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Influencer Marketing and its Impact on Consumer Behavior

INSTAGRAM INFLUENCER IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The objective and aim of this research-based thesis was to explain and analyze the influence of Instagram influencer on the consumer behavior. Hence the consumer behavior of consumers in different target groups may differ, the focus was on the consumers in the fitness industry. Furthermore, the boundaries were set as well for the influencer platform due to the huge variety of opportunities. For this research, the influencer platform used to analyze and explain the phenomena of influencer marketing, was Instagram. Therefore, the main research problem, which will be answered within the following chapters is: How do Instagram Influencer affect the consumer behavior in the Fitness industry?

In order to explain this research problem, the first chapter concentrate on the theoretical basics of the topic, explanations and definitions of influencer, principles of influencer marketing, platforms and consumer behavior. To be able to analyze and connect those different topics, I have carried out an online survey about Instagram influencer in the fitness industry for the empirical part of this thesis.

The research findings showed, that Instagram influencer in the fitness industry do have an impact on the consumer behavior, with some conditions, such as the need of trust or the fit of the product to the actual goals of the individual customer. Furthermore, the findings showed, that there is a relationship between different variables, which lead to the impact on the consumer behavior. Influencing the consumer behavior is a time intense process and the actual success of this influence is difficult to measure. Nevertheless, there are many different ways of how Instagram influencers can influence the consumer behavior of their followers, which are explained in this thesis. The empirical part of the thesis shows, that there is a clear trend and high chance for brands to use Instagram influencer in the fitness industry to increase their reach and raise their total sales, as well as increase the brand awareness.

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

"A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is." – Scott Cook (Website of Velonce 2020).

Nowadays, the daily use of Social Media already has become normal for many people, no matter if only for catching up with friends or family, following their favorite celebrity or sports club or finding new inspiration. the fitness and health sectors are especially becoming increasingly popular as the interest of a healthy lifestyle is getting into the public focus. In general, not just living healthy, but also using social media to show this or get inspiration are ever-rising trends. Apps like Instagram have changed the way people are getting information and communicate with each other. Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and others are used to share photo content, videos and comments with friends, families, followers and even companies. These give their users the opportunity to connect globally and "stay up to date" at any time and any place (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 2, 90). The visual content sharing development is also partly caused by the ongoing developing process of cameras in smartphones and easily accessible databases in apps like Instagram (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 90). Social media does not only give their users the chance to create, share or communicate information (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 3), it also can help to increase the body image of the users, which is increasingly popular in the fitness industry: users simply post their healthy food photo or an "after-gym selfie" and feel psychologically better (Ridgway & Russell 2016, 6). With other words, "strong is the new skinny" is making a lifestyle out of a trend, especially for young people (Koch & Luu 2015, 3).

The research provides information about the different social media channels, but because of the numerous variety of social media platforms, the focus lays on Instagram, as it is the most popular one for influencer marketing at the moment (Tadje 2019) and introducing all platforms would be a too wide range for this thesis. To be

able to analyze the consumer behavior in connection with influencer marketing, the basics of consumer behavior are explained as well (see Figure 1). For the empirical part of the thesis, the researcher did an online survey, from which the results and analysis are presented in chapter seven. The analysis of the survey results in combination with the knowledge from the literature review are used for a conclusion of the research problem in chapter eight.

2 PROBLEM SETTING AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME OF REFERENCE

As I am also very actively following social media on a daily basis and am active in the fitness industry as a fitness competitor in the IFBB (International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness), the fitness industry and the business opportunities given by social media for this industry, are piquing my interests highly and were my reason to choose this topic.

The aim of this thesis is to help the reader to understand the influencer marketing in social media and its impact on consumer behavior, especially in the fitness industry with its special needs and requirements (see Figure 1). Through the collected research knowledge and the survey results, the research problem "How do Instagram Influencer affect the consumer behavior in the Fitness industry?" will be answered in the following chapters of the thesis. Based on the research problem, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. What are social media and what platforms can be used for influencer marketing?
2. What is influencer marketing generally and what are influencer principles?
3. What is Instagram and why or how can it be beneficial for influencer marketing?
4. What is the fitness industry and what makes it different from the other industries?

5. How does the fitness industry use social media? What tools can be used?

6. How can a successful social media marketing strategy be measured?

7. Do consumers trust influencers and does it actually have an impact on their buying behavior?

8. What might make an influencer trustworthy (in the fitness industry)?

9. Why do consumers even follow influencers?

All those questions will be answered in the following chapters, partly in the theory- and party in the empirical chapters.
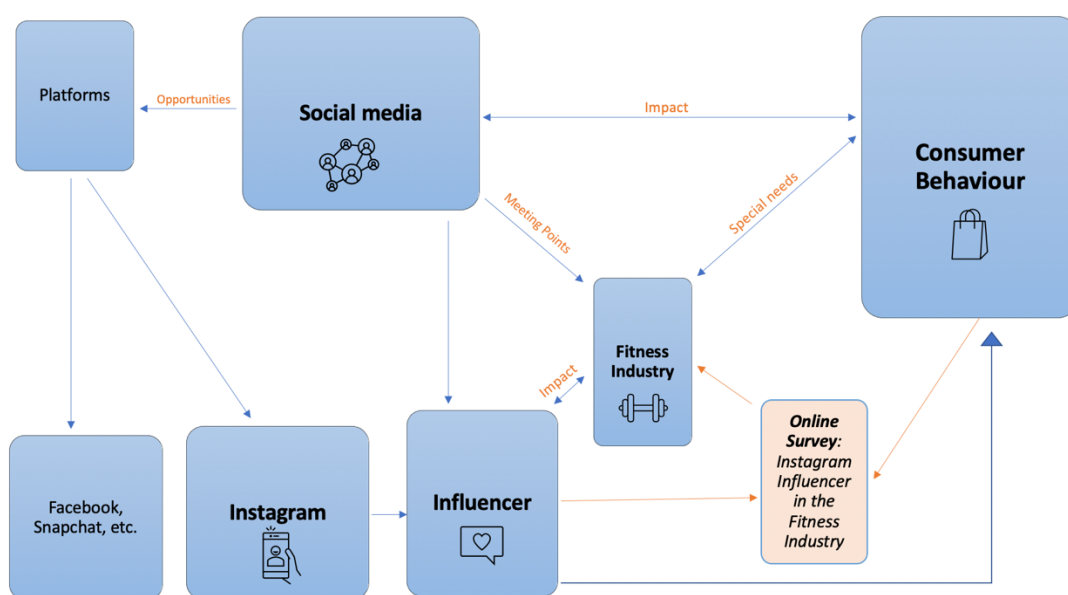
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Thesis: Instagram Fitness Influencer and their impact on consumer behavior (Author of the thesis, 2020)

As seen in the Figure 1 above, the conceptual framework of the thesis covers the relationship between the different variables of the research: social media platforms with the focus on Instagram, consumer behavior, influencer and the fitness industry. The researcher aims to explain the impact and interaction with and to each of those variables within the following chapters. In order to analyze and understand the current situation of the (fitness) Instagram influencer, the researcher did an online survey, which is represented in the orange box in the conceptual framework above.

3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFLUENCER

As already mentioned in the introduction, social media is changing individuals' lifestyles by providing them new opportunities of communication, connection and sharing. This trend of using social media is not only changing the private lifestyles, but also companies are slowly starting to reconstruct and adapt their marketing strategies to benefit from the new opportunities in social media. Nevertheless, due to the mass of information and the variety of platforms, it can be difficult for a brand to stand out. Therefore, influencer marketing is an interesting way of reaching many consumers of a specific target group within a specific channel. Therefore, a rising amount of companies are willing to invest in influencer marketing strategies. It helps companies to reach more people and make them familiar with a brand, products or services and even getting in contact with them as customers, finding out their needs, providing a better, cheaper and faster customer service or leading the attention back to their website in the hope of increasing the sales (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 13-15).

3.1 Influencer

One successful way of reaching people and potential customers has always been the "word of mouth" principle. It spreads information quickly and since the age of the internet, this method is working faster than ever (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 160). The social media influencers are using exactly that principle to reach as many potential customers as possible through sharing visual content on different social media platforms with the goal of influencing the consumers buying behavior (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 104).

3.1.1 Definition of an influencer

The original definition of an influence is the ability to change a person's behavior to drive him or her to an action (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 10), like for example getting the consumer to order a specific product. Before influencer marketing became

a strongly rising trend, the interruption marketing was spread in social media platforms. This form of advertisement represents professional from the brand itself incising acted advertisements, which tend to seem   artificial and therefore not trustworthy for the consumer, while influencer marketing as a globally rising trend creates trust, since the influencer should represent a reliable, honest and familiar voice (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 9, 192). Influencer marketing opens new doors for businesses to reach many people of a specific target group (Figure 2), but it can also be challenging due to the requirement of transparency and flexibility sides of the brand or company, because influencers are "their own brand" and need to create relatable and honest content in order to not harm the trust of their followers. The companies need to leave their influencers lots of freedom while also setting borders creating an influencer strategy (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 123-124). When this is done wisely, influencers may reach many followers and start a chain reaction (see first and second level of the Fisherman's Influence Marketing Model in Figure 2) of reaching consumers (Brown & Fiorella 2013, 77). This works either on the level "B2C" (Business to Consumer) or "B2B" (Business to Business) (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 193).
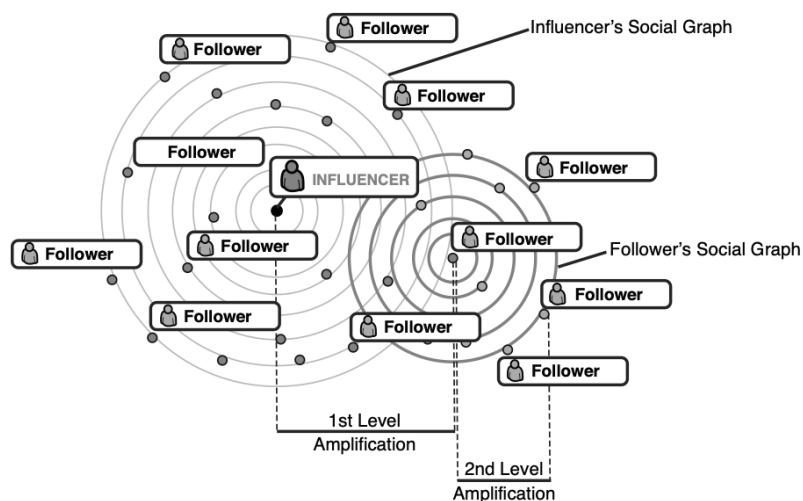
Figure 2. Fisherman's Influence Marketing Model (Brown & Fiorella 2013, 77)

The figure above (Figure 2) shoes the Fisherman's Influence Marketing Model (Brown & Fiorella 2013, 77). The model shows, that one person, the influencer, is able to reach several people when sharing content. That is visible in the first level amplification. After the influencer has reached several followers, the followers can turn into another form of influencer as well, when they share the information or content as well and

therefore reach more people, compared to the total reach of people if only the original influencer would have shared the content. This is called the second level amplification (Figure 2).

3.1.2 Fundaments and principles of influencer marketing

Before explaining more about influencer marketing, it is important to understand the fundaments of what an influencer is and how their principles work. An influencer is a person with a high-follow to low-following ratio, many likes, comments, views and etc., who is regularly sharing visual content of his or her personal life through a social media platform, usually using a positive self- branding strategy and thereby creating income either as part- or full-time job. Usually, influencers are trying to bring a specific product or brand closer to any potential customers by adding advertisement into the content of their own everyday-lifestyle or personality. While doing this, the influencer needs to balance between creating valuable content for a specific brand and staying authentic and reliable for their followers (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 105-108).

3.1.3 Popularity level

Influencers can vary a lot in their level of popularity and there are many different kinds of influencers existing. Which influencer is the right one for a specific company depends on the target group the company wants to reach through the influencer and therefore, there are no real instructions with a right or wrong. Firstly, all influencers are known for something and able to motivate their followers into action, like for example buying a specific product. There are the celebrity influencers (see Table 3), who usually have more than one million followers (Miles, 2019, 203), like actors, singers or athletes, who are famous and usually have a mainstream group of fans that can be influenced by the celebrity influencers. The "category influencers" are usually not as famous as celebrity influencers and concentrate on a specific sector, in which they also created their follower base and target group and are able to influence this specific target group. The category influencers can be all kind of influencers from

nano- to mega influencers (see Table 1) The "micro influencers" have either a very limited or even no online reach at all, but are convinced about a specific brand or product, which they share either online or offline (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 22-24). In many social media platforms, influencers have a verification, which makes them even more trustworthy to their followers, such as a "blue mark" in Instagram behind their username (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 146).

