

# the fashion utopia

about Dutch fashion bloggers and their followers

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## 1. Abstract

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In this paper we will describe the relationship between Dutch fashion bloggers and their followers. At first, we will write about the way bloggers present themselves by taking a look at the content of their posts and adjoin results of our interview with a Dutch blogger and a performed survey. Second, we dive into what attracts the consumer towards the blog and what makes them want to return to take a look at the latest post and therefore become a follower. Subsequently the influence bloggers have on the consumer will be examined and by doing this we try to get a clear perspective the relation between the blogger and the follower.

## 2. Introduction

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Using media to present yourself to the outside world is a current motion that nowadays almost everybody is familiar with. Fashion bloggers profit by this movement by creating an opening in the secretive world of fashion and blog followers feel they have found an online companion. However, very little research can be found about this fast growing influential force that has the ability to affect the consumer. This detection made us wonder about the blog followers. What attracts consumers towards the blog and makes them want to return to look at the newest post? Finally, does visiting the blogs affect their shopping behaviour? After sifting this motion we have noticed Dutch fashion blogs beam a communal feeling of utopia. During this study, we establish the followers equal to the consumer since we discovered they are regularly influenced by reading the fashion posts. What specific methods of posts the bloggers use to influence the followers will be described later on. Our main focus point will be the blog followers/consumers and the relationship they have with their favourite bloggers. In order to understand the blog followers, firstly it is necessary to highlight and clarify the investigated posts and dig into the overall utopian atmosphere Dutch fashion bloggers use to collect followers.

### 3. Theoretical Background

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Even though blogging no longer is a new phenomenon, specific research about the relation between the blogger and the follower, has not yet received much attention. However, there are starting to emerge more and more publications about this engagement and how it is maintained. The section Dutch fashion bloggers and their followers in particular is an interesting topic to examine as it has become clear they definitely play a part in the European world of blogging and are being read by consumers of many age categories. Based on the research we have gathered around and looked into the following notes confirm our philosophy. Primarily, it is apparent blogs are seen as a platform for consumers to help them with their self presentation (Kretz, 2010. p. 393-399). Blogger Tess van Daelen ratified our feeling that sharing personal related content creates more likes and therefore more followers.

By sharing a personal insight Tess creates a better bound with her followers which leads to consumers that have good faith in her as a fashion expert. Belch and Belch point out that this well maintained close relationship makes what the bloggers say or do so much more influential (Belch and Belch, 2011). This reflects on the current consumer behaviour. Blog followers confess they visit their favourite blogs multiple times and even feel inspired buying the shown items. Numbers have shown us that high status bloggers even have the power to sell a product out by only sharing it (Buzzfeed Shift, 2012). Besides that we can appoint the fact the large amount of edited images on the blogs speak towards the consumers since they consider the internet as the greatest visual source of information and are used to this format (Schroeder, 2002. p. 22).

#### 4. Method

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Our intention is to study whether the utopian world created by fashion bloggers affects the blog followers. In detail, the paper will investigate how and if the shopping behaviour of the consumer is influenced by the bloggers. As stated before we have chosen to highlight the perspective of the consumer/follower and we will only give a brief introduction about the utopia world created by the bloggers and how this is expressed. Because not much research has been done before on the subject of fashion blogs and their consumers, we will use an explorative research design which takes more of a flexible and lightly structured approach. The primary begin was conducted by an online survey that was designed to be anonymous and slightly revealed the true intention of the research. This was done in order to have the questions answered in the most honest way as possible. The survey gives us insight in which, and how many, people follow blogs and how often they visited the blog. We concentrated our inquiry on both men and women who live in an urban area and fall within the age group of: 15-20, 21-25 and 26-30. Participants for further semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected based on their involvement in fashion blogs. An important criterion was that they visit fashion blogs on a daily basis. Image research and analysis has taken place within the top ten most visited fashion blogs in the Netherlands. These fashion bloggers are appointed to be most influential, inspirational and popular amongst followers and therefore viewed as role models. The interview with Dutch fashion and lifestyle blogger Tess van Daelen (blog: TESSTED) was based on gathering more insights in the world of blogging and would exemplify a bloggers angle in this motion. Remarkably, the top ten representatives declined our interview request.

