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#CREDIBILITY

EXPLORING SOURCE CREDIBILITY OF INFLUENCERS AND PURCHASE INTENTION ON INSTAGRAM

AALBORG UNIVERSITET

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Kristian Malle
Tyll Würfel

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the thesis is to uncover how Instagram influencers and their credibility affect consumers' purchase intention. To do so, the study firstly started with two smaller procedural research questions that had the objective of theoretically explaining both the credibility that is attached to influencers, and also how said credibility could impact consumers' purchase intention. The third research question had the aim of going from theory to empirical research by examining how actual consumers see the credibility of influencers on Instagram and how that impacts their purchase intention.

Method: The research that has been conducted is based on the qualitative data collection method of focus groups, where 18 consumers, spread across three focus groups, participated in the study. The collected data was subsequently analyzed through pattern matching where the theoretical framework's predicted themes and patterns were compared to the ones that were found in the data.

Findings: The analysis revealed that consumers on Instagram used all of the five dimensions of source credibility when having to evaluate the credibility of an influencer. Further, it was found that an influencer's credibility had a positive influence on consumer's brand attitude, brand credibility, and additionally brand awareness. The latter was an aspect that was not taken into consideration in the proposed theoretical framework. Brand attitude, brand credibility and brand awareness subsequently showed to have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
B2B	Business-to-Business
B2C	Business-to-Customer
eWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action

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1. Introduction

1.1 Has Nothing Changed?

The act of endorsing celebrities with branded products is a tradition that dates several centuries back in time (Upekha, 2015; Erdogan, 1999). One of the earliest well-known cases of celebrity endorsement dates back to the 16th century, where an English based pottery firm was leveraging their relationship with the Royal Palace (Upekha, 2015). The companies' goal was to portray, to the broader public, that their products were of high quality in order to drive sales in the long run (Upekha, 2015).

As time passed and technology developed, new opportunities emerged that gradually have broadened the scope of the phenomenon (Upekha, 2015; Erdogan, 1999). The rise of cinemas, commercial radio and television added new dimensions to the act of using celebrity endorsers, which gradually turned it into popular advertisement technique among marketers (Jayswal, et al., 2013; Erdogan, 1999). Yet, at first, the number of endorsements was relatively limited simply because there were not that many major celebrities that were available for marketers to use (Erdogan, 1999). That all changed in the 1970's where the amount of major celebrities and endorsement deals started to increase rapidly hand-in-hand (Erdogan, 1999). This tendency has not slowed down since then and as a consequence, it has created a present-day reality where experiencing celebrities endorsing products like Gillette razors, Adidas sneakers, or Rolex watches have become an integrated part of everyday life (Upekha, 2015; Arora & Sahu, 2013; Dwivedi et al., 2016; Proctor & Kitchen, 2018).

1.2 A New Age of Promotion

The advent of the internet and the subsequent rise of always-on connectivity facilitated by mobile devices and social media, has had widespread influence on society, and by extension, the field of marketing. We have now entered a new age of promotion, comprised of targeting and connectivity, which has caused a dramatic increase in the number of branded and non-branded impressions an individual is exposed to, estimated to be as much as 5000 ads per day compared to 3000 ads around 30 years ago (Kantar Consulting, 2016). Meanwhile, there has been an increase in the amount of available entertainment avenues. Webster (2014, p. 4) notes that "the total supply of human attention available […] has an upper bound. The widening gap between limitless media and limited attention makes it a challenge for anything to attract an audience". This increase in complexity over time has caused individuals to develop cognitive

filters to mitigate the noise (Kitchen, et al., 2014). Parth et al. (2017) argue that reduced or shorter attention spans are an example of this phenomenon.

An example of a social media platform that caters to short attention spans is the picture-sharing platform Instagram, which currently has 800 million monthly active users and two million advertisers (Instagram, 2018a; Instagram Business Team, 2017). It has become an integral part of businesses' communications, with 2018 advertising revenues on Instagram estimated to be between $8 billion and $16 billion (Cherney, 2018). One way to advertise on Instagram is through a recent marketing practice called influencer marketing; companies utilizing people with a larger following to promote products or services via their social media account (Freberg, et al., 2011).

Social media platforms like Instagram have widened the term of what it means to be a celebrity or opinion leader. It is now entirely possible to be 'Instagram famous', and having everywhere from a few thousand Instagram followers to millions of followers, all the while being relatively unknown in the outside world (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). This also creates many 'niche celebrities' that have certain interest areas, e.g. shoes or make-up, with fairly homogenous follower demographics (Davies & Mudrick, 2017). Although only having a few thousand followers online hardly makes a celebrity, a micro-celebrity can still persuade his (small) following (Khamis, et al., 2017). In essence, the influencer serves as a targeting tool (De Veirman, et al., 2017). Depending on the target audience, marketers can choose the influencers they would like to work with accordingly.

1.3 The Heart of Influencer Marketing

Consumers browsing Instagram are confronted with an enormous amount of information on the platform itself, in addition to the aforementioned ads one encounters elsewhere (Kitchen, et al., 2014; Jones & Kelly, 2018). Companies are competing for the consumers' attention not only among themselves but also with regular users (Parth, et al., 2017). Due to this large amount of information consumers are confronted with, they tend to evaluate a message quickly with very few thoughts, in not very elaborate fashion (Kitchen, et al., 2014; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Thus, companies that want to persuade consumers of their products or services using influencer marketing on Instagram need to make the optimal use of the few thoughts a consumer will give them.

At the center of persuasion, regardless of context, is the concept of credibility (Eisend, 2004). It is commonly defined as "a person's perception of the truth of a piece of information" (Eisend,

2004, p. 352). When people spend very few thoughts on evaluating a message they judge it mostly based on its credibility (Lee & Koo, 2016). In the case of Instagram this means that consumers look at whether the message comes from a credible source or not and based on the outcome they process the message or they disregard it (Kitchen, et al., 2014; Wang, et al., 2017). While literature on credibility on Instagram is rather sparse, other social media platforms have received more attention as Johnson and Kaye (2015) note. They also explain that credibility is platform-specific and cannot be generalized across these.

As previously mentioned, there are currently two million advertisers active on Instagram spending billions of dollars on advertisements. These companies can either continue to increase their budgets in order to increase results or apply the given budget more efficiently. To achieve the latter, companies including influencer marketing tactics in their marketing efforts, must detect credible influencers on Instagram for efficient resource deployment, as according to Erdogan (1999) and Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) the strongest influence on a celebrity endorser's message effectiveness is credibility. Resource-efficient advertising is especially important for smaller and medium-sized companies with small budgets competing against large multinationals with enormous budgets (Parth, et al., 2017). Therefore, to relay efficiently a message to consumers via Instagram, a company needs to know what credibility specifically on Instagram is composed of. Current research has not addressed this issue.

Calls for research involving credibility on Instagram have been extended by several researchers (e.g. Parth et al. (2017), Evans et al. (2017) or Djafarova and Rushworth (2017)). Erkan and Evans (2016) and McCormick (2016) extend calls for research regarding purchase intention in the light of credibility different social media platforms.

Based on the problem discussion the following research question is to be answered in the thesis at hand:

- How do Instagram influencers and their credibility affect consumers' purchase intention?

In guiding the answering of the above question, the following procedural research questions are to be answered:

- How can the credibility of influencers on Instagram be theoretically explained?
- How does the credibility of influencers on Instagram impact consumers' purchase intention theoretically?

- How do actual consumers see the credibility of influencers on Instagram and how does it impact their purchase intention?

1.4 Thesis Structure

This chapter is going to go over the structure of the thesis. An overview of how the thesis is going to proceed can be seen in figure 1.

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│        Introduction         │
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│         Reflections         │
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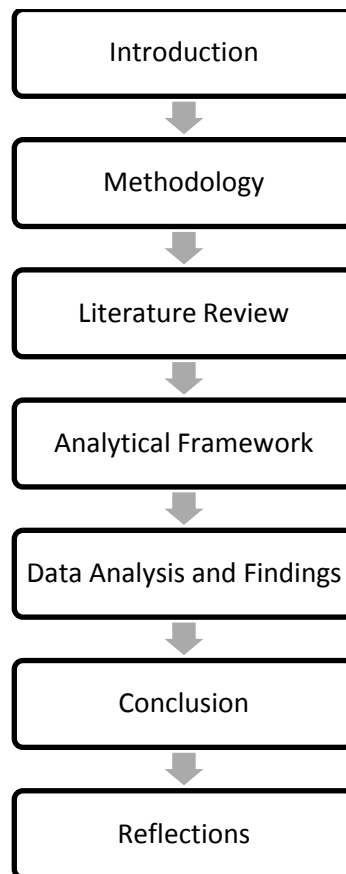
Figure 1: Thesis Structure
Source: Author's creation

Chapter 1 of the thesis was an introduction, consisting of a brief outlining of the history of celebrity endorsements, as well as how technological advances have changed this marketing domain. Following, the paper described how influencer marketing fits into this field of marketing, which lays the foundation for the formulation of this thesis' problem formulation.

Chapter 2 includes the thesis' methodological dispositions and will include the following aspects: research strategy, methodological and paradigmatic choices and literature review approach. The research strategy of this paper is influenced by subjectivism and interpretivism. Further, the literature review approach is outlined, which is going to be adopted is narrative and is linked to a cross-sectional research design. In addition, the chapter will detail the thesis

research design, which includes subchapters on data collection, focus groups, application of the focus groups and an operationalization. Lastly, the chapter covers data coding and analysis method, quality criteria and ethical considerations.

Following, in Chapter 3 the literature review conducted is presented, which includes a thorough look into the literature that surrounds celebrity endorsements and source credibility as well as its dimensions in the form of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, online behavior, and similarity. Further, brand credibility will be examined along with theory of reasoned action, brand attitude, subjective norm, and purchase intention. Lastly, a theoretical framework will be presented on the basis of the literature review.

Chapter 4 contains the analysis of the collected data, which will be done through pattern matching. The predicted themes and patterns from the theoretical framework will be compared to the ones that were found in the data.

Chapter 5 will include the thesis' conclusion, which will be drawn from the pattern matching that was conducted in the analysis in chapter 5. In addition, the chapter will contain the thesis' theoretical contribution, managerial implications, limitations, future research. Lastly, chapter 6 offers some personal reflections by the researchers.

2. Methodology

This chapter is going to contain the thesis research strategy, which is comprised of ontology, epistemology, human nature, methodology and finally the chosen paradigmatic standpoint. Further, the literature review approach that has been selected will be covered along with an overview of the research journals that been used in the actual literature review. Subsequently, the data collection method, focus groups, is outlined and its application is elaborated on. An operationalization of the questions asked in the focus groups is presented afterwards. At the end, the data coding and its analysis are explained and quality criteria and ethical considerations are described.

2.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy is the pillar of any research, since it covers the assumptions and beliefs that are held by the scholar, which in turn influence what should be studied, how it should be performed and lastly how the results should be interpreted (Kuada, 2012; Guba & Lincoln , 1994; Bryman & Bell, 2015). These assumptions and beliefs about ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology are embedded in scientific paradigms. Paradigms can be

described as a group of metaphysical or basic assumptions that represents a certain view on reality (Guba & Lincoln , 1994; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Kuada, 2012). This worldview covers the researchers perception about "the nature of reality" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.127), what place the individual has in said world, along with the nature of the relationship that individuals have to the world and the parts that exist in its environment (Guba & Lincoln , 1994; Saunders et al., 2016; Kuada, 2012). These assumptions "(…) underwrite the frame of reference, mode of theorising and ways of working" (Saunders et al., 2016, p.132) for scholars (Saunders et al., 2016; Kuada, 2012).

The word paradigm was first developed in the 20th century by Thomas S. Kuhn in order to try to understand the radical changes that occurred within natural science. The radical changes were by Kuhn (1962) classified as a paradigmatic revolution and was later popularized through his publications (Kuhn, 1970; Donmoyer, 2008; Arbnor & Bjerke, 2012). However, according to Arbnor and Bjerke (2012), Kuhn's perspective has been challenged by numerous scholars within the domain of social science, such as Törnebohm (1974) and Guba & Lincoln (1994). The critique of Kuhn revolves around when a new paradigm emerges, because of radical change, it replaces the ways of thinking that are embedded in an old paradigm (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2012). This is not the case in social science, where old ways and new ways of thinking are able to co-exist, since scholars "construct reality in very different ways" (Donmoyer, 2008, p.3) depending on factors such as where they work and live (Donmoyer, 2008; Fuglsang et al., 2013). For that reason, reality within the sphere of social science consists of various realities rather than just one joint reality (Fuglsang et al., 2013; Donmoyer, 2008). Further, within qualitative research scholars like Guba and Lincoln state that knowledge is not something that is discovered, but instead constructed (Donmoyer, 2008). Based on the aforementioned, the paper at hand possesses an evolutionary perspective towards paradigms instead of Kuhn's revolutionary one, since the paper is going to conduct qualitative research within the scientific domain of social science. The choice of having an evolutionary perspective is important in the way that the thesis is going to use papers from all over the world, which employ different paradigms. By having an evolutionary perspective, it is going to allow the paper to use all of the papers, which would not have been the case if the study had undertaken a revolutionary perspective.

Before going into this paper's ontological, epistemological, human nature and methodological assumptions, it is moreover important to emphasize the choice of typology, when it comes to classifying paradigms (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2012; Kuada, 2012). The reason for this is that the

root assumptions that underlie the various paradigms vary between the typologies (Kuada, 2012). It is thus paramount to consider the implications of choosing one instead of another, since it is the assumptions of a paradigm that have an impact on how research issues are defined and understood (Kuada, 2012).

One of the most well-known typologies are Burrell and Morgan's (1979) radical humanist, radical structuralist, interpretive and functionalist (RRIF) classification, which this paper has chosen to utilize (Kuada, 2012). The RRIF classification can be seen on figure 2, and the reason for choosing it is because there is a significant coherence between this thesis' assumptions and beliefs about the social reality and those of Burrell and Morgan (1979).
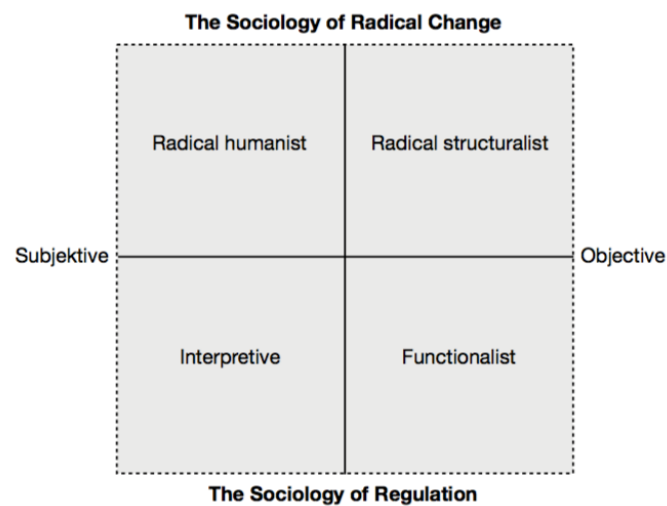
Figure 2: RRIF Typology
Source: Author's creation based on Burrell and Morgan (1979)

2.2 Ontology

Ontology as a concept refers to "the nature of what the researcher seeks to know" (Kuada, 2012, p.58), which simply refers to the questions that researchers have to pose about how the social reality is created, in the form that it currently appears (Saunders et al., 2016). This thesis has an underlying subjectivistic perspective regarding the social reality that encompasses influencer marketing on Instagram. This entails that the paper perceives the social reality as being socially constructed through a process of human interaction and action (Kuada, 2012; Noonan, 2008; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This entails that the social reality around influencer marketing on Instagram will be perceived as being socially constructed. In order to gain an understanding about the research domain, it is necessary to examine individual's language usage and the man-made construction process (Fuglsang et al., 2013). It is therefore not possible for researchers to be external observers, but instead need to be active participants

in this social construction process in order to grasp it (Fuglsang et al., 2013).

2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is by Kuada (2012, p. 59) explicated as "the nature of knowledge and the means of knowing.", which relates to the researchers' perception on how knowledge is composed of along with what classifies as acceptable knowledge and lastly what contribution can that knowledge provide (Saunders et al., 2016; Stone, 2008). Because of this paper's subjective stance, the epistemology of the paper can be classified as being anti-positivistic. The social world will thus be viewed as being socially constructed and it is therefore necessary to look through the eyes of individuals who are directly involved in the social act of being exposed to influencer marketing on Instagram in order to be able to understand that reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Kuada, 2012).

Hence, this paper is aiming to go in-depth with Instagram users' perception of reality by going into dialogue with the users in order to try to uncover their experiences regarding the platform. The reason as to why that is important for this paper is that individuals interact with each other on Instagram to further the social construction process and thus create the reality, which they live in (Fuglsang et al., 2013). This will be a process where the researchers cannot be external observers, and instead have to be involved in the dialogue about reality in order to be able to understand it (Fuglsang et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). Because of the active role in the dialogue, the researchers of this paper will be co-creating reality together with the interviewed Instagram users.

The key to renewal and the uncovering of new understandings within this papers research domain is therefore tied closely together with specific and highly unique knowledge (Fuglsang et al., 2013). The knowledge that is going to be constructed is specific to both the individuals that are included in the study and to the context of influencer marketing on Instagram. As a result, this will allow for very limited generalization.

2.4 Ontology

The view on human nature in this paper, will because of the subjective approach, be based on assumptions of a voluntaristic nature (Kuada, 2012). Unlike a purely voluntaristic perspective, where individuals are totally free-willed and autonomous, the paper is taking a more moderate standpoint where human nature is influenced by voluntary factors as well as situational factors (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Fuglsang, et al., 2013). This entails that this paper perceives individuals' human nature as being relatively free-willed when it comes to their acting on

Instagram as a platform. Yet, this paper also recognize that the individual users are impacted by Instagram's guidelines, rules, and general choices regarding the platform's functionality, which set the scene and the boundaries for how individuals can interact with one another on the platform. This means that the paper will have a focus on the social construction process that occurs within the bounds of Instagram. While the paper recognizes the situational factors, they will not be examined, as the social construction process is able to occur relatively freely, as long as users do not break some of the few guidelines and rules that exist on Instagram.

2.5 Methodological Considerations

Because of the aforementioned assumptions about the social reality, the paper at hand's methodology will seek to analyze the interactions and actions that occur around the social reality of influencer marketing through the eyes of individuals that figure as Instagram users. Therefore, the knowledge that is acquired possesses very limited generalizability since the research at hand is focused on analyzing information that may only be valid for the individual person in the context of the paper (Crossman, 2017; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Haynes & O'Brien, 2000).

2.6 Paradigmatic Standpoint

On the basis of the nominalistic ontology, the anti-positivistic epistemology and the paper's view on both human nature and methodology, this study can according to Burrell and Morgan's (1979) RRIF typology be classified as having an interpretivistic paradigmatic standpoint.

While applying a qualitative approach to research, which is reflected in the thesis' paradigmatic point of view, this thesis takes its point of departure in existing literature. This means that it is applying a deductive approach to qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2016). This is a rather unusual occurrence in business research as noted by Hyde (2000) and again echoed by the likes of Hjorth et al. (2008). However, qualitative methods can just as well be applied to test existing theoretical knowledge (Yin, 2009). It is in fact a misconception in much of business research that only quantitative methods should be applied in such way; according to Hjorth et al. (2008) this misconception is slowly broken down by a new generation of scholars. Application of qualitative methods in a deductive fashion lend themselves well to create an extended understanding of existing phenomena in new contexts (Hyde, 2000; Yin, 2009). The most common form of qualitative research based on deductive thinking is that of pattern matching as applied by O'Reilly et al. (2016) which is to be elaborated on in subchapter 2.10 (Yin, 2009). However, while a deductive approach is applied as discussed above, the thesis allows for

emerging codes to be used in the analysis process, which is an infusion of inductive elements in an otherwise deductive process. This aspect is also further elaborated in subchapter 2.10.

2.7 Literature Review Approach

Having outlined the paradigmatic position underlying this paper, one should then detail one's approach to review extant literature. The literature review conducted for the purposes of this thesis was done as a traditional or narrative literature review, which focuses on selecting, critiquing and summarizing relevant literature (Cronin, et al., 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2015). This is especially helpful when trying to identify research gaps and discrepancies (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This method was used to provide the reader with a comprehensive summary of the literature within the topic of influencer marketing, without having to allocate the time a complete systematic literature review would require (Cronin, et al., 2008). In addition, employing a traditional literature review may provide understandings that could have been overlooked through the elimination process involved when conducting a systematic literature review (Jesson, et al., 2011). Systematic literature reviews will sometimes neglect context, and by employing the narrative literature review, it made it possible to emphasize the social media context of the paper.

During a literature review, whether narrative or systematic, a certain scope of the research has to be considered (Saunders, et al., 2016). This includes judging both the relevance of the research to the topic at hand, as well as the value of the given research and whether topics have been sufficiently covered (Saunders, et al., 2016).

The literature review was conducted in April 2018 and comprises of 138 peer-reviewed articles, stemming from a varied selection of journals from different fields of research, such as psychology, marketing, journalism, public relations, and IT. An initial scope search was conducted using Google Scholar, Aalborg University Library database, EBSCO and ProQuest. Seeing as Google Scholar does not include every publisher and does not allow for advanced filtering, the subsequent deeper literature search followed by utilizing only Aalborg University Library database, EBSCO and ProQuest to gather the articles. Due to the recency of the phenomenon and rapid developments in the area of social media, mostly newer articles were considered for the literature review as indicated by the median publishing year of 2013. However, the snowballing effect of information gathering has led to older literature being considered as well. An overview of the publishing year for the articles considered is shown in figure 3.
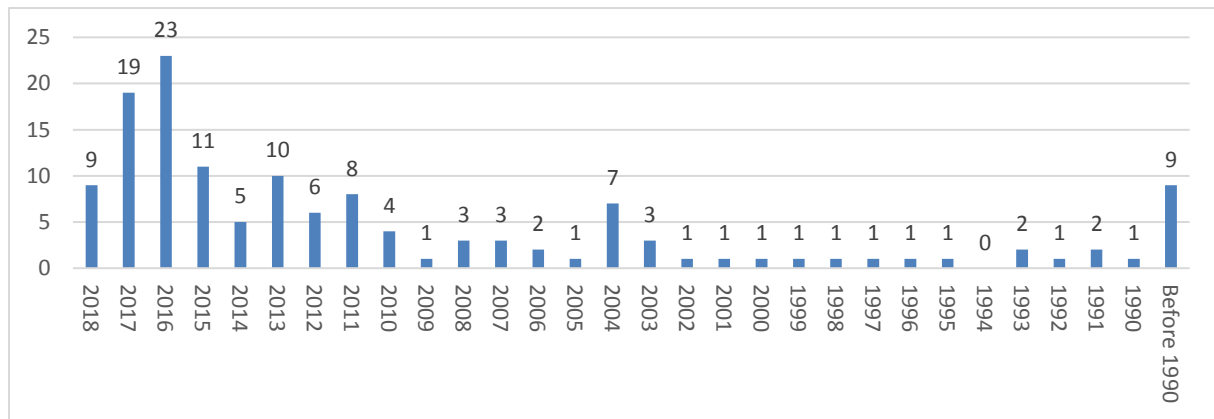
Figure 3: Number of Articles Published in the Respective Year
Source: Authors' Creation

Most of the articles used operate with the functionalistic approach. To be exact, 125 articles or roughly 90% were written with an underlying functionalistic paradigm, while 13 articles used an interpretive paradigm. None of the articles used a radical humanist or radical structuralist paradigms. Some may argue that one should only consider articles written with a similar underlying paradigm. However, the likes of Hjorth et al. (2008), Gordon (2016) or Friel (2017) argue for recontextualization of existing literature e.g. by way of using them with a different paradigmatic standpoint. Doing so allows to supplement conclusions from one paradigm with those from another facilitating a better and more well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon in the future (Friel, 2017). For this thesis, this should mean a better understanding of source credibility and its influence on purchase intention on Instagram.

Table 1 illustrates the search terms that were used to perform the literature review. Appendix 6 shows an overview of the peer-reviewed articles used in the entirety of the literature review.[1]

Table 1: Search Keyword Table

Keyword	Operator	Keyword
Influencer	AND/OR	Marketing
		Social Media
		Instagram
		Credibility
		Source Credibility
		Brand Attitude
		Attitude toward the brand
		Purchase intention

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[1] Research papers and books omitted from overview list. Can be found in the complete bibliography.

Keyword	Operator	Keyword
Celebrity Endorsements	AND/OR	Marketing Social Media Instagram Credibility Source Credibility Brand Attitude Attitude toward the brand Purchase intention
Credibility	AND/OR	Social Media Purchase Intention
Source Credibility	AND/OR	Social Media Dimensions Brand Credibility
Trustworthiness	AND/OR	Social Media Source Credibility Brand Credibility
Expertise	AND/OR	Social Media Source Credibility Brand Credibility
Attractiveness	AND/OR	Social Media Source Credibility Social
Online Behavior	AND/OR	Social Media Source Credibility
Self-presentation	AND/OR	Social Media Source Credibility
Similarity		Social Media Source Credibility
Purchase Intention	AND/OR	Social Media Online Qualitative Measurement Purchase Behavior Accuracy Credibility
Intention to buy	AND/OR	Social Media Online
Intention	AND/OR	Behavior Attitude Purchase TRA Theory of Reasoned Action
Attitude Toward the Brand	AND/OR	Celebrity Endorsements Social Media Purchase Intention
Brand Attitude	AND/OR	Celebrity Endorsements Social Media Purchase Intention
Theory of Reasoned Action	AND/OR	Attitudes Intention
Subjective Norm	AND/OR	Social Media
Brand Credibility	AND/OR	Social Media

2.8 General Qualitative Research

The research design of a study acts as a guide for the research process and specifically concerns itself with the way to conduct said research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). When conducting qualitative research, the most common research design applied is that of basic qualitative research, sometimes also referred to as generic qualitative research design (Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdel, 2016). This is possible because by nature all qualitative research applies a basic qualitative research design but at times an additional and more specific research design such as phenomenology may be applied (Creswell, 2017). However, researchers conducting qualitative research may also refrain from pledging allegiance to a second research design, thus only applying a basic or generic qualitative research design (Cooper & Endacott, 2007).

The thing all qualitative research has in common is trying to uncover "how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their worlds" (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016, p. 25). In the case of this thesis, the goal is to uncover how people make sense of credibility on Instagram and how this impacts their purchase intention. Due to the qualitative nature of this thesis, a basic qualitative research design is applied. This entails that the methodological choices and the researcher's theoretical point of view need to be detailed in rigor (Cooper & Endacott, 2007). Data is collected in qualitative fashion such as interviews using a sample attained from non-random sampling techniques (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2013; Cooper & Endacott, 2007). In the case of interviews, the questions to be asked are derived at from previous theory since this study takes a deductive approach with certain inductive elements to research (Saunders, et al., 2016; Zikmund, et al., 2013).

As aforementioned, an additional research design may be chosen by the researcher to further explicate their approach to qualitative research. With the thesis taking a closer look at the phenomenon of credibility and its influence on purchase intention in the realm of Instagram, one must consider the research design of phenomenology to be a possibility. It is applied when creating a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon through the shared experiences of several individuals (Creswell, 2017). Before data collection, researchers are asked to become aware of their biases and set these aside for the time being (Merriam & Tisdel, 2016). This is done when specifying certain assumptions of phenomenology such as lived experiences and objective reality or the consciousness of lived experiences (Creswell, 2017).

This study however does not apply a phenomenological research design. Merriam and Tisdel (2016, p. 28) note that these kind of research designs are best used to research "affective, emotional, and intense human experiences." The phenomenon under investigation is none of

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these and at the same time, credibility's role in the persuasion process is a combination of subconscious and conscious elements (Kitchen, et al., 2014; Eisend, 2004). What this means is that both subconsciousness and consciousness are directed at reality by way of being combined in the credibility concept (Creswell, 2017). This goes against the phenomenological idea of only consciousness being directed at reality and thus phenomenology was chosen not to be a research design applied. Nonetheless, certain aspects of phenomenology should still be considered and applied in basic qualitative research such as becoming aware of biases and setting these aside as well as possible during the data collection and analysis process (Creswell, 2017; Merriam & Tisdel, 2016).

Another aspect of the research design to be considered is its time element, which is cross-sectional. This means that it is done once and only represents a snapshot of time (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). This is done, as the researchers are interested in what is going on at the moment regarding purchase intention and credibility on Instagram and not in any changes occurring over time. Here it is important to note that this aspect is often associated with quantitative research, with Bryman & Bell (2015, p. 53) even referring to it as "social survey design." However, qualitative methods can just as well be applied as per Cooper & Schindler (2013), cross-sectional only represents the temporal aspect of a research design such as exhibited in studies by Skolnik et al. (2014) or Ekanayake et al. (2012).

The applied research design can be considered exploratory. These kind of research designs aim to "clarify [one's] understanding of an issue, problem or phenomenon" (Saunders, et al., 2016, p. 175). This kind of research is usually guided by research questions starting with *how* or *why* (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2013). Additionally, exploratory research also tends to favor the use of semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Saunders, et al., 2016). The study's goal is gaining a deeper understanding of credibility and its impact on purchase intention, which manifests itself in the research question of: *How do Instagram influencers and their credibility affect consumers' purchase intention*? Thus, the study can be seen as exploratory in nature.

2.9 Data Collection

2.9.1 Data Sources

A scientific research process requires a collection of data by the researchers, either done through primary or secondary data (Saunders, et al., 2016; Hox & Boeije, 2004). Primary data consists of data the researchers collect themselves, e.g. done through questionnaires, observations or interviews (Saunders, et al., 2016). Secondary data is the usage of data that is available publicly,

which can be in the form of research publications, books, statistical databases, etc. (Zikmund, et al., 2013; Saunders, et al., 2016). While secondary data can be a time- and cost-effective solution, provided there is a good fit with the study, primary data enables the researchers to completely control and tailor the collection process to the purposes of the study at hand (Church, 2001; Saunders, et al., 2016).

For the purposes of this thesis, primary data was deemed a necessity to acquire. While in theory plenty of secondary data would be available on the Instagram platform itself in the form of posts and comments, it would be hard to understand what lies behind the posts in form of general attitudes, thoughts and motives, without establishing a dialogue with users. In addition, due to the lack of extant literature in the context, other sources of secondary literature are limited as well. Therefore, the choice of primary data collected through focus groups enabled the researchers to acquire a wide range of current knowledge.

2.9.2 Focus Groups

Using a discussion-style interview to question a small amount of people at the same time is referred to as a focus group (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The suggested number of participants is between five and twelve people according to Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) and Prior et al. (2013). A moderator is tasked with facilitating the discussion and making sure the participants are sticking to a previously defined topic (Saunders, et al., 2016). The discussion is recorded and afterwards transcribed in order for the researchers to analyze the data properly; ideally both video and sound recordings are taken (Prior, et al., 2013; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Focus groups belong to the qualitative data collection methods (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Unlike quantitative methods, it generates non-numerical data similar to observations or in-depth interviews (Saunders, et al., 2016). Focus groups are recommended to be rather unstructured in their interview approach to allow group flow and the participants' personal thoughts to reflect in the interview process (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Yet, from time to time the moderator should give little impulses to the group in order to keep interview goal-oriented (Grudens-Schuck, et al., 2004).

Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) outline several qualities of focus groups: While they are rather cost- and time-efficient and relatively easy to organize, they generate a large volume of valuable data. They also require few literacy skills in most cases making them one of the more inclusive data collection methods (Kitzinger, 1995).

As focus groups make use of open-ended questions, the questions' answers can be expected to be extremely detailed at times (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Participants will also voice their opinion on the topic in a subtler way allowing for more nuances of that opinion to be articulated (Saunders, et al., 2016; Grudens-Schuck, et al., 2004). In addition to these two aspects, the group dynamics of the focus group provides the participants with differing opinions and aspects of the topic they had not previously considered thus yielding more well-rounded information compared to single in-depth interviews (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015; Kitzinger, 1995).

On the other hand, these group dynamics can also be the cause of hindrance to the focus group (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A common occurrence is participants not being comfortable sharing more personal experiences in front of a group (Saunders, et al., 2016). Another hindrance might be that shy participants hold back and do not voice their opinion as much, contrastingly might dominant group members not only dominate the discussion but also force their opinion onto the other group members (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). This illustrates that one of the most difficult things to do is proper composition of the focus group (Greenwood, et al., 2014).

Given the research context of this thesis and its attempt to uncover nuances about credibility and its impact on purchase intention on Instagram, non-standardized answers are a very important tool. Only these allow the researcher to dive deeper into the experiences of consumers, thus furthering the understanding of credibility and purchase intention in the realm of Instagram. The deductive approach acts as a theoretical anchor, while the non-standardized answers allow the researcher to uncover new nuances to the phenomenon (Green, 2014; Anfara & Mertz, 2014). This also means that complex answers should be emphasized in order to uncover details that would have been lost in the questionnaires of quantitative research and that the individual's answer is empowered (Saunders, et al., 2016). Additionally, studies by O'Reilly (2016) or Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018) have applied similar means to collect data for their research in a similar context showing focus group to be an applicable data collection tool.

2.9.3   Application of Focus Group

The research that is conducted in this paper is based upon a conceptual framework that is of interpretive nature, where focus groups have been chosen as the information gathering method and pattern matching as the data analysis method. The aforementioned methodological dispositions affect how the researchers should select its participants as well as when the data collection process should end (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Cleary, et al., 2014).

In order to fulfill this thesis' purpose concerning the posed research question, it is paramount that the sampling of participants is following a well-defined sampling strategy (Cleary, et al., 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The paper at hand has chosen to opt for a convenience sample, which is a non-probability sampling method where the most accessible participants have been picked (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, et al., 2016). In spite of the method being the least rigorous compared to other sampling methods it is still one that is commonly used when conducting focus groups, due to researchers having limited funding or a limited participant pool (Barbour, 2001). Studies conducted in a similar context such as Finch et al. (2015), Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), and Lin et al. (2017) have applied similar methodology. The major drawback of convenience sampling is that it only allows for very limited generalizability; however, a study applying a subjective reading of the generated data can very well apply this approach (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Maidabad, 2012). To secure some degree of relevance between the sample and the aim of the research objective, this paper follows Saunders (2012) in Saunders et al. (2016) who states that samples that are drawn through the use of convenience sampling often utilize selection criteria that are known from purposive sampling. The selection criteria that was used for the paper at hand was that the participants should be an Instagram user, to make sure they have made experiences in the realm of Instagram.

The participants were approached via face-to-face interactions, telephone calls and direct messages on Facebook. A total of 68 participants were identified to match the criterion and asked to participate in the study, of these 68 people asked to participate only 23 agreed to take part in the study. Of the 23 individuals, five canceled on short notice; consequently, the number of participants in the paper is totaling 18. The sample that was drawn consisted of participants in the age group between 22 and 29, where 15 of them were students from Aalborg University and the last three were postgraduates working full time. The gender split was twelve men and six women who are spread over the following nationalities: Italy, Germany, Portugal, Iceland and Denmark. All of the participants that took part in the study were residing in the city of Aalborg in Denmark.

As a way to decrease confusion and facilitate the discussion among participants, the questions were pretested as suggested by Hurst et al. (2015). This was done with individuals rather than a focus group setting, as it is easier to schedule these and are just as helpful for pretesting as

pointed out by Morgan (1995). In total three individuals were asked the prepared questions and based on their feedback, the questions were rephrased.

After pretesting the focus group to ensure the prompts could be covered in time and were not confusing, a total of three focus groups with a participant number of five to seven interviewees per session were conducted. The focus groups were conducted in English, which neither the participants nor the researchers are native speakers in. This was done for two reasons, for one it was necessary to use a lingua franca as the participants and researchers did not share a common mother tongue. Second, the publication of the material is done in English, in this case van Nes et al. (2010) suggests to also conduct the interviews in English if the participant's English skills allow for doing so. Seeing as all participants completed at least part of their university education in English, it was deemed satisfactory to conduct the focus group in English. However, this will still have an impact on the data as discussed in chapter 6.

