ARCADA

Influencing millennials

Key components for an effective influencer marketing campaign

Catharina Cadwallader

MASTER'S THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	Media Management
Identification number:	23188
Author:	Catharina Cadwallader
Title:	Influencing millennials: key components for an effective influencer marketing campaign
Supervisor (Arcada):	Nathalie Hyde-Clarke
Commissioned by:	

Abstract:

In the past few years the employment of social media influencers has become an increasingly popular advertising strategy for brands looking for product promotion, especially when targeting younger demographics. Previous research shows millennials spend more time watching content online than any other age group and that the video sharing site YouTube has become an increasingly popular platform for millennials to watch content created by individual users. Social media influencers are able to market products in a more personable way than traditional advertising due to the trust they have earned from their audiences, making the product promotion feel more like a word-of-mouth recommendation. Due to the interesting correlation between influencer marketing and millennials' time spent watching content online, an online survey was carried out to establish why millennials choose to watch and follow video bloggers on YouTube; whether millennials believe that their consumer behaviour is impacted by the recommendations and promotions of influencers; and what it is that makes an influencer marketing campaign credible to the millennial follower. Based on 580 millennial respondents, the results showed that the credibility of the influencer is a major factor in influencer marketing. Millennials watch video bloggers for entertainment and because they like the personality of the influencer. However, if a product is being promoted the credibility of both the influencer and the brand is key for the recommendation to be considered by the millennial viewer. Not only do millennials prefer the brand being promoted to be one previously seen on the channel or feed of the influencer, but the brand also has to fit in with the content the influencer regularly produces. It is also vital that the influencer is both positive and critical of the product or service they are promoting as this makes the recommendation seem like a genuine product review. These factors play a big part in whether a millennial will trust the recommendation being made by the influencer.

Keywords:	Influencer marketing, social media, millennials, YouTube, credibility
Number of pages:	51
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of figures

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

The arrival of the Internet in the late 1990's brought on changes to practically every aspect of our lives. Fast forward 20 years and even those first years surfing the World Wide Web seem rather archaic. As a result, the advertising industry 'continues to change as new technology and platforms are released' (Rivera, 2018). However, as the Internet has grown increasingly saturated with adverts, marketers have started looking to so called influencers to raise brand awareness on social media (Angulo, 2016).

Different forms of media have been used for advertisement purposes. The difference is that in influencer marketing, it is created, produced and distributed by single content creators, also known as social media influencers. These influencers are media managers in their own right as they single-handedly plan, manage, execute and deliver tailor-made promotional content to their personal social media channels.

Although influencer marketing as a concept has developed significantly since the influx of social media, the basic purpose remains the same. Brown & Hayes (2015, p.10) state that influencer marketing 'encourages greater selectivity in targeting segments, increases understanding of each sector [and] demands more thought when deciding how and what to communicate'. Social media influencers have turned this new form of product promotion into full time jobs on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Product promotion in itself is '(informal) communication about a product, brand, or service in order to raise interest of potential customers' (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki 2018, p.3). This can occur in the form of brand mentions, use of branded products or product reviews for instance in videos on YouTube or photos on Instagram.

Influencer marketing is quickly becoming brands' marketing technique of choice for reaching their customers in an authentic way (Rogers, 2017). Tapscott (2008, p.200) asserts that content that audiences identify with is a powerful thing and 'producing something other than straight advertising makes the message more interesting'. Influencer marketing takes advantage of the bond created between the influencer and their followers. As Dahan (2016) points out, 'online consumers aren't opposed to seeing and receiving brand messages; they just want to interact with those messages on their own terms'.

Should that message be brought forward by an influencer the viewer is familiar with, the reaction may be very different to that of traditional advertisement. Werner Geyser, founder of the Influencer Marketing Hub, emphasises that 'audiences are following [influencers] for a reason. They share common interests, so they almost act as a media outlet themselves. They have massive, massive reach' (Cellan-Jones, 2019).

As millennials spend more time on YouTube and Instagram than any other generation (Statista, 2019a; Statista, 2019b) they are more frequently exposed to influencer marketing. However, at the time of writing very little research has been conducted concerning millennials' reaction to influencer marketing. Research regarding millennials in general has been conducted in recent years but is still considered deficient (Taylor, 2018; Ng & McGinnis Johnson, 2015). Because the millennial generation currently represents a quarter of the earth's population (Tilford, 2018) it has been suggested that 'the study of the millennials will be a constant for market researchers and marketing areas that represent brands that would like to remain in the market' (Moreno et. al, 2007, p.141).

Likewise, there is also a definite lack of literature concerning influencer marketing as a marketing strategy. Academic research in the field is still scarce, most likely due to how relatively new the field is. In order to contribute to the existing academic literature regarding influencer marketing, and more specifically millennials' perception of it, a research study was conducted to deepen our understanding and knowledge.

1.1   Problem Statement

This research will examine reasons why millennials choose to follow influencers online, and to what extent those influencers can impact their followers' consumption choices with a focus on social media platforms YouTube and Instagram. By doing this we can identify key components for an effective online influencer marketing campaign whether in order to raise brand awareness and/or increase conversion. The study assumes that the user is an active participant and has the choice to decide whether to follow specific influencers and their recommendations, and equally has the choice to stop following them when it suits them.

This study therefore explores what prompts millennials to follow video bloggers, what keeps them following, and when do they decide to value the opinion of an influencer

enough to accept a recommendation to buy a service or product. This research will provide a deeper understanding as to how influencers may be used for marketing purposes, and the most effective methods they could employ to both attract and maintain an existing following.

1.2 Research questions

As previously stated, the field of influencer marketing requires more research, specifically with regards to millennials. Therefore, the aim of this research is to fill a few of the many gaps in influencer marketing research by answering the following three questions:

1. Why do millennials choose to watch and follow video bloggers on YouTube?

2. Do millennials believe that their consumer behaviour is impacted by the recommendations and promotions of influencers on YouTube and Instagram?

3. What makes an influencer marketing campaign credible to the millennial follower?

1.3 Methods and limitations

The aforementioned research questions will be answered through quantitative research. An online survey consisting of 20 questions (multiple choice and single answer) was prepared and distributed through the YouTube channel and personal Facebook page of the author. This method of distribution was chosen because it allowed access to a large network of potential participants, especially in the millennial age range. After a total of 72 hours the survey was answered by a total of 974 participants. Due to the channels chosen to distribute the survey it is reasonable to assume that the scope of the participants is largely limited to followers of the author's social media channels. The methodology is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

1.4   Concept definitions

Social media influencer or influencer:

A person with a sizeable following on social media who has the power to affect their followers' consumer behaviour through product promotion (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019).

Content creator:

A person who creates and uploads content online. 'Content is what we consume on social media, […] what we tag, save, consume, share and interact with' (Stasik, 2018).

Sponsored content:

Content uploaded onto a social media channel which has been paid for by a brand but created by the publisher (Lisk, 2018).

Millennial:

According to new definitions by Pew Research Centre a millennial is 'anyone born between 1981 and 1996 (ages 22 to 37 in 2018)' (Dimock, M. 2018).

1.5   Structure

In this thesis we will firstly examine the concept of influencer marketing and its emergence as a viable marketing strategy. We will also define how influencers operate on social media platforms YouTube and Instagram. Following a look at millennials both in the context of social media users and consumers, we will then move on to discussing the methodology and presenting a selection of our survey questions. We will subsequently present the results of said survey and lastly, discuss the findings and make suggestions for future work in the field.

2   INFLUENCER MARKETING

2.1   Shift in branding strategies

The dawn of social media changed everything in terms of marketing as companies witnessed consumers being drawn to websites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter (Long, 2011). Old marketing techniques were no longer viable, and businesses had to change how they communicate their messages and whom they communicate them to (Brown & Hayes, 2015, p.3). This has subsequently had an incredible effect on how the advertising industry does business. (Guo, 2011, p.161; Serazio, 2015, p.600). In fact, the notion that traditional advertising is not effective with today's youth is shared by many (Burns, 2009; Schawbel, 2015; Serazio, 2015). According to a Forbes study a mere 1% of millennials stated that a convincing advertisement would help the brand earn their trust as they reportedly believe advertising to be 'all spin and not authentic' (Schawbel). It is vital for marketers to keep their finger on the pulse of millennial behaviour and take advantage of their expertise. Cole (2019) states in no uncertain terms that 'today's average Instagrammer has far more of a knack for creativity, attention to detail, and personal branding than most "marketing professionals"'.

According to a recent study conducted by the IAB and PwC, more money is spent on digital advertising than TV advertising in the United States with an estimated $88 billion spent on online advertising (for full report see IAB, 2018). In a column for *The Guardian*, Moore (2018) muses:

> Old-fashioned adverting is in decline. The days of the memorable TV ad are gone, they are often very low-quality and basic. As TV channels proliferate, you can see they can hardly fill the ad spaces.

To make matters worse for advertisers, when millennials are 'watching TV' 67 percent are in fact watching via streaming services (Luttrell & McGrath, 2015).

People in general are spending increasingly more time online, however millennials still take the lead by spending up to almost four hours online per day, by using an average of 2.8 devices (Roesler, 2018). Nevertheless, focusing marketing budgets solely on digital advertising is not the solution as online users are likely to skip, ignore or even block advertisement online (Dahan, 2016; Rivera, 2018). This could be in the form of banners or

pop-up advertisements on websites. In 2017 it was reported that '26% of desktop users and 15% of mobile users use ad-blocking software, which is a massive hit on all the investment brands put into display ads' (Tait, 2017). Influencer marketing can therefore be a solution as audiences, although likely to skip or block ads, cannot block paid posts or other content by influencers they follow on social media (Dahan, 2016). The option to use influencers could arguably be further encouraged by the fact that millennials are in fact double more likely to prefer YouTube over traditional TV (Aslam, 2018).

Marketers are now lining up to collaborate with influencers because they value the effect they have on their communities (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki 2018, p.1), which can translate into thousands of dollars in paid partnerships for influencers and huge return on investment and marketing potential for brands (Traackr, 2018). Although a relatively new phenomena, many brands have already been quick to jump on the trend of influencer marketing as evident by Mediakix's statistics revealing that brands spent more than 1 billion dollars on influencers on Instagram in 2017, with the figure expected to have doubled by the end of 2019 (Rogers, 2017).

2.2   Electronic word-of-mouth

The relaxed nature of product promotion by an influencer create a word-of-mouth effect that can be seen as a 'lighter shade of branding' (Serazio, 2015, p.610). This type of electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) which applies to both content creators and consumers alike is, according to Rosario et al. (2016, p. 297), 'one of the most significant developments in contemporary consumer behaviour' and can be as important for a brand as driving sales (Husain et al., 2016, p.27). In fact, eWOM research has shown that online consumers are more persuaded by creators' recommendations even though they do not actually know them (Rosario et al., 2016). This trust stems from the fact that the audience views the creators as experts in their respective fields (Schwemmer & Ziewiecki 2018; Gerhards, 2017) whether it is beauty, lifestyle, electronics or gaming.

The fact that authenticity and credibility is immensely important in social media marketing (Sweetser et al. 2008; Barefoot & Szabo 2009) is widely accepted and further proven by Long (2013, p.146) who refers to research stating that consumers trust infor-

mation gained through social media more than traditional advertising. Social media influencers encourage a sense of familiarity and accessibility thanks to being perceived as 'real' by their followers. (Cotter, 2018, p.3s)

Online content considered credible will make people more likely to share it, and sharing content is what social media marketing is all about (Serazio 2015; Tapscott 2008). According to a marketing director quoted in Serazio (p.610) 'it's harder for someone to share a piece of content that's very heavily branded because you're clearly then, like, this mechanism for the brand versus a mechanism for a piece of content'.

2.3   Social media influencers on YouTube - 'YouTubers'

In the last 10 years YouTube, which was bought by Google for over 1.5 billion dollars in 2006 (Burns, 2009, p.63), has become a leading place for social media influencers to promote products and services. Influencer marketing on YouTube is managed by multi-channel networks (MCNs). Professional YouTubers receive brand deals and promotional campaigns by being a part of an MCN which sells targeted advertising and brand collaborations (Digiday, 2014) whilst also helping influencers 'produce high-quality videos and manage their advertising revenue streams' (Mediakix, 2016).

As there are now 50 million creators on YouTube (Aslam, 2018), advertisers have endless choices when it comes to choosing an ambassador for their brand. However, as Burns (2009, p.61) states "standing out among the many videos being added at a rate of about one per second […] on YouTube requires a creative concept and for some, a solid marketing strategy". Those who do succeed may have anywhere from hundreds of thousands to millions of followers online and have become celebrities in their own right. According to a Business Insider article, YouTubers have "built their followings outside of the control of media giants, even if they are now signing big deals with those companies. And there is power and independence in having that huge fan base" (Lync, 2018).