## 4.1 Fashion bloggers

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After meeting Dutch fashion bloggers and observing several well known blogs it became clear that personal related posts are very popular among the blog followers. That bloggers are aware of this motion was confirmed in an interview with Dutch blogger Tess:

*“(...)The personal stuff always gets the highest views .” ( T. van Daelen, 2014)*

Bloggers use several manners to involve the consumer in their personal life and in addition make them part of their ongoing journey, developing themselves as an expert within the fashion world. This gesture contributes to an increasing engagement between the blogger and the reader elevates the blogger to an iconic statue and therefrom a fashion guide to the consumer. This combined, leads to the great influence bloggers have on their followers; the consumer. Primarily it is important to know fashion bloggers mostly represent themselves through visuals and all the posts are carefully chosen. The bloggers selectively choose where the focus lies when sharing a post and intent to enchant the viewers with images of a happy harmonious life and display their personal sense of style. They spread photographs of an highly curated life. This utopian atmosphere which they choose to communicate contains pictures and small pieces of text that emphasize a positive lifestyle. The high amount of visual images appeals to the consumers because they consider the internet as the greatest visual source of information (Schroeder, 22). Besides this sumption it is perhaps good to emphasize the todays digital active generation is familiar with edited pictures and use this development themselves to spread posts on instagram, facebook and other variants of social media. If we take a closer look at some of the most recent posts of famous Dutch fashion bloggers we can determine that the fairylike feeling is implemented in the overall layout as well as the content of posts. Within the shared posts bloggers are able to send out multiple messages and thereby send out various information. The broadcasted posts mostly show several desired objects, fabulous hangout places and a good looking taste all in this one picture.



afterDRK blogger Sabrina Meijer shared a post which is titled: *'It's the little things'*. In this post she talks about little things that genuinely make her happy. She confesses that she finds it hard to pinpoint what is most important because she believes happiness can be found in the little things in life. She shares a image which show us her pleasures.

*A morning coffee – with my eyes still closed – on our sunny roof terrace. The smell of the 'Tuscan Fig' scented candle I recently got (it's from the Australian brand Lumira, so yummy).*

<http://www.afterdrk.com/its-the-little-things/>

This image gives voice to various references. Throughout this post Sabrina lets us know she is the proud owner of a sunny roof terrace, in possession of a expensive cartier necklace, gets free presents of brands and also gives us a sneak peek of her home interior. All sorts of things that leave the followers with a feeling of desire. By sharing personal related posts the blogger nourished the engagement with the followers. In the sequel we will describe how this influence comes into existence from the followers point of view and how this close connection can lead to this great influence.

#### 4.2 The influenced consumers

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Since the fashion bloggers are seen as role models and therefore become a reliable source they have the ability to influence consumers decisions whether to purchase something or not. In addition consumers search for bloggers who they feel are like-minded individuals and who have similar interests. Consumers associate or not associate, themselves with other groups based on what they desire and like, but also on what they dislike and disgust (Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 2003. p. 329-30). This going-on contributes to the bloggers power to reach the choir (Kent, 2008. p. 32-40). It is important to emphasize blog followers voluntarily choose to follow selected fashion blogs. They want to stay up-to-date with fashion and have faith in the bloggers expertise since they have proven this by their large amount of followers. In an interview with blog follower Jasper Oelers he emphasizes he chooses to follow certain blogs because he feels they can relate to his values and believes and therefore convey an atmosphere that inspires him to evolve his personal style. Besides that, he confesses he is sensitive for the advertisement on the blogs.