Table 1. Influencer designations by number of followers (Miles, 2019, 203)

Influencer designation	Number of followers
Nano influencer	10 - 1000
Micro influencer	1000 - 10.000
Macro influencer	10.000 – 100.000
Mega influencer	100.000 – 1 million
Celebrity influencer	1 million or more

3.1.4 Influence collaborations

There are many different opportunities for influencers to collaborate with a specific brand or company. One very commonly used option is the by influencers inventively shared brand content, likewise in form of a free product, which the influencer receives from a brand and sequentially promotes on his or her social media account, which works for both, B2C and B2B situations. A second option is co-created content of a brand and an influencer, which is shared on both accounts, from the influencer and the brand or company. In the cultivated brand-managed influencer communities online communities are developed, in which an influencer is sharing specific brand-related content for this specific target group. Another possibility for a company or brand is to repurpose already existing influencer content for new purposes such as e-mail- or printed advertisements. Eke in-person (brand-) events to which influencers are invited or social media account takeovers are opportunities for brands to increase the reach and brand awareness. As also mentioned in the principles in table 1, a brand can provide an influencer a specific promotion code or link, from which the influencer might earn a particular percentage of the profit through code or link generated sales,

which is known as "Influencer-driven affiliate sales programs". In social media, aside from that competitions and giveaways are increasingly popular. For those, influencers usually receive a product, which they can raffle as a price and at the same time, promote that specific product (Backaler & Shankman, 2018,130-132).

3.1.5 Measuring success

Generally, in social media, it is easy to measure factors such as the amount of likes, comments, followers or views, but measuring the actual influence or increase in sales driven by the actions of an influencer or even choosing a tool for measuring can be arduous (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 159-160). Often, the potential coherencies between the interactions of the influencer and his or her followers' actions, which can occur even after a longer time period has passed, might be misleading (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 192-193). According to a survey of Rakuten Marketing in 2019, 59% of the brands, which are using influencer marketing strategies are tracking the brand reach, 5% are tracking the brand awareness, 44% the direct sales, 40% the generated site traffic and 32% the indirect sales (Rakuten Marketing 2019, 30). That clearly shows the trend, that brands would like to measure or track the different factors, even if they are partly difficult to track. To measure the most closely approximate impact of the influencers, there are specific influencer software or tools such as "Klout", "Social Mention", "Radian6" or "Sysoms" (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 191-192), influencer agencies or image glossaries available (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 200). In the following table 2, different influencer practices and examples for measuring the ROI (return on investment) in those practices are introduced. Generally, besides the principle of sharing, the regularity is important too, hence a follower is more likely to visit the influencers' profile more often to search for updates, when he or she expects them regularly, compared to an influencer, who does not share content often and therefore might become unappealing for followers within some time (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 80).

Table 2. Influencing Principles and Measurement (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 125-129, 157-158)

Principle	What is it for?	What can be measured?
1. **Corporate reputation management**	Using celebrity influencers to prevent a bad public reputation	Measuring positive media mentions in connection with influencers
2. **New product launches or brand events**	Influencers are spreading and promoting a new product or brand event in their social media channels	The amount of sales through a specific promotion link or code
3. **Product development inspiration**	Integration of influencers' ideas and opinions during the product development processes	(Amount, Quality, etc. of) new ideas from the influencer
4. **Product reviews**	Product reviews in order to help with the product positioning when (categorially or geographically) entering a new market	Product reviews on a specific product
5. **Search engine optimization**	Search engine algorithms are nonstop developing, which makes it challenging for brands to be on top of the search list. Influencers can link the brand's website and improve the SEO ranking of the brand's website	Improvement in keyword ranking caused through influencers actions

As seen in Table 2, there are several different practices of how an influencer can reach his or her followers on their social media account and how a brand can measure its impact and which practice is the best for a specific company or brand, depends on their specific goals. Some companies might focus on finding an influencer with the highest possible reach of consumers, while others are more interested in the quality (success rate) (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 183). Nevertheless, when creating content, the authenticity and transparency of the influencer help to create a long-term connection between the influencer and the followers (consumers) and therefore are the key to success (Rakuten Marketing 2019, 26).

3.1.6 KPI's and influencers ABCC's

The principle, in which the sales generated through a promotion code or link are measured, can be difficult to measure in the beginning, since the consumers might act after a longer time period. But not only those (active) principles can be measured, also other KPIs (key performance indicators) can be measured, such as the engagement of an influencer. That can include KPIs such as reposts, interactions with the community or even the total amount of online mentions of a specific brand in specific time period. Other measurable good KPIs in relation with the website metrics can be the referral traffic from networking websites, the bounce rate, the average time spent on the website and interactions with links on the website (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 183-185). In order to be successful, an influencer should follow the "influencer ABCC's", in which the A stands for authenticity and engagement, the B for the right brand fit, C for the community. including the reach and engagement within the community. The second C stands for the content, which should be creative and adding value to the community for the specific brand (Backaler & Shankman 2018, 28-34). All in all, it is important for different brands to be aware of the fact, that the amount of followers is not equal to the quality of the influence or that some markets are more and some less open for influencer marketing (Backaler & Shankman 2018, 34, 51).

3.1.7 Risks of using influencer marketing

When using influencer marketing as a strategy for a specific brand, next to the opportunities some risks occur as well. Those risks can be either reputational, legal or competitive risks. Some influencers are buying followers or "fake accounts" as followers and are therefore inconceivable while additionally the legal framework for the influencer marketing is gradually evolving. Some influencers accessorily cooperate with more than one brand at the same time, which may create competitional situations (Backaler & Shankman, 2018, 152). Through the use of social media in the influencer marketing, the consumers have more power than ever to harm a brand or company by telling their opinion and criticizing the brand. The brands or companies have less to no control about this, which can lead to an image damage (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 18).

3.2 Platforms

Nowadays, a variety of social media platforms are available for anyone with a mobile device and an internet connection. Within the different availabilities, three main categories are important to distinguish: publishing services, in which information or ideas are shared on platforms such as blogs or forums, media sharing services, where different media can be shared, such as music on Spotify, videos on YouTube or pictures on Instagram and networking services, where people can socially connect, for example in social networks like Facebook or microblogging platforms like Twitter (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 3-6). Those opportunities make it easier than ever for private users to find and create a network with others, who share the same interests, but also for brands to connect with their communities and get inside views with unfiltered real-time feedback (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 15-16). Because of the amount of platforms and the different opportunities on each, I will only briefly introduce the most important ones, but focus on Instagram to stay within this bachelor's thesis' framework. Since Instagram is such an important part of this thesis, it is presented in its own chapter (Chapter 3.3), unlike Facebook or Snapchat.

3.2.1 Facebook

Facebook is a social media networking page, which was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and is owned by Facebook Inc. (Website of IT Business 2019). The platform currently (2020) has about 2,7 billion users (Website of Statista 2020) and can either be accessed via desktop version or as mobile app (Andrews 2020, 4). Facebook is mainly used for social networking, but the users can also share content, send messages, like or comment content, follow the activities of public pages or events, use the marketplace, join community groups or create their own business page (Website of IT Business 2019). Every user has an individual news feed in a chronological order and with through an algorithm by relevance filtered content, based on interests, posted by friends or pages the user has liked. The use of Facebook is free of charge, whereas Facebook is using the personal data to embed possible relevant advertisements in the user's individual newsfeeds. The advertisements can be bought by brands and may be adjusted customized either "programmatically" or "behaviorally" for the consumers

(Andrews 2020, 2, 41). In social media, the users are not the customers, but the "product", which is sold to the companies, which are paying for the advertisement, or as Tristan Harris says in the documentation "The Social Dilemma": "If you're not paying for the product, then you are the product." (Jeff Orlowski's film The Social Dilemma 2020). Unlike in Instagram for example, in Facebook, the users cannot directly link a brand's account to a private post, but only publicly share it on the brand's official wall (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 91), which may exacerbate influencer marketing in this social media platform.

3.2.2 Snapchat

Snapchat is a platform, which is part of the visual social media group and currently with about 249 million active daily users one of the most important and popular apps for the younger generation (Website of Statista 2020). Users can send text messages, but the main focus lays on visual communication by sending short videos or pictures with filers, stickers or other editing tools. The "snap" can only be viewed once and disappears after watching. Visual content can also be added in the "My Story", where the friends or followers can watch it as many times as they wish within 24 hours after it was published. If someone takes a screenshot or wants to watch a snap a second time, the forwarder receives a notification. The target group of this app is the youth market (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 25-27).

3.3 Instagram

As seen in "Figure 3", Instagram is within the top ten of the world's most popular social media networks, ranked by the number of active users (Website of Statista 2020). The mobile app was founded in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and bought by the Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg in 2012. Instagram is a visual content app with an enormous database, location tags and other personal data. It allows their users to create and post visual content like photos and videos, edit them with filters, comment, like and share pictures, post and edit stories or send messages. Furthermore, the user can search for specific hashtags (#) and see more content, which was tagged

under the same location tag. The platform can be accessed through any device, but content can be shared via mobile app only (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 8-10, 14-15, 75, 85). According to Instagram's guidelines, it is a place, which is supposed to be authentic, inspirational and provide space for individuals to present themselves (Website of Instagram 2020). Nevertheless, Instagram also has some rules and regulations to ensure it can follow the guidelines as good as possible (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 20).
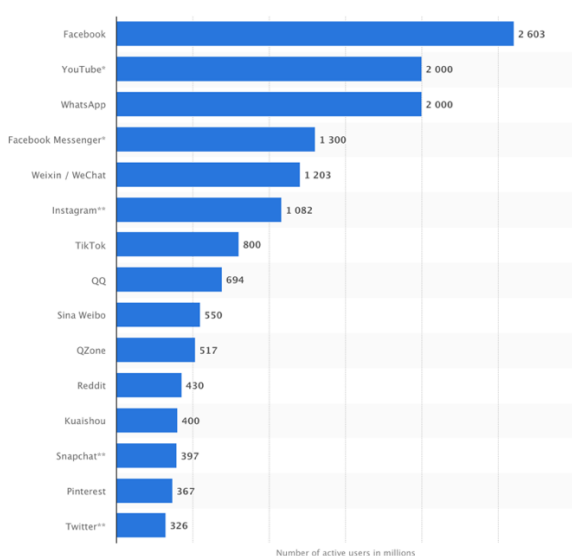

Figure 3. Most popular social networks worldwide by July 2020 (Website of Statista 2020)

3.3.1 Instagram users and using Instagram

Every user has an individual newsfeed on their start screen, and an explorer area, where other accounts with for the individual possible relevant and interesting pictures or accounts to follow are suggested, based on their interactions and interests Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 19-20). The news feed is individualized by three different factors, which an algorithm analyzes: the interests, based on the user's past views, likes or actions, the recentness of the post and the relationship between the user and the person, who's post appears in the feed, based on previous interactions with the person such as likes, comments or views. But not only content from other Instagram users appears in the news feed, also native advertisements from other apps appears in the feed as well and also there, the content is based on the previous relations and interests

of a user (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 100). Instagram can not only be used to share visual content, in three different ways, either traditionally with photo or video in the news feed, a story or IGTV (Miles, 2019, 17). Moreover, it can also be used to create social media promotions, engage communications, create of personal identity or promote virtual relationships either between followers or between an influencer and its followers, who represent the customers and consumers (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 61-64).

Currently there are more than one billion active Instagram accounts in use every month, from which more than 500 million use the stories function every day and about 90% are following a brand or company on Instagram. Stories are a tool, which is used to share content, which can be viewed only for a time period of 24 hours after posting it, unless it is saved as a highlight in the profile. This leads to an increased use of Instagram, since many users do not want to miss a story from someone they follow before it disappears again. Stories are often used by influencers to share advertisements and specs, because it is easy to add a "swipe up" function, which leads the consumer directly to a specific link, while he stays in the app at the same time. Due to the short time availability, users started to be less careful when choosing the content, they share in stories and add features like filters, stickers, questions, location or name tags, texts, GIFs or music stickers. Even live videos can be shared to interact with the followers (see Table 3) (Highfield & Abidin 2020, 27-29). If a person wants to share a longer video, the "IGTV" feature provides an opportunity in form of a streaming service. IGTV (Table 3) is the newest form of sharing content in Instagram. Other than in the other options in this app, this opportunity offers the user to share and watch the videos in a horizontal format and in a longer length (Miles, 2019, 18).

3.3.2 Content sharing opportunities

Table 3. Instagram sharing possibilities (Miles, 2019, 89, 93)

What?	Visibility
Single photo in feed	Visible in feed and profile
Multiple photos in feed	Visible in feed and profile
Feed video	Up to 60 seconds; visible in feed and profile

Instagram story photo	24 hours visible in Story
Instagram story Boomerang	24 hours visible in Story, video of 1 second length, repeating itself
Instagram story video	24 hours visible in Story, video of maximum 15 seconds length
IGTV	Video of up to 10 minutes, for larger profiles up to one hour
Live video (in story)	Up to one hour live video

Links can be added when switching from a normal profile to a business profile. For the user, it is free to switch to a business profile, which has some extras such as business and contact information or shop buttons, and it gives the user inside view opportunities (Website of Instagram Business 2020). Those inside views can analyze in real-time the total amount of reached accounts, content interactions and possible earnings from the past seven days from either posts or story content. Additionally, a business profile can be directly linked with an existing Facebook business page and may be managed by several persons without logging out from the persons private account, which makes sharing of the same content via one action possible (Website of Instagram Help 2020 and Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 17).

When using a business profile, not only stories can be edited with additional (shop- or linking-) features, also "shop now" linking underneath photos, carousel (more than one picture in a gallery to scroll through swiping to the side) or video ads are available. Businesses might also buy those form of advertising, which appear in the news feed independently from any influencer or business profile and choose between targeting options for their advertisements based on a specific location, demographics, interests, behaviors, custom audiences, lookalike audiences or a compound out of several (Website of Instagram Business 2020). Furthermore, business profiles have the "promote" button right underneath the post with several campaign options or the advertisement through Facebook option, which provides an even wider variety of options to choose from (Miles, 2019, 182-183).

3.3.3 Influencing principles and styles

As mentioned in the chapter above, there are several different influencing principles and strategies. Nevertheless, Instagram is an app with its own specializations and therefore, it has some specific influencing styles. Generally, in Instagram, there are rules and regulations, and therefore, any kind of advertisement or "branded content" from an influencer, who gets a specific value as payment from a brand for creating content, needs to be marked as such (Website of Instagram Help 2020). It can be done for example through adding a small marker with the content "(AD)", "#sponsored' or any other marker to the post (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 117). Additionally, there are multi-influencer campaign on Instagram, in which a whole group of influencers promote something specific and use the same hashtag, which leads to a high amount of content for the brand's campaign. Also shout-outs or tagging (mentioning another account), giveaways "instablogging" (posting a picture with a short blog-style description) or "how-to"-tutorial are a typical Instagram influencer actions to increase a brand's awareness. Another principle is called "relative others" and includes posting neutral content over a longer time period and adding the product placement discretely in between the neutral posts. In the posts over a longer time, another option is the "Lifestyle showcase", in which a discrete sponsor-hashtag is used for many posts and represent the choices of products the influencer has done to create exactly that desirable lifestyle. The most effective and neutral way of influencing the followers is called The Instagram aesthetic". It is the least obvious form of advertisement and is done by using specific hashtags "'OOTD" (shortening for "outfit of the day", a very popular hashtag), while tagging different parts of for example an outfit or telling the price of this with the purpose of making it possible for the follower to re-create a certain look or outfit. To avoid the content to be stolen by other brands or accounts, influencers are often posting selfies with the product placement. This has the other side effect, that it gives the follower the feeling of reliability and "experiential authority" (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 107-108, 115-125).

4 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

4.1 Definition of consumer behavior

Consumer behaviour is a very important topic for companies and brands, since it will reflect in the amount of sales. Why it may increase or decrease the sales and how it can be influenced, will be discussed in this chapter. Generally, consumer behaviour is a dynamic movement, which is a result of the environmental impact on an individual, the behaviour itself, the connection and interaction of the affect and the cognition. Environmental impacts in this case can be anything, that has an effect on the feelings of an individual (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 7, 20), while according to traditional behaviourist, feelings may have an impact, but not justify the behaviour. The environmental happenings or the feelings, which are eventually initiated by those, have the power to influence actions, such as purchasing a product from a specific brand (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 21-22).

The consumer behaviour may also be influenced by factors such as the access to information about a specific brand or product, the personality, gender, age, income or lifestyle of the consumer, the available time (until the product is needed), the knowledge or experience of the consumer or even by social expectations, like for example the thought what family members or friends would think about it (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 226).

Influencing the consumer behaviour (for example through social media marketing) is a time intense process. If a brand desires the consumers understanding or acceptance for either a specific message, product or the brand image, it takes time and an intense strategic preparation of delivering the right content or message towards the consumer (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 41). Another important factor nowadays, through the use of the internet and the increased availability of information and choices, the consumer has many opportunities to compare different products by factors such as the price, quality, delivery time or optic. Even some specialized websites on comparison exist to help the consumers to make their best possible purchasing decision (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 14).

4.1.1 Cultural impact on consumer behavior

As a result of the globalization, marketing strategies are getting more and more cross-cultural and have fewer local limitations. Nevertheless, there are still differences within the different cultures and how individuals of different cultures react to specific marketing strategies. A marketing strategy, which positively influences the consumer behaviour in one country, might have a negative impact on the consumers in another country. The openness for different products or strategies differs from culture to culture. That makes the creation of a consumer behaviour influencing marketing strategy in the globalized working world challenging for brands and companies, which would like to reach consumers all over the world. Therefore, it can help a company or brand to create different marketing strategies for different target groups, meaning, a company needs to choose or define a specific target group first and then create a strategy or advertisement, which makes a specific product desirable for the consumers of that target group. One way to analyze the possible connections between the markets are the "means-end chains" (Figure 4) (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 110-125).
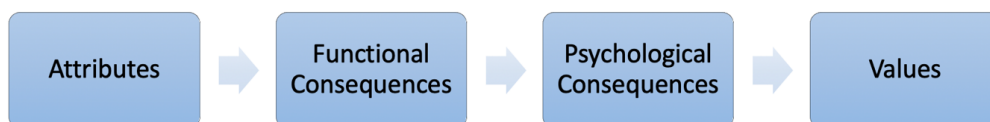
Attributes → Functional Consequences → Psychological Consequences → Values

Figure 4. Means-end chain (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 71)

4.1.2 Brand knowledge, image and awareness

The "means-end chains" (Figure 4) shows the meaning of a specific product based on the consumer's opinion and personal consequences when using or owning the product. These chains can be seen as an important part of the product knowledge, which has an impact on the consumer behavior and the brand loyalty, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The product knowledge is a specific collection of associations a consumer has in combination with a specific brand or product. As you can see in Figure 4, the model is based on four stages. The first stage involves knowledge about the product itself. What does the consumer know about a particular product? In the second stage, the consumer is thinking about the consequences of the usage. What are the

benefits of using or owning it? Does it help to reach a specific goal, and if yes, how? What does the product do? The third stage is on a psychological base and involves important questions such as how the consumer feels about using this particular product or what do other people might think about someone else using it. The last stage of this model are the values, represented by the "end state" of the behavior. It may be for example a better feeling about the own personality or an increase of self-confidence (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 65-72).

Next to the brand knowledge, the brand image and the brand awareness play an important role in connection with influencing the consumer behavior too. The brand image is a combination out of a social and a psychological meaning together with the physical characteristics of a specific brand. The psychological meaning develops from the feelings and the thoughts the consumer generates either from own or other consumers experiences (word of mouth). Especially through the use of social media, the word-of-mouth effect is increasingly important. Consumers can search for example for product review videos or research what their role models (in the fitness industry for example athletes) might think about the product, before they decide to buy or not buy a product. Like this, individuals easily connect positive or negative feelings with a brand, meaning if they buy a product from a specific brand, they also buy the feeling status they connect with this brand (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 49-50). While the brand image is more connected to the feelings, brand awareness is based on recall and recognition. Recalling describes the connection between something a person knows with a specific brand (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 52). For example, an athlete wants to buy new quality gym pants and immediately thinks about the gym pants of Gymshark, which are in athlete circles increasingly popular and which is a brand that offers a variety of gym pants in different styles, colours and sizes (Website of Gymshark 2020). Recognition describes the process of connecting a specific product with a specific brand in the head when seeing it. For example, if a person sees a tick as a logo, he or she most likely connects it automatically with the brand "Nike" (Website of About Nike 2020 & East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 52).

4.2 Consumer behavior models

When consumer considers different purchasing options, there are three different models, which can be taken into consideration, before the consumer does the final decision whether to buy or not buy a product of a specific brand. The cognitive model, the reinforcement model or the habit model (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7,9).

The cognitive model presupposes rationality when making a purchasing decision, which means there are valid and reasonable arguments which lead to a purchase. The augmenting process can be influenced through additional information about the brand or product or a comparison between different options. This model of making a purchasing decision is often used when buying a product (or anything from a specific brand) for the first time and there is no own experience to base the decision on. This process may be unconsciously influenced through advertisement or word of mouth through others without own research for comparison (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7,9). The word of mouth process has been a very popular method used to spread information, which became even quicker and easier through the use of the internet and social media. Especially if consumers like a product or brand, which has been recommended to them before, they are most likely going to recommend it further on. As seen in "Figure 5", for example in Instagram, an influencer can introduce and recommend a specific brand to his or her followers, which may keep sharing it with their followers and so on. Like this, opinions, no matter if positive or negative ones, spread quick and far and can either benefit or hurt a brand or its image (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 181, 257). The cognitive system is furthermore responsible for mental processes such as understanding and interpreting a specific brand or product, deciding if it is good, bad, favorable or etc., thinking about how a problem can be solved or goal be reached or simply comparing different products and deciding which one might be the better option (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 41).
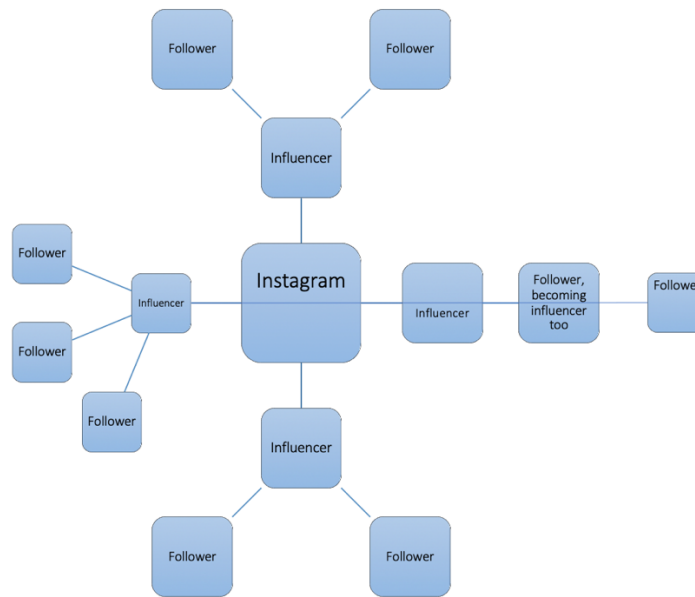
Figure 5. Word of mouth model re-creation for Instagram Influencers (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 257)

As already mentioned above, the environment is important for the behavior of individuals. In connection with the cognitive system, the environment and the different stimuli, which can occur from the environment, may lead to decisions or actions. The affective systems responses are factors such as emotions, feelings, moods or evaluations, while the cognitive system is based on knowledge, beliefs and meanings. As seen in Figure 6, each side of the model can influence the other side, for example if someone is in a really good mood, he or she might buy something, which he or she would not have bought while being in a bad mood. This means, a brand should always try to reach both, the affective and the cognitive system, since both systems in combination create the brand image and influencing them in the end leads to a positive or negative purchasing decision or brand image. If a consumer decides to buy something and therefore creates his or her own experience, the experience may change the previous knowledge, which can lead to a changed behavior towards a brand. Nevertheless, brands can influence the behavior of consumers through promotions or advertisements (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 22-23, 42).
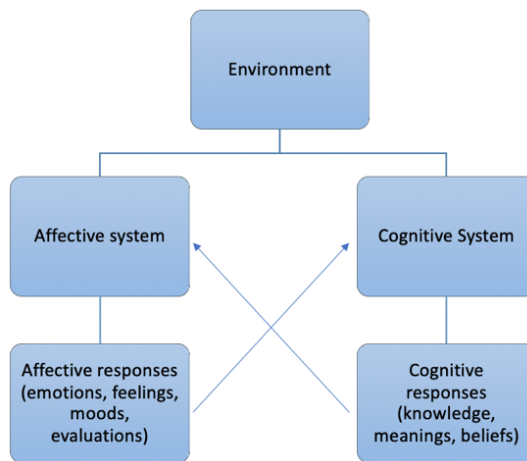
Figure 6. Relationship between affective and cognitive systems (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 41)

The reinforcement model assumes, that the choice of the consumer is influenced through environmental factors, which make a specific option the most beneficial compared to others, but it differs for each individual, since some options might be more beneficial in some persons eyes than in others (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7). For example, if a person is relatively new in the fitness industry and does not have much experience of which brand provides good quality and which does not, the consumer might make random choices until he or she, by coincidence, finds a brand, which he or she likes and stays loyal to. Nevertheless, each consumer gains knowledge and experience through the consumption of specific goods within the time and connect the brand with specific characteristics after becoming familiar with it. This can be used in promotions and advertisements, the connection of a brand with specific characteristics, and is called "shaping". Classic conditioning (connecting specific characteristics with a brand) can also lead to further purchases of a brand. For example, if a person is on holiday and he or she forgot the sports supplements at home, the athlete will most likely buy familiar products in the store, if he or she sees the brand and recognizes it in the unfamiliar store, for example trough package design (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 10-12).

The third model is called "habit model" and as its name already says, it is about the habits of doing something regularly. In this case, purchasing for example products of the same brand over and over again. In this model, the characteristics of the brand or product, such as the design, shape, smell or etc., might influence the purchasing

decision and the consumer remembers this when thinking about a new purchase and there is not enough experience or knowledge, which lead to switching the brand. In this model, the person does not think about any other alternatives before doing a purchase, only after doing the purchase, for example if the consumer is not satisfied with the product. This model makes it highly challenging for a new brand to gain more consumers by breaking their habits. Often, advertisements or promotions are not enough to reach the consumers attention, because the other brand, which the consumer consumes, has the "stimuli control", which is the stimuli control over purchasing decision based on a brand name, a logo or other factors. In this case, free samples might be an option for a new brand to reach new consumers and develop their brand awareness (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7, 12-13).

4.3 Brand and customer loyalty

Brand and customer loyalty are important factors in the consumer behaviour anyway. If a consumer buys one product type from more than one brand, it can be caused because of too little brand awareness, negative experiences, the desire for a variety or other personal reasons. Also factors such as discounts from other brands, availability or word of mouth can have an influence on the consumers behaviour and choice or may lead to switching the brand. Nevertheless, studies state, that long-term customers are usually more likely to spend more money on a specific brand than short-time customers (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 29, 32-34, 39). Especially in the highly competitive markets, such as the markets in the fitness industry, it is extremely challenging to gain new customers, and therefore, loyal customers are important (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 353),

When talking about customer loyalty, three different types can be considered. The first type of customer is buying more than one brand, therefore, it is called "share". The share of how much the customer buys from which brand can be individually split. The second type is called "retention" and describes a customer, who is loyal to a brand and returns to it for re-purchases over a long time period. The third type is called "recruit" and is an extremely valuable customer type for a brand. This type of customer does not only buy the products from a brand, the customer additionally recommends this

brand to others, meaning the person is sharing a positive word of mouth to motivate others to buy the same brand. Generally, if a customer feels good about a brand and is satisfied with it, the customer is more likely to return and might become a loyal customer. Not only satisfaction has an impact on the behavior, also any other kind of emotions connected to the brand, such as the attitude, commitment or trust, influence the consumer behavior. Some brands try to create loyalty through reward systems, meaning if a consumer returns and purchases regularly, the loyalty will be rewarded, for example, through discounts or other benefits (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 27-28, 45).

Discounts in general, not only in reward systems, are attractive to consumers. It can help to increase the demand and discounts are especially popular in specific seasons, in which the consumers expect a brand to have discounts. A too high price can make even a loyal customer switch to another brand, while other customers might connect high prices with good quality in their minds, which does not always equal (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 87, 198-199).

4.4 Learning, influencing and the internet

As already mentioned, the internet gives the consumers many benefits, such as the opportunity to compare choices, prices, availability and many more crucial factors. This creates a highly competitive market and leads to an average decreasing price in most industries. Nevertheless, also factors such as trust are important. If for example a customer regularly does the purchases through a specific website he or she already trusts, the probability, that the customer returns to that website instead of purchasing from another, which might offer the same product slightly cheaper, is high (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 14-15). In social media for example, the brands pay for the advertisements in the hope to influence and change the knowledge of the consumers to make them buy something from that brand (Jeff Orlowski's film The Social Dilemma 2020).

To change the consumer behavior and increase the sales, there are three different models of learning: the overt modelling, covert modelling and verbal modelling. In the

overt modelling, an individual learns through watching another individual and evaluating the consequences of the other person using a specific product. If the consequences are positive, the person will buy the same, if they are negative, the person has learned to avoid that product or brand. In the covert modelling, the person cannot see the product or brand, but can only hear what someone else tells about it with the consequence of imagining the product, like for example in radio advertisements. In the verbal modelling, an individual is told how other individuals in the same kind of situation act, which consequently creates standards or social norms an individual is likely to imitate. It can also help to create trust, if the person sees, that another one is using the same product and had good experiences with it (Peter, Olson, & Grunert, 1999, 207-211).

5 FITNESS INDUSTRY

As mentioned above, a healthy and fitness-oriented lifestyle is becoming center of attention (Koch & Luu 2015, 3) and people are searching for knowledge, inspiration and motivation. Consequently, in the fitness industry, social media is an increasingly important becoming media as well, even if it will not replace the traditional media in this industry. When athletes interact with brands in social media, the athlete is usually either seeking for a sponsorship or engagement (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 92).

Generally, the fitness industry has the characteristic, that it has two different fields of marketing: marketing the sports itself or marketing through the sports. In the first option, a specific team, game, sport, organization or etc. is promoted, while through the second option the sports or an athlete is used to promote a specific good or service, which does not directly need to be related to the sports. While in the fitness industry traditionally locations such as the gyms, stadiums, expos, ice halls or other locations directly related to the sports are the marketplace, social media creates marketing opportunities online and availability even at the user's home is possible. Through social media use, companies can get an inside view of the consumers' needs and

wishes and develop their products adjusted to those, while the influencers in this sector usually are athletes, who promote different brands and products on their channels (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 29, 35-42, 65-66).

5.1 Traditional versus influencer marketing

Often traditional advertisement can seem artificial and may even lead to a negative response (Backaler & Shankmann 2018, 9), while fitness influencers seem trustworthy and may give their followers the feeling of getting an insider view and being provided with honest and reliable opinions or recommendations by the athlete (influencer) (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 79). But not only the brands themselves or their sponsored influencers are sharing content in this industry, also the customers are sharing their experiences and visual content in social media with other fans of the brand or linking the brand to their content. This makes them be a part of the advertisement, since they can even unwittingly act as "brand ambassadors" or "micro influencers", when the shared content arouses the attention for the specific brand (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 89-90).

5.2 Athlete cooperation example

If a brand is cooperating with an athlete, who is an active influencer, the brand has the opportunity to reach the fan base of the athlete through his or her influence or even create products in cooperation with the athlete, like for example Whitney Simmons, a competitive gymnastics athlete, is working together with Gymshark, a sports clothing brand and is releasing her second own Gymshark collaboration collection in October 2020 (Website of Gymshark 2020). The brand Gymshark does not only benefit from the shared contend, promotions and reviews done by Whitney Simmons, they also reuse her content for their own advertisement or share her workout videos, in which she can be seen wearing Gymshark clothes (Website of Gymshark 2020, Instagram 2020). For example, in Figure 7, Whitney Simmons wears pieces of the collection and shares her workout program, while only mentioning the clothing pieces as a side effect, but nevertheless, arousing both, brand awareness for Gymshark and potential desire of

the consumers for those clothing pieces (Website of Instagram 2020). This is just one example, that shows, that even if social media is not always the best place for directly making sales through the platform, it helps to enhance the users to desire a specific product and motivates them to buy it later on or simply inform them about upcoming releases, discounts or any other brand events (Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide 2013, 181).

Figure 7. Athlete as sponsored influencer (Website of Instagram 2020)

For the further research part, in which the impact on an individual's consumer behavior can be influenced by an Instagram Influencer from the fitness industry, will mainly focus on the fitness industry in form of athletes, who are interested in weight and strength training, cardiovascular training or other training, which mainly takes part in a gym. According to Leaver, Highfield and Abidin, Instagram influencers are able to influence individuals through their content, depending on the shared content or kind of profile (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin 2020, 73).

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research method

For this research-based thesis, I have been using a mixed method research principle. That means, I have been using both, qualitative and quantitative research methods. This thesis theory development was based on an abductive approach, meaning it was a combination out of the deductive and inductive approach. The inductive approach focuses more on defining and explaining a specific topic, such as the different fields like fitness industry, consumer behavior or Instagram influencer in my thesis, and is based on a qualitative research method. The deductive approach is based on an empirical observation process, in this case my survey. Therefore, a combination out of both, the deductive approach, provides results from the observation through the survey and additionally possible reasons and explanations for those results based on the research material (Pirkanaho 2020).

6.2 Data gathering

In the first part, the research is mainly based on qualitative research through secondary data, in the second part, additionally to the qualitative research and data, my own survey provides primary data for a quantitative research. Primary data is usually more precise and may deliver more suitable data for the own research. It has been collected with the aim to answer the questions of this specific research, in this case the thesis topic, while the secondary data is data, which has originally been gathered for another purpose, for example books, articles or other sources. When talking about secondary data, two types of secondary data may help with the research, either the internal (within an organization) or the external secondary data (Stevens, Loudon, Ruddick, Wrenn, & Sherwood, 2005, 90-92). For this thesis, the used secondary data consists of external secondary data.

6.3 Online Survey

The primary data for this thesis were collected in form of an online survey. The survey platform was "SurveyMonkey" (Website of SurveyMonkey.com 2020). Goal of the survey was to reach at least 200 answers for to create a reliable frame for the analysis. The researcher was hoping to reach people of the specific target group: active Instagram users, following at least one fitness influencer and who are sporty active by themselves. To reach this specific target group, the researcher has shared the link to the online survey (convenience sampling method) in her own social media channels. The link was shared in the researcher's Instagram story, her Instagram biography and furthermore in sports and weight-lifting related Facebook community groups. The Facebook groups each have several thousands of members from different countries and cultures, but they all do have one for the researcher crucial factor in common: the interest in fitness and fitness related brands, as well as athletes.

The survey was open from the 29.10.2020 until the 09.11.2020 and received a total of 554 answers within that time. 23 questions in total were included in the survey, either multiple choice, several answer choice-, rating or open-ended questions. The gathered data covered demographic and socioeconomic data, such as the age, gender or interests of the participants, attitude data, such as their behavior towards influencers, lifestyle data, such as individual characteristics like the importance of fitness in the participants lifestyle, and motivational data, such as why they follow influencers. The combination of those data was supposed to help the understanding the possible target group, as well as answering the research objectives and how the different parts of the research objectives interact or may benefit from each other (Stevens, Loudon, Ruddick, Wrenn, & Sherwood, 2005, 100-102).

The benefits of an online survey were the possibility to create a rather long questionnaire, getting fast replies on a low cost level and even being able to involve participants from different countries and cultures to create a more realistic variety of answers (Stevens, Loudon, Ruddick, Wrenn, & Sherwood, 2005, 123).

6.4 Data analysis

For the data analysis, the survey results were the key factor. The results were carefully gone through and categorized to see possible patterns or different possible target groups, which can be influenced in different ways. While analyzing the data collected through the survey, statistical significance tests in form of the p-value analysis were taken into consideration (Pirkanaho 2020).

If the p-value is used for the analysis of data from surveys, the statistical significance level is usually shown in a number between zero and one. This number is called "p-value". If the p-value is smaller than 0.05, the result is statistically significant and may prove, that the answers could be depending on a specific factor such as for example the age, gender or any other factor, that could have been used as "null hypothesis". The "null hypothesis" concerns a relationship between two factors, like in this case the Instagram influencer and the consumer behavior (Website of Simply Psychology 2019). The hypothesis for the analysis of this survey will either support the assumption, that Instagram influencer in the fitness industry can influence the consumer behavior of their followers, or it will show, that they cannot do this. Nevertheless, the hypothesis will be based on more than one independent variable, since there are many factors involved in the purchasing decisions based on the consumer behavior. As seen in the chapter about consumer behavior, next to knowledge, also trust plays an important role. Furthermore, the role of the "word of mouth" principle is crucial as well and as seen in the quote in the introduction, people trust other people more than artificial seeming advertisements. Therefore, the statistical significance test provides a p-value, which either rejects or proves the truth of the null hypothesis in the following chapters. If the p-value is bigger than 0.05, the chance, that the hypothesis is true, is high (Website of Simply Psychology 2019).

6.5 Validity and reliability

Reliability in the research comes from either observing something for a longer time period (test-retest reliability), observing the regularity of processes or happenings or by taking many different information sources from different researchers into

consideration (Website of BCcampus, 2020). For this thesis, the researcher has been using sources from many different researchers in the research part of the thesis (the secondary data) and has partly compared the information from different sources about the same topics, to ensure the reliability of the sources. Furthermore, the researcher is optimistic about the sources itself since most of the secondary data sources are subject-specific (scientific) books or articles from professional websites.

The validity of this thesis is based on the use of the fitting sources for the topic choice and the different variables of the thesis, as well as the right choice of target group of the survey participants. The sources are as already mentioned, mainly professional books, articles or websites which do fit the topic of the research. The survey's validity is ensured due to convenient sampling method, with which the right target group could be filtered out from the social media account of the researcher and additionally, the first three questions of the questionnaire. The first three questions of the questionnaire ensured, that the person does fit the right and valuable target group for this research. If any of the first three questions would have answered with "no" (and therefore, the participant would not have represented the right target group anymore), the participant could not have proceeded to the following questions, which were the base for the analysis and conclusions of this research. Another proof for the reliability and validity of the research results (the survey results) is based on the participants of the survey. Not only had the survey a cross-cultural target group and field of participants, it also had more than 550 answers in total. In general, the more answers a survey has, the more realistic and valuable the get for the research.

7 RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1 Data from the survey

The survey, which was available on the internet from the 29.10.2020 until the 09.11.2020 and received a total of 554 answers (N=554), had 23 questions, which are attached in Appendix 1. The survey started with three questions, which all had to be

answered with "yes" in order to be able to continue with the following further 20 questions. The questions were supposed to make sure, that the participating person is a relevant person for the content of the survey. The questions ensured, that the person is actively using Instagram (at least twice per week), is interested in a healthy lifestyle and is sporty active and is following at least one fitness influencer on Instagram.

After answering all three first question with yes, the following questions of the survey were relevant. If a participant did answer at least one of the above-mentioned questions with "no", the participant could not finish the rest of the questions and automatically skipped the rest of the survey. The questions of the survey were separated in five different categories, but nevertheless, the categories themselves did not influence the order of the questions, so that not all of the questions from one category would follow onto each other. In this way, the participant was less likely to identify the categories by him- or herself while doing the survey. The categories were: general questions, information about the participant, (Instagram post) content related questions, purchasing related questions and questions more related to the influencers.

The independent variables in the survey were factors such as the gender, age group or educational background. The dependent variables are those, which affect the outcome of the survey (CSSLOhioStateU, 2014), so in this survey the influence of the Instagram fitness influencer on the consumer behavior. The variables are split in four different categories: the nominal variables, which have only one possible outcome, such as the gender, the ordinal variables, which are for example the rating questions of this survey, the interval variables, which have a numeral identical interval between the different answer choices, and the ratio variables, which are variables, that have a natural (numerous) null point. In this survey, there have been only nominal and ordinal variables, but nevertheless, the rating questions, in which the participant could choose a number between one and five, cannot just be seen as an ordinal, but also as an interval variable, because the interval between the different rating options remains the same (CSSLOhioStateU, 2014).

Most of the participants were female (86%) and in the age from 19 to 24 years (about 54%). The second biggest age group consisted of participants in the age between 25 to 34 and smallest age groups were 15 to 18, followed by 35 to 44 and 45 or older.

Furthermore, most of the participants were either university (or similar) students (46,5%) or in the working life (46%), which is also reflecting the most popular age groups. That shows, that the people, who have passed the first three questions and support the researcher's expectations of a possible target group of mainly female young adults, most likely have access to financial assets in order to be able to purchase fitness related products. Since the researcher has used conveniece sampling method by sharing the survey link mainly in the researcher's own (fitness related) Instagram account and different weigh-lifting and fitness related Facebook community groups, the researcher was hoping to receive several answers from participants from the above described target group. As the numbers of the survey show, the expectations were fulfilled.

The question "How important is fitness to you?", which had to be rated on a scale from one (not at all important) to five (very important), showed, that almost three quarters of the participants think, that fitness is very important, while only about one percent of the participants think, that fitness is not important. About 25% described fitness on a scale from one to five as a three or four. That shows, that fitness has a high relevance in most of the participants life and therefore, the results may be valuable for fitness related brands, since the participants seem to be a good target group based on their interest in a fitness lifestyle and the expected desire of fitness products in order to be able to follow their fitness lifestyle.

Questions eight and nine were directly related to the content and the participants could choose more than one option of preferences. It was visible, that videos (>80%) are the most popular choice of preferred content, closely followed by pictures (60%). That supports the visual aspect of Instagram as marketing platform. Only about 22% of the participants have their focus more on the description texts of the posts. Next to the traditionally posted content, some of the participants stated, that they are mainly interested in the stories, which are a very interesting marketing and self-branding tool for the influencers as well. As the actual content in the fitness industry, the participants of the survey stated, that they are mainly interested in workout videos or instructions (>77%) and lifestyle tips and inspiration (75%), less in product reviews or recommendations (34%). About one quarter of the survey participants would say, that product reviews are not trustworthy, while less than 22% would trust those. More than

half of the participants would neither directly agree nor disagree with the trustworthiness of a product review. Nevertheless, paid promotions in product reviews seem to have a negative influence on the trustworthiness of the review. People might not believe in the honesty and reliability of the influencer in this case. This may be one of the reasons, that reflects on the smaller interest in direct product reviews on the influencer's channels.

Since fitness influencer's lifestyle seems to be very interesting for their followers, the chance to place the promoted products within their "natural lifestyle" when sharing it, might be a beneficial combination out of promoting the product and sharing their lifestyle at the same time. Nevertheless, the followers of the influencer want to see natural posts (see open answers in the Appendix) and actually learn from the fitness influencer, who is in this case in the role of an expert on this field (health and fitness). The fitness influencer is the role-model, who is providing valuable tips and educational information, more than 77% of the participants stated, fitness influencers motivate and inspire them to live a healthier and more active life.

Furthermore, from the open answers of those questions, the desire of seeing positivity and an inspirational message was highly demanded. The followers do not only want to see the sports related content, but also the private and natural lifestyle of their role models (influencers). This does also include other health related topics such as nutritional tips and mental health. This can be used by fitness related brands as well, since many brands offer nutritional products such as protein powders, vitamins or others.

The survey results showed clearly, that besides the trust factor of an influencer, also the personal benefits and the individual need of the promoted product are crucial for the final purchasing decision. More than 80% of the survey participants stated, that they have at least once already purchased a product, which they have found through an influencer, more than 50% even said, that they find new products through influencers on a regular basis. More than 60% of the participants agreed, that they are most likely going to buy a product recommended by an inflouencer, if they like it. Since the open answers of the survey showed as well, that some of the people who follow influencers are partly finding products from the influencers, which they have

been looking for but did not know where to search for them by themselves. All in all, the combination of those questions show, that the influencer promotions do provide the opportunity for a brand to reach more customers and motivate them to purchase the product, especially because they might have been looking for a similar product and got the information of the availability from exactly that brand from a specific influencer. Nevertheless, the product needs to fit to the person's taste, goals and budget as well.

As seen in Figure 8 (please find the full answer choices in Appendix 1), the most popular reasons to look at a product and consider to buy it are if there is a promotion code of the influencer available, the brand or price is directly tagged or there is a "swipe up" (direct) link to the product or brand in the influencer's story post. This shows, that the direct connection and easy way of finding the product or further product information is important for the followers and potential customers. Less important are the hashtags like "#sponsored", giveaways or other reasons. The open answers (as seen in the Appendix 1 and 2), show, that the followers want the product to support their individual goals and desires, meaning it has to match their lifestyle choices and goals, it needs to benefit the individual and it should have a positive review, preferably even a non-paid review.
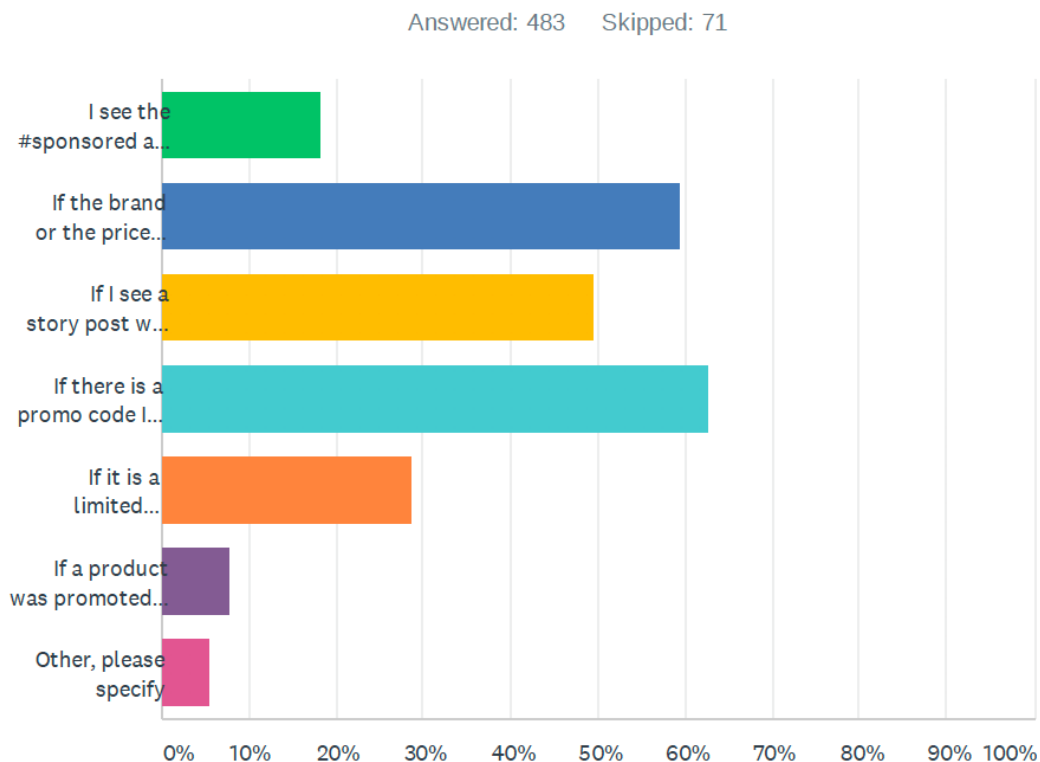
Answered: 483   Skipped: 71

Figure 8. Purchasing decision influence question: "I am most likely going to check out a product, if (please choose one or more options)…" (Researcher's Online Survey on Surveymonkey.com, 2020)

Furthermore, as already mentioned, trust is crucial: if the follower does not trust the influencer's opinion or honesty, he or she is most likely not going to trust the product or brand either. Both, the open answers and the previous answers to the different questions of the online survey show, that the access to information is important for the potential customer to make a purchasing decision. This is also clearly explained in the consumer behavior chapter (chapter 4), the knowledge has an impact on purchasing decisions. In the end, influencers basically do get paid by the brands for creating knowledge for the potential (new) customers in order to make them buy the product (Jeff Orlowski's film The Social Dilemma 2020). This is also proven in the cognitive model of the consumer behavior (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7,9): if a person has knowledge about a brand and can create rational and reasonable arguments to support the purchasing decision, the person is most likely going to buy exactly that (reasonable) product from exactly that brand. If there is not enough access to information or missing knowledge, the customers often follow the habits model (East, Wright, & Vanhuele, 2013, 7,9) of consumer behavior and purchase the same product as they have used to buy over a longer time period already, since they do have

knowledge about that product already and it is the easiest option for the person in that moment.

When it comes to choosing the right influencer for a brand, it can become really challenging, since there is a wide variety of available influencers and different aspects the followers pay attention to. In general, as already explained in the chapter about consumer behavior, trust and knowledge can influence the consumer behavior and therefore purchasing decisions. The trust in an influencer and the knowledge the influencer provides the follower therefore can be a crucial factor in a purchasing decision. Generally, while more than 50% of the survey participants would neither say they trust or do not trust a fitness influencer, the opinions are split, but more do trust the influencers (>30%) than not (<12%). That shows, that next to the neutral perspective, the trend goes into the direction of a positive attitude towards the influencers. This can be caused through the role model function of the influencer. The followers want to learn from the influencers and therefore, trust in their experiences, knowledge and skill is required and desired.

The amount of followers does not seem to have a huge impact on the trustworthiness of the influencer, nevertheless, the survey results show, that some of the followers still think it plays an important role. Finding a right balance between a good amount of followers and the original purpose and goal of the influencer marketing is the key role in this case. As seen in table 1, there are different sizes of influencers. A successful influencer might not necessarily be a celebrity influencer, but to spread a brand or product efficiently, the influencer does need to reach some people and therefore, a nano influencer might not be enough. Nevertheless, the amount of followers has only a limited impact on the trustworthiness of the influencer itself and might develop and increase within the time.

As shown in the previous paragraphs, while product reviews by an influencer seem less trustworthy, the product itself seems to become more attractive to buy for the follower, if the follower sees, that the influencer uses the product in the "private" life as well (>80% think that). This once again supports the role model and inspirational position of the influencer for the followers. The "private" lifestyle of the influencer can lead to product and purchasing decisions of the followers. Therefore, it plays an

important role what kind of products the influencer shares as part of his or her own usage decision. This may or may not be a paid promotion, while most likely a non-paid promotion can have an even bigger impact on the opinion of the followers.

Furthermore, the professionality of the influencer plays an important role as well. As already explained in the chapter about influencer in the research part, influencers are often considered as some kind of an expert in a specific field, in this case for example fitness and nutrition. If an influencer has a specific certificate or proof for the professional knowledge, the trustworthiness in highly increasing.

Nevertheless, next to the content, lifestyle and professional background of the influencer, and also the physical shape partly matters for the followers. An influencer is supposed to deliver a positive message and share "good vibes" with the followers, nevertheless, especially in the fitness industry, the followers are seeking for fitness motivation and body goal role models. Usually in this industry, a desired body type is a sporty figure, healthy and with muscles. This was also partly shown in the answers of the participants in the online survey. While only about one quarter of the participants would not rate this as a very important factor for the trustworthiness of the influencer, more than 40% would say, that this has an impact on the trustworthiness. This might be caused by the role-model function, since the followers are looking for inspiration for their own body and their own goals. Therefore, the physical shape of the influencer may become a part of a brand's decision factors towards or against a specific influencer. While the physical shape and the mental attitude of the influencer are important factors in the follower's eyes, the actual location or language is less important. More than 70% of the survey participants stated, that they even prefer to follow international influencers and the physical location does not matter in their eyes.

Especially these survey questions were considered as basis for answering the research objective whether the consumers do or do not trust the influencer's and what could actually make an influencer trustworthy in the consumer's or follower's eyes.

7.2 Data analysis and statistical significance

For a better analysis of the results, the researcher has exanimated the statistical significance and created a hypothesis and null hypothesis. A statistical significance shows, that the relationship between two (or more) variables is not a contingency, but they are in a coherence. The null hypothesis is a hypothesis, which states, that the variables have no effect on each other, while the (research) hypothesis, which can be one- or two-way direction, shows, that there is an effect or relationship between the variables (CSSLOhioStateU, 2014). Since trust plays one of the key roles in the consumer behavior and the relationship between the influencers and their followers, the researcher has created the following null and research hypothesis for the analysis of the statistical significance:

Null Hypothesis: Trust does not play any role in the consumer behavior of the fitness influencer followers towards their purchasing decisions after the impact of the influencer.

(Research) Hypothesis: The trust towards an Instagram fitness influencer empowers the influencer to impact the consumer behavior of their followers.

Furthermore, to analyze the quantitative data, the researcher has used the p-value to reject or support the (null) hypothesis. The p-value may show the probability to have an error within the results when for example either rejecting or proving the null hypothesis. For this survey's analysis, the researcher has chosen the alpha of 0.05, which is also called Type I error. This means, that the researcher assumes a relationship between the different variables (the influencer marketing and the consumer behavior of the followers). If there is no relationship between the variables, the hypothesis can be rejected, and the null hypothesis accepted. The alpha of 0.05 (p-value of 0.05) states, that the researcher is willing to accept a 5% chance of making this explained Type I error (Website of CSULB, 2020).

To analyze and calculate the statistical significance, questions nine and eleven of the online survey were compared. The researcher has chosen those two independent

variables to create a null and research hypothesis and analyze a possible relationship of the variables, because after carefully studying the survey results, the researcher assumed a possible relationship between those two variables, which may be an important factor in the consumer behavior influence on Instagram.

To make the comparison less complex, the rating of the question eleven was summarized from originally five into three categories. "Strongly disagree" and "disagree" represent the category "no trust", "strongly agree" and "agree" are represented by the category "trust" and "neither disagree or agree" is represented by the neutral category.

7.3 Chi-Square analysis and results

A Chi Square test, also called X^2 statistics, can be used to test a specific hypothesis and either reject or prove it (Website of Investopedia 2020). The test can be used in two different situations, either to test a possible relationship between two independent variables (test for independence) or to see if the sample from the test matches the real numbers of an observation (goodness-of fit test) (Website of Statistics How To, 2020). In the Chi Square test, the result depends on the different variables (in this case the trust level and if the person either did or did not buy a through an influencer found product), the sample size, the degree of freedom and the expected outcome, compared with the actual outcome from the survey (Website of Investopedia 2020). The calculations in Table 4 to 6 were based on the survey results (answers given by the participants) and the following formular from Figure 9:

$$\chi_c^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$$

Figure 9. Chi Square Formula (Website of Investopedia, 2020)

In Figure 9 above, the Chi Square Formular is shown. X_c^2 represents the Chi Square value. E_i are the expected values and O_i shows the observed values. The values for the calculations and the calculation results can be found in Table 4,5 and 6. Table 4 shows

the observed values from the survey, meaning the actual amount of answers per category compared to each other (O_i). Table 5 shows the calculated expected results of the relationship between the variables (trust level and purchasing decision) E_i. Table 6 shows the Chi Square statistics, or X_c^2 value. With the help of those numbers, the Chi square statistics and the actual p-value were calculated.

Table 4. Observed cells for the Chi-Square Test (Online Survey of the researcher in Surveymonkey.com, 2020)

Bought the product	O_i: no trust	O_i: neutral	O_i: trust	O_i: Total
yes	39 (9,7%)	217 (54,1%)	145 (36,2%)	401 (100% of yes; 83% of total)
no	17 (20,5%)	48 (57,8%)	18 (21,7%)	83 (100% of no; 17% of total)
Total	56 (11,6%)	265 (54,8%)	163 (33,7%)	484 (100%)

Table 5. Expected cells totals (E_i) (Online Survey of the researcher in Surveymonkey.com, 2020)

Bought the product	E_i: no trust	E_i: neutral	E_i: trust	E_i: Total
yes	46,4 (11,6%)	219,56 (54,8%)	135,05 (33,7%)	401
no	9,6 (11,6%)	45,44 (54,7%)	27,95 (33,7%)	83
Total	56 (11,6%)	265 (54,8%)	163 (33,7%)	484

Table 6. Chi-Square statistics (Online Survey of the researcher in Surveymonkey.com, 2020)

Bought the product	X_i^2: no trust	X_i^2: neutral	X_i^2: trust	X_i^2: Total
yes	46,4	219,56	135,05	401
no	9,6	45,44	27,95	83
Total	56	265	163	484

With the numbers, which are shown in the tables above, the researcher was able to calculate the Chi Square statistic and the p-value. The calculations of the Chi-Square analysis showed a result of a chi-square statistic of 11.3268 and a p-value of 0.003471. Generally, the lower the Chi-Square value, the higher is the chance of a strong relationship between the two different variables (Website of Statistics How To, 2020).

To ensure the assumed relationship, the researcher decided to focus on the p-value for either accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis.

The null hypothesis for seeing if there is a possible relationship between the observed consumer behavior and the very important seeming factor "trust" was the following: "Trust does not play any rule in the consumer behavior of the fitness influencer followers towards their purchasing decisions after the impact of the influencer.". Due to a p-value, of 0.003471, which is smaller than 0.05, the calculations showed a statistical significance and the null hypothesis can be rejected. Furthermore, the researcher's assumption and research hypotheses can be accepted. That means, that there is a relationship between the level of trust or trust factor of the potential customer and the influencers, and it has an impact on the power of the influencer to influence the purchasing decisions of his or her followers. With the rejection of the null hypothesis in this case and the proof of the research hypothesis, the research objective whether a potential customers do or do not trust influencers and if it has an impact on their consumer behavior, was answered.

8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Summary

As the fitness lifestyle is an increasing modern trend, together with the rising usage of social media platforms, the marketing methods have adapted as well. The marketing has changed from the traditional interruption marketing, which often seemed artificial and untrustworthy, to influencer marketing, which is supposed to be more natural and is based on the "word of mouth" principle to create trust and a relationship between the influencing and the interacting party. In the fitness industry, many consumers are using social media platforms, especially Instagram with a focus on visual content, as a place to get inspired, motivated and to learn from their role models (athletes as influencers). Those platforms provide the influencers many different ways of interacting with their audience and promoting their partner brands. Even if the actual

success is difficult to measure, the survey results showed, that influencers seem to have an impact on the consumer behavior, since the influencers are able to provide knowledge and create trust over a longer time period by constantly staying active and creating attention for themselves and the promoted brand.

8.2 Conclusions

The research findings as well as the empirical results showed a clear trend of the visual sharing platforms and its benefits for the marketing. It provides new ways of reaching a huge amount of potential customers within shortest time. Especially the Instagram influencer in the fitness industry can be extremely beneficial for fitness related brands. The influencers have the opportunity to increase the brand awareness or positively influence the image of a brand. Of course, if done wrongly, the effects can also go to the opposite direction, but the chances of a successful marketing strategy are relatively high, if the brand chooses the right influencer and principles for the right target group carefully. There are many different ways of collaborations, but according to the survey results, the most popular ones within the follower's opinions are shared lifestyles more than obviously sponsored partnerships. The followers want to see natural and authentic content, no "fake" recommendations. Honesty and an opinion based on the influencer's own experience are a good way of introducing a brand to the audience. When creating content, it is important to provide the followers further knowledge and access to information about either the brand or the product itself. Even if the followers would prefer unpaid recommendations and partnerships the most, those are more unrealistic in the influencer business, since being an influencer is not only a hobby, but for some even a full-time job. Nevertheless, the influencers are a good opportunity for the brand to share knowledge about a brand or product, so the followers will learn more about it and might break out of old habits and decide to purchase exactly that product in the future. Especially for newer and still unpopular products, this is a great opportunity to reach attention of the right target group.

Of course, the customers do not simply buy products without any reasons. Many participants of the survey stated, that the products need to match their (fitness) goals or have some benefits towards reaching those goals. Nevertheless, sometimes an

influencer can create the desire for a product a customer would usually not have bought, by providing him or her information why exactly that brand could be beneficial for their goals. In this situation, the role of the "expert" of the influencer, often professional athletes, is shown. The influencers in the fitness industry act as role models, motivation and inspiration for many of their followers. Therefore, even the body shape of the influencer might partly be important for the brands, depending on the products and the message the brand wants to send. The content should generally be motivating and deliver the followers some kind of a positive message. Many followers in the fitness industry do not only follow the fitness influencers for workout and nutrition tips and knowledge, but also for mental health coaching, therefore, a natural and positive attitude is crucial.

The probably most important factor of the influencer marketing, especially in the fitness industry with the athlete in the expert and teaching role, is the trust. If the followers and potential customers trust the influencer, they are more likely to listen to their recommendations and try products, they might not have previous own knowledge about. Nevertheless, if the influencer wants to be as successful as possible, he or she needs to share a lot of private content, since the most effective marketing way seems to be the integration of the promotions into the lifestyle and not simple product reviews. If that is done nicely and authentically, influencers have the power to impact the consumer behavior of the consumers in the fitness industry through their Instagram content.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends any fitness related brand to use social media as a tool to reach and interact with its customers, since it is reaching increasing attention nowadays. The active use of social media platforms such as Instagram and moreover, the use of influencers on those platforms, may help the brand to develop a good brand image, awareness and knowledge and furthermore, it can help to receive real-time feedback and globally reach a lot of consumers within a short time. Especially for new

products or brands, the researcher recommends the use of influencer marketing in the fitness industry. It has the big power to reach many people of the right target group and increase the brand awareness.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends to carry out careful research before choosing the influencer. Depending on the brand's goals, the influencer may even be international and should have at least a good reach for the chosen target group. Therefore, for example a nano influencer might not be the right choice, while a celebrity influencer could be over the budget or reach too many customers, so the demand might be too high for the current availability of the products. When choosing the right influencer, a brand should always try to find one, which matches the brand's values and would use the product by him or herself as well, so the influencer can integrate it to the own lifestyle and promote the brand through honest reviews and own experiences with the brand and its products. This seems trustworthy and reliable to the customers and the chance, to influence the consumer behavior of the customers of the right target group is relatively high.