It is, in fact, the video bloggers (as opposed to for instance brands or music artists) who get the most views on YouTube. Heltai (2016) reports on a study commission by Google which shows that almost 80% of the 18-34 demographic prefers to watch videos uploaded by individual content creators. The biggest channel on YouTube has for many

years been Swedish video blogger Pewdiepie with a record breaking 93 million sub-scribers worldwide – and counting. (Social Blade, 2019). Other big names on YouTube include Chilean Germán Garmendia with 33.1 million subscribers, Brazilian Whinders-sonnunes with 26.7 million subscribers, American Dude Perfect with 26.5 million and Mexican Yuya with 20.5 million subscribers (Lynch 2018).

2.4   Social media influencers on Instagram

Instagram, the photo sharing app founded in 2010 and bought by Facebook in 2012 for $1 billion (Page, 2015) has quickly become a household name. It is currently one of the most popular social media networks with 1 billion active users as of June 2018 (Statista, 2018). On Instagram you can upload photos to your own profile (also called 'feed'), livestream or publish a Story - a function that allows you to post photos and short vid-eos which disappear after 24 hours (Instagram, 2019a). In fact, Business Insider re-ported in June 2018 that Instagram Stories has an impressive 400 million daily users (Price, 2018). Because of its immense popularity, Instagram has become an ideal place for influencer marketing and has opened doors to a new kind of influencer who does not have a following on YouTube. On Instagram, much as on YouTube, it is all about creat-ing something that keeps people interested. Cole (2018) states that 'today's serious In-stagrammers know the value of building […] their Personal Brand'. And a strong per-sonal brand can mean money. Exactly like influencer marketing on YouTube, brands hire influencers on Instagram to post about their products and services. Cronin (2018) explains that 'in recent years, Instagram has become a full-time career for many, with influencers and celebrities earning huge pay cheques from paid posts and partner mar-keting campaigns.' According to statistics published by Hopper HQ (2018) the 10 big-gest influencers on Instagram can earn $15,000 to $33,000 per post. Huda Kattan, the biggest non-celebrity influencer on the app has an impressive 32 million followers, whilst the world's biggest YouTuber PewDiePie (real name Felix Kjellberg) has 16.6 million (Instagram, 2019b).

2.4.1 Celebrities on Instagram

As large as some influencers' followings on Instagram might seem, they pale in comparison to that of celebrities. For that reason, it has also proven to be a very lucrative platform for those celebrities. In fact, not a single non-celebrity made the Hopper HQ 'Instagram Rich List 2018' where they list the year's over all top earners on Instagram. This suggests that although influencers control the YouTube space, celebrities rule Instagram. Ranking first on the 'Rich List' was Kylie Jenner who is reported to earn up to $1 million per post (Hopper HQ). She is currently the biggest Instagrammer in the world thanks to her astounding 131 million followers (Instagram, 2019c). Other big earners on Hopper HQ's list include Selena Gomez, Christiano Ronaldo and Jenner's sister Kim Kardashian and Beyoncé Knowles – all of whom reportedly earn between $700,000 and $800,000 per post.

One reason why celebrities are so popular on Instagram is arguably not only the age-old fascination with celebrities but because it often invites the follower into their daily lives and into their homes, i.e. into places we as an audience haven't been invited before. Walter (2018) explains that 'the relatability of celebs—that authenticity [is] about sharing moments from their lives that are a tad less glamorous than the usual red carpet shot.'

2.5   #ad

Since 2017 many influencers and celebrities alike have gotten into legal trouble for not following advertising regulation by not declaring when they are in fact acting as influencers, i.e. when they have been paid to promote a product or service (One Roof Social, 2018). In the UK the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) state that ads 'must be obviously identifiable as such' which is why the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) recommends using words such as ad, advertisement, and advertising to clearly state that the post is paid for by a brand (ASA, 2018).

In an effort to allow for more transparency, Instagram introduced a new 'branded content tool' which allows influencers to tag the brand they are collaborating with in a subheader titled 'paid partnership with' (Alba, 2017). A similar feature is also available on YouTube and Facebook, however in the United States the Federal Trade Commission

(FTC) has stated that using this feature is not enough (Notopoulos, 2017). In a letter to over 90 influencers, the FTC stated that any brand connection 'should be clearly and conspicuously disclosed' and that influencers 'should use unambiguous language and make the disclosure stand out' (FTC, 2017). Similarly, in the UK the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) reportedly contacted 10 celebrities in August 2018 due to Instagram posts that were not considered up to par (Davies, 2018). Only a few months later the BBC reported that the CMA had investigated 16 celebrities (including influencers) regarding their posts on social media and announced that all 16 individuals had agreed to change their practices, with the risk of being taken to court if they do not (Wakefield, 2019).

2.6   Micro influencers

Micro influencers are social media influencer with a smaller following than a macro influencer. However, the definition of small can range from 2,000-50,000 (Kelly, 2018); 'anywhere between 10,000 and 500,000 followers' (Wissman, 2018); to 'less than 10,000 followers' (Hatton, 2018). Micro influencers are defined as 'individuals who work in their category or are truly knowledgeable, passionate and authentic and are seen as a trusted source when it comes to recommendations for what to buy' (Berger, J. & Keller Fay Group, 2016).

The reason why micro influencers are significant in influencer marketing is because the size of an influencer's following is only part of the equation of a successful influencer marketing campaign. In fact, Wissman (2018) argues that 'engagement is the key factor in an influencer's ultimate success when it comes to commercial viability'. This is why brands looking for high engagement should rather turn to micro influencers. A study of more than 800,000 Instagram users revealed that 'as an influencer's follower total rises, the rate of engagement (likes and comments) with followers decreases' (Markerly, 2016.) Based on the study, Markerly suggested that 'influencers in the 10k-100k follower range offer the best combination of engagement and broad reach'. This can be a financially beneficial option for brands as they can hire 10-20 micro influencers for the same price as one post by a celebrity (Tait, 2017). Wissman (2018) reiterates that 'it's not necessarily the number of followers as much as how engaged that audience is. Micro-influencers have specific niche audiences and are deeply connected to them'. There

is something resembling a friendship of sorts between a micro influencer and their audience. Hatton (2018) points out that audiences are less likely to question the recommendation of a micro influencer as it feels genuine, stating that 'this kind of authenticity attracts engagement, awareness and brand recall'.

3   MILLENNIALS

The study of generations was essentially first introduced by Karl Mannheim in his 1923 essay *The Problem of Generations*, a ground-breaking 'theoretical treatment of generations as sociological phenomenon' (Pilcher, 1994). The core of Mannheim's theory can be seen as the notion that 'people resemble their times more than they resemble their parents' (CenSamm, 2017). A present time generational research continues to be conducted by research institutes such as Pew Research Centre. By studying generations, we are able to draw conclusions about people born around the same time as they have been known to have similarities not only in shopping and communication preferences but also in characteristics, expectations and values (The Centre for Generational Kinetics, 2016). According to Pew Research Centre (2015):

> Age cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time; they can provide a way to understand how different formative experiences interact with the life-cycle and aging process to shape people's view of the world.

According to new definitions by Pew Research Centre, the Millennial generation, also referred to as Generation Y, consists of persons born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, M. 2019). In 2019 there are currently 1.8 billion millennials worldwide (Tilford, 2018).

3.1   Defining factors of the Millennial generation

Millennials are a generation shaped by world events and global changes both economic and technological (Moreno et. al, 2017, p.135; Abramson, 2018). They came of age during the Internet explosion, entered the workforce during an economic recession (see Dimock, 2018; Bolton et al., 2013) and is generally received as 'highly educated and technologically connected compared to prior generations' (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017). Millennials are also the first generation to grow up with social media, making them natives of this new kind of 'digital, consumer driven, […], instant satisfaction world' (Sweeney, 2006). Perhaps due to the culture of gratification on social media, millennials

are often described as confident, entitled or even narcissistic (See Ng & McGinnis Johnson, 2015; Sweeney, 2006; Woo, 2018).

According to a 2016 Nielsen study, millennials spend just under an hour per day on social media (Casey, 2017) while a different study a few years earlier found that number to be 1.8 hours per day (Ott, 2010). It is therefore no wonder that companies are turning to social media marketing in order to reach their consumers where they spend their time (Hanna et al., 2011).

Because they grew up in the Internet era, millennials relate to technology in a different way than their parents, the Baby Boomers, who grew up in the television era (Tapscott, 2008; Serazio, 2015). It has been suggested that they are therefore more critical and sceptical when it comes to advertising (Tapscott, 2008; Bolton et al., 2013).

> They were raised in a world of marketing and advertising, so they can detect a sales pitch with heavy topspin in a second. While they are not impervious to the power of advertising, they are more adept at filtering, fast-forwarding, and/or blocking unsolicited advertising than previous generations were. (Tapscott 2008, p.186)

Rachel Baumgarten, a senior marketing VP, suggests that the most important thing to understand about millennials is that they have been marketed to practically their whole lives: 'They get the marketing game, and they're willing to play along. They just need to know that there's value in it for them' (Lafayette, 2013, p.2). David Arabov, CEO of Elite Daily, elaborates that, although it is common to think otherwise of millennials, they in fact 'develop strong brand loyalty when presented with quality products and actively engaged by brands' (Schawbel, 2015).

Similarly, if they find an influencer they trust, a bond is developed. In fact, 40% of millennials state that 'their favorite online influencer understands them better than their real-life friends' (Mediakix, 2018). Perhaps that is why they reportedly do not mind influencer marketing: According to a study by Defy, 87% of millennials approve of product placements in videos whilst a study by Adweek reported that '57% of millennials […] are willing to view sponsored content from a brand as long as it includes authentic personalities and is entertaining and useful' (Arnold, 2018).

In fact, millennials will even do their own influencer marketing if there is something in it for them. An extensive study of American, Canadian and British millennials found

15

that almost 50% of millennials 'are willing to promote products or brands through social media in exchange for rewards' (Aimia, 2011).

3.2 Millennial consumer behaviour

Although many millennials graduated during the recession and faced a rough start in their employment years (Woo, 2018), they are in fact the first generation in modern history to experience near equal pay between genders as they start their careers (Pew Research Centre, 2013). In 2019 the majority of millennials have entered the work force and now represent a significant purchasing power (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017; Moreno et al, 2017). By 2020 millennials are expected to have a spending power of over $1.4 trillion collectively (Quad, 2016). However, as with everything else, they present a difference in consumer behaviour from previous generations. 'Millennials expect a much greater array of product and service selectivity. They have grown up with a huge array of choices and they believe that such abundance is their birthright' (Sweeney, 2006, p.2). Understanding the millennial consumer is therefore vital for brands looking to secure new, loyal customers.

> It is important to consider that when approaching this consumer, sellers must send explicit messages as well as efficient technology that address their demands, but the misunderstanding of digital media and misuse of delivery mechanisms might deprive consumers of distinguishing the value they seek online. (Moreno et. al, 2017, p.142)

Although millennials are constantly referred to as a digital generation recent research in fact indicate that they prefer shopping in brick and mortar shops as opposed to online (Kraljević & Filipović, 2017; Accenture, 2013). They want to be able to touch and feel the products in the store, even though they might then go online to find a better price and actually make the purchase - a concept called "showrooming" (Accenture, 2013).

Unsurprisingly, they do also enjoy online shopping, especially if there are incentives available to them. These incentives can for instance be free delivery – '58 percent of Millennials [state] that this is the most influential purchase driver (with coupons and discounts coming second)' (Roesler, 2018).

As previously stated, millennials are often regarded a demanding generation that want the best, none the least when it comes to shopping. They want a multitude of choices combined with high-speed service and are likely do thorough research online before-

hand (Tapscott, 2008, p.186). 'Many hone their shopping skills on the Internet, checking product ratings and reviews or feedback on retailers, for example, to confirm that both product and vendor provide the best value and service, respectively' (Accenture, 2013).

4   METHODOLOGY

In this study we are asking the following research questions:

1.   Why do millennials choose to watch and follow video bloggers on YouTube?

2.   Do millennials believe that their consumer behaviour is impacted by the recommendations and promotions of influencers on YouTube and Instagram?

3.   What makes an influencer marketing campaign credible to the millennial follower?

In order to answer these questions a quantitative method was chosen to conduct the research. Due to the need to gather a significant amount of data in order to be able to make assertions regarding a specific phenomenon, a survey was determined to be the best choice for conducting the research as it is 'a research strategy in which quantitative information is systematically collected from a relatively large sample taken from a population' (de Leeuw et. al., 2008, p.2). This approach will allow us to determine trends in millennials' social media use and their general and specific attitudes towards influencer marketing as using a survey 'provides a quantitative […] description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population' (Creswell, 2014).

There is also a qualitative aspect to the research as a large portion of the participants (187 in total; 98 of which were millennials respondents) opted to give lengthy responses in the final survey question asking for further comments on what is important when deciding whether to trust the recommendations of an influencer. For the purposes of this research, only the answers of millennial participants will be analysed.

4.1   Online survey

The research was conducted through an online survey as this method allows for the researcher to potentially reach a large and diverse participant group, as well as generate a generous amount of data. Further benefits of using an online survey include ease of use for participants, immediate access to results as well as the possibility of reaching participants regardless of their location (Flick, 2011). The survey was anonymous, however basic questions such as age and gender were asked of the participant in order to determine that they met the criteria of the sampling approach (millennials) and to be able to see differences (if any) between different genders. Although there are many websites which allow you to set up your own survey, Google Forms provided an advanced enough platform for designing a survey whilst also showing the results in clear graphics. Through Google Forms it is also possible to download the data in order to analyse the answers in different ways by extracting specific data using formulas in Microsoft Excel. A similar study using Google Forms was conducted by Havia (2017) for his Arcada bachelor's degree thesis on gaming videos on YouTube and proved to be an effective means of contacting participants in that study.

4.2   Distribution and sample

The survey was not distributed to a predetermined list of participants, making it a 'non list-based web survey' (Manfreda & Vehovar, 2008, p.267). It was distributed online on two social media platforms, the main one being the YouTube channel of the researcher (www.youtube.com/catpetersonproject) and the other the personal Facebook page of the researcher (www.facebook.com/catharinacadwallader). Since the researcher is an influencer as well, the sample would already be familiar with the phenomenon under investigation. These platforms were chosen due the access they granted to potential survey participants – especially in the millennial age group. The researcher has a largely millennial aged following on YouTube (at the time of writing 84.9% of her subscribers are 18-34 years old) and since she is a millennial, she also has a network of millennial aged contacts on her personal Facebook.

The link to the survey was shared on YouTube in the description of a YouTube video posted by the researcher; on Facebook it was shared in a private post on her feed. The

survey was live for 72 hours between Friday February 1 and Monday February 4 2019. Anyone who had access to the link was able to take part in the survey as there were no restrictions on participants age or otherwise. By the end of 72 hours, 974 had answered the survey, of which 580 (59.5%) were identified as falling within the millennial age group. Only the responses from the millennials have been included in this research.

4.3   Limitations

The author recognizes that there are clear limitations to the research conducted due to the channels chosen for distribution of the survey link. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of the participants are either subscribers to the YouTube channel of the researcher or personal friends or acquaintances. It should be noted that 60% of the views on the author's YouTube channel are from Finland. This could affect the results in terms of global trends. However, since influencer marketing has grown exponentially in Finland in the last few years (Vizeum, 2018; Lahti, 2018) with reportedly 41% of Finnish 25-34-year olds watching YouTube daily (DNA, 2017), this is an excellent group to sample in terms of what attracts them to follow an influencer.
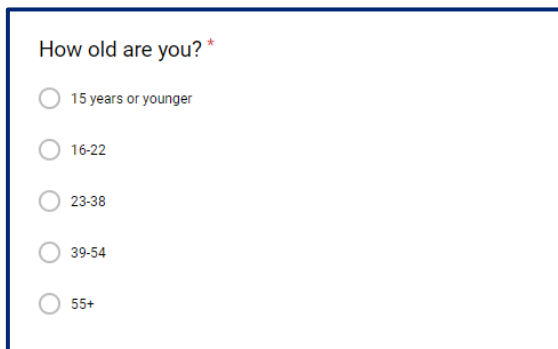
4.5   Pilot survey

A pilot survey was conducted ahead of the final survey in order to establish flaws and potential missing or ambiguous questions. Campanelli (2008, p.176) asserts that a pilot survey is 'the only way of assuring that the survey questions written, do indeed communicate to respondents as intended.' Based on the results of the pilot survey minor alterations were made to the possible answers for a few questions and some options were added. Four questions were also changed to optional.

4.4   Survey questions

The survey consisted of 20 questions, all multiple-choice questions with some allowing participants to choose more than one answer. Out of the 20 questions, 16 could not be left unanswered (these are marked with a red asterisk in the examples below). Three

19

questions were optional as they were dependant on the participant's answer to the previous question and the last question asked for participants to give further thoughts on what is important when deciding whether to trust the recommendations of an influencer.

The first question which establishes the participants age is the most important question as it allows us to sort and analyse the responses solely of millennials.
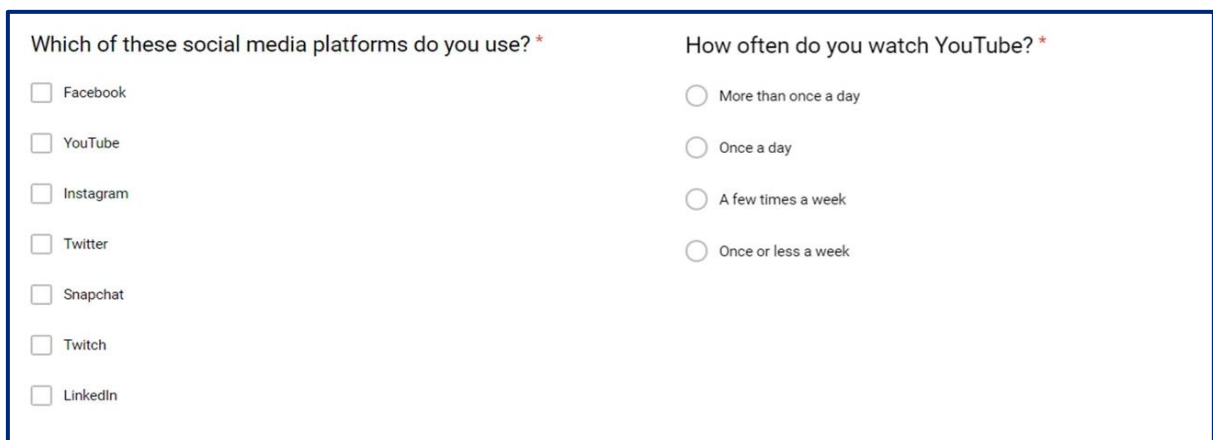

Fig. 1. Survey questions regarding participants' age

Overall, the first part of the questionnaire focused on the participants' social media use.

Fig. 2. Examples of survey questions regarding participants' social media use

The second part of the survey focused mainly on participants' YouTube habits and use.

Fig. 3. Example of survey question regarding YouTube

The third part of the questionnaire largely concerned influencer marketing with several questions about the impression of credibility and feelings regarding paid collaboration posts.

Fig. 4. Examples of survey questions regarding influencer marketing

5. RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the online survey are presented. As this research concerns millennials, only the answers from respondents who were identified as millennials (i.e. who selected the age range 23-38 years) have been included in the results. A handful of comments from the final question have been inserted where applicable to elaborate on the results. Due to anonymity, respondents are referred to as R, and are numbered sequentially according to order of response for analytical purposes.
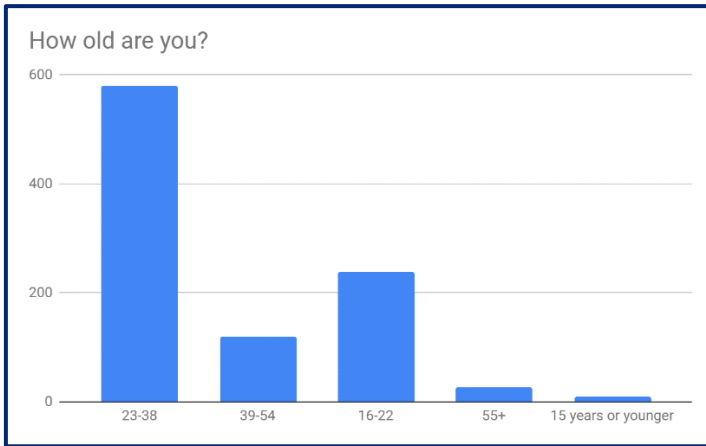
Fig. 5. Results of the survey question "How old are you?"

This means that the following survey results are based on the answers of a total of 580 respondents, which equals to 60 percent of all participants. The results were compiled into graphs using spreadsheet programme Google Sheets which allowed for the responses of millennials to be separated from the rest of the data using a filtering tool.

5.1   Survey results

Firstly, we were able to establish that a large majority of the respondents were female with only 24 percent male. Four persons did not identify as being female nor male and one did not want to disclose their gender.
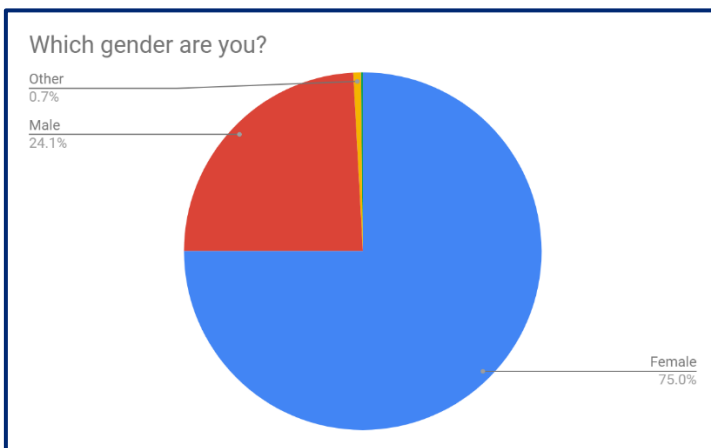
Fig. 6. Results of "Which gender are you?"

Secondly, the respondents stated which social media platforms they use. For this question, they were able to choose several options. Although Facebook, Instagram and

YouTube were all distinctly popular choices, YouTube was deemed the most popular with 96 percent of respondents using the video website.
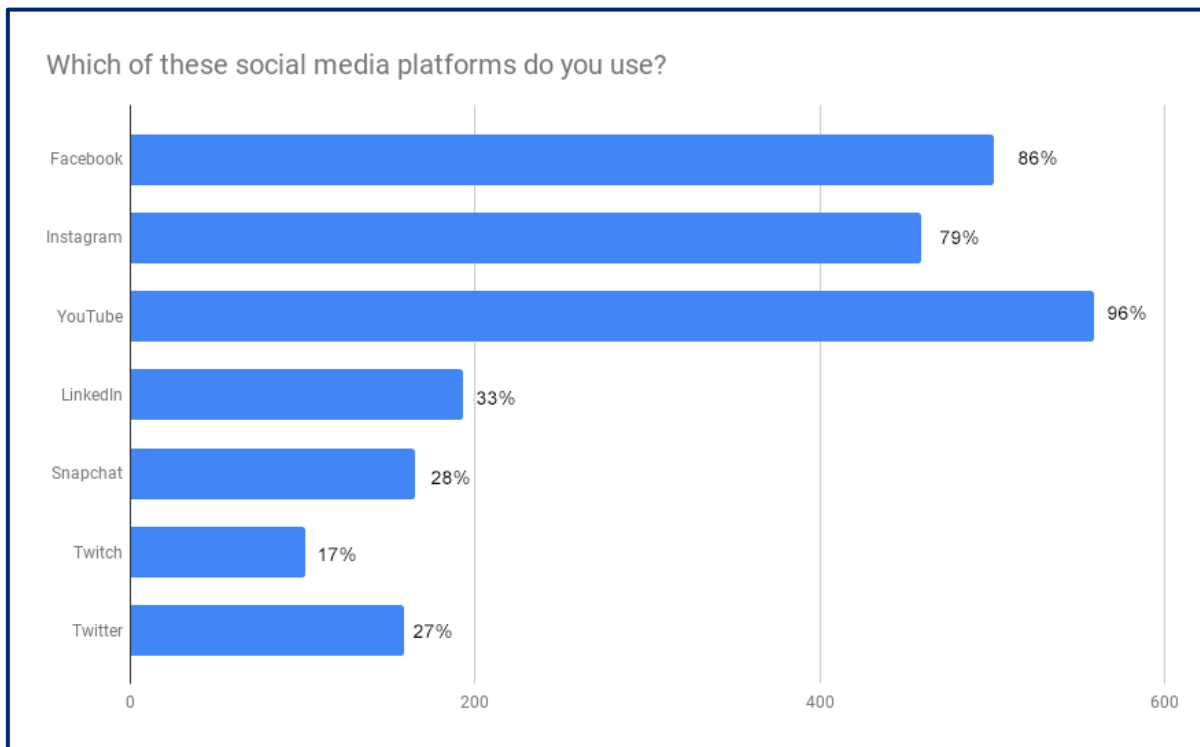
Fig. 7. Results of "Which of these social media platforms do you use?"

Thirdly, we were able to establish that over half of all respondents watch YouTube more than once a day, with the second most popular option being that they watch it once a day.
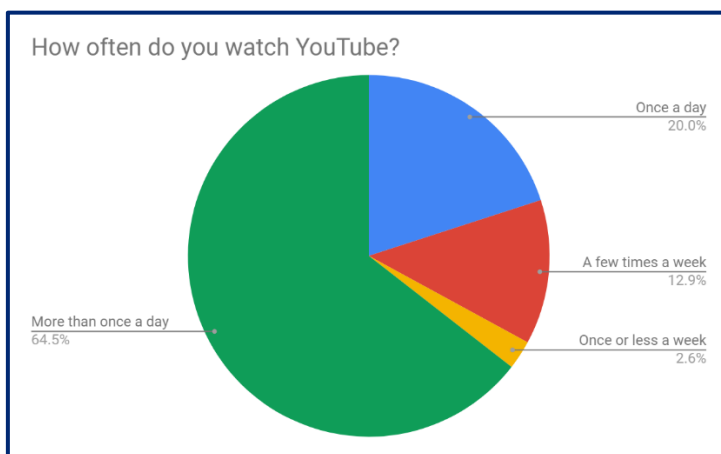
Fig. 8. Results of the survey question "How often do you watch YouTube?"

In the follow up question, it was possible to choose more than one option.

We were able to determine that respondents mainly watch video bloggers on YouTube, with 93 percent of respondents selecting the option.
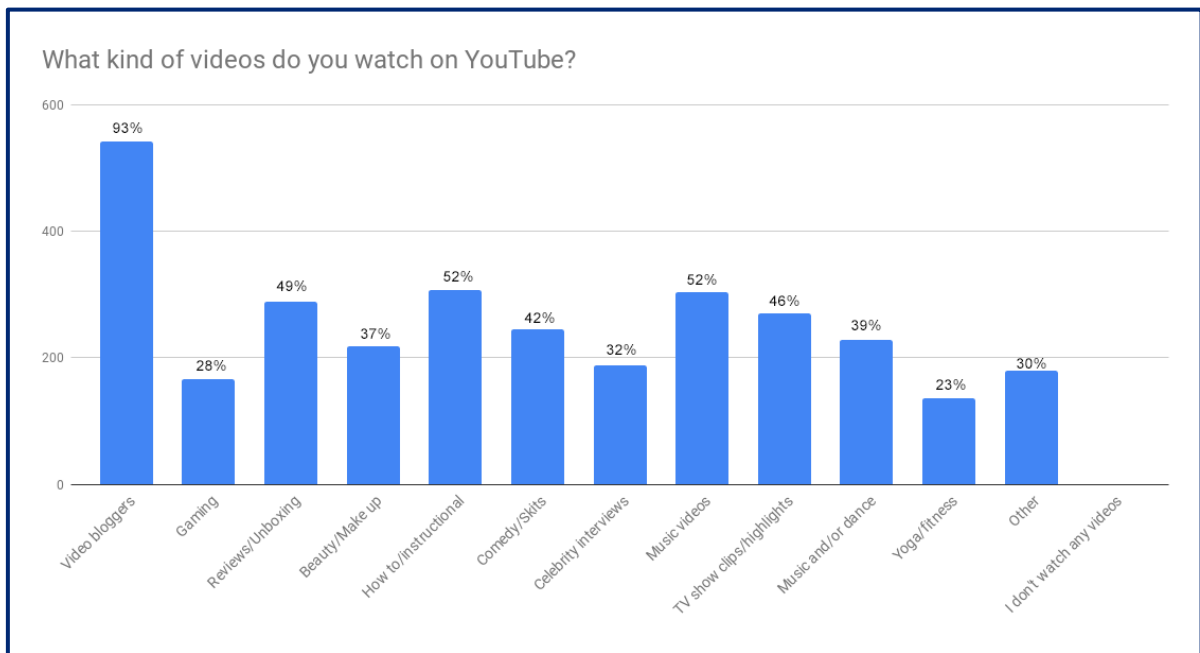
Fig. 9. Results of "What kind of videos do you watch YouTube?"

The reason for watching video bloggers on YouTube was identified as most frequently being for entertainment as well as due the respondents liking the personality of the video blogger. Once again, the respondents were able to choose more than one option.
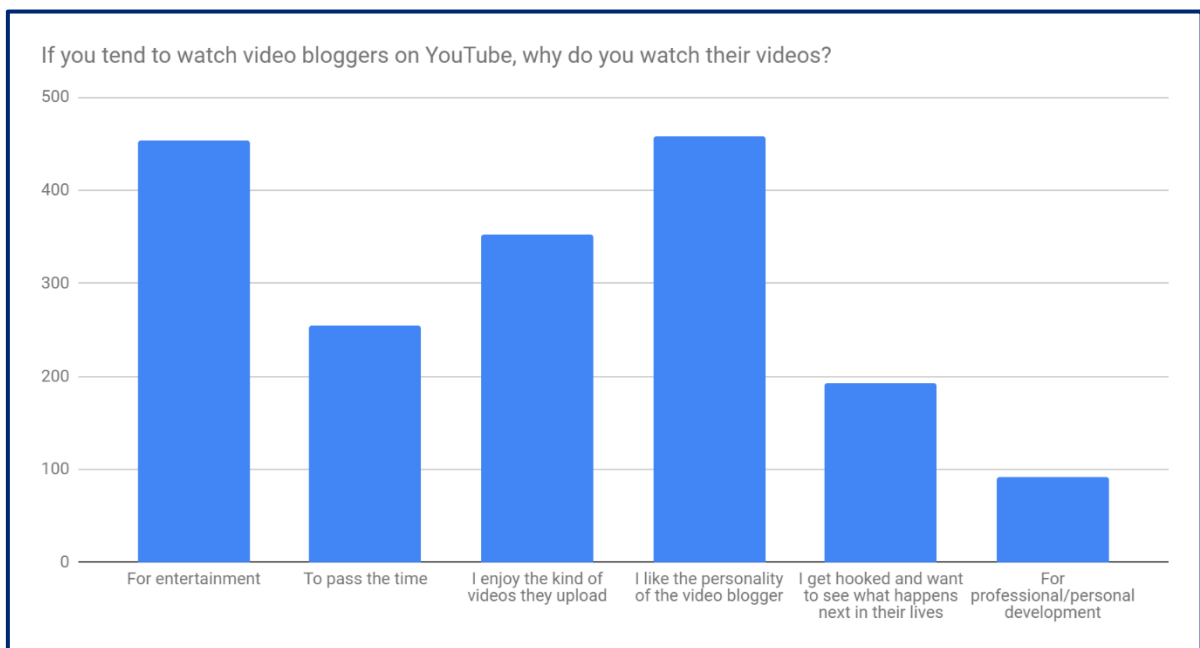
Fig. 10. Results of "If you tend to watch video bloggers on YouTube, why do you watch their videos?"

We then were able to assert that over 60 percent of respondents were subscribed to 10 or more YouTube channels. 14 percent were subscribed to 5 or more channels.
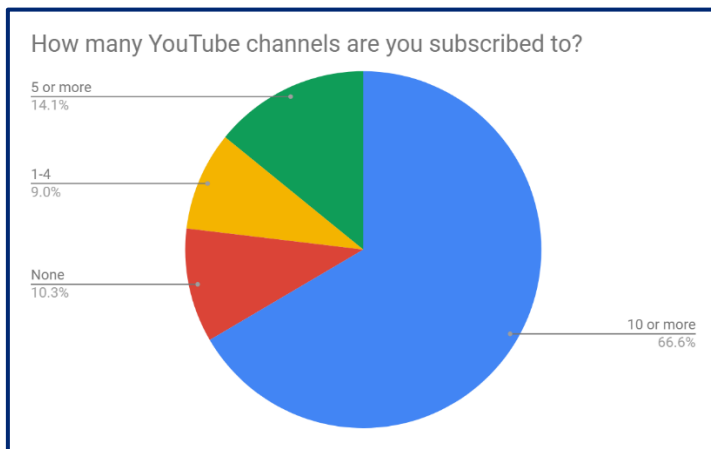
Fig. 11. Results of "How many YouTube channels are you subscribed to?"

The reason for deciding to subscribe to a specific YouTube channel was largely established as being one of the following: they like the personality of the video creator; they watched and enjoyed one or more of their videos; or they are interested in the topics discussed on the channel.
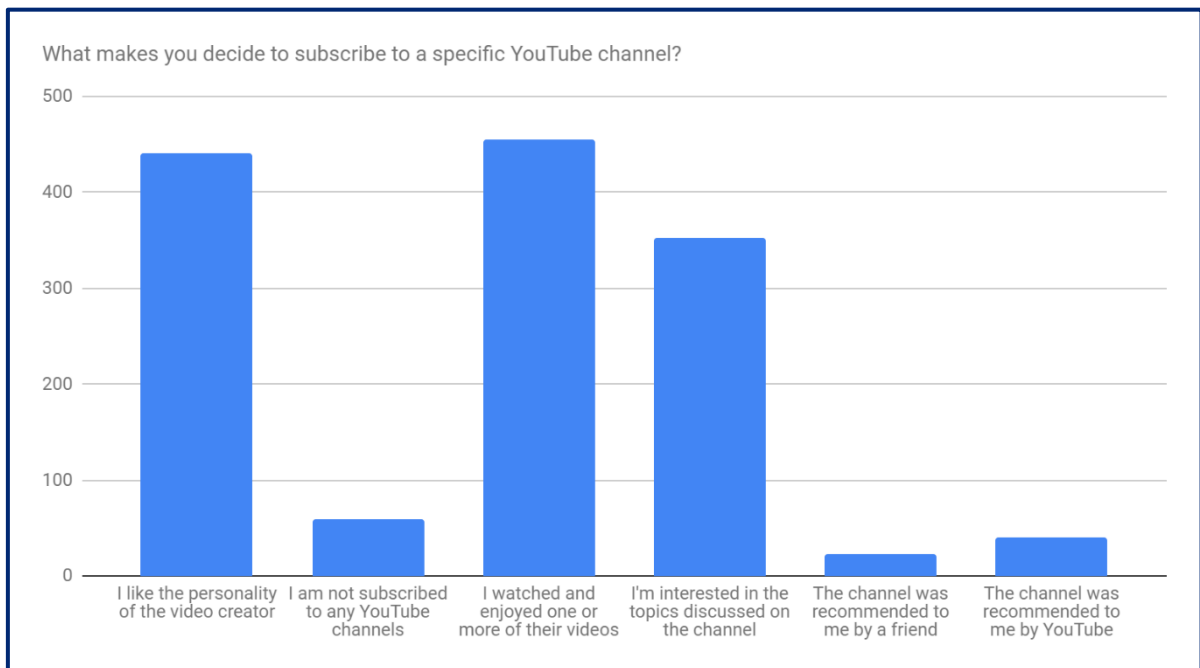
Fig. 12. Results of "What makes you subscribe to a specific YouTube channel?"

The following question showed that the main reason why respondents do not watch a video uploaded on a YouTube channel they are following is because the video topic does not interest them. Once again, several answers could be chosen.

25
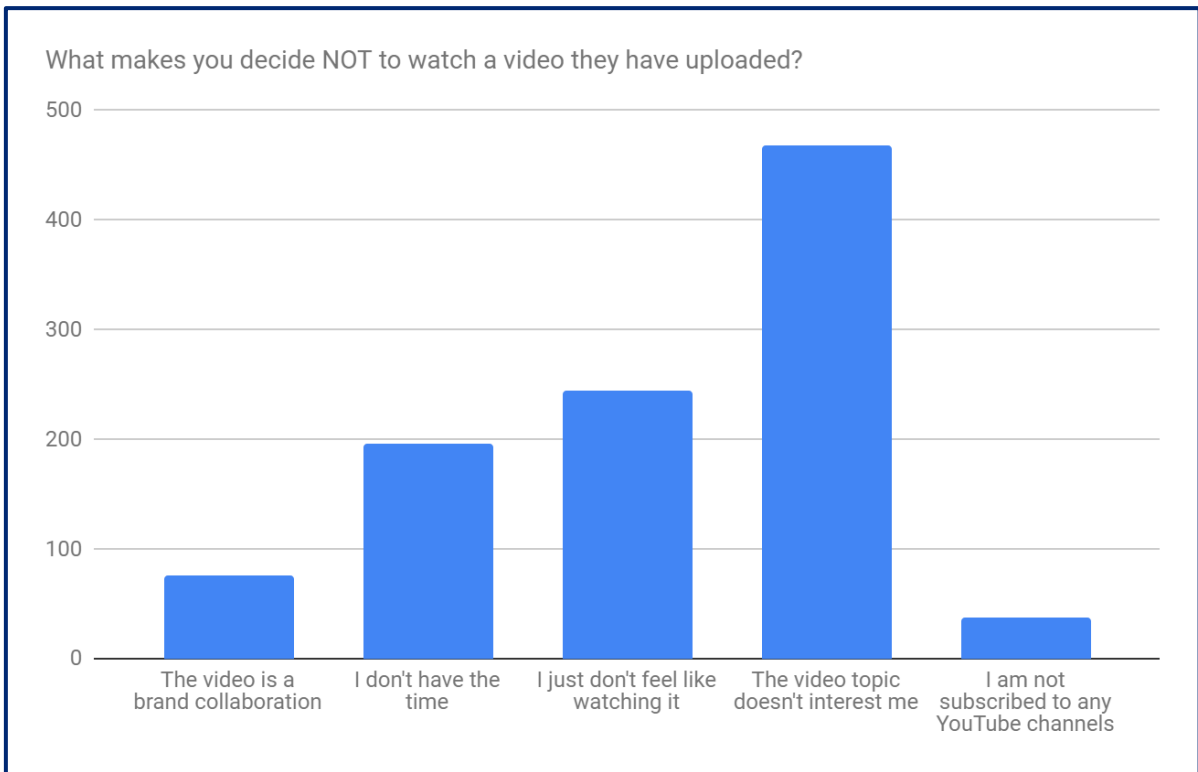
Fig. 13. Results of "What makes you decide not to watch a video they have uploaded?"

We were then able to determine that 72 percent of respondents follow the same influencer on more than one platform but only 65 percent follow influencers on Instagram.
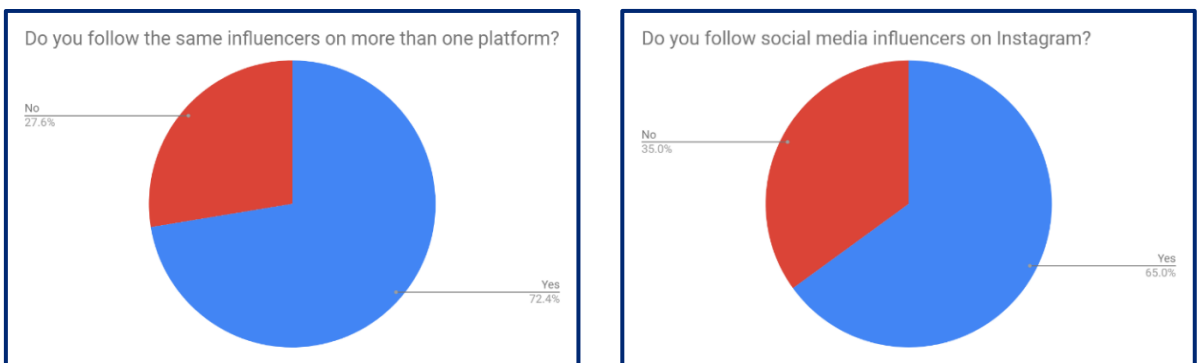
Fig. 14. Results of "Do you follow the same influencer on more than one platform?" and "Do you follow social media influencer on Instagram?"

The responses to the next question gave us in-depth knowledge of what accounts the respondents follow on Instagram: although friends and family was the top choice, it was closely followed by video bloggers, celebrities and photographers.
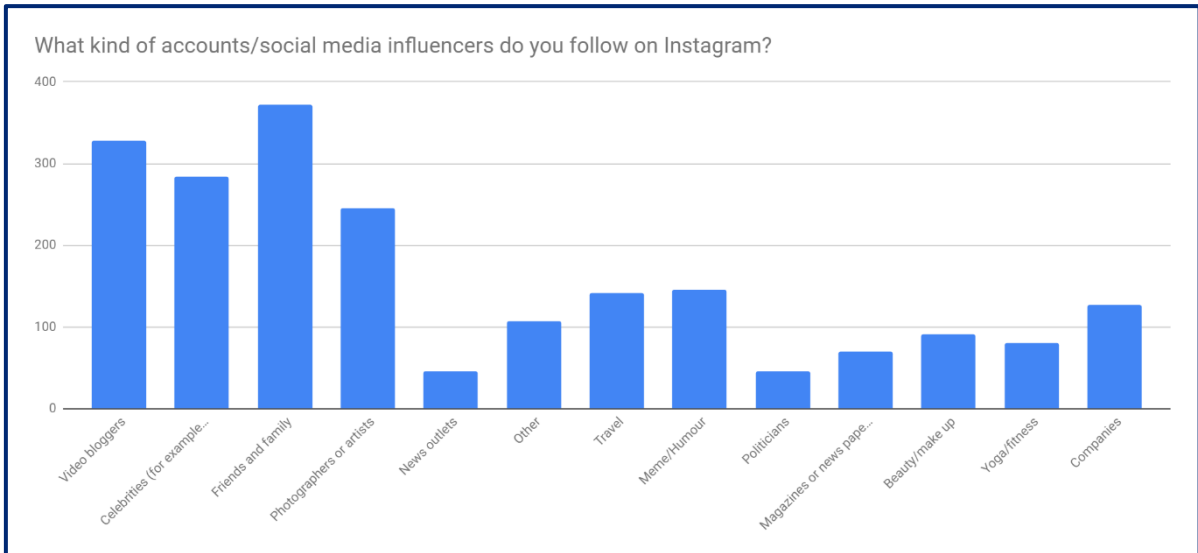
Fig. 15. Results of "What kind of accounts/social media influencers do you follow on Insta-gram?"

Based on the two following questions we could determine that how respondents feel if an influencer posts paid content often depends on the brand and that it is very imported that the brand is a good fit for the influencer. This sentiment was elaborated on by many respondents in the final question with respondents stating they are more likely to trust an influencer's recommendation: 'if it's suitable for the other content they're creating' (R13); 'if the product is vital to the "influencers" channel (ex. yoga mat for a yoga chan-nel)' (R59); and 'if the brand or products is aligned with their lifestyle' (R71).
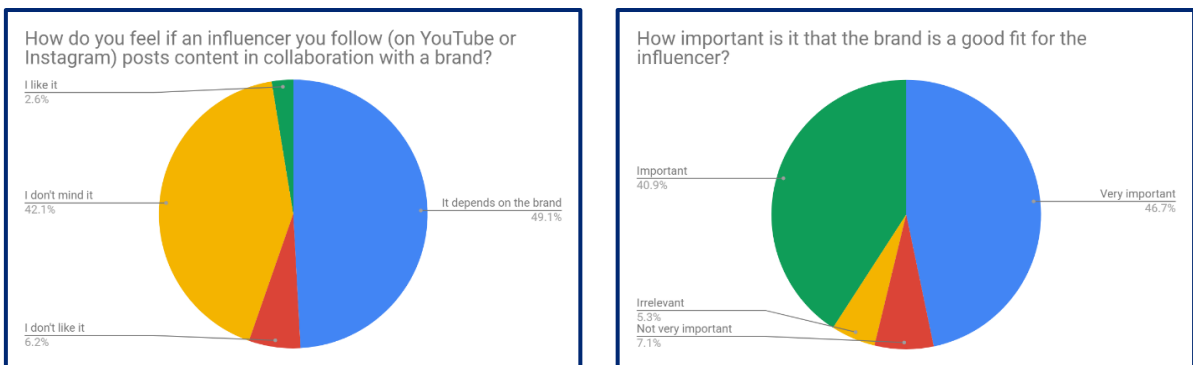
Fig. 16. Results of "How do you feel if an influencer you follow (on YouTube or Instagram) posts content in collaboration with a brand?" and "How important is it that the brand is a good fit for the influencer?"

The notion that the brand plays a vital part in trusting the recommendation of an influencer was further confirmed in the following question as 62 percent of respondents stated that whether they are likely to trust the recommendation of an influencer depends

27

on the product or brand whilst 14 percent stated that they were not likely to trust the recommendation of an influencer. Comments in the final survey question included statements such as: 'it also depends on the recommendation, as I am more likely to check out and even purchase an app or a service than a concrete item' (R34); 'when [the] brand is paying for [a] campaign for many influencers at the same time makes me NOT [want] to buy their product' (R46); and 'the product they are recommending has to be somewhat known' (R88).
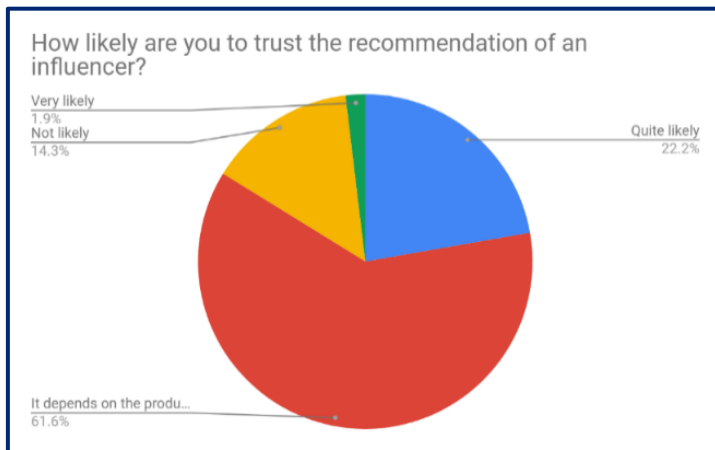
Fig. 17. Results of "How likely are you to trust the recommendation of an influencer?"

In the follow-up question, respondents were able to choose several possible answers for what makes them more likely to trust the recommendation of an influencer. The most popular choice, whether an influencer seems to genuinely like the product/service they are promoting, was a subject many respondents elaborated on in the final question with comments such as: 'the most important thing is that the product seems to honestly excite the person' (R7). They also stated that deciding factors include 'your own feeling that the influencer is genuinely impressed and convinced by the product/service' (R77, translated from Finnish) and 'whether it feels like a genuine opinion or just an ad' (R79). On the subject of trustworthiness one respondent suggested that 'the age of the influencer is an additional factor - I find it difficult to trust "kids" but the more mature influencers are the ones I find trustworthy as I feel that "they know what they're talking about" and "are genuine"' (R4).

What makes you more likely to trust the recommendation of an influencer?

They seem to genuinely like the product/service they're promoting	The product/service is something that interests me personally	Other	They seem like a trustworthy person	They have a lot of followers/subscribers
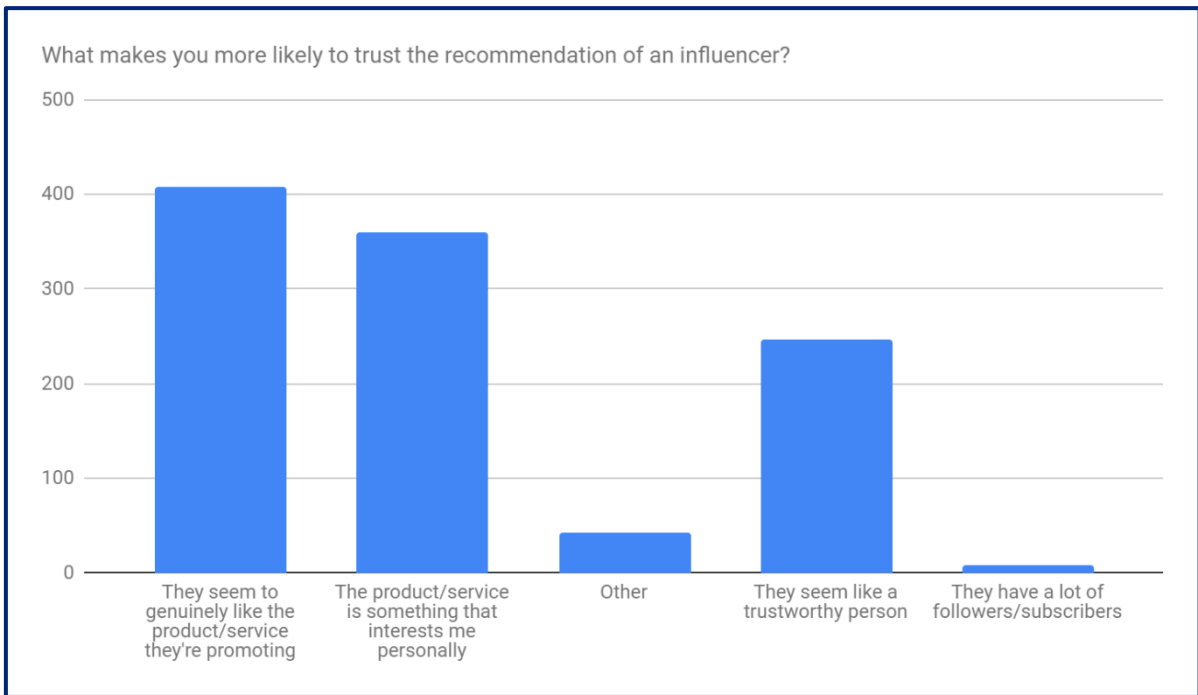
Fig. 18. Results of "What makes you more likely to trust the recommendation of an influencer?"

The question of what makes an influencer seem credible allowed respondents to choose more than one option but provided one answer that clearly stood out, namely that they are positive but also critical of the product/service they are promoting. This was chosen by 87 percent of respondents and was the most popular theme amongst comments in the final question. Many emphasised the important of presenting pros and cons of the product or service: 'I think it's important that the influencer give a well-rounded review, with both positive and negative aspects of the product/service that they're reviewing or selling. Otherwise, it doesn't seem credible' (R14); and

> 'If they are objective in their review of a product, I am more likely to believe them. If a person has nothing else to say except "this is the best thing ever", it just doesn't sound believable. Having the ability to step back and look at something from a different perspective and offering constructive criticism is needed for a good, honest review'(R12)
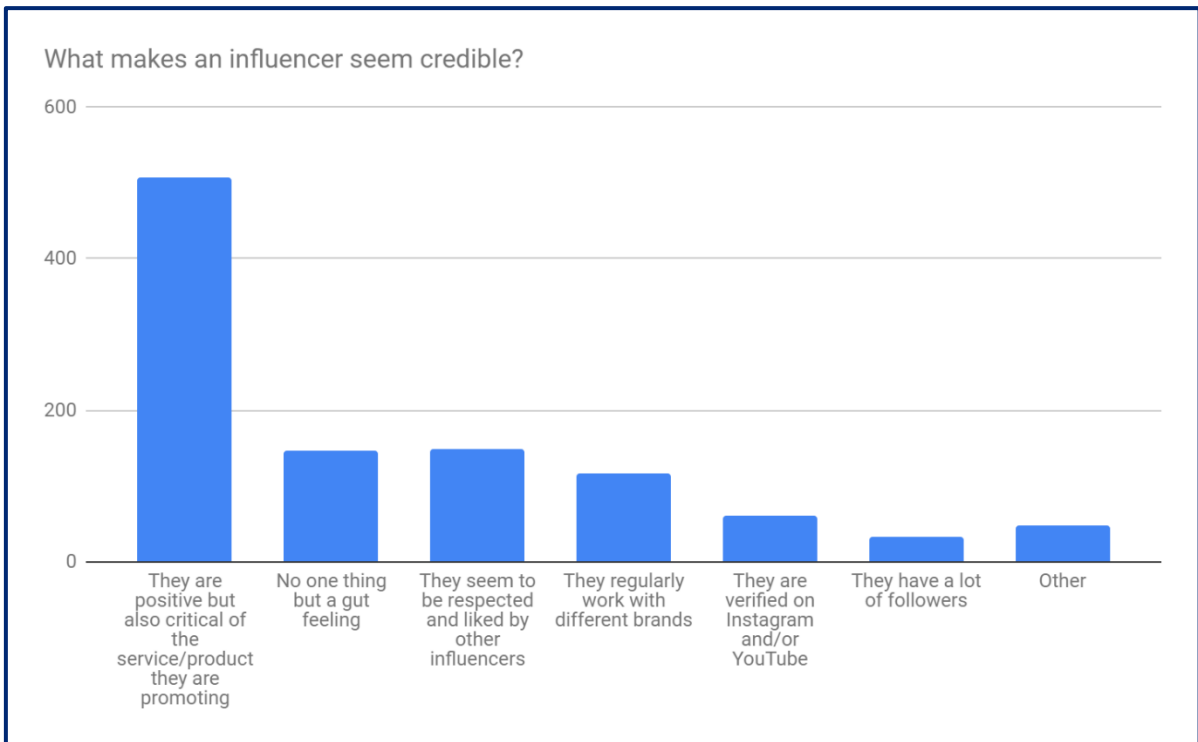
Fig. 19. Results of "What makes an influencer seem credible?"

The following question revealed that 56 percent of respondents have bought a product or service promoted by an influencer.
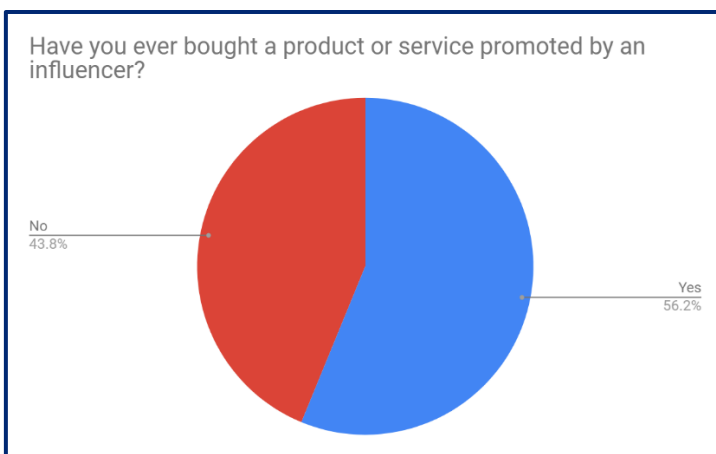
Fig. 20. Results of "Have you ever bought a product or service promoted by an influencer?"

The penultimate question of the survey, and the last multiple-choice question showed that the main reason why the respondents stop following or watching an influencer is because they become bored with their posts or videos. For this question it was possible to choose several answers. The most popular answer was chosen by 40 percent of re-spondents.
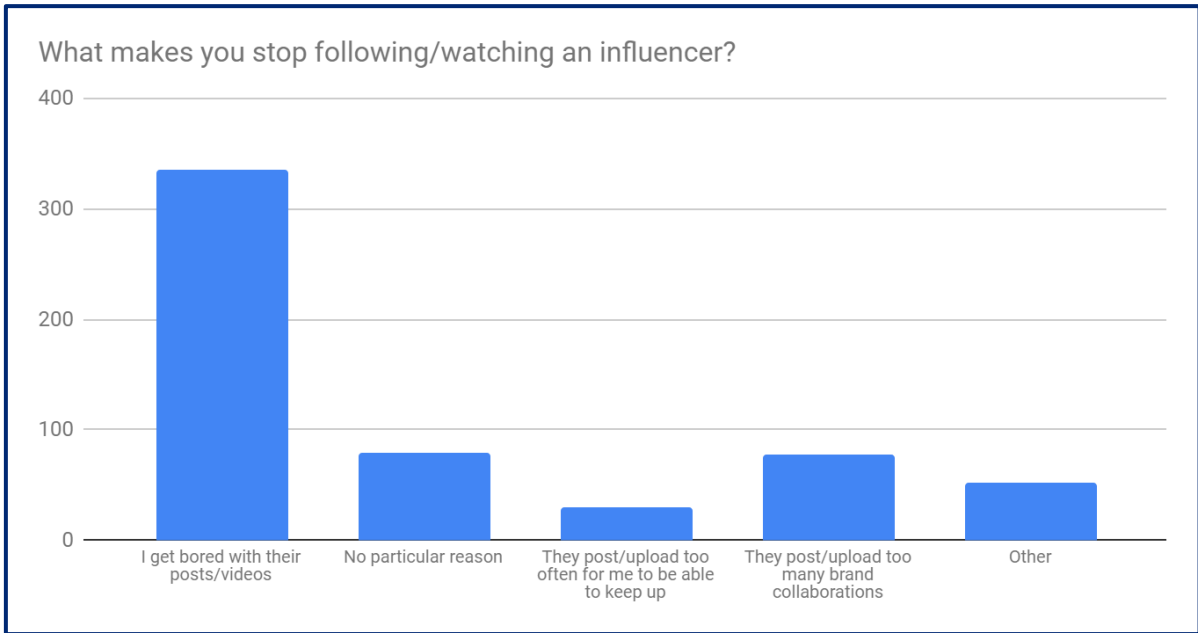
Fig. 21. Results of "What makes you stop following/watching an influencer?"

5.2 Additional comments

The final and optional question 'Is there anything else you think is important when deciding whether to trust the recommendations of an influencer?' garnered an unexpected amount of comments and immensely useful data. 98 of the millennial respondents chose to answer the question, of which 88 were deemed relevant and appropriate for the study. In studying the responses, 12 themes were recurrent in the comments and could as a result be identified as factors millennials feel are important in deciding to trust the recommendation of an influencer. Most of these factors (numbers 1-10) can also be regarded as key elements of a successful influencer marketing campaign targeting millennials.

The themes are illustrated below with two examples of respondents comments:

1) The influencer is critical, objective and provides pros and cons of the product

> It's crucial that they are critical about the products - they discuss the pros but also emphasise the fact that there are/might be some cons (R4)

> They must give genuine criticism on the products as well as positive reviews in order to appear as a true reviewer and not just a product spokesperson (R15)

2) The influencer seems genuinely impressed and excited by the product or brand

The most important thing is that the product seems to honestly excite the person (R7)

I can respect collaborations when influencer is actually truly excited about the collaboration (R44)

3) The product or brand has been seen in the influencer's content before and/or after the collaboration

A person seems genuine in recommending something when you see on their videos/social media accounts that they use the product or service regularly themselves (R25)

What helps is if I have seen the influencer use the product/service in some way even before they made a sponsored video, recommendation etc. (R26)

4) The influencer does not post brand collaborations too often or too frequently

First and foremost, if they do brand deals/collaborations 'all the time' it makes me feel that they might not be genuine and hence I might not trust them after all (R4)

If an influencer's social media account is 80% or more about brand deals (for example, if a YouTube vlogger posts lots of videos where they only talk about the said brand), I'm less likely to consider any of the products (R82)

5) The quality and execution of the brand collaboration post or video

Influencers seem to have a very different approach to the collaboration videos also. Some make the whole video all about that product or brand and some make a video that is still very much like their everyday videos but with a little twist of marketing. I prefer the second one as you don't even realize you are being influenced (R75)

I'll usually skip any video if the quality of the video is poor. So if you're trying to "sell" me a recommendation… Please do it with a bit of effort (R80)

6) The product is not being promoted by several influencers simultaneously

If the same brand is using a lot more influencers at the same time promoting their products or services really aggressively, I may feel a bit iffy about it (R45)

There's no dependability in influencers who do the same collaborations as all the other in-fluencers at the same time, often regarding completely irrelevant products (that are trendy) (R69, translated from Swedish)

7) The product is a good fit for the influencer and their channel

I think it's important that an influencer doesn't accept every single brand deal they're being offered. Or at least give it a thought if it's suitable for the other content they're creating. I think at least my world would go upside down if I'd see a family vlogger (with kids) advertising alcohol beverages, or a health coach advertising Burger King. That would change completely how I would see them and watch their content in the future. (R13)

If it seems they would never use it themselves, or don't actually use it in the video and just showcase it I find it less likely they actually use and genuinely recommend the product (R56)

8) Transparency about the content being paid for or sponsored

Honesty of the company and the influencer. I have in the past stopped following someone if they made sponsored videos without telling the viewer it was sponsored (R41)

Youtubers trying to conceal or hide the fact that they are using paid promotion doesn't sit right with me (R56)

9) The influencer themselves: whether they seem honest and genuine

The influencer itself! If they have a good track record with being critical, honest and trustworthy (R5)

I am more likely to be open to recommendations if I enjoy and relate to the creator and the content that they produce (R61)

10) The product or brand is environmentally friendly and/or sustainable

I don't appreciate influencers marketing not-sustainable products or services on their platforms. […] That's why I usually don't agree with the influencers, the products they get and promote should definitely be more sustainable and eco-friendlier (R33)

I would be more likely to trust an influencer who seems to be concerned with environmental issues and recognizes their influence on especially younger audiences, rather than someone who tends to collaborate with, for example, a lot of fast fashion brands and whose channel is all about urging people to buy (R34)

11) The viewer's own research online of the product or brand

> To be honest I always look up everything that I might be interested in buying, even if there is an influencer saying the product works. I check reviews on other sites, I check if the site is safe, and if the company is legit, etc. (R38)

> I don't trust a single influencer nor review. I'll always compare several sources of information if product or service is interesting (R58)

12)   The influencer's or brand's values align with the viewer

> I tend to trust more influencers who I think have similar values as I do (R30)

> The collaboration or a recommendation should be aligned with the theme/s of the channel and also reflect the shown or said values of the person. You can often tell if the recommendation is done purely for money or exposure (R34)

6. DISCUSSION

In this chapter we will discuss the results of the survey and answer the previously stated research questions. We will analyse how the results relate to existing research regarding influencer marketing discussed in preceding chapters; whether the results can be linked to previous research on millennial behaviour and how the results can be used as guidelines for a successful influencer marketing campaign.

Based on the results of the survey it is evident that YouTube is both a popular website amongst millennials and the ideal platform for influencer marketing: Not only do a large majority (64 percent) reportedly visit the site more than once a day but when they do, they prefer to watch video bloggers. This is rather consistent with previously mentioned research stating that 80% of the 18-34 demographic prefers to watch videos uploaded by individual content creators (Heltai, 2016). They are also not only there to watch one creator, as 66 percent declare that they are subscribed to 10 or more channels.

Also consistent with previous research on influencer marketing is the fact that millennials want to be entertained by the content they watch (Arnold, 2018), and this is proven to be the main reason for watching videos on YouTube; the personality of the content creator is also recognised to be a key reason. These are the same reasons why they decide to subscribe to their YouTube channels. The majority of millennials (72 percent) do

however follow influencers on more than one platform (65 percent follow them on Instagram) which is positive from an influencer marketing standpoint. This means that cross-platform collaborations will potentially be viewed twice by the same viewer.

Previous research deeming millennials familiar and therefore rather sceptical of advertising (see Lafayette, 2013; Tapscott 2008) was further confirmed by the respondents in this survey. Especially the comments to the final survey question revealed many cases of scepticism towards both brands and marketing in general. One respondent stated the following:

> Whenever an influencer that I follow recommends a product on their channel I tend to focus on the way they present it. If he/she only says the obligatory key words that the brand has forced him/her to say or whether the influencer stays true to himself/herself. (R8)

This ties in with millennials' wish for influencers to be critical of the product or service being promoted, which was established as a key factor for an influencer seeming credible. Based on the additional comments this has been deemed of utmost importance with one respondents stating 'to me it's really important to bring up both - positive and negative sides of the product/service, because I honestly doubt there is a thing that doesn't have any flaws in it' (R13). Although it is easy to simply praise a product and service, being critical and objective gives the audience a sense of sincerity and authenticity.

> I think it's important that the influencer give a well-rounded review, with both positive and negative aspects of the product/service that they're reviewing or selling. Otherwise, it doesn't seem credible (R14)

For millennials it very much seems to depend on the brand whether they choose to accept a recommendation or not. Virtually half of the respondents (49 percent) declared that how they feel about an influencer posting a brand collaboration depends on the brand in question, further stating that it is very important (46 percent) or important (40 percent) that brand is a good fit for the influencer. The fact that the brand plays a huge role was further confirmed by the 61 percent that stated that how likely they were to trust the recommendation of an influencer depends on the product or brand. This is a theme that came up several times in the comments to the final question and will be discussed further in chapter 6.1.

The fact that millennials find follower amounts virtually irrelevant when it comes to trusting a recommendation of an influencer is a very positive finding and supports the use of micro influencers. As has been stated, micro influencers are extremely connected

to their audiences and are seen as trusted sources when it comes to recommendations (see Wissman, 2018; Berger J. & Keller Fay Group, 2016). One respondent commented 'I trust a smaller influencer more and one that does less collaborations' (R83).

The question of credibility seems to be the biggest issue concerning influencer marketing. If the influencer does not seem credible, there is little or no success of earnestly influencing their audience. A surprising issue that was brought up numerous times in the comments to the last question, without a link to a single survey questions, was the matter of an influencer working with too many brands, too often. Respondents stated that 'if there is too many [collaborations] then they lose their value' (R2) and 'if an influencer's social media account is 80% or more about brand deals (for example, if a YouTube vlogger posts lots of videos where they only talk about the said brand), I'm less likely to consider any of the products' (R82). This is highly notable as this is not an issue that has been brought forward previously in influencer marketing research and is something that influencers and brands alike should keep in mind.

Interestingly, 56 percent of the millennials admitted to having bought a product or service promoted by an influencer. Influencer marketing may work especially well in targeting millennials as influencers are often able to offer their audiences perks or special offers during as part of a brand collaboration. As previous research suggests, millennials purchasing decisions are often affected by incentives such as free postage or discount codes (Roesler, 2018).

Thanks to the comments to the final survey question we were also found that millennials are likely to do their own research on products before deciding to purchase something promoted by an influencer. This is in line with previous research that has found millennials to be keen on checking product reviews and ratings to make sure they get the best product for the best price (Accenture 2013). One of the respondents of the survey commented: 'I search and go through other people's opinion of the same product or service, if possible. One opinion is always better than one' (R55, translated from Finnish). Another respondent elaborated on why they do their own research:

> I compare the influencers' personal opinions with other more professional reviews and then make up my own mind. I always keep in mind that influencers' recommendations are just personal opinions and that they do not actually have expertise to professionally review the products (R37)

Positive past experiences evidently also serve as a form of research as one respondent noted: 'If I tried something they recommended before and it worked it makes me trust them more in the future (R64)'.

6.1 Revisiting the research questions

In response to the first research question 'Why do millennials choose to watch and follow video blogger on YouTube?' the research has proven that millennials mainly watch video bloggers for two specific reasons: they want to be entertained, and they like the personality of the video blogger. They also enjoy the kind of videos they create and to a certain degree get drawn in to their lives and want to know what happens next. For millennials, it is therefore very much down to the individual video blogger: whether they like the person or not.

The answer to the second research question 'Do millennials believe that their consumer behaviour is impacted by the recommendation and promotions of influencers on YouTube and Instagram?' is slightly more complex. It is this researcher's belief that although more than half of millennial respondents admitted to having bought something promoted by an influencer, millennials in general are too sceptical, proud and strong willed to believe themselves to have been impacted. If they have bought a promoted product, they are likely to believe that they have done so at their own peril and it has been a conscious decision to buy the product despite it having been promoted by an influencer – not because of it.

The last research question, 'What makes an influencer marketing campaign credible to the millennial follower?' proved to be the most multi-faceted, due to the extensive knowledge and information received by the respondents in the final survey question. Although one could include the majority of factors presented in the preceding chapter (5.2) as an answer to this question, the researcher has chosen to narrow it down to three key issues. Firstly, the brand has to fit into the lifestyle of the influencer and the style of their channel/feed. Secondly, the promoted product or brand should be somewhat familiar on the channel, meaning it should have been seen in regular, unpaid content prior to and after the brand collaboration, preferably both. Lastly, it is crucial for the influencer to offer up some kind of criticism or suggestion for improvement of the promoted prod-

uct or service. Although it is also very important that the influencer appears to be genuinely happy with the product, by offering up both pros and cons of the products they seem to be reviewing the product as opposed to just advertising it.

6.2   Recommendations for future research

Due to the limitations resulted by the chosen distribution channels for this study, the researcher recommends similar research to be conducted with different distribution channels to further our understanding of influencer marketing. This would make it possible to draw further conclusions regarding millennials perception of influencer marketing.

Additionally, it would also be valuable to compare millennials' views on influencer marketing compared to that of other generations. Since we know that millennials take to advertising in general different to their parents if would be interesting to establish if there are differences in how the older generation regards influencer marketing.

Due to the substantial majority of female respondents we were not able to draw any conclusions regarding differences in preferences or opinions about influencer marketing between genders. Therefore the researcher strongly recommends an influencer marketing study in the future that would allow for such comparisons to be made.

It would also be beneficial to conduct research from the point of view of influencers in order to understand their motivations, views and experiences as this kind of research is virtually non-existent. It would be immensely valuable to be able to understand the industry from their standpoint, for instance the process of deciding to work with a certain brand and how equal the pay is between male and female influencers with similar sized audiences.

7.   CONCLUSION

As a result of the research conducted as part of this master's thesis, our understanding of how millennials perceive and respond to influencer marketing has broadened. Without much previous research to use as guidelines, we have now established the key issues needed to be considered when using this marketing strategy to target millennials. This research is relevant to media managers, marketers and influencers alike as it expands

our knowledge of a very relevant, yet still somewhat unexplored, field of online marketing.

Although the use of influencer marketing is still a relatively new form of online marketing, for millennials it is a well-known, and for the most part, accepted part of following influencers online. The reason why influencer marketing can be especially worthwhile when targeting millennials is not only because of the time they spend on social media making them the most likely audience, but also due to the fact that they do not want to be exposed to traditional advertising. Although they are likely to use ad-blockers to hide advertisement on websites, millennials do not reject influencer marketing as a form of advertising as they enjoy the content that the influencer makes and arguably accepts that product promotion is part of it. From what we know about millennials they want everything to be more tailor made to their interests, wants and needs, ergo product promotion by an influencer they like and are interested in is more likely to spark their interest – given that the brand fits with the influencer.

In order to create a successful influencer marketing campaign all parties need to be aware of certain elements that affect how the campaign is perceived by the audience. When targeting millennials, it is important to consider that the brand and influencer are a good match as millennials will otherwise disregard the recommendation being made. Similarly, it is important that the product or service being marketed is something that the influencer would use in his or her daily life. This will ensure audiences that the recommendation is genuine and support the notion that the influencer is likely to continue to use the product or service in the future. Moreover, brands should ideally aim to work with influencers who they know to be real users or even "fans" of their products. This is because the audience is then likely used to seeing the product or service on the influencer's channel and regards the collaboration as natural. Additionally, brands should encourage their hired influencer to be critical of the product they are hiring them to promote as this is proven to be a critical factor in millennials' decision to trust the recommendation of an influencer.

When planning an influencer marketing campaign on YouTube, it is important to keep in mind the reason why millennials watch video bloggers in the first place: for entertainment. They like their personalities and the kind of content they make but they still need

to be entertained. If the topic of the video does not interest them, they will not watch it. This is something to keep in mind as previous research has also proven that millennials will watch content, even though it is sponsored, as long as it is entertaining.

What is evident however, is that one cannot underestimate the scepticism that this kind of product promotion can generate amongst millennials. This most likely stems from the previously discussed fact that they have grown up surrounded by advertising and are unlikely to be convinced by the typical marketing spiel. In order to actually become influenced they need to believe that there is something else driving the influencer's recommendation beside a pay check: that the influencer genuinely likes and uses the product. Then, the marketer or brand has a chance of achieving a successful influencer marketing campaign.

REFERENCES

Abramson, A. 2018, *Millennial consumer behavior: Understanding millennials* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.alexisabramson.com/millennial-consumer-behavior/ Accessed 5 April 2019

Aimia 2011, *How Generation Y will Reshape Customer Loyalty* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.aimia.com/newsroom/news-releases/how-generation-y-will-reshape-customer-loyalty/ Accessed 13 April 2019

Alba, D. 2017, *Instagram will now tell you who's getting paid to post* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.wired.com/story/instagram-sponsored-posts/ Accessed 30 January 2019

Angulo, N. 2016, *Brand marketers see higher engagement with micro-influencers: Survey* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.marketingdive.com/news/brand-marketers-see-higher-engagement-with-micro-influencers-survey/418109/ Accessed 17 January 2019

Arnold, A. 2018, *Millennials Hate Ads But 58% Of Them Wouldn't Mind If It's From Their Favorite Digital Stars* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2018/01/21/millennials-hate-ads-but-58-of-them-wouldnt-mind-if-its-from-their-favorite-digital-stars/#51291db659ca Accessed 5 April 2019

ASA 2018, *Influencer's Guide* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.asa.org.uk/uploads/assets/uploaded/3af39c72-76e1-4a59-b2b47e81a034cd1d.pdf Accessed 30 January 2019

Aslam, S. 2018, *YouTube by the Numbers: Stats, Demographics & Fun Facts* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.omnicoreagency.com/youtube-statistics/ Accessed 16 October 2018

Barefoot, D & Szabo, J. 2009, *Friends with Benefits: A Social Media Marketing Handbook*, No Starch Press, Incorporated, 316 pages

Bolton, R.N, Parasuraman, A., Hoefnagels, A., Migchels, N., Kabadayi, S., Gruber, S., Komarova Loureiro, Y., & Solnet, D. 2013, Understanding Generation Y and their use of social media: a review and research agenda, *Journal of Service Management*, Vol. 24 (3), pp. 245-267. Available from: ProQuest. Accessed 4 November 2018

Brown, D., & Hayes, N. 2015*, Influencer marketing: Who really influences your customers?* Routledge, 256 pages

Berger, J. & Keller Fay Group. 2016, *Research shows micro-influencers have more impact
than average consumers* [ONLINE] Available from: http://go2.experticity.com/rs/288-azs-731/images/experticity-kellerfaysurveysummary_.pdf Accessed 1 February 2019

Burns, Kelli S. 2009, *Celeb 2.0: How Social Media Foster Our Fascination with Popular Culture*, [EBOOK] ABC-CLIO, LLC, pp.61-63 Available from: Ebook Central. Accessed 15 October 2018

Campanelli, P. 2008, 'Testing Survey Questions' in de Leeuw, E., Hox, J. & Dillman, D.A., (ed.) *International Handbook of Survey Methodology,* Taylor & Francis Group, p. 176

Casey, S. 2017, *2016 Nielsen Social Media Report* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/2016-nielsen-social-media-report.html Accessed 6 November 2018

Cellan-Jones, R. 2019, *Tech Tent: The power of influencers* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-47001461 Accessed 28 January 2019

CenSamm 2017, *Strauss-Howe Generational Theory* [ONLINE] Available from: https://censamm.org/resources/profiles/strauss-howe-generational-theory Accessed 16 April 2019

Cole, N. 2018, *6 Things The Average Instagrammer Does Better Than Most Marketing Professionals* [ONLINE] Available from: https://medium.com/@nicolascole77/6-things-the-average-instagrammer-does-better-than-most-marketing-professionals-14bbe17cdd72 Accessed 29 January 2019

Cotter, K. 2018, Playing the visibility game: How digital influencers and algorithms negotiate influence on Instagram, *New Media & Society* Vol. 1 (19), pp.1-19 Available from: Sage Accessed 25 February2019

Creswell, J.W. 2014, *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, 4th Edition, Sage Publications, 271 pages

Cronin, N. 2018, *The 2018 Instagram Rich List – Who Earns the Most from Social Media?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.hopperhq.com/blog/2018-instagram-rich-list/ Accessed 28 January 2019

Dahan, E. 2016, *Influencer Marketing May Be the Antidote to Ad Blocking*. [ONLINE] Available from: http://www.marketingprofs.com/opinions/2016/29369/influencer-marketing-may-be-the-antidote-to-ad-blocking Accessed 1 February 2019

Davies, R. 2018, *Social media celebrities under investigation by business watchdog* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/aug/16/uk-watchdog-investigate-payments-social-media-influencers Accessed 30 January 2018

de Leeuw, E., Hox, J. & Dillman, D.A., 2008, 'The Cornerstones of Survey Research' in de Leeuw, E., Hox, J. & Dillman, D.A., (ed.) *International Handbook of Survey Methodology,* Taylor & Francis Group, p. 2

DNA 2017, *Digitaalisen elämäntavan tutkimus* [ONLINE] Available from: https://corporate.dna.fi/documents/94506/930199/DNA+Digitutkimus+2017_raportti+medialle_somebarometri.pdf Accessed 6 March 2019

Digiday 2014, *WTF is an MCN?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://digiday.com/media/wtf-mcn/ Accessed 6 March 2019

Dimock, M. 2019, *Defining generations: Where Millennials end and post-Millennials begin* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/ Accessed 13 April 2019

Federal Trade Commission 2017, *FTC Staff Reminds Influencers and Brands to Clearly Disclose Relationship* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2017/04/ftc-staff-reminds-influencers-brands-clearly-disclose Accessed 30 January 2019

Flick, U. 2011, *Introducing Research Methodology: A beginners Guide to doing a Research Project,* Sage Publications, 271 pages

Gerhards, C. 2017, Product placement on YouTube: An explorative study on YouTube creators' experiences with advertisers, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, pp.1-18 Available from: Sage Journals. Accessed 4 November 2018

Guo, M. 2011 'Marketing and Branding in Online Social Media Environments: Examining Social Media Adoption by the Top 100 Global Brands' in Noor Al-Deen, H.S. & Hendricks, J.A., (ed.) *Social Media : Usage and Impact*, Lexington Books, pages 161-181 Available from: Ebook Central. Accessed 5 November 2018

Hanna, R., Rohm, A. & Crittenden V.L. 2011, We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem, *Business Horizons,* Vol. 53 (3) Available from: ProQuest Accessed 16 October 2018

Hatton, G. 2018, *Micro Influencers vs Macro Influencers* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/micro-influencers-vs-macro-influencers/516896/ Accessed 28 January 2019

Havia, M. 2017, *Let's Play – Why watch? En enkätundersökning om Let's Play genren på YouTube,* Bachelor Thesis, Helsinki: Arcada, Online Media

Heltai,G. 2016, *What Millennials' YouTube Usage Tells Us about the Future of Video Viewership* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.comscore.com/Insights/Blog/What-Millennials-YouTube-Usage-Tells-Us-about-the-Future-of-Video-Viewership Accessed 3 November 2018

Hopper HQ 2018, *Instagram Rich List 2018* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.hopperhq.com/blog/instagram-rich-list/niche/influencer/ Accessed 29 January 2019

Husain, S., Ghufran, A. & Chaubey, D.S., 2016 Relevance of Social Media in Marketing and Advertising, *Splint International Journal of Professionals* Vol. 3 (7) Available form: Sage Journals. Accessed 5 November 2018

IAB 2018, *IAB internet advertising revenue report 2017 full year results* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.iab.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/IAB-2017-Full-Year-Internet-Advertising-Revenue-Report.REV2_.pdf Accessed 6 November 2018

Influencer Marketing Hub 2019, *What is an influencer?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://influencermarketinghub.com/what-is-an-influencer/ Accessed 17 January 2019

Instagram 2019a, [ONLINE] Available from: https://help.instagram.com/ Accessed on 18 January 2019

Instagram 2019b, [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.instagram.com/kyliejenner/ Accessed 12 April 2019

Instagram 2019c, [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.instagram.com/pewdiepie/ Accessed 12 April 2019

Kelly, S. 2018, *What is a micro influencer?* [ONLINE] Available at: https://blog.scrunch.com/what-is-a-micro-influencer Accessed 28 January 2019

Kraljević, R., & Filipović, Z. 2017, Gender Differences and Consumer Behavior of Millennials, *Acta Economica Et Turistica*, Vol. 3 (1), pages 5-13 Available from: ResearchGate Accessed 12 March 2019

Lafayette, J. 2013, "Research Helps Marketers Make Millennial Connections", *Broadcasting & Cable,* vol. 143 (10), p.2. Available from ProQuest. Accessed 16 October 2018

Lahti, I-P. 2018, *Mitä on tämän päivän vaikuttajamarkkinointi?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.meltwater.com/fi/blog/mita-on-taman-paivan-vaikuttajamarkki-nointi/ Accessed 28 February 2019

Long, M. 2011, 'Beyond the Press Release: Social Media as a Tool for Consumer Engagement' in Noor Al-Deen, H.S. & Hendricks, J.A., (ed.) *Social Media: Usage and Impact*, Lexington Books, pages 145-160 Available from: Ebook Central. Accessed on 5 November 2018

Lisk, J. 2018, *7 Great Examples Of Sponsored Content* [ONLINE] Available from https://www.mediaplanet.com/us/blog/insights/7-great-examples-of-sponsored-content Accessed 18 January 2019

Luttrell, R & McGrath, K. 2015, *The Millennial mindset: Unravelling fact from fiction* Rowman & Littlefield, 206 pages

Lynch, J. 2018, *These are the 19 most popular YouTube stars in the world — and some are making millions* [ONLINE] Available from: https://nordic.businessinsider.com/most-popular-youtubers-with-most-subscribers-2018-2?r=US&IR=T Accessed 4 November 2018

Manfreda, K.L. & Vehovar, V. 2008, 'Internet Surveys' in de Leeuw, E., Hox, J. & Dillman, D.A., (ed.) *International Handbook of Survey Methodology,* Taylor & Francis Group, p.267

Markerly 2016, *Instagram Marketing: Does Influencer Size Matter?* [ONLINE] Available from: http://markerly.com/blog/instagram-marketing-does-influencer-size-matter/ Accessed 28 January 2019

Mediakix Team 2018, *The Top 10 Millennial Marketing Statistics You Must Know* [ONLINE] Available from: http://mediakix.com/2017/03/millennial-marketing-statistics-everyone-must-know Accessed 25 February 2019

Moore, S. 2018*, Instagram influencers show how ads have changed. We need to catch up* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/aug/17/instagram-influencers-advertising-youtube-vloggers-kardashians Accessed 30 January 2019

Moreno, F.M., Avila, F., Lafuente J.G. & Moreno, S.M. 2017, The Characterization of the Millennials and Their Buying Behavior *International Journal of Marketing Studies* Vol.9 (5) pages 135-144. Available from Research Gate. Accessed 25 March 2019

Ng & McGinnis Johnson, 2015, Millennials: Who are they, how are they different, and why should we care? in Burke, R.J., Cooper, C.L. & Antoniou, A-S.G. (ed.) *The Multigenerational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities,* Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. Pages 121-137. Available from ResearchGate. Accessed 25 March 2019

Notopoulos, K. 2017, *Social media platforms' in-app ad tools aren't good enough for the FTC* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/katienotopoulos/ftc-says-fb-instagram-youtube-ad-tools-arent-enough Accessed 30 January 2019

O'Neil-Hart, C & Blumenstein, H. 2016, *The latest video trends: Where your audience is watching* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/video-trends-where-audience-watching/ Accessed 16 October 2018

One Roof Social 2018, *Declaration and Disclosure - The 2018 Update* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.oneroofsocial.com/single-post/2018/03/05/Is-it-a-ad---The-2018-Update Accessed 30 January 2019

Ott, A. 2010, *How Social Media Has Changed the Workplace [Study]* [ONLINE] Available from https://www.fastcompany.com/1701850/how-social-media-has-changed-workplace-study Accessed 8 April 2019

Page, V. 2015, *Top Companies Owned By Facebook (FB)* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/051815/top-11-companies-owned-facebook.asp Accessed 18 January 2019

Pew Research Centre 2013, *On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity – For Now* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millennial-women-near-parity-for-now/ Accessed 13 April 2019

Pew Research Centre 2015, *The Whys and Hows of Generations Research* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.people-press.org/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/ Accessed 16 April 2019

Pilcher, Jane, 1994, Mannheim's Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy in *British Journal of Sociology* Vol. 45(3) Available from: http://marcuse.faculty.history.ucsb.edu/classes/201/articles/94PilcherMannheimSocGenBJS.pdf Accessed 15 April 2019

Price, R. 2018, *Instagram's Stories feature is now twice as big as Snapchat, with 400 million daily users* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-stories-400-million-daily-active-users-snapchat-2018-6?r=US&IR=T&IR=T Accessed 18 January 2019

Rivera, A. 2018, *How Technology Is Changing Online Advertising* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.business.com/articles/how-technology-is-changing-online-advertising/ Accessed 6 March 2019

Roesler, P. 2018, *New Study Highlights Trends that Shape Millennial Consumer Decisions* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.inc.com/peter-roesler/new-study-highlights-trends-that-shape-millennial-consumer-decisions.html Accessed 8 April 2019

Rogers, C. 2017, *What's the ROI of influencer marketing?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.marketingweek.com/2017/08/30/roi-look-like-world-influencer-marketing/ Accessed 8 April 2019

Rosario, A. B., Sotgiu, F., Valck, K. D., & Bijmolt, T. H., 2016. The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales: A meta-analytic review of platform, product, and metric factors, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 53, pages 297–318 Available from: Sage Journals. Accessed 4 November 2018

Schawbel, D. 2015, *10 New Findings About The Millennial Consumer* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2015/01/20/10-new-findings-about-the-millennial-consumer/#6bdc4f4c6c8f Accessed 11 March 2019

Schwemmer, C. and Ziewiecki, S. 2018, Social Media Sellout: The Increasing Role of Product Promotion on YouTube, *Social Media + Society,* Vol.1 (20) Available from: Sage Journals. Accessed 16 October 2018

Serazio, M. 2015 Selling (Digital) Millennials: The Social Construction and Technological Bias of a Consumer Generation, *Television & New Media*, Vol. 16 (7) pages 599–615 Available from: Sage Journals. Accessed 4 November 2018

Social Blade 2018*, Pewdiepie Live Subscriber Count* [ONLINE] Available from: https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/pewdiepie/realtime Accessed 12 April 2019

Stasik, S. 2018, *What is a content creator?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.stateofdigitalpublishing.com/content-strategy/what-is-a-content-creator/ Accessed 17 January 2019

Statista 2018, *Number of monthly active Instagram users from January 2013 to June 2018 (in millions)* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.statista.com/statistics/253577/number-of-monthly-active-instagram-users/ Accessed 18 January 2019

Sweetser, K.D., Porter, L.V., Chung, D.S., Kim, E. 2008, Credibility and the use of blogs among professionals in the communication, *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly,* Vol. 85 (1), pages 169-185 Available from: Sage Journals. Accessed 4 November 2018

Sweeney, R. 2006*, Millennial Behaviors & Demographics*, New Jersey Institute of Technology, [ONLINE] Available from http://unbtls.ca/teachingtips/pdfs/sew/Millennial-Behaviors.pdf Accessed 26 March 2019

Tait, J. 2017, *What the hell is a micro influencer?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.tribegroup.co/blog/what-is-a-micro-influencer? Accessed 28 January 2019

Tapscott, D. 2008, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generations is changing your world,* McGraw-Hill, 384 pages.

Taylor, C.R. 2018, Generational research and advertising to millennials, *International Journal of Advertising,* Vol.37 (2) pages 165-167 Available from Taylor & Francis Online. Accessed 12 March 2019

The Centre for Generational Kinetics 2016, *An intro to generations* [ONLINE] Available from: https://genhq.com/faq-info-about-generations/ Accessed 15 April 2019

Tilford, C. 2018, *The millennial moment — in charts* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.ft.com/content/f81ac17a-68ae-11e8-b6eb-4acfcfb08c11 Accessed 13 April 2019

Traackr 2018, *What is Influencer Marketing and Why Does it Matter?* [ONLINE] Available from: http://www.traackr.com/influencer-marketing Accessed 6 November 2018

Vizeum 2018, *Somen ja vaikuttajien merkittävyys kasvaa räjähdysmäisesti* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.vizeum.fi/uutiset/somen-ja-vaikuttajien-merkittavyys-kasvaa Accessed 25 February 2019

Wakefield, J. 2019, *Social media stars agree to declare when they post ads* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-46960179 Accessed 30 January 2019

Wissman, B. 2018, *Micro-Influencers: The Marketing Force of The Future?* [ONLINE] Available from: https://www.forbes.com/sites/barrettwissman/2018/03/02/micro-influencers-the-marketing-force-of-the-future/#4b243e136707 Accessed on 28 January 2019

Woo, A. 2018, *Understanding the Research on Millennial Shopping Behaviors* [ONLINE] Available from https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/06/04/understanding-the-research-on-millennial-shopping-behaviors/#4ad90295f7ab Accessed 5 April 2019