*“(...) Last month my favourite blog posted a picture of an awesome backpack. I searched on the internet where it was for sale and bought this bag the same week.”*  
( J. Oelers, 2014)

Some bloggers have the power to cause an item in sell out by simply sharing a link to where followers can buy it. (Buzzfeed Shift, 2012) Remarkable is that mostly all of the posts contain brand names and links to company web stores and therefore can be seen as an indirect form of advertisement. Since the blogger is able to post reviews and recommendations for their followers and online consumers they have the power to encourage the consumer to try products they have never used before. Because companies have become aware of the power of social media and especially the influence of bloggers they are now often working together. During this collaboration the bloggers receive money, free gifts and more followers and the companies collect buyers. The ads are often specified to fit the consumers personal interest.

This marketing tool makes it easier to attract followers and reduces the boundaries for them to purchase. The added links also attract consumers by attaching additional value such as special discounts gifts and free deliveries (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, 56-57).

That followers feel a strong connectivity with the blogger and feel an urge to stay connected with the blogger is reinforced by an quote in a recent research about the Norwegian bloggers and their influence on blog followers.

*"I check in on my favorite blogs a couple of times a day, maybe three or four times. I have to admit that I am a bit obsessed, for instance if my favorite blogger hasn't updated her blog in a couple of days, I start to get worried that something bad has happened, or if she has stopped blogging. I know it's a bit stupid but I can't help it."*

(Halvorsen, Hoffman, Coste-Maniere and Stankeviciute, 217).

It clearly shows the urge the followers have and that, that urge has to be fulfilled with a new post. In this way the follower stays connected to the blogger. With this daily 'contact' the blogger becomes a big part of the followers life, as much as a friend or family member would. This makes the feel of trust even stronger, not only do the consumers now rely on their trustworthy because of the bloggers expertise in the fashion world, they now trust them as much as they would rely on a friends advice or opinion. This makes what the bloggers say or do so much more influential (Belch and Belch, 2011). That connection is even further strengthened by the ability to respond on the bloggers content. Bloggers use this knowledge to encourage the followers to respond, they will ask the followers to *"Let's turn the tables. What are you wearing today?"*(<http://www.chapterfriday.com/2014/09/chapter-friday-team-wears-6/>) or use an 'viewers contest' or ticket give away to generate more responses. A good example of a ticket give away is one from the blog Love Aesthetics from Ivania Carpio. She would give away 2 tickets to a Fashion week show in the Netherlands to two followers who would in return give her their personal information.



#### Two Tickets To Give Away

I'm beyond excited to meet some of my readers give away tickets for you guys to join me during Vodafone's Fashion Lab at AFW. Jef Montes will be presenting his collection at the Vodafone Firsts Fashion Lab; a cool initiative for new talent to showcase on a professional platform for the first time. (For those who don't get the tickets, no need to feel left out! You can see the show live via the Fashion Week app. And you don't even have to dress up. Or leave your laptop and bed. ) If you (+a friend) want to attend Amsterdam Fashion Week for the first time:

/ leave your name and email address in the comments.

/ on Wednesday I will randomly pick someone who will receive 2 tickets + more info about the exact place

And so, the bond gets even stronger, the followers feel privileged they are invited to this fashion event and are super excited to meet the blogger. Not only is it now possible for them to hang out with the blogger but besides that they can be part of 'their' world for this evening. From our survey we learned that the most people still turn to stores and webshops (36,3%) for their fashion inspiration, followed by 34,1% who get their inspiration from the street and on the third place come the fashion blogs with 15,9%. These positions in the top 3 are being supported by a recent research on Social Media and Blogging influence by Technorati media where they state that retail sites are the most likely to influence a purchase (56%), followed by Brand sites (34%) and blogs also take the third position with 31,1%.