Before the start of each session, the participants were encouraged to take some of the food and drinks provided and small talk was started to create a relaxed atmosphere. The focus group started with a short briefing on the research topic and an introduction of the authors. The participants were then asked to sign consent forms informing them of how the data will exactly be used, that it will be anonymous, that the focus group is being recorded, and that they have the right to withdraw their data should they wish to. As none of the researchers had previous experience with moderating focus groups and no funds for an external moderator were available, the one who felt most comfortable in the role took over the main moderation as suggested by Morgan (1995). The main moderation for each focus group session was done by the same person.

In the first part of the focus groups, questions regarding the source credibility dimensions were asked. To stimulate discussion among participants, as suggested by Colucci (2007), were shown a picture of an influencer endorsing a product by the brand of Califia Farms before inquiring about a certain source credibility dimension. The brand offers coffee-based products (e.g. cold-brew coffee), dairy substitute products (e.g. almond milk), and fruit-based smoothies among others. The brand is currently offering their products only in its home market, the US, and in Australia as well as the UK. It was chosen as the products appeal to large part of the Instagram audience and because the brand is considered one of the best at utilizing Instagram for marketing purposes (Kolowich, 2018). In addition to that, the interviewees have most likely had had no interaction with the brand, thus there would be no preexisting brand attitudes; a suggestion by O'Reilly et al. (2016) and Evans et al. (2017). The pictures used conform to the

corresponding source credibility dimension e.g. using a snapshot aesthetic to drive trustworthiness and expertise as researched by Colliander & Marder (2018) as seen in table 2. The picture contained the product, it included the caption, comment feed and number of likes as seen in table 2 along with the arguments as to why the pictures were chosen. After taking a look at the picture and the influencer's profile feed, questions regarding each source credibility dimensions and their respective aspects were asked as operationalized in table 3.

Table 2: Overview of Pictures Used for Each Source Credibility Dimension

Dimension	Picture	Reasons
Trustworthiness	**Figure 4**: Picture to Stimulate Discussion on Trustworthiness Source: Valdez (2018)	- Snapshot aesthetic as per Colliander & Marder (2018) - Showing a human rather than just the product being shown
Expertise	**Figure 5**: Picture to Stimulate Discussion on Expertise Source: Powell (2018)	- Snapshot aesthetic as per Colliander & Marder (2018) - Shows experience by showing it in use and saying that she drinks it - Posts recipe alongside the picture showing knowledge

Dimension	Picture	Reasons
Attractiveness	**Figure 6**: Picture to Stimulate Discussion on Attractiveness Source: Harris (2018)	- Physically attractive exhibited by being a model - Combination of swim suit and blanket comes across as stylish
Online Behavior/Self-Presentation	**Figure 7**: Picture to Stimulate Discussion on Online Behavior/Self-Presentation Source: Teich (2018)	- Interacts with followers in comments - The page itself is very active posting updates at least once a day - Cares about followers by encouraging them to become healthier
Similarity	**Figure 8**: Picture to Stimulate Discussion on Similarity Source: Smolowe (2018)	- Animal involved allows those that like animals to relate more easily - Drinks coffee with a friend - Taken in a setting that can be relatable to others compared to simply pictures of the product

After that, the influence on brand credibility and their perception of the brand's trustworthiness and expertise was talked about and how this relates to the participants' purchase intention. The next step was discussing aspects of brand attitude e.g. what associations they have with the brand after seeing the pictures and influencers and whether these associations mean they would intend to buy products of the brand. Finally, the participants were asked to recall instances and frequency of social pressure they have experienced on social media relaying the aspect of subjective norm. In addition to that, they were asked how it influences their intention to buy products in general and if they were likely to now buy products from Califia Farms after seeing the pictures. At the end, participants were asked if there was anything else they wanted to add but had not felt able to do so when it occurred, or whether they had any questions as a debriefing. An overview of the pre-determined questions asked can be found in table 3 on page 22.

The three focus group conducted did not provide enough data to reach data saturation, which is single best indicator of correct sample-size as stated by scholars such as Carlsen and Glenton (2011) as well as Guest et al. (2017). The idea of data saturation refers to conducting as many focus groups needed until no new themes emerge in the additional data (Guest, et al., 2017). Data saturation was not reached as new focus groups provided details not brought up in the previous focus groups. However, seeing as recruiting participants for additional focus groups could not be done due to time and resource constraints, it was decided that the data generated through the three group should suffice. This is in accordance with Carlsen and Glenton (2011) and their reasoning on what other aspects can justify the number of focus groups conducted other than data saturation.

2.9.4   Operationalization

As a way to itemize the underlying theoretical concepts, it is recommended to enter a process referred to by Bryman and Bell (2015) as operationalization. It is a tool devised to ensure proper measurement of said concepts when applying one's research techniques (Venkatraman & Grant, 1986; Gummesson, 2006). The theories, concepts, and ideas describing reality as outlined in a theoretical framework are turned into measurable entities (Sutton & David, 2004). Even though this process is mainly applied in quantitative research, Fischer (2009) is doing the same when conducting qualitative research in deductive fashion. This notion is echoed by scholars advocating for the use of data analysis approaches drawing from pattern matching (Johnson, 1997; Hyde, 2000).

The use of de Vaus' (2001) ladder of abstraction is recommended by Sutton and David (2004). In it, the researchers begin to pin down theoretical concepts more and more and thus become more aware of its implied meanings (Sutton & David, 2004). With an awareness of the implied meanings in mind, the researchers then define the concepts and comes up with ways to measure these, e.g. for qualitative research using focus group interviews these would be the guiding questions (de Vaus, 2001; Gummesson, 2006).

For this thesis, the source credibility dimensions, brand attitude, subjective norm, brand credibility, and purchase intention were operationalized by carefully following the aforementioned ladder of abstraction by de Vans (2001). The results can be seen in table 3 below but should always be seen in combination with the previous context to not lose sight of their actual application. Most questions were coined with limited influence from other studies' phrasing, except those relating to purchase intention, subjective norm and brand attitude, which in part are based on the work of Zoellner et al. (2012).

Table 3: Operationalization of Focus Group Interview Questions

Concept	Sub-Concept	Item	Definition	Question	Source
Source Credibility	Trustworthiness	Reliability	Capable of believing information from said source.	Do you think this influencer is reliable? Why or why not?	Hovland et al. (1953), Ohanian (1990), Spence et al. (2013)
		Honesty	Adhere to the facts.	Does the influencer come across as honest? Why or not?	Hovland et al. (1953), Spence et al. (2013)
	Expertise	Knowledge	The amount of knowledge a person has with a product.	Do you think this influencer is knowledgeable about the product? Why or why not?	Hovland et al. (1953), Reichelt et al. (2014), O'Reilly (2016)
		Experience	The amount of experience a person has with a product.	Do you think this influencer is experienced with these kinds of products? Why or why not?	Hovland et al. (1953), Reichelt et al. (2014), O'Reilly (2016)

Concept	Sub-Concept	Item	Definition	Question	Source
Source Credibility	Attractiveness	Physical Attractiveness	Desired by others based on physical features.	Do you find the influencer to be unique? Why or why not?	Ohanian (1990), Edwards et al. (2014), Bergkvist & Zhou (2016)
				Do you find the influencer to be beautiful? Why or why not?	
				Do you find the influencer to be stylish? Why or why not?	
		Social Attractiveness	Desired by others based on social features.	Do you feel like the influencer is popular? Why or not?	Ji & Phua (2014), Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)
	Online Behavior/Self-Presentation	Interactivity	How the influencer interacts with their followers.	Do you find that person to be interacting with their audience? Why or why not?	Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018), Johnson & Kaye (2016)
		Goodwill	The influencer has the best for his followers at heart.	Do you think the influencer cares about his followers? Why or why not?	Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018), Spence (2013)
		Recency of Updates	How often the influencer updates his Instagram with new content.	Do you think the influencer is actively posting updates on Instagram? Why or why not?	Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018), Westermann et al. (2014)
	Similarity	Personal Similarity	Similarity of the personality between influencer and follower.	Do you find the influencer relatable? Why or why not?	Reichelt et al. (2014), O'Reilly et al. (2016)
		Usage Similarity	Similarity of the usage of product between influencer and follower.	Do you think the influencer's use of the product mimics how you would use it? Why or why not?	O'Reilly et al. (2016)

Concept	Sub-Concept	Definition	Question	Source
Brand Attitude		The overall evaluation of a brand through the consumer	Have you had previous experiences with the brand and how do you feel about the brand after seeing these pictures?	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), Spears and Singh (2004), Zoellner et al. (2012)
			What things do you associate with the brands mentioned in the pictures?	
Brand Credibility	Trustworthiness	The willingness of a firm to deliver what it has promised.	Do you think the pictures make you think they are more likely to mean what the company promises? Why or why not?	Erdem and Swait (1998), Baek et al. (2010), Jeng (2016)
	Expertise	The ability of a firm to deliver what they have promised.	Do you think the pictures make you think they can actually deliver what they promise? Why or why not?	Erdem and Swait (1998), Baek et al. (2010), Jeng (2016)
Subjective Norm		Social Pressure to buy a certain product.	Tell me why it is or is not important that you buy the same products as your friends, family or those you follow on social media.	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), Raij and Schepers (2008), Zoellner et al. (2012)
			Have you ever bought a product to live up to other people's expectations?	
Purchase Intention		The likelihood a person intends to purchase a product	To what extent is it important for you to trust the brand for you to consider buying it? Why is it like that?	Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), Spears and Singh (2004), Zoellner et al. (2012)
			How likely is it that you would buy the product? Why or why not?	

2.10   Data Coding and Analysis Method

Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that researchers apply either analytic induction or grounded theory to analyze qualitative data, as these are the most commonly used techniques. Both of these build on an inductive research process and should not be applied in a deductive research process (Suddaby, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Different ways to analyze qualitative data are explained by Yin (2009), who discusses the techniques of pattern matching, explanation building, cross-case synthesis, logic model, and time-series analysis.

All of these have a first step in common and that is the process of data reduction (Philipson, 2013). It is seen as a prerequisite of proper analysis to reduce and then reorganize the raw data that was generated during data collection (LeCompte, 2000). When conducting focus group interviews, these should be transcribed and in the process cleaned up from any misunderstandings (Miles, et al., 2013). This means that footnotes may be made to indicate the proper meaning of wording used by the interviewees based on the context; it should merely be a help for the researcher and interpretations of the said should be avoided in them (Miles, et al., 2013; LeCompte, 2000). This thesis transcribed the conducted focus groups based on audio recordings by a dictation machine supplemented by field notes indicating proper tone in the interviewees' language or facial expressions as well as using video recordings to properly attribute statements to the correct interviewee. Stewart and Shamdasani (2014) point out that this approach is the best way to avoid confusion and false interpretation e.g. missing sarcasm. The tool used to transcribe the focus groups is called *transcribe!* and integrates a text editor with an audio player specifically designed for the transcription of audio recordings.

What follows next is that the researcher needs to apply an analysis technique (Dul & Hak, 2008). Hyde (2000) suggests the application of pattern matching when doing qualitative research in deductive manner. It is important to note, that a pattern does not need to be a relationship between two factors but may also be a pattern within a factor itself (Almutari, et al., 2015; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This is the reason why pattern matching is also referred to as thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). What should also be mentioned is that there are no strict guidelines that a researcher must follow when analyzing qualitative data using pattern matching, but that there are suggestions one may incorporate in one's analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles, et al., 2013).

The general idea of pattern matching is to compare a pattern that was predicted through a frame of reference or theoretical framework with those patterns visible in the collected data (Braun &

Clarke, 2006; Yin, 2012). By explicating a study's theoretical assumptions in a theoretical framework and thus the expected patterns, the comparison between extant theoretical knowledge and newly uncovered data is facilitated (Dul & Hak, 2008). Seeing as this thesis proposed an analytical framework outlining the influence source credibility has on purchase intention, this means that certain patterns were predicted in a theoretical way. These patterns are then compared with those uncovered in the data generated from the focus groups.

In order for the researchers to compare patterns properly, in the next step after reducing the data, one should code the data (Miles, et al., 2013). In this process, parts of the data (e.g. remarks by the interviewees) are grouped in themes, which are derived from the framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In addition to using themes based on the framework, researchers are encouraged to introduce new themes when necessary and the used ones are exhausted but plenty of data is left uncoded (Miles, et al., 2013). The newly introduced themes help the researcher to uncover new nuances about the phenomenon. The coding of the collected data was done in two stages as suggested by Basit (2003). In the initial coding stage each of the three researchers coded the transcripts independently to reduce bias as per Saunders et al. (2016), using the codes derived from the analytical framework, sometimes referred to as a priori codes, as shown in figure 9. After the initial coding stage, the researchers discussed their results going through each individual line coded and came up with a consensual initial coding. After this stage, the data was coded with special focus on possible codes emerging from the data as Basit (2003) suggests, to further explore the nuances of source credibility and its influence on purchase intention for influencers on Instagram. In similar fashion, this was done independently and the researchers discussed their results to agree on a consensual coding. Doing so unveils all types of patterns, not only those that match the theoretical framework, but also those not matching it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As this study aims to explore the phenomenon at hand further, it is important to include these emerging codes, as participants' experiences shape the understanding of how influencers' credibility affect purchase intention on Instagram and study does not seek to merely find empirical evidence for existing theoretical knowledge.

This second step in coding represents an inductive infusion in an otherwise deductive research process, and might lead to some criticism regarding the consistency of the research approach. However, as mentioned in the discussion of research strategy and research approach, this study can be considered exploratory. According to scholars such as Braun and Clarke (2006), Joffe (2011) or Almutari et al. (2015), exploratory studies ascribing to a deductive research process should allow for considering "findings that do not match with previous frames and have the

potential to revolutionize knowledge" (Joffe, 2011, p. 212) as it is one of the main reasons for conducting exploratory research.

The overall coding tree can be found in figure 9 to aid the coding, the software of NVivo 11 was used. Academic literature points out that using software to aid the coding process can deliver great benefits in regard to organization, transparency and facilitating discussion between researchers when coding independently from each other (Zamawe, 2015). However, it is also discussed by Zamawe (2015) that the use of coding software takes time for researchers to familiarize themselves with the software. It also stated that this kind of software does not analyze data, but is an aid in the analysis process. Seeing as the researchers were introduced to the software in lectures on qualitative data analysis, NVivo 11 was deemed an applicable tool to aid the coding process.

The next step is then to actually compare the predicted patterns with those existing in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After this, the newly emerged patterns and themes were described and put in relation to the existing themes and patterns.

In the past, pattern matching has often been, explicitly or implicitly, associated with an objective view of reality (Roulston, 2001). It should be noted, though, that pattern matching is "essentially independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). In fact, a closer reading of its applications shows that it equips researchers having a subjective view of reality with better results than those with a different view of reality (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Almutari, et al., 2015).

Seeing as pattern matching fits both the thesis' deductive research process as well as its paradigmatic orientation, its application as data analysis technique was chosen. After transcribing the data, the themes from the theoretical framework were applied as seen in figure

9.
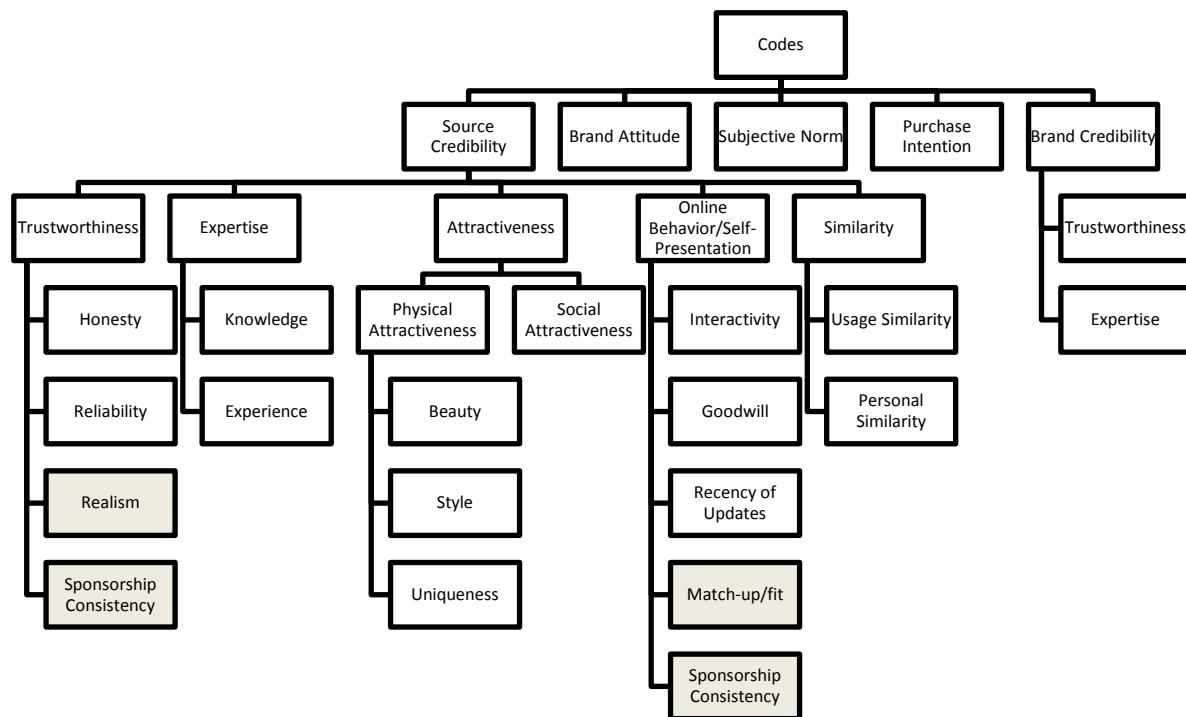
Figure 9: Coding Tree (White: Codes Based on Framework; Beige: Emerging Codes)
Source: Authors' Creation

2.11   Quality Criteria

An important part of the research process are quality criteria and its adherence (Saunders, et al., 2016). Researchers have taken different stances on what quality criteria should look like for qualitative research. One point of view is that researchers should apply those criteria applied in quantitative research, the opposite point of view advocates for quality criteria specific to qualitative research (Flick, et al., 2004; Bryman & Bell, 2015). This thesis has the underlying assumption of the absence of absolute truths, which implies that it is impossible to give a "single absolute account of social reality" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 400). According to both Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Manning (1997), this warrants the use of quality criteria specific to qualitative research. Their position is based on the notion that without a single truth, qualitative research "cannot and should not be judged by conventional measures of validity, generalizability, and reliability" (Mays & Pope, 2000, p. 50). This idea for example manifests itself in the fact that a lot of qualitative research does not even aim to be generalizable (Mays & Pope, 2000). The criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity are proposed by Bryman & Bell (2015). The latter is more important and common in action research, but should still be

considered in certain aspects when doing non-action research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Trustworthiness is an aggregate and consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Bryman & Bell (2015) outline these as follows: As there are several ways to present social reality, the researcher has make sure to balance these different ways. Whether this balancing act can be accepted and understood by others makes up credibility. One could say that researchers need to present social reality in a manner believable for others. The transferability criterion refers to the fact that researchers are encouraged to give many details in their writing. This is done in order for others to be in a position to judge to which extent one can apply the findings of the study to other contexts and situations. Because of qualitative research looking at unique settings and contexts, the transfer of findings can be hard at times. Thus, others should be put in position to judge for themselves. Dependability is about other researchers being able to review and comprehend the study's research process, ultimately these other researchers can also judge whether research has been conducted in proper manner. This is done by keeping records of the data and outlining the methods used. Last but not least, the confirmability criterion refers to setting aside personal biases.

Several measures were undertaken by the researchers to ensure trustworthiness. One aspects is using a 32-item checklist by Tong et al. (2007), which has been suggested to be one very practical way of ensuring trustworthiness by Yardel (2008). Other aspects include the spelled-out approach to the literature review, a detailed account of the focus groups as they happened, and the attached transcripts of the focus groups.

The second criterion suggested by Bryman and Bell (2015), authenticity, is made up of five sub-criteria: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Fairness entails the idea that researchers should make sure to include all points of view of social setting in the research process. It can be easy to research a company perspective but only conduct interviews with upper management, thus omitting the point of view of the regular employees. In this case, the social setting is not fairly presented in the research. Ontological authenticity aims at helping members of a social milieu to understand better the milieus of which they are part. While educative authenticity concerns itself with empowering members of a social setting to understand the perspectives of the others, catalytic authenticity aims at being a catalyst for change in a social setting. Lastly, tactical

authenticity has the goal to ensure members of a social setting are able to take action to change the social setting for the better. (Bryman & Bell, 2015)

As previously noted, the discussed aspects of authenticity are especially relevant in action research. However, especially the fairness criterion of authenticity should also be considered as a valuable quality criterion in qualitative research outside of action research, according to Seale (1999).

2.12   Ethical Considerations

Conducting business research involves a series of ethical considerations to take into account. These have been expressed as to whether participants are subjected to harm, whether informed consent is lacking, whether an invasion of privacy is made, whether deception is occurring, and whether participants are in charge of their data e.g. have the option to withdraw it after its collection (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This thesis paper adheres to these principles.

When it comes to focus groups specifically, there are further methods to overcome ethical issues, such as putting the interviewees at ease, ensuring confidentiality and establishing a rapport by explaining the sequence of topics and avoiding confusion (Breen, 2006). Ensuring complete confidentiality is difficult however, as the researchers have no control over participants after the focus group has been conducted (Smith, 1995). Therefore, the moderators should acknowledge this problem in the introduction, as well as request from participants not to divulge externally, what other participants have said in the focus group (Smith, 1995). Smith (1995) proposed a range of ethical issues to avoid in the focus group process, mainly centering on over-disclosure of personal information, especially in relation to sensitive topics. The nature of focus groups is disclosing personal information both to researchers and to the other participants. This can stress the interviewee emotionally, which is why moderators should continually assess the comfort level of the group, and if necessary intervene (Smith, 1995). In addition, it can be appropriate to let participants discuss their reactions about the interview for a few minutes at the end (Smith, 1995).

In regard to ensuring consent, the participants were provided consent forms informing them how the aforementioned aspects such as the data is being used confidentially etc. It is an important aspect of actually ensuring consent instead of just informing participants orally about it (Halcomb, et al., 2007). Moreover, the selected participants in this thesis paper's focus group are over 18 years of age, eliminating the need for parental consent.

3. Literature Review

This chapter contains a discussion and review of the extant literature concerning the topic of celebrity endorsements, source credibility, and their influence on purchase intention by the way of brand credibility and brand attitude. The inclusion of the latter builds on reviewing literature regarding the theory of reasoned action (TRA). Based on the discussion a framework is created to guide the research process from a theoretical view.

3.1 Influencer Marketing as Celebrity Endorsement

The fact that celebrity endorsement is a well-known and often applied strategy in marketing has already been hinted at in the introduction (Erdogan, 1999; Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). While celebrity endorsement has been researched extensively, relatively few studies define what they mean by it (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Amos, et al., 2008). According to Knoll and Matthes (2017) many studies imply a definition coined by McCracken (1989, p. 310): "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement." However, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) argue that this definition is not up-to-date with today's marketing world. They state that a celebrity endorsement definition in today's world should include e.g. no limitation to consumer goods, but should also consider commercial goods, and services for B2B and B2C as well as advocating for political parties or non-profit organizations. This can for example be seen with basketball star Dirk Nowitzki endorsing German bank ING DiBa, golf star Tiger Woods endorsing the services of consulting firm Accenture or famous actor Leonardo DiCaprio endorsing wilderness conservation group WWF (Heider & Hufer, 2013; del Mar Garcia de los Salmones, et al., 2013; Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). It is further argued, that celebrities no longer just appear with the product or brand, but can also simply mention it in a tweet or in a post on a different social network (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Khamis, et al., 2017). Based on this, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) propose their own definition:

> "*Celebrity endorsement is an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition (a celebrity) and an entity (e.g. a brand) to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity.*" (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016, p. 644)

While this definition does address the issues brought up by Bergkvist and Zhou (2016), there are certain aspects that have recently become known, which make it necessary to revisit this definition. This paper has already addressed the aspect of a new celebrity definition, which requires less fans or followers compared to before the emergence of social media. This is still

in line with the above definition as these so-called micro-celebrities also enjoy public recognition, just to a smaller extent (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Khamis, et al., 2017). However, what should be addressed is the part in the definition that talks about an agreement between the two parties. For example, Chae (2018) studies the newly emerging trend of people aspiring to become famous on social media platforms such as Instagram. She talks about aspiring influencers or micro-celebrities associating themselves with brands without the brands' knowledge in order to boost their own popularity. These people have already built a smaller following but wish to even further increase it, yet this association also acts as an endorsement for said brand (Chae, 2018). This aspect of micro-celebrities has also been observed by Khamis et al. (2017) and Lavorgna and Sugiura (2018). This study thus defines celebrity endorsement as the act of an individual who enjoys public recognition promoting an entity and/or its products and/or services.

The idea of celebrity endorsement is based upon the idea "that audiences envy, admire, and wish to emulate the consumption constellations and aspirational lifestyles that surround celebrities" (Russell & Rasolofoarison, 2017, p. 762). Brand meanings and associations are thus derived from the endorser as explicated by McCracken (1989). At the same time, because of their existing following, they attract attention to the brand/product/service that otherwise would not have existed and thus further spread the aforementioned emulation (Tzoumaka, et al., 2016; Wang, et al., 2017).

Having elaborated on celebrity endorsement and defined this phenomenon, the next step is to take a look at what makes it work. All reviews of celebrity endorsement literature have placed its effectiveness at the center of research attention. In narrative reviews by Kaikati (1987), Erdogan (1999), Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) as well as meta-analysis by Amos et al. (2008) and Knoll and Matthes (2017) the conclusion is that the endorsers credibility has a large influence on the effectiveness of the relayed message; Amos et al. (2008) even attributing the largest influence to credibility. Of course, credibility is not the sole contributor to the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement; Knoll and Matthes (2017) prove that the gender of an endorser (e.g. male versus female) has an influence. Yet, Bergkvist and Zhou (2016) note that they were unable to find this effect and refer to credibility as the main element in the persuasion process, similar to Erdogan (1999).

Amos et al. (2008) elaborate on this matter in their conclusion by saying that the idea of credibility in celebrity endorsement is best encapsulated by the source credibility model. Looking at studies which are not solely literature reviews but conduct primary data collection,

one can see that the credibility source model is a prominent part of many recent studies such as Ayeh (2015), Bergkvist et al. (2016), Lee & Koo (2016), Tzoumaka et al. (2016), Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Russel and Rasolofoarison (2017) or Wang et al. (2017). The fact that it is not only commonly applied by researchers but that meta-analyses have also confirmed its relevance makes source credibility warrant a closer look.

Regarding impacts of celebrity endorsement, recent studies such as Russel and Rasolofoarison (2017), Wang et al. (2017) or Bergkvist et al. (2016) as well as older studies such as Kamins et al. (1989) or Agrawal and Kamakura (1995) have found links between source credibility as per celebrity endorsement and attitude towards the brand. A similar link has been found between source credibility as per celebrity endorsement and brand credibility e.g. by Wang et al. (2017), Chan et al. (2013) or Spry et al. (2011). Both Wang et al. (2017) and Russel and Rasolofoarison (2017) prove a link of these two concepts on purchase intention in the realm of celebrity endorsements.

Based on this, source credibility, brand attitude, brand credibility, and purchase intention are going to be examined closely in the following.

3.2 Source Credibility

Academic research into source credibility first started with simple exploration of the topic in the 1930s (Eisend, 2004). After the Second World War, the research community was intrigued by the efficiency of Nazi propaganda and began allocating more time and resources towards researching it (Hovland, et al., 1949). In their research, Hovland and his peers treat credibility as the "perception of truth of a piece of information" (Eisend, 2004, p. 352). As communication is a process between at least two parties, this means that the receiving party uses credibility as a way of rating the source of the information in regard to communicating truthful information (Hovland, et al., 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). In advertising, most of the times a company or its spokesperson are the source of the information, while the consumer is the recipient (Eisend, 2006). In the case of celebrity endorsement, it is the celebrity who acts as the spokesperson of a company (Bergkvist, et al., 2016).
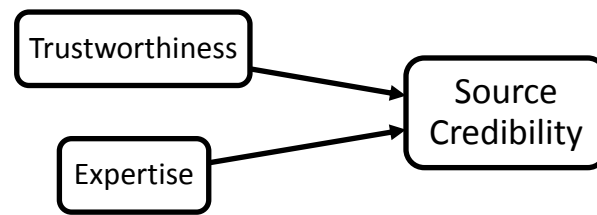
Figure 10: Original Source Credibility Model
Source: Authors' creation based on Hovland et al. (1953)

Numerous studies have been conducted with source credibility as research topic (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Eisend, 2004). Both the dimensions of source credibility as well as its influences have been researched extensively (Reichelt, et al., 2014). The initial dimensions of source credibility as per Hovland et al. (1953) are competence, sometimes referred to as expertise, and trustworthiness, as seen in figure 8. In addition to that, Eisend (2006) notes in his attempt to generalize source credibility dimensions that several studies have included their own dimensions. This amounted to 49 different dimensions used (Eisend, 2006). At the end of his study, he is able to reduce these 49 dimensions to three dimensions; it includes the two initial dimensions as well as attraction. However, Eisend (2006) also notes that while a generalized approach has its advantages, a more contextualized approach should be preferred whenever possible. Thus, a look at studies researching credibility in the context of social media should be taken. The source credibility dimensions used should then be discussed to allow for a contextualized take on credibility in social media and specifically Instagram.

## 3.3 Source Credibility in Social Media

The source credibility model has also been used or incorporated in several studies whose contextual realm is that of social media (e.g. Edwards et al. (2013), Reichelt et al. (2014), O'Reilly et al. (2016), Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Wang et al. (2017) or Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018)). However, there is no consensual conceptualization for source credibility in a social media context. Most studies incorporate the original two elements of trustworthiness and expertise stemming from Hovland et al. (1953). Yet, several studies have incorporated their own dimensions specifically tailored towards a social media context as can be seen in appendix 1.

Out of 20 studies considered, 15 applied trustworthiness and 14 applied expertise or competence as dimensions. These are the original dimensions proposed by Hovland et al. in 1953. Some of

the studies that did not include these did so on purpose in pursuit of new dimensions in a social media context e.g. Johnson & Kaye (2016) or Westerman et al. (2014). However, other omitted the two without further explanation e.g. Li and Suh (2015). In addition to these two dimensions, attractiveness (five times), interactivity (three times), similarity (three times), and goodwill (twice) have been somewhat commonly applied or derived at through quantitative research.

The other dimensions, such as recency of updates as proposed by Westerman et al. (2014) were proposed with one very specific context in mind. In the case of recency of updates, this dimension was created with news on twitter as the context. Westerman et al. (2014) argue and prove that news agencies have to publish tweets about recent news in order to be seen as a credible source of news, even when evaluating older tweets. A similar context was chosen by Johnson & Kaye (2016), in which they proposed reliance as a dimension. It is supposed to capture the news consumers' reliance on said medium (Johnson & Kaye, 2016). In their research, they uncover that people who rely on fewer news outlets perceive those they follow as more credible. They also discuss that this effect is highly likely to be only relevant when talking news and specifically those with political ties.

Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) propose a conceptualization of source credibility dimensions specifically embedded in an Instagram influencer marketing context. Their conceptualization is the result of qualitative research on the topic. In it, they uncover that the dimensions of attractiveness, trustworthiness, and competence can indeed also be identified as patterns in the collected data. In addition to these, they also propose a self-presentation or online behavior dimension. This dimension encapsulates aspects such as how authentic or engaging a person is as is further shown in figure 11 (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018).
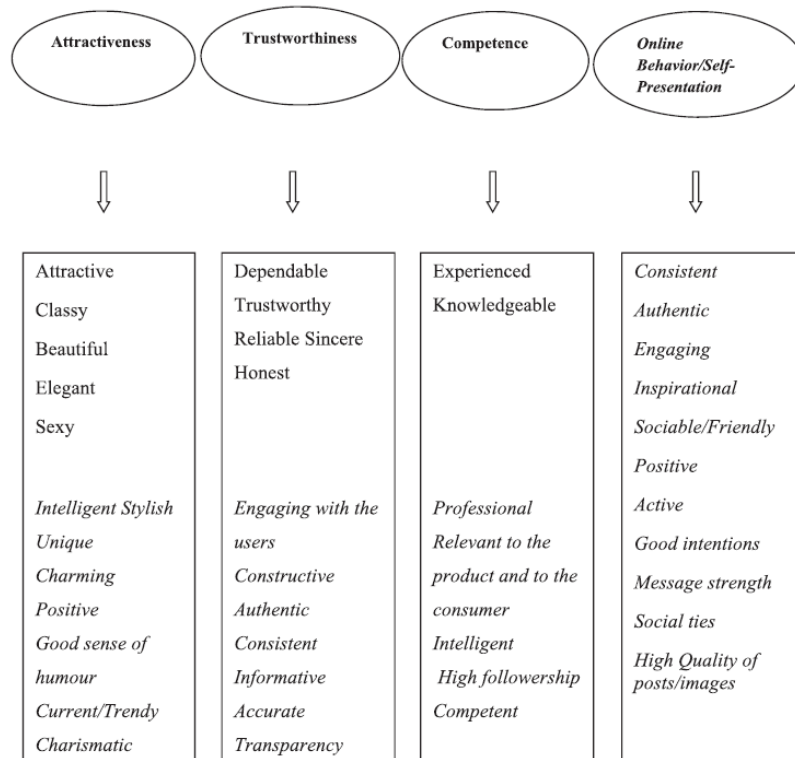
Figure 11: Source Credibility Dimensions
Source: Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018)

Interestingly, the self-presentation or online behavior dimension incorporates dimensional aspects emphasized by Edwards et al. (2014), Johnson & Kaye (2016), and Li and Suh (2015) in the form of interactivity on one side, but also on the other side that of goodwill as per Spence et al. (2013) and Lin et al. (2016), and recency of updates by Westerman et al. (2014). These can be seen as engaging aspects of online behavior and good intentions in self-presentation respectively.

Based on the above, the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, online behavior/self-presentation plus the similarity dimension, which has been also used by more than one study, will be closer examined in the following.

3.3.1 Trustworthiness

As one of the initial dimensions of source credibility, trustworthiness has received considerable attention among the research community. The idea of a person telling "the truth if they know it" (Spence, et al., 2013, p. 4). In case of a highly trustworthy source, consumers are more inclined to assume that the information communicated can be believed compared to an untrustworthy source (Wang, et al., 2017). Earlier research has reasoned that celebrity endorsers are never highly trustworthy as they are either being paid for the endorsement or gain other

benefits from the cooperation, and consumers thus are in general suspicious (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Erdogan, 1999). A similar notion has been observed by Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018) in regard to influencer marketing. However, research has also shown that those influencers with less than 10,000 followers are often not perceived as being contracted by a company unless explicitly stated (de Veirman, et al., 2017; Evans, et al., 2017; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). In the event of an influencer announcing that their post is in cooperation with a company, consumers act similarly as with influencers with a much larger following (Evans, et al., 2017).

The studies considering trustworthiness as a source credibility dimension in a social media context, as shown in appendix 1, all were able to show its influence on source credibility and subsequent framework dimensions. What new and old studies have also shown is that a source does not need to be highly trustworthy, but rather a certain trustworthiness threshold needs to be reached (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). What this means is that trustworthiness is still an important dimension of source credibility, but at a certain point, after the threshold, the other dimensions exert a stronger influence on source credibility (O'Reilly, et al., 2016). The majority of interviewees in Djafarova and Trofimenko's (2018) study also hinted at said trust threshold in their source credibility perception of Instagram influencers. In addition to that, Colliander & Marder (2018) empirically proved that the type of pictures used on Instagram influences the as to how trustworthy consumers perceive the source to be. A snapshot aesthetic used by good photographers is always regarded as more trustworthy than simply using pictures shot in a studio (Colliander & Marder, 2018). Their study however defines a snapshot aesthetic as not obviously shot in a studio.

To make trustworthiness more tangible, Ohanian (1990; 1991) or Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) refer to certain aspects of trustworthiness. Most notably reliability and honesty, as the two possess the most predictive power (Ayeh, 2015). For reliability, it refers to having confidence in the source of information (Edwards, et al., 2013). In relation to honesty, the idea is that a person is communicating information without bias (Shan, 2016).

This shows that even 60 years after its first proposition, trustworthiness is still a relevant dimension of source credibility. Not only is it still being applied, but nuances have also been added to its conceptualization capturing the changing environment. Studies researching source credibility in a social media context were also able to apply trustworthiness successfully. In addition, they added new social media specific nuances. Thus, this study includes trustworthiness in its conceptualization of source credibility with the aspects of honesty and reliability preceding trustworthiness.

3.3.2 Expertise

The second dimension initially proposed by Hovland in the 1950's is expertise, also referred to as competence (Erdogan, 1999). This dimension encapsulates the source's "knowledge and experience with the topic" (Reichelt, et al., 2014, p. 69). An expert of the field is thus assumed to provide more credible information about a topic compared to those not familiar with the field (Edwards, et al., 2013). When using somebody with high expertise in a clearly marked ad, their expertise has less of an impact similar to the reduced trustworthiness with celebrities (O'Reilly, et al., 2016). The addressee is less able to distinguish whether the information are being provided are based on the experts actual knowledge or whether the paid advertisement has led to the emergence of positive bias towards the product or service (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; McCormick, 2016).

Similar to trustworthiness, all relevant studies shown in appendix 1 are able to confirm the relevance of expertise and its influence on source credibility. Those studies that took a more distinguished approach to expertise, namely Reichelt et al. (2014) and O'Reilly (2016), came to results that showed that there are more aspects to expertise than previously thought. According to Reichelt et al. (2016), it has no impact of the fulfillment of social function. Meaning it is not necessary to possess expertise to build and curate a community - as many influencers do in the way of gaining followers - which in turn was speculated to drive their source credibility (Reichelt, et al., 2014). The results by O'Reilly (2016) showed that, as was elaborated on regarding trustworthiness, expertise is also a dimension that often only acts as a threshold dimension. Meaning having low expertise has a negative influence or even leads to the dismissal of information, however at a certain point the increase in expertise does little to drive source credibility (O'Reilly, et al., 2016). In similar fashion, the snapshot aesthetic also drives the expertise of influencers as compared to studio style picture (Colliander & Marder, 2018).

To go deeper into expertise, several researchers like Zha et al. (2018), Shan (2016), Ayeh (2015) apply the notions of having experience with and knowledge about a product or the product category. This is again based on Ohanian's (1990) measurement scale. In its application Ohanian's (1991) results show knowledge and experience as the antecedents of expertise with the highest factor loading. Based on these results contemporary research has further provided empirical evidence for their relevance. Thus, the two aspects will be used in the conceptualization of expertise in this thesis.

Again, even 60 years after its first proposition the dimension of expertise is still a relevant and often applied concept in source credibility conceptualizations and research in general. With updates through newer findings elaborating on the details and continued successful research results undermining this. Based on this and the previous discussion, this study considers expertise as a dimension for source credibility.

3.3.3 Attractiveness

Attractiveness as dimension of source credibility builds on the idea that consumers are more likely to accept information from attractive people as they are wishing to identify themselves with the attractive endorser (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Erdogan, 1999). Numerous studies have shown the existence of a relationship between attractiveness and source credibility as detailed by Bergkvist and Zhou (2016). Typically, attractiveness refers to the physical attractiveness (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016; Pornpitakpan, 2004). There are certain industries in which endorsement by attractive people is especially effective such as the fashion industry (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018).

In recent years, a more nuanced view of attractiveness, especially in the light of social media, has been created. Researchers such as e.g. Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) or Ji & Phua (2014) have argued that the idea of social attractiveness is another aspect that needs to be given more weight specifically in a social media context. The idea is that high follower, comment, and like counts on social media profiles indicate high social attractiveness (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Edwards, et al., 2014). These are easy indicators of social attractiveness making it a lot easier for people to consider this part of attractiveness, which takes more cognitive effort in print media for example (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018; Pornpitakpan, 2004; Kaikati, 1987). This social attractiveness component is especially important in a social media context, because social media celebrities' physical appearance do not necessarily need to be visible for them to be an internet celebrity. Studies have also shown that faceless internet celebrities can be considered attractive e.g. Edwards et al. (2014) or Jin & Phua's (2014) lending more relevance to this aspect of attractiveness.

However, the physical attractiveness aspect cannot be completely disregarded, as the research by Chae (2018) showed that female influencers need to possess physical attractiveness in order gain followers and act as credible source of information. Further, the current emphasis of influencer marketing on fashion further strengthens the relevance of attractiveness as a source credibility dimension in a social media context.

This thesis sees physical attractiveness as consisting of aspects proposed by Ohanian (1990) and Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018). Drawing from Ohanian (1990) is the inclusion of beauty as an aspect of physical attractiveness. It is the part of her developed measurement scale that had the most predictive power for the attractiveness dimension. Other empirical evidence for it can be found in studies such as Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) or Yoon and Kim (2016). In addition to that, uniqueness and style are used as suggested by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) to integrate contemporary aspects of physical attractiveness.

Further support for the use of style as an aspect can be found in the works of Phua et al. (2017) as well as Choi and Lewallen (2018), which both emphasize Instagram being a platform on which people pay high attention to a person's style. Much more so than on other platforms or real-life settings. Thus, the inclusion of style as part of physical attractiveness is justified. Similarly, have the likes of Casaló et al. (2017), Sheldon and Bryant (2016) or Labrecque et al. (2011) found in their studies, that uniqueness or wishing to exemplify uniqueness is an important aspect of the usage of Instagram. Together with the empirical evidence as an aspect of physical attractiveness provided by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), this justifies its inclusion in the conceptualization of physical attractiveness.

As discussed, attractiveness is a relevant dimension in the realm of social media when addressing source credibility. This study thus will consider it in its conceptualization of source credibility going forward. Attractiveness will be seen in distinct aspects, as social and physical attractiveness. The latter is assigned additional nuances; namely beauty, style, and uniqueness.

3.3.4   Online Behavior/Self-Presentation

This dimension proposed by Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018) is based on the results of interviews they conducted during their research. In it, one can recognize several aspects that have also been proposed as standalone dimensions of source credibility, namely goodwill, interactivity, and recency of updates (compare appendix 1). The proposed dimension reflects the feeling of the interviewees that the self-presentation and online behavior are important key stones to be seen as credible for an Instagram celebrity (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018).

Certain aspects of their proposed dimension as previously shown in figure 11 on page 12 can be seen as part of the three previously discussed dimensions. High quality pictures for example could rather be an aspect of attractiveness as it gives prominence to the physical attractiveness of a person or masks unattractiveness (Moon, et al., 2016).

Yet, as aforementioned, other aspects of the dimension are certainly distinguished enough from the three previous source credibility dimensions as they have been deemed their own dimensions and can be found in extant literature. Johnson & Kaye (2016) argued for example that interactivity on social media builds a feeling of familiarity and identification. In their study, they were able to prove the positive relationship between interactivity and source credibility. Slightly earlier studies published by Edwards et al. (2014) and Li and Suh (2015) were also able confirm this notion. Interestingly enough, the interactions do not need to happen between the influencer and a single follower but rather between the influencer and his follower community (Li & Suh, 2015).

The good intentions aspect of the dimension can be juxtaposed with the goodwill dimension proposed by both Lin et al. (2016) and Spence et al. (2013). It refers to the endorser caring about his followers and having their best interests at heart (Spence, et al., 2013). Lin et al. (2016) for example found out that goodwill has an influence on source credibility but also that it is weaker than trustworthiness and expertise.

The active aspect of the dimension can be found specifically in the recency of updates source credibility dimension by Westerman et al. (2014). Even though they postulated that this aspect is most likely only relevant in a news context on social media, it is picked up in Djafarova & Trofimenko's (2018) proposition. The idea is that recent updates to the profile, or immediate reports about news, act as a filter to distinguish professional and amateur approaches to taking care of one's social media profile (Westerman, et al., 2014). It is further elaborated, that this is most likely not the same across all social media profiles, e.g. influencers might just be especially active and post recent updates because of too much time, something observed by several researchers studying social media behavior of teenagers according to Westerman et al. (2014).

The other behavioral and self-presentation aspects, not found in extant source credibility dimensions, have however been echoed by research such as Chae (2018) or Khamis et al. (2016) in their approaches to channeling social media behavior in reference to a general credibility aspect.

Djafarova and Trofimenko's (2018) way of incorporating former standalone dimensions, e.g. goodwill, and other neglected aspects, e.g. picture quality, into a single new dimension make sense in the simplification of source credibility dimensions. These single dimensions do not exhibit enough influence, especially by themselves, given the focus on influencer marketing, to be considered their own dimension as to avoid overcomplication. At the same time, they also

share a common theme as clustered in figure 11 on page 12. Thus, this thesis incorporates the dimension of Online Behavior/Self-Presentation by Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018) in its conceptualization of source credibility. However, as anteceding factors for the dimensions, only the sub-dimensions of interactivity, goodwill, and recency of updates are used. This is done to narrow the scope and not overcomplicate matters, but also because they are the aspects that can be found in other research and have been empirically confirmed by others than Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018).

3.3.5 Similarity

The last dimension that warrants examination is that of similarity. It builds on similar arguments as that of attractiveness, but instead of wishing to identify and become more like the celebrity, one evaluates how much alike one is to the celebrity (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Reichelt, et al., 2014). An opinion or the use of a product can be applied to the follower's own life, if the influencer or celebrity is similar to them (Reichelt, et al., 2014). The research by Reichelt et al. (2014) and O'Reilly et al. (2016) confirms the positive influence of similarity on source credibility in a social media context.

O'Reilly et al. (2016) also uncovered that there are two aspects to the similarity: personal similarity and usage similarity. Personal similarity refers to things like the use of similar language, having a similar character or background that help the follower categorize the celebrity, while usage similarity means how similar the product or service might be applied by both (O'Reilly, et al., 2016). The former helps them understand the logic behind certain remarks and relate to their experiences more easily if similarity is high (Wang, et al., 2018).

The usage similarity aspect of the dimension emphasized the previously echoed threshold characteristic of expertise (O'Reilly, et al., 2016; Wang, et al., 2018). While consumers value an expert's opinion, often they can much easier relate to the experiences and opinion of a person who likely uses the product the same way they do (O'Reilly, et al., 2016). For example, a professional photographer may have much more equipment and knowledge on how to use a camera thus finding certain aid programs irritating, while the amateur user can make good use of them.

Going forward, this study uses similarity as a dimension of source credibility. Within it, the subdimensions of personal similarity and usage similarity are used as nuances or predictors to the similarity construct.

3.3.6 Summary of Source Credibility

Having discussed various dimensions of source credibility and the aspects that they entail, this study provides a theoretical conceptualization of source credibility. To sum things up, the study considers five dimensions of source credibility to be relevant in a social media context: trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, online behavior/self-presentation, and similarity as seen in figure 12. The underlying assumption is that these will positively influence as to how consumers believe an influencer to communicate truthful information. Similarly, these dimensions of source credibility are driven by other antecedents that have been discussed in the respective. An overview of the links is shown in figure 12 and with more specific relationship indication in figure 14 on page 57.
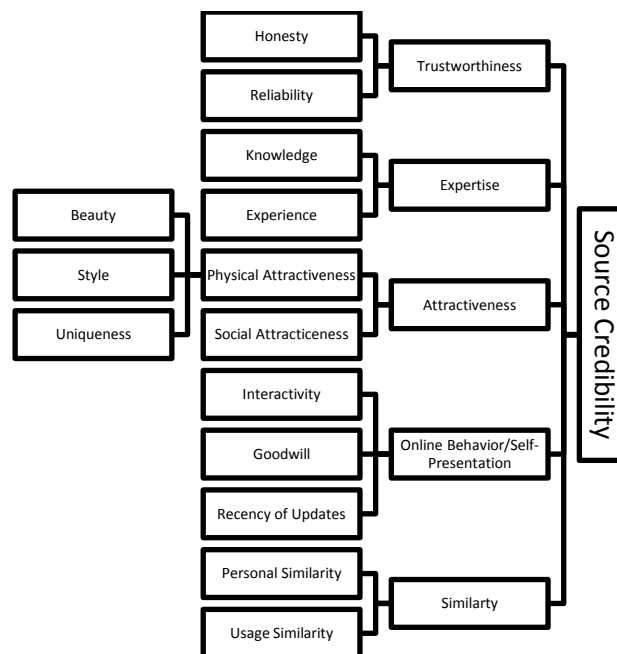
Figure 12: Study's Source Credibility Conceptualization
Source: Authors' creation

3.4 Brand Credibility

The idea of brand credibility was first conceptualized by Erdem and Swait (1998). They base their conceptualization on the work of Hovland et al. (1953) on source credibility and subsequent studies on that topic as detailed in chapter 3.3 (Erdem & Swait, 2004). Erdem and Swait's (1998) conceptualization of brand credibility also draws from signaling theory, thus assuming that there is an information asymmetry between companies and consumers. According to signaling theory, consumers use brands as signals or cue judge certain characteristics of a product e.g. quality (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Jeng, 2016). A brand in this case acts as an aggregate of several cues (Baek, et al., 2010). Based on this brand credibility is

defined "as the believability of the product position information embedded in a brand" (Baek, et al., 2010, p. 665).

Similar to source credibility, brand credibility uses the dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise (Shamim & Butt, 2013). But other studies have also attempted to incorporate other dimensions mainly adapting those used in source credibility research e.g. attractiveness (Wang & Yang, 2010; Shamim & Butt, 2013). It was pointed out by Sweeney and Swait (2008) that no studies have added dimensions to brand credibility in convincing fashion, e.g. by abandoning the signaling theory aspects of brand credibility, while still building on research strongly embedded in said aspect. In the ten years since Sweeney and Swait's (2008) publication, newer studies have also tried to adapt the brand credibility model and add new dimensions. For example, Wang & Yang (2010) incorporate attractiveness citing prior studies having done so. They also omit the signaling theory aspect when doing so by simply equaling brand credibility with source credibility. It shows in their results, in which attractiveness barely loads as a factor in the brand credibility construct compared to high loadings for trustworthiness and expertise, meaning that either the conceptualization of attractiveness is done badly or that it should not be considered a dimension of brand credibility (Hair, et al., 2010). This illustrates the points made by Sweeney and Swait (2008) regarding improper dimensional extension of brand credibility. This also explains the relative lack of newer studies using extended brand credibility conceptualizations (Shamim & Butt, 2013).

In terms of brand credibility, there are thus the two dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise to be considered. Both are similar to its counterparts in source credibility. Trustworthiness is defined as "the willingness of a firm to deliver what it has promised" (Jeng, 2016, p. 2), while "expertise refers to the ability to […] deliver what they have promise" (Baek, et al., 2010, p. 665). What this means is that a brand may be trustworthy but lacks the expertise to deliver a product of promised qualities (Kemp & Bui, 2016). An example would be when a start-up is genuinely convinced to eliminate all plastic trash but simply does not have the knowledge and competences to engineer plastic in a way that it decomposes quicker (Kemp & Bui, 2016). It works the other way around as well, a large engineering company known to have caused lots of environmental harm in the past may have the engineering knowledge to do so, but people would generally question its willingness thus having low trust in them (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Kemp & Bui, 2016).

Studies such as Bougoure et al. (2016), Chan et al. (2013) or Spry et al. (2011) have shown that brand credibility can be driven by an endorser's source credibility to large effect. The endorser's

credibility is transferring to the endorsed brand (Spry, et al., 2011). In fact, Baek et al. (2010) and Sweeney and Swait (2008) point out that it is very much a reflection of marketing measures such as employing celebrity endorsers. Thus, naturally the endorsers' source credibility should manifest itself in brand credibility (Bougoure, et al., 2016).

Researchers are also able to establish an impact on purchase intention arguing companies being willing and capable of delivering what they have promised, impact the intention of consumers to buy from such a company (see e.g. Baek et al. (2010), Wang and Yan (2010), Baek and Whitehill King (2011), Jeng (2016), Shams et al. (2017) or Wang et al. (2017)).

When talking about brand credibility in a social media context, the first aspect that needs to be addressed is that companies nowadays are expected to have a presence on social media and use it to advertise (Parsons, 2013). For younger consumers, this social media presence is a prerequisite for a brand even having credibility, as they form their brand credibility perception mainly via social media content (Thach, et al., 2016). Brands can use social media as a platform in which they communicate information firsthand to their followers or audience, aspects such as interactivity become important (Kim & Brown, 2015). But also by associating themselves with known celebrities or influencers, one can drive brand credibility (Chung & Cho, 2017). This is especially helpful for brands that are unknown and/or are fighting stigmata based on their origin (Bianchi & Andrews, 2015; Kim & Brown, 2015).

Brand credibility is proven to be driven by source credibility in the realm of celebrity endorsement and is a relevant construct in the realm of social media. Similarly, the brand credibility dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise have withstood the test of time and are also relevant. Going forward, this study thus incorporates brand credibility as a way source credibility indirectly influences purchase intention.

3.5 Theory of Reasoned Action

Prior to the TRA, much human behavior research was dedicated to prove a direct link between attitude and performed behavior, which provided inconsistent results and much debate in the psychological research community (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2014). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was proposed by Fishbein (1967) and further developed in Fishbein and Ajzen (1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The TRA posits that behavioral intention is the primary determinant of a performed behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In turn, intentions are formed by the two constructs of attitude and subjective norm as shown in figure 13.
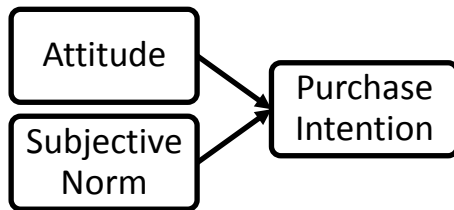
Figure 13: TRA Overview
Source: Authors' creation based on Fishbein & Ajzen (1975)

Attitude toward an object is formed contemporaneously with acquiring beliefs about an object, and is defined as "a person's general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward some stimulus object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 216). Attitudes are often used to predict behavior, not only in the TRA, but also as part of other theories or concepts (Albarracin, et al., 2014). Marketers often try to influence consumers' attitudes in order to affect their shopping behavior (Ngai, et al., 2015). Attitude change can occur instantly given the right circumstances, meaning that attitudes are merely temporal constructs that do not need to be stable over time (Albarracin, et al., 2014; Sin, et al., 2012). At the same time, it should be acknowledged that attitudes can also be positive and negative towards an object at the same time, implying ambiguity of the construct (Ghirardato, et al., 2004). Both aspects are important in regards to social media: First, due its fast-paced nature, which almost certainly evokes attitude changes much quicker than previously (Chang, et al., 2015; Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018). Second, this fast-pacedness also causes consumers to have ambiguous attitudes towards an object in the realm of social media, as they are unable to cope properly with the amount of information incoming (Charness, et al., 2013; Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018). This means that consumers exhibit both positive and negative attitudes towards an object in a social media context rather than one-directional attitudes.

The subjective norm refers to "the person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 302). These people can include family or friends but also social status e.g. in social media (Childers & Rao, 1992; Fardouly, et al., 2015; Chae, 2018). Fishbein and Ajzen (1981) argued that attitudes cannot be used while omitting subjective norms, when addressing criticism brought up in regard to their 1975 paper. In social media, people are more than ever before exposing their behavior online (e.g. by posting pictures of their newest purchases), Wang et al. (2012) found that consumers are thus trying to conform with their peers more than ever before.

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They argue that there is an expectation to fit in with the rest of people on social media, a notion shared in the research of (Mishra, et al., 2018).

It thus comes as a surprise, that most studies drawing from Fishbein and Ajzen's research employ attitudinal measures to predict purchase intention, but omit any mentions of subjective norm (e.g. Bergkvist et al. (2016), Russel and Rasolofoarison (2017), Wang et al. (2017). Yet, studies such as Pookulangara and Kösler (2011), Lee and Hong (2016) or Cheung and To (2017) were able to draw attention to the predictive power of subjective norm in a social media context.

Criticism and extensions of the TRA

Sheeran's (2002) meta-analysis of meta-analyses of intention-behavior studies found that intention on average accounted for 28% of the variance in future behavior, measured across 422 studies with 82,107 participants. According to Sheeran (2002), explaining 28% of the variance is not necessarily low, but it does explain why several researchers have argued for extensions to the TRA, in what Langdridge et al. (2007) call the 'additional variables paradigm'; adding additional variables to bridge the TRA and improve accuracy. These additional variables can be grouped as concerning components of intention, attitude and subjective norm (Langdridge, et al., 2007). Among the components of intention, is Bagozzi and Perugini (2004), who differentiate between intention and desire, on the grounds that intention refers to a made decision about performing a behavior. Meanwhile a person can have the desire of doing something without intending to do so (Langdridge, et al., 2007; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004). The TRA was originally made to predict volitional behaviors, although Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) extended the TRA to account for non-volitional behavior, with the added variable of perceived behavioral control. Perugini and Bagozzi (2001) argue that having desires as a separate construct from intentions and instead as a predictor for intentions, has higher predictive and explanatory capabilities compared to Ajzen's (1991) TPB (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004).

A more recent criticism of the TRA is that it is not falsifiable, which Popper (1959) posed as the requisite for proper scientific research. While Lakatos' (1978) addition of auxiliary assumptions – the assumptions researchers make, which the theories they test do not account for – render absolute falsification impossible, reasonable falsification should still be possible (Trafimow, 2009). Trafimow (2009) uses Lakatos (1978) to argue ways to make all theories falsifiable to a degree, when applying the proper auxiliary assumptions, as sometimes unfalsifiable theories get proven falsifiable years later with different circumstances and

advancements. This was further expanded by Trafimow (2012) with the proposal of auxiliary validity.

Another example of issues with the TRA is that some scholars state that it assumes rationality, even in the extended TPB that accounts for non-volitional behaviors (Sniehotta, et al., 2014). However, it is possible for individuals to make reasoned actions based on wrong assumptions (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2015). In response to the criticism, Ajzen (2015) points out that neither the TRA nor the TPB assume rationality in human behavior. His argument is based on the idea that beliefs and desires, which serve as the basis for attitude formation, are subjective in nature (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2014). "People may hold beliefs about many objects and issues that are derived not from a logical process of reasoning but instead are biased by emotions or desires" (Ajzen, 2008, p. 531). This goes to show that many researchers have disregarded the impact of these subjectivities (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2015).

While the TRA has its imperfections, and newer revisions have been made, e.g. Ajzen's (1991) TPB, it still makes sense for the purposes of this study. The construct of perceived behavioral control from the TPB can enhance predictive qualities with around 2% added variance in scenarios with low perceived behavioral control, but loses importance in situations with high perceived behavioral control with an added variance of 1% to none (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2014). When examining purchase intention created by influencers on Instagram, it is a volitional situation with a high perceived behavioral control, as individuals cannot be forced to buy a product, thus making the measurement of perceived volitional control redundant. Individuals may still feel pressured to buy a product e.g. to fit it with a crowd, but in that case subjective norm is more fitting.

Thus, the TRA will function as an underlying foundation in the thesis' theoretical framework, by incorporating TRA aspects such as brand attitude, subjective norm and purchase intention.

3.6 Brand Attitude

For several decades, brand attitude has figured as a central construct for both scholars and practitioners (Spears & Singh, 2004). The reason for this is firstly tied to the fact that it has proven itself especially helpful when wanting to get insights into the behavior of consumers (Walla et al., 2011; Spears & Singh, 2004; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Schiffman et al., 2012; Thomas & Johnson, 2017; Bhaduri, 2017). The second major reason for its popularity is that the research that has been conducted around brand attitude within the domain of marketing has largely been facilitated by already existing theoretical frameworks that stem from studies from

the field of social psychology (DeLamater et al., 2014; Spears & Singh, 2004; Fiske et al., 2010).

When examining the marketing literature there are two attitudinal constructs that are the most conspicuous, which are brand attitude and purchase intention (Spears & Singh, 2004). Although Fishbein and Ajzen make clear distinctions between attitudes and behavioral intention, several researchers along the years have measured purchase intention and brand/product attitude stacked on a single measurement factor, as well as used different measurement items, which renders stable comparisons across studies hard to do (Spears & Singh, 2004). Spears and Singh (2004) criticized this practice, and developed psychometric measures to see whether purchase intention and brand attitude were separate, but highly correlated constructs or being part of the same construct. They did find the constructs to be separate but related.

Brand attitude can, according to Mitchell and Olson (1981) in Spears and Singh (2004, p.55), be defined as "an individual's internal evaluation of the brand". The reason why this particular definition is preferred over other definitions, such as "how the consumer feels about the brand" (Egan, 2015, p.386), is that Mitchell and Olson's (1981) definition more precisely encapsulates the two characteristics about brand attitude that figure in the vast majority of the conceptualizations that have emerged in past decades (Spears & Singh, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Thomas & Johnson, 2017). The first characteristic that Mitchell and Olson (1981) take into account is that brand attitude revolves around an individual's response to an object that can be either imagined or real (Spears & Singh, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Secondly, Mitchell and Olson (1981) perceive brand attitude as being evaluative in its nature, which means that there exists an "imputation of some degree of goodness or badness to the attitudinal object" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.53) (Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Lastly, it is worth noting Mitchell and Olson's (1981) use of *internal evaluation*, since it refers to attitude as being something that is constructed internally within each individual consumer (Spears & Singh, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999). One of the things that the aforementioned brand attitude definition lacks is the aspect of time (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Spears & Singh, 2004).

Therefore, this paper has chosen to adopt and add Early and Chaiken's (1973) perception that brand attitude "endures for at least a short period of time and presumably energizes and directs behavior." (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.53). Further, this paper will follow Spears and Singh (2004) and Keng et al.'s (2016) perception about brand attitude being its own construct along

with Crano and Prislin (2006) and Chaiken & Trope's (1999) thoughts about the construct being a summary evaluation. The reason why it is important to incorporate summary evaluation in the conceptualization is "to distinguish [brand attitude] from the evaluation implicit in beliefs, feelings, behaviors, and other components and expressions of attitude" (Chaiken & Trope, 1999, p.443).

Thereby it underlines the difference between a consumer's attitude regarding a brand and the feelings that may be evoked by one. When comparing the two, feelings have a temporary nature and are also self-referent, which is not the case with attitudes that figure as being more enduring over time along with being a more conscious concept (Spears & Singh, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Feelings are therefore only able to tell scholars how the social reality affects the individual instead of actual insights about the social reality of which the individual is acting in (Spears & Singh, 2004; Chaiken & Trope, 1999). Brand attitude will thus be perceived more generally as "not only to a conscious, objective decision about an object's value, but to any mental process associating a valence with an object." (Chaiken & Trope, 1999, p.443).

Hence, this paper defines brand attitude as "attitude toward the brand is a relatively enduring (…) summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior." (Spears & Singh, 2004, p.55).

Recent research on brand attitude in the context of social media

Some of the recent studies that focus on brand attitudes on social media is Kim and Lee's (2017) study on luxury brand communities in the context of social media. They conclude that if marketers emphasize on branded interaction in luxury branded communities it can have a positive effect on brand attitude along with purchase intention and brand loyalty (Kim & Lee, 2017).

Scholars like Langaro et al. (2018) look into how social media platforms can contribute to brand building. They establish that if both the brand and consumers participate in the co-creation process regarding content, it can have an effect on consumers' brand attitude and brand awareness and thus possibly have an impact on the company's overall sales (Langaro et al., 2018). For that reason, Langaro et al. (2018) perceive social media platforms as very effective marketing communication tools.

Sanz-Blas et al. (2017) looked at the access from a mobile phone to a social media platform like Facebook and the branded communities that exist on the platform, which were found to

have an impact on brand attitude for both passive and active users in the branded community. If the firm's Facebook page is able to provide consumers with information they find useful, it will have a positive impact on the overall experience and brand attitude, which in turn makes them more inclined to participate actively in the branded community (Sanz-Blas et al., 2017). In a study from 2013, Sanz-Blas et al. (2013) found that one of the primary motivational factors for using a social networking platform from a mobile phone was entertainment, relaxation, informativeness and socialization. They conclude that the two factors entertainment and relaxation have a positive impact on individual's general attitudes to utilize social media platforms from a mobile phone (Sanz-Blas et al., 2013). Their findings have the managerial implication of emphasizing how important it is for companies to create content that users both find interesting and at the same time is entertaining and fun, in order to reinforce consumers' positive attitude. (Sanz-Blas et al., 2013).

Chung and Cho (2017) studied how the mechanisms of social media can have an influence on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements. They found that the trustworthiness of the source in relationships of para-social nature had an influence on brand credibility (Chung & Cho, 2017). The reason is that, as previously stated in the passage about source credibility, the credibility of a source has an impact on consumers' attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and/or opinions (Chung & Cho, 2017). Further, Chung and Cho (2017) found that the positive influence on brand credibility subsequently would help form purchase intention.

It is apparent when examining recent studies about brand attitude that the construct itself, along with its link to purchase intention, is still highly relevant for scholars within the field of marketing. Moreover, the construct has proven itself highly relevant in the research domain of social media and celebrity endorsement. Because of the aforementioned, this study will thus incorporate the construct, and it will therefore be an important component to examine the influence of source credibility on purchase intention.

3.7 Subjective Norm

Having mentioned inconsistencies in the research involving application of subjective norm as predictor for behavioral intention, further discussion on the matter is needed. The idea of predicting intention through attitude is credited to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) and thus when drawing from their ideas, the matter of subjective norm should at least be addressed (Coleman, et al., 2011; Ajzen, 2015). Examples of studies that omit the subjective norm aspect but apply attitude to predict behavioral intention include Bergkvist et al. (2016), Russel and

Rasolofoarison (2017), Wang et al. (2017) as mentioned in the general introduction to the theory of reasoned action.

The main line of reasoning among the studies not adopting subjective norm is described by Erkan and Evans (2016). They point to Miller (2005) stating "that if a person's personality is not influenced by the thoughts of others, then subjective norms would carry little weight in the predicting the intention or behaviour" (Erkan & Evans, 2016, p. 49). This seems logical, as the idea of subjective norm refers to the perceived social pressure to perform a certain behavior. However, the argument that there are people who do not care about what others think of them is a faulty one. While there are qualitative studies in which interviewees have voiced such notion, there are experimental studies that refute these claims and are able to prove that no human is an island (Schepers & Wetzels, 2007).

The second refuted line of reasoning for the exclusion of subjective norm builds on arguments stemming from Davis et al. (1989). They adapt the TRA but argue that subjective norm is not well understood and not enough evidence for its relevance is currently available. But as pointed out by van Raij and Schepers (2008), the most common and most successful modification of the Davis et al. (1989) model is in fact the inclusion of subjective norm. In the time since, subjective norm has been proven repeatedly to be a relevant predictor in the way proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in (1975) (Rhodes & Courneya, 2003; Schepers & Wetzels, 2007). This also means that studies referring to Davis et al. (1989) in order to justify should revisit their argumentation.

Taking a look in the other direction, namely at the implementation of subjective norm in order to predict behavior, one can take to the likes of Prendergast et al. (2010), Pookulangara and Kösler (2011), Cheung and Thadani (2012), Reichelt et al. (2014), Lee and Hong (2016) or Cheung and To (2017). These studies have been able to empirically prove the predictive power of subjective norm specifically for purchase intention in an online or even social media context.

But not only are there studies specifically proving subjective norm to be relevant, there are also studies outlining the existence of social pressures in social media. This notion can be seen in studies by e.g. Chae (2018), Webb et al. (2017), or Woods and Scott (2016). While these studies place special emphasis on adolescents, they also mention that this phenomenon is not exclusive to this age group and can also be seen in older members of social networking sites.

This proves that subjective norm is a relevant concept in predicting behavioral intention in social media. It also goes to show that arguments for the exclusion of subjective norm when

drawing from the TRA or subsequent models are easily refuted and make use of outdated arguments. Thus, this study includes the notion of subjective norm in order to predict purchase intention.

3.8 Purchase Intention

The intent-behavior research of the TRA also extends into marketing research, where researchers and managers try to predict future buying behavior or future sales utilizing the construct of purchase intention. Purchase intention measurements are also used to gauge interest in product concepts or ahead of product launches, as well as adjusting production size to demand (Morwitz, et al., 2007). Purchase intention can be defined as "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56). In this chapter, the predictive accuracy of purchase intention will be outlined, following a sample of general applications of the construct in literature, and lastly a look at previous applications operating within the social media context central to this thesis.

The predictive accuracy of purchase intention

Whether purchase intention is the most reliable predictor of future sales has been up to debate. Armstrong et al. (2000) examined four different methods of forecasting with intentions, for four different data sets from varying industries and time periods, and compared the predictive qualities with extrapolations of past sales data. They found that all intentions-based methods were more reliable than past sales extrapolations, and combining the averages of the intentions-based methods being the most accurate. These results clashed with Lee et al. (1997), who had not found much support for buying intentions. However, as Armstrong et al. (2000) note, this may be due to Lee et al.'s (1997) data only being collected with a 3-point intentions measurement scale of 'yes', 'no', 'maybe', instead of a scale with more options, like e.g. Juster's (1966) 11-point purchase probability scale (Day, et al., 1991).

Being more reliable than past sales does not make purchase intention perfect – predicting complex human behavior reliably is no easy task, as is the case with purchase intention. Therefore, discrepancies can occur between purchase intention and actual purchase behavior (Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004; Morwitz, et al., 2007). Eventual missing/unaccounted for variables in the TRA notwithstanding, there can be a variety of reasons for this, such as shifting priorities or circumstances in the consumer or market, or measurement tools relying on internal

accuracy without accounting for external[2] (Langdridge, et al., 2007; Sheeran, 2002; Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004; Morwitz, et al., 2007; Chandon, et al., 2005). Morwitz et al. (2007) found that purchase intention better predicted purchasing behavior when concerning an existing product rather than a new one[3] and when it was a durable product over a non-durable. There is also the element of time playing a role, as purchase intention has a higher predictive accuracy when conducted shortly before behavior measurement (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Morwitz, et al., 2007). This suggests that individuals are better at predicting their short-term behavior over long-term behavior (Morwitz, et al., 2007). Additionally, their findings indicate higher accuracy when people are asked about purchase intentions at the brand level or model level, over the product category level (Morwitz, et al., 2007).

A flaw in the construct of purchase intention is that there have been found mere-measurement effects; the act of measuring purchase intention can have an effect on the intention, due to the consumer becoming more aware of its cognitive attitudes, thus adjusting its behavior accordingly (Morwitz, et al., 1993; Fitzsimons & Morwitz, 1996; Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004; Chandon, et al., 2005)

General applications of purchase intention

Being a predictor for future sales or buying behavior, purchase intention has been applied several times in several areas. The approach to do so often follows the same patterns by implicitly or explicitly being an adaptation of the TRA, by inserting purchase intention in the end of a framework after an attitude concerning x is established, e.g. in Bruhn et al. (2012), Coursaris et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2017), Erkan and Evans (2016), Spears and Singh (2004) or Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016).

A qualitative, contextual approach to determining purchase intention is Amatulli and Guido (2011), who conducted in-depth interviews and used the laddering technique and Means-End Chain analysis to look at determinants of purchase intention in luxury fashion on the Italian market. Their hierarchical value map illustrated the reasons consumers buy luxury fashion goods and how the constructs are interlinked, as well as suggests that Italian consumers primarily buy luxury goods to have long-lasting items and increased self-confidence (Amatulli

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[2] "the studies measure the improvement in the ability to forecast the behavior of consumers whose intentions they previously measured, not the behavior of consumers whose intentions they did not measure" (Chandon, et al., 2005, p. 1)
[3] New meaning no competitor having an equivalent

& Guido, 2011). However, the self-confidence appears to come from within, by feeling better and being at ease, rather than from flaunting wealth to others (Amatulli & Guido, 2011).

Relevant to this thesis, celebrity endorsements and purchase intention have been found related. Ohanian's (1990; 1991) psychometric scales for measuring endorser benefit only managed to significantly link the source credibility factor of perceived expertise to purchase intention. However, the other two factors of trustworthiness and attractiveness having since been found to affect purchase intention as well (Pornpitakpan, 2003; Düsenberg, et al., 2016). Wang et al. (2017) also applied both endorser credibility and purchase intention into a framework applied to the airline sector, where the source credibility factors feed into a combined consumer attitude of endorser credibility. This drives the factors brand attitude and brand credibility, which then both significantly influence purchase intention (Wang, et al., 2017).

Purchase intention on social media/online

Looking more specifically at research in online contexts, as with many other business-related contexts, purchase intention is often used, in combination with a broad variety of constructs. Already in 2003, Schlosser (2003) found that interacting with virtual objects, e.g. a virtual representation of a digital camera, could affect attitudes, mental imagery and cognitive elaboration, which in turn drove purchase intention.

In social media, social media marketing activities have been found to drive brand equity, which in turn drives purchase intention (Kim & Ko, 2012). In Kim & Ko's (2012) conceptualization, purchase intention also significantly drives customer equity, which denotes the value a customer brings a company throughout a life. Coursaris et al. (2016) also proposed a model for the dynamics of brands' social media pages, where engaging brand content drives brand equity, which in turn drives purchase intention, and drives what they call 'brand social media engagement intention' which concerns whether people want to engage with a company's postings on social media. Hutter et al. (2013) looked at similar constructs applied on the case of carmaker MINI, and found that both brand awareness and 'brand page commitment' significantly influenced purchase intention. Bruhn et al. (2012) made a large framework concerning factors of social media communication and how they affect aspects of the brand in the consumer mindset, and then add purchase intention at the end of the framework as being driven by brand attitude. Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) also looked into user-generated and firm-created communication on social media and how they affected factors brand equity and brand attitude. Then how brand equity and brand attitude drove purchase intention (Schivinski

& Dabrowski, 2016). Every link was found significant except for firm-generated communication on brand equity (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Information adoption and attitude towards information have been found to drive purchase intention on social media (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Alhidari et al. (2015) or Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) utilized structural equation modeling and found positive relationships between social media involvement, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and purchase intention.

Djafarova & Rushworth (2017) used in-depth interviews about Instagram, coupled with a template analysis following themes identified in the interviews. They suggest that eWOM is highly influential on buying behavior through trust, as well as through reducing risk by looking at reviews on Instagram, which are facilitated by influencers they trust (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Overall, purchase intention as a construct has some clear imperfections in being able to predict future behavior accurately, although accuracy increases the shorter the timeframe. Nonetheless, purchase intention remains the best indicator for the purposes of this thesis, seeing as extrapolation of historical sales data is neither more accurate as seen in Armstrong et al. (2000), nor applicable for the sample population used in this thesis paper, which consists of non-customers. This chapter has shown the versatility of applying the construct of purchase intention in various contexts, social media research comprised.

3.9 Analytical Framework

"A theoretical framework situates […] the research clearly within the scholarly conversation, adds subtlety and complexity to what appear at first glance to be simple phenomena and allows for building a repertoire of understandings, diverse perspectives of the same phenomenon." (Anfara & Mertz, 2014, p. 356).
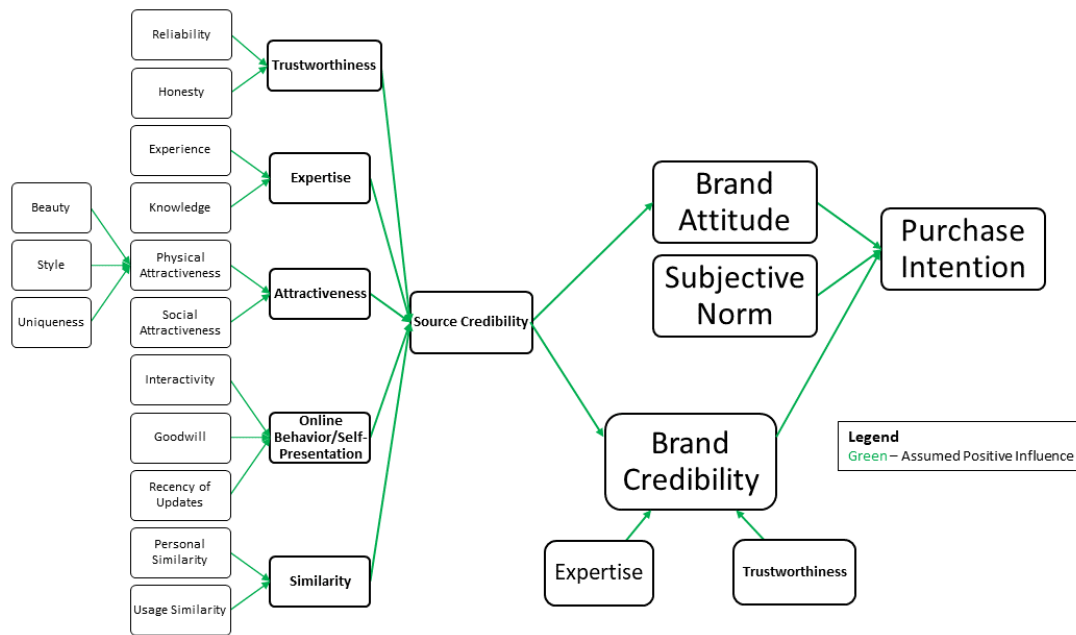
Figure 14: Analytical Framework
Source: Authors' creation

Based on the reviewed literature, a theoretical framework is proposed as seen in figure 14. There are several assumptions made by the authors that underlie the framework. The framework incorporates the original source credibility dimensions, as seen in Hovland et al. (1953), Djafarova and Trofimenko's (2018) addition of online behavior/self-presentation, as well as the dimension of similarity, as found in Reichelt et al. (2014) and O'Reilly et al. (2016). For each of the five dimensions of source credibility, aspects are proposed that positively influence these dimensions drawing from Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) and Ohanian (1990; 1991). These five dimensions come together in the aggregate that is source credibility. This in turn influences brand attitude and brand credibility, as seen in e.g. Chung and Cho (2017).

Brand attitude, based on the work by Spears and Singh (2004), and subjective norm are then assumed to impact purchase intention positively following Fishbein & Ajzen's (1975) TRA also echoed by Cheung and To (2017) and Reichelt et al (2014). Brand attitude as predictor for

purchase intention is often seen in literature, e.g. Schivinski & Dabrowski (2016), Wang et al. (2017) or Bruhn et al. (2012). Brand credibility, as conceptualized in Erdem & Swait (1998) and Beak et al. (2010), is assumed to have a positive influence on purchase intention, as seen in Chung and Cho (2017).

4 Data Analysis

The chapter is going to cover the comparison of the theoretical frameworks predicted themes and patterns with those that actually exist in the collected data. The analysis will start off by going through source credibility and its five dimensions, which will be followed by the examination of brand credibility, brand attitude, subjective norm and purchase intention.

In the analysis, the referencing format of the participants will consist of e.g. participant 1 from focus group 1 being denoted as 'P1-FG1' and so on. Full transcripts for the focus groups conducted are found in appendix 2, 3, and 4.

4.1 Source Credibility

4.1.1 Trustworthiness

The theoretical framework in this thesis paper had the source credibility dimension of trustworthiness underpinned by the factors of reliability and honesty. Reliability and honesty were predicted to have a positive influence on trustworthiness, which in turn is predicted to have a positive influence on source credibility, as shown in figure 15.
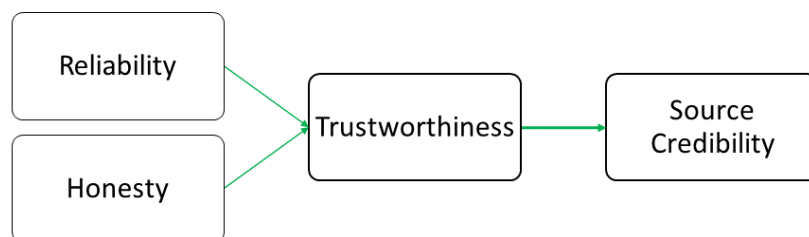
Figure 15: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Trustworthiness
Source: Author's creation

Reliability

The influencer that yielded the highest amount of perceived reliability and honesty in participants was the mother of two, with a picture of a smoothie made with the target brand among others. In addition, unbeknownst to the participants of the focus group, she was not paid for the post. Among topics discussed by participants in relation to this influencer was her being a mother and showing her family; her mentioning a combination of multiple brands; and her having tried the product. While the first option relates to her online behavior, it had an influence on how people judged her trustworthiness and overall credibility. For one participant, the mother was instantly perceived as more honest and reliable by stating "*(…) she's a mom and she's tired all the time, (…) she would not adopt this drink unless she thinks it can help her [in]*

some way" (P7-FG1). It appears that the participant has confidence in the source of information (definition on page 37), but that it is because she is a mother. This suggests that for this participant the personal similarity acts as a moderator for trustworthiness and possibly attractiveness, which is not something that was theorized in the framework.

Next, by mentioning a recipe and utilizing different brands in the recipe, the mother-of-two influencer not only showed expertise, but also honesty and reliability. In addition, her profile denoted her as a 'Coffee Lover' and showed her drinking multiple brands of coffee. Two participants mentioned being a "*brand whore*" (P1–FG3) or a "*product bitch*" (P2–FG2) as negative, although another participant found that an influencer using multiple brands inside the same product category would lead her to "*lose the trust that [she has]. [Because] if she (...) tries a new one every week, then 'maybe not'*" (P1-FG1). This emerging theme of sponsorship consistency is not accounted for in this paper's framework. The empirical results from this study point in multiple directions however, and suggest that some people find a strong affiliation to a brand as being of low reliability, while others judge shifting affiliations as being unreliable. This no-win situation exemplifies that it is impossible to accommodate every recipient of information without alienating others.

Multiple participants felt that reliability was lowered when the influencer endorsing a product was a model. One participant expressed that she "*instantly just distrust[s] it when [she] can see [that] it's a model*" (P1-FG1). This could be either due to a lack of perceived personal similarity, or through a cognitive filter associating model beauty to traditional advertising, which could signify a complicated relationship between trustworthiness and attractiveness. An emerging pattern that applies to both aspects of trustworthiness and online behavior is that quite a few participants placed emphasis on settings/pictures appearing as "*staged*" (e.g. P1–FG1, P3–FG2, P5–FG2), "*too perfect*" (P7–FG1), "*fake*" (e.g. P1–FG2, P2–FG3), looking like a "*photo-shoot*" (e.g. P5–FG3, P6–FG3) or do not "*feel natural*" (P3–FG2). There was a clear relationship between finding the picture too polished and a lack of trust/negative sentiments. This could be an extension of finding the models unreliable, where a model is deemed 'unrealistic', in addition to the cognitive connection between Instagram as a visual medium, beauty, and beauty as a job, leaving not much room left for trustworthiness.

Honesty

The assumption that the models were used to advertising also applies to the perceived honesty of influencers in the focus groups. While one respondent "*wouldn't believe her so much because*

she's used to advertising" (P1-FG1), another acknowledged that "*even though [she] know[s] [the model is] paid to do it (...) [she gets] the impression she wouldn't put on something she doesn't believe in* (P4-FG1). This means that some perceive an implied bias (definition on page 37) due to their profession, and thus causing low honesty, while others judge the perceived honesty to supersede the given bias on a case-by-case basis.

The Instagram page, which posted different fitness and health related posts and quotes, was found to have low perceived honesty. While the post stated it was not an ad, several participants did not believe that it was not, and some participants mentioned anecdotes of social media pages being turned for-profit. One participant said that pages were the "*the one that I rely on the least*" (P2-FG1), due to them not being honest about advertising, while another attributed it to the lack of a human face on the page.

The interpretations of trustworthiness and underlying factors may have been influenced to an unnatural degree due to the method in which the study was conducted. As participants were presented for pictures from influencers they do not follow themselves, the degree of trust will remain superficial. Trustworthiness is likely built over time when following a person, which this study cannot reflect. This is also expressed by P3-FG1, who stated that "*if I follow a person and have a relationship to that person in that sense then it has a way higher effect on me compared to when I see a random influencer, so if I follow a person on Instagram because I like that person because of what he or she does then it's way more reliable. Then I trust that person*". In addition, some participants had the assumption, or took it upon themselves, to be critical towards the presented pictures, which does not necessarily reflect a real-life scenario of casual Instagram usage (more on this in the limitations chapter on page 89 to 90). This participant behavior can be seen e.g. in "*(...) when we are sitting here trying to be.. trying to criticize that and tear it apart*" (P5-FG1), which would also mean that a degree of distrust towards presented material will be present, making it difficult to establish trustworthiness. On the other hand, this does echo the discussed on page 36 to 37 concerning people tending to be generally suspicious of celebrities.

In conclusion, both selected factors of trustworthiness drawn from extant literature could be traced to patterns found in the conducted focus groups and showed positive relationships to source credibility. In addition, an emerging pattern expressed a connection between finding pictures 'unrealistic' and attaining a low perceived reliability, which was not theorized in the analytical framework. Likewise, an emerging theme of sponsorship consistency was revealed,

which was not accounted for in the analytical framework. Results here pointed in multiple directions and warrant further examining in future research.

4.1.2 Expertise

Expertise figures as a sub-dimension to source credibility in this paper's analytical framework, where expertise is seen as being constituted of experience and knowledge, as seen in figure 16. By examining the participants' perception towards an influencer's degree of experience and knowledge regarding a company product, it is possible to uncover the impact of expertise on source credibility.
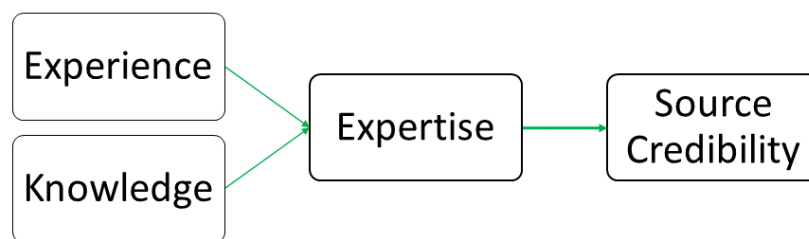
Figure 16: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Expertise
Source: Author's creation

Experience

The participants in the study placed a lot of importance in the influencer's experience when having to evaluate the credibility of the information provided by influencers who promoted company products as being delicious, energizing or being a satisfactory beverage. When evaluating the experience of an influencer the majority of the participants put a lot of emphasis on the fact that the influencer actually had consumed the products themselves. The aforementioned came to light, when P2-FG1 stated the following regarding the mom that had made a smoothie: *"At, at least, you know like, she tried it and she's advertising something she tried. I mean like she could have taken the recipe from somewhere, but you know like it gives an idea of.. she actually tried the thing and she actually liked it."* Others agreed, and because of the mother's high degree of experience with the product, the participants portrayed her as being an individual that was more informed, health conscious and critical in her thinking (P1-FG1; P1-FG3; P3-FG3). As the influencer is being perceived as having a high degree of experience with a product, there is indication that experience has a positive impact upon source credibility through the dimension of expertise. The aforesaid is in accordance with what is stated on page 38.

A similar pattern occurred when the picture of the two guys camping was displayed, where P2-FG2 articulated: *"It seems like the two guys are using this product also at home. Not only in that setting".* Further, statements like *"it seems like he really uses the product because he likes it."* (P1-FG2) cemented that because of his experience with the product he was deemed as being an individual who was both informed and health conscious.

The assessment of an influencer's degree of experience was not solely based on the picture itself that included company products. It became apparent that the influencer's personal bio and feed also figures as essential components when participants had to assess experience and thus how credible the provided information where: *"Like, there's a lot of healthy food in her pictures and everything. So she's, she's doing it a lot. So, I don't know, I think it's kind of trustworthy."* (P1-FG2). Because of the mom with the smoothie had stated that she was a coffee lover in her bio and had a myriad of pictures with healthy beverages and food she was by the participants deemed more credible as a source. This was likewise found to be the case for the two guys that went camping, who, like the mother, were perceived as experienced by the participants (P4-FG1; P2-FG2; P1-FG2), which is in accordance with page 38.

Knowledge

As the participants had to evaluate how knowledgeable the influencers seemed to be about the products that they were displaying, there was attached a lot of importance to how the influencer portrayed the products in the comment section. This was especially made clear when the participants were looking at the mother with the smoothie recipe: *"That, that type of recipe that she has put together like.. That, that kinda.. You kinda need to have some insight into just figuring that out. And that's not something that you just like bundle together in the kitchen randomly."* (P5-FG3). A perception that was echoed by P4-FG2: *"Like she seems like the kind of person that not would not just drink it before she knew what's in the product."* This confirms what is stated on 39, where it is stated that if the influencer is seen as having a high degree of knowledge, it will impact the dimension of expertise in a positive way, which in turn will affect source credibility positively.

Another important aspect when judging the level of knowledge that the influencers had about the products, where their profile bio and feed, like it was the case with experience. An example of that is the guy that went camping, where he was deemed knowledgeable more on the basis of his feed than of the picture itself.

This came across when, for instance, P4-FG1 explicated: *"when you follow that person, you know his values. He is about health and all this so he doesn't have to describe how healthy, healthy it is. I drink this coffee and you should know it is healthy."* The aforementioned influencer was due to his healthy and active lifestyle deemed, by the participants, to be knowledgeable about what products he should consume, in order to uphold his current healthy lifestyle. As the influencer was seen as knowledgeable, it had a positive impact on source credibility through the expertise dimension as in accordance with page 39. Another example is the mother with the smoothie that was highlighted again: *"she has like the whole recipe. And also when you go through her feed she has numerous pictures with (...) Food and drinks at home. Then in that regard she seems quite knowledgeable"* (P6-FG3). As it was the case with the guys that went camping, the personal bio and feed proved to be an important factor when evaluating whether an influencer is knowledgeable or not.

What this chapter outlines is that experience and knowledge have a positive influence on source credibility through the dimension of expertise as it was presented in the papers conceptual framework on page 57. For both experience and knowledge, it applies that the caption of the photo and the photo itself with the branded products were aspects that participants took into consideration when evaluating respectively experience and knowledge. In addition to that, the influencers' personal feed along with their bio, were also things that the participants included in their evaluations.

4.1.3   Attractiveness

Taking a closer look at the subdimension of attractiveness and what the participants said about it, reveals an interesting picture. Generally speaking, the participants again did not voice a consensual opinion. Examining physical and social attractiveness closer will show why and how this relates to the overall impact of attractiveness on source credibility as it was predicted in the framework (compare figure 17).
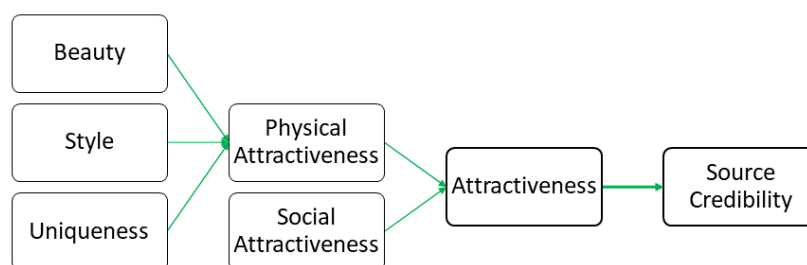
Figure 17: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Attractiveness
Source: Authors' Creation

<u>Physical Attractiveness</u>

The analytical framework proposed that physical attractiveness is composed of beauty, uniqueness, and style. When asking the participants how they felt about the beauty of the influencers that they were presented, most agreed that the model-looking influencers (picture one and three) were "*pretty*" (P1-FG3), "*good-looking*" (P2-FG3), "*beautiful*" (P5-FG1). But at the same time, some participants asked themselves if these models were not too pretty, e.g. after admitting that the two influencers are beautiful, P5-FG1 goes on to say that their beauty "*is like almost a dream.*" P1-FG1 also stated that the influencer from picture two "*was beautiful and attractive too.*" An opinion that P7-FG1 shared by claiming the mother has more "*natural*" and realistic beauty. It can thus be said that beauty does not always, as theorized on page 40, drive physical attractiveness in positive fashion, but has less of an influence if the beauty is not realistic enough for Instagram users.

The uniqueness aspect is also brought forth by the participants. P1-FG3 referring to the influencer on picture three stated that "*in a normal world setting she would be sort of unique.*" Yet, on Instagram there are tens of thousands of people that could be considered unique because of their looks and thus to somebody with access to all of them, this does no longer come across as unique. This also makes distinguishing between them hard, as P4-FG2 put it: "*like I don't think I could remember the difference from her and the other one.*" This is a general sentiment shared among the participants. This however opposes the theorized importance of uniqueness on Instagram as mentioned on page 40. But in a way, it also connects to it as it was said that showing one's uniqueness off on Instagram is an important factor for its usage. When many people show off their self-believed uniqueness on Instagram, it is much more likely that among the millions of Instagram users there are other users that are unique in the same way, as one believes oneself to be. Thus, reducing one's uniqueness on Instagram.

In terms of the influencer's style, some of the participants felt like, especially the models, look like "*stylish persons*" (P1-FG3), and commented a lot on the way the people dress. But P5-FG3 also pointed out that there seems to be two different personas in terms of style combined in the models' pictures by saying that "*it's quite easy to distinguish between the model photos and her regular photos in terms of her style, because she's much more fashionable on the photo shoots than she is in everyday life*". When talking about the influencer from picture two, the participants felt like she was also more realistic in terms of dressing. They felt like she was not styled over the top like the models on some of the pictures. This goes to show that style, as an antecedent, as outlined on page 40, does not possess a strictly positive relationship with physical

attractiveness. But it works as an inversed parabola, meaning that it positively impacts physical attractiveness but at a certain point starts to have a negative influence on it.

Interestingly enough, P2-FG1 relates the overall physical attractiveness aspect back to the original reasoning behind it. The participant was stating that if he were trying to be like the influencer in picture three, e.g. beautiful, healthy etc., then he "*would probably go for something like that*" and believe the things poised by the influencer more. This relates back to idea of a person believing another more if they want to be like them in terms of outer appearance as stated on page 40.

Social Attractiveness

When inquiring about the social attractiveness of the influencers, participants were quick to point toward follower counts (e.g. P1-FG1; P4-FG2), amount of likes on pictures (e.g. P2-FG2), amount of comments (e.g. P4-FG1) or even how they relate to each other e.g. P6-FG1 takes amount of likes in comparison to the number of followers into account as was suggested in the literature review on page 39. In addition to these Instagram 'KPIs' it was also pointed out that the influencer from picture three must be popular, too, "*because [she] is [an] ambassador for two brands and has been on TV*" (P5-FG3); positions associated with popularity by the participants. This is general gist of the participant's take on the influencers' popularity. However, P4-FG2 tried to put the whole discussion into a bit of context adding that the models probably have a greater social attractiveness to women from 14 to 30 than "*persons like us reading political science*". This relates the social attractiveness aspect but also to that of similarity.

Impact on Source Credibility

Now when talking in terms of how physical and social attractiveness might influence the credibility of the influencer, it was theorized that there would always be a positive influence. Seeing how physical attractiveness was not seen as something special, it drives credibility only in minimal fashion if at all. However, saying that most influencers are pretty but not unique possibly implies physical attractiveness as a threshold. In order to consider the information of an influencer as credible, the influencer must have a certain level of physical attractiveness. However, after that an increase in attractiveness does not contribute much to the credibility of the influencer.

When talking social attractiveness and its impact on source credibility, P5-FG1 states, "*if [the influencer] had 500.000 followers I would believe [them] more*" echoing the theorized positive relationship from page 39. However, other participants "*actually feel the other way around. Because the more followers [the influencer] has, the more I feel like he is trying to sell this brand*" (P4-FG1). This means that for P4-FG1 the credibility of an influencer decreases with increasing follower count. Other participants echoed this sentiment e.g. participant 2-FG2 believing people who "*have less followers*" more than "*people with 100.000 followers.*" Having other people make these statements and discuss them in their focus group also led P5-FG1, who first stated that he trusted people with many followers more, to say that "*if there are like more than 10.000. I am eager [...] to believe that it's [...] an ad.*" This gives a more nuanced view to the relationship unlike the one mentioned on page 39.

However, the participants still associate follower count with popularity and reputation. If they do not have a personal offline relationship with the respective influencer, these are still important indicators. This can be seen by the participants saying that "*there's probably a reason why this person don't have a lot of followers*" (P5-FG1), which also came up in a discussion in the third focus group. This does in part, considering the previous paragraphs, echo the importance of social attractiveness as theorized on pages 39 to 40. With this in mind, one could say that up until a certain point social attractiveness increases the credibility of an influencer on Instagram, after that point it slowly decreases similar to an inversed parabola.

To sum things up, the impacts of physical and social attractiveness do not simply positively drive source credibility or influencers' credibility on Instagram respectively as it was theorized in the analytical framework. But a rather nuanced view of the relationship emerged in the analysis; physical attractiveness being most likely only a threshold aspect and social attractiveness having an influence on source credibility similar to that of an inversed parabola.

4.1.4 Online Behavior/Self-Presentation

The dimension of online behavior or self-presentation was an added dimension to source credibility in the theoretical framework. As an umbrella term, it covers how influencers behave and present themselves and engage their audience online, through goodwill, interactivity and recency of updates. It is theorized to have a positive influence on source credibility as seen in figure 18.
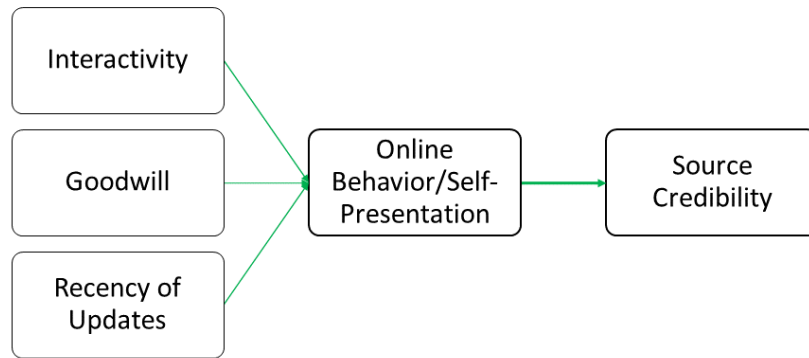
Figure 18: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Online Behavior/Self-Presentation
Source: Author's creation

Goodwill and Interactivity

Several participants appreciated when influencers were trying their best and appeared to have their audience's interests at heart. The presented mother-of-two influencer exhibited goodwill through her caring for her kids, her husband and her own health, as well as trying to help her audience with tips. This is in alignment with the goodwill and good intentions propositions (see page 41). A participant also referred to an influencer he had personally been following from the early days of having around 1000 followers, to now when said influencer is over 100.000 followers (P3-FG3). The participant appreciated that the influencer still attempts to respond to comments even if he cannot keep up with the amount. This connection between interactivity and source credibility is in accordance to the theoretical framework (page 57). This likely also has degrees of personal similarity, where the influencer still attempts to be approachable and interactive with his audience, larger audience notwithstanding. Other respondents have also pointed out that it is likely easier to foster a community and respond to people when the follower amount is relatively low, one participant stating that the mother-of-two influencer "*doesn't have as many followers. So it's easy to care. You know they, they have a very little community*" (P4-FG3).

While interactivity was conceptualized in the theoretical framework as influencer to follower communication and interaction (see page 41, 57), some participants stated that they did not feel the need to communicate with influencers and had not done so previously (e.g. P1-FG1; P4-FG1). It is apparent that interactivity for respondents also has traces to eWOM (which was not a part of the theoretical framework) and social attractiveness. Results suggest that influencers should create engaging posts that spark comments and tagging of friends, which create more activity on the posts. P3-FG1 expressed that he "*definitely think[s] it does something [for him] if there's a lot of comments. Compared to if there was one comment. It does a whole lot for me.*

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And of course also if [the influencer] respond[s] too, so if you made a comment yourself, that would make a big difference". This appears to be the case even for people who are more skeptical of influencers, as the comments generating eWOM would be gaining their attention. This can also create purchase intention, as expressed by P5-FG1: "*if I would see this, I would be more influenced to buy this because of the comments, not because of the description. Because in most of the comments they are like: 'Yeah, it's lovely. You should try this' and so I would feel like it should be nice, but not because of the page*". This suggests this particular respondent ranks eWOM higher than interactivity from influencers in establishing his purchase intention.

Recency of updates

Looking at the recency of updates, empirical results were unclear and did not directly match the theoretical assumptions made on page 40 to 41. Being an influencer implicitly requires a certain degree of activity; otherwise, they are irrelevant (P4-FG3). But two participants expressed annoyance with too frequent posting, with P6-FG3 stating that he had previously followed a lot of influencers but unfollowed almost all, due to being annoyed with cluttering of the newsfeed. This would suggest that there is an aggregated threshold limit for posts and that influencers have to strike a balance in posting frequency if they want to avoid alienating certain people. This balance is highly subjective though, and influencers have no way to gauge how many posts followers get from other sources. Additionally, slowing down posting behavior could slow follower growth for the influencer and alter algorithm favorability.

Self-presentation

As was already touched upon in the trustworthiness part of the analysis, this study's respondents appeared to focus much on whether the pictures were straying too far from looking like real life. In addition to trustworthiness, this also has a lot to do with the self-presentation of influencer; the way the influencer presents itself has an impact both for how pictures are interpreted, as well as whether a product seems like a 'good fit' for the influencer. Respondents denoted at different stages whether or not there appeared to be a consistency between the product and the profile. This lends credence to the matchup hypothesis seen in literature, and suggests that an influencer could shape their profile in a certain direction if they wish to advertise for certain products. Moreover, companies should look for influencers that fit their brand/product, as incongruent match-ups like "*Cristiano Ronaldo in a collaboration with Egyptian steel*" (P3-FG1) does not leverage the source credibility in a meaningful way. One respondent mentioned that he could appreciate advertising (from influencers) if he finds it

relevant to him, however "*(…) if they start advertising for, I don't know, new tools like a drill, and it is a guy that I usually look up because he dresses well, then what the fuck.*" (P4-FG3).

The previously detailed trustworthiness part of the analysis also brought up the emerging theme of sponsorship consistency; whether an influencer had a strong affiliation to a brand, or had shifting affiliations. This naturally also relates to the self-presentation aspect, as the brand or brands become part of the influencer's online persona.

For the third influencer's self-presentation, opinions were mixed, as some felt it was a good mix of private pictures and model jobs (e.g. (P7-FG1, P2-FG1, while others felt like the profile was "*perfect*" (P3-FG1), meaning that it was not possible to relate. Others again looked at this differently, by expressing that she did not look as attractive in her 'normal' pictures as in the presented model picture (P3-FG2, P4-FG2). A few participants did point out that on social media you are likely showing the best side of yourself (e.g. P2-FG2, P1-FG3), but as outlined in previous parts of the analysis, the sheer amount of criticism in the sample regarding too processed or set up pictures suggests that an overemphasis on the best side may be too much of a good thing.

Overall, results indicate positive relationships from goodwill and interactivity as part of the online behavior/self-presentation dimension to source credibility. Recency of updates was inconsistent with theorized assumptions. It appears to work as a necessary threshold in both ends; some degree of activity is necessary, otherwise the influencer will not appear in newsfeeds. However, too much activity may annoy people on and lower source credibility. Echoing the previously detailed emerging pattern of realism, there was some indication that an overly polished profile lowered source credibility after a certain threshold. Lastly, emerging patterns of eWOM as part of interactivity and match-up/fit influence on purchase intention revealed important to participants.

4.1.5 Similarity

The last source credibility dimension is similarity, which in the analytical framework is split into the following two sub-dimensions: personal similarity and usage similarity, as shown in figure 19. Personal similarity refers to how much the individual is alike the celebrity and usage similarity signifies how similar company products will be used by both the individual and the celebrity.
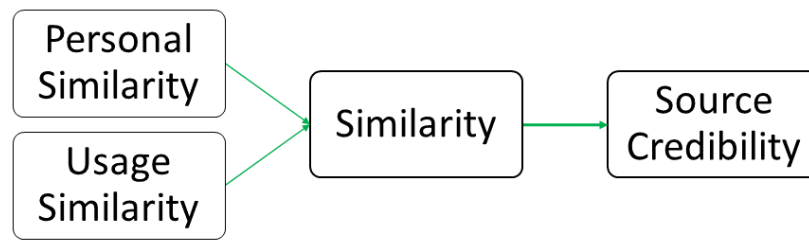
Figure 19: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Similarity
Source: Author's creation

Personal similarity

When examining the participant's opinions regarding the sub-dimension of personal similarity, it quickly became apparent that there were diverse views between participants when it came to them relating the degree of similarity between themselves and the influencers.

Some participants put an emphasis on the influencer being personally similar to in terms of follower count. To judge whether an individual was regular or not, some participants, like P2-FG1, used the number of followers as an indicator for whether the influencer was a regular person with an Instagram profile like the participant himself. By the influencer having a follower count that was closer to the participants own, some felt that the influencer was more personally similar to them. This caused the participants to find it easier to understand the logic behind the influencer's pictures and remarks since their experience would be closer to what the participants themselves had witnessed in their lives. The aforementioned confirms what was proposed on page 42 where it is stipulated that when personal similarity exists between the follower and the influencer it has a positive influence on source credibility via the similarity dimension. Participant 3-FG1 echoed this sentiment by stating: *"Definitely like the last guy because I think that could be me. (...) We are on one level"*. Because the participant perceived the influencer to be similar on a personal level, it had a positive impact on the credibility of the information that came from the influencer. If an influencer, contrary to this, was deemed more polished than the participants themselves because of being perceived as being more physical or socially attractive than the influencer, it had a less of an impact on source credibility through the dimension of similarity (P3-FG1; P7-FG1; P1-FG3). This came across when the participants were shown the pictures that included the models, where P3-FG1 for instance stated that *"I cannot relate to at all, she hasn't got my interest at all because there's so many of those girls on Instagram. So for me I cannot relate to it at all and she wouldn't be effective for me as a man in promoting a chocolate drink or whatever"*.

For others the evaluation, of whether there were personal similarity between them and the influencer, was based upon the fact if they had a similar characteristic or not. This was the case for the mom, where P7-FG1 *explained "Also because she's a, she's a mom - I have a kid too. And we're tired all the time"*. Here it shows a high degree of personal similarity, which in turn had positive impact on source credibility for this participant, through the similarity dimension, as theorized on page 57.

<u>Usage similarity</u>

Looking at usage similarity, there were two aspects that played a part when the participants had to evaluate the usage similarity between them and the influencers.

The first aspect that had an impact on the evaluation of usage similarity was the setting itself when the products were consumed. P3-FG1 explained that *"I kind of relate to the motive about having a nice morning, and kind of the freedom"*. For P3-FG1 and the agreeing participants, it was not only the actual use of the product that figured as a crucial part of the evaluation, but also if the setting was similar to one that they could see themselves in. The usage similarity present in this thereby had a positive influence on the overall dimension of similarity and subsequently source credibility, as expected on page 57.

The second aspect that was identified was between participants' evaluation of usage similarity and the influencer's actual use of the product, which is in line with what has been conceptualized on page 42. This came across when participant 3-FG3 said the following: *"I could see myself taking it hiking. Because you have the coffee you don't need to brew it because then you to bring the water and I don't know how much coffee you take out there"*. Because of the way the influencer used the products resonated with the same way that participant 3-FG3 would have gone about it, and it had a positive impact on how credible he perceived the information provided by the influencer. On the other hand, for participants who perceived that there existed a low degree of usage similarity between them and the influencer the influencer was perceived to be less credible as a source of information (P1-FG3; P5-FG3).

To summarize, findings for personal similarity indicate that the participants had a high degree of personal similarity when the influencer had the same characteristics as them, or was on the same social level in terms of follower count. The high degree of personal similarity showed to have a positive impact on the overall dimension of similarity and subsequently source credibility, which is in accordance with page 57. For usage similarity it was established that if the setting of the usage and the actual use of the product was deemed to have a high degree of

similarity, it would in turn it had a positive influence on source credibility via the similarity dimension, as proposed on page 57.

4.1.6 Overview of Source Credibility

The theorized dimensions of source credibility (compare figure 20) are all relevant in light of the experiences and opinions of the participants. However, the relationships are not as simple as expected.
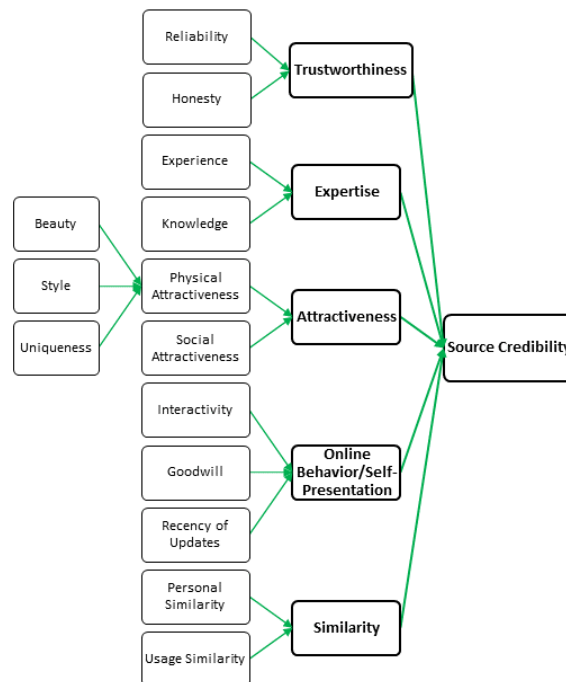
Figure 20: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Source Credibility
Source: Authors' Creation

The positive impact of trustworthiness, expertise, online behavior/self-presentation and similarity can be considered linear as theorized in the framework on page 57. However, attractiveness appears not to have a straight linear relationship, but sees the impact on source credibility increase with increasing attractiveness until a certain point. After that point, the impact decreases with increasing attractiveness similar to an inversed parabola.

The antecedents of the mentioned source credibility dimensions were also confirmed to be relevant for the most part. However, recency of updates and physical attractiveness appear to be only thresholds that need to be reached and then have a minimal impact on the respective dimensions if at all. Recency of updates will even lower the online behavior/self-presentation aggregate dimension. In addition to the theorized antecedents, trustworthiness was further

underpinned by antecedents of realism and sponsorship consistency. The latter of the two also impacts the online behavior/self-presentation dimension.

4.2 Brand Credibility

The participants voiced mixed opinions in regard to brand credibility. Looking at it from the two dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise, one can paint a clearer picture of how brand credibility is seen by the participants and how it impacts purchase intention and is impacted by source credibility in relation to the analytical framework (compare figure 21).
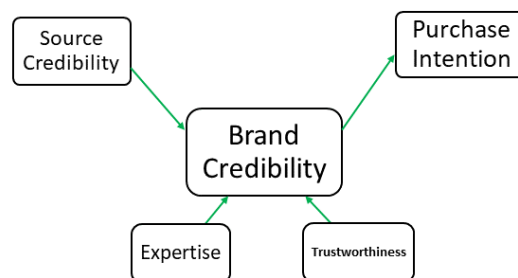
Figure 21: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Brand Credibility
Source: Authors' Creation

Trustworthiness

Participants generally did not believe that the company promoted in the pictures was interested in promoting a plant-based diet "to make the world a better place" (P3-FG2). Others like P5-FG1 echoed this sentiment "*I'm not getting the feeling that they do it for the environment.*" Other participants further elaborated that it comes down to the choice of influencers that endorsed the company saying, "*but for me it's not trustworthy when they use a model and then they also use two guys sitting on a mountain, […] they're trying to push the products*" (P3-FG1). What this entails is that the range of influencers shown to the participants caused confusion in the actual ideals and vision of the company. Seeing as the influencers come from different backgrounds and cater to different audiences, there is no common purpose uniting them e.g. a plant-based diet. One can see, that the influencers' lack of credibility when talking plant-based diets or sustainability in general, rubs off on the brand itself. The chosen influencers should thus also align in their ideology with that of the company, an aspect that was not addressed in the thesis theory chapter. Only the last influencer who was out in nature was seen to increase the trustworthiness of the company with P2-FG2 saying that "*the company tries to […] be environmentally-friendly and I actually got the impression with the two guys camping.*" This was however not enough to convince the participants of the company's commitment to a

healthier life and planet. In their eyes, the association with the models made the company appear to be more interested in selling their product and profit, with their commitment to sustainability and health taking a background role. This shows that the trust in the company to strive towards a more sustainable world is rather low.

However, it should also be noted that the participants do not distrust the company per se. While it is admitted that the participants did not know the company, they also did not know if the company had been involved in any environmental scandals and just assumed that this had not been the case. P3-FG3 juxtaposed it to a known multinational by saying "*it's a small company, it's not Nestle, that we know is somewhat evil.*" This sentiment was echoed by P4-FG3 who claimed to "*always trust the smaller companies more than some of the bigger companies.*" So being a smaller company generally gives a slight advantage in terms of trustworthiness echoing an aspect discussed in the theory chapter on page 44.

The participants offered ways to increase a company's trustworthiness in their eyes. A common theme in relation to influencer marketing was not only collaborating with influencers that are known to promote a healthy or sustainable lifestyle but also to have them check out the production process. P4-FG3 brought up somebody like the famous actor Leonardo DiCaprio who is very outspoken in fighting climate change. He thus aligns well with the idea of making the world a better place. Having him work with the company would increase the company's trustworthiness in the eyes of P4-FG3. Similar notions were brought up by P3-FG1 stating "*a profile […] concerned with the environment or anything like that, that would have a way higher influence*" on brand credibility.

This goes to show that source credibility has an indirect influence via trustworthiness and expertise on brand credibility that was not theorized in the framework. This relationship was also not mentioned in previous literature thus not being included on the review of brand credibility on pages 43 to 45. Similarly has the fit between brand and endorser not been addressed.

Expertise

Having an influencer or celebrity check out the company's production process and supply chain also alludes to the company's expertise; can the company actually source and produce their products in environmental fashion. This is where some of the participants were also a bit suspicious, as they were not provided any information on this through the material published by the influencers on Instagram.

"*How do you make the world a better place, if you send your products around in planes. That is really bad for the environment*" as voiced by P3-FG3 shows the need to source products locally when available. But in the same fashion, the company should show how their coffee is sourced and whether the workers on the coffee plantations are treated and paid fairly to really show they are making the world a better place for everyone. In relation to the actual production process, P4-FG2 wants the company to "*show how you make it but not just give it to a model it does not seem like an expert because of that.*" This further emphasizes that a company's expertise relies heavily on the production and sourcing capabilities when it comes to being sustainable, which can barely come across by having models pose with their products. However, when talking about products for a healthy life, when equaling healthy with skinny, P2-FG2 for example showed his general suspicion for products that promise more than they can be expected to deliver.

The participants further question the appropriateness of the influencers and influencer marketing in general to drive the expertise of a company when talking about brand credibility. In general, the match-up between the influencers and the company seems not to be a good one as P3-FG2 puts it: The company does not come "*across as experts because […] other people are good at taking pictures of their products.*" It again echoes the call of aligned vision and values between company and influencer as was discussed in regard to the company's trustworthiness. P7-FG1 points to documentaries as more appropriate to drive a brand's expertise earning agreement from fellow interviewees, while P1-FG2 pointed towards statistics, publications or seals to drive a company's expertise. Influencer marketing not being an appropriate tool to drive a company's expertise has however no consensus as it was discussed among members of the third group that cosigns from experts in the respective field (e.g. coffee, sustainability, healthy living) can to a certain degree drive the company's expertise.

One can see that brand credibility can be driven by source credibility via the dimensions of brand trustworthiness and brand expertise as proposed in the analytical framework. However, it should also be mentioned that source credibility drives brand credibility mainly by impacting brand trustworthiness as participants hinted at the low trust in the influencers having influenced their perception of the brand's credibility. Brand expertise on the other hand, seems to not be influenced as strongly as trustworthiness through source credibility as part of celebrity endorsement.

Further on the issue, P1-FG1 said "*I don't think they are not credible just because I don't believe in the influencers, I would just think that the influencers were not credible.*" This goes to show,

that low source credibility among the endorsers does not necessarily lead to low brand credibility. Rather than having a negative impact, it could be argued that source credibility can only increase brand credibility but is unable to decrease it even when only having an indirect impact on brand credibility. It is an aspect not considered in the thesis' conceptualization of the relationships between brand and source credibility.

When looking further at how brand credibility, more specifically how it affects purchase intention, one can see that this influence is also present in the focus group interviews. P3-FG1 for example mentioned that the company show they have highly educated and knowledgeable people on the topic "*in the company and they are experts in doing this. So, if they have this kind of statement then it is for me pretty important.*" In similar fashion, P7-FG1 mentioned that if they can trust the company to actually create a healthier planet, then that deserves "*some positive support*" in the form of purchases. Both examples show that brand credibility and its subdimensions can drive purchase intention. However, the lack of brand credibility can for certain companies also lead to a decrease in purchase intention as can be illustrated by several stories told by the participants about how they lost faith in a company after a scandal e.g. P2-FG1 and Moncler. Yet, extremely large companies like H&M (P1-FG1) and Volkswagen (P3-FG1), as per participant statements, seem to rely less on brand credibility to drive purchase intention. P1-FG1 for example said that when she learned about the scandal regarding the working conditions of producers for H&M she did not want to support them anymore. It is a company that emphasizes their social responsibility, so they lost credibility in participant 1-FG1's eyes. Yet, "*a week went by and I was like okay*" as stated by P1-FG1.

Concisely, expertise and trustworthiness work well as antecedents to brand credibility, as theorized in the framework and outlined on page 44. In its conceptualization of trustworthiness and expertise, brand credibility can drive purchase intention as proposed in the framework. Regarding the two subdimensions of brand credibility, both trustworthiness and expertise are impacted by an influencer's source credibility rather than brand credibility itself. This is an aspect that was not predicted in the framework, as it referred to a direct relationship between source credibility and brand credibility instead of an indirect one. However, it does confirm the aspect that an endorser's credibility can rub off on the brand as outlined on page 44, but it happens in different manner.

4.3 Brand Attitude

In the analytical framework, the dimension of brand attitude is proposed as a summary evaluation process that occurs internally. In this process, individuals determine their attitude towards a particular brand. The sum of the evaluation whether it is negative, positive or neutral is presumed to energize a behavior. In figure 22 below, the aspects in the analytical framework that concern brand attitude are shown in order to give an overview of what this chapter is going to cover.
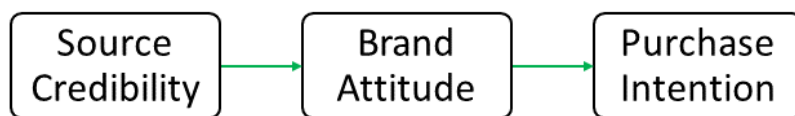
Figure 22: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Brand Attitude
Source: Author's creation

Initially, it should be stated that there were no participants that had any prior experience with the brand. Their attitude and its potential link to purchase intention did therefore purely rely on the material that they had been presented for during the course of the focus group interview itself. (P1-FG3, P4-FG3, P5-FG3, P6-FG3)

When asked about what the participants associated with the brand, the most common answers were the words "*healthy*", "*expensive*" and "*cool*" (P5-FG3; P4-FG2; P3-FG3; P3-FG2; P2-FG1). Other associations that were mentioned were refreshing, perfect, trendy and quality. It became apparent that participants, who possessed a more favorable attitude towards the brand, subsequently had a positive influence upon their intention to purchase one of the brand's products (P3-FG3; P4-FG2; P5-FG3; P2-FG1). Further, for P2-FG1 and P3-FG3 a relationship showed that having a high degree of source credibility had a positive impact upon brand attitude as in accordance with page 57. Lastly, it should be stated that there were exceptions within the group of participants having a rather positive brand attitude. This was the case for P3-FG2 and P6-FG3, who did not have the intention to purchase the product even though they had a positive brand attitude, which is not in accordance with the framework (see page 57).

It was not all of the participants who shared the same positive attitude towards the brand as the ones mentioned in the above. Some participants had a more neutral perception: *"I can't really make a profile out of the brand (…)"* (P5-FG1) or *"I don't really know like, it just looks like, it*

doesn't really do anything for me. It just seems like a drink. I don't really have an opinion."
(P1-FG3). By having a rather indifferent or neutral brand attitude, the participants displayed conflicting intention in actually going out and buying the product (P1-FG3; P5-FG1).

Among the participants, there were even some who perceived the brand in a negative light and thus possessed a negative attitude towards the brand (P2-FG3; P2-FG2; P6-FG3). These participants described the brand as being a company that tries too hard while others were sceptical about the credibility of the information that was provided by the influencers about the companies' product (P2-FG3; P2-FG2; P6-FG3). Some of the things that was pointed out was *"it doesn't look like the two models were trying to make the world a better place"* (P2-FG2) and *"now thinking that (...) it was a plant-based vegan company I can't really see that that comes across anywhere"* (P6-FG3). The aforementioned establishes that there also can exist a negative relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention (P6-FG3, P2-FG2, P2-FG3). Further, participants who had a low degree of source credibility showed that it likewise could have a negative impact upon brand attitude (P6-FG3, P2-FG2, P2-FG3).

To summarize, the emergence of several aspects were shown. Participants that perceived a positive attitude towards the brand were more inclined to also have purchase intention. In spite of the ambiguity within this group of participants, the previously mentioned indicates that having a positive brand attitude also has a positive impact on the participants' purchase intention, which is in line with page 57. Moreover, it was also established that there is a positive relationship between source credibility and brand attitude, which is in accordance with the papers analytical framework on page 57.

Participants with a neutral or indifferent brand attitude were made up of participants that had conflicting purchase intention. Because of the predominant ambiguity, it was not possible to establish a relationship between brand attitude and purchase intention for individuals with an indifferent or neutral brand attitude echoing page 46.

Further, it was established that a negative brand attitude had a negative impact upon the participants' purchase intention. Lastly, it was found that having a low level of source credibility would have a negative impact upon brand attitude, which then in turn would affect the participants purchase intention negatively.

4.4 Subjective Norm
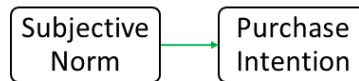
Figure 23: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Subjective Norm
Source: Authors' Creation

When discussing subjective norm and how it impacts their purchase intention as shown in figure 21, P4-FG2 said that "*of course you do*" take expectations from others into consideration, though without offering any further details as to why. However, other participants told anecdotes of trying to "*quickly [be] accepted as a cross fit athlete*" (P3-FG1) by buying gear seen on world-class cross-fit athletes or buying a one-time grill to not be left out and not "*be the one that asks: 'Hey, can I put my stuff on your [grill]?'*" (P3-FG3). P4-FG1 and P1-FG3 both reported instances where they bought clothes while shopping with friends because their friends said they looked nice. They did not want to disagree with their friends and thus bought the clothes, which they ended up returning at a later time. This relates back to the theorized relationship of the analytical framework.

Yet, it should also be addressed that several participants did not feel like they ever bow to any social pressures, and that they do not try to live up to somebody's expectations and thus buy certain products. This echoes some criticism of subjective norm that was addressed in the theory chapter on page 52. However, during the discussion it often came across as if the people simply did not want to admit that this actually happens to them. Similar to when P4-FG2 stated: "*In a perfect world I would say that I'm rational so ads can't affect me*," P1-FG1 for example "*wouldn't say that it is to live up to any expectations*." The remarks opposing an impact of subjective norm on purchase intention should thus not be taken at face value.

This goes to show that the predicted impact of subjective norm on purchase intention is present in the data. It further cements the theorized positive relationship of subjective norm to behavioral intention as outlined on page 52.

4.5 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention was found to be positively influenced in multiple ways, some of which have already been outlined in the previous analysis parts of brand credibility, brand attitude and subjective norm, as shown in figure 24. All three relationships were confirmed through matching patterns, according to the theorized in the respective literature review chapters (see

page 43 to 45 for brand credibility; page 45 to 56 for TRA and its included dimensions of brand attitude, subjective norm and purchase intention) and the subsequently developed theoretical framework (page 57).
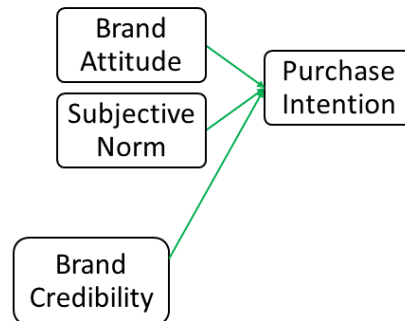
Figure 24: Part of Analytical Framework Relating to Purchase Intention
Source: Author's creation

When it came to whether purchase intention regarding the presented brand of Califia Farms had been established, results pointed in different directions. Following is a breakdown of usable answers concerning purchase intention.

One subset of participants achieved purchase intention, and were interested in trying the product or products, likely for curiosity reasons (e.g. P7-FG1, P2-FG1, P1-FG2, P2-FG2, P5-FG2, P1-FG3). Some participants were interested, but contingent on the price (e.g. P1-FG1, P5-FG1, P2-FG3), which was not explicitly asked in every focus group. One said that he would try it, but not due to having seen it on Instagram, rather it would be an in-store decision (P4-FG2).

Others either remained unconvinced due to indifference towards the brand (P3-FG1), dislike of the product category (P3-FG2), or did not have purchase intention at this point due to plenty of competing offerings (P6-FG1, P6-FG3). However, for Participant 6-FG1 that could change if he perceived the product as more popular.

These answers reaffirm the theoretical framework and show that consideration of whether or not they intended to purchase was established. Since purchase intention in general can be driven in many ways (see page 54 to 56 for examples), the theoretical framework cannot account for all explanations. A prevalent emerging pattern was the influence of purchase intention through brand awareness, which was not included in the proposed framework. Multiple respondents have mentioned how they have visited cafes/stores because of having seen them on an influencer's picture (P3-FG3; P5-FG3; P4-FG3; P6-FG3). Here it becomes an influencer driving purchase intention through brand awareness and source credibility.

An interesting theoretical question arose concerning purchase intention, as one participant stated that he "*once bought a hat, a winter wool hat as I saw a guy wearing it, but I was also looking for a hat*" and added that the influencer usually wears clothes of quality and that the participant did not know the brand (P3-FG3). Although this participant was in the market for the product category, making him more recipient to stimulus, this decision can be explained in a number of ways.

Option 1, the participant chose to trust an influencer on a blind purchase decision without ever taking the brand into consideration, thus foregoing both brand attitude and brand credibility. Here it could be a case of source credibility influencing a more pure attitude towards the object (product), which then drives purchase intention, thus still confirming the attitude-intention link from the TRA. Option 2, the source credibility is immediately transferred and converted to brand credibility, thus influencing purchase intention. Concurrently brand attitude would also be created. Or the more unlikely option 3, that requires a very literal interpretation of the participant's statement: the participant did not ever take brand into account and no attitude was formed towards the product, since he just needed any hat. This would signify a direct link from source credibility to purchase intention and subsequent purchase behavior.

In any case, in this situation the source credibility is particularly driven by the expertise of the influencer, as well as the style subdimension of attractiveness, and additionally, the emerging theme of brand awareness is created here as well.

The study revolves around a brand that no participant was supposed to know in advance, so as to accommodate attitude formation without preconceived notions, as discussed on page 18. But in essence, both brand/product category awareness would need to exist to facilitate purchasing conditions. This can also be traced to the act of intention measurement creating/enhancing intention, which has been discussed in the literature review as the mere-measurement effect of intention measurements (see page 54).

In conclusion, all theorized relationships of brand credibility, brand attitude and subjective norm to purchase intention were confirmed. Emerging patterns included brand awareness as leading to purchase intention, which could also be seen as a necessary prerequisite.

4.6 Overview

In order to give an overview of the findings from the analysis of the papers proposed analytical framework, in this chapter there will be a brief summary of what was uncovered in the analysis.
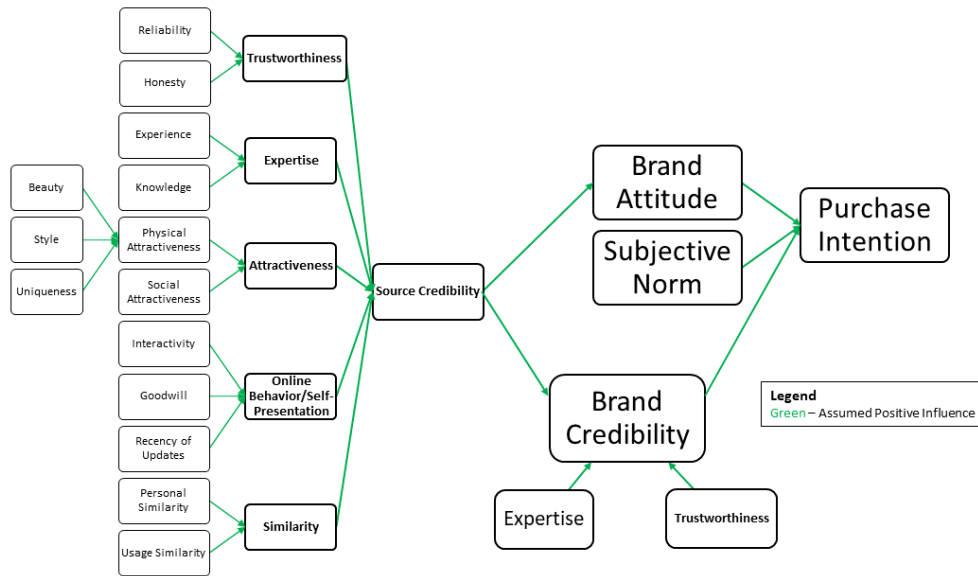
Figure 25: Original Analytical Framework
Source: Authors' Creation

First, trustworthiness and its underlying dimensions showed to have a positive relationship to source credibility. Further, a connection emerged between deeming a picture as 'unrealistic' and gaining a low perceived reliability. The emerging pattern of realism came to light, where participants had negative sentiments on pictures appearing to be too polished or in staged situations, thus decreasing the subfactors of trustworthiness, leading to lowered source credibility. In addition, the theme of sponsorship consistency emerged, which relates to whether an influencer had shifting affiliations with brands or had a strong affiliation to one brand.

Much like trustworthiness, it was established that the dimension of expertise and its sub-dimensions had a positive relationship with source credibility. This was however not the case for attractiveness and its sub-dimensions where it was found that it did not have a clear positive impact on source credibility. The underlying dimension of social attractiveness was confirmed to have a positive impact on source credibility whereas physical attractiveness only figured as a threshold.

For online behavior/self-presentation, the sub-dimensions of goodwill and interactivity were verified to impact source credibility positively. The last sub-dimension that constitutes recency of updates was found to be a threshold dimension with two thresholds; the first threshold involves a certain amount of posting being necessary, the second threshold will actually affect source credibility negatively by too frequent posting, leading to annoyance in followers. Emerging patterns showed links between interactivity and eWOM, as interactions do not happen only between the influencer, but also among followers and their friends, which can lead to purchase intention.

The findings for the similarity and its sub-dimensions establish a positive relationship to source credibility. When looking at brand credibility, it confirmed that the dimension was able to drive purchase intention. Interestingly, it was discovered that the two sub-dimensions of brand credibility was impacted by source credibility instead of the overall brand credibility dimension itself, which was not an aspect that had been predicted in the proposed framework. For brand attitude, it was confirmed that exist a positive link between the dimension and source credibility as well as brand attitude having a positive relationship to purchase intention. The existing of a positive relationship to the dimension of purchase intention was likewise confirmed for subjective norm.

Lastly, for purchase intention the findings reaffirmed the theoretical framework. Further, new patterns emerged that indicated that purchase intention can be influenced through brand awareness as shown in figure 26. The analysis uncovered an instance where influencers impacted consumers' purchase intention through brand awareness and source credibility. An aspect that was not proposed in figure 23.
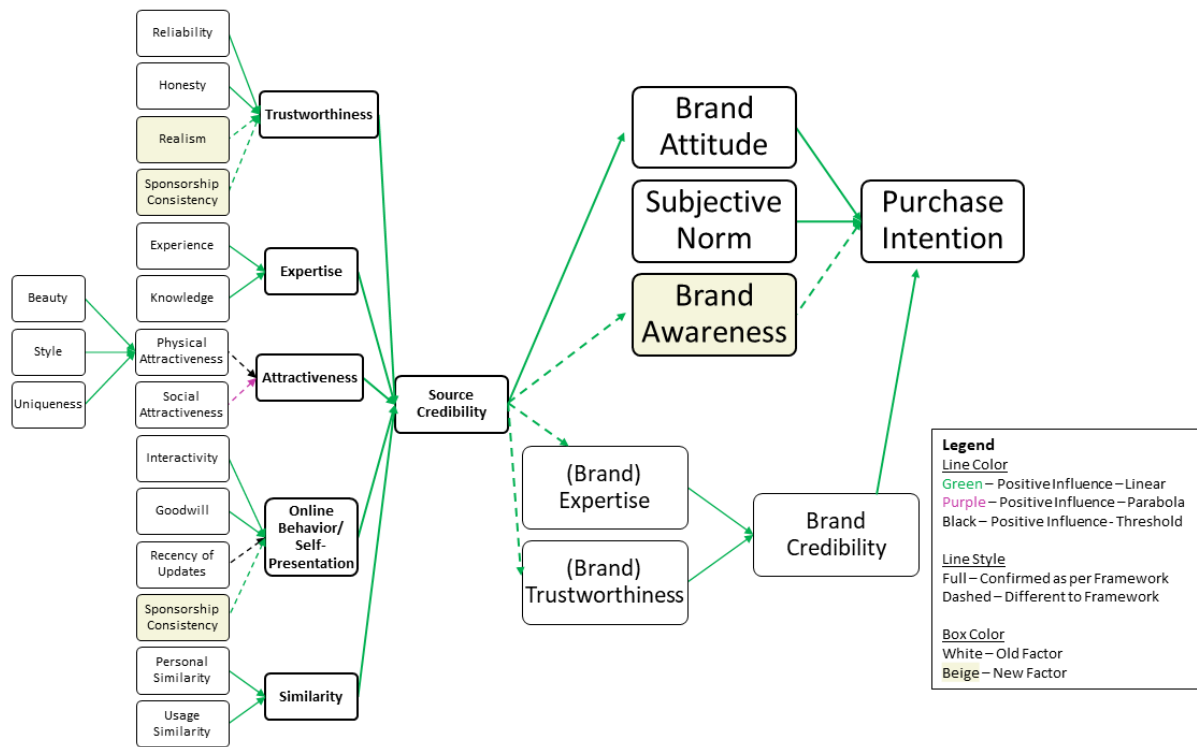
Figure 26: Amended Analytical Framework
Source: Authors' Creation

5. Conclusion

This chapter wraps up the research process by presenting this thesis' conclusions. Based on it and the results presented in the previous chapter, implications for the business world are outlined, the study's limitations are detailed and shortcomings are addressed. Finally, suggestions regarding new and different angles on source credibility and purchase intention research in the realm of Instagram, which should be researched in the future, are made.

5.1 Conclusion

This thesis set out to answer one major research question: *How do Instagram influencers and their credibility affect consumers' purchase intention?* To do so, it used smaller procedural research questions to help answer the more complex one.

The first procedural research question asked: *How can the credibility of influencers on Instagram be theoretically explained?* Using existing literature, a view of source credibility with Instagram in mind was synthesized that extended previous source credibility conceptualizations. Based on literature, trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, online behavior/self-presentation, and similarity are made out to possess distinct positive influences on source credibility.

The second procedural research question sought out to explore the way source credibility ultimately influences purchases intention: *How does the credibility of influencers on Instagram impact consumers' purchase intention theoretically?* The extant literature pointed towards source credibility not directly influencing purchase intention. Using previous research, it was theorized that source credibility indirectly influences purchase intention by positively influencing brand attitude and brand credibility. These two in turn have a direct positive influence on purchase intention.

The third research question aimed at shifting from theory to empirical research: *How do actual consumers see the credibility of influencers on Instagram and how does it impact their purchase intention?* Consumers on Instagram use the influencer's trustworthiness, expertise, social attractiveness, online behavior/self-presentation, and their similarity to judge the credibility of an influencer. However, it is important that the influencer possesses a certain level of trustworthiness, physical attractiveness. The influencer's credibility then positively impacts consumers' brand attitude and their perception of the brand's expertise and trustworthiness, but

also positively affects brand awareness. These three aspects then in turn have a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention.

5.2 Theoretical Contribution

The results of this thesis also provide different insights into the topic of source credibility and its influence on Instagram as outlined in the conclusion. When relating it to existing literature, there are different aspects that have implications. For one it confirms the relevance of the online behavior/self-presentation dimension proposed by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), which lacked other empirical evidence. It is also able to confirm similarity as an important antecedent to source credibility, which previously only Reichelt et al. (2014) and O'Reilly et al. (2016) had proposed. Thus, providing more empirical evidence for a more nuanced view of source credibility, specifically for an Instagram context, compared to the generalized view of source credibility such as the one proposed by Eisend (2006).

Regarding certain sub-dimensions of source credibility entailing a threshold characteristic, this study is able to confirm that this is indeed the case for expertise as O'Reilly et al. (2016) also had found out but earlier research had not discussed. The other threshold that was found by other researchers, namely trustworthiness by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), was not confirmed in this study. However, this study adds several other thresholds, physical attractiveness and recency of updates, which have not been addressed in previous research. In similar fashion, this study was able to find a more nuanced view of relationships between variables compared to previous studies who have only looked at it in a linear way. Results indicated an inversed parabola relationship between social attractiveness and source credibility. The idea of social attractiveness was also confirmed in the way Edwards et al. (2014) or Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018) have looked at it.

Results also give further proof of the match-up hypothesis that researchers such as McCormick (2016) examine. In it, there should be a good fit between product and endorser. This thesis takes it one step further, by indicating that the fit should not only be between product and endorser but also between brand and endorser to maximize the source credibility effect's impact. In addition to the match-up hypothesis, results also connect back to the idea of ad disclosure when talking about honesty as part of trustworthiness as participants were always suspicious that the picture might be an ad because, while obviously an ad, there was no disclosing information. Researchers such as Evans et al. (2017) or Campbell and Evans (2018) have tackled this in a rather functionalistic way, but this study underpins their results with interpretive and qualitative results.

5.3 Managerial Implications

This thesis' contribution is both practical and theoretical. The findings in the thesis provide practitioners with unique insights about the field of influencer marketing on Instagram from a consumer's perspective. More specifically, there will in the following be a rundown of the five factors that marketers should focus on, when wanting to identify a credible influencer that can establish purchase intention for potential and current customers. Before applying what is going to be stated in the following, it is paramount to be attentive to the thesis' limitations, which can be viewed on page 89 to 90.

The first thing marketers should pay attention to is using influencers who take pictures that are not too polished or staged, since 'unrealistic' photos are deemed untrustworthy. Further, it is important to identify influencers that have an audience, which consists of individuals from the desired target group. The reason for this is that people are more inclined to trust an influencer if they have either a personal relationship with them or if they follow them because they like what he or she does.

Another important aspect is the influencer's degree of expertise. For an influencer to seem experienced or knowledgeable it is paramount that it is visible from their personal feed and/or bio that they previously have used the type of product they are advertising.

When it comes to judging the attractiveness of an influencer things get a bit tricky. Looking at physical attractiveness, the influencer does not have to be extremely attractive but at the same time, they should not be seen as unattractive either. Therefore, they need to be somewhere in between. Besides being physical attractive, the influencer should also be socially attractive, which is measured by follower count. Hence, it is beneficial if the influencer has accumulated a higher number of followers than the average user although having too many followers at a certain point is not beneficial.

The next aspect that is important for marketers to consider is the influencer's online behavior or self-presentation. It is important that the influencer has good intentions and creates engaging posts that can spark a conversation in the comment section. In addition to that, the influencer needs to participate in the conversation and answer the followers who comment to the best of their abilities. Further, the influencer needs to post regularly while not doing it too often since it will alienate certain people.

The last aspect that should be considered when identifying an influencer is similarity. It is

important to use an influencer who the company's target group will perceive as being personally similar. This implies being on the same social level or having personal characteristics that are alike. For usage similarity, it is crucial that the setting and the actual use of the product itself resonated with how the consumers would go about it using the company's product(s).

In addition to finding a generally credible influencer to drive purchase intention, brands can also influence their brand expertise or brand trustworthiness specifically. This can be done by employing influencers with high expertise or high trustworthiness respectively as these aspects then in turn rub off onto the brand.

5.4 Limitations

The study conducted has some implications and limitations that should be addressed and held in mind. First, as outlined in the methodology, by conducting a qualitative interpretivist study, the generalizability will be considered low. In addition, the cultural setting may have an influence on the receptivity to influencer marketing, as well as the general Instagram usage. For example, Germany could have an increased number of private accounts due to security concerns, or emerging markets could have different usage patterns and views on celebrity. Further research is needed to adequately cover the topic.

Likewise, the selected sample is consisting of university students or people that have completed university education. This means that the sample is more educated that the average country population, which means that it is not necessarily representative of the general population.

Next, the product presented for the focus groups is a fast-moving consumer good (FCMG), although in the premium end of the respective product category. The application of this product begs the question of whether it is possible to compare across product categories, even if one limits to FCMG.

As pointed out in the analysis part of trustworthiness, some participants had the assumption that they were there to stay critical and 'figure out the flaws' in the influencers' messages. This creates a dynamic of overanalyzing, which does not necessarily reflect casual usage of Instagram. This is in part due to the approach of using brands and influencers with which people do not have relationships. Based on the responses in the conducted focus groups, participants are likely more distrustful than in a normal setting, since it is a set up setting, and an unfamiliar influencer. Moreover, by being interactive focus groups, a mindset of staying critical can quickly spread to other group participants. These issues have an impact not only on the

trustworthiness aspect, but on every construct measured. Results could be different if a study was set up utilizing influencers and their followers, which could better reflect the relationship through not having their guard up.

Another issue that became evident in the empirical data collection and subsequent analysis is that it is difficult to distinguish between source credibility and trustworthiness in participants. People have a tendency to use overlapping words like trust, credibility, trustworthiness, reliability etc. in an interchangeable way when they talk, which makes some of the finer distinctions get lost. A way to address this could be through quantitative questionnaires with very specific questions addressing each construct, but even then it may just sound like repeating questions to a person not familiar with the finer points of source credibility theory, which could still muddy the results.

Lastly, this thesis only examines at a conscious level in participants. Going into the subconscious through experiments or observation, or looking at affective parameters may provide different results and additional understanding.

5.5 Future Research

This thesis has added to the body of knowledge in an emerging research field of influencer marketing and Instagram, but many questions remain. Due to the limited generalizability of the applied methods, additional research in more contexts is needed. Examining other contexts and/or other products will provide further insight into Instagram as a platform and the use of influencers in marketing.

In general, while the thesis has provided insight into different relationships in source credibility, these relationships may not be linear. The thresholds uncovered in this thesis in addition to the confirmed ones warrant further research to assess properly and measure their importance. This thesis could be applied as the foundation for the development of a quantitative study that measures the uncovered relationships in rigid fashion.

Among emerging patterns found in this thesis, a large emphasis was put on whether a picture appeared realistic, e.g. mirrored a real-life situation. This topic warrants further exploring in the context of Instagram, due to the platform's emphasis on visual content. Additionally, the theme of sponsorship consistency became present, although the exact implications are unclear at this point in time. Further research of this topic is needed to properly assess the threshold parameters for sponsorship consistency.

Concluding, as pointed out in the limitations, this thesis only examines at the conscious level in participants. Future research may provide additional insight by examining at a subconscious level, through experiments or observations. Or researchers may apply a research design addressing affective factors, either at a conscious or subconscious level.

6. Reflections

This chapter is supposed to offer some reflections on certain aspects of the thesis combining theoretical aspects and personal experiences. The personal note of this chapter also affects the different tone and the language used in this part of the thesis.

We as university students have not conducted any qualitative research during our time in the master's program but have always opted to conduct quantitative research. This means we were and still are rather inexperienced with qualitative research. Where this shows is in the literature review and subsequently the theoretical framework and the data analysis. Many scholars like Bryman & Bell (2015) or Saunders et al. (2016) argue that the quality of qualitative research increases with the experience of the researchers. What this meant for us is that we spent a lot more time than expected reading up on processes and comparing previously written master's theses to ours in order to get an idea of how to conduct our research in proper fashion.

As previously mentioned, the inexperience shows in several aspects of the thesis. Very prominently in the literature review, especially in hindsight, where we do not elaborate enough of the actual antecedents of the source credibility dimensions. For one part, the proposed antecedents are not commonly conceptualized and elaborated on in source credibility research. Ohanian (1990; 1991) and Djafarova and Trofimenko merely attempt to trace them if at all and most scholars (e.g. Eisend (2006), Jin and Phua (2014), Djafarova and Rushworth (2016) among others) do not further discuss them either but simply refer to Ohanian (1990). This is where we should have looked further beyond the mere application in source credibility research trying to synthesize a theoretical understanding that allows for a more nuanced theoretical view.

This also connects to the analysis; in it, we make the effort to refer back to theory and, so to say, confront theory with our empirical evidence. But to some extent, mostly regarding the antecedents, there is not much with which to confront our empirical evidence. Of course, this allows for the creation of a more nuanced view of the source credibility dimensions and their antecedents detached from prior knowledge. But one should be aware that incorporating theoretical knowledge from other academic research streams might have helped to avoid reinventing the wheel and would have facilitated an even more nuanced view of the source credibility dimensions. At the same time, results might also have allowed us to show that the knowledge of other academic research streams is not applicable in this context. However, seeing as it is right now, we do not know what is the case.

When we look at how we generated our data, there are further aspects to address. Similar to being inexperienced with qualitative research in general, we were and are also inexperienced with the conduction of focus groups. This showed especially our moderation skills, especially in the first and at times in the second group, as we allowed the participants to get off track too often. A trained and more experienced moderator would have been able to prevent this and get more to the bottom of the matter as intended in the script. Now having an external moderator or training a lot to become very good at it is and was no realistic option. But what we found out is that transcribing the focus group and reading through the transcript helped enormously to get an idea where we went wrong in moderation. Because of this, focus group three felt a lot better moderated. To facilitate this, we should have conducted our pre-testing not only with single individuals but also with a focus group. Simply to be able to get an idea what aspects of our moderation should be improved upon.

Regarding the focus groups and the sample used, it should also be addressed that it would have been nice to match the influencers and their pictures shown with the participants. As it also came apparent in the focus groups, familiarity with an influencer is an important aspect. Source credibility is most likely not formed in a mere split-second but formed and shaped over a longer amount of time. Thus, it would have been nice to use influencers that the participants actually follow. But seeing as the sample was both diverse in terms of nationality and studies like Trapp et al. (2018) have shown that people tend to follow influencers from their own country rather than international influencers, it was decided to not go this way due to the low number of participants available. A similar issue can be taken with the brand and its products that were used. We were unable to ensure that every participant is interested in these kind of products; of course, this influences the way they act and think regarding them. Ideally, one would ensure that only people interested in these kinds of products would respond as those are the people a company is interested in influencing rather than those that are not interested anyway.

While Califia Farms is regularly praised by the way they make use of Instagram as a marketing tool, the number of pictures and influencer collaborations was limited. For example, the picture used to stimulate discussion for trustworthiness, in hindsight, does not come across as trustworthy. However, other pictures used are even more obviously staged or do not show a person at all, which is a major key in building trust. A different brand would have had a better selection of influencer pictures available, however those available were most likely known to the participants or their products were even less interesting to the majority of the participants. Other brands taken a closer look at are Dutch eyewear brand Ace & Tate, Canadian outdoor

clothing brand Camping Goods, the watch brands Daniel Wellington of Sweden and Kapten & Son of Germany, and American athletic wear brand Under Armour. Basically, it came down to no brand having all aspects, meaning one would have to decide on two aspects as illustrated in figure 27.

Many pictures available

Pick Two

Brand unknown to
participants

Brand's products
interesting to most
participants
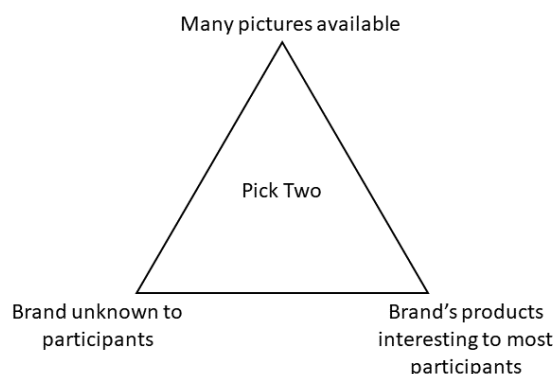
Figure 27: Triangle of Aspects
Source: Authors' Creation

We also did not reach data saturation as already discussed in the chapter on application of focus groups. Ideally, this would have happened, through conducting two focus groups, transcribe and analyze them, then do the same for one additional group until no themes emerge. But seeing as we had a hard time to recruit participants and match theirs' and our schedules, we did not follow this process all the way through. It basically came down to judging how much more additional information are we getting out of conducting an additional focus group versus how much time will that leave us to properly analyze the data. We went with the latter of the options feeling reinvigorated by Guest et al. (2017, p. 16) stating that "three focus groups will likely capture 80% of the themes on a topic." It can thus be understood that the additional data generated would have had a rather small impact on the overall results.

Last but not least, the incorporation of subjective norm should be addressed. It is argued that proper application of intention with attitude as an antecedent, based on the TRA, should also include subjective norm. This claim is based on the argumentations that papers give for excluding subjective norm. However, we should have probably omitted subjective norm from the study, not because of the arguments used by other researchers, but rather because it feels out of place and does not add a lot of useful information. It also took up a decent amount of time in focus group interviews making them longer than needed.

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Appendix 1: Source Credibility Dimensions

Study \ Dimension	Trustworthiness	Expertise	Attractiveness	Similarity	Platform Credibility	Relevance	Interactivity	Reliance	Recency of Updates	Goodwill	Likability	Online Behavior/ Self-Presentation
Ayeh (2015)	x	x										
Colliander & Marder (2018)	x	x										
Colliander & Dahlén (2011)	x	x	x									
Djafarova & Rushworth (2017)	x	x	x			x						
Djafarova & Trofimenko (2018)	x	x	x									x
Edwards et al. (2013)	x	x										
Edwards et al. (2014)		x	x				x					
Hur et al. (2017)	x											
Jin & Phua (2014)	x	x	x									
Johnson & Kaye (2014)					x							
Johnson & Kaye (2016)							x	x				
Li & Suh (2015)							x					
Lin et al. (2016)	x	x								x		
Nekmat et al. (2015)	x	x									x	
O'Reilly et al. (2016)	x	x		x								
Reichelt et al. (2014)	x	x		x								
Spence et al. (2013)	x	x		x						x		
Wang et al. (2017)	x	x	x									
Westerman et al. (2014)									x			
Zha et al. (2018)	x											
Total	15	14	6	3	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1

Appendix 2: Focus Group 1 Transcript

Moderator 1: Yes. Well, thank you for coming, everyone. Really nice of you. So you know what it's about, influencer marketing. And we're going to show you some some pictures on Instagram. And also the person's profile, sort of profile feed. And then we want you to answer or come with your thoughts about how you interpret some different aspects of their posts and of their profiles and at any point, even though we show you some things. If you have something like. Also if you think about your own Instagram usage or experiences, at any point, you can insert something. It doesn't have to be strictly connected to the profile. So we hope it creates some conversations and discussion.

Moderator 1: So we have we have this case. It's a brand you probably don't know, which is called Califia Farms. They manufacture coffee, drinks, smoothies,

Moderator 2: - juices, chocolate milk, the whole range. Should we start with the first picture? OK. Take a look at it, and you'll have - take the whole scene in.

Moderator 1: Can you read the text?

Everyone: Yeah.

Moderator 1: Is the company American or? (Nodding) Okay.

Moderator 2: And then, that's the feed of the person. We did check for nudity (laughter in room). You're also old enough, okay.

Moderator 1: So, we're going to ask you like, how this person comes across. Do you think the person is reliable, for example, why or why not.

Participant 2: Define reliable? Like what do you mean for reliable?

Moderator 1: Like, do you trust what this person is saying or doing.

Participant 1: I would say she looks very much like a model. So maybe I wouldn't believe it so much. And Wilhelmina is like a, isn't it like a model website she's referring to? Isn't it like a model-scout-thing?

Moderator 2: Yeah, it's like an agency.

Participant 1: Yeah. So I would say, maybe I wouldn't believe her so much because she's used to advertising.

Participant 3: Is it like only related to a profile or a picture?

Moderator 2: Also take the picture in consideration.

Participant 3: I think like, she looks like a model. I would agree. And I think it's like scened [sic] in a way. But I kind of relate to the motive about having a nice morning, and kind of the freedom. Consider that motive. But I would still have in mind that she's of model and she has probably got paid to do that. So I would have that in mind.

Participant 1: Definitely.

Participant 2: I mean I don't know because like what you said makes sense. But at the same time we're talking about coffee, that's a coffee isn't it. So it's like it's not that. I mean if it was an ice cream I would agree. So like of course, there reliability I think it depends on the product that it's advertised as well because if you take that it's just coffee. So I don't know like zero calories or whatever then could actually be like reliable as an advertising or could be trusted. Always depends on the product I think.

Moderator 1: What about the person itself? Like do you think she seems honest? You were talking a lot about her looks.

Participant 4: I feel like, even though it's pretty obvious that she's selling something, it's not out of her style. It seems like it's her style. Like all the pictures, and it's like, she has a certain style. So, if you have clothing, or coffee, and it fits with her style, I think it's believable. Even though I know she's paid to do it. I mean, I get the impression she wouldn't put on something she doesn't believe in.

Participant 1: I don't know, I instantly just distrust it when I can see it's a model. It's like, why should I trust that's her honest opinion. I guess they pay her a lot to, tag that.

Participant 7.: I think it's a little too scened [sic], like it's too set up for me. I think it's like, that could be like the back of a hotel. And she's sitting there all alone, why would she do that? (laughter in room) As you probably have a hundred of those empty coffees in in, at the side, because it's followed by a hundred takes, and I think it's just, in the way with that shirt, I think it's too set up. I think there's a lot of photographs people saying "no, no no no. Again-

Participant 1: - New take

Participant 7.: Yeah, new take. So, yeah.

Participant 4: Yeah, I guess the way the bottle is turned is pretty product placement.

Participant 7.: It is not like I would imagine her sitting at her own house like that. So it's too set up for me, definitely.

Participant 5: Yeah, when I look at this I'm not looking at "oh, she's pretty or not". It's more like an advertisement, as I look at it through an advertisement. If it was on the, shopping or something, I would say the same as looking at this picture, because she's exactly grabbing the bottle as you would in an advertisement. But it's not that I trust her more or less, it's just the same as an advertisement.

Participant 7.: I also think the light in the picture is too perfect. Like it was taken with a Canon camera, and not just an Instagram smartphone (agreement in room). Yeah, it's, it's too perfect, and also with the shirt on her. Yeah.

Participant 6.: I also believe with the way we are living today with Instagram and social media, like, we have a lot of bloggers and influencers and stuff, and, I would not call them trustworthy all of them, when they are promoting some products or something. I believe that this kind of marketing could be like creating some brand awareness or something about the company or product but again creating this relationship from this given person to a consumer and getting the consumer to buy the product. That I find a pretty hard time to relate actually. So I would say that they create some awareness but the relationship and trustworthiness to make the consumer buy the product and try it, that's a hard way and a hard bridge to cover I think.

Moderator 1: Should we move on?

Moderator 2: Yes. So we'll have another picture.

Participant 5: It's from the same?

Moderator 1: This is a different person.

Participant 4: But the same brand?

Moderator 1: Same brand.

Participant 4: For me that's more classical Instagram, when you post it yourself.

Participant 1: Have you seen the text: "this smoothie changed my life"? (laughter in room).

Participant 4: No, the text there probably is too much. (laughter)

Participant 2: But I think it's actually a nice, I, I think it's a nice caption because it's kind of funny you know, so in a sense like it catches your attention as well, It's like "I don't have time to eat lunch but I don't want to eat the kids". I think it's I think it's a good one.

Participant 1: Yeah maybe just delete the first line. (agreement)

Moderator 2: Well, she's talking about, if you read the rest, about using it in a recipe, so making the smoothie yourself using some of it, using some of Califia Farms. Is that something, or is it just already too much?

Participant 1: I would say that it's more useful and like, yeah.

Participant 7.: It just looks like a customer who is a little too happy about this particular drink. But I think I like the setting better and I understand some of the text she's writing because I think some of the happiness about that drink could be that it's really good, she's just tasted it, and it's becoming spring soon in the picture and it's all good, you know. And I like that we don't see any model or anything too perfect in that picture.

Participant 4: And you can see the kids in the background, so it's not like "ohh I have kids".

Moderator 2: (showing influencer's profile page) So that is the person.

Participant 1: Even though some of the pictures may be a little staged, they are still more reliable.

Participant 4: Yeah definitely.

Participant 2: I would say it's more spontaneous in a sense.

Participant 7.: Because of that we also see her in a context where maybe "I'm going to take a picture now, even though I'm not entirely 'made-up' [sic] and stuff like that, so it's more down to earth.

Participant 1: We also get the sense that she actually cares about what she's eating.

Participant 7.: But also I think that if you check out the description you know like 'believer' and 'mama' like in that way like, she gets also closer to like a specific target of customers in a sense. And it's more down to earth as somebody said.

Moderator 1: So would you say that she's like knowledgeable about the product, like does she have some specific insight, insight into the product? Is she teaching you something?

Participant 4: Like she seems like the kind of person that not would not just drink it before she knew what's in the product.

Participant 1: She's also, like, saying she goes to the farmer's market. She seems more.. critical.

Participant 5: I have a feeling that when we're looking to the profile it's more of the kind of person that would tell that she likes the product just because she likes the product and the other one more like "I only do it because they pay me". But at the same time when I see the picture and the description I feel like "Yeah, you're just.. selling it".

Participant 7: Also because she's a, she's a mom - I have a kid too. And we're tired all the time.

Participant 1: Do you eat him all the time? (laughter)

Participant 7: No. But I, I think that because she's a mom and she's tired all the time, I think that this, this - she would not adopt this drink unless she thinks it can help her some way. Or making her feel a little more fresh and energized, stuff like that. So I don't think she's a person without a d opt any kind of shit to drink. Unless it's something that makes her feel "this is, this is good, this is nice for me" and it's a healthy snack type thing.

Participant 1: But it also depends whether, on a, like.. there were some other smoothies and stuff. And if that's another brand I think I would lose the trust that I have. 'cus if she just like tries a new one every week, then 'maybe not'.

Participant 2: But also with the fact that in the, in the picture she posts a like a recipe or something. Like you know, like with, with whatever kind of powder etc.. I think that it also shows in a sense some like.. At, at least, you know like, she tried it and she's advertising something she tried. I mean like she could have taken the recipe from somewhere, but you know like it gives an idea of.. she actually tried the thing and she actually liked it.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 3: Yeah, for me the biggest difference is that it seems based on her profile and the picture, that she has an interest in this type of product. That's kind of in line with her profile. And also like just in general it seems that it means something to her. Where the other picture was more like I just want to push this product because I get some money because of that. And then I can relate way more to this kind of person than the other model type of person as a user.

Participant 1: (new picture is shown) What is it that she's holding?

Moderator 1: This is cold-brewed coffee.

Participant 2: (reading from picture text) With almond milk yeah, dairy-free, no sugar, tastes delicious.

Participant 2: Again, a model kind of girl where this is wave number 1000 in the background. And again, I think it's too set up. And the blue water is very colorful.

Participant 1: It's also a bit weird that she's walking around there with a coffee.. I don't know.

Participant 3: Yeah I also think it seems a bit random maybe.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Moderator 1: So do you find this sort of influencer.. do you find her to be unique?

Participant 5: No.

Participant 1: No.

Participant 6: I also believe that the other one's, the mom, is like more down to earth. And we were shown some private photos with the kids and so on, so, in that way we could maybe create some relationship to her. If I saw a picture like that on Instagram, promoted ad, I would just skip by because I could get a thousand of them, daily. Because, everyone nowadays are using bloggers and models and so on, to promote some products and it's like "Yeah, I not asked about this commercial" so I'm not looking for it. But get some relationship like to a private person that shows something funny and show something about their lives, I feel attached to look more into the profile and so on. But when it's just a model, like I'm just skipping by it.

Participant 4: Yeah. I think's really boring and, yeah.. like I don't think I could remember the difference from her and the other one.

Participant 6: No.

Participant 1: No.

Participant 5: If you ask me about the trust part, so if trust more the opinion about the mom, or the first and third girl I would say the mom because it's more, much more believable that she really tasted it and she's commenting on this and I get the feeling that you could put any bottle in this, in this model and it's the same. It's just a good photo and then you just put the brand on the photo.

Participant 2: But you know, I also think - like it's true - but I also think it depends on who is on the other side of the screen because if you take like, I don't know, a mom or something they're gonna like, probably like you know, go on, as you said, and skip it. But if you're taking somebody that is really, I don't know, into fitness, or hypocaloric stuff and you see that, like she's a model and this drink is dairy-free and low in sugar etc. Then like if you are like on a diet or if you want to, I don't know, improve yourself in physical terms or something, then you would probably go for something like that more than with a mom that is, you know, advertising the smoothie, I don't know.

Participant 1: Definitely.

Participant 4: But then I still think the scene is a bit off.. Like, she's out swimming or?

Participant 7: (laughs) Yeah, with the, with the dry hair. (laughs) But it's, it's, it's just like.. again, I think it's, it's too set up, because if you look at the coffee and then look at her skin it's almost the same color. And I don't, I'm not in California very often - I've haven't been there. But, but what is.. and I was thinking that she's wearing a white bathing suit and having the brown coffee on her, right. So you can really very fast look at the coffee. And again, it's it's (laughs) it's yeah, it's it's too obvious that it's set up I think, also because yeah, the brown skin and then white bathing suit and the brown coffee. You see it, it's right in the middle of the picture. That is what.. she wants us to see.

Moderator 1: So, so, do you, do you find this, this influencer beautiful or attractive? (agreement in room)

Participant 7: Yes.

Participant 1: Definitely . . yeah. But the mom was beautiful and attractive too.(agreement)

Participant 7: But that was natural.. where this is...

Participant 1: Yeah, more like about beautiful pictures.

Moderator 1: So it's different kinds of beauty?

Participant 1: (repeating to participant who did not hear) Maybe it's different kinds of beauty.

Participant 7: No but I just think that I like the natural more because that is something.. dreaming imagination like that. That is what we think in our head but in reality we see the mom which I think is more of beauty.

Participant 5: Yeah but I think that will also depend on the people, like you said who are on the other side of the screen, because I think there are a lot of, lot of, a lot of people that are looking at this model are like "I want to be like her. I want to take this exact photo". So it's.. I look at it a different way. Of course both are beautiful but then this is like almost a dream as you said. But I think there are people looking more at these photos because they want to, to reach that dream.

Participant 5: Yeah definitely, that was.. I was not saying that that wasn't.. less correct I think, I just when we are sitting here trying to be.. trying to criticize that and tear it apart.. I just think that is more reliable that mom type. I think that the majority of people looking at that type advertising would look at the model and think "yes, I want to buy that product.

Participant 2: Also because like always in the caption there is.. it's written that it's dairy-free. So you also, I think that you also target, besides, I don't know if you can speak but for instance you.. could target vegan or vegetarian like you know. So it's I think it's a very different target. So it really depends on what kind of person you are and what you're aiming for.

Participant 3: I also feel like Instagram and social media is a bit superficial. So in that sense I think most girls will maybe aspire to look like her so she will probably be more effective in terms of relating to a person's impulsive interest. So I guess a lot of girls would quickly see an interest in that picture and maybe do a search on that product or whatever, related to the other person we saw before.

Participant 1: (showing the influencer's profile page) She's, she's again referring to some kind of management.. I, I wouldn't believe really.

Moderator 1: Do you find her like, stylish? Like, does she know how to..

Participant 1: I bet that she decided herself on any picture. I think she's kind of.. it looks like fun pictures. So I don't know if she's.. (interrupted)

Participant 4: There's more of the personal pictures in this profile than in the first girl.. Some less perfect pictures as well.

Participant 7: Yea, it's, it's great mix of privacy stuff and also job model stuff (agreement)

Participant 2: Yeah because we see like those central from the sense of selfies like they are taken you know like also with the cropping... (agreement) up or whatever.

Participant 3: I feel like her profile is like perfect. And she's beautiful and all that kind of stuff. But I cannot relate to at all, she hasn't got my interest at all because there's so many of those girls on Instagram. So for me I cannot relate to it at all and she wouldn't be effective for me as a man in promoting a chocolate drink or whatever.

Participant 1: She also mentions that she's a Califia Farms Ambassador so..

Participant 5: Yeah she's not hiding it (laughs)

Participant 1: No. (laughs)

Moderator 1: So do you think, like, do you see her as a popular person?

Participant 5: Yes.

Participant 1: Yeah.. based on her followers and.. she's on TV or something

Participant 5: She's the most expensive from the three.. (laughs and agreement) for sure. For the company. But I think that the company might have different objectives when aiming at the three girls but.. because I think when they are aiming at the second one they are aiming at a target different, a different target that is like the mom that maybe gives you advice about things that you give to your kids. And what is good and bad and maybe like more trustful opinion.. and here is like they are paying an advertisement on Instagram, just pure advert.

Participant 1: But it's true that it really depends on who's looking at it because my sister-in-law also trusts what Kylie Jenner says.. So it's not.. I think it also depends on age maybe.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Participant 4: Yeah, then it's more again about being that person.

Participant 1: Yeah, exactly.

Participant 5: (shown new picture) This is a another.. Instagram or?

Moderator 1: Yeah this is again a different, a different profile.

Participant 5: Okay.

Participant 1: But it's not and an ad .

Participant 1: I think that.. (interrupted)

Participant 5: If it's not an ad, this is really creepy (laughs)

Participant 1: Is this a person or is it like a?

Moderator 2: This is a general page.

Participant 2: I think it's the one that I rely on the least because like one of the things that we really don't like on Instagram is when like you follow page for, I don't know, whatever like, inspiring quotes or fitness inspiring stuff and everything and they're like oh we are not advertising it like we are not advertising this, but I'm advertising it you know what I mean. So it's like I, I, I really don't like when, when you get a page which is supposed to be like, like something else and it's clearly an advertisement because you know again I mean it can be effective because if you follow that page is because, I don't know, like you want to have healthy living or whatever. So of course then like what they advertise is supposed to be healthy as well. But with the fact that that is a page I don't really like trust it.

Participant 1: And the fact that they don't use the product, they just like.. put a picture in of that and not that.. the coffee they make every morning. Maybe they could have like used the product.

Participant 5: But maybe, at least I am a bit influenced by the number of followers. If there are like more than 10.000.. I am eager not to believe that it's not an ad. And I think that is an ad because they begin to be a bit professional I think. And, and maybe it's really not an ad and I just believe because they have 7, 70K or something.

Participant 1: I just think that, it's a little.. I think it's an ad because that Instagram page does not have a face on a person, posting multiple pictures where this person is present. It's just quotes and pictures of happy people that, working out and stuff like that.

Participant 7: I think that's just because we have a lot of photos and post a picture of a model. And you don't see any normal settings in that page. So I think it's an ad also because it's not just... If that has been in the background and you see some coffee tables some people having coffee mugs from that company. That would be a little less an ad. But still it's an ad.

Participant 2: I agree with her when she says they could have at least used the product. So yeah I just, like, I mean I could go to a supermarket and just take a picture like hey guys like I use it and think it's great, you know? And then they don't even bother about actually making their coffee or latte or whatever they want.

Participant 5: They are just advertising it.

Moderator 1: I cannot relate to this general profile, but I have a little different feeling than you. Because in some general profiles, I think they have kind of a general statement, they want to send to their followers. So if this e.g. was a fitness or general profile that I like and follow and I can relate to and kind of fall in line with that statement, and they posted this picture, I feel like it would have kind of a big effect on me. Because then I feel like it's kind of my mark that they make on this product. Like they say it's good enough, it's aligned with our profiles view of how things should be.

Participant 5: I view it as an advertisement if we are talking about trust and everything.

Moderator 1: Are you thinking about this kind of post as engaging their audience like does it create and...

Participant 5: Not for me but maybe if it's in the spirit of the whole page maybe it's even useful even as advertisement. They are like okay, we are on the healthier living path than we are advertising this brand and we feel like it's good enough for you, too, and it's in the spirit of healthy living. So it might be even useful for the people that are following the page.

Participant 2: I mean like in terms of engagement, if you want to take action. Like if you go up. You see that it says we approach you like we like the page whatever brought to you by etc. So in terms of engagement it's a lot like we are suggesting you saw. I think that there is a high level of engagement also like if you look at all the comments that are under (agreement from other

participants) and the page actually responds because I saw that they retagged someone. So I would say that there is high engagement.

Participant 1: I would say so, too, because it's like people are tagging each other and I just tried it and made my coffee this morning. So it's like, maybe it actually works for those who follow.

Participant 5: It really works for this brand.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Moderator 1: Does that do anything for you, when you see engagement?

Moderator 2: Like an influencer or bigger person and they have responded to you?

Participant 3: I definitely think it does something if there's a lot of comments. compared to if there was one comment. It does a whole lot for me. And of course also if they respond to so if you made a comment yourself that would make a big difference.

Participant 1: I wouldn't call them influences but for example H&M, they respond like in every language you write them on their Instagram.

Participant 5: If I would see this, I would be more influence to buy this because of the comments not because of the description. Because in most of the comments they are like: "Yeah, it's lovely. You should try this and so I would feel like it should be nice but because of the page

Participant 1: And not the picture.

Participant 4: I feel it's a broader group of people that would be involved: the girls, young girls, and other young girls that would be commenting. I haven't seen the comment, but maybe like: "Hey, you look good." or something like that.

Participant 3: They are trying to get that friendly action with the followers.

Moderator 1: So do you find this influencer to be relatable and do you find yourself able to relate to.

Participant 7: I think I can relate more to them because of the video he is posting. Because I really like to be outdoorsy and he is outside, something like that. So I think that would attract more that the previous because I can relate to that, so in that context I like it.

Participant 3: For me it's the same. I like being outdoors and I can see myself in that spot. So it definitely relates to me. I would like to see the product more actually because I'm not sure that it's like it seems a bit random that the product is there and you cannot see what it is at all. But maybe the description of course would indicate what it is.

Participant 7: But, to extend what you said, Participant 3, I like the way of this. This product is being used and to be outdoorsy, there's nothing more great in life when you are outdoorsy and you just woke up, go out of the tent and then make this great coffee. So that encourages me more to trust them than the previous.

Participant 4: So I guess, when you follow that person, you know his values. He is about health and all this so he doesn't have to describe how healthy, healthy it is. I drink this coffee and you should know it is healthy.

Participant 7: Yeah, it works for him. He is outside and in the wild. Drinking his coffee and enjoy it.

Participant 2: And I also think that it's more relatable because the guy doesn't have that many followers either, does he?

Participant 5: No.

Participant 2: Because he has like 3000 something. So it's three, yeah, three-thousand. So I think that it's also like more relatable because you know like you, I mean, even if it's advertising it it's like it's a normal person just, just with an Instagram profile and everything. And I really like it as well there. The fact that they are camping because I do camping myself for instance and there is the dog there as well which catches the attention because I love dogs. So I think it's way more relatable like out of all the pictures that we saw, I think I think that this is the most relatable maybe. At least in my opinion.

Participant 4: It also makes sense that he is a commercial photographer, because he makes this big effort. If you scroll down, the layout is really pretty.

Participant 1: You can see that the pictures are overlapping.

Participant 4: And also actually because like the product is not the center of attention but it's more like the camping and the picture and everything. I think it's nice because even though it's an advertisement it's not like the center of attention of the picture. So like he looks more natural in the sense.

Moderator 1: Do you think that he knows, like the way he uses the product is how you you would use it.

Participant 4: I guess, because it's dairy free you don't have to worry about it staying cold on the way up the mountain.

Participant 2: I think it's I think it's really, really relatable to like the use of the product because you know like are they are camping and when you're camping is not that it's very easy to have like every like you know like every utility or facility that you have at home for instance. So it shows that it's actually really easy to use them. And just like reheat it as well so it shows that it's really, you know, simple.

Participant 3: I agree with that. In relation to the followers for this type of profile it wouldn't probably mean much to me but I actually think that if a person has not that many followers I think it's been negative for me because then I think like there's probably a reason why this person don't have a lot of followers. So in some way it's kind of... Yeah I might relate that to the product actually that if he had 500.000 followers I would believe that he had more expertise or whatever, maybe.

Participant 4: I actually feel the other way around. Because the more followers he has, the more I feel like he is trying to sell this brand. Because he has a lot of followers.

Participant 6: In relation to creating the trust on Instagram, I often look at the conversion rate. How many followers they have and how much interaction, likes and users actually gave on the given video or post because a lot of companies are offering followers and comments, and likes on Instagram. So you could go as private person and buy five thousand followers and you're could gain 1000 comments on the next five posts and so on. So again about the conversion rate of how many people actually seen this video, how they interact and the people that are interacting. I rely on that, too. Or is it just some scam accounts.

Participant 5: But I think on this case we are still on the grey kind of zone because although it's only more relatable than the models that we've seen before but it is still a situation that we probably would not be using this product actually. But it feels like we could and the model is more like a

distant relationship. But I think that Like like ideally I could do this but most likely we are not going to do this

Moderator 1: So these things we talked about so far. You, of course, said a lot of things. Do you think these kind of aspects affect, make you believe the influencer more or less and why? You've been talking about someone showed some expertise, talked about someone looks like models, some of them look like models and amount of likes they get or interactions or followers. There is a lot of different variables. Are these things that you feel like, do they influence how much you believe the influencer?

Participant 3: Yeah, definitely. If I can relate to the person and I am on the same level as that person, then I would definitely trust that person more and maybe lookup the product and whatever. And I am very inclined to just scroll by really quickly when it's a beautiful model pushing chocolate for example.

Participant 7: Yeah, I think the same. Because we saw various ways to sell the product, but in my perspective I can relate more to the person who has expertise in the product category. I am very quick to swipe away on that person if they have 500.000 followers. Because then I think it's just something they do to sell the product. But that's not a bad thing, but it doesn't work for me. But I like the guy in the mountain who has not a lot of followers and is using the product like I would. Or the mom who has kids and stuff like that. I think that works for her.

Participant 1: Is it just me, that doesn't know what cold brew coffee is?

Moderator 1: It's basically where you brew the coffee for an amount of time. You put the roasted coffee with beans and leave it in the fridge. They make it not with warm water but with cold one.

Participant 1: So that's kind of ruins my reliability on him. Because then it would be like heavy.

Participant 7: But I have seen like people drink it when they are skiing.

Participant 1: Yeah, yeah, then maybe. So I am just like: "Would you really drink and put it like this.

Participant 7: But he was heating it on the cooker.

Moderator 1: You can heat it up again. It's just a different brewing.

Participant 1: So it was like the product that stood here, as you put it. Yeah, that's what I don't like.

Moderator 1: I think it was milk, right?

Participant 1: So he brought a liter of milk to the... Yeah, I don't really believe that.

Participant 7: I think he is heating that coffee up.

Participant 1: Yeah, he is like really outdoors and just brought this up to the forest?

Participant 7: If you're going to scout stores you can find a lot of drink kind of products looking almost like that. So I trust it.

Participant 4: It looks like a morning walk, it's not like was having a backpack and so on. I feel it was just a normal walk to see the sun.

Participant 1: I just don't feel like, being an ex-scout myself, I would not bring a liter of milk on my walks. But maybe I'm over analyzing

Moderator 1: Everything is correct in here. So, are there, from your own usage of Instagram Do you have personal experiences also concerning what we've talked about. Have you interacted with influences.

Participant 1: I have a few friends that I think, have become influences themselves. Yeah. But I have not contacted any external influencers or what do you say?

Participant 3: Is it related only to normal people or also celebrities?

Moderator 2: Also celebrities.

Participant 3: Like yesterday I checked my Instagram, when I saw Cristiano Ronaldo in a collaboration with Egyptian steel like a steel company. And it didn't make sense for me at all. So and in that regard again it's I cannot relate to that relationship at all. And it seems like he's just pushing a product.

Participant 5: I'm sure he's not for there for the money. [Sarcastic tone - All the people laugh]

Participant 4: I follow very few influence types and i never really contacted them. I don't really feel the need.

Participant 1: Yeah

Participant 3: But I would say if I follow a person and have a relationship to that person in that sense then it has a way higher effect on me compared to when I see a random influencer, so if i follow a person on Instagram because I like that person because of what he or she does then it's way more reliable. Then I trust that person.

Participant 1: as long it is in their expertise area I would say.

Participant 3: Yeah, and if it's in line with what they are about.

Participant 1: If you know like, even more, and then it can it - yeah it can be like even more of out of tracks.

Participant 3: So it would affect you way more? In a positive way?

Participant 1: I would say it would affect me even less if it's like if it's one that I Do know, that starts advertisement about something, that is related to their image. Or if it is reliable the way they have tried the product, and maybe they have went to coffee shop and they have okay what kind of coffee are you using - stuff like that.

Participant 4: [Agrees]

Moderator 1: Okay, so lets talk a bit about the brand that you saw, Califia Farms, have you had and previous experience with the brand, and how do you feel about the brand after having seen some pictures?

Participant 2: I've never heard of it before, for instance, but for some things it looks nice, there is this like some of the products that where advertisements, were vegan, so like diary free, so you know it's good for the environment for instance, so if you care about that kind of stuff then of course you where affected because you see that it's in line with your values in a sense, and also like, I don't like smoothies for instance, but I know a lot of people do, here in Denmark specifically, so if you like, you know that specific kind of drink, beverages or what ever, and then you see that with this brand, gives you the possibility of like [can't here it] then of course then you are affected, and you could try it.

Participant 3: I would think that I would be a bit confused, and maybe think that the brand is a bit untrustworthy, I think it's probably effective enough, and a lot of people will relate to the campaigns, but for me its not trustworthy when they use a model and then they also use two guys sitting on a mountain, for me that's just shows that they're trying to push the products, and their campaigns are not aligned at all. So I don't really trust it.

Participant 5: Yeah, but I don't know maybe here you have a more overall view of the company, and normally people only get one or two of these, so it will be a better context because you are already following that person, so there is something that relates you to that page or person.

Participant 3: Yeah, in that sense yeah

Participant 5: and then you receive only the one that is more connected to you, and then you don't see the other ones probably.

Participant 3: Yeah

Participant 4: I feel like this type of product doesn't really, like have our age group at all, so for me it's good that they target different people - and I probably wouldn't see the other ones anyway.

Participant 2: Yeah, but I guess it is also like you know the strategy, so when you target it's a very different group of people, you make a mom advertise this thing and then a model, and then everything like then you have a wider spectrum of potential customers.

Participant 5: Maybe they are just testing what works best.

Participant 7: Yeah, that could be.

Moderator 2: Is there anything that you associate with the product or brand, now that you've seen it?

Participant 1: Coffee.

Participant 4: Being dairy free

Participant 1: being outside, they where all outside - or not all of them.

Participant 3: Yeah, freedom in a sense I would think. That's what it seems like they are trying to push.

Participant 5: After doing the 4, I can't really make a profile out of the brand but if we look at only one separately then you can have different perspective. If it s in the nature, if they are camping or something, then I think you have a different feeling when you are looking at the model that is in the swimming pool.

Moderator 2: So what they are promising, or the general idea of what the brand does, is that they want to create a healthier plant-based food system for the world or contribute to that and make the food a healthy and better place - do you think that, that is something that the company means?

Having seen the pictures? Or is it just something they have written because it is good for marketing?

Participant 1: I can't evaluate that from the pictures I think. I would have to look at how it was produced and stuff like that.

Participant 5: That is not obvious [people agree].

Participant 1: You can't say, that they don't or they do. It depends on so much more.

Participant 4: Based on the pictures and profiles, not at all.

Participant 1: I don't see why we shouldn't get that feeling. Why don't we get that?

Participant 4: They are plant based and create a better world

Participant 1: But they say that it's vegan and stuff. That would be plant based

Participant 5: Yeah but for me - I've just think that they would only think that they would like us to explore more of this - I'm not getting the feeling that they do it for the environment, I just feel like that they want us to go and explore more about the brand.

Participant 1: Yeah, but I don't get that it's not good for the environment either.

Participant 5: Yeah, they are just trying to get attention somehow.

Moderator 1: In terms of credibility, what do you think about the brand in terms of credibility?

Participant 5: I also don't have much to say, it's okay nothing really bad and nothing really good for now it's okay, and if I was interested I would be exploring more and I wouldn't say it was super credible or not, because I think that they are not aiming for credibility they are aiming more to grab attention.

Participant 4: Yeah

Participant 3: I think it would depend on which of the pictures I would have seen, if I had seen the models, I cannot relate to them at all, so it wouldn't be credible for me. But if I saw a profile, that is maybe, concerned with the environment or anything like that, that would have a way higher influence, and affect my credibility or my comment credibility.

Participant 1: I also think it deepens on their own Instagram, or their own, like that's a big deal for me. I don't think they are not credible just because I don't believe in the influencers, I would just think that the influencers where not credible.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Participant 7: I would also like to see their own Instagram page, because I have once seen a documentary about the Danish Baresso and they are selling coffee, it's a coffee chain, where they where filming all the different rules and restrictions there are in Africa where they are producing their coffee beans and I think it could be interesting to see if they had some pictures about how they are sustaining the product lines, the procedure of doing this, and the workers down there, there is actually producing this - that would be much more reliable for me. Because it's about the product itself, and how it's produced and not so much the way that people drink it.

Participant 1: Exactly [Participant 4 also agrees] And if that's the vision, then that is what makes them credible - what they share.

Participant 7: definitely

Moderator 1: So in general, like to what extent is it important for you that you trust a brand? For you to consider buying it?

Participant 7: I think if I'm buying a product and they say it's very environmental friendly then it's very important that I know they are environmental friendly. Like I Like when you buy a Ben and Jerry's ice-cream, it's fair trade, so you know that they are doing something good about the money they are earning. They are helping people, stuff like that. I like that. And I trust it, because I've seen a lot of documentaries about what they are doing, and that is really reliable to me. So I need to know that they are doing what they say they are doing. Because if I found out that they where not doing that thing, then I would never trust them again. Because it's about the environment, and the people of what they are saying. They are promising something, and they are not delivering that expectation then - yeah.

Participant 1: You wouldn't trust them, but would you ever buy Ben and Jerry's again then?

Participant 7: I think there are many good substituting products, so I could live without.

Participant 1: Because I got the feeling of like the H&M with the scandal, I was like no, and a week went by and I was like okay [everybody laughs] because it's like.

Participant 7: I see what you are saying, but I would be disappointed. Defiantly.

Participant 1: yeah of course.

Participant 7: And I wouldn't talk that good about them. But it's still a good product.

Participant 1: Yeah, exactly. So I don't think it's always a deal breaker that you just like distrust something that they have done.

Participant 7: No, but if its - like I'm shooting that this [Califia farms] is an upcoming brand so if they are building their awareness, and building their brand on a lie, then it would be a deal breaker I think.

Participant 4: I was in china recently, and I went for, if I had to buy coffee, first of all it's very difficult, but I went for the brands that I already knew, because I tried it already, so I knew what I was expecting instead of like something random Chinese brand - is it good or is it not good. It depends on what you [pause] the situation.

Participant 1: Then there is also a bit about Starbucks scandals and stuff but you still go there

Participant 4: So maybe if it was shit coffee, I think it would be [pause] you wouldn't drink it. But they know the taste, and they are used to the taste, so even though there are some scandals then maybe it wont affect.

Participant 2: It also depends on the entity of the scandal, from my perspective and an example of it is Moncler. Which is a brand of like they make cloths and it was really trendy to buy the house coat or the coat lets say. And it came out that they where like mistreating this poor goose like and everything, and literately like doing so many bad things. So before knowing that I bought one of those coats, but then after that I never bought anything again, because you know it really depends on the entity of the scandal if its just I mean maybe a bad advertisement policy that then came out with the H&M example which could be just a mistake or if you actually mistreat animals or exploit people for instance.

Participant 3: I think also it has something to do with your relationship to the brand. If it's a brand that is really important to you that is inline with your values if you kinda feel that you need that

brand then you [pause] I think I would tend to be more forgiven to that brand. For example related to the VW diesel scandal, I was a bit disappointed but right now I might also be disappointed with myself because I don't really feel any bad with VW, I feel like I would like to buy a VW one day if I could. I don't know why. So I think it also relates to your existing relationship with the brand [Participant 4 Agrees]. In terms of having a scandal, or trustworthy affection.

Participant 1: If I is a brand that you haven't tried before and you don't trust it, then I don't see any future relationships in that [Participant 3 agrees].

Participant 4: Also, I think that the price, like the Canadian goose is a pretty expensive jacket so it was just another reason to not buy it. You can find another expensive jacket or a less expensive jacket that might not have any scandals, and then I would buy that instead.

Moderator 1: So, from the pictures you have seen, do they make you think that this brand can actually deliver on what they promise? This sustainable plant-based sign.

Participant 1: I don't really see any sustainable promises in that sort of advertisement. I believe that it is vegan because they said so some of them. But that's about it [Participant 4 agrees]

Participant 6: Again, I would like to see some more videos about how they produce it and how can this makes the world better - some statistics [Participant 1 agrees]. A lot of coffee shops are using it. Or coffee beans are making the world better like this and this, and some statistics shows that if we keep doing it like this in 2025 we can have a world like this. Some aspects that can affect the consumer in buying in the mind of we are doing something for the world. Not a model standing with a bottle like we would like to sell this and become healthy like me. And yeah.

Participant 4: But you get the feeling that they care at all.

Participant 1: No, but I think that's true, but I think that, that fits into another marketing activity.

Participant 7: The strategy is to make the world better and like that show some statistics on how you would do this

Participant 1: Yeah, but don't make the model show the statistics. [Participant 7 agrees]. So I think its for me a fine influencer campaign if you can say that, but they should just do something ells also.

Participant 3: Yeah to me I don't think that they get the point though using those influencers, but I think that if they had chosen other influencers then it might have been another case, if they had chosen sustainable or aware people who have a lot of followers for example, where people know that they know that they are about sustainability or the environment then I think that it would be way better if that is the point that they want to persuade.

Participant 1: Yeah, but if it's just to bring attention to the brand then it's fine [Participant 3 agrees] and then you could click on the [confusion about how to pronounce @] @ and like their own Instagram page and maybe you would find it there. Then I think it's fine.

Moderator 1: So, to what extent is it important for you that a brand is an expert in what they do? For you to consider buying it.

Participant 7: I don't think it's very important to me that they are an expert It's just if I like the product then I'll buy it. And if I don't buy it then I will not buy it. [Participant 1 agrees].

Participant 1: But I also think it depends cause you would rather buy a Rolex than an Omega, yeah like.

Participant 7: I think that depends on just the thing that companies is doing, if they are likeable to me then I would of course support them. And I like that they are caring about the environment, they should deserve some positive thoughts or what's it called. Some positive support because I think that that is something that we all need to think about in what we are doing, to not damage our earth, so I think that that is good. That is not so much important but that is something that I would consider, because they are doing something good. And if the product is good also then I would like it.

Participant 3: I feel like it relates on the product. If they state that it is about changing the world and stuff like that, then it's for me important that they have some expertise and show okay we have these people in the company and they are experts in doing this. So if they have this kind of statement then it is for me pretty important.

Moderator 1: So is it important to you in general that you buy the same products as your friends or family or those you follow on social media?

Participant 1: I would say that my friends and family more than who I follow on social media. But I don't know if it is really important for me to buy the same thing. That also depends on what it is.

Participant 5: But following on what you are saying I am also more keen at least to try if there is family or friends using it. But if I don't like it then I would not going to use it [Participant 1 agrees].

Participant 4: But I feel like it's not important, but I feel like if they recommend a brand I would rather try it. But it's not important. [Participant 1 Agrees]

Participant 1: Then I don't have to get it as well - I don't feel like that. That is more like [pauses] I don't know what I was going to say.

Participant 2: In my case it also depend on the product as well. Because if I need to buy coffee or food then I really rely on what my parents buy you know or what my friends use. When it comes to I don't know to cloths or other things - Like I don't know cosmetics, then I am more like I tend to try more for something that could change the world. It really depends on the product I would think. At least in my opinion.

Participant 5: But for me, also with food products I also have the price that is really important and where it is available. If I had to order that [Califia farms product] through the internet and it's not in the supermarket it's too hard for me. Then I don't do it. For a food product. If it was like a jacket or something it would be easier to spend a like little bit more money on something that is harder to get of something than [mumbles] food

Participant 2: Yeah, it's also the importance you give to the product. In my case with food I buy it online. I like wait for the package from my parents. It really depends on the importance of the importance.

Participant 5: For me it's just not.

Participant 3: I can add that at one point I wanted to do more cross fit, and then I followed these guys on Instagram. These world class cross fit athletes and they where all wearing the same kind of gear from the same brands and I think that I would like to say that it didn't affect me but I would defiantly say that it affected me subconsciously. That I wanted to kind of buy these brand in order to have the hope of being quickly accepted as a cross fit athlete or whatever. Or when I went to fitness world to do a workout, so in that regard it defiantly has an influence on me in terms of it's the way to get quickly accepted by society when it's conspicuous products.

Moderator 1: So have you guys like, have you ever bought a bit like Participant 3 said, bought products to live up to other people expectations or at least your impression of people expectations?

Participant 3: I think I bought a couple of t-shirt and I can't remember the brand, but based on the analogy I just told. But yeah, I've bought some products maybe subconsciously because it's a way to get accepted and stuff like that.

Participant 5: But I think most people buy mainly cloths because if you have an idea of what you want to look like in the cloths you are always trying to something similar to an image you have in your head. It may not be a specific brand but like a group of brands, or maybe it's not a brand specially or maybe it's a certain style and yeah for sure I bought some stuff to look in a curtain way or that someone would like [stopped talking]

Participant 4: I don't know if it is like expectation as such, but I mean if I go shopping with my friends, and I ask does this look nice, and they say that this t-shirt would look nice, or maybe I would be more. Yeah.

Participant 1: I would agree with that, but I wouldn't say that it is to live up to any expectations. Maybe we just share opinions with our peers.

Participant 4: Maybe more like family dinners, and maybe your mom like she has an expectation of you to dress a certain way or dress according to the way that you are expected to dress.

Moderator 1: So, with everything you've seen today and talked about with this brand, Califia Farms, how likely it is that you would buy the product?

Participant 2: Do they sell it here in Aalborg? Do you know?

Moderator 1: If it was available here.

Participant 2: Yeah, okay.

Participant 7: I think it would be something, I would not go into a supermarket to buy it, because of what I've seen now. It would be if me and Participant 1 and Participant 6 are later on today going to group work and at a coffee shop, we are not doing that, but if we did, and they had that on the menu. So why not try it, right? To try something new. But that would be something that I would do for fun, because I had that relation to it now, but not if I saw it in Rema later on today.

Participant 1: I wouldn't not have any money left I did It every time I saw [people laugh]- so no I wouldn't not do that

Participant 4: I think again if I saw it when I went shopping I would maybe look at the product, and maybe search more information about it, but I wouldn't go to the store simply to buy it.

Moderator 2: What about the others?

Participant 2: I think that, if it was available in Aalborg, like do you know next time I go grocery shopping or something I would try it. I can relate to the fact of the diary free etc. so I think it's really nice, so at least I would try it, and of course I don't like it then bye. But I think I would try it, because you know like, also with the smoothie recipe, I would try the product I think because of this vegan/healthy concept.

Participant 5: If I would see it in a supermarket it would caught my attention since I already saw it on Instagram, but for me it would depend on the price and how keen would I be to buy something like that on that day. But mainly if it's too much expensive maybe not. But yeah, maybe. I would defiantly caught my attention because I saw the ad.

Participant 3: For me to say that I'm very indifferent regarding this brand, because it didn't relate to my emotion's at all, so if they had persuade me more by making me aware that it was sustainability and stuff like that then it might affect me more. But I'm very indifferent about the brand.

Participant 6: I would also say that it haven't convinced me to buy it because you also have to take that in mind with the brand loyalty. We already know Starbucks and have those ice coffee's all around the detail shops, and I would prefer just to buy the Starbucks coffee, because I know the taste and I know what I get. I don't want to experiment with those California [Califia Farms] because if they had affected me in some way and I said oh, that's fun, that's nice - I must try it because everybody is talking about it then I might try it. But ells I'll retain to the brand loyalty with Starbucks that I have delivered. That is also something that companies must have in mind when they want to influence people I think because I think consumers always have brand loyalty to a given brand and how can you convince them to buy from your brand instead.

Participant 6: instead. The true influencers.

Participant 5: Yeah but, regarding what you're saying before if everybody here was drinking that I would be really keen to try it.. because like what is so special about it. (agreement) Like, it bring you curiosity. Why am I the only one that hasn't tried it?

Participant 7: Yeah definitely .

Participant 1: But I think I, I would only notice it because now we've seen so many pictures. If I just saw one influencer on my feed, I wouldn't think about it when I need to (unintelligible)

Moderator 1: So you wouldn't react to the product if you saw it in your own Instagram feed?

Participant 1: I can't recall any products I've seen from the last week so no. Because they are there, I just don't recall them. Maybe it's because they don't catch my.. and that coffee thing doesn't either catch my attention really.

Participant 3: Yeah I feel kind of the same with just seeing one picture..

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 3: ..it wouldn't catch my attention at all.

Participant 1: Definitely now I would notice it, because we've talked about it for one and a half hour but.. if it was just one picture I wouldn't think about it.

Moderator 1: Well.. that's basically it. Is there anything you would like to add? Something you feel like is within the realm of influencer marketing.

Participant 5: Regarding me trying the product from the four (participant misremembers amount) advertisements, definitely the mom one would be the one that would get me thinking about getting the product because there.. she's like trying it, at least it seems so. And, the last one would be nice picture but I wouldn't even care about the product. I would just see the video and like "ohh this is nice". But I wouldn't even look at the product and the other ones are just advertisements.

Participant 5: I agree, but I am not sure I would actually look up the product with the mother either. I see that she's using it, but I would just go "okay.. I use product too..". (laughs in room) I don't know if I would think so much about it.

Participant 5: Yeah but, I don't.. I wouldn't say that I would try it but I would be more thinking about it. You know what I mean: "mmhm, maybe it's nice" you know? (laughs in room)

Participant 1: Yeah .

Participant 5: And the other ones are.. the last one I wouldn't even see the product. And the other two are just like "oh, this is an energy brand or something". But, like you said, after five minutes I wouldn't recall.

Moderator 3: Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix 3: Focus Group 2 Transcript

Moderator 1: So I don't if you all know, it's about influencer marketing on Instagram. And what's going to happen is that we're going to show you a few pictures of influencers. And, also their, their profile and profile feed. And then we want you to try and express your opinions on different things relating to these posts and profiles. At any point, if you have like personal anecdotes or thoughts, about your own behavior on Instagram please just talk, talk to us. (laughs) It doesn't have to strictly relat to the picture. It can also just be general thoughts. We have a sort of company case. It's a brand called Califia Farms. And they, they make juices and coffee, drinks, different beverages, smoothies.

Moderator 2: Also yoghurts I just saw today. So that kind of stuff. All dairy free. And the idea is working towards a healthier planet, healthier living for the people.

Moderator 1: Vegan-based products. Okay.

Moderator 2: First we're going to show you a picture and we're gonna look at the feed of the person of that page. And then Moderator 1 is going to ask questions.

Moderator 1: You'll see. (showing first picture) (pause while looking at the picture) And we want to hear if you think this influencer seems reliable, comes across as honest.

Participant 3: When you say reliable what do mean exactly?

Moderator 1: Like, do you find the person trustworthy in their.. aesthetic.

Participant 3: Okay.

Participant 2: To me it looks more like she's doing some fashion stuff, more than juices. And, of course you could argue that juices maybe belong to her lifestyle because she tries to live healthy because you also have some bikini pictures and.. Like, fashion is always very beauty-driven area.

Participant 4: Yeah there's totally a similarity between her pictures showing her.. Yeah, let's say a nice body and then.. that she trains and eats very healthy.

Participant 2: Yeah.

Participant 3: Yeah, well when you say reliable, the picture that you just showed and, and all her other pictures doesn't seem reliable in the fact that it's a natural set up. It feels like everything is a set up picture. So when I'm looking at that, and looking through her profile it, it just feels it feels like a commercial he doesn't feel natural. This is something I do as part of my day. No, that actually look like a pretty staged picture especially when I'm concerning all your other pictures. So when you say reliable that's what I think about it.

Participant 2: Maybe she tried to be a little bit more credible because she put in some more private pictures but doesn't look so staged. There are some that are not that perfect quality, maybe even shot on the phone. (previous participant agrees) Maybe should try to work on the reliability.

Participant 2: Yeah. Yeah. It's like every sixth or seventh picture is like a normal picture. You know you have the red the red wine on the table and so on which is a staged, but that that looked very staged.

Moderator 2: Participant 1, how do you feel about it? Do you think you can rely on information that she would pass on to you?

Participant 1: Not at all. Like they said I think everything looks kind of fake, very staged. So this picture kind of fits into her feed kind of but, I don't know, it's not like I don't trust her just because she drinks that juice right now. I don't know.

Participant 3: Yeah I think it has to.. It has to do with the fact that even though she's pouring up her juice I'm not sure she's going to drink it. (agreement) Because it's so, it's so staged like most other pictures that you're like "hm, this is probably just commercial and just like any other commercial. Those people in those commercials actually don't use or don't buy into, buy the things that they are trying to sell. So yeah that's, that's kind of how I feel.

Participant 3: I think it's also interesting that the first comment about the wardrobe, that it's not about the product itself. But it's more like "would you buy the fashion" (agreement)

Participant 4: But it's like. It's like just a classic commercial. Do you want to be hot as.. what's..

Participant 3: Emily.

Moderator 1: Emily Valdez

Participant 4: ..Emily Valdez then drink this juice. It's like a classic commercial. If you want to be hot as this actor use this perfume or something like that.

Participant 2: There's also no people around, like it's completely empty.

Participant 4: Yeah, yeah.

Participant 2: And it's a sunny day, so it's like a very high coincidence maybe. (laughs and agreement)

Participant 3: (shown new picture) That's a cool picture

Participant 5: it really is

Participant 2: I mean, in that post the, the drink is clearly in the focus not the person herself. And she also has a little story to it. So that you can maybe relate to her because she also talks about her kids. You can also see it from the feed that.. Of course the kids are a big thing in her life, but whenever she uses products, the products are in the middle of the picture and not she herself.

Moderator 1: So does this, this influencer appear to be knowledgeable to you?

Participant 2: Yeah.

Participant 1: Definitely. Like, there's a lot of healthy food in her pictures and everything. So she's she's doing it a lot. So, I dont know, I think it's kind of trustworthy.

Participant 5: I would say so as well.

Participant 4: Yeah. And the picture is not staged in the same way as the first one we saw. But then you read the text.. she post with the picture.

Participant 1: Oh God, yeah.

Participant 4: Then: "OK it's like this, this is like a commercial". Yeah. But the picture is more like just you know a snapchat picture or something like that. But when you read the text and put them together.

Moderator 1: So do you think this this person is like experienced with the product?

Participant 3: Yeah I would say that. Well, she come across as someone who actually uses the products, if you ask me. But I'm kind of confused, confused when I, when I see pictures because.. in some in some ways, she come across as a very honest person we're just you know this is my everyday picture. But then like when you look at her cereals you see that they are perfectly aligned, all the cereals in her in her lunch. And so, and you know of course it's staged, it's still staged. So it's like you have these two conflicting thoughts. Is it either staged or does she actually use the products and it's, it's just a normal, normal day for her. 'cause does she actually use the extra 10 minutes to line up the cereals every morning. Or is it just a commercial. So she is kind of confusing but she come across as more trustworthy, I think, just in general, yeah.

Participant 2: But of course you have to say on social media you're always going to present yourself from the best side. (agreement) So if you would just punch everything together in your bowl nobody would look at that picture. So of course she has to have some aesthetics in there. I've also found it interesting that those products she is advertising is like a combination of three different products because it's, or four, Califia Farms but also some other products. So she's also combining it. But overall she looks to me like she's living a healthy lifestyle. And she also takes care of her health and also the health of her children. So maybe to me she's more trustworthy than other Instagram influencer.

Participant 3: Yeah. I would say that I.. even though she's trustworthy.. I, I, I don't at all find her, find her that, find that her knowledge about food is any, any more significant than any other people. So, but she but she looks more trustworthy definitely, maybe because it's like more kind of everyday pictures.

Participant 5: Yeah I do, even though I feel like, the text is a bit too much. Like the recipe really showcases her.. (pauses) you know knowledge about living healthy.

Moderator 1: So you do not consider to be an expert?

Participant 3: No no no no no no no not at all. You know, you have a lot of experts on food like the food babe and so on, all those persons and you know, they don't know a thing about it. And so just because she's holding some kind of smoothie doesn't mean she actually knows anything about food.

Participant 3: If you, if you have a look for example at the ingredients that she puts in there. Like she tries to keep to be healthy. And, she also uses almond butter for example, so which is really out of the line. Like, I wouldn't know where to get almond butter you know. (laughs in room) Like for starters. And.. like compared to the other influencer you have to say that she at least tries her best because she gives a recipe so she actually did try some things out. So I would consider her more of an expert than the girl before. Because maybe she used two bananas before or only half a spoon or a small spoon or a small spoon of the almond butter and she didn't like it so much. So she actually tried before.. I think she thought about she does with a product.

Participant 1: (Pause while looking at new picture) What the fuck is that, seriously. (laughs)

Participant 4: It's Sam Harris loving her Califia Farms (laughs in room)

Moderator 1: So with this influencer.. I don't know.. do you find her to be beautiful or attractive?

Participant 4: (while scrolling through profile feed) The first picture she was very beautiful but..

Participant 3: Yeah.

Participant 4: The close-up pictures. Yeah okay, that close-up picture, yeah.

Participant 3: She doesn't look like her first picture.

Participant 4: No , she's attractive there.

Moderator 1: Do you, do you find her to be unique in any way?

Participant 3: No .

Participant 3: No, she has a lot of lifestyle pictures more or less. Like, something with her nails and something with.. wardrobe and I don't know what. And she uses like a lot of makeup. So probably that's more her niche than food. Or beauty products would be more her niche.

Participant 3: I just think her as one of thousands of beautiful Instagrammers or Instagrammers who want to be beautiful.

Participant 5: No not at all. There are so many that look like so similar to her on instagram, which is why I don't find her unique at all.

Participant 3: Okay. So do you, do you think, do you think of her as a, kind of like a stylish person? Or what is her appearance to you?

Participant 3: Yeah yeah. She doesn't appear to me as a person who actually consider what she eats. She doesn't consider that many thoughts about what, what she eats. She appeals to me as someone who maybe have interest in makeup or, I don't know, clothes, or something like that, but definitely not her food. So yeah that's just you know it's just an ordinary model picture I guess.

Participant 2: I also think it's the one out of hundred pictures that she took that that actually had the waves in background exactly what she wanted her so.. like before you could know she was in her garden, just took a picture. And there were children in the back and it maybe took her five minutes to edit it and put it up. Because she probably used Photoshop and I don't know how many pictures taken and probably put filters and whatever on it. So.. it looks more like the commercial-commercial again. And as you told already, like it's a completely different person from the close-ups. I wouldn't judge her as credible.

Moderator 1: Do you, do you guys think she's popular to other people?

Participant 2: Probably. (agreement) You can also see that she has a lot of comments on it and also a lot of likes so..

Participant 4: Yeah, if you have 1300 likes. 71.000 followers yeah. Then she is probably popular.

Participant 3: Yeah but, yeah, it's.. something like that, that is a very difficult question because I certainly would not follow her so and so.. is she popular. Yeah probably. But, but I don't know why she would be. I don't think her pictures are that good and yeah.. it comes across as very staged, most of her pictures.

Participant 3: (looking at influencer's profile text) What, what is Chic Management? I have no idea.

Moderator 1: Probably a modeling agency.

Participant 3: Ah.

Participant 2: I mean, Califia, is it an Australian brand? Because she works in Sydney obviously.

Moderator 2: It's an American brand, they're from California.

Participant 2: Okay. Like in Europe you'd, I think you never heard of it.

Moderator 2: No they're in the UK, Australia and USA and Canada.

Participant 2: Yeah but you said for example popular. Like, it also depends on the continent because here no one of us have seen her and would probably not really.. follow her.

Participant 4: Yeah and when she when you're talking about popular it's.. I think it's very important to think about who is she popular for. Because I think she's popular for a group like young girls from 14 to girls at 30. But persons like us reading political science (laughs). We would not follow her.

Moderator 1: (showing new picture and profile page) So this is, this is a page that posts different healthy things.

Participant 2: It's more like a motivational, sport fitness page. Like you wouldn't really.. you would actually expect the The Sweat Life and products on there because it's.. nondairy, probably almond and what was it.. coconut. So it's actually of the healthiest sites of things you could use in

your cereals for example or in your coffee. I think it's also a trend to go dairy-free nowadays. Gluten-free and I-don't-know-what-free. So, like especially in fitness almond milk is heavily used because it has less calori- less carbs. I think it fits into their whole.. how to say.. genre that they're working on. But if you look at the feed it's like lots of sports, lots of motivation. And then there's one product in between. Of course it sets out, but it's easily overlooked if you scroll through the page. Because you see fitness, fitness video and pictures and then there's motivational speeches, comics.

Participant 3: No there are way, way too many quotes to.. for me, I wouldn't find that interesting to look at at all.

Moderator 1: Do you feel like they're engaging their audience?

Participant 3: I think, yeah. I, I feel like or I don't know about the picure.. that picture there but, on the whole page every picture were at the right person, they almost always smiling at the camera and trying to, you know, get through that fourth wall. But Of all the quotes and all the and all the the yeah just because of all the quotes, it doesn't really appeal to me.

Participant 2: But they try to answer some of the comments they get. They try to engage with the community but it looks more like the page is just like have this and do this like we tell you this like motivational. It's more like a passive thing, I think, for consumers to see that feed and consume this. And then maybe you repeat it. But you wouldn't really interact with it because normally if you give a recipe for example then you would ask. Some even did it here. They say tried to use it for making this steam for lattes for example. So the users actually comment themselves more or less. So it's kind of customer engagement I would say. They won't have to talk to the consumers. They maybe rely on the consumers instead of stealing information.

Moderator 1: So do you find this profile relatable and to what extent?

Participant 4: For me it's more than just this so it's not so much. But there was some other pictures for example.

Participant 3: Yeah they are actually doing something they don't have a perfect set up in the same way. But then to have the drone flying and stuff. So again, it's set up but it's not in the same way.

Participant 2: It looks more like it could have actually happened. Like you said like I have a drone, maybe make a video of it.

Participant 3: If you don't read the text. I have absolutely no idea what they're advertising because you can't see the product maybe, maybe you know we just saw it on the, the... I guess it's the milk from before. From the picture before maybe. I don't know. That could be that little carton there in the middle otherwise you actually wouldn't know when they are advertising if you didn't read the text. And yeah that comes across as more reliable than some in some way. You know they are not in your face with the product. I kind of like that and I don't know why I like that. But I do. And maybe because it's more honest in some way

Participant 4: And it's not like the first four or five pictures because it's the same picture in some way. It's a beautiful girl and the product or just a product and then a comment. We all know that it's a staged picture or it's just random while showing a picture of some kind of coffee cream or some kind of drink.

Moderator 1: So do you think or do you feel like the way these people use the product. Do you feel w that's how you would use it?

Participant 2: I actually see two places where you'd use some kind of that product like in fitness where you actually count your calories and as a hipster. Because it's a very unusual set up that you just go out, have your camping cooker with you, make your own coffee and then also have this probably super expensive almond milk with you. And they also kind of look like they're into that

kind of lifestyle. I would also agree with you. The distractions that this like the canyon setting. There is this is camping setting. There's a dog in there and it's actually moving away from the product. And they're using this infinity loop thing from Instagram, where you come back and see the same thing over and over again.

Participant 3: Yeah. Yeah I hate walking so I probably wouldn't use the product like that. Yeah. I don't think, it doesn't really speak to me but I like the fact that it seems more honest because the product is not up your face.

Participant 2: It seems like the two guys are using this product also at home. Not only in that setting. Like before the girl with the children, she would also use it at home. But the other two, it's like they got paid to take the picture and then they got back to whatever they do.

Participant 1: Yeah, I was thinking about it like this is not an everyday situation. So most people cannot relate to it probably. But when I see that I just want to be there right now. I just want to sit there and drink coffee because it's amazing. Like I don't know, it speaks to me and I like that. And it seems like the whole profile seems personal like he's good at photography obviously. But that's his job. So those pictures look pretty good. I think I personally would totally follow him. I don't know. Like it doesn't seem like it is an ad it seems like he really uses the product because he likes it.

Participant 3: Yeah. And yeah I would totally agree with that point because they also chose the setting for the picture that doesn't speak to, perhaps, all of your audience maybe, you know. At least it doesn't speak to me in the same way it speaks to Participant 1. You have to be someone who likes to walk them, obviously the nature and I guess not many, not that many people would probably find that somewhere attractive. And so it's a very specific group, I guess, of audience that you're trying to promote this product to when they make me it in a way like that.

Participant 2: I think he is also very good at making you feel better when you scroll through his Instagram, for example, because all the people are smiling and there is dog in between, there is actually his tongue out. And I think if you look at the colors of the pictures and so on, it's always the

setting with the lightning and people are smiling like you look at his feed, like personally I feel not really happy but I get a smile on my face more or less. There's also funny pictures in-between.

Participant 4: And the pictures are more honest. They are just...

Participant 2: Out of your life

Participant 4: Yeah

Participant 4: Like everyday life not just beautiful girls showing their body and a fitness tour.

Moderator 1: So in general, if you think about these pictures and some of these things we talked about. Whether you trust or whether they are an expert. How they promote themselves and whether you can relate to them. Are those things that make you believe an influencer more?

Participant 3: Yeah. I'd say that one person stands out for me and that's the mother with the children. (Agreement from other participants) I feel like the settings were at least more natural than the rest of the pictures and all the female models who just went over their head with staging the picture. It doesn't speak to me at all and that is just a regular commercial and because of that you don't trust the person to actually use the products. I feel like. You know this is just another job. You got the waves in the background and she probably used to have two or three hours to get the perfect picture and then the job is done. It's just a job for her. The mother on the other hand, she comes across as someone who actually uses the products. So that's, that's at least more trustworthy than the rest of the pictures.

Participant 2: I mean the almond milk or the cold brew coffee. So they're not really sexy products. So to say. Like you have fashion which is combined in your head with beautiful people with staged photos and so on and beautiful locations of course. Because if you have a night robe, then you have,

you wear it in at a beautiful gala or something so you can't really have garden picture with it. The milk and the coffee is everyday products. They don't need to be sexy or staged because I think their best advertised in their the natural habitat. (Agreement from participants) So in the kitchen, when ou go out and drink it on the go, if you do camping trips like that and not on your dream vacation and the sun shines.

Participant 4: If it was a dress company, a fashion company then it would be more reliable with staged pictures.

Participant 2: I mean it's also not going to be a sexy brand unless of course they want to get their brand out. It makes little sense to compare them to fashion. So the wrong comparison or the wrong setting for the product,

Moderator 1: Are there any personal experiences you want to add to this?

Participant 2: There's a Facebook page about Instagram fails with advertising. I know that if you have for example Milka chocolate that they are eating the chocolate in Dubai. 35 degrees outside. So you can guess how the chocolate would looks like. I could actually imagine the the girl with the waves in the background just holding the product. But after the picture like: "Take it away. I don't want to get fat" or something. "I already have my calorie intake for today." So think about that.

Moderator 1: So the attractiveness aspect doesn't necessarily...

Participant 2: You also have to say that these two fashion girls, they didn't have the product in the center. It was like a tenth of the picture. And before it was this very huge, what actually can be made with the product or how it is realistically consumed.

Moderator 1: Ok, let's talk about this brand. Did you guys have any previous experience with this brand. How do you feel about the brand?

Participant 2: A little bit more expensive, on the upper price side. Yeah. Of course they invest in influence. Yeah. But also I know that cold brew coffee is very trendy so you could expect it to be a little bit high on the price. And also almond milk, especially in Denmark. You can buy normal milk for eight Kroner and almond milk cost twenty-two. So I don't want to know what this would cost in Denmark. We have as I don't know are free and not only almond but with all the, the other stuff.

Participant 3: It comes across as a company who wants to advertise a product for a younger audience who wants to be healthy and who is kinda chic and have total control over their lives. You know if you want adventure, if you want to live a healthy lifestyle, buy this product. That's the feeling I have, like that's how I see that brand. That is their goal to want to promote the product like that.

Participant 2: It's also for men.

Participant 3: Yeah.

Participant 2: And you also don't know if they are maybe also are like lovers. So it could also be like... You don't know that! These two people on a camping trip, the romantic setting. If you think about Ben Jerry's for example they actually do a lot of advertisement for same sex relationships and so forth. So maybe this could also be to say they can point to their marketing strategy that say we are open to everyone like everyone and the consumers and we're also tolerant to everyone. Could also see it from that site.

Participant 4: For me it's like a company, they are putting their products in nice bottles and nice boxes. They are very beautiful, but the product is just juice like any other and is just milk like any other milk. But the cost of what they are putting in these nice cans, then they can sell it for a higher

price but the product is just product. We know it, we can buy a bottle of water for three Kroner but you can also buy a bottle of water where the bottle is more fancy. And it's cost, It costs 20 crowns

Participant 2: If you also noticed that the milk has the same package as normal milk but for coffee itself, had the same kind of shape that I've never seen in a bottle before. Because the cold brew coffee looked like it's custom-made. But the packaging for the milk just seems regular.

Participant 3: Well personally I feel like the brand is trying too hard. It's like they really want to push this product. It's like hey if this product is good then I'll probably hear a b out it somewhere else or I'll see other people use it because it's good. It's like trying too hard.

Participant 4: It's like the pictures with the beautiful girls. Buy this product and then you will have a perfect and healthy live. That's the brand value for me.

Moderator 2: Give us one word. After seeing the pictures, what do you associate with the brand?

Participant 2: They're trying, at least, to create a healthy lifestyle. You can consume it everywhere like at home, on the go, (sarcastically) at photoshootings.

Participant 4: Maybe quality or perfect life.

Participant 3: Yeah. Yeah. I would probably say something like like health maybe but but it's like there are a lot of lifestyles matched into this one product. Now, you want to be healthy, you want to look beautiful. You want to use it when you have kids and you make cereal and you want to be this chic mom and just know who knows everything with living healthy. It's like there's a lot. If your're a model that uses the product. If you are a model as well. There is a lot of lifestyles in there. Yeah. And so, so but health and maybe try-hard. That's also a word that I would use.

