



# **The Role of Influencer Marketing and Paid Promotions on the Buying Behaviour of Consumers Aged 15–35 Years Old**

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## Abstract

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| <b>Degree</b><br>Bachelor of Business Administration  |
| <b>Thesis Title</b><br>The role of influencer marketing and paid promotions on the buying behaviour of consumers aged 15–35 years old   |
| <b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b><br>48+5   |
| <p>Influencer marketing and paid promotions are increasingly important in companies' social media marketing strategies, as especially younger consumers rely on social media channels for communication, information, and commerce. This thesis investigates the role of influencer marketing and sponsored content on younger consumers' buying behaviour. It explores how influencer content and sponsorship disclosures affect consumer trust, perceptions of authenticity, and buying decisions, with a particular focus on the beauty industry.</p> <p>The empirical research is conducted with a quantitative online survey, based on a review of existing literature on the topic. A structured survey was distributed to a sample group of young consumers, gaining a total of 102 valid responses from consumers aged 15–35 from nine different countries. It measures social media platform preferences, perceptions of genuineness in product reviews, influencer characteristics that drive trust, and consumer attitudes toward sponsorship disclosures. Survey data analysis was conducted on Excel, as most survey questions provided measurable results. The few open-ended questions were analysed individually, finding common themes in the responses.</p> <p>Findings highlight how Instagram and TikTok emerge as the best platforms for reaching younger consumers, especially Gen Z consumers, and influencing buying decisions. In addition to these platforms, YouTube and Facebook should be utilized in marketing efforts toward Millennial consumers. From different influencer types, micro influencers are viewed as most relatable and authentic due to close ties to community and peer-like perceptions. Additionally, micro influencers gain around 5–25% higher engagement rates on their posts. Consumers' attitudes towards sponsorship disclosures commonly lean from neutral or negative, as sponsored product reviews are less trustworthy to consumers as non-sponsored reviews.</p> <p>Overall, this study provides insights to influencer marketing, effective sponsored promotions, and factors that impact younger consumers' buying decisions. It provides valuable insights for brands and marketers on influencer marketing, for content creators on viewers perceptions, and lays a foundation for academics for possible future research.</p> |
| <b>Key words</b><br>Social media marketing, influencer marketing, paid promotions, consumer buying behaviour, beauty industry   |

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# 1 Introduction

This is a research-based bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This thesis is conducted with a specialization in Marketing and Sales and investigates the role influencer marketing poses on the buying behaviour of the younger generations' consumers.

This chapter explains the background of the thesis, the research objective, research problem and investigative questions of the study. Additionally, demarcation of the thesis, as well as key concepts are discussed in this section.

## 1.1 Background

The role of influencer marketing and paid promotions on consumer buying behaviour is a current topic in the field of marketing. As marketing efforts in social media and the use of various social media channels increase, companies must find ways to reach their customers in a way that resonates with them.

Social media has become a vital marketing and communications channel for businesses due to its popularity and reach. According to a digital global overview report published by DataReportal, Meltwater and We Are Social (2025), the number of social media users reached 5.24 billion, which equals to 63.9% of the world's population. For many, social media platforms serve as a primary domain for sharing and receiving information, content, and aspects of their lives, and though the information in social media might be questionable in terms of accuracy, it is best reached through these platforms. Additionally, social media has created an interconnected network, where users can interact with others all over the world. This enables the use of online word-of-mouth (WOM) as a way to share personal opinions, experiences and reviews with a far greater reach. (Appel, Grenwal, Hadi & Stephen 2020, 79.)

Organizations have adapted their marketing strategies to utilize this level of reach. Through digital WOM, the method of viral marketing can be used to spread a message, and nowadays, it is one of the most popular strategies for advertising businesses online (Dev Chowdhury & Bhowmik 2025, 7). Viral marketing and online WOM refer to recommendations and reviews distributed in a digital space, such as social media, which have potential to influence consumer perceptions of different products or brands (Bogdan, Dospinescu & Dospinescu 2025, 2). In social media marketing brands aim to gain a high level of reach for their content and, on the other hand, reach more specific engaging audiences. With the use of different influencers, they can do just that. Influencer marketing allows for companies to connect with larger audiences, even those who may be difficult to reach

through more traditional channels. As mentioned, younger generations have a major presence on social media platforms, which indicates that the best way for businesses to connect with this audience is through social media and social media marketing.

It is not enough to reach the audience, but to find a way to connect with it in a way that encourages feelings of trust and credibility for the consumer. According to a Deloitte Digital Media Trends survey (2025) Gen Z and millennials find social media content more relevant as opposed to traditional TV and they feel a personal connection to social media creators. Additionally, 63% of the Gen Zs and 49% of the millennials surveyed say that advertisements and product reviews on social media are most influential to their buying decisions. Consumers listen to influencers and online creators in not only product recommendations but also in all other sorts of advice since user-generated content is seen as more authentic and real (Deloitte 2024).

Social media marketing is growing its share of companies' marketing efforts every year and we see more and more companies from different industries start to adapt their marketing to fit to social media channels. However, the beauty industry, including makeup and skincare products has become one of the front runners in shifting their marketing efforts to social media platforms. According to a State of Influence Beauty report by market research company Traackr in 2024, beauty influencer content saw record levels of engagement on Instagram, TikTok and YouTube rising above 40 percent across all major categories within the industry (Stern 23 January 2025). Additionally, a study on the leading purchase categories on social media shows that 42 percent of survey respondents purchased health and beauty products on social media 3 to 7 times in the previous year, while 18 percent had more than eight purchases, making health and beauty one of the top industries (Capgemini 2024). This indicates that the beauty industry holds a large presence on social media in terms of content, advertising, and engagement from consumers.

## **1.2 Objectives and research questions**

The main objective of this study is to understand how seeing influencer content and paid promotion posts on social media influences the buying behaviour of the younger consumer segment, as the age group of consumers aged 15–35 years old is highly active and engaging in digital environments. According to Kagan first-quarter 2023 US Consumer Insights survey, social media usage differs generationally, with younger users relying on social media platforms for news, entertainment, as well as product and service information (Nissen 13 July 2023). It is forecasted that by 2027 there will be a combined 135.5 million Gen Z and millennial social network users in the US, which equals to more than half of the total social network users (Feger 14 August 2023).

As younger generations consume large amounts of social media content and advertising on a daily basis, the aim of this thesis is to gain an understanding into the factors that make promotional content successful.

The research problem is divided into the research question (RQ) as well as four investigative questions (IQs) to better demonstrate the objective of this study, and to better understand the different sub-categories that the research contains.

RQ. How does influencer marketing and paid promotional content affect consumer attitudes and buying behaviour of the younger consumer group aged 15–35 years old?

IQ1. Which social media platforms impact consumer buying decisions most effectively?

IQ2. How can brands ensure that promotional product reviews seem genuine to the consumer?

IQ3. What characteristics make influencers trustworthy or relatable to young consumers?

IQ4. How does transparency of sponsorship disclosure affect consumer trust and response?

Artificial intelligence was utilized in ideation when brainstorming the investigative questions, to ensure the IQs relate to the RQ and that they cover important areas of the topic.

### **1.3 Demarcation and overlay matrix**

The research problem is limited to a specific age group of consumers aged 15–35 years old. The reason why this study is limited to this specific age group is because Gen Z and younger Millennials have grown up in a digital environment and are highly active on different social media platforms. Therefore, they are more exposed to influencer content and digital marketing efforts of companies, and they have a better understanding on how social media marketing works. The author wishes to gain knowledge as to which social media platforms and advertising characteristics drive the purchasing decisions of young consumers in social media.

Additionally, this research focuses on the social media marketing efforts within the beauty industry, as it has one of the largest presences in social media marketing and advertising. Beauty products from makeup, skincare, haircare, and fragrances are largely promoted on social media platforms and beauty related content is a popular category within social media.

Table 1 illustrates in which sections of the thesis different investigative questions are researched and discussed, showing the connection between the primary research method, theoretical research, and results discussion.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

| <b>Investigative question</b>   | <b>Theoretical framework</b> | <b>Research method</b>                              | <b>Survey questions</b> | <b>Results</b> |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------|
| IQ1. Which social media platforms impact consumer buying decisions most effectively?      | 2.1.2                        | Quantitative survey & review of existing literature | 5, 6                    | 4.1            |
| IQ2. How can brands ensure that promotional product reviews seem genuine to the consumer? | 2.2.1. & 2.3.1               | Quantitative survey & review of existing literature | 8, 9, 10, 11,           | 4.2            |
| IQ3. What characteristics make influencers trustworthy or relatable to young consumers?   | 2.1., 2.1.1., 2.1.3. & 2.3.1 | Quantitative survey & review of existing literature | 13, 14, 15, 16,         | 4.3            |
| IQ4. How does transparency of sponsorship disclosure affect consumer trust and response?  | 2.2.1 & 2.2.2.               | Quantitative survey & review of existing literature | 11, 17, 18, 20          | 4.4            |

#### 1.4 Benefits

This subchapter highlights the benefits of this study for different audiences, including businesses and marketers, influencers, researchers, and consumers. For businesses and marketers, the research provides strategic insights into how influencer marketing affects the behavior of a certain consumer segment, which allows them to allocate budgets more effectively. Additionally, the results may help in optimizing marketing campaigns by guiding marketers on which social media platforms or content types drive the most engagement from consumers. For influencers and content creators, this research can help them to better understand their audience impact. With the results, they can learn how different types of content actually influence consumer buying decisions, which in turn helps to better refine the message and approach to their content.

A benefit of this study for academics, is providing a foundation for possible future studies. This research adds to the existing academic literature on digital marketing efforts, consumer buying behavior, and media influence for younger audiences. Therefore, the research can serve as a basis for more detailed studies on the topic in the future. Finally, for the consumers, more specifically the

younger consumer group, this research helps to understand media literacy. It helps consumers to reflect on to which extent they are influenced by paid content and paid reviews on social media channels.

## 1.5 Key concepts

This subchapter presents the key concepts of this study and explains what the keywords mean in theory. The aim is for the reader to gain a clear understanding of the concepts that base this research in order to better understand the discussion and results.

**Social media marketing** is a strategy of using social media technologies, software, and channels for creating, communicating, and delivering content that offers value to an organization's stakeholders (Tuten 2023, 19). Social media marketing uses its platforms to increase brand awareness, encourage consumer engagement, and to build communities, as well as long-lasting consumer relationships.

**Influencer marketing** refers to a digital marketing strategy where businesses collaborate with influential individuals, such as celebrities or content creators on social media platforms in order to promote their products and services. Influencers are seen as third-party endorsers who shape their audience's views through the content they share on social media. In influencer marketing, viewers and especially followers perceive recommendations as closer to peer-like advising rather than traditional advertising. (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey & Freberg 2011, 90.)

In Influencer marketing strategies, the influencer is either sent a product or service in exchange of agreed upon content posts, which is a more collaborative strategy, or they are paid a flat rate for each featured post. In this case the influencer takes part in a brand deal. (McKinsey & Company 10 April 2023.)

**Paid promotions** refer to social media advertising strategies, where businesses pay platforms to display their content to targeted users in the shape of sponsored posts, video ads or influencer-sponsored content. The aim is to gain visibility and reach more users in the company's target audience. Paid promotions significantly increase e.g., brand awareness and engagement among target audiences, especially with the use of influencers. When brands pay influencers to promote their product or service with a sponsored post, they can advertise their brand and product in a seemingly organic and authentic way. (Ashley & Tuten 2015, 18–20; Dehghani & Tumer 2015, 597.)

**Consumer buying behaviour** is a study of the process individuals, groups and organizations use to select and use products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy their needs, and the impact that these processes have on consumers, as well as on the society (Kotler & Keller 2016, 179). It

consists of understanding the decision-making processes, as well as the internal and external factors that influence and impact consumer's choices.

**Beauty industry** is a global sector that focuses on products and services designed to enhance personal appearance. The industry includes cosmetics, skin- and haircare, personal care, and fragrance. The industry's roots come from the use of scents and fragrances, from where it has developed to now include methods to enhance appearance with different beauty products and services (Jones 2010, 53–59).

## 2 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to expand on the key concepts of this thesis and to research the topic through existing theories and studies. Concepts and theories are explained in detail based on a review of existing literature.

This thesis examines influencer marketing and paid promotions as a marketing method and both of these methods fall under companies' digital marketing strategies. To understand how influencer marketing and paid promotions work, the foundation must be first explained. Digital marketing, according to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022, 5) offers new innovative techniques for businesses to communicate, reach and engage with consumers online. Digital marketing aims to manage companies' online presence in the form of company websites, mobile apps and social media pages integrated with online communication techniques, such as search engine marketing, content marketing, social media marketing (SMM), online advertising, and email marketing. As a marketing technique, it offers many benefits, including improved consumer interaction, personalization in accordance to target audience interests, and potential organic marketing options in search engines and social media channels. (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2022, 5.) Since this study focuses on influencer marketing and paid promotions, the research is limited to the the sub-category of digital marketing these techniques fall under, which is social media marketing (SMM).

First, the concept of social media is explained and expanded on. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, 60) define social media as a group of online apps that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and these apps enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Others define it as a mobile and web-based technology that creates highly interactive platforms, where users can communicate, co-create, and share user-generated content, as well as build communities to shape culture and social interaction (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011, 241–242; Van Dijck 2013, 4). Social media channels can be divided into four zones to better understand the opportunities they offer for the user: social community, social publishing, social entertainment, and social commerce. The first zone, social community, contains the channels that focus on building relationships, facilitating multi-way communication, conversation, and collaboration, in addition to sharing of experiences and resources. Therefore, the possibility to socialize is the main objective of this zone. The second zone, social publishing, features the production and publishing of content via social media channels. Social publishing enables the sharing of user-generated content, which means that individuals can share experiences, opinions, and thoughts in a democratized way, without the barriers of traditional publishing sites. Social entertainment covers events, activities and performative content that aim to entertain the audience, and to create enjoyable experiences for the viewer, which are posted on social media channels. Finally, the fourth

zone, social commerce is all about using social media for buying and selling of products and services. It encompasses social shopping, which is the active participation and influence of others in a consumer's decision-making process, as well as social marketplaces and hybrid channels, which refers to social media apps where users can share what they are buying or have bought. (Tuten 2023, 12–16.) Understanding the opportunities, social media offers helps in creating efficient and successful SMM strategies.

Marketing strategies in social media are exceptionally valuable due to their reach and access to differing audiences. Additionally, SMM allows for companies to advertise their products and services in a way that does not disturb audiences, viewers, and possible consumers. Tuten (2023, 19) explains how traditional marketing methods focus on push messaging, meaning one-way communication delivered to target audiences and using large broadcasts to reach mass audiences, while social media marketing allows enhanced interaction and engagement between brands and audiences, providing consumers with a possibility to contribute and collaborate with brands in their marketing efforts. Figure 1 further demonstrates and visualises the difference in communication between traditional marketing (a) and new, digital marketing (b) in media.

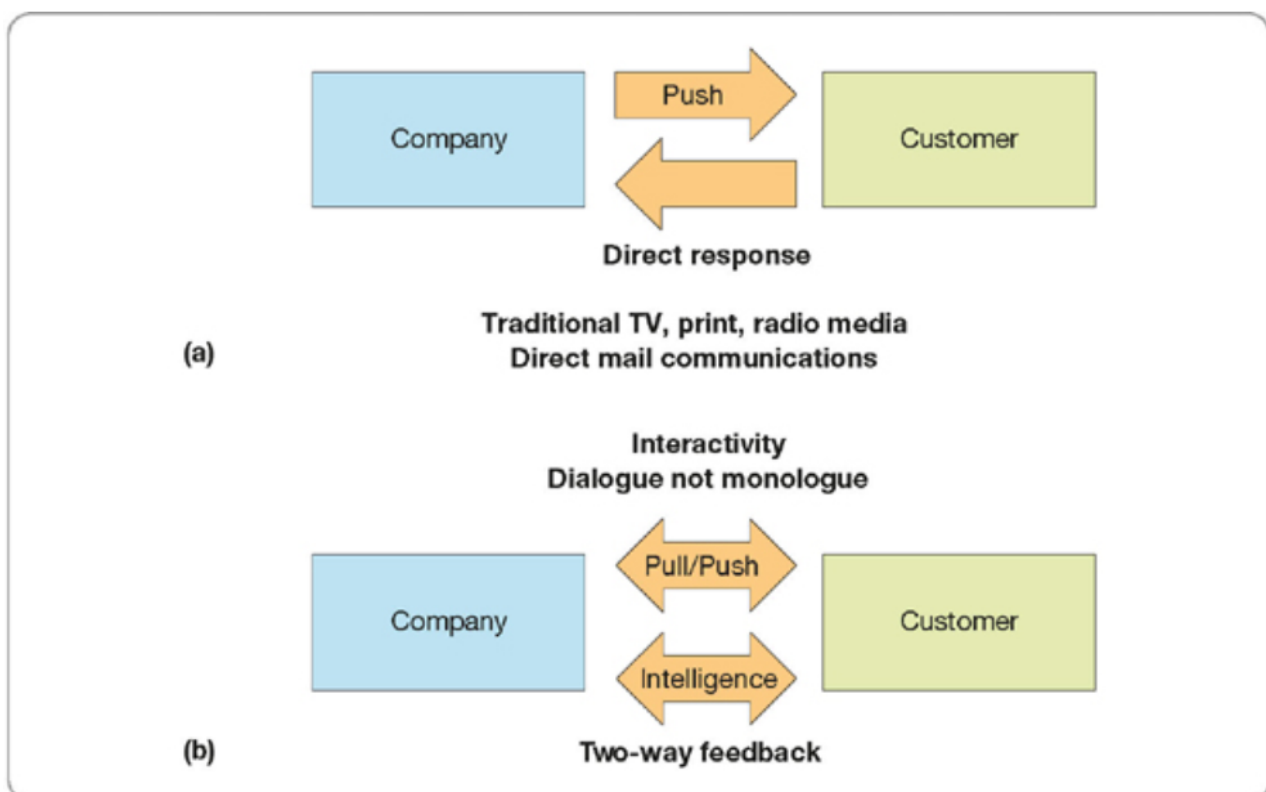


Figure 1. Communication models for traditional marketing method and digital marketing (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick 2022)

As mentioned, another difference in the methods comes from disruptiveness. Traditional marketing is based on an interruption-disruption model, where brands communicate by delivering messages to audiences whether or not they wish to receive them and whether or not the messages are relevant to their unique needs. Therefore, when communicating to their target audience, the brand interrupts prior and ongoing activities. On the other hand, SMM gives companies the opportunity to advertise their brand, product, or service in an interactive and seemingly informal way, which facilitates the belief that the consumer is in control of the content they view and engage with. (Tuten 2023, 19.) In SMM, the consumer is already on a social media platform and is more receptive to seeing advertising and promotional content since it does not disrupt their activity.

## **2.1 Influencer marketing as a marketing strategy**

In today's digital markets, companies' marketing and advertising strategies have shifted to accommodate for the change of digitalism. As mentioned, digital environments and SMM offer new possibilities for businesses, when communicating with target audiences and consumers. SMM strategies have adapted with the use of influencers as product, service or brand reviewers and endorsers and they serve as a backbone to the majority of social media campaigns, especially for larger brands (Dahl 2021, 77). Influencers are defined as independent third-party endorsers who aim to shift viewers attitudes through their social media posts, and who have gained a following through their content, often focusing on a specific area of expertise such as travelling, fashion or beauty (Freberg, Graham, McCaughey & Freberg 2011, 90; Dahl 2021, 78). Additionally, influencers are described as a hybrid mix between a friend-like peer and traditional endorser (Childers, Lemon & Hoy 2019, 260). Now, influencer marketing uses individuals on social media who have significant influence over their audience to promote brands, products, and services. It enables the marketing efforts to be more targeted and more personalized to consumers in a company's market segment and it focuses on building a relationship between an influencer and their audience. (Rachmad 2024, 9.)

According to Dahl (2021, 77) the domain of influencer marketing has to do with consumers' tendency to spend more time on social media. Therefore, consumers make more purchase decisions based on the information they gather from social media platforms, where the people they follow and see often act as online experts who have influence over these decisions. To explain it more simply, influencers serve as social media opinion leaders who are in most cases paid by companies to endorse products or services on their channels. Now, as a method, influencer marketing is closely related to two traditional marketing techniques: endorsements and product placement, however the difference comes from influencer marketing using social media personalities as opposed to traditional marketing using celebrities in endorsements. Additionally, it is similar to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), in terms of recommendations to other users. (Dahl 2021, 77–78.)

Table 2. Differences in endorsement methods (Dahl 2021)

| <b>Celebrity endorsement</b>              | <b>Influencer</b>                 | <b>eWOM</b>                      |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| No social relationship                    | Para-social relationship          | No social relationship           |
| Endorsements often unrelated to expertise | Endorsements related to expertise | Expertise not easily established |
| Evaluation based on social credibility    | Often high source credibility     | Argument quality is important    |

Table 2 illustrates how these endorsement methods differ from each other and how the viewer or consumer depicts the effectivity of the endorsement between different methods. Celebrity endorsement refers to the influencing technique used in traditional marketing. De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017, 801) suggest that influencer endorsements are more effective than celebrity endorsements due to their perceived accessibility and authentic, self-generated content. Celebrities are already well-known figures from mainstream media, while influencers are ordinary internet users who gain audiences through content creation by sharing their lifestyles along with sharing product reviews. The contrast comes from celebrities being seen as distant figures whose endorsements are driven by commercial contracts, whereas influencers are viewed as para-social acquaintances who consumers have grown to know and love and whose endorsements come from personal use and are based on expertise in the field. (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders 2017, 799–801.) Looking at influencer endorsement and eWOM, we can see a few differing aspects: (1) in eWOM there is no social relationship between the endorser and the viewer, as their interaction mostly lasts for a single review, which also explains how (2) expertise is not as easily established due to the viewer not being as familiar with the endorser as a person, and finally (3) in eWOM quality of the endorser’s argument is increasingly important since the viewer has not built a perception of trust and credibility for the reviewer (Dahl 2021, 78).

Influencer marketing as a social media marketing strategy is taking up increasingly larger portions of companies’ marketing budgets. Linqia (2023) surveyed over 250 brand and agency marketers for their State of Influencer Marketing -report and according to this research, 75.5 percent of respondents’ budgets either increased or remained the same compared to the previous year, with 97 percent investing in influencer content outside of organic endorsement. The rising popularity for influencer collaboration can be explained by efficient content creation for the brand. In traditional marketing, companies pay professional photographers, videographers and writers for the production of marketing material and content, which requires time and funds. On the other hand, in

influencer marketing the content creation is part of the deal, making campaign implementation relatively efficient for the company. (Tuten 2023, 92.)

### **2.1.1 Micro- and macro influencers**

This subchapter dives into the different characteristics and types of influencers, as well as how companies take these different characteristics into account when deciding, which influencers to collaborate with in their campaigns. The brand, product, and service endorsers in SMM used to consist of celebrities, however with the rise of influencer marketing, endorsers can be what could be defined as “regular people”. This means that the criteria for endorsers, or in this case, influencers have changed. According to Lou and Yuan (2019, 63) in order to be considered an influencer, a creator must fulfill three criteria: (1) to be active on one or more social media platforms, (2) to have a large number of followers and most importantly, (3) to have influence over their followers’ behaviour. Dahl (2021, 79) explains how influencer types are divided into categories such as micro-, mid-level, and macro-influencers depending on the number of followers these creators have, contrasting the criterion of having many followers. There is no agreed number of followers for each category. However some theories define influencer types as nano influencers, with less than 1000 followers, micro influencers with 1000 to 100,000 followers, macro influencers with 100,000 to 1 million followers and mega influencers with over 1 million followers, while others define the categories by micro influencers having fewer than 25,000 followers, mid-level influencers having 25,000 to 100,000 followers and macro influencers having more than 100,000 followers (Chen-Olmsted & Kim 2023, 101; Rachmad 2024, 11; Dahl 2021, 79).

Successful social media marketing campaigns rely on other factors than solely the number of followers an influencer has. Chan-Olmsted and Kim (2023, 101) explain that though many assume influencers with millions of followers to create the best impact for a campaign, number of followers is not an automatic indicator of the influencer’s persuasive power over their viewers and followers. In fact, according to industry insiders, micro influencers or mid-level influencers have the highest influence over their followers due to intimacy and authenticity of content. (Chan-Olmsted & Kim 2023, 101; Dahl 2021, 79). Micro influencers often focus on one community instead of reaching for large audiences across multiple networks, which enables them to become familiar and relatable to the viewer. Audiences tend to view micro influencers as relatable, normal people who are “one of them”, facilitating the perceptions of trust towards the influencer, which in turn makes viewers and followers act based on their recommendations more easily. (Tuten 2023, 89.) Comparing the advantages and disadvantages of micro- and macro influencers, Conde and Casais (2023, 2) found that micro influencers typically have a strong voice in their community and niche, loyal audience and high engagement but their reach and visibility are limited, whereas macro influencers have a

significant number of loyal followers and high levels of reach in specific markets, however their engagement rates maintain around 5 to 25 percent lower than those of micro influencers. Macro- and mega influencers' higher reach and micro influencers' higher engagement creates a paradox for companies, since intimacy and popularity of an influencer are related in an inverted way. This means that companies need to strategically choose which influencers to work with for the best results based on different campaign goals. (Chan-Olmsted & Kim 2023, 101–102.)

Many companies and marketers view smaller influencers as better due to their niche following and audiences, making micro influencers a popular type to collaborate with among brands. Figure 2 shows the distribution how brands plan to work with influencers in their social media campaigns and in 2021, micro influencers were the top choice for brands, whereas in 2023 micro influencers with 74% came second to macro influencers with 81% of brands planning to collaborate with them. The shift in popularity is explained by brands aiming to focus on fewer, bigger, and better influencer partnerships, in addition to the rates micro influencers charge rising higher. (Linqia 2023.)

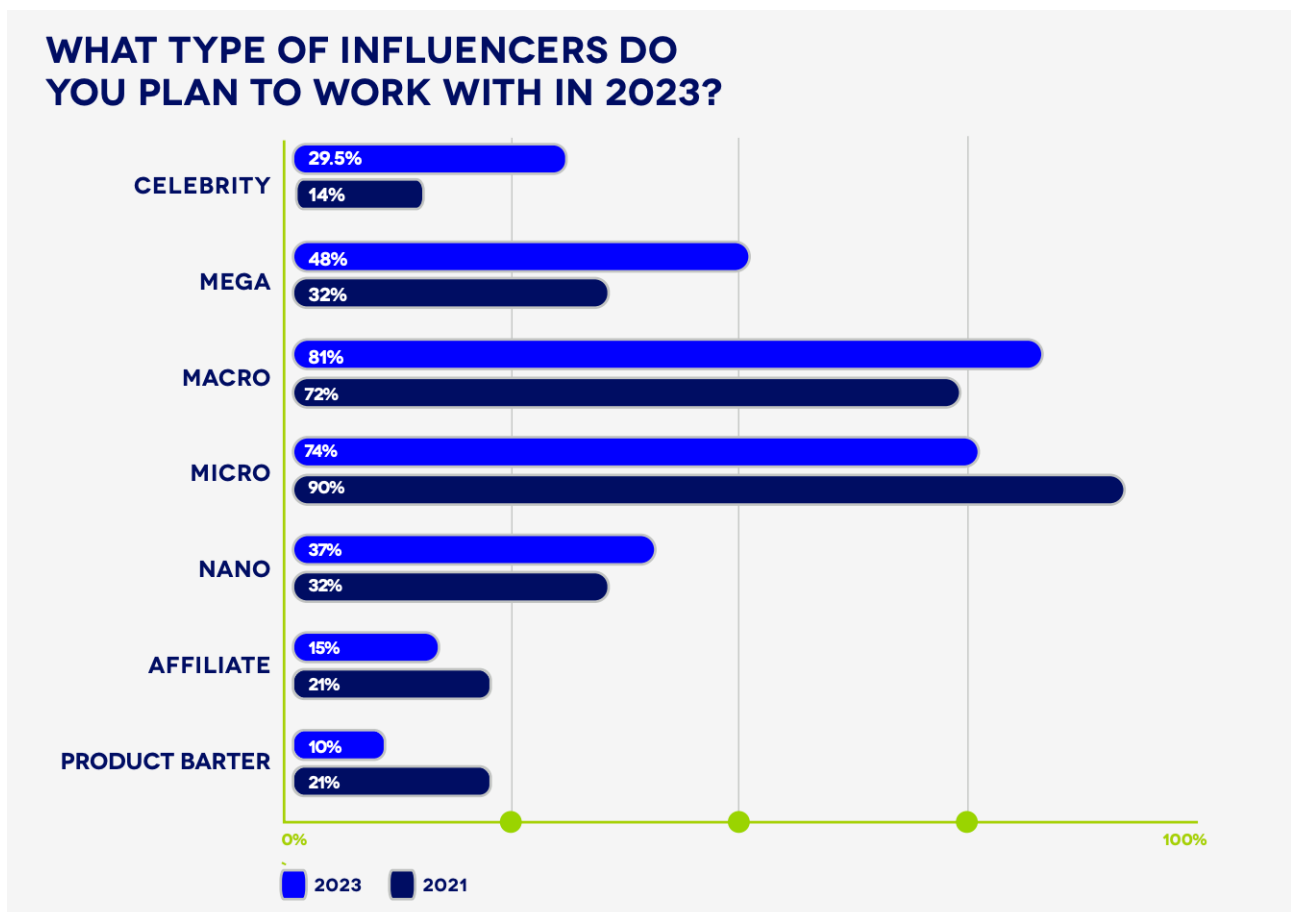


Figure 2. Distribution of influencer types companies plan to work with in 2023 (Linqia 2023)

### 2.1.2 Favored social media platforms in influencer marketing

Social media consist of many different platforms, however not all of them are suitable for marketing purposes and more specifically influencer marketing. In their State of Influencer Marketing -report, Linqia (2023) found that the most popular social media platforms favoured by brands were Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, now known as X, Pinterest, and Snapchat. Though TikTok is a newer, highly fast-growing platform, Instagram still reigns as number one. This can be explained with the way Instagram has adapted their platform to match new features proposed by possible competitors to gain an upper hand on the market. Examples of this are the creation of Instagram Stories as a result of the growing popularity of Snapchat, where posts are only available for 24 hours, as well as the implementation of Instagram Reels to compete with TikTok, where content is based on short-form videos. (Chan-Olmsted & Kim 2023, 105.)

Tuten (2023, 151–154) provides a social media channel plan for understanding, where to post marketing materials in order to reach specific target audiences. Key highlights of the most popular platforms for younger generations include assessments of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat. Platforms that are recommended for reaching the demographic of users under 35 years old are Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat, while YouTube and Facebook cater to older generations as well. All of the previously mentioned platforms are good options for community and relationship building, publishing content and for entertainment, however when considering marketing efforts, as a bonus, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok are great options regarding commerce. Content-wise Facebook as a platform is best designed for informative posts about company-related topics, establishing brand presence and utilizing targeted ads, as well as sponsored posts. Instagram offers possibilities to gain exposure through hashtags, building relationships within the community and opening up conversation on the community's important topics. Additionally, in Instagram brands can promote their content with paid posts and by collaborating with influencers, which increases engagement. Influencers are most commonly specialized in the fields of health, wellness, fashion, beauty and food. TikTok offers endless possibilities due to its substantial number of user-accounts. The platform shows its users personalized content based on their interests, and fields of interest are easily categorized with hashtags such as BookTok, SkinTok, PetTok and BeautyTok. As a platform, TikTok appeals to the younger generations, with 50% of users being under the age of 29, which means that the content is recommended to be humoristic, entertaining and trendy. (Tuten 2023, 151–154.)

Hutchinson and Dwyer (2023, 125) suggest that visibility and viral content are important for not only influencer marketing but also for the social media platform to attract large audiences and to encourage users to boost and share content. Virality requires certain features from platforms for

example a place where the user can search for content within their field of interest, such as an “explore” or a “for you” section that recommends content based on algorithms. (Hutchinson & Dwyer 2023, 125–126.) Platforms that allow virality are Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Looking at the target age group, Statista (2024) shows that leading social media platforms by users aged 18 to 29 were Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok, which indicated that the younger generations are highly present in these platforms. Additionally, in a global social media statistics report, DataReportal (2025) indicates that YouTube has the highest social media advertising audience with 2.54 billion monthly users, Facebook comes second with 2.36 billion users, while TikTok reaches 1.94 billion monthly users and Instagram 1.88 billion. In addition to high levels of reach in terms of advertising, more than 50 percent of active users aged 16+ years old report to follow or research brands and products on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok (DataReportal 2025).

Based on existing research and statistics, the best social media platforms for influencer marketing are Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. When taking sponsored content and paid advertisements into consideration, Facebook should be added to the list for companies’ social media marketing strategies.

### **2.1.3 Beauty influencers**

Social media has an immense number of active users across platforms and therefore content varies from all sides of the spectrum. The content users see on social media platforms depends on algorithms, however some industries and content categories are more popular than others. According to Hutchinson and Dwyer (2023, 127) beauty and makeup was the second most popular content category in YouTube in 2021, in terms of video contributions by content creators, as well as engagement by users. Additionally, beauty is represented in the top 10 most popular categories of Instagram influencers, as well as TikTok search categories and purchasing categories (HypeAuditor 2025; Marketing Interactive 2023; YouGov 2024).

Beauty influencers act as brand and product endorsers, who aim to influence consumer buying decisions through makeup-, skin- and haircare tutorials, product reviews and daily beauty content. They build communities that focus on beauty and self-care and shape trends within the industry. (Chaumal & Mahajan 2025, 160.) Beauty influencers on YouTube are most popular from their makeup tutorials and educational videos on how to do makeup, while on TikTok and Instagram, they are mostly known for their “get ready with me” videos (GRWM), where they showcase everyday makeup and skincare routines, while promoting products. However, GRWM -content saw a decrease in engagement and video views. Brands are suggested to focus on richer storytelling and long-form content that offers more depth to the viewer, instead of following trends. (Hutchinson & Dwyer 2023, 127; Traackr 2025.)

## **2.2 Paid promotional content on social media**

This section of the theoretical framework focuses on paid promotional content, such as sponsored advertising posts and sponsored influencer posts on social media. Additionally, the effect of sponsorship or ad disclosure is examined.

Tuten (2023, 240) explains that in order to reach target audiences, brands must find the right channels to distribute and promote their messages, such as social media channels. It is suggested that to optimize impressions, solely publishing content is not enough, and instead, it needs to be promoted as well (Tuten 2023, 240). Social media marketers can benefit from paid content by paying influencers to create content posts relating to their brand, product or service. By doing this, they gain access to the influencer's audience and persuasive power, which can lead to higher brand recognition, consumer engagement, and possibly purchasing decisions. Incorporating influencers into their promoting efforts enables brands to market themselves in a relatable manner, however by law, all sponsored content must be disclosed clearly and conspicuously so that viewers know it is a paid advertisement or paid collaboration. (Tuten 2023, 254.)

### **2.2.1 Sponsored posts and influencer posts**

Sponsored content refers to paid content, where companies either pay the platform to distribute certain content posts to a larger audience, or companies pay creators to promote their brand or product in their content. Brands may seek out influencers and bloggers to participate in a social media campaign. (Tuten 2023, 234.)

How can viewers spot sponsored posts? The most popular way of disclosing advertisements and paid collaborations is by using hashtags, such as #sponsored, #ad or #ambassador, however since clarity of sponsorship is increasingly important, a few hashtags in the caption might be considered too vague (Dahl 2021, 85). In fact, Evans, Phua, Lim and Jun (2017, 138) suggest that the success of sponsoring influencers to advertise brands and products might come partly from consumers not realising that the content they see is an advertisement. Social media platforms have now set guidelines for transparency in sponsorship disclosures in order to protect the public from advertising content being disguised as social media (Tuten 2023, 234). According to Meta Business Help Centre (2025) branded content, which is creator's content that either features or is influenced by a business partner in exchange for monetary value, on Instagram and Facebook requires the use of their paid partnership label. Instagram Help Centre (2025) instructs users on how the label works: to get the label, the user must tag the brand in their post, which sends a request to the brand and when it is approved, both the brand name and paid partnership label will be visible on the post tag. Users can disclose partnerships on all content forms, meaning feed posts, stories,

and reels (Instagram Help Centre 2025). When posting promotional content on TikTok, users must turn on the content disclosure setting that ensures transparency and trust within the community. When turning on the setting, users are asked if the content is promoting own product or business, or if it is branded content on behalf of a business. The label differs based on the option: in the case of promoting own business, it will be labelled as promotional content, while endorsement of a brand or product that is not the creator's own will be labelled as paid partnerships. (TikTok 2025.) In YouTube, creators must select the paid promotion -box in video details when uploading videos that contain sponsored content, which will result in a paid promotion label in the video thumbnail (Google YouTube Help 2025).

### **2.2.2 The effect of sponsorship disclosure on consumer perceptions**

Disclosing sponsored content posts on social media is increasingly important as viewers are warranted to know whether the content is made to advertise or whether it is organic content from an influencer. The persuasion knowledge model (Friestad & Wright 1994, 2) refers to consumers' knowledge and awareness of various advertising tactics that marketers use to persuade them. According to this model, consumers may view disclosed sponsored content as a deliberate attempt to influence wanted action, which might lead to a defensive or negative response from the viewers. Contrastingly, results show that when viewers know a video or post is sponsored prior to viewing it, the post might perform better in terms of engagement and positive perceptions. This can be explained by the shift in viewers' attitudes towards the post. When sponsored content is disclosed properly, the viewer immediately understands it to be a paid advertisement. This gives them the opportunity to decide whether to watch the content, which in turn is often made based on the expected return. When a consumer is truly interested in the sponsored content, they are more likely to engage with it. (Sun, Zhou & Yang 2023, 85–89.)

Lou, Chee and Zhou (2023, 65–66) suggest most studies to agree that ad disclosures increase ad recognition and brand recall, however there are contrasting results on whether ad disclosures increase purchase intention. Additionally, they suggest that advertising disclosure does not matter as much in purchasing decisions as prior knowledge or interest and perceived authenticity of the product or service review, as well as the influencer-product fit and relevance (Lou, Chee & Zhou 2023, 66). This indicates that previous studies have found differing results on how sponsorship disclosures affect consumer perceptions, and no clear lining can be made from the studies conducted up to this point in time.

### 2.3 Consumer buying behaviour

This section examines consumer buying behaviour and how influencer marketing, promotional content, and persuasiveness impact it. Additionally, this section dives into what makes social media marketing campaigns effective and how effectiveness is measured.

To understand consumer buying behaviour, theoretical explanations must be offered. Consumer behaviour is the study of processes involved in groups or individual's selection, purchasing and use of products, services or experiences to fulfil their needs and desires. It is an ongoing process encompassing the pre-purchase thought process, the exchange, which relates to the transaction where two or more parties give and receive something of value, and the post-purchase review of the product, service or experience. Figure 3 showcases the different stages of the consumption process, relating to consumer buying behaviour. (Solomon 2020, 22–23.)

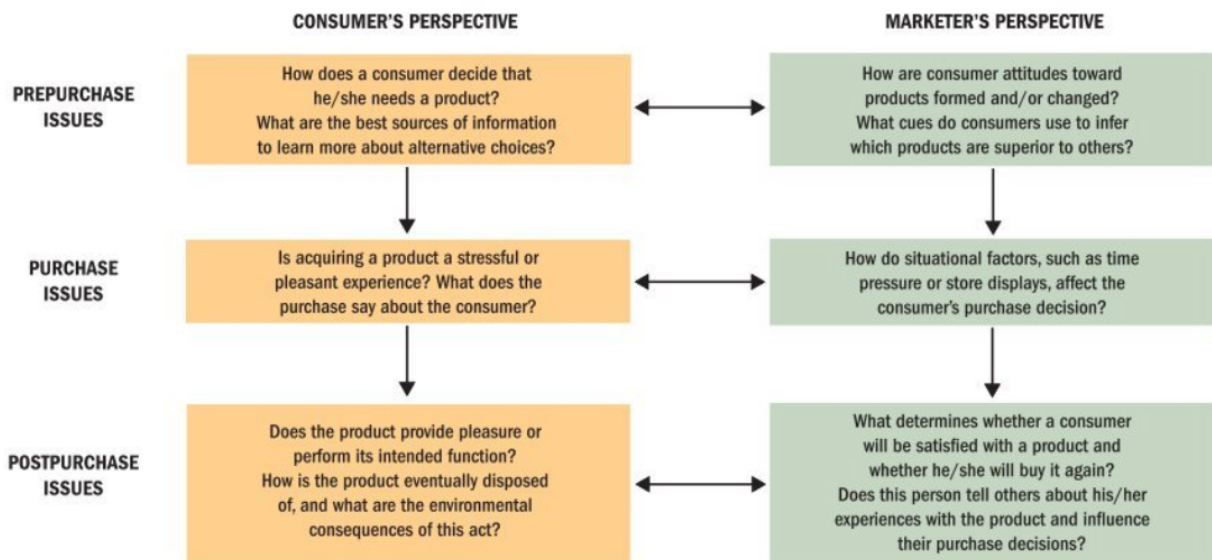


Figure 3. Stages of the consumption process (Solomon 2020)

Consumer attitudes have an important role in shaping buying decisions. Attitudes are formed through classical- and instrumental conditioning, which are used in traditional marketing and are based on repetition and cohesive messages. Additionally, attitudes are formed by modelling the behaviour of friends and media endorsers, such as celebrities and influencers. (Solomon 2020, 295.) Consumer decision making consists of cognitive-, habitual- and affective decision making. Cognitive decision making is rational and deliberate, meaning the consumer makes purchase decisions thoughtfully, based on information and evaluation. On the other hand, habitual decision making is unconscious and automatic, which usually relates to routine purchase decisions such as buying groceries, while affective decision making is instantaneous and often based on emotion. In

promotional marketing strategies, consumer decision making is often cognitive, where they first need to find information about a product or a service from different sources and then evaluate options based on reviews and word-of-mouth. However, sometimes buying decisions from promotional advertisements can be affective if a consumer makes impulsive purchases. (Solomon 2020, 338–359.)

### **2.3.1 Persuasiveness of promotional content**

What makes influencer marketing persuasive to the consumer? Lou, Chee and Zhou (2023, 63–64) illustrate the descriptive model between different factors' relationship in influencer marketing in figure 3. Research identifies similarity, attractiveness, credibility, and authenticity to be some of the main factors in influencer marketing persuasiveness, which drive successful outcomes in terms of consumers' actions. Explaining the terms found in figure 4, Source Credibility Theory refers to how credibility is measured in three dimensions: based on expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Expertise relates to how knowledgeable an influencer is perceived to be e.g., in a certain niche. If consumers view the product-endorser fit to be poor, they won't be persuaded by the campaign. Attractiveness refers to both physical- and social attractiveness of the influencer. Beauty is always appreciated, especially when marketing beauty products, however likeability and familiarity of the influencer regarding the viewers and followers is important for persuading buying decisions as well. On the other hand, trustworthiness is determined by the influencer's integrity and possible bias. Consumers look for objectivity and whether there is a conflict of interest between an influencer's personal style or opinions and the promotional campaign they participate in. In addition to these, figure 4. mentions similarity as an important factor in influencer marketing. Similarity refers to how alike consumers view themselves and the influencer in terms of lifestyle, interests and attitudes. (Lou, Chee & Zhou 2023, 64–65.)

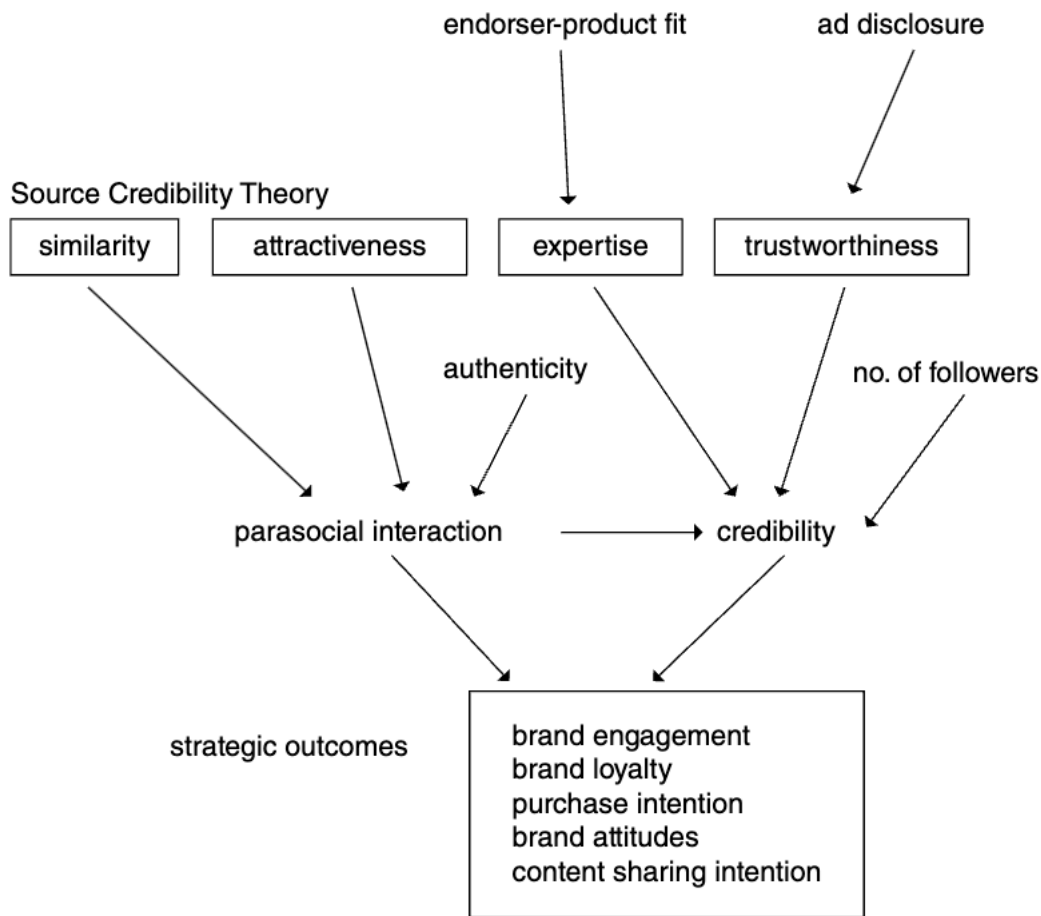


Figure 4. The relationship between different factors in influencer marketing effectiveness (Lou, Chee & Zhou 2023)

Additionally, Liu, Yu and Yang (2024, 5) suggest that especially short-form video promotions are successful due to informativeness and relevance. With the use of short-form video content in promotional campaigns, brands can deliver effective and engaging messages to target audiences that are both informative through text and speech, and visually illustrative. Prior studies have found informativeness to be one of the key root factors of consumer attitudes towards advertisements. Another important factor is relevance. Perceived relevance of advertising messages has to do with how self-related the content is for the viewer's own interests, needs, and values, with relevant advertisements often inflicting positive responses from audiences. (Liu, Yu & Yang 2024, 5.)

To conclude, content-wise viewers are persuaded by informative and relevant messages, according to their own interests and needs. On the other hand, factors that make the endorser persuasive to the viewer include similarity; again relating to the viewer's own lifestyle and interests, in addition to physical and social attractiveness, expertise relating to a specific industry or niche, and trustworthiness of the endorser.

### 2.3.2 SMM campaign effectiveness

This subchapter looks into what makes social media marketing campaigns effective and how to form them, as well as how effectiveness is measured. SMM campaigns require extensive planning in order to ensure success. Key steps in the planning process include setting up clear and measurable goals for the campaign, identifying target audiences and understanding their demographics, interests and behaviour, choosing the right promotional endorsement, e.g., right influencers or paid advertising posts, as well as choosing the type and frequency of content. For measuring campaign effectiveness, companies must establish clear key performance indicators (KPIs) that can be evaluated post-campaign. (Rachmad 2024, 12.)

Tuten (2023, 367) explains how in order to measure the success of SMM campaigns, companies must first define the campaign objectives and what are the results they wish to see from the campaign. KPIs often consist of increasing brand awareness with high reach, increasing traffic to their sites, and of course, increasing sales. Usual metrics in social media marketing campaigns include views or impressions, engagement, meaning likes, comments and shares, site traffic, clickthrough rates and sales conversion rates. Additionally, companies wish to know how much income an investment into a SMM campaign generates, which is determined with the return-on-investment rate. (Tuten 2023, 362–372.)

This indicates that effective social media campaigns start from clear planning and objectives. Companies must choose which influencer types to work with based on campaign goals or whether to pay platforms to advertise their own content posts, and whether audiences deem the choices to be adequate can be seen from the rates of the evaluation metrics.

### **3 Methodology**

This section outlines and explains the methodology of the primary research method for this study. The chosen research method is an online survey, which is presented in section 4. First, the chosen research method is described and defined. Then the sample group of the study is explained, after which, data collection and analysis are outlined. Additionally, the reliability of research is evaluated.

The process of this research-based thesis consists of a review of existing theories, literature, and research studies, followed by a self-administered online survey that collects quantitative data from the sample group. After these, results of the survey are collected and analysed, and finally, the study is reflected on in the form of a conclusion and future recommendations.

#### **3.1 Description of the chosen method**

This study is conducted with the quantitative research method, employing an online survey. Quantitative research refers to a method, where results are measurable and can be expressed in numbers. Research may consist of a survey that the researcher designs from the beginning, or it can be a secondary analysis of existing data. (Williams, Wiggins & Vogt 2024, 14–15.) This study is conducted with an online survey, which provides empirical data and primary results, which means that sections past the literature review will not consist of analysis of existing secondary data. The alternative method of research would be qualitative interviews; however, quantitative survey was chosen due to the ability to analyse larger trends among consumers.

A quantitative survey is a self-report data collection tool where researchers obtain information on respondents' attitudes, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, and behavioural intentions. The use of a survey as the research method provides a way to collect standardized, measurable results from respondents, in order to understand recurring trends within the field of research. Surveys are one of the most popular research methods in business studies for collecting cause-and-effect data. (Johnson & Christensen 2019, 208–209; Ghauri & Gronhaug 2010, 118–119.)

#### **3.2 Sample group of the study**

The sample group of this study consists of younger consumers aged 15–35 years old, including most of Gen Z and the younger segment of Millennials. The author wishes to survey this specific age group, since they have the highest understanding of digital advertising, and this age group is largely represented on social media. The survey is related to trends within the beauty industry, consisting of personal care, makeup, haircare, and fragrances, however the sample group is not limited to a specific gender. Therefore, the only limitation is targeting a specific age group.

### **3.3 Data collection and analysis methods**

Data collection was done through an online survey with the Webropol survey tool. The survey link was distributed to consumers via WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Instagram. Since the target group for this research is younger consumer generations, the channels, especially Snapchat and Instagram seemed viable for reaching the target sample. The author sent the survey directly to contacts within these networks and these contacts were encouraged to share the survey forward to people who they thought would fit the target sample of the research survey.

Survey questions were brainstormed with the help of artificial intelligence to ensure that all investigative questions are taken into account and included in the primary research to show measurable results.

Data was stored and analysed in Microsoft Excel. Webropol automatically creates an Excel sheet of the survey responses, where all answers and selections from individual respondents can be seen in a straightforward way. For the analysis, pivot tables were created to measure specific survey questions, answer options and different respondent characteristics, such as age and gender. After the thesis is published to Theseus, the survey data will be disposed of from all external files.

### **3.4 Reliability of research**

Research reliability is ensured through a clear research design, reliable analysis and measurement tools, minimization of sources of bias, and analysing findings with multiple methods or based on multiple factors (William 2024). Research design is explained as the research process in the beginning of this section. The research survey was conducted based on the theoretical research carried out in section two of the thesis, which increases the validity and relevance of the survey questions. Additionally, survey data was analysed based on different respondent characteristics, including age and gender to ensure that results are not presented solely based on one factor. Furthermore, on top of the quantitative, measurable survey questions, the author chose to include open-ended answers in the survey, so that respondents can explain certain viewpoints in their own words.

The online survey was participated by in total 103 respondents, of which 102 were taken into account in the analysis, since they fell within the target sample group. Respondent demographics are further expanded on in the results section. While the number of respondents allows for concrete results and analysis, a larger sample of a few hundred to one thousand respondents would increase the validity of research results.

## 4 Results

This section focuses on the analysis of survey results. The primary research method of this thesis is a quantitative online survey, and this section presents survey results and analyses them, aiming to find answers to the investigative questions of the thesis. First, respondents' demographics are analysed with the information from the introductory questions of the survey. After this, each investigative question is expanded on with the results from different content questions.

### 4.1 Introductory questions

The first questions of the survey determine respondents' demographics. The three introductory questions asked respondents questions relating to demographic information in terms of age, gender, and nationality. These questions offer opportunities to analyse survey results based on different respondent characteristics, still falling within the target sample group. In total 103 people wished to move forward with the survey, meaning the total number of survey respondents is 103.

Out of the 103 respondents, 102 fall within the target age group which was the only limitation and criteria to be included in the analysis. However, since other age groups were included in the survey question options, this respondent is included in the presentation of demographic results. When looking at respondents' age characteristics, figure 5 illustrates that most respondents fit into the age group of 20 to 24-year-olds. It is the largest with 71 survey respondents (69%). The second largest age group is respondents aged 25 to 29 years old with 23 responses (22%), while 30 to 35-year-olds consist of five respondents (5%), and 15 to 19-year-old respondents were only three (3%). As seen in figure 5, only one of the survey respondents fall out of the target age group.

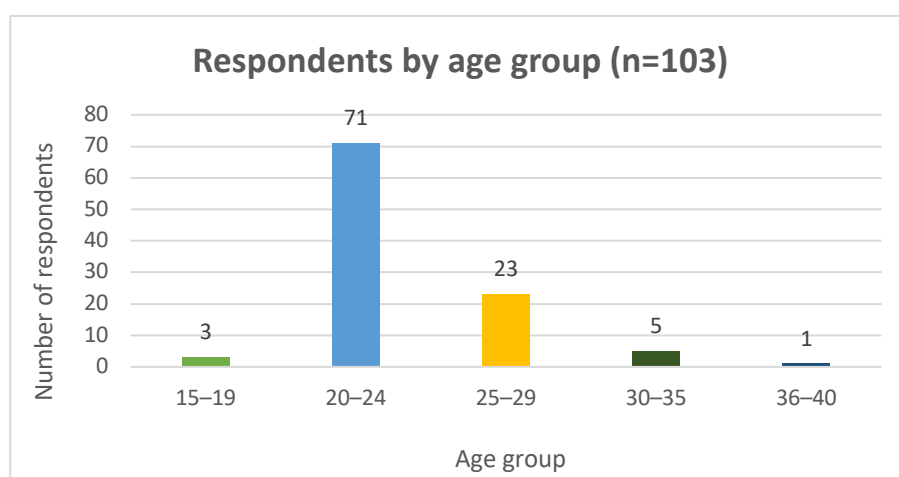


Figure 5. Number of respondents by age group

Survey question 3 asked respondents about their gender, and as shown in figure 6, 91 respondents (88%) were women, while 12 respondents (12%) were men. None of the survey respondents

wished to not disclose their gender. This indicates that even though the author did not limit the study to a certain gender, and encouraged people from different demographics to participate, the beauty industry is more associated towards women, and they are more familiar with the industry.

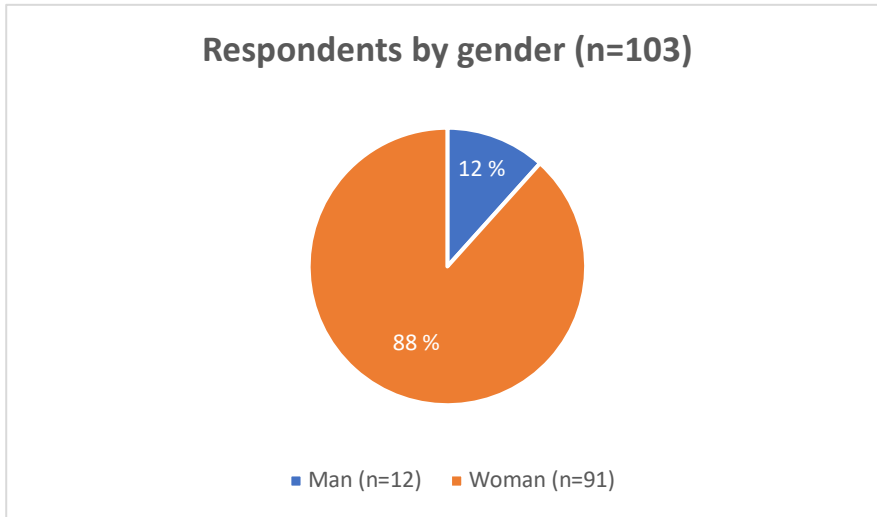


Figure 6. Respondents by gender

Question 4 asked respondents to indicate their nationality. The results are shown in table 3, with a large majority of 89 respondents (86%) being from Finland. Three other nationalities consist of multiple survey respondents with three respondents participating to the survey from Germany, Spain, and the United States. The remaining 5% of respondents are singular participants from Austria, Canada, China, Italy, and Russia. This indicates that the survey reached people from all over the world, however since the number of respondents from specific countries apart from Finland is very small, the analysis of results cannot be based on nationality as the demographic comparison.

Table 3. Respondents by nationality

| Nationality    | Number of respondents | Percentage of total |
|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Austrian       | 1                     | 1%                  |
| Canadian       | 1                     | 1%                  |
| Chinese        | 1                     | 1%                  |
| Finnish        | 89                    | 86%                 |
| German         | 3                     | 3%                  |
| Italian        | 1                     | 1%                  |
| Russian        | 1                     | 1%                  |
| Spanish        | 3                     | 3%                  |
| American (USA) | 3                     | 3%                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>103</b>            | <b>100%</b>         |

Originally, the author aimed to conduct the analysis with comparing results by respondents' gender, since the specific age group is the only limiting criteria for the analysis. However, since most of the respondents are women, and the number of men is relatively small, most results will focus on comparing the differences in answers between the smaller age groups within the target age group of 15 to 35-year-olds. Though the age group of this study is limited to consumers aged 15–35, the range of this age group is relatively large with twenty years in between. In survey question 2, respondents indicated their age group within a five-year range in the age group options. Respondents who are still in their teens may have differing views compared to those in their early to mid-thirties. Therefore, most results compare differences between the smaller age groups within the target sample, while gender is analysed on some survey results.

#### **4.2 Which are the best social media platforms for promotional marketing?**

This subsection focuses on the analysis of IQ1. Which are the best social media platforms for promotional marketing? In the survey, survey questions five and six focus on social media platforms. Figure 7 illustrates most used social media platforms according to different age groups. It showcases the results from survey question five, which asked respondents to indicate all social media platforms that they frequently use. It is a multiple-choice question and gained in total 413 responses from 102 respondents. Results are presented in percentages, since age groups have large differences in size. Overall, Instagram is the most popular and commonly used platform among respondents as all 102 respondents (100%) use Instagram frequently. Other platforms see variation in popularity between different age groups, with TikTok being the second most popular platform with 87 responses (85%) and Snapchat rising to the third spot with 86 responses (84%). After these platforms, 54 responded to frequently use Pinterest (53%), 52 respondents (51%) use YouTube, and only 28 respondents (27%) frequently use Facebook. None of the respondents indicated that they do not frequently use social media and in total 4 respondents chose the option "other", and among the answers were platforms such as X, LinkedIn, and Jodel. This indicates that Facebook is not as popular among younger consumers as expressed in literature and existing research, while Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat show high popularity for consumers aged 15–35 years old.

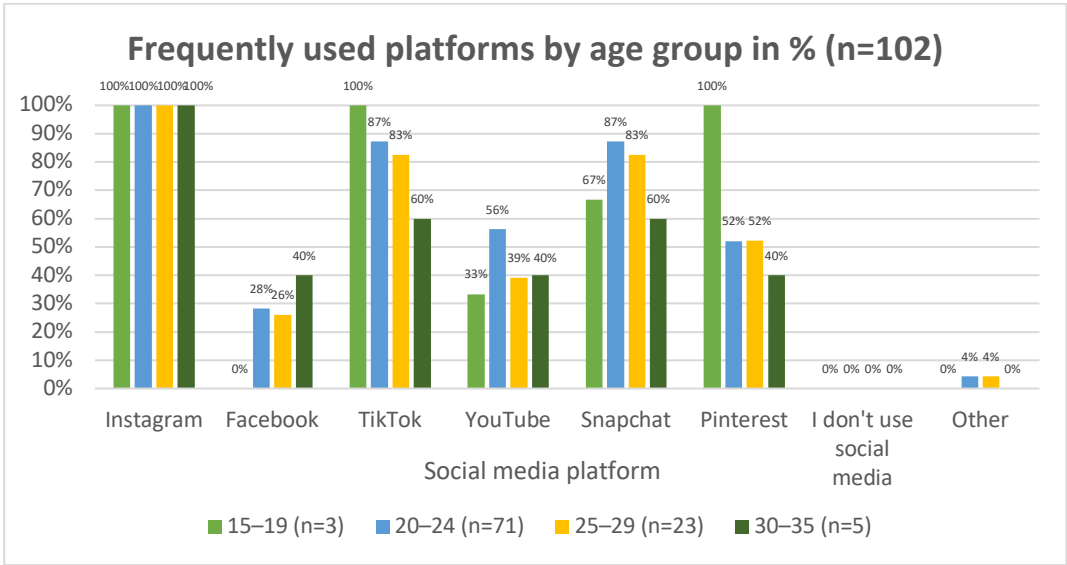


Figure 7. Frequently used platforms by age group

Looking at the results between smaller age groups, figure 7 shows that all three respondents (100%) from the age group of 15 to 19-year-olds frequently use Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest. Snapchat is also popular among this age group with 67% indicating the use of the platform, while 33% said to frequently use YouTube, and none using Facebook. From 20 to 24-year-olds, all 71 respondents (100%) use Instagram, 87% use TikTok and Snapchat, 56% use YouTube, and 52% use Pinterest. Facebook is again the least commonly used platform among this age group with 28% of the respondents aged 20 to 24. Looking at the second largest age group of respondents aged 25 to 29, Instagram is used by all 23 respondents (100%), while TikTok and Snapchat are used by 83% of the respondents from this age group. 52% of respondents use Pinterest, 39% use YouTube, and again, only 26% frequently use Facebook. And finally, from 30 to 35-year-olds again all five respondents (100%) frequently use Instagram, further demonstrating its popularity among younger consumers. 60% of the respondents within this age group use TikTok, and 40% use YouTube and Facebook. The least popular platforms for this age group are Pinterest with 26% and Snapchat with only 17%. Though Facebook is the least popular platform overall among all respondents, it is more commonly used by respondents in their early to mid-thirties, and therefore a valuable channel for reaching younger consumers as well.

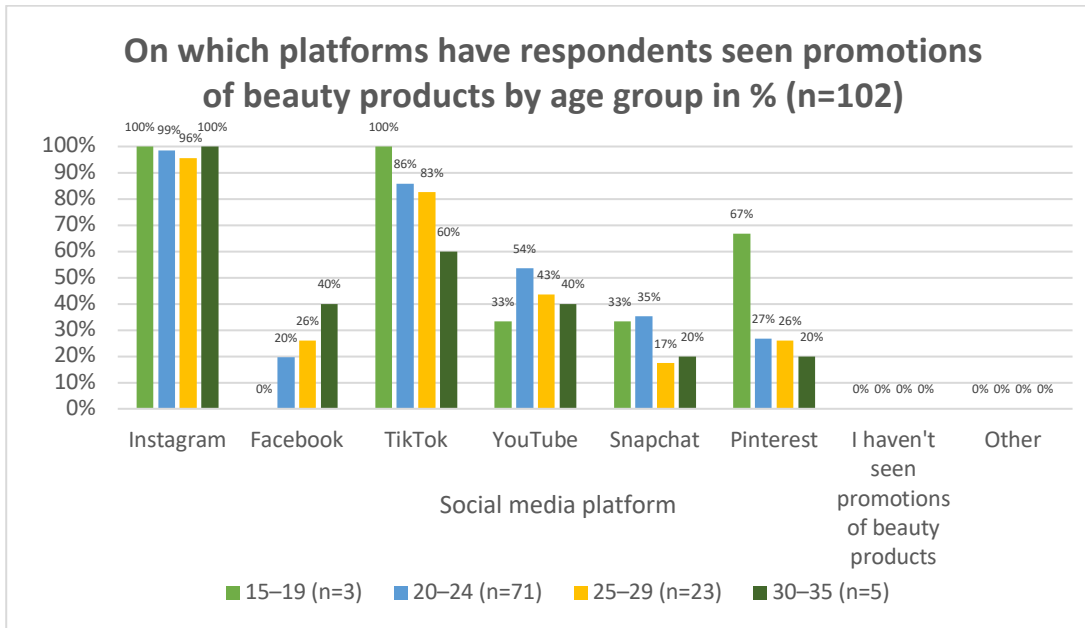


Figure 8. Platforms where respondents see promotions of beauty products by age group

Survey question six asked respondents to indicate all of the social media platforms where they have seen promotions of beauty products within the past three months. The multiple-choice question gained in total 318 responses from the 102 respondents. Figure 8 shows that overall Instagram is the platform, where majority of respondents indicate to find beauty product promotions with 100 responses (98%). The second most common platform for promotions of beauty products is TikTok with in 86 responses (84%). After these, 51 respondents (50%) selected YouTube, 31 (30%) selected Snapchat, 28 (27%) selected Pinterest, while 22 respondents (22%) selected Facebook. Age group analysis shows that for 15 to 19-year-olds, Instagram and TikTok are where all of the respondents see beauty product promotions, while also Pinterest is relatively common for finding promotional content. For respondents aged 20 to 24, Instagram and TikTok are the most common platforms for promotions with 99% and 86% of respondents selecting them. Additionally, YouTube was selected by 54%, while the rest of the platforms are less common for promotional content. Among 25 to 29-year-olds, Instagram and TikTok are again the most common platforms for beauty product promotions, while YouTube, Facebook and Pinterest are relatively common in relation to promotions, and Snapchat is the least common for promotional content with only 17% of respondents within the age group selecting the platform. From 30 to 35-year-olds, everyone selected Instagram, while TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube are relatively common as well.

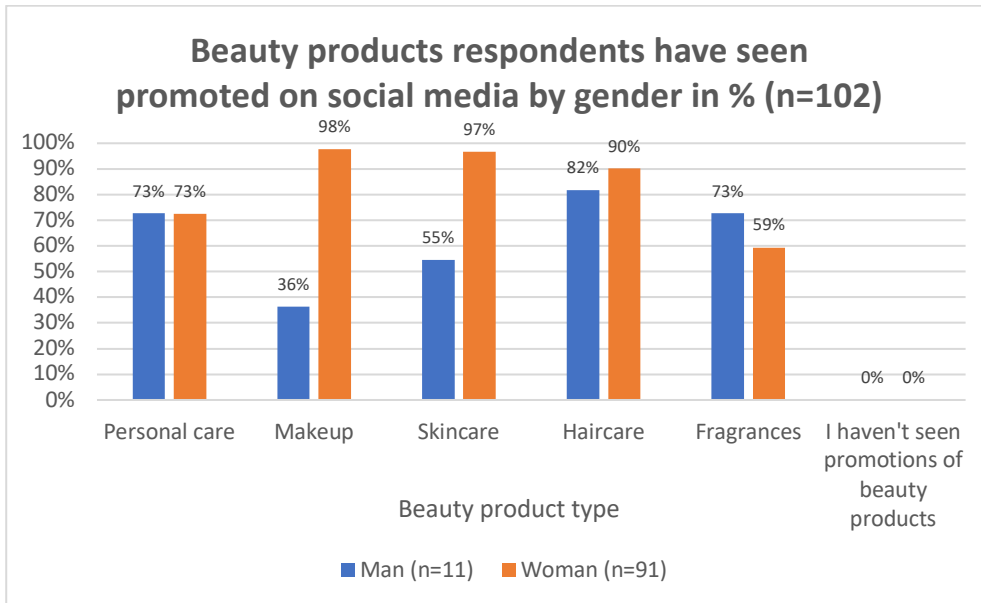


Figure 9. Beauty products respondents see promotions of on social media by gender

Question seven of the survey aims to understand what types of beauty products are most often promoted to respondents. Respondents were asked to again indicate all product categories they have seen promoted. The analysis is done based on gender since it shows more differences in answers and offers larger comparisons as opposed to age. Figure 9 illustrates that all product categories are represented in promotional content for both women and men, however most common or most popular categories differ between the genders. For women, over 90% of respondents selected makeup, skincare, and haircare, making them the most popular beauty product categories. Contrastingly, for men, promotions of haircare, fragrances, and personal care products are most common with more than 73% of respondents selecting all of the three.

#### 4.3 How can brands ensure promotional product reviews seem genuine to the consumer?

Question 8 of the survey aims to find a general attitude of the age group relating to promotional content. Respondents were asked if they have ever purchased a beauty product after seeing promotions of it on social media either directly or as a result of promotional posts. As a mandatory question, all 102 respondents answered to it, out of which 86 respondents (84%) selected “yes”, and 16 respondents (16%) selected “no”. Therefore, majority of respondents are open to purchasing products that they see in promotional posts, however different factors contribute to their attitudes and behaviour.

Figure 10 shows how different factors in product reviews increase the genuineness of promotional posts according to different age groups. The results to question 9 show that the factors that make promotions seem genuine are quite scattered, however as question nine is a multiple-choice

answer, respondents were encouraged to select all options that resonates with them. The question gained in total 352 selected answers from the 102 respondents. Overall, the most genuine factor is the inclusion of personal experience within the product review, which was selected by 75 respondents (74%). The second most selected factor is critical reviewing style, selected by 66 respondents (65%). More than 50% of respondents also selected “the product is used in real time”, “the product review comes from a third party”, and “the content is not overly promotional”. Finally, 20 respondents (20%) selected “sponsorship is clearly disclosed” and only five respondents (5%) indicated that they do not trust product reviews on social media. The respondents who selected “other” answered “I rarely trust product reviews” and “hearing reviews from friends”, indicating that non-sponsored product reviews are more genuine.

Age group -wise, figure 10 highlights that the most important factors for teenaged consumers regarding genuineness are using the product in real time and ensuring that the content is not overly promotional. Both of these factors were selected by more than 67% of respondents aged 15 to 19 years old. For respondents in their early to mid-twenties, results are scattered with all factors being selected by more than 60% of respondents in this age group, except for clear sponsorship disclosure. The results for respondents in their mid to late twenties are relatively scattered as well, however three factors were all chosen by more than 65% of the respondents in this age group, indicating their importance. These factors are using the product in real time, including personal experience within the review, and being critical when reviewing a product. Finally, for respondents in their early to mid-thirties, the most important factors in genuine product reviews are including personal experience, and making sure that the content is not overly promotional with both of these factors being selected by 80% of respondents in this age group.

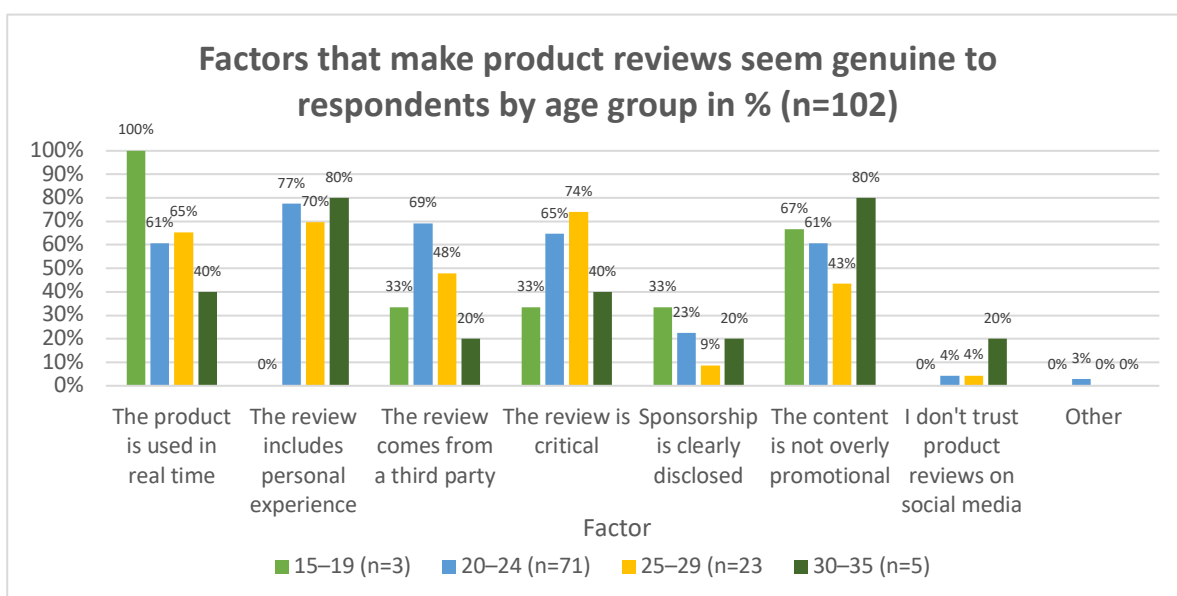


Figure 10. Factors that make product reviews seem genuine by age group

For broader analysis, figure 11 shows results to question nine based on gender. The results are shown in percentages of the total number of men or women. 82% of men selected “the review is critical”, making it the most important factor in genuine product reviews. For women, 75% selected “the review includes personal experience”, making it the most important factor. The largest differences are seen in using products in real time with 67% of women selecting the factor, while only 18% of men found it important. Additionally, 64% of women and only 36% of men selected “the product review comes from a third party”, and 22% of the women selected “sponsorship is clearly disclosed” while none of the men found this factor important. On the other hand, 82% of men and 63% of women selected critical reviewing style, indicating that male respondents see criticality as a more important factor than female respondents.

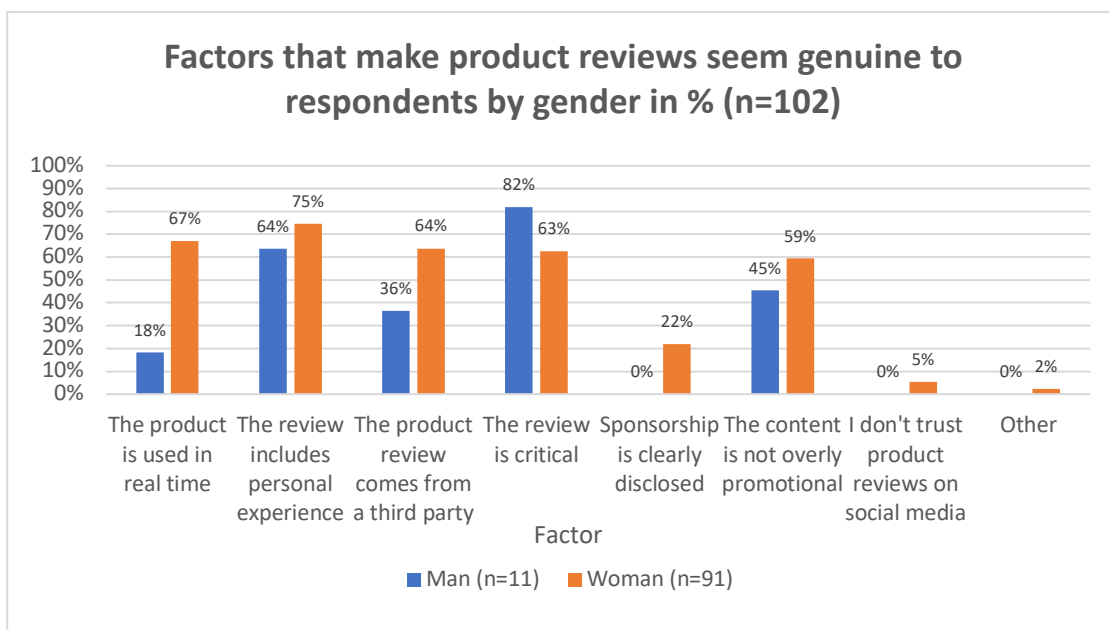


Figure 11. Factors that make product reviews seem genuine by gender

Question 10 asked respondents if they trust product reviews that are not sponsored. The aim is to understand whether the target group finds content on social media trustworthy when creators do not have incentive to increase sales of certain products, since they are not paid by brands to promote them. The results to this question showed that 98 respondents of 102 (96%) selected “yes and therefore find non-sponsored product posts trustworthy at least to an extent. On the other hand, five respondents (5%) selected “no”, which indicates that some consumers feel that they cannot trust any kinds of product reviews or recommendations on social media.

In question 11 of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate how much they trust sponsored product reviews by selecting “always”, “often”, “sometimes”, “rarely”, and “never”. As seen in figure 12, none of the respondents felt that they can always trust sponsored product reviews. Most of the respondents (66%) selected “sometimes”, while 9% selected “often”, 23% selected “rarely”, and

2% selected “never”. This indicates that most respondents feel that they can trust sponsored reviews, however many are weary of them, and buying decisions may require further convincing.

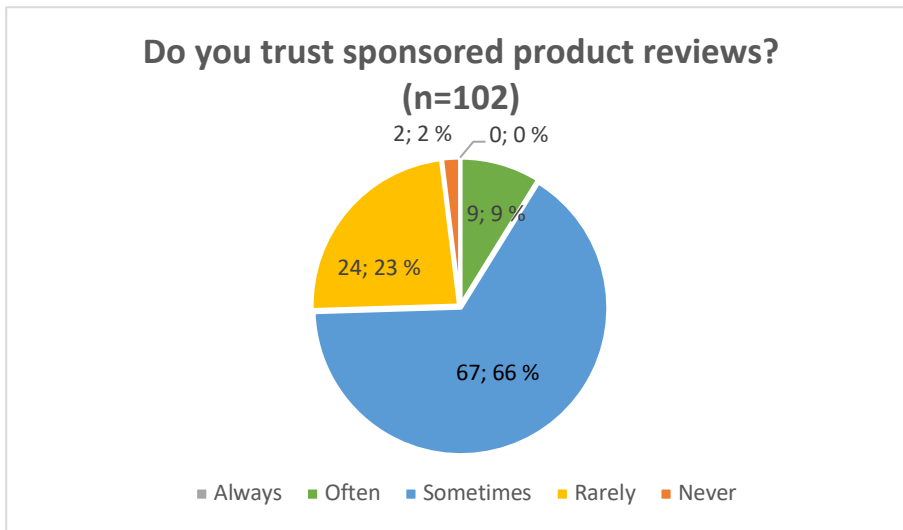


Figure 12. Do you trust sponsored product reviews?

#### 4.4 What characteristics make influencers trustworthy or relatable to young consumers?

Question 12 serves as a preliminary question for the analysis of influencer trustworthiness. Respondents were asked whether or not they have seen product promotions specifically from influencers on social media channels, to which 101 (%) answered “yes” and were therefore able to respond to the subsequent questions. One respondent answered “no” and was therefore unable to respond to questions relating to influencer marketing.

In question 13 respondents were asked which characteristics make influencers seem trustworthy to them. They were asked to select all characteristics that apply to them. Due to the preliminary question for this section of the survey, the question was responded to by 101 respondents with in total 323 selected answers. Overall, based on the results, the most trustworthy characteristics are “honest and transparent views”, selected by 79 respondents (78%) and “using the products they promote”, selected by 73 respondents (72%). 57 respondents (56%) selected “promotions are related to their everyday life and content”, while 48 respondents (48%) selected “sharing similar lifestyle, views, or values as you”, and 46 respondents (46%) selected “expertise in the industry or niche”. The final characteristic “regularly engaging with followers” was selected by 13 respondents (13%), while one respondent selected “other”, which was specified as “if the product is used before getting a sponsorship”. Only six respondents (6%) selected “I don’t trust influencers”.

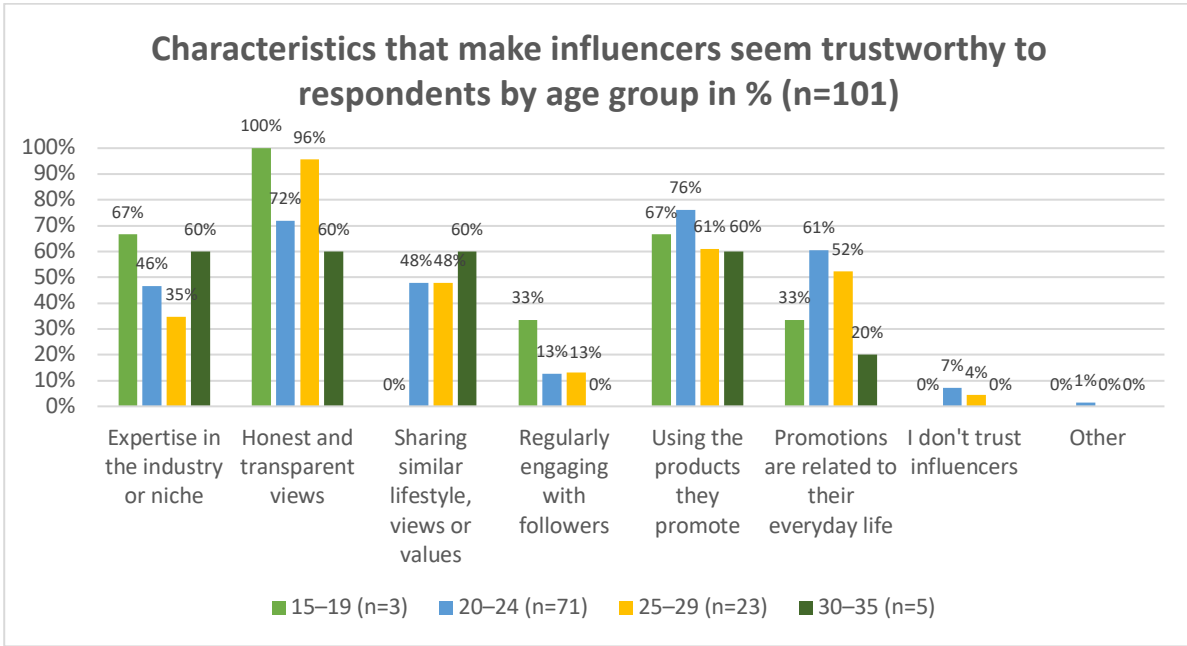


Figure 13. Characteristics that make influencers seem trustworthy by age group

Figure 13 illustrates the results to question 13 based on age group, while figure 14 presents the results based on gender. Age group -wise the biggest differences in results can be seen in more than 96% of respondents aged 15 to 19, and 25 to 29 selecting “honest and transparent views”, while only 60% of respondents aged 30 to 35 selected this characteristic. Additionally, 60% of respondents aged 30 to 35 selected “sharing similar lifestyle, views, and values as you”, which was selected by none of the respondents aged 15 to 19. Similarly, 33% of respondents aged 15 to 19, and none of the respondents aged 30 to 35 selected “regularly engaging with followers, while 7% of the 20 to 24-year-olds and 4% of the 25 to 29-year-olds indicated to not trust influencers, a characteristic that was not selected by any of the respondents from the youngest or oldest age group in the analysis.

Looking at the differences in results based on gender, figure 14 shows that the characteristics with most differing results are “expertise in the industry or niche”, “honest and transparent views”, and “I don’t trust influencers”. 70% of the male respondents indicated that expertise in the industry makes an influencer seem more trustworthy, while only 43% of the female respondents selected this characteristic. On the other hand, 82% of women, and only 40% of men feel that honest and transparent views make influencers trustworthy, while 7% of women indicated that they don’t trust influencers, which was not selected by any of the men participating in the survey.

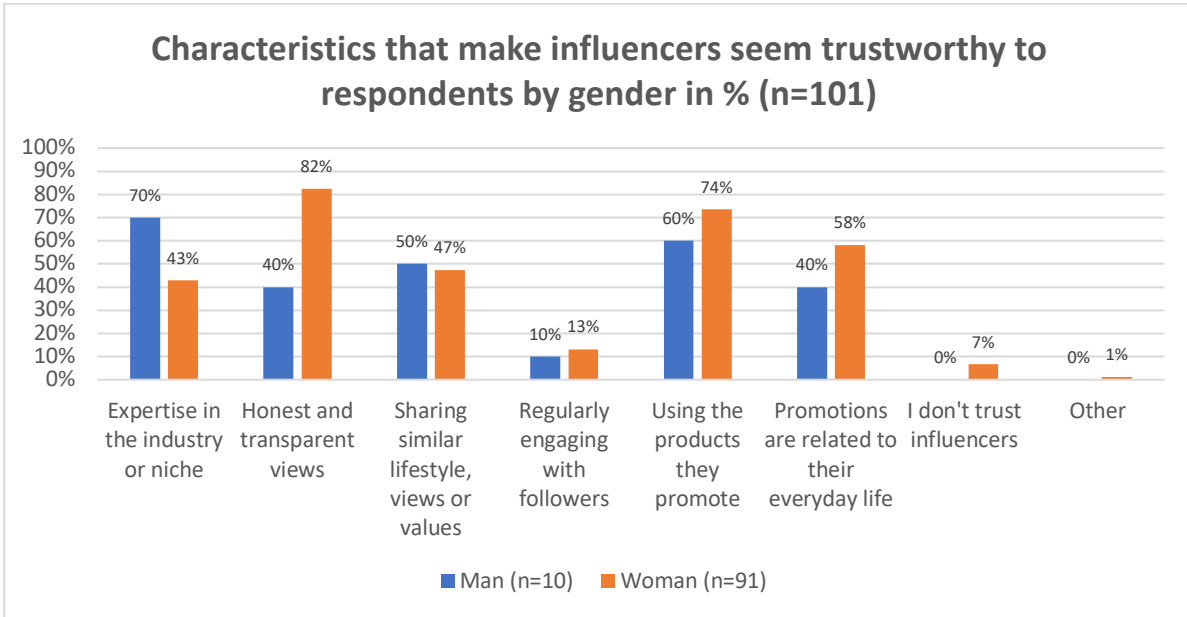


Figure 14. Characteristics that make influencers seem trustworthy by gender

Question 14 asked respondents to select, which influencer types they find most trustworthy. The question was not mandatory to respond to and was therefore catered towards respondents who feel that they can trust influencers, at least to a certain extent. The question was responded to by 98 respondents, and since respondents were asked to select all influencer types they find trustworthy, it gained in total 162 selected answers. Figure 15 shows the results based on all selected answers, to understand which types are the most trustworthy overall. “Micro influencers” was selected by 54 respondents and takes up 33% of all selected answers. The most selected influencer type is “mid-level influencers” with 40% of total selected answers. “Macro influencers” was selected by 32 respondents, taking up 20% of the total, and only 12 respondents selected “mega influencers”, which equals to 7% of total selected answers.

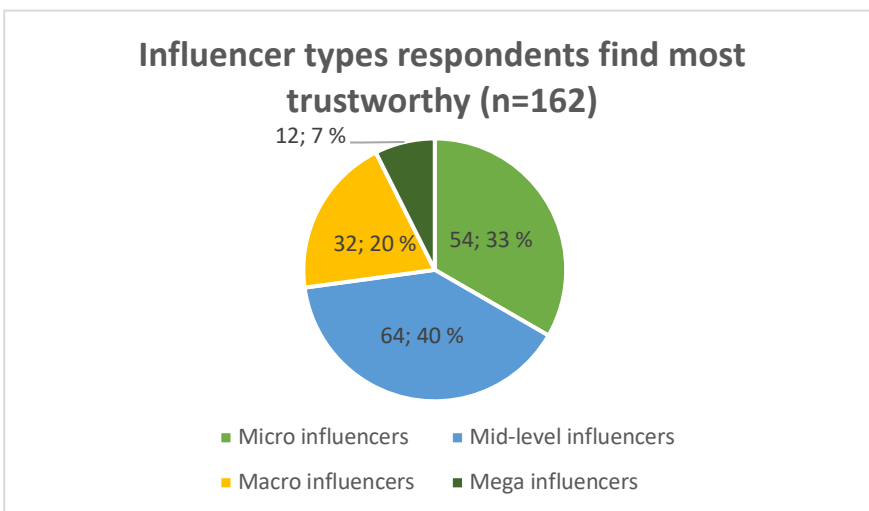


Figure 15. Influencer types respondents find most trustworthy

Another optional question is question 15, which asked respondents to specify why they chose the specific influencer types that they did. In total 49 respondents explained their answers and the common themes that came up include relatability with smaller influencers, and expertise and loyalty cohesiveness with larger influencers. Respondents who selected micro-, and mid-level influencers explain that influencers with less followers are not yet paid enough from collaborations to make a living solely from social media, and therefore reviews might be more truthful. Additionally, respondents argue that they seem more genuine and personal, since they can engage with individual followers and their lifestyle is more “down-to-earth” and relatively similar to their audiences’ lives. On the other hand, respondents who selected macro-, or mega influencers bring up how smaller creators may not have the privilege to pick and choose which collaborations to take and might therefore promote anything they can. According to their views, larger influencers have the opportunity to choose which brands to collaborate with, and they most likely already use products from these brands. However, as seen in figure 15, the most selected influencer type is mid-level influencers, and in specifications respondents bring up how these influencers have enough followers to not take any brand deal offered but are not famous in a way that leaves them out of touch with reality.

Question 16 measures how important it is to share similar concerns or goals with an influencer, e.g., similar hair or skin type in beauty product promotions. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance by selecting the option they most resonate with from “very important”, “somewhat important”, “neutral”, “not very important”, and “not important at all”. Overall, 62 respondents (61%) selected “somewhat important”, 27 respondents (27%) selected “very important”, 11 respondents (11%) selected “neutral”, and one respondent selected “not very important”. None of the respondents indicated it to be “not important at all”.

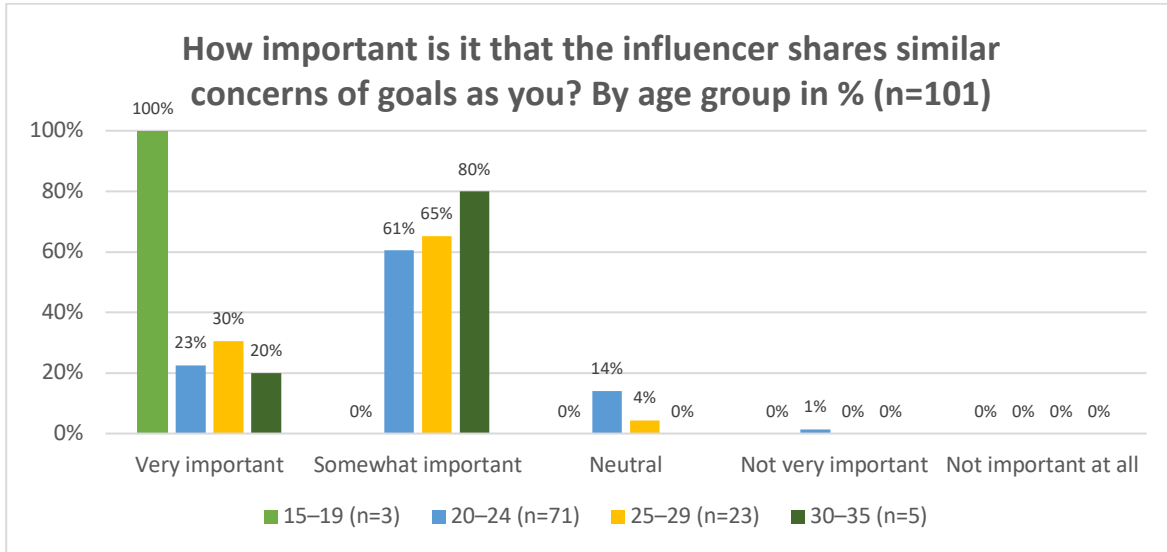


Figure 16. The importance of influencers sharing similar concerns or goals as the respondent by age group

Figure 16 shows results to question 16 by age group, while in figure 17, results are illustrated based on gender. Age results illustrate how all three respondents aged 15 to 19 (100%) feel that it is very important to share similar goals with the product promoter, while only 20–30% of the respondents from other age groups selected this option. 80% of respondents aged 30 to 35 selected “somewhat important”, which was also selected by 65% of respondents aged 25 to 29, and 61% of respondents aged 20 to 24. Only 14% of the respondents in their early to mid-twenties and 4% of the respondents in their late twenties selected the option “neutral”, while only one respondent indicated that similar concerns or goals are “not very important”.

Results based on gender in figure 17 show that more than 50% of both men and women selected “somewhat important”. Differences are seen in 29% of women and only 10% of men selecting “very important” and opposingly, 30% of men and only 10% of women selected the option “neutral”. Additionally, 10% of men indicated that sharing similar concerns or goals is “not very important”, which was not selected by any of the women.

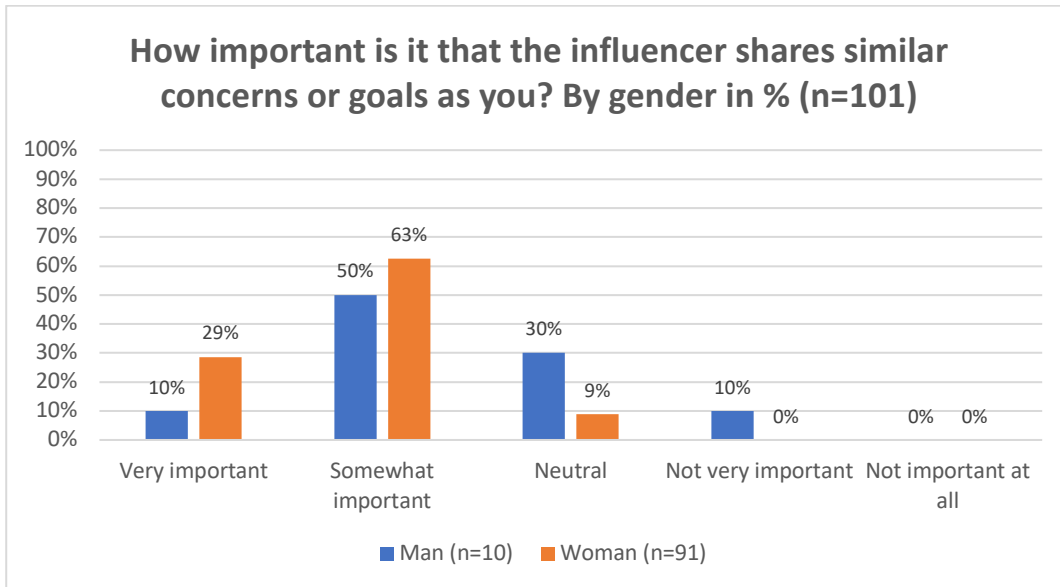


Figure 17. The importance of influencers sharing similar concerns or goals as the respondent by gender

#### 4.5 How does transparency of sponsorship disclosure affect consumer response?

Sponsorship disclosures are focused on and measured in survey questions 17 and 18. Question 17 asked respondents if they can tell if a post on social media is sponsored or not. It is a single-choice question, and respondents were to select one of three options: “yes, disclosures are easy to spot”, “I don’t know, sometimes it is hard to tell”, and “no, disclosures are not clear”. As a mandatory question, it was responded to by all 102 respondents. Figure 18 shows the results in numbers and in percentages of total respondents. As seen in the figure, none of the respondents felt that disclosures are difficult to spot. On the other hand, 67 respondents (66%) indicated that disclosures are clear, and it is easy to see if a post is sponsored or not, while 35 respondents (34%) indicated that it may sometimes be difficult to tell, indicating that disclosures could be marked in a clearer way.

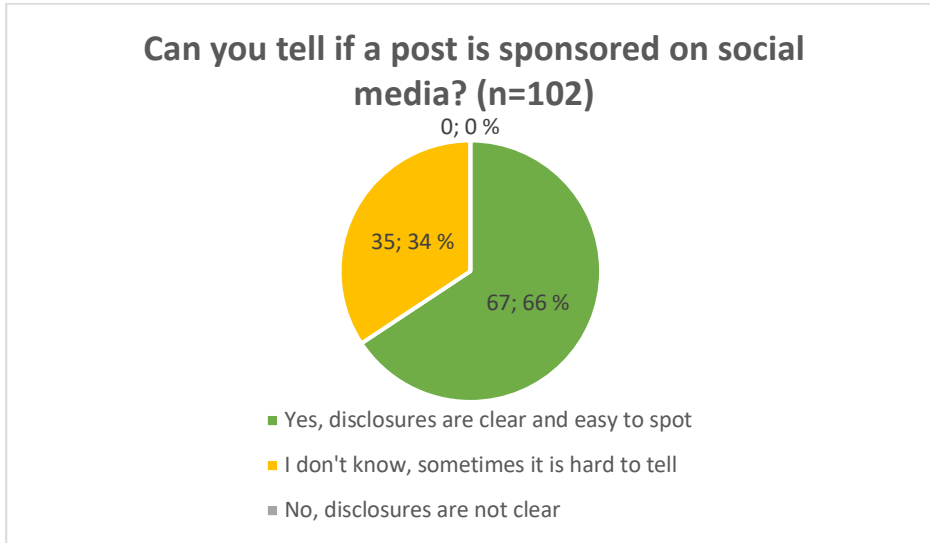


Figure 18. Can you tell if a post is sponsored on social media?

Figure 19 assesses the results to question 18 of the survey in numbers and percentages of total respondents. Question 18 measures how seeing sponsorship disclosures affects respondents' attitudes towards the sponsored post. Again, respondents were asked to select one of four options, which include "positively", "neutral", "negatively", and "other/open answer". The most common answers were "neutral" with 57 responses (56%), and "negatively" with 32 responses (31%). 7 respondents (7%) indicated that seeing sponsorship disclosures affects their attitude towards the sponsored post in a positive way, while 6 respondents (6%) selected the option "other".

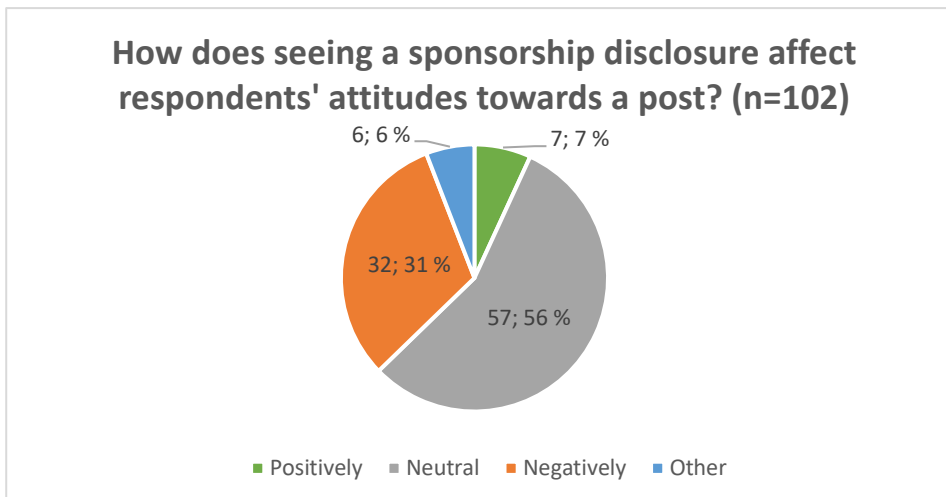


Figure 19. How seeing sponsorship disclosures affects respondents' attitudes

Respondents who selected "other" in question 18 explain their views to lean more towards the negative side. Explanations mention how respondents cannot fully trust the product review post once they see that it is sponsored. Some respondents mention that they see right through it and don't feel that the reviews are genuine, while others explain that sponsorships decrease their level of

trust in the review, their attitude depends on the post and therefore is not automatically negative. Additionally, sponsorship disclosures might be a dealbreaker to some respondents. In the open answers one theme is how some are inclined to skip a post entirely when they see that the creator of the post is being sponsored, or that the post is a sponsored advertisement from the brand itself.

Question 20 assesses which factors influence respondents buying decisions relating to social media promotions. It is only available to respondents who have considered buying promoted products on social media, which was asked in question 19. In total 93 respondents answered “yes” to question 19 and were therefore able to respond to question 20 as well. Respondents were asked to again select all factors that they think influence their buying decisions, and so in total 277 selected answers were collected in the results. Overall, the most selected factors were “word-of-mouth”, selected by 67 respondents (72%) and “prior knowledge of the product or similar products”, selected by 66 respondents (71%). “Frequency” of promotions was selected by 50 respondents (54%), while the rest of the factors: “popularity” of the promotional post, “transparency of sponsorship”, and “endorser-product fit” were all selected by around 30 respondents (32%). One respondent selected the option “other”, which was specified as “the promoter has a good brand for themselves” by the respondent. Further analysis is reviewed based on age group and gender in figure 18 and figure 19.

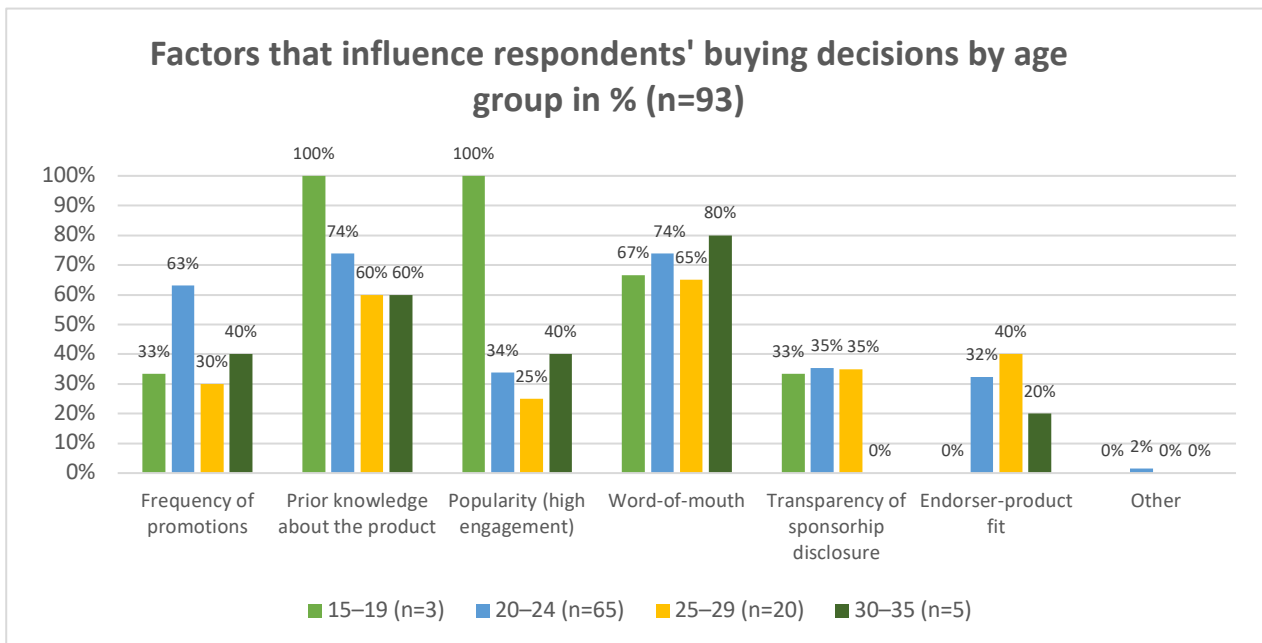


Figure 20. Factors that influence buying decisions by age group

Figure 20 showcases results to question 20 based on the selected answers from each of the smaller age groups of the survey. Results are shown in percentages of total number of respondents falling within the specific age groups. As seen in figure 20, the differences in selected factors

between age group are quite large. For example, 63% of respondents aged 20 to 24 selected frequency of promotions, while it was selected by only 30–40% of the respondents from other age groups. Also, 100% of respondents aged 15 to 19 selected both prior knowledge about the product and popularity of the promotional post, of which the first was selected by 74% of respondents aged 20 to 24 and 60% of respondents aged 25 to 29 and 30 to 35, and the latter was selected by only 25–40% of respondents from the other age groups. Additionally, none of the respondents in their early to mid-thirties selected transparency of sponsorship disclosure, which was selected by 33–35% of respondents from all other age groups. Similarly, none of the respondents in their teens selected endorser-product fit, which was on the other hand selected by 20–40% of respondents from the other age groups. Word-of-mouth is a factor that all age groups agreed on and is the most influential factor in buying decisions for the respondents.

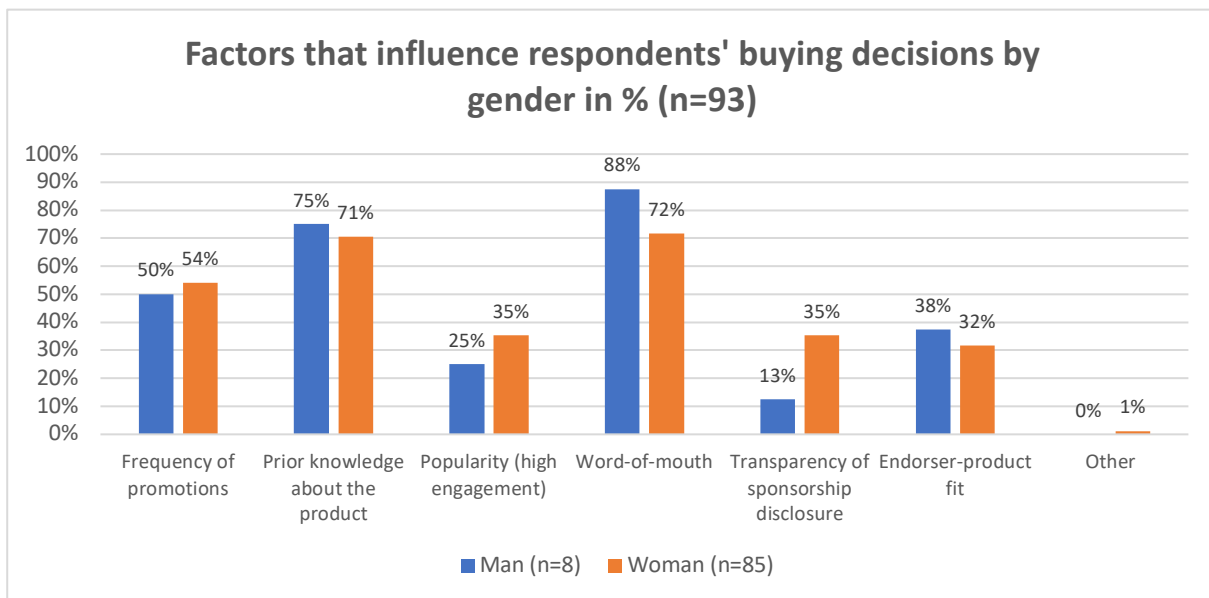


Figure 21. Factors that influence buying decisions by gender

Figure 21 further analyses question 20 of the survey, showing the results based on gender. Frequency of promotional posts, prior knowledge about the product, and endorser-product fit are all factors that were selected by around the same percentages of both men and women. On the other hand, popularity of the promotional post was selected by 35% of women and only 25% of the men, indicating the factor's higher importance for women. Additionally, 35% of women and only 13% of men selected transparency of sponsorship disclosure. Oppositely, 88% of men and 72% of women selected word-of-mouth, showing that this factor is more important to the male respondents than it is to the women who participated to this survey.

## 5 Conclusion and recommendations

This section concludes the thesis with a discussion of key findings from the results presented in chapter four, in addition to offering recommendations for future research within the topic or industry, and finally reflecting on the process of thesis writing and author's learnings.

### 5.1 Key findings

This subchapter presents the key findings to each investigative question, combining findings from both existing literature and research, and the quantitative survey conducted for this thesis.

IQ1 focuses on social media platforms and aims to understand which platforms are best for impacting consumer buying decisions. Existing theories show that Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and YouTube are consistently identified as influential platforms for social media marketing and consumer buying behaviour. In addition to these platforms, Snapchat and X, formerly known as Twitter are some of the most used platforms worldwide. Now, why Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube specifically are seen as the most influential platforms is due to their reach and large user population, as well as visual storytelling formats and high engagement. This is validated with the survey results, as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are the platforms where respondents most commonly see promotional content, especially relating to beauty products. On the other hand, Facebook was the least selected platform for both frequent use and promotional content. However, respondents who are closer to or in their thirties indicated to use Facebook more frequently, and so the platform should not be counted out from brands' social media marketing campaigns. In short, for reaching younger consumers, the best platforms to focus on are Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, while marketing campaigns intended for e.g., Millennials and older generations should be distributed on Facebook in addition to the platforms mentioned before.

Genuine product reviews, and the factors relating to them are researched in IQ2. Existing theories highlight that authenticity in promotional product reviews or promotional content in general is key. Promotions are seen as more genuine and trustworthy when the product promoter presents honest reviews and uses natural language, as opposed to being overly promotional. Additionally, engaging with peers and viewers increases connections and helps to build a stronger relationship with the promoter's community. Survey results also emphasize the importance of transparency and honesty in product reviews. Respondents indicated to value including personal experience in reviews, as well as being critical and using products in real time, so that the viewer can see how it truly works. Like the theoretical results, survey results show that overly scripted and promotional content decreases viewers' trust and makes the posts less genuine.

IQ3 focuses on influencer marketing and aims to find out which characteristics make influencers seem more trustworthy to the consumer. Theory insights and survey results align relatively well, when assessing the most trustworthy influencer types. Theory shows that micro influencers are perceived as more authentic by viewers due to their close ties to community, high engagement rates, and peer-like association. Similarly, survey results show that micro-, and mid-level influencers are seen as most trustworthy due to relatability and down-to-earth personalities. Large creators are seen as closer to celebrities, who no longer live in the same reality as most viewers. Survey results show some differing views, and respondents are conflicted when assessing the trustworthiness of product reviews and brand collaborations from these influencers. However, as the most selected influencer type, mid-level influencers seem the most trustworthy since they have enough followers to be able to choose which collaborations to take, but not enough followers to be able to solely live on the money coming from social media. Therefore, they are still relatable, but do not need to take any collaboration they can get.

Different characteristics that respondents think increases influencer trustworthiness also include honesty and transparency, influencers truly using the products that they promote themselves, and relating the product promotions to their everyday life, which shows that the product is actually useful to them and something that can be related to their usual content. Additionally, respondents view that sharing a similar lifestyle or views as the influencer makes them seem more trustworthy, as it is easier to relate to them. Finally, many indicated that influencers showcasing their expertise within the chosen industry or niche increases trustworthiness due to seemingly more valid recommendations and reviews.

The last investigative question, IQ4 aims to understand how seeing sponsorship disclosures affects consumers' attitudes towards the post. Both theoretical findings and survey results show differing outcomes, indicating that a clear answer to this question cannot be determined. On one hand, consumers prefer to see clear disclosures to know whether or not a post or review is sponsored, and nowadays platforms have adapted their content disclosing efforts to make it clear to all users. According to theoretical insights, some viewers might show positive attitudes towards sponsorship disclosures, as then they know the post to be an advertisement and can react to it as such. On the other hand, some viewers have negative associations to sponsorship disclosures, as they feel that the post is no longer truly genuine since the creator has an external incentive to promote a brand, product or service. In survey results, respondents indicated that most commonly their attitude toward a post either remains neutral or turns negative when seeing a sponsorship disclosure. However, respondents indicated that solely the sponsorship is not what affects their attitude, but instead there are other factors that impact their following behaviour.

When respondents were asked to indicate which factors influence their buying behaviour, the most influential factors were word-of-mouth, meaning recommendations from others, mostly people that the consumer trusts, as well as prior knowledge about the product that is promoted. Additionally, respondents indicated that seeing promotions of the same product frequently influences their buying behaviour, in addition to high levels of engagement on the promotional posts. In fact, clear sponsorship disclosures were among the least influential factors relating to respondents' buying behaviour or buying decisions.

## **5.2 Recommendations for further research**

To gain a broader understanding of influencer marketing and its impact on consumer behaviour, future studies could examine the topic based on generational differences to understand how, in addition to young consumers, older generations view, react to, and understand influencer marketing and promotional content. A generational review could examine whether influencer marketing has similar or diminished effects to older users' buying behaviour. Additionally, further studies could examine the topic based on cross-industry comparison to understand how the effectiveness of influencer marketing varies across industries such as fashion, food and beverages, health or technology.

Another viewpoint that future studies could focus on, is a more detailed investigation to the different influencer types; nano-, micro-, macro-, and mega influencers to gain a deeper understanding on how consumers view and react to them. Additionally, the impact of sponsorship disclosures and disclosure regulations should be researched further to understand how they influence consumer trust, possibly on a global level.

Further research on the topic itself should also be conducted to further validate the findings, since the sample of this study is relatively small and concentrated.

## **5.3 Reflections on the thesis process and learnings**

This bachelor thesis has been an intensive learning journey and unlike any assignment completed in prior studies and throughout this degree. This project has provided lots of great learning opportunities and a chance to utilize the skills acquired throughout my studies in Haaga-Helia. I have learned to design and conduct larger-scale research and further, learned about all of the factors that relate to research planning and carrying out the process. Though theoretical or academic research has been previously conducted, this is broader than what has been worked on before, therefore enhancing academic writing skills.

This thesis experience provided a new challenge on many sides with learning time management, data analysis, and carrying out a research study without the help of others. This experience has strengthened and enhanced academic and professional skills and lays a foundation for future research and studies to be conducted in a master's programme. Overall, through this thesis project I have either learned or improved my skills in many areas and I have now experienced, how to plan and write a study report individually, in a broader scale.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Permission letter and survey questions

#### Survey information and consent letter

This survey is for a bachelor's thesis, aiming to collect data on younger consumers' buying behaviour (Gen Z and Millennials) relating to social media marketing. Additionally, it has a focus on the beauty industry.

The beauty industry consists of personal care e.g., hygiene products, makeup, skincare, haircare and fragrances, meaning that the products falling within this industry are used by everyone.

Influencer marketing refers to sponsored content and paid partnerships posted by influencers on their own channels, on behalf of a brand, while paid promotions also include brands' own posts that they pay to be promoted to larger audiences on social media. The purpose of this survey is to understand how paid promotional content on social media affects consumer buying behaviour.

All responses are anonymous and will be used for solely academic purposes. The results will be presented in a summarized form, meaning no individual responses can be identified. The survey data will be disposed of after the thesis is completed.

This survey takes approximately 5–7 minutes to complete and each response is valuable to the research. Participation is voluntary and you may exit the survey at any time. The final thesis report will be published in the Theseus online library.

Thank you for your time and participation!

1. By continuing, you confirm to have read and reviewed the information about this study.  
Your participation is voluntary.\*
    - Yes, I wish to participate.
    - No, I do not wish to participate.
  
  2. What is your age group?\*
- 14 or younger
  - 15–19
  - 20–24

- 25–29
- 30–35
- 36–40
- 41+

3. What is your gender?\*

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Other / I prefer not to say

4. What is your nationality?\*

- Select from the dropdown menu.

5. Which social media platforms do you use frequently? (Select all that apply)\*

- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- I don't use social media
- Other

6. On which platforms have you seen promotions of beauty products (personal care, makeup, skincare, haircare, fragrances) within the past three months? (Select all that apply)\*

- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Snapchat
- Pinterest
- I haven't seen promotions of beauty products
- Other

7. Which beauty products have you seen promoted on social media? (Select all that apply)\*

- Personal care products
- Makeup products
- Skincare products
- Haircare products
- Fragrances
- I haven't seen promotions of beauty products

8. Have you ever purchased a beauty product after seeing promotions of it on social media?\*

- Yes
- No

9. What factors make product reviews seem genuine to you? (Select all that apply)\*

- The product is used in real time (e.g., a tutorial)
- The review includes personal experience
- The product review comes from a third party (the post is not made by the brand)
- The review is critical
- Sponsorship is clearly disclosed
- The content is not overly promotional (e.g., it is integrated into daily life)
- I don't trust product reviews on social media
- Other

10. Do you trust product reviews that are NOT sponsored?\*

- Yes
- No

11. Do you trust sponsored product reviews?\*

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

12. Have you seen product promotions from influencers on social media?\*

- Yes

- No

13. Which characteristics make influencers seem trustworthy to you? (Select all that apply)\*

- Expertise in the industry or niche
- Honest and transparent views
- Sharing similar lifestyle, views, or values as you
- Regularly engaging with followers
- Using the products they promote
- I don't trust influencers
- Other

14. Which influencer types are you most likely to trust?

- Micro influencers (less than 25,000 followers)
- Mid-level influencers (25,000–100,000 followers)
- Macro influencers (100,000–1 million followers)
- Mega influencers (more than 1 million followers)

15. Specify why?

Open answer

16. In beauty product promotions, how important is it that the influencer shares similar concerns or goals as you (e.g., similar skin- or hair type)?\*

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Neutral
- Not very important
- Not important at all

17. Can you tell if a post is sponsored on social media?\*

- Yes, disclosures are clear and easy to spot
- I don't know, sometimes it is hard to tell
- No, disclosures are not clear

18. How does seeing a sponsorship disclosure affect your attitude towards a post?\*

- Positively

- Neutral
- Negatively
- Other / open answer

19. Have you considered buying a product that is promoted by the brand or by an influencer in a sponsored post?\*

- Yes
- No

20. Which factors influence your buying decisions? (Select all that apply)\*

- Frequency (seeing reviews of the same product frequently)
- Prior knowledge about the product or similar products
- Popularity (high levels of engagement on promotional posts)
- Word-of-mouth (reviews and recommendations from others)
- Transparency of sponsorship (being honest about advertisements)
- Endorser-product fit (the product promoter is qualified in terms of expertise, or the product relates to the promoter's usual content)
- Other