## 5. Conclusion - The perfect fit

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At the end of the research we have to conclude that this relationship between the blogger and the consumer seems to be the perfect fit. This because both parties derive their profits from the online engagement. In order for the blogger to be considered an expert in the fashion field they have to gain as much followers as possible. Only then they are interesting enough for retailers and companies to invite for fashionshows, meetings or even approach them for a collaboration. To get this amount of followers they have to interact with their followers and give an insight in their personal life. In this way the followers feel a strong connection to the blogger and will stay in touch. They consider them as friends, trustworthy and reliable. Consumers feel like the bloggers have nothing to gain by lying or deceiving them. Even when a lot of bloggers now get paid and sponsored by a lot of brands. As long as they mention that with their content and are honest and open about it. (Wright) Followers say they will still believe in the truthfulness of the blogger and see the sponsoring as a well-deserved reward for all the effort they put in their blog. (Halvorsen, Hoffman, Coste-Maniere and Stankeviciute, 217-218) And something to keep in mind for the bloggers is that, 54% of the consumers believe that smaller blogs have bigger influence. (Technoratimedia, 2013) They believe that how bigger the blog the more they get sponsored and influenced by brands. It seems like there needs to be a balance found between staying true to themselves and thereby maintaining their own style, honest and trustworthy. This contributes to a solid engagement because followers like to think they are in an intimate relationship with the fashion blogger. On the other hand it is important to reach an big audience of readers to be considered an icon who attends events and gets paid by companies for the effort they spend on their blog.

Interviews we had with blog followers and the survey results underpin the influence of fashion bloggers on their buying behaviour. Followers feel comfortable within the close relationship they started with the blogger. The bloggers helps them in making decisions by showing what is ok to wear to different occasions and how to combine certain items within an outfit.

Consumers utilize the benefits of fashion blogs. Not only do they now have to spend less time

on finding what they need by walking through crowded shopping streets they also feel secure after buying a product. They know the fashion item is recommended by a fashion expert. Therefore we can conclude this engagement is helpful to both sides. The future of blogs is in the hands of the bloggers and their ability to control their urge to expand; they will always have this need, to climb the ladder of fashion-importance and earn more money for their services by sponsor deals and collaborations. More and more fashion blogs, who started this journey years ago, now feel that it is time for change. They want to grow, whether it is by collaborating with brands (love aesthetics), adding an online store to the blog (stylescrapbook) or even turning into an online magazine. They are getting bored of sharing posts only about themselves, are in need of new challenges and can not keep up the image of an utopian life or even just smell the fame. Followers are starting to wonder about their honesty and since bloggers have so much to gain by their followers, they are also deepening their relationships with other bloggers. For example, by posting the same content and link to each others posts which leads to losing your own identity.

## HOW TO STYLE A BOYFRIEND SHIRT THE FEMININE WAY

OUTFITS

Posted on 25 May 2014



### A white shirt

If there's one timeless item that you should have in your closet, it has to be the button up. It's your go-to piece for business meetings and days at the office, but can be worn loosely on your day off too (preferably without pants). The shirt should be well-fitted, so it doesn't make you look sloppy. The French brand Equipment are one of the best when it comes to blouses, so you might want to check out their collection.



OUTFITS

## OUTFIT | THE WHITE BLOUSE MIGHT JUST BE PERFECT FOR SUMMER

By Fashion Hoax on 08 August 2014

Ni. Ik hou echt niet van lange mouwen in de zomer, want ik heb het te snel heet. Maar deze witte blouse is perfect voor de zomer! Lekker losjes met opgestroopte mouwtjes en een shortje. Mocht je dit ook proberen ...



## 8 WARDROBE CLASSICS TO KEEP FOREVER



8 Wardrobe classics to keep forever...and the best places to find them (both desirable and affordable). Or at least, the places where I get mine.

<http://www.afterdrk.com/8-wardrobe-classics-keep-forever/> <http://www.chapterfriday.com/2014/09/six-classic-pieces-to-invest-in-this-fall/> <http://anokyve.creatorsofdesire.com/how-style-boyfriend-shirt-feminine-way/> <http://fashionhoax.creatorsofdesire.com/outfit-white-blouse-summer/>

The danger of losing their personality within the content is even more at risk by employing a team to help the blogger maintain and expand the blog. The team is now able to influence the character of the blog. In the case of Chapter Friday they are currently talking about 'the team' and what the team does and wears. The feeling of a connection between two persons, the blogger and the follower, reduces as it now feels more as a team running a brand or company. (<http://www.chapterfriday.com/2014/09/chapter-friday-team-wears-6/>)

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