can make it tricky. I also don’t know many places that sell it and is usually pretty expensive.” P5 responded that, “Currently, I am in a financial situation that makes it difficult for me to always buy sustainably, but it is still something I always think about.” P9 said that sustainability, “greatly affects purchasing decisions, but sometimes I make compromises for the sake of convenience.
DISCUSSION

Using the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Triple Bottom Line, coding of the interview transcripts disclosed new perspectives on the influence of digital and social media marketing, specifically on the topic of sustainability. This study reveals the effects sustainable living influencers have on consumers belonging to the millennial generation, helps us understand how these influencers engage social media users, and confirms that there is a consequential response in regards to consumer sustainable mindset.

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) is a framework that evaluates a company’s performance not only in terms of monetary profit, but considers ecological and social measures as well (Slaper and Hall, 2011). In this study both the sustainable living influencers and millennial followers interpreted sustainability as negative environmental impacts generated by the fashion industry. When considering a brand’s sustainability, the subjects responded that they consider the effects of the fashion industry on our planet and garment workers being exploited and poorly treated, and the . The interview results supported the TBL theory in that the collected data shows that the respondents highly value the social and ecological impact when assessing brand performance.

This coincides with previous research on TBL affecting consumer perception of a brand by Hyejune Park and Youn-Kyung Kim that validated the TBL framework is successful in interpreting how a consumer perceives a fashion brand’s sustainability, and thus the brand itself. They also match Dongkyu Na, Jeongwon Lee, and Youngjoo Na’s findings in 2014 which also confirmed a strong correlation between a business’s TBL and its company evaluation and brand image. In addition to supporting past research results, this study incorporated social media marketing as a mechanism for informing and impacting consumers perceptions of sustainability.
as well. This suggests that it is optimal for sustainable brands to advertise their sustainability measures through social media outlets in order to strengthen their brand image for millennial consumers.

Using TPB as a framework, I examined the interview data in order to determine whether or not sustainable Instagram influencers have an impact on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying intentions toward sustainable fashion. TPB is a theory of how persuasive communication influences consumer attitude, affecting their behavioral intentions, and thus resulting in behavior (Rodgers and Thorson, 2017). The interviews conducted supported the assumption that sustainable living Instagram influencers affect millennial consumers’ attitudes toward sustainability. The results show that 5 out of the 6 interviewed followers report that Instagram posts they view have affected their level of concern regarding sustainability, and each interviewee exhibited a high level of perceived behavioral control regarding sustainable issues. However, access to capital and lack of known locations selling sustainable products often presents barriers to purchasing this way. Therefore, the interview data from this study rejected TPB. Due to the higher price of sustainable products and the limited availability, the attitudes toward sustainability and the perceived behavioral control did not result in behavior.

Previous studies done by Justin Paul, Ashwin Modi, and Jayesh Patel in 2016 and Rambalak Yadav and Govind Pathak in 2017 found a relationship between environmental concern and consumers’ decision to purchase sustainable products. Building upon this, I wanted to explore whether or not following sustainable social media influencers and the environmental concern of millennial consumers resulted in them purchasing sustainably, but did not find a strong relationship.
Based on these results, it can be confirmed that following sustainable living Instagram influencers does have a significant impact on the sustainable mindsets of millennial consumers. However, as mentioned above, the finding of this study reject the second part of my hypothesis, that these sustainable mindsets result in behavior.

**CONCLUSION**

By combining the Theory of Planned Behavior and Triple Bottom Line, this study offers a new perspective on the influence of digital and social media marketing on consumers and contributes to the current knowledge and education on social media influencing and marketing to millennials. Our results will provide a practical contribution by providing data on how to engage current and future generations of consumers. Available capital, aligning values, and level of engagement contribute to the effects sustainable influencers have on consumer attitudes and behavior. This study offers also offers implications regarding the growing trend of sustainable business practices and the importance of incorporating TBL into business frameworks. This study is one of few focused on Instagram influencers addressing the impact they have on millennial consumers’ attitudes and buying intentions. Potential limitations of this study present the following research opportunities: (1) more extensive research into the topic by conducting a greater number of interviews and utilizing different research methods to collect qualitative data and (2) collecting data from different social media platforms.
REFERENCES:


