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Ethics and Influencers in Russia

What do users expect from bloggers' advertising on Instagram?

Abstract

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What do users expect from bloggers' advertising on Instagram?

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Abstract

Influencer marketing in Instagram has become a powerful form of social media marketing in recent years in Russia. This allows companies and brands to promote their products to the loyal audiences of the influencers and, therefore, efficiently develop their image. However, popularity and usage of influencer marketing bring an issue of false and misleading advertising published by influencers on their pages in order to attain financial or other benefits. The problem of false advertising is a serious issue which causes different negative consequences, influencing lives and health of the followers, and the whole social media market as well.

Therefore, this work analyses the current situation on the influencer marketing in Russia from the sustainability perspective and determines a set of recommendations on improvement of online marketing from users' point of view.

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1   Introduction

1.1   Background

With spreading of social media influence and prevalence, an increasing number of people receive an opportunity for their content to be noticed and shared to a greater audience. Rising usage and accessibility of social media result into easier and faster spreading of the information across the internet allowing users to find and personalize content they interact with according to their interests. This creates an opportunity for content creators to match and connect with the right audience, where their content would be the most visible. Therefore, there appears a space for various businesses, companies or people to grow and build their own brand, increase its reputation and promote it through the social media channels.

To be more precise, Hootsuite Global Digital Overview (2020, 8), shows 3,8 billion active users of social medias worldwide, which is 49% of the world's population. In Russia there are 70 million active users (48% of population). This means that almost every second citizen could be interested in goods or services promoted through Social Media Marketing (SMM).

Rising share of internet advertisement on the Russian market shows its increasing influence: increase of 20% led to the total 224 RUB billion spent on internet advertising in 2019, while share of traditional TV advertising decreased by 8% (AKAR 2019, according to Vachurova 2020, 24).

As a result, there appears such a rising phenomenon as social media influencers (SMIs) which, in term of social media marketing, can affect people's opinions on advertised goods or services through content influencers publish on their social medias. At this point internet offers various social medias for marketing, advertisement and brand building. However, one of the most strategically important social media channels for influencer marketing is Instagram. According to statistics, nowadays there is approximately 1 billion active Instagram users worldwide and 56 million users in Russia in 2021 (Dean 2021; Hootsuite 2021, 57). From the perspective of the influencers marketing, Instagram enables bloggers and influencers to position promoted products or services in a visually attractive way and tell a story of a brand, enhancing the brand identity through various channels and tools.

However, the ability to attract new audience through the influencers marketing, brings several issues related to false, unreliable and often unethical advertising which could be harmful for the audience in different ways.

The main problematic aspect of internet marketing is regulation. Federal Advertisement Law of Russian Federation states that advertising must be fair and credible, however only federal

SMIs such as television, newspapers or journals are properly regulated, while digital marketing sphere is controlled poorly due to the lack of proper tools and mechanisms. This causes a gap between legislation and factual situations, where dishonest marketers carry minimum or no responsibility for unethical marketing strategies to promote their product or service. As a result, Instagram market in Russia is filled with unethical and disturbing advertisement, causing customers to negatively perceive marketing in general.

Those reasons result into a need to research and define sustainability and responsibility aspects related to the Instagram marketing through the influencers in order to connect norms and standards of ethical marketing with the current situation.

Another important aspect is to analyze the influence of current marketing on the users, customers and followers of Instagram in terms of social sustainability, transparency and trust towards SMIs. The need to discuss ethics of Instagram marketing from the customers' viewpoint arises from the present worldwide transition towards sustainability, where traditional strategies present outdated from the social and ethical perspective.

Therefore, this work analyses and research the current changes and tendencies of influencers marketing in Russian Instagram segment and define the users' experiences and expectations from the advertisement nowadays.

1.2   Research questions

The main objective of the present work is to analyse and understand the marketing phenomenon of advertising through the SMIs on Russian Instagram segment, research its sustainability aspects and detect users' perception and attitude towards SMI's advertising. Understanding and research of the presented topics allows to detect the current changes and tendencies in the advertising field, highlight the issues of the SMI's responsibilities and answer the main question of the thesis: what do users expect from blogger's advertising?

However, to give comprehensive answer to this question, there is a need to address the sub-questions (SQ) of the research:

SQ1: How is influencer marketing performed in the Russian Instagram segment from the sustainability perspective?

SQ2: What responsibilities should SMIs have regarding their advertisement from users' perspective?

SQ3: How do users perceive advertising nowadays?

Those sub-questions help to comprehensively analyse the current phenomenon from both influencers' and users' perspective and give the reader understanding of the topic's background before moving to the statistics analysis and the main outcomes of the thesis.

1.3   Theoretical framework

The Table 1 below represents the theoretical framework and research methods used in collecting and analysing data related to the sub-questions.

Sub-question	Theoretical framework	Research Methods	Results
SQ1. How is influencer marketing performed in the Russian Instagram segment from the sustainability perspective?	Ethical marketing Influencer Marketing Social Media Marketing	Desktop research; Case study;	Chapter 3
SQ2. What responsibilities should SMIs have regarding their advertisement from users' perspec-tive?	Social aspect of sustainability; Sustainable marketing Individual Social Responsibility	Desktop research; Quantitative research; Survey data collection and analysis	Chapter 4.3
SQ3. How do users perceive advertising nowadays?	Individual Social Responsibility	Desktop research; Survey data collection and analysis; Quantitative research	Capter 4.4

Table 1. Overlay matrix of research questions

Starting from the sub-question one (SQ1), it analyses the overall performance of SMIs in Russian Instagram segment from the social sustainability perspective, basing on ethical marketing and social sustainability aspects of influencer marketing phenomenon. The main research methods used are desktop research and case study. The second research question (SQ2) analyses present responsibilities of SMIs from the ISR perspective, followed by sustainable marketing analysis. To answer this question, desktop research, survey data collection and quantitative research were conducted. Moving to the third question (SQ3), it determines users' perception of advertisement through consumer behaviour and consumer experience analysis from ISR perspective, using survey data collection and analysis, desktop research and quantitative research.

1.4 Delimitations

This work has a few important delimitations to clarify the chosen topic and narrow the research base. Considering delimitations, the focus point of the thesis is the users' perception of the advertising on Instagram from and the chosen research country is Russia.

Instagram was chosen as a primary platform for the research due to the number of reasons: Instagram is the 4th most used social network within Russian Federation and called *modern platform for business growth and development* (Hootsuite 2021, 46; Pozharnitskaia & Pozharnitskaia 2019, 9-17). Also, comparing to the past, when Instagram was a platform for sharing personal photos, nowadays it is represented by multiple business commercials, which attracts significant number of companies and individuals to promote their products or services.