10 FINAL WORDS AND EVALUATION OF THE THESIS

In the researcher's eyes, the gathered information from the research in combination with the survey results, are showing that Instagram influencer in the fitness industry can have a beneficial impact on the consumer behavior while working together with different fitness related brands. The research of this thesis provided a frame, in which all of the different variables needed for successful influencer marketing in the fitness industry, were defined and explained. The survey showed, that the influencer in the fitness industry may have an impact and together with the research findings, the conclusion and summary may provide valid and interesting information for any fitness related brand, that is interested in investing in an influencer cooperation for the future.

From the researcher's point of view, this was a very interesting topic due to private relations to the fitness industry and interest in social media in general. The different

models of consumer behavior and how the social media marketing can be used to impact thus, was extremely informative and lead to an increased interest in social media marketing and its beneficial tools from the researcher's side.

For the further research, the researcher recommends for example to study if it would be beneficial for companies to add influencer's product reviews directly next to the product on the website, so the customers can get additional information and opinions from experts, which might lead to a purchasing decision. Another interesting research question for the future could be if or how the trust of the followers towards an influencer can be increased, since this seems to be an important factor for the consumer behavior. All in all, there are a lot of good research questions related to this topic for the future, because it is a relatively new marketing area and opens many business industries new doors and provides several opportunities.

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Online Survey (Questionnaire)

Q1: Are you actively using Instagram (at least twice per week)?
- Yes
- No

Q2: Are you interested in a healthy lifestyle and are sporty active?
- Yes
- No

Q3: Social Media influencers are persons, who have a lot of followers and are regularly posting content on a social media platform and interact with their followers. In the sports industry, those are often athletes, coaches or etc. who are posting for example workout videos, product reviews and so on. Are you following at least one fitness influencer on Instagram?
- Yes
- No

Q4: What is your gender?
- Male
- Female
- Other

Q5: Which age group do you belong to?
- 15 – 18
- 19 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 +

Q6: How important is fitness to you? (Rating question)
1. Not at all important
2. Somewhat important
3. Very important

Q7: What kind of Instagram content do you prefer from fitness influencers? (choose at least one option)
- Pictures
- Videos
- my focus lays on the description text
- Other, please specify

Q8: I follow fitness influencers mainly for (please choose at least one option)...
- product reviews or recommendations product
- lifestyle and inspiration
- workout videos and instructions
- Other, please specify

Q9: I have at least once already purchased a product or service I found through an influencer. (No matter what kind of influencer or product.)
- Agree
- Disagree

Q10: I find new products through influencers regularly.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q11: Fitness influencers are trustworthy.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q12: The more followers an influencer has, the more trustworthy and professional he/she is.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q13: If an influencer is recommending something, I am most likely going to check out the product.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q14: If I like the recommended product, I am most likely going to buy it.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q15: Influencers' product reviews are trustworthy.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q16: If I know, that the influencer is payed for a specific post, it has a negative impact on the honesty/reliability of the review.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q17: I am more likely to buy/ trust a product, when I know the influencer I trust is using it regularly too.

- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q18: If the influencer has for example a coaching or nutrition certificate, I trust him/her more.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q19: The physical shape of the fitness influencer has an impact on the trustworthiness.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q20: Fitness Influencers motivate and inspire me to live a more active and healthy lifestyle.
- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

Q21: Please choose one of the following statements
- I prefer to follow only influencers who post content in my native language
- I like to follow international influencers (the location does not matter)

Q22: I am most likely to check out a product, if (please choose one or more options) …
- I see the #sponsored and I can search for the brand
- If the brand or the price is directly tagged
- If I see a story post with a "swipe up" link
- If there is a promo code I can use
- If it is a limited influencer collaboration product
- If a product was promoted in a giveaway, but I did not win it
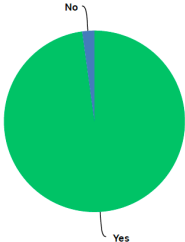- Other, please specify

Q23: What is your professional background?
- student (high school or similar)
- student (university or similar)
- in working life
- Unemployed

Q1 Are you actively using Instagram (at least twice per week)?

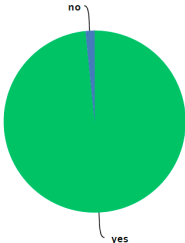Answered: 554   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.83%	542
No	2.17%	12
TOTAL		554

Q2 Are you interested in a healthy lifestyle and are sporty active?

Answered: 554   Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
yes	98.38%	545
no	1.62%	9
TOTAL		554

Q3 Social Media influencers are persons, who have a lot of followers and are regularly posting content on a social media platform and interact with their followers. In the sports industry, those are often athletes, coaches or etc. who are posting for example workout videos, product reviews and so on. Are you following at least one fitness influencer on Instagram?
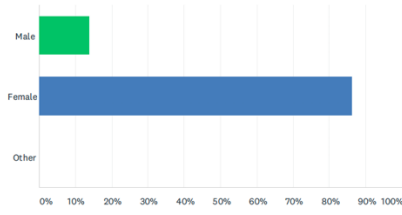
Answered: 554   Skipped: 0
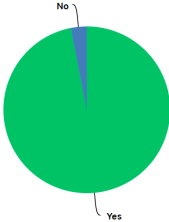
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	96.93%	537
No	3.07%	17
TOTAL		554

Q4 What is your gender?

Answered: 482   Skipped: 72

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	13.90%	67
Female	86.10%	415
Other	0.00%	0
TOTAL		482

Q5 Which age group do you belong to?

Answered: 483   Skipped: 71
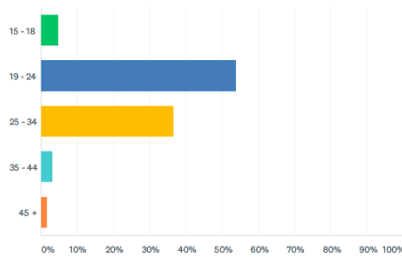
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
15 - 18	4.76%	23
19 - 24	53.83%	260
25 - 34	36.65%	177
35 - 44	3.11%	15
45 +	1.66%	8
TOTAL		483

Q6 How important is Fitness to you? (Rating 1 - 5, 1= not at all important, 5= very important)
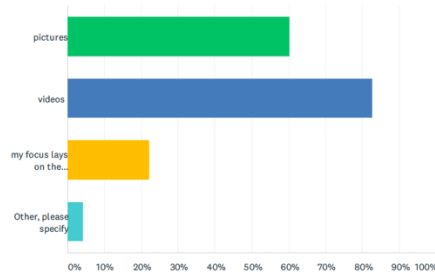
Answered: 483   Skipped: 71
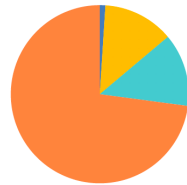
	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.00% 0	1.04% 5	12.84% 62	13.25% 64	72.88% 352	483	4.58

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 2.00	Maximum 5.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.58	Standard Deviation 0.75

Q7 What kind of Instagram content do you prefer from fitness influencers? (choose at least one option)

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
pictures	60.33%	292
videos	82.64%	400
my focus lays on the description text	22.11%	107
Other, please specify	4.13%	20
Total Respondents: 484		

Fitness Influencer on Instagram   SurveyMonkey

#	OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY	DATE
1	Photo carusel	11/4/2020 8:40 PM
2	Natural pictures	11/3/2020 1:19 PM
3	reels and stories	11/2/2020 9:57 PM
4	Nutrition and exercise tips	11/2/2020 8:09 PM
5	Stories	11/2/2020 6:04 PM
6	The workout routines	11/2/2020 6:00 PM
7	The message they spread, positivity	11/2/2020 4:48 PM
8	Videos - workout, educational. Pictures-educational!	11/2/2020 11:36 AM
9	Stories	11/2/2020 10:39 AM
10	Mindset change	11/2/2020 10:18 AM
11	Good tips	10/30/2020 3:16 PM
12	Nutrition	10/30/2020 2:52 PM
13	Stories where they tell their days.	10/30/2020 12:24 PM
14	Reels	10/30/2020 10:57 AM
15	Hilfestellung bspw korrekte Ausführung von Übungen oder Hilfe bei gesunder Ernährung	10/30/2020 10:35 AM
16	Stories	10/30/2020 9:39 AM
17	All three above	10/30/2020 7:23 AM
18	Reels	10/30/2020 12:01 AM
19	general effectiveness of the content being promoted	10/29/2020 11:48 PM
20	Ass pictures	10/29/2020 11:02 PM

Q8 I follow fitness influencers mainly for (please choose at least one option)...

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70
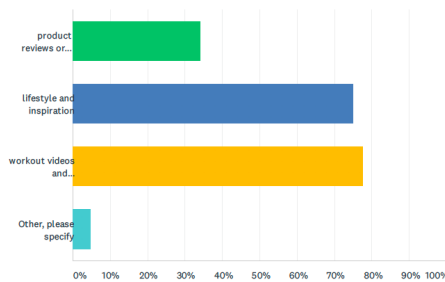
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
product reviews or recommendations	34.09%	165
lifestyle and inspiration	75.00%	363
workout videos and instructions	77.69%	376
Other, please specify	4.75%	23
Total Respondents: 484		

#	OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY	DATE
1	Outfits, lifestyle	11/4/2020 8:40 PM
2	Mental Health	11/3/2020 10:16 AM
3	Evidence-based knowledge & information	11/3/2020 9:28 AM
4	Try on haul of Gymshark	11/2/2020 9:20 PM
5	Science/study breakdown	11/2/2020 8:17 PM
6	Nurtition advice and tips	11/2/2020 8:09 PM
7	A pic of the body I want to work hard for.. they are role models for me	11/2/2020 6:27 PM
8	Motivation for everything, because these influencers give me so much to believe that everything is possible.	11/2/2020 5:19 PM
9	Meals/healthy alternatives for snacks	11/2/2020 5:16 PM
10	Their experience, educational advices	11/2/2020 11:36 AM
11	Motivation	10/30/2020 7:13 PM
12	I'm working on fitness industry myself	10/30/2020 7:13 PM
13	Motivation	10/30/2020 1:11 PM
14	Recipes	10/30/2020 11:48 AM
15	Motivation and positivity	10/30/2020 11:20 AM
16	Motivation	10/30/2020 7:23 AM
17	Healthy recipes	10/30/2020 1:43 AM
18	Healthy diets	10/30/2020 12:12 AM
19	Recipes	10/30/2020 12:01 AM
20	Nutrition tips	10/29/2020 11:54 PM
21	Motivation and a reminder of my goals	10/29/2020 11:39 PM
22	For the meat	10/29/2020 11:02 PM
23	Recipes and food inspiration	10/29/2020 10:57 PM

Q9 I have at least once already purchased a product or service I found through an influencer. (No matter what kind of influencer or product.)

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70
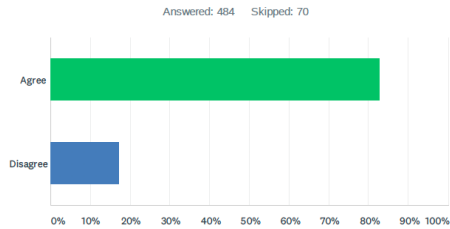
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	82.85%	401
Disagree	17.15%	83
TOTAL		484

Q10 I find new products through influencers regularly.
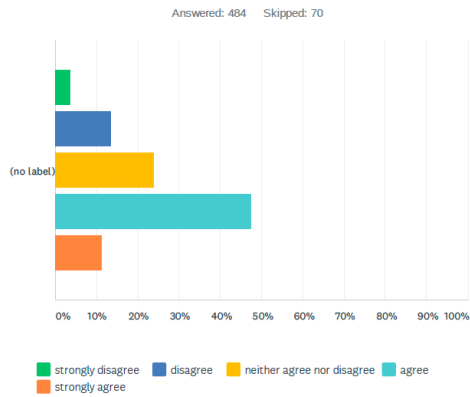
Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	3.72% 18	13.64% 66	23.76% 115	47.52% 230	11.36% 55	484	3.49

Q11 Fitness influencers are trustworthy.
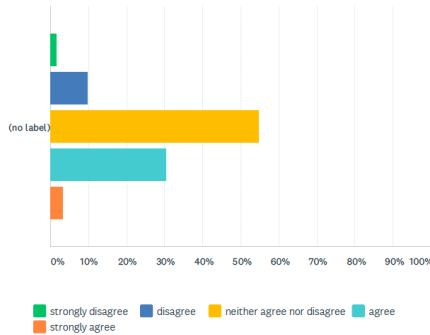
Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

- strongly disagree
- disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- agree
- strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	1.65% 8	9.92% 48	54.75% 265	30.37% 147	3.31% 16	484	3.24

Q12 The more followers an influencer has, the more trustworthy and professional he/she is.

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	15.50% 75	42.15% 204	27.69% 134	11.98% 58	2.69% 13	484	2.44

Q13 If an influencer is recommending something, I am most likely going to check out the product.

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	2.07% 10	21.07% 102	32.85% 159	41.32% 200	2.69% 13	484	3.21

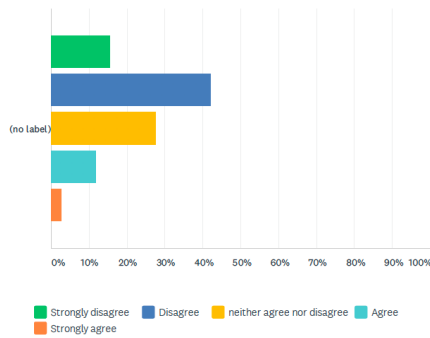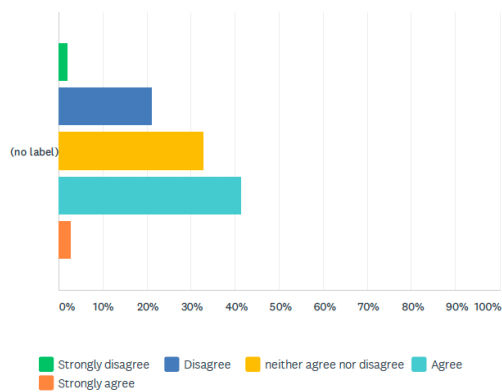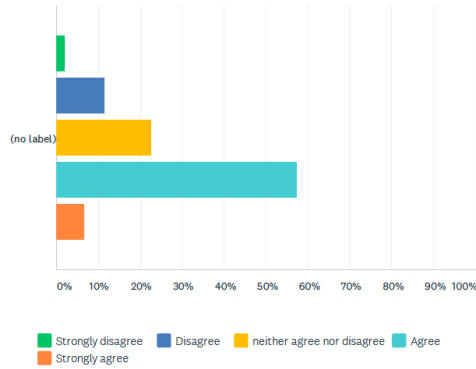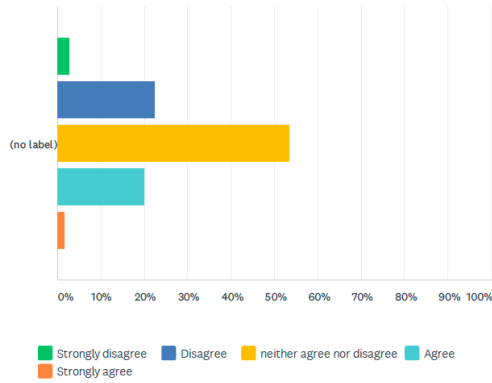## Q14 If I like the recommended product, I am most likely going to buy it.

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

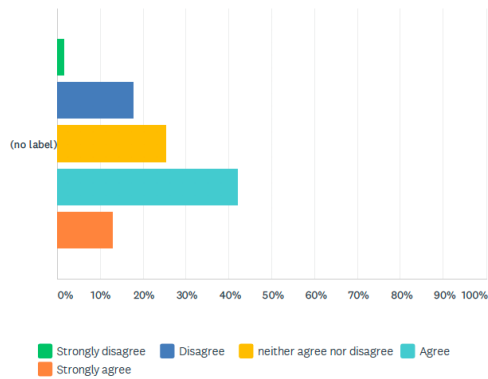|	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	2.07% 10	11.57% 56	22.52% 109	57.23% 277	6.61% 32	484	3.55

Q15 Influencers' product reviews are trustworthy.

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	2.69% 13	22.31% 108	53.31% 258	20.04% 97	1.65% 8	484	2.96

Q16 If I know, that the influencer is payed for a specific post, it has a negative impact on the honesty/reliability of the review.
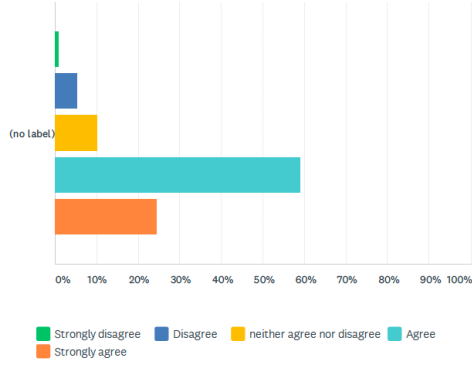
Answered: 484   Skipped: 70

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	1.65% 8	17.77% 86	25.41% 123	42.15% 204	13.02% 63	484	3.47

## Q17 I am more likely to buy/ trust a product, when I know the influencer I trust is using it regularly too.

Answered: 485   Skipped: 69

- ■ Strongly disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ neither agree nor disagree   ■ Agree
- ■ Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.82% 4	5.36% 26	10.31% 50	58.97% 286	24.54% 119	485	4.01

## Q18 If the influencer has for example a coaching or nutrition certificate, I trust him/her more.

Answered: 485   Skipped: 69
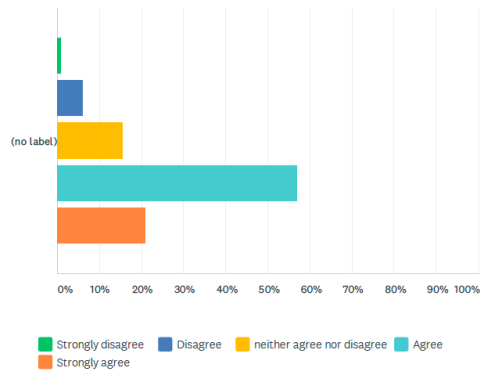
- ■ Strongly disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ neither agree nor disagree   ■ Agree
- ■ Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.82% 4	5.98% 29	15.46% 75	56.91% 276	20.82% 101	485	3.91

Q19 The physical shape of the fitness influencer has an impact on the trustworthiness.

Answered: 485   Skipped: 69
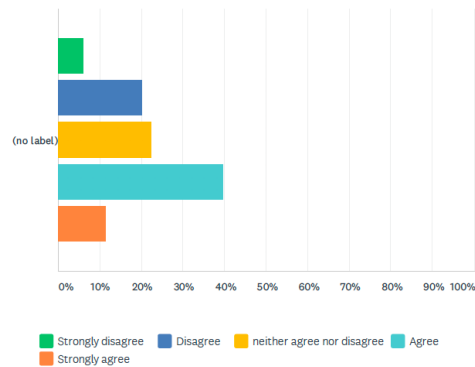
- ■ Strongly disagree   ■ Disagree   ■ neither agree nor disagree   ■ Agree
- ■ Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	5.98% 29	20.21% 98	22.47% 109	39.79% 193	11.55% 56	485	3.31

Q20 Fitness Influencers motivate and inspire me to live a more active and healthy lifestyle.

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70
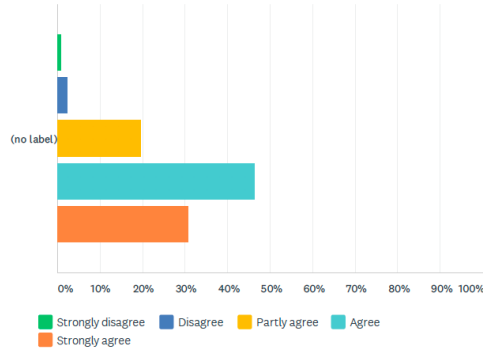
Legend: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Partly agree, Agree, Strongly agree

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	PARTLY AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
(no label)	0.83% 4	2.27% 11	19.63% 95	46.49% 225	30.79% 149	484	4.04

Q21 Please choose one of the following statements

Answered: 485   Skipped: 69
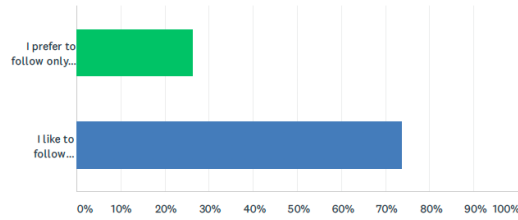
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I prefer to follow only influencers who post content in my native language	26.39%	128
I like to follow international influencers (the location does not matter)	73.61%	357
TOTAL		485

Q22 I am most likely to check out a product, if (please choose one or more options) …

Answered: 483   Skipped: 71
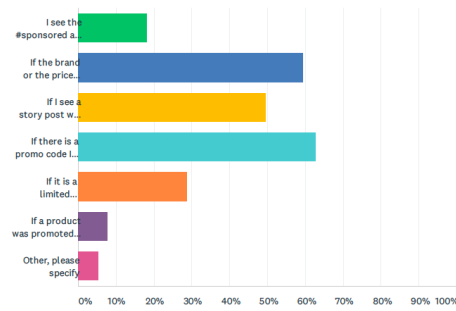
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I see the #sponsored and I can search for the brand	18.22%	88
If the brand or the price is directly tagged	59.42%	287
If I see a story post with a "swipe up" link	49.48%	239
If there is a promo code I can use	62.73%	303
If it is a limited influencer collaboration product	28.57%	138
If a product was promoted in a giveaway, but I did not win it	7.66%	37
Other, please specify	5.38%	26
Total Respondents: 483		

#	OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY	DATE
1	I dont buy from influencers	11/4/2020 8:40 PM
2	It co-aligns with my goals and values	11/4/2020 11:29 AM
3	If I think The product is useful	11/4/2020 9:30 AM
4	Only if Im interested in the product I will go to check on it, no matter price or discount	11/3/2020 9:45 AM
5	If I'm interested in that product	11/3/2020 9:28 AM
6	If enough information is provided on the product with support.	11/3/2020 4:58 AM
7	I think it will benefit me	11/3/2020 4:25 AM
8	If it's new and limited	11/3/2020 1:10 AM
9	If it something that I have been looking for and I like it and there are good reviews.	11/2/2020 9:57 PM
10	Depends if I like it and find it beneficial for example a gym shark clothing	11/2/2020 9:56 PM
11	Non sponsored positive review	11/2/2020 8:11 PM
12	If its the influences brand eg. App or workout plans and I trust the influencer from watching them over time, not when they are advertising something unrelated to fitness which they're paid to promote	11/2/2020 6:59 PM
13	If it's something that I have wanted to try but didn't know which brand to choose/where to start	11/2/2020 5:16 PM
14	A trustworthy influencer is advertising it	11/2/2020 4:24 PM
15	Depends on the product	11/2/2020 3:06 PM
16	It's something I am looking for or if I think I will need it	11/2/2020 12:18 PM
17	If I am interested in it, I like it's outlook and I really need it, I currently can afford.	11/2/2020 11:36 AM
18	If I like the influencer or the product.	11/2/2020 10:40 AM
19	If I trust the influencer (that's really important)	10/30/2020 7:13 PM
20	If an influencer paid for it with his/her own money and talks about it on a non-ad post	10/30/2020 1:34 PM
21	Seems useful	10/30/2020 4:14 AM
22	if the influencer uses the product regularly in their everyday lives and specifies this through instagram stories etc	10/30/2020 3:15 AM
23	If the person has a good education/ knowledge in fitness	10/30/2020 12:01 AM
24	If it catches my eye	10/29/2020 11:21 PM
25	If I trust the influencer	10/29/2020 11:12 PM
26	It is a sex toy	10/29/2020 11:02 PM

Q23 What is your professional background?

Answered: 484   Skipped: 70
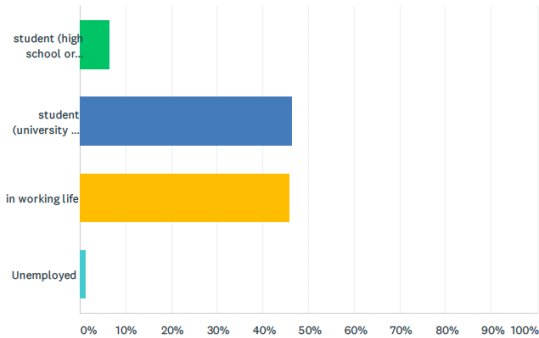
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
student (high school or similar)	6.40%	31
student (university or similar)	46.49%	225
in working life	45.87%	222
Unemployed	1.24%	6
TOTAL		484