The influencer marketing was chosen as the main marketing strategy to analyze its sustainability aspects and psychological effect on customers due to its universality and prevalence on the market. Generally speaking, variety of influencers' blogs allows almost every business to promote their service or product to the most suitable audience.

Also, the work is mostly concentrated on social aspects of advertising's sustainability and not on the sustainability of promoted products and services, as the primary goal is to detect users' attitudes towards the Instagram bloggers' advertising and identify sustainability gaps in the current marketing, while distinguish users' behavioural patterns, and research emotional and psychological aspects of advertisement influence.

Therefore, those delimitations allow to narrow the research base and extract more precise data on the selected topic.

1.5 Methods

This work uses the combination of various methods: statistics compilation, research cases analysis and users surveys data gathering as well. But firstly, literature review discusses phenomenon of influencer marketing from sustainable marketing, social aspects of sustainability and individual social responsibility perspective.

Also, literature review and research highlight the changes in the customers perception of sustainability and its importance in marketing and advertising.

The next method is study cases supposed to highlight current market situation from different angles on the example of real cases. The examples are taken from advertisement of different influencers varying by size of the audience, blog's theme etc. This allows to describe and analyse cases from different perspectives.

Following the case analysis, this work moves to the last main part of the thesis which is surveys data analysis. The surveys are divided into two sections: correlation between blogger's reputation and followers' perception of their advertisement; and analysis of aspects influencing trust of the users. The detailed information on target audience is given in Chapter 4.

The first survey is designed to detect the correlation between bloggers' reputation and its influence on users' perception of their advertising. In other words, the survey is combined of multiple questions aimed to define various social and ethical aspects influencing followers' trust towards bloggers or influencers in general. The comprehensive analysis of this survey can be connected to the theory of brand's building and brand's reputation, as bloggers' influence and reputation can be perceived as a growing of personal brand. Therefore, analysing and detecting aspects influencing bloggers' reputation can determine sustainability attributes that make the most crucial contribution to the customers' decision- making process.

The second survey is designed to detect patterns in users' behaviour related to perception of advertisement promoted through various SMIs. This allows to define the most important behavioural patterns influencing users' decision-making process on whether to perceive the advertisement credible and ethically appropriate or not. Despite both questionnaires discuss customers' attitudes towards advertisement credibility at different extent, the second survey focuses on analysing emotional and psychological factors affecting users emotions towards advertisement in general. That allows to detect both negative and positive influence of current advertising and suggest the areas of development.

Combination of these methods allows to comprehensively understand and answer the main research question of the work.

2 Sustainability and Ethical Marketing

2.1 Key concepts

Social Media Influencer is a social media person with loyal audience that they earned by sharing content that inspires, entertains, informs and connect them with their followers. Influencers are able to generate social communication, drive engagement and set social trends, which positions them to work with brands on sponsored content. (Mediakix n.d.)

Influencer Marketing Influencer marketing is a form of marketing where brands invest in selected influencers to create and promote branded content to influencers' own followers as well as to a brand's target audience (Vulko 2021 according to Lou & Yuan 2019). Such influencers promote the content through different social medial channels, for example, YouTube, Instagram etc.

Social Media Marketing is an activity of targeting and reaching customers for increase in profit, improvement of brand image or other goals of business maintained through social media channels (Wilson 2009, 13)

Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) is a way in which an individual set a number of healthy and sustainable habits where an individual follows a set of moral principles and legal norms and therefore, positively contribute into environmental, financial and social aspects of sustainability (Sudova 2017).

Sustainable marketing is a challenge for marketers to cope with a relentless issue, which is ecosystem degradation caused by consumption. In other words, marketers should reinvent strategy and craft 'win-win-win' outcomes in which customers win (obtain genuine benefits), organization win (achieve financial and other objectives), and ecosystems win (functioning is preserved or enhanced) at the same time. (Fuller 1999, xi-x)

Sustainability sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations Brundtland Commission 1987).

2.2 Phenomenon of influencer marketing

With the rising popularity of social medias, there appeared such a phenomenon as social media influencers – people with loyal audience which they built by sharing quality content that engage them with the followers. At this point, influencers become a powerful tool to influence people's opinions and, therefore, a desirable part of a brand's or a company's marketing strategy. Influencer marketing strategy allows brands and companies to promote

their products to the loyal audience of an influencer instead or in addition to building their own audience from the scratch. This can be an easy way to gain new customers or increase the popularity of the brand. Also, another reason for influencer marketing to be popular and efficient is that influencers create content on various topic, spheres and niches, therefore, brands and companies are most likely to find the right audience for their exact products and services.

Therefore, as influencers have a significant impact on their audience, they can easily affect their follower's opinion and convince them into purchasing sponsored items. And although influencer marketing is an efficient tool for social media marketing and when used right, may bring a healthy and sustainable development to the brand, however, when brands or influencers consider only their own benefits a priority, it can lead to a number of negative consequences to both their followers and the market itself.

2.3 Sustainability in online marketing

As the most known definition of sustainability states: sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations Brundtland Commission 1987). However, in the context of present work, sustainable development also refers to meeting one's personal needs without compromising needs of other people around. To be more precise, thesis discusses sustainable actions which an individual person as user or influencer could take to contribute into healthy development of the online advertising market.

2.4 Individual Social Responsibility in Russia

This part discusses ISR from both user's and influencer's perspective to detect the aspects affecting people's behaviour in the context of conscious and sustainable choices.

Individual Social Responsibility is a process of responsible lifestyle and a set of healthy and sustainable habits which allows individual to positively contribute into environmental, financial and social aspects of sustainability. However, as Sudova 2017 states, to conduct transition towards more responsible consumption a certain level of financial income is needed, therefore, a part of Russian population consumes not products or services they want, but products and services they can afford. In other words, low level of income becomes a barrier in following sustainable behavior, as non-sustainable options are often cheaper and more affordable. To be more precise, the research of Nielsen company 2017, shows that only 12% of Russian population purchase sustainable products, which is one of lowest numbers

worldwide. However, 62% of people would like to change their behavior towards more sustainable if they have proper conditions. In other words, more than a half of population has potential to live more sustainable life and attain better life habits.

From influencer marketing perspective, it means that SMIs should promote advertising campaigns in such way which does not compromise followers' potential benefits in favor of the influencer's own wealth. In other case, it can lead to harmful or dangerous consequences to their audience, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

From the user's perspective it means making sustainable choices on what product or services to buy or what influencers to follow. In other words, users of Instagram should process information online with cautiousness in order to avoid potentially misleading or harmful content. As influencers heavily rely on the trust of their audience, users have a power to influence what is credible and sustainable.

3   Case analysis

3.1   iHerb

iHerb is an American company with a global online marketplace specializing on selling and delivering various dietary supplements, vitamins, food additives, medical herbs etc (iHerb 2021). This company is related to various official investigations in Russia, as significant number of items presented on the company's website is banned or prohibited for selling on the territory of Russian Federation (Vedomosti News 2021).

Therefore, advertising of certain products listed on iHerb's website is technically legal, but promotion of medical products can lead to serious consequences if not conducted properly. All medicine must be bought and taken after professional medical consultation, and advertising should also include warning of possible side effects.

Recent scandal with Instagram blogger Elena Kornilova is related to the fact that Elena was promoting specific products from iHerb to her audience. To be more precise, she was recommending dietary supplements and vitamins as a treatment for various diseases. However, without proper medical consultation those medicine could cause severe consequences which could permanently affect lives and health of her followers. And, moreover those products Elena was promoting were not certified as medical supplies from the concrete diseases. Therefore, such recommendations were harmful and dangerous. (Meduza journal 2019).

However, not only Elena Kornilova promote iHerb's website. Polina Pchelnikova as a member of EULAR PARE (European League Against Rheumatism People with Arthritis and Rheumatism) states that Instagram is flooded with influencers promoting vitamins and dietary supplements as a main medical treatment of various diseases. (Meduza journal 2019 according to Pchelnicova).

Those recommendations and advice published by SMIs are a dangerous phenomenon, which could cause severe consequences on the market and users and therefore, it should be addressed on governmental level primarily.

3.2   Fem Fatal

In 2019 company Lefami issued Fem Fatal Acne Remover blue serum and bough the advertising of their product from various Instagram influencers. The product was promoted as anti-acne serum for reducing inflammation suitable for all types of skin (Lefami 2019). However, acne-treating products cannot be suitable for everyone and requires professional

medical consultation before use in order to detect possible allergies or side effects. And yet, most of the bloggers promoted Fem Fatal serum without mentioning possible side effects (Konasova 2019).

After numerous complaints from customers, popular YouTube blogger Ekaterina Konasova conducted her own chemical expertise which disclosed the antibiotics tetracycline in the composition of the serum, which were not listed among the ingredients. Important thing to mention is that Russian legislation prohibits antibiotics in the cosmetics according to TP TC 009/2011 law. Also, other claimed ingredients did not comply with the actual ones. At this point the issued serum was not complying with the regulations and norms and, therefore, its exposure led to the public resonance.

This public scandal led to official investigation which resulted into the fine applied onto Lefami company by Cheboksary's court, admitting that claimed ingredients did not comply with the factual ones.

The official exposure of the company led to the public scandal affected bloggers and influencers published Fem Fatal advertisement on their pages. And despite the majority of bloggers gave their comments and made their apologies to the followers and deleted the advertising from their pages, some of the SMIs continued their partnership with Fem Fatal.

For example, Olga Buzova, Russian singer and Instagram celebrity with 23 million followers published the same advertising of Fem Fatal's blue serum at her account (Lenta.ru News 2019). Since the advertising was published after proofs of Fem Fatal's fault were provided publicly via different media channels, it can be concluded that Olga Buzova let dangerous and harmful product on her page intentionally.

As a conclusion, this case shows that influencers published Fem Fatal's advertising, did not conduct proper research on the product, such as certification and possible side effects and promoted harmful product to the audience.

However, despite the negative consequences of the situation, it also shows significance of individual social responsibility on the online market.

3.3 Conclusions

The represented cases demonstrate the issue of influence marketing from the different perspectives.

The cases clearly represent the lack of federal regulations, regarding advertisement quality maintenance. As cases show, Instagram influencers carry minimum or no factual responsibilities for their actions in the social media sphere. In other words, Russian legislation lacks the proper tools and mechanisms to control the online marketing segment. Therefore, it allows dangerous and unethical content to leak into Instagram marketing.

Another conclusion to be made is that mega-influencers and celebrities seem to be less affected by consequences of their actions due to their reputation and popularity. That creates inequality between known and unknown influencers regarding legal regulations.

Also, represented cases bring the issue of individual social responsibility. In other words, SMIs as individuals lacks understanding of social and environmental changes caused by their actions, which leads to negative consequences on society. Hence, bringing awareness of sustainable development is needed to be discussed.

All in all, lack of legislation control over online marketing segment creates a gap between user's expectation from advertising and factual advertising itself. Promotion of knowingly unfair, harmful or dangerous products and services decreases followers' trust towards influencers.

4   Data and survey analysis

4.1   Population and sampling

The surveys were conducted among respondents aged 15-45 to represent opinions from different generations and provide unbiased results. All respondents are Russian-speaking Instagram users subscribed to at least one social media influencer.

4.2   Data collection and analysis

Primary survey data was collected from Google Forms inbuild analysis mechanism. Next step was to combine and analyse primary data, in order to build diagrams, histograms and tables, representing gathered information in visually supporting way. The data collected from surveys is presented and analysed in both visual and textual ways and discussed in the following chapters. The statistical data is rounded to the whole numbers according to the mathematical rules in order to simplify the process of analysis.

4.3   Survey 1. Influencers' ethics and reputation

The first survey was conducted among 122 respondents. The survey is counted with total of 11 questions addressing aspects influencing users' perception of SMI's ethics and reputation.

Figure 1 below represents the reasons which could make followers to unsubscribe from the influencer. The leading reasons are promotion of dangerous or illegal product and services, supporting illegal activities and personal scandal (for example, cheating or unethical expressions). Following the most significant reasons, respondents also mention that promotion of personal values that go against users' own beliefs and discovering influencer bought followers are also important. The least important reasons to unfollow is that influencer posts too often or too little.

## What are possible reasons for you to stop following the influencer?

Reason	Percentage
Promotion of dangerous or illegal products or services	81%
Supporting illegal or dangerous activities	78%
Personal scandal (for example, cheating)	66%
Influencer bought followers	48%
Promoting values that go against your own	46%
Influencer posts too often	20%
Influencer posts too little	7%
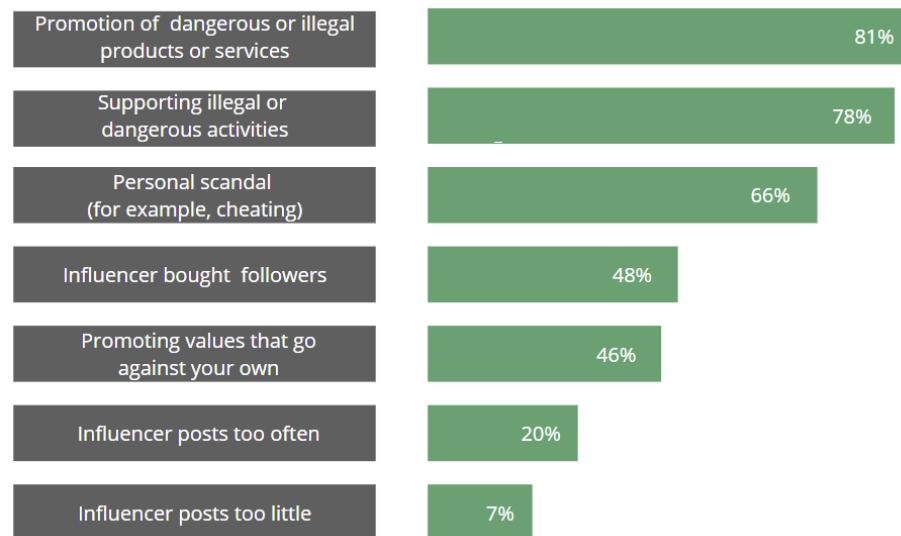
Figure 1. Most important reasons for users to stop following influencers.

The results show that users do not support unethical and dangerous activities or products promote by influencers. Another key finding is that reputation of bloggers and influencers matters a lot to the followers, and they do not support unethical activities.

Next figure (Figure 2) shows users' opinions on what information influencer should share about the paid promotion published on the page.

What information influencer should reveal about their advertising?

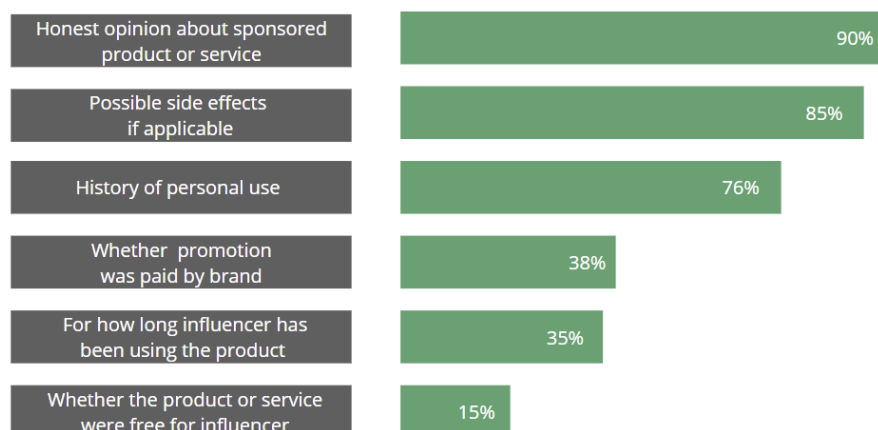| Information	Percentage
Honest opinion about sponsored product or service	90%
Possible side effects if applicable	85%
History of personal use	76%
Whether promotion was paid by brand	38%
For how long influencer has been using the product	35%
Whether the product or service were free for influencer	15%

Figure 2. Users' opinions on what information about promoted product must be shared by influencers.

According to the respondents, the most important information about the promoted products or services is influencer's honest opinion about the product. In other words, users want to know what influencers actually think about the products they promote to the audience. Next significant aspect is revealing possible existence of side effects, if applicable in the situation. A lot of products or services may not be suitable for the certain group of people and may cause various side effects, affecting lives and health of customers. Therefore, users prefer to know if promoted product or service is suitable for their health conditions. The third most important information influencer should share is the history of personal use. Most users prefer influencers share only such products or services which they use themselves. Therefore, if the influencer reveals the most important information about the product or service, users seem not to care about whether the promotion was paid, or for how long the influencer has been using the product.

Moving to the next block of questions, Figure 3 represents respondents' answer on what they perceive appropriate for influencers to share on their page.
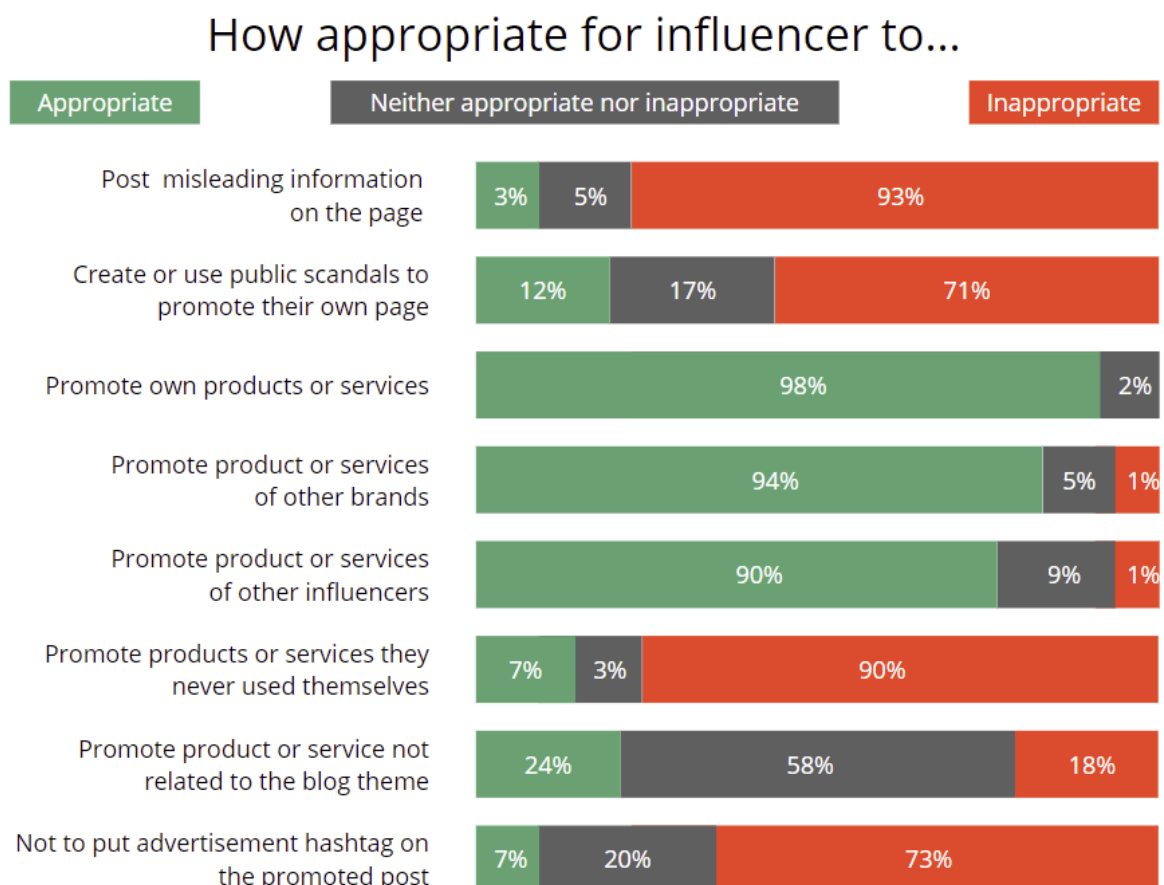

Figure 3. Matrix of respondents' answers.

Starting with the activities most users perceive appropriate, promotion of influencer's own products or services and promotion of other brands and influencers is perceived positively

by users. As chapter 4.4 shows, users mostly negatively perceive the advertising presented on the Instagram. However, according to the results from Figure 3, users positively perceive the idea of advertising itself. Therefore, it could be concluded that users do not trust the advertisement due to frequent misleading and unethical publications made by influencers.

Moving to the next part of the analysis, it represents users' opinion on the activities they perceive inappropriate. The most criticized activity is posting misleading information the page or blog, followed by promotion of products that the influencer never used themselves, the absence of the advertising hashtag and hyping on a public scandal. Analysing the results, it could be noticed that users highly value not only marketing ethics, but also personal ethics of influencers.

Another noticeable aspect is that users do not care much about advertising's topic and whether it correlates with the influencer's page main topic. Therefore, it could be concluded, that users prefer accuracy and ethicality of the paid promotion over its theme.

Last but not least, this chapter discusses how reputation and ethics of an influencer affect users' trust towards their advertising. As Figure 4 represents, it has a direct dependence, showing that users find ethical influencers more trustful.

How does influencer's reputation and ethics influence
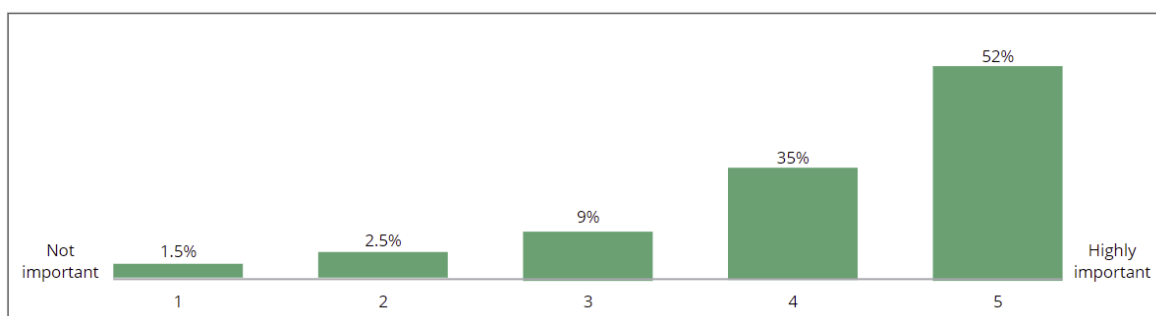your trust towards their advertising?

Figure 4. How influencer's reputation affects users' trust towards their advertising.

Taking everything into consideration, reputation and ethics of influencers highly impact users' opinion on the content they share. Another key finding of the research is a list of aspects that users believe influencers are responsible for on their page. Considering factors and aspects influencing users' trust towards advertising, the present survey represents desired responsibilities carried by SMIs according to the users opinion, which allows to conduct a set of recommendations related to improving sustainability and ethics of the Instagram marketing.

## 4.4   Survey 2. Users' trust towards SMI's advertising

The second survey was conducted among 113 respondents. Slight decline between re-spondent numbers of first and second survey is explained by the fact that 9 out of 122 people did not continue to the second survey. The survey is counted with total of 13 ques-tions, and the following analysis describes main results and conclusions according to the logical order of questions.

The first block of questions was aimed to detect general attitude towards different categories of advertisement in Instagram. Figure 5 represents users' amount of trust on the scale from 1 to 5 in Instagram advertising in general (1), bloggers' advertising (2); and advertising from mega-influencers and celebrities (3).

Level of trust towards Instagram advertising in general (1)
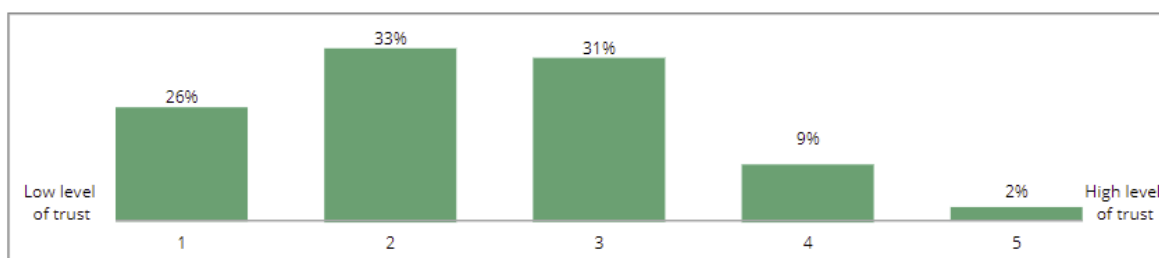
Level of trust towards SMI's advertising in general (2)
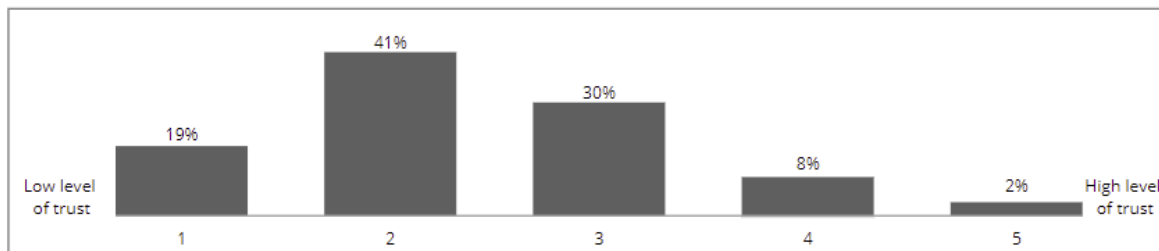
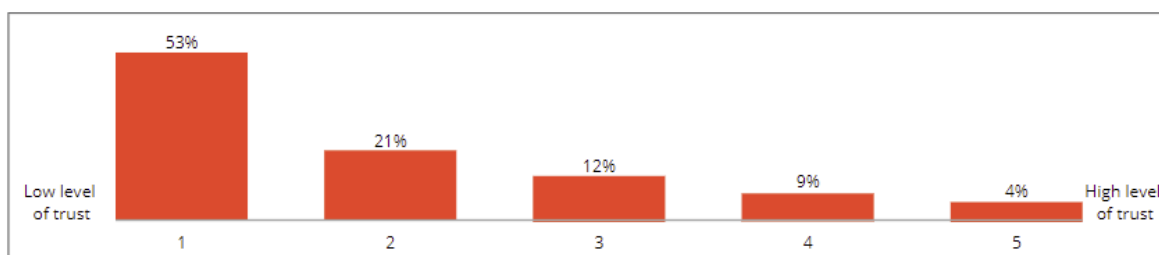Level of trust towards celebrities and mega-influencers (3)

Figure 5. Cross-comparison of trust levels towards different advertisings.

The comparison of first two graphs (1), (2) shows that users tend not to trust both Instagram advertising and bloggers' advertising in general, however, more users tend to perceive In-stagram advertising in general strongly negative, while feeling more trustful towards influ-encers' promotions. Such result can be explained by the fact that influencers tend to build

more personal connection with the audience, while traditional advertising may feel more impersonal, and therefore, more truthless.

The last graph (3) represents the amount of trust towards mega-influencers and celebrities. The previous graphs represented quite even distribution of responds, while on the last picture it shows high ratio of more than 50% of respondents expressing strong disbelief towards celebrities and mega-influencers. The tendency of strongly negative perception of mega-influencers and celebrities is also rising worldwide. According to Elizaveta Panova, Media Direction Group CMO, the trust towards celebrity and mega-influencers' advertising decreases worldwide over the past days, while trust towards macro- and micro-influencers stays at the same level (Kommersant 2020). On the basis of presented facts, it can be concluded that mega- and celebrity influencers affect trust of the users the most negatively.

To be more representative, the pie chart (Figure 6) below represents the distribution of trust between mega- and celebrity influencers and influencers with smaller audience. The pie chart shows that 65% of people trust macro-influencers more. 31% of respondents were indifferent and only 4% mostly trusted celebrities and mega-influencers.

Do you find mega-influencers' advertising more trustful than macro- and micro-influencers'?
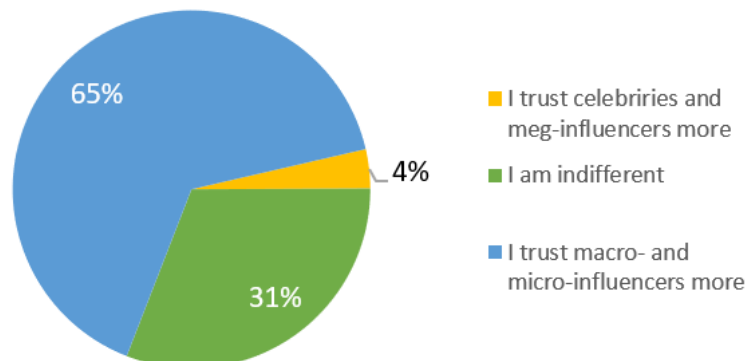

Figure 6. Distribution of users' trust between mega- and macro-influencers.

Next, the analysis moves to the second block of questions, which is about buying of advertised goods and services after its promotion through influencers.

As the data below shows (Figure 7), more than a half or respondents ever bought product or service after its promotion through influencers. However, 41% of respondents were not satisfied with the purchase. Since the number of dissatisfied customers is statistically important, it could mean that at least some share of advertisement was not clear enough. In other words, there is a high probability that paid promotion has advertised poor quality or misleading goods or services.

Have you ever bought product or service after its advertising through influencer?
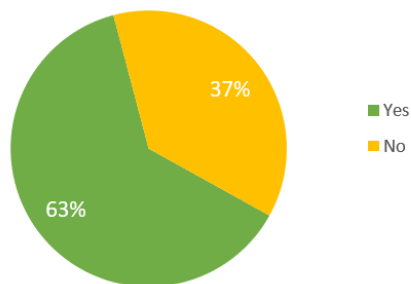
If you bough product or service through influencer's advertising, were you satisfied?
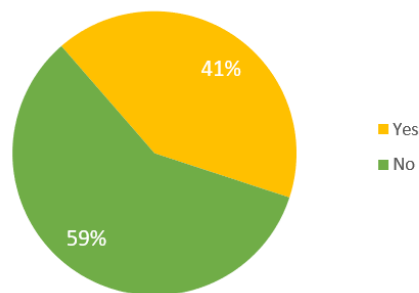

Figure 7. Proportion of users' satisfaction with products and services bought through influencers' advertising.

Next question estimates the correlation between SMI's reputation and users' trust towards their advertising. The results are the same as in the first survey (Figure 4): users highly value the ethics and reputation of bloggers, and it strongly influence their trust towards their advertising.

Moving to the next block, it describes the amount of advertising represented in Instagram (Figure 8).

How often do you see influencers' advertising in general? (1)
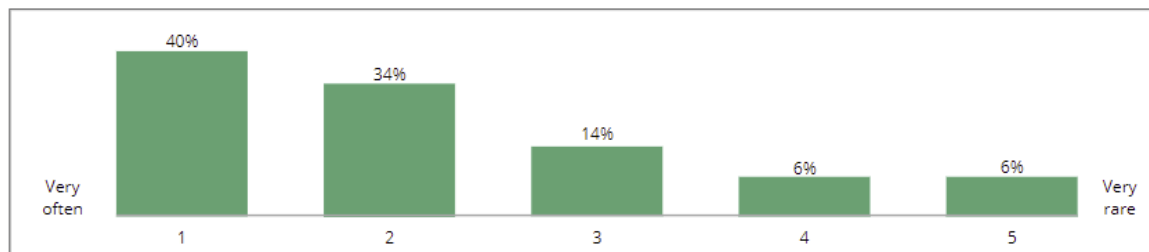
How often do you see misleading advertising from influencers? (2)
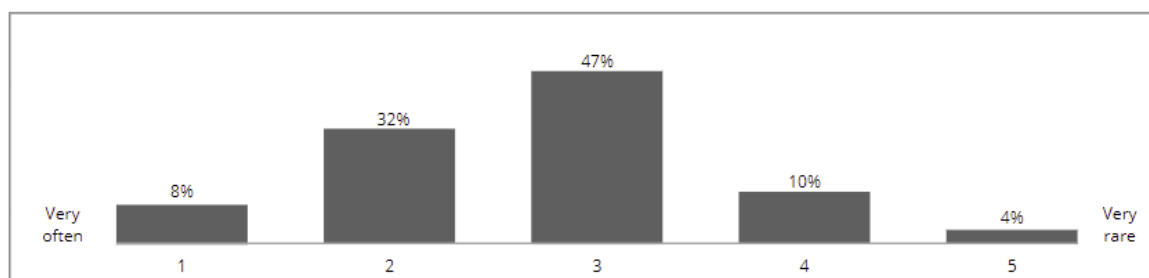

Figure 8. Amount of advertising represented in Instagram.

As the first histogram (1) shows, the majority of users notices marketing integrations often or very often, and only 7 of respondents do not notice any advertisements at all. As for the second histogram (2), it represents the amount of non-credible advertisements noticed by

users of Instagram. Despite most users do not see such advertising often, the rest of responds is distributed unequally, showing higher ratio of respondents who notice non-credible marketing integrations often or very often.

Next question discusses the emotional perception of bloggers' advertising in general. In total, 63% of respondents express negative or mostly negative feelings about SMI's marketing integrations. 29% stays indifferent and only 8% perceive bloggers' advertising positively. The negative feelings correlate well with the lack of trust towards influencers experienced by most users.

Moving to the next and also last block of questions, it discusses factors influencing users' trust towards advertising. The pie chart below (Figure 9) represents information on how personal involvement into influencers' lives correlate with the trust towards advertising they post.

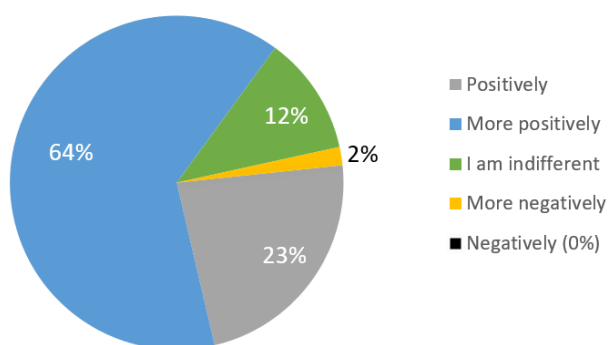How does feeling of personal involvement into influencer's life affect your trust?

Figure 9. How feeling of personal involvement into influencer's life affects the trust od users.

As presented, 87% of respondents consider engagement as a positive factor influencing their trust. Feeling involved into influencer's personal live forms the deep emotional connection with the audience, where the influencer is perceived as close friend, resulting into higher trust.

Next two graphs (Figure 10) represent users opinions on the factors influencing their trust. The first graph (1) represents factors negatively impacting the trust. As the data shows, the most important factors are promotion of unethical products or services (bookmaker agencies etc.), high number of paid promotions on the page and the absence of information about possible side effects. Following the most important factors, users also perceive lack of information about product or service and personal scandal around the promoted brand

as significant reasons to disbelief the advertising. The least important factor is mismatch of promoted good or services with the general blog's theme.

What can negatively affect your trust towards bloggers' advertising? (1)

Promotion of unethical products or services (e.g, bookmaker agencies)	86%
Too many advertisements from the influencer	85%
No information about possible side effects if applicable	74%
Not enough information about product or service	40%
Public scandal around promoted brand	36%
Blog's theme does no correlate with promoted product	20%
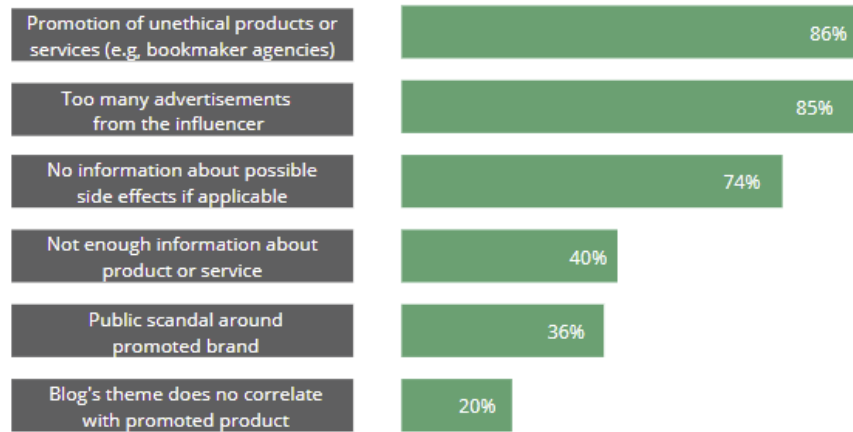
What can positively affect your trust towards bloggers' advertising? (2)

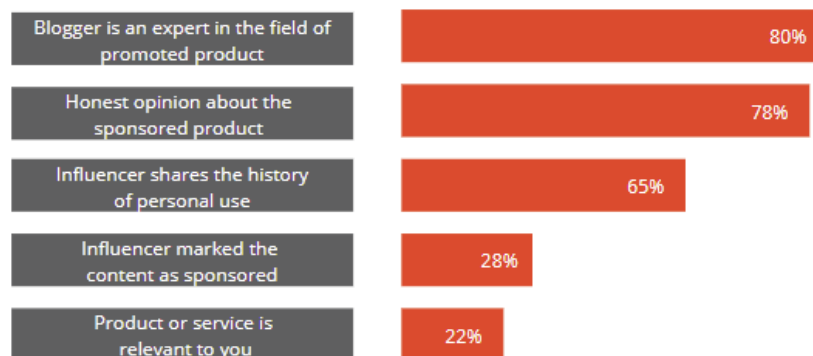|	
Blogger is an expert in the field of promoted product	80%
Honest opinion about the sponsored product	78%
Influencer shares the history of personal use	65%
Influencer marked the content as sponsored	28%
Product or service is relevant to you	22%

Figure 10. Aspects affecting users' trust towards advertising

The second graph (2) discusses aspects which could potentially increase the trust towards advertising. Among all factors, respondents perceive proficiency and competence of influencer in the sphere of promoted goods or services; the honest review from the influencer; and the history of personal use as the most significant factors. Least important factors are personal relevance of promoted product and the existence of ad hashtag, showing that the product is sponsored.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Key findings

As the research shows, most users are cautious and negative towards SMI's and Instagram's advertisement in general.

Answering the first sub-question (SQ1), current performance of influencer marketing in Instagram is seriously lacking social sustainability. On the examples discussed in the Chapter 3, it is clear that the current legislation lacking proper mechanisms to prevent false adverting leaking into the online market. Therefore, SMIs have an opportunity to promote and publish harmful content without carrying responsibilities for their actions. However, the most problematic aspect is that celebrity- and mega-influencers seem not to be affected by legislation at all. After public scandals or exposures, such influencers do not carry any actual consequences for the harm they created and often just attract more audience. This situation is a critical issue for the government to address in order to maintain healthy competition and justice across the market.

As for the SQ2, there is rising social sustainability awareness happening among users of Instagram. On practice, it means that more people start thinking about individual social responsibility and how their own and others' actions may influence the society. Therefore, in the context of influencer marketing, users believe in greater responsibilities influencers should carry. Regarding influencer's advertising, users consider fair and transparent advertising ethically appropriate, while judge any false or misleading information on the blogger's page. In other words, the morals are changing towards sustainable life-habits and, therefore, people start concerning not only about themselves, but also about social sustainability.

Poor performance of social media influencers and users' changing moral standards causes more and more negative perception of Instagram advertising in general. The main reason behind this is poor regulation of online marketing sphere. The lack of factual control over advertising quality results into the gap between customers' expectations and the reality. In other words, legislation do not protect the end user from misleading and unfair advertising and, therefore, customers prefer not to trust advertisement at all. In long-term perspective, allowing false advertising leak into the market could prevent fair and ethical companies and individuals from entering the market. As a result, it slows down the development of sustainable and healthy competition.

Taking everything into consideration, the thesis can answer the main research question: what do users' expect from blogger's advertising? In simple words, users expect fair and

quality advertising published on the blogger's pages. From the social sustainability perspective, it could be perceived as a positive change in people's behaviour, as this means people start caring more about possible consequences of their own and other's actions.

5.2 Recommendations

As the research shows, false and misleading advertising has become an issue over the past years, resulting into decreasing trust towards SMIs and the advertising they post. On the example of analyzed cases, it is clear that influencers can affect followers in their decision-making process in buying a product or service. At this point, influencers are responsible for the content they promote on their page, as it can affect a significant number of people. As the examples from Chapter 3 illustrates, promotion of a product without proper research, or a product influencer have never used themselves can lead to the serious consequences impacting lives and health of the followers. However, high number of SMIs advertise such products and services which are financially beneficial to promote. Therefore, a number of influencers compromise the benefits of the followers while promoting products in order to gain their own financial or other benefits. At this point, it leads to the publication of misleading or harmful content, which negatively impacts the followers. Therefore, the general level of trust towards SMI's advertising is decreasing and nowadays people tend to perceive advertising negatively. People's perception of advertising and SMIs plays significant role into monetizing and rising publicity of brands and companies on Instagram, and negative attitudes towards advertising in general decreases the number of opportunities for the fair and ethical companies to enter the market and grow audience.

At this point, the purpose of the thesis is to suggest a set of recommendations on growth and development of sustainable advertising policies which are beneficial for both users of Instagram and marketers promoting their products and services.

According to the Chapter 4, users are more positive towards such advertising that includes information about important aspects of the product or service, such as possible side effects. Also, users appreciate honest feedback from the influencer and prefer the blogger to disclose the product's history of personal use. Another important aspect is that influencer demonstrates authority and knowledge in the sphere of the promoted product or service. Also, users tend to trust more if an influencer manages to set a trustful relationship with the audience based on honesty and transparency of an influencer's opinions. In other words, users prefer honest and transparent advertising which promotes no harmful, dangerous or misleading information which can negatively affect their lives.

At this point, SMIs should think about building trustful relationship with their audience by applying sustainable marketing policies when publishing advertising. Moreover, followers negatively perceive gaining popularity by hyping on public scandals or tragedies. Users of Instagram prefer fair and ethical methods of promotion, which face their own ethical standards. Therefore, SMIs should rely not only on financial benefits from advertising, but also on positive impact they could create.

Another important aspect is that online promotion is a part of market, and therefore, offer of fair and ethical advertisement is defined by customers' demand. In other words, users of Instagram can prevent false advertising by careful and thoughtful choice of goods and services, based on the sustainable approach. Moreover, proper development of cancel culture in Russia can also affect influencers and make them to be more cautious and thoughtful about the content they post and promote. However, to effectively influence social sustainability, the government and legislation should provide proper and easy mechanisms of leverage, so every person has an opportunity to make positive contribution.

Therefore, the main issue is determined by legislation which is not able to take preventive measures against the false advertisement. Therefore, the thesis suggests comprehensive development of legal sphere targeting search, analysis and elimination of harmful and unfair marketing promotions from the Instagram space.

All in all, the issue of false advertisement from influencers requires more than one step to solve the problem, on the contrary, it requires comprehensive development of all spheres and elements included into online marketing: from simple Instagram users to Instagram Influencers and government.

5.3   Suggestions for further research

Sustainability in online marketing is a broad topic to discuss and research. Promotion of products through influencer marketing which was discussed in the present thesis is just a certain part of a whole online marketing strategy. Therefore, one of the possible spheres to analyze is sustainability of the promoted products or services themselves. The discussion also could include comprehensive and full analysis of the brand's or company's marketing strategies not limited only to promotion through influencers.

This would allow to understand the full picture of how Russian brands and companies perform their marketing strategies from different perspectives and suggest more precise and accurate recommendations on growth and development of sustainability.

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Appendix 1. Influencers' ethics and reputation survey list of questions

Q1: What are possible reasons for you to stop follow an influencer?

Q2: What information an influencer should reveal about promoted products or services?

Q3: How appropriate for an influencer to publish misleading information on their page's topic?

Q4: How appropriate for an influencer to use or create public scandal to increase their own popularity and promote their page?

Q5: How appropriate for an influencer to promote their own products or services?

Q6: How appropriate for an influencer to promote products or services of the other brands?

Q7: How appropriate for an influencer to promote products or services of other influencers?

Q8: How appropriate for an influencer to promote product or services they have never used themselves?

Q9: How appropriate for an influencer to promote products or services which are not related to their page's main topic?

Q10: How appropriate for an influencer not to put an advertisement hashtag under the promoted post?

Q11: On the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'do not influence at all' and 5 is 'influence a lot' estimate how influencer's reputation affect your trust towards their advertising

Appendix 2. Users' trust towards SMI's advertising survey list of questions

Q1: Estimate your level of trust towards Instagram advertising in general on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is 'do not trust at all' and 5 is 'trust a lot'

Q2: Estimate your level of trust towards influencers' advertising in general on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is 'do not trust at all' and 5 is 'trust a lot'

Q3: Estimate your level of trust towards celebrity- and mega-influencers' advertising on the scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is 'do not trust at all' and 5 is 'trust a lot'

Q4: Have you ever purchased product or service after its promotion via influencers?

Q5: If your answer is yes, were you satisfied with the purchase?

Q6: On the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'do not influence at all' and 5 is 'influence a lot' estimate how influencer's reputation affect your trust towards their advertising

Q7: On the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very rare' and 5 is 'very often' estimate how often do you see sponsored publications on the SMI's pages

Q8: On the scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is 'very rare' and 5 is 'very often' estimate how often do you see sponsored publications which are misleading or false on the SMI's pages

Q9: What feelings do you have towards SMIs advertising in general?

Q10: Do you believe that celebrity and mega-influencers are more credible than influencers with smaller audience?

Q11: How does feeling of personal involvement into influencer's life influence your trust towards their advertising?

Q12: What aspects could negatively influence your trust towards influencers' advertising?

Q13: What aspects could positively influence your trust towards influencers' advertising?