Participant 1: I would go for healthy probably, because I think all these lifestyles they kind of advertise, like, are connected by being healthy. (Agreement among participants). Because you kind of have to be healthy for all of this. Yeah.

Moderator 1: So what do you think about the brand in terms of credibility? Do they you they make you think.

Participant 2: You said before, that the company tries to save the planet and be environmentally-friendly and I actually got the impression with the two guys camping. And also with the mom because she had a nice nature setting. But the other two, I don't really see them environmentally friendly or very green or in the nature. I'm not sure if it's their whole company policy.

Participant 2: So the pictures do necessarily signal what they promise?

Participant 3: It's also like you said the products were vegan...

Moderator 2: And plant-based.

Participant 3: But the non-vegan thing, you don't really catch that by looking at the pictures.

Participant 2: But is it vegan or non-vegan?

Moderator 1: No it is not-dairy but vegan.

Participant 3: Non-vegan. Made with beef. (Laughter) So it doesn't come down as credible in terms of the vegan thing. Whether it's non-dairy, I don't know, maybe. I could be very biased, I

probably am, but I'm leaning towards the fact that the product is not credible because I'm just there when they're trying so hard. I'm just I'm turning very skeptical about them. The product itself. So it's like a counter thing. Oh they really want me to buy this. If they can't get it on the market just because it tastes good and it makes you feel good. You actually have to sell it like this. Why should I buy one. I could be biased, be too skeptical. I don't know.

Participant 2: But it's so hard for a new brand.

Participant 3: You have to do marketing to get your product out. So in some ways...

Participant 3: But it's like you have to do it like, like if you have like a continuum you could be like there's a subtle way to do it. You know like the two guys camping, you can't see the products. Very subtle way to marketing your product but the model pictures really try hard and because of that I get like I kind distance myself from the product because of all those models pictures. I could probably more relate to the mother and the guys on the camping trip.

Participant 2: From marketing that if you want to introduce a new brand, you should do brand building first and then do product. So as you get the name out. So actually it's good to have big close ups from the products. To know, ok, this is the company Califia farms and so on. So their first principle should be to get the name out and then afterwards when they already know that it's actually that he could for example use a model. And then because you already know that brand, you recognize the shape of the bottle for example or something. So it's not that important anymore that you say it's Califia Farms, but then you say okay she is consuming this product so it has to be good. That is what they want to achieve with their fancy model ad, but I think that they are not at that point

Moderator 1: So how important is it for you to trust the brand in order for you to consider a purchase?

Participant 2: I think they should be honest at first, and be like in a natural setting like we said before. So, that's when I would trust the brand and not when they pay some pretty high sums probably for people with 100.000 followers because it is probably more honest from people who actually use it and have less followers. Because you know when they use it then they recommend it, and thy stand with their little fan base and their honest opinion behind the product whereas the others probably get paid for anything they wear and take a picture. So you know they are basically a product bitch (People laugh). You know what I mean right? You know the coat they are wearing is from I don't know what and they came for free to her to take a picture. And the same with the bottle now, I see it and they paid her 5000 euros for one post, so that she pours it in a glass and never drinks it, because you cannot see her actually drinking it. Whereas the other two that we really liked, the mother and the camping - you know that they drank it (Participant 4 and Participant 3s agree). You are 100% sure.

Moderator 1: So, judging by these pictures do you think that the brand can deliver on what they promise?

Participant 4: No, judging of the pictures of the models lets call them that. They can - I don't believe that one single product can deliver such a beautiful body &people laughs§. It's not possible. You have to work out and eat healthy.

Participant 2: What do they actually stand for (referring to Califia Farms)?

Moderator 1: They have this, you know, non-dairy, vegan sustainability angle

Participant 4: They have a CSR agent. That's for sure.

Participant 2: It doesn't look like the two models where trying to make the world a better place.

Participant 4: Not with that big pool, probably heated. Big house, just for one or two persons (people laugh)

Participant 3: Yeah, I think the problem for me is that form those pictures I can't see how they are going to make the world a better place you know. You could change the product with many other products and you could tell me that this company is trying to make the world a better place and I would be like oh okay, probably, maybe, I don't know. The pictures doesn't really show the fact that they want to make the world a better place, I don't get that why. You know, I just feel like this is just a normal product being branded by some influencers and I don't get the vibe that it's actually trying to promote a better world.

Participant 1: I don't think that it's their goal with the pictures. They just want to get your attention

Participant 3: Oh, okay

Participant 1: and then like you look them up, go on their profile and everything and probably there they talk about that

Participant 3: Oh, it's just that the question I thought that. Yeah.

Moderator 1: Everything you say is right in here.

Participant 3: Yeah, you just asked me whether does these pictures do you find them credible. Their goals credible because of these pictures.

Moderator 1: can they deliver these promises.

Participant 3: I don't think they can deliver those promises. I don't get that vibe because you could change the product with any other product and it still just would be an influencer trying to influence you to buy a product.

Participant 2: You also have the feeling that Starbucks cup of coffee would be more fitting for the two models. Seriously (people agree).

Participant 3: Especially you know also the mother, it could be like a &unrecognizable word§. Oh I just came back from soccer practices and now I'm finally relaxing.

Participant 2: but I'm actually thinking that she would actually prefer to do it herself like mix something herself. But it doesn't have to be - it could also be another product

Participant 3: Yeah, exactly that's my point. It doesn't have to be Califia Farms &Participant 2 Agrees§. And by looking at these pictures I would not be able to tell you what the goals of the company was. Oh, they are probably trying to make the world a better place, I would not get that vibe if I wasn't told that beforehand.

Moderator 1: Do you seem like experts at what they do? Like and to what extent?

Participant 4: The influencers?

Moderator 1: No the brand

Participant 2: Do they actually tell you something about how they for example got their coffee, how they made it, or what kind of almonds they are. Do you have some kind of trades of the

products? So that they say our coffee come from factory farmers from brazil and we have actually vised the station for example. Do they have something in that?

Moderator 2: They do a bit on that on their website and on their own session.

Participant 3: But of course this is only, you want us to give our honest opinion because of

Moderator 2: Of course

Moderator 1: How important is it for you that they appear as experts?

Participant 4: if you should appear like an expert in your product for me, then they should make a commercial showing we are making our Califia product in this way, and it is very good for the planet because of our CO_2 is not that high and it's just a good product in many ways. Show how you make it but not just give it to a model it does not seem like an expert because of that

Participant 3: Yeah, I don't know. The way they are branding it, these pictures are very simple for me. You just give them to someone who is good at taking pictures and then you hopefully they get some good, those models will hopefully give you a good picture, but that doesn't seem to me like the product is itself or the persons who are making the product they don't come across as experts because of that because of other people are good at taking pictures of their products, so because of the models is good at taking pictures with the product with the children in the background doesn't mean that those who make the actual products are experts. I don't see that connection and I don't feel the connection when I see the pictures.

Participant 2: But how do you actually get an expert in tasting coffee or tasting almond milk? Like there is a very handful of people that can say okay I'm an expert coffee taster and I did it for 15 years and so on. I think the point here is that you actually have to see when you consume some kind

of such a good. Like a cold brew coffee for example takes time to get done. Normally you press a bottom for a coffee and it's done within 3 minutes, but cold brew have to sit for 6, 12, 24 hours for example. So you actually know maybe when the people drink something like that it could be their only cup of the day. It's very special to them and I get the feeling when I see the people who camp there it could be their only coffee that they make because they have limited supplies with them. It was out in nowhere. And the mother who wants to treat herself after a long day with her children to something very good, so she actually too it. But the other two's it looked like they have a quick lifestyle too, but it could be more like I'm grabbing a coffee here from Starbucks or from wherever chain is next to me and then I'm just, they don't really care what coffee they are drinking or what almond milk they are drink.

Participant 3: I think that, if they wanted to appear as experts, if the brand wanted to appear as an expert I would probably expect something like I'll show you how our products are made. This model is taking where we make some of our products or this is where we get our products from. Farmers in brazil or something like that. That would be like, that would probably generate a feeling with me that they would have a high degree of knowledge about their products. That they know how it is produced. But those pictures doesn't create that feeling with me.

Participant 4: Yeah, and they should show what's the most excellent thing about the product (Participant 2 Agrees). We're using the best fruits, or the best coffee beans. Like Volvo we are making the most safes cars in the world that's why we are the best. They should do it the same (Participant 3 Agrees)

Participant 2: They could also do it in a fun way (People agree) (Incoherence talking) And then you have your product that is tasteful and very harmonized product for example. So you can say it's the extra price you are paying. So you don't know anything about the product itself.

Moderator 1: So, tell me if it is important or not important to you that you buy the same products as your friends or your family or people you follow on social media?

Participant 3: I would say that, I don't think I have ever tried to buy a product just because someone on social media used it but I do buy products when my friends and family use it. Because you get a more honest opinion I think and you know the person, so you know if the person describes the products this way, then I would probably or probably not like it as well.

Participant 2: have you never seen a review on YouTube for a tech product for example?

Participant 3: Oh yeah.

Participant 2: Because I also agree with you. But if it comes to technology for example then I know my family knows nothing about it (people agree)

Participant 3: but I would probably distinguish between reviews and an advertisement for something like, you know reviews is actually if &stops talking§. Good reviews is at least is like a good analysis about something but this is nothing like that, and products that are marketing like this doesn't effect me but of course I like listing to reviews about technology, different cars of cars for example. I like reviews about cars for example, and I would probably buy a car if I saw a very nice review but that is something ells I think. Even though the person is reviewing is also paid to promote the products.

Participant 2: Yeah exactly, that was what I was about to say. Sometimes you don't really know if the video is sponsored or not because they are sometimes that good.

Participant 3: Yeah, but I do think they have to use a disclaimer if it is YouTube know a days.

Participant 2: On Instagram normally also. Then they say it's a sponsored post. Nowadays.

Participant 3: So if there was some kind of disclaimer then I would probably look a bit more critical about the review as well. So, I don't think , I have ever bought a product because I saw someone on social media using it expect if it was an analysis or review about the product.

Participant 2: Yeah I would also agree with you. For me it comes down to expertise. So if I know a friend or a family member have used a product for 10 years or like 1 years and you that you can actually trust her or him because he has something experience with it, so you don't have to do the experience yourself, that is also why if I had to buy something new in technology like a new laptop or phone then I would always go to YouTube videos, because I know that there are 100 videos on phones, that probably compare every phone there is out there for example. So I actually know that they can compare this phone to another one that I'm considering maybe, so I would also trust them. But with consumer goods with coffee or milk, then I find it really heard, then I would go to my peers again. I would not watch a video and have someone analysis the almond milk - how much almond there is in there (People laugh).

Moderator 1: So would you ever buy products to live up to other people expectations?

Moderator 2: or just to fit in with your friends.

Participant 4: Yeah you do that, of course.

Participant 3: Yeah, I bought products because my friends used the product.

Participant 4: we bought 2 bottles of Bollinger each.

Participant 3: Yeah, we actually bought to bottles of champagne, just because our friends told us that it was very good. And we are going to drink one of those tonight.

Participant 4: Yeah (People laugh)

Participant 3: Yeah, you know you trust your friends. And you know that if they describe a product then you know okay, if he used those kind of words about the product - the last time he used those kind of products I liked or didn't like the product. So I know if he use this description now, then I probably would like or not like the product as well again.

Participant 2: Did you buy it because he recommended it or did you buy it because you would have paid 20 kroner less for something cheaper then they would have said what kind of shit did you bring?

Participant 3: Probably a little both of both &Laughs§. I don't know, he just said that this Bollinger was very very cheap, it was a good offer. He just asked whether or not we wanted to bottles each.

Moderator 1: So you felt like the person expected you to buy it?

Participant 3: No, no, not at all. It came across because he mentioned that he was taking the boat from Denmark to Norway, and he said and then he would buy some wine and so on, and then we where like can you get cheap wine and champagne, and then he said yeah you can get this and this, and he said I would probably recommend the Bollinger is cheap and it tastes good. And then we where like okay lets try it.

Participant 4: it is not cheap, it's just the cheapest place to buy it.

Participant 3: Yeah (Laughs)

Moderator 1: Okay, so lastly, with this Califia Farms brand. How likely is it that you would buy the products?

Participant 1: I would totally try it.

Participant 5: I think I defiantly would try the coffee, since I've like gotten quite intrigue by looking at it for some time now

Participant 2: Me too. Like the coffee I would try. The milk maybe not.

Moderator 1: Any reason as to why you find it interesting?

Participant 2: Because I think, like what almond milk you can't really do so much different. It is almonds and they almost taste all the time the same. But with coffee there is so many different beans and so many different roasting's, and so many different way to make them as I told them you can do cold brew for 6 hours, 12 hours or 24 hours and then how much. So I would actually be curious to try how it tastes and yeah especially now with the weather it's a good thing. Not especially now, but normally if it is warmer outside you tend to drink something cold. And coffee normally belongs to my day, so that product would fit.

Participant 3: Yeah, I wouldn't buy the product at all. First of all, I don't like coffee &People laugh§. Right now I'm trying to see if I can remember ever seen the same type of commercial and actually trying to buy the product afterwards. And I can't think of any one time I have ever done that. There is all these commercials and influencers about juices for example or smoothies

Moderator 1: These sell smoothies as well.

Participant 3: Oh, I wouldn't try those juices because of the commercials. But I haven't tried any of those products for new smoothies even though I've seen a lot of influencers say you have to buy this product. So I can't think of anytime that I've actually bought a product because of someone (stops talking)

Participant 2: But I think it depends on, for example ice cream. I see myself, that I always see a new sort of ice cream and then I want to try it. Maybe it is the same, do you normally drink smoothies or juices?

Participant 3: Yeah, and I also eat a lot of ice cream in the summer. But every time I go down to Paradise Ice, who makes these very devious ice creams I always choose the same three flavors even though they have gotten like 10 new flavors. Al right give me the one with Daim and chocolate and vanilla ice. And that's the main thing.

Moderator 1: So for the last?

Participant 4: Yeah I would in a perfect world I would say that I'm rational so ads can affect me but I think I would try it. But I would not see them on Instagram, it would be - I would see it in the store, and think oh that's a new coffee products or juice product I have to test it. &People agree§

Moderator 1: Well, that's it. I don't know if you have something that you want to add, something you want to say concerning anything.

Participant 1: So it's available in the UK right? Then I'll try it. I'm going to be there next weekend.

Appendix 4: Focus Group 3 Transcript

Moderator 1: So, thank you for coming today, hi everyone. As you probably know we're going to talk about influencers and credibility on Instagram. So what's going to happen is we're going to show you some pictures and some profiles of influencers or pages. And we're going, we're, we're going to ask you a few questions relating to these pictures or profiles. We have a, sort of a brand case relating to this which is called Califia Farms, which is a company that produces bottles of cold-brewed coffee, juices, smoothies, non-dairy milk substitutes like almond milk. Everything is 100 percent plant-based. So like vegan and non-dairy. And, and they will be figuring in in the things we show you as well. Is there anything else?

Moderator 3: Well I think we're good for now. .

Moderator 2: Yeah, I think we can start. .

Moderator 1: Well, let's get started then. So this, this is the first picture. .

Moderator 2: (pause) And that's her Instagram feed. .

Participant 1: She's very pretty.

Participant 3: Like it seems most of her pictures are very, there's a lot of thought in how to actually take the picture (agreement in room). They don't just snap a picture right away. .

Participant 5: There also seems to be, like you said that legs and some kind of common thread in there. And then there's also like the pretty model pictures and then there's also like some regular ones. .

Participant 1: Yeah. Yes she's both showing her personal life like there was a picture with her friends and then she has the proper model shoots. .

Participant 6: There's also the one who's out hiking with her dog, that's pretty nice.

Participant 4: What's Wilhemina.com?

Moderator 1: It's, it's a modeling recruitment agency.

Participant 4: Okay.

Moderator 1: So what we want to, to ask, for example for this picture is.. do you think this influencer appears as reliable? You think you can trust.. how she is or, or not..?

Participant 4: She has.. Tagged Califia far.. Farms. Okay.

Participant 2: Yeah so she's not, she's not hiding her affiliation to the brand.

Participant 3: No.. I mean I don't know if they have to. But.. Like it's nice to know. (agreement) because then I know it's most likely an ad or some relationship is there. I don't have to guess.

Participant 2: But I think from the from the picture it doesn't really look all that real. I guess you could take a nice picture if you wanted to but still it just looks very product focused. So it sort of looks like an ad.

Participant 6: Yeah. It almost looks like a fashion shoot.. Where, the coffee that has just been inserted basically.. but it's a pretty picture and everything but like I don't know if she's like.. seems reliable, that's a bit hard to kinda get across from that I think. But like.. She is, she's.. Of course like since she's thin and pretty and everything, she is kinda selling the, the healthy lifestyle but.. Yeah I don't know if she seems reliable.. I don't really think so.

Participant 3: She is a model so.. It could just be contract work that she she is supposed to take this picture and upload it and then here's a life's supply of.. I don't know - coffee but.. And also like I don't know her so I can't really judge.

Participant 1: Yeah it's getting difficult to know how her personality is because we haven't seen many pictures of her so we don't really know like if this product is something that just fits straight into her personality or not.

Participant 3: Yeah, but also like I don't know what what the history is. If she's, I don't know, advertised for a lot of products previously and it was quite obvious. The I would probably believe her.. The information she gives us that much. But if.. This is like the first time she does this kind of thing then it would probably be like "hey, I'm not sure.." like either she was really careful in choosing them or the company made a really good offer or she actually really just likes the product, and this is not even an ad and she just.. That's why it doesn't say ad because I think they have a write hashtag ad, you see that a lot.

Participant 4: If you look in her feed.. I would agree.. If you look at her feed you can tell that she uploads usually other pictures that are not that professional. (agreement) And then.. She has a, a high quality picture in there. So I guess it really looks like an ad so you can't really trust it.

Participant 5: I think it would also be much more reliable. If she had like had numerous pictures where she was drinking it.. Like it seemed like she only had the one, so it seems like.. More like an ad than anything. It doesn't seem like it's something that she usually drinks when you go through the feed. And also like you guys said with the.. that the.. Pictures, picture itself is very stylistic and is very photo shoot.. photoshoot-ish. So, yeah, it does seem super reliable. I mean like at least we know she is a model, it's not like all of a sudden there is really fancy picture. And then you would be really.. Wondering how did that happen? Like.. because it wouldn't happen out of no.. out of the green.

Participant 6: Yeah, it's. It fits into a profile.

Moderator 1: OK. Well, let's.. if there's anything else? Let's look at the next picture. So this is a different influencer.. (showing new picture)

Participant 3: Yeah, also looks like.. The other girl wouldn't have uploaded something like this.

Moderator 1: So, so does this.. influencer - you can also take a look at the profile here. Does she come across as being knowledgeable about the product or.. Or doesn't she.

Participant 6: Well seeing that.. First of all that she has like the whole recipe. And also when you go through her feed she has numerous pictures with her.. with like a smoothie type drink and it seems like she's making like.. Food and drinks at home. Then in that regard she seems quite knowledgeable. The only thing that kinda.. Springs into my eyes is, is the first part of the.. Of the comment section where she may be like.. is Quite overselling in a bit that "this smoothie has changed my life."

Participant 1: Yeah. But you can see that she's also like she's, she's a mom. So she has a very family friendly profile like she's talking about.. "Oh She has to.." She has to stay busy and feeding her kids and things like that.. Like the kids are in a lot of pictures.

Participant 3: Yeah, it could be something that my mom would say when I was young. (agreement). She is staying busy. You don't really get that much sleep, true. But also it seems like she has used the product so she knows what she's talking about.

Participant 1: Yeah.. and she's combining it with other products so she doesn't seem like necessarily a brand whore or anything.. Like it seems like she's making an informed decision combining different things.

Participant 3: I mean like, there is quite a bit of food. And I think if you go in there she even says that she's about like health.. (looking over at profile text, participant must have assumed based on the pictures) Did it say something like that?

Participant 5: Coffee lover.

Moderator 1: Kombucha brewer, that's pretty health conscious.

Participant 3: Oh, I thought actually it said something about being healthy. She comes across as somebody who, you know, she doesn't want to give up on the good things in life. But she still tries to be healthy.

Participant 5: Yeah.

Participant 4: And that's when she when she makes, I don't know, she had the recipe there.. She makes the smoothie with.. I guess healthier products than you normally would. So that that's quite, quite cool.

Participant 6: Also the picture still seems a bit more authentic. Like it it looks like a snapshot of like everyday.. Basically.

Participant 2: Yeah, but I still don't really get why you would post a drink like that if you weren't interested in selling it. Like, who cares about..

Participant 3: I mean there are people that like what she posts, because once in a while maybe there's an, there's a cool recipe. Then again, where do you get all the products..

Participant 2: Maybe it's just me.

Participant 3: Where do you get all the products from?

Participant 2: Yeah.

Participant 3: Because she always uses different ones.

Participant 1: Maybe she gets them for free. They're probably pretty expensive. If you had to live like that.

Participant 3: Do you know how much the Califia Farms things are?

Moderator 2: Well, they are roughly 8 dollars for.. A two-pack of cold-brewed coffee.

Participant 4: Wow, that's pretty expensive. But I'm not.. Although, in the U.S. everything is cheaper. So yeah, it is expensive, it would cost even more here.

Participant 1: And I guess also if they have to.. like it sounds like they use.. If, you said it was non.. Non-dairy right? And vegan.

Moderator 2: Yeah.

Participant 1: So, so I guess it's more expensive to make than if you just made, made with a bunch of chemicals.

Participant 5: And also like she use almond butter. So she has really gone full-out on that drink.

Participant 3: What is that even? Butter out of.. made out of almonds yes obviously, but.. Okay, yeah also nevermind.

Participant 5: Yeah, I have never, I have never heard about it actually.

Participant 4: Yeah, it sounds healthy though.

Participant 2: I think it's supposed to be pretty high in protein and healthy fats.

Participant 4: I find it interesting, also like, you know like in the background with the trees.. I don't know like.. the mom or the model before that I would sort of look at her for the.. For the girl - you know as "she's pretty and yeah I like that blah blah blah. Look at that". But not, not really read anything about it. But with this one I don't know. Because here the picture itself isn't really that

interesting it doesn't really have something that is that I like personally. Yes that's a drink in the middle so I know it's about, must be about the drink. But then I would have to read the comments.. or like I would be more.. (interrupted)

Participant 3: Maybe it makes sense when you know her. Yeah maybe she always, like post a little story with it.

Participant 2: I wouldn't trust her from that. I mean maybe she's a nice person, I don't.. I don't know. I mean she's sharing her life, her kids are there. But I mean everyone is sharing their life on social media. So..

Participant 3: But it feels less polished compared to the model, like it is..

Participant 2: There is still some.. Some like the product is more exposed..

Participant 2: Yeah, but when you look at.. But when you look at the mom. Like, it feels less polished compared to the model because they are not these super professional pictures where the mom is just hey can you take a picture. Probably to the husband. Then they put a lot of effort in their pictures but it still feels like.. They're doing it to show off their best side. Not to actually build a portfolio of nice pictures. And also she doesn't have that many followers does she?

Participant 5: No.

Participant 2: What was it?

Participant 5: 6000 or something, I think.

Participant 2: But that's still more than a normal person. (agreement) They're not just her friends.

Moderator 2: She posts stories as well, where she's.. Talking to people.

Participant 1: She actually looks younger than I thought.. In this story.

Moderator 1: Does, does she.. Does she come across as being experienced with these kind of products or?

Moderator 1: I mean it looks like she has used the product. So at least she has some experience with the product itself. And..

Participant 1: Yeah that is true.

Participant 5: I think she seems pretty experienced because like.. That, that type of recipe that she has put together like.. That, that kinda.. You kinda need to have some insight into just figuring that out. And that's not something that you just like bundle together in the kitchen randomly.

Participant 2: Can you go back to the recipe? But.. It could also be something that these brands you know they combine, find influencers together and send them the recipes.

Participant 6: Yeah sure. Or like, maybe there's even like a recipe on the back of the cold-brew itself. Maybe not including that (unintelligible due to interruption).

Participant 2: It could just be like a random bunch of ingredients put together and blended..

Participant 3: And then she got lucky and it actually taste good.

Participant 2: Yeah.

Participant 5: But there's something about her that..

Participant 2: If every thing tastes nice then it's probably going to taste alright.

Participant 5: But there's something about her that I kind of trust that she has actually put that in that drink because you could just have the cold-brew and just say "well I just made this".

Participant 2: Yeah, I agree with that. That's true.

Participant 6: It seems more reliable than the first picture .

Participant 2: Unless it's part of what the brand told her to say.

Participant 6: Yes of course.

Participant 4: But I mean.. She said she's a coffee lover so I guess she knows her cof.. At least more than two brands of coffee. In that regard I guess she also has a drank them, has the experience but I guess she also knows them.

Moderator 1: Yeah. So here take a look at the next. This is again a different influencer.

Participant 3: Another model?

Moderator 1: Yeah she's, she's also a model. And we, we, we want to want to hear your general thoughts but what we also want to hear is whether you find this person to be unique in a way.. and why or why not.

Moderator 1: I guess like she's pretty and in a normal world setting she would be sort of unique because not everybody's that pretty.. But on Instagram you have access to, I don't know how many girls who are pretty. She doesn't really look that different from the rest of them.

Participant 2: Yeah I would probably forget her.

Participant 4: Yeah I mean if I saw her at a supermarket then I would be like "oh, the girl from the supermarket, wow she's hot". But but, here..

Participant 3: It basically looks like something that is taken out of like a fashion magazine.. like it, like that has been stated before like.. You would instantly forget her, there's nothing unique about that picture at all.

Participant 1: (looking at picture feed) Oh, she's on TV as well.. or in some studio

Participant 4: (referring to profile text) but she also said like Califia Farms ambassador right?

Moderator 1: Yeah, she is.

Participant 1: So she's upfront.

Participant 6: She's also [priceline] Ambassador. (mispronounced)

Moderator 1: Priceline

Participant 6: Oh, priceline

Participant 4: Oh.. Hotels. That's a weird combo.

Participant 1: She takes what she can get. (laughter) But she seems nice. Very pretty as well.

Participant 5: There's also some personal pictures as well.

Participant 4: Yeah she has quite a few pictures that are rather, I would say bad.. Like it's not "guy with the Super Camera"

Participant 1: it's kind of difficult to also like.. pinpoint her ethnici- ethnici- ethnicity. Like, she could sort of be from anywhere.

Participant 4: But she's from Australia right.

Moderator 1: Yeah I think so.

Participant 4: I guess it's a melting pot.

Moderator 1: Yeah.

Participant 6: But when you look at the photo itself when you look at the cold brew it almost looked photoshopped in because the picture is so.. Like..

Participant 3: Yeah she looks quite different on the picture than in the other pictures. Like, there is a lot of Photoshop or a lot of makeup.

Participant 2: Yeah it's, again, when you look through her profile it's pretty clear that this is a photoshoot for the product. Like it's not a normal situation.

Participant 5: And also like if you look at the outline of her body like it's super sharp. So this definitely been retouched.

Participant 1: Yeah and the colors go well together.

Participant 5: Like who knows if she even stood like that when the waves were like that. It could even look like she has been inserted. So they are taking two pictures maybe even (agreement).

Participant 4: Yeah.. but she is.. She's pretty and all that.

Participant 6: But yeah, I wouldn't say she was unique at all.

Participant 1: Is she a celebrity of some sort?

Moderator 2: She is like, I guess you could call her a micro-celebrity or something like that she has quite a few follower, followers and she's been on TV.

Participant 1: But you don't know why she was on TV. (Moderators are not aware of reason for TV appearance)

Moderator 1: So you clearly think she's, she's very.. Pretty. You've all acknowledged that. Do you think that she's a stylish person? (pause)

Moderator 2: Does she have a cool style for example? The way she dresses is that something that appeals to you?

Participant 1: I must admit I didn't really look much at her clothes because she's very pretty. And also some of the pictures she doesn't really have many clothes on (laughter in room).

Participant 5: But she looks like a stylish person.

Participant 2: Yeah.. but it could just be that she is she's a good-looking girl. Maybe she gets free clothes as well.

Participant 4: Well, if she's a model, she has to kind of have a cool style, I suppose.. or she gets a cool style.

Participant 1: But, but most of the pictures her face is in focus or entire body. But, it's not really that.. Doesn't look like she's promoting clothes.

Participant 5: But also actually when you look at it if you look through her feed, like.. It's quite easy to distinguish between the model photos and her regular photos in terms of her style, because she's much more fashionable on the photo shoots than she is in everyday life. She seems like she's doesn't have that many accessories. And it's also like more basic clothes basically. Like a dress or something.

Participant 1: So maybe she's actually a pretty normal girl when she's not being a model or advertising for something.

Participant 3: I could sort of.. See that her model persona drinks Califia coffee but her real-life persona doesn't.. (agreement).

Participant 1: Could just be that like.. She is an ambassador.. So..

Participant 6: You know she's been paid. (agreement)

Participant 3: It's weird that.. Like the picture, it seems really obvious from looking at the picture but it doesn't say anything about it.. that it is an ad for Califia Farms

Participant 5: That's true.

Participant 2: I guess. Is she not using hashtag either? Or she does have a hashtag "collab." .

Participant 6: But what. But who knows what that constitutes like it's like. Because he says that this diary free, no sugar and it tastes delicious. But then again we are really unsure if she has been paid or not. So like it's kind of hard to trust .

Participant 2: but maybe it's so obviously an ad that you don't have to say it because you're talking about the product and.. .

Participant 3: I Mean when I see it...

Participant 2: you're focusing on the product. .

Participant 6: Yeah.

Participant 3: When I see it, you could tell me that this is not an ad. And I would not believe it. I would always think it's an ad, it's too perfect. .

Moderator 1: So this influencer do you think she's, does she seem popular to you or not?

Participant 3: I Mean look at the comments. I would love to get that many comments on my Instagram.

Participant 1: But it could just be bought comments.

Participant 3: I don't know if they are bought and I think she has so many followers. I don't think she needs to buy comments. .

Participant 1: Well, You know you can just buy followers, comments, and likes .

Participant 3: But they seem too realistic for it.

Participant 1: And She's been on TV so who knows, we don't know why she was on TV. But guess she could be pretty popular. .

Participant 5: And Also I would also say that she seems very popular both because she has 70000 followers which is quite a lot but also like because is ambassador for two brands and has been on TV. And well she seems at least... and also a models. So she seems a bit more popular than most people.

Participant 4: If She is that popular I guess you always have to be a bit suspicious. You cannot take every, like trust everything they say. They're probably not going to tell you shit because then the whole facade of their money making machine breaks down but they also not going to tell you 100 percent truth. .

Participant 5: I'm Also like quite a few bad things about the photo in terms of it being for a job and whatnot. But like I would say one thing that is good at, that it's like you getting focused on the product because of the white dress and the contrast and all that. Like it was actually the first thing I looked at almost and then I looked at the face after that almost .

Participant 2: But it could just be any random model with any random drink .

Participant 6: Yeah easily. .

Participant 1: But I guess it also depends on who's looking. I think maybe many people.

Participant 4: Of course you guys look at something different (Laughter) .

Participant 1: I guess other people would like. Maybe you wouldn't think about that. She's just a model. Maybe they want to be like her. (agreement)

Participant 4: But Then again she probably is like that's her job, to be pretty.

Participant 1: And Social media also shows all the positive sides of your life. Maybe she doesn't...

Participant 4: I mean like also it was already said. There's probably also a lot of Photoshop and maybe. But with a lot of Photoshop I could look like that as well. .

Participant 3: But Then again there are thousands of them out there. And it's also a bit unrealistic to become like that. .

Participant 1: I do follow some model, but I mostly try to, I guess, when I think about it people I follow who aren't my friends; they are sort of people I can relate to. I follow some fashion bloggers and some make-up tutorial people but they're mostly just like seem like normal people to me. And I guess she is normal but she's still, she's still very perfect.

Participant 6: Yeah, I wouldn't follow her either. Because in connection to what you said like she doesn't really have a claim to fame besides having a few model shoots here and there and a lot of people have pretty pictures like she's not like the mom that like was making smoothies and stuff like that. So yeah not one that I would follow. .

Moderator 1: Okay. I think we need to move on. So This is this is from a, this is from a page on Instagram. It's not a person per se. Take a look at it and then try to think about what you think. But also if you find this to be interacting with the audience or not interacting. How it comes across. .

Participant 1: I Mean I guess they have a few comments. How many comments. .

Participant 5: But I really like that these state that it is explicitly is not an ad.

Participant 3: It Is probably the one that looks the most an ad. (Agreement) .

Participant 2: Yeah It still looks Photoshop doesn't look like you just took it. I mean maybe he has a filter on but it does look like an enhanced picture.

Participant 3: but They are like talking to people in the comments. (Agreement) Can we also see their feed? .

Moderator 2: Of course you can. .

Participant 3: But it's weird, there are these girls working out, there are guys working out, some quotes in between. It's not really something for me.

Participant 2: Yeah I don't really get why you would on that.

Participant 5: I Don't really get why... the almond milk doesn't really fit in. Like, I Think. Of course it's a page that revolves around being healthy but they haven't had any similar photos to. It's more most people that work out or there's a picture of a fitness watch or something. It seems a bit weird. .

Participant 2: I work out and I do a lot of fitness, but I mean I don't really follow people I don't know. .

Participant 4: I mean it's not even a person. It's just like some dude picking pictures from everywhere. (Agreement) And I guess then he says: "Oh, Califia farms, I will tell them it's not an ad." And then I will post this and they will be like "oh well, you only have 500 people on your account." "Well, I have this page I could post it here." "Oh yeah, okay then, here is 50 euros." .

Participant 5: Maybe they sent him like a box of coconut cream.

Participant 2: I Guess I would trust it if my friend tagged me in it and had experience with the product. I don't think I would try a product because some page said that I should and even looks like it an ad even though they say it is not an ad.

Participant 5: I think for me like the most impactful about the picture and the comments section is what other people have said like they've tried it and loved it like that has a lot more weight for me than just a random person who saw it. .

Moderator 1: Do You think this this influence cares about her, I'm sorry this page, do you think they care about their followers? Do you feel like they care about them?

Participant 4: I Think just by promoting the whole stay healthy thing and then replying to people not necessarily about product but just on their journey to becoming fit. I guess they care about them if we think being fit and healthy is a good thing. Something that to achieved.

Participant 1: but they have more than 70 thousand followers. So maybe they're not, maybe they don't really care. Maybe they care about the number of followers but not really about the followers. .

Participant 3: I would say they care more than the model before because I guess in the fitness community you always people are quite supportive. And this is the cost of bringing them together. But then it's just a page it's like you don't, like it's not like you know this person cares about me.

Participant 1: And You don't really know the other people.

Participant 4: Yeah Maybe there's like 50 people managing the page as a spare time project and then one person is actually really supportive and the others are there counting the money. But I would feel like the mom she should because I think she was also replying to comments in regards to the recipe. I think she actually like I could get the feeling she cares because she cares about her kids, about her husband. You could see it in pictures. And then she doesn't have as many followers. So it's easy to care (Agreement) You know they, they have a very little community.

Participant 2: and some of those pages. I know from, from Facebook sometimes they just grow a big page and then they sell them off and then they start advertising. So. So it's more like a business decision.

Participant 3: Also I guess if you have a person as the page, it can still be sort of like a community platform and follow a fast like a guy who's wearing like this Scandinavian fashion, very minimalistic. And I think that following when he at just 1000 followers and now he is at this point I think 100000 or something like that. And you can tell also you get so many comments he can't even reply to all of them. But he still tries to and he will tell people where he bought stuff even if it when it's on sale.

Participant 1: And it Is him that answers the messages?

Participant 3: I Would say so because that's also he quit his job to just do this the Instagram thing now. So I think maybe if he was still working but he said he's not working anymore.

Participant 2: It feels like those motivational quotes. It's kind of a cliche. They're all reposting the same ones, work hard etc.

Participant 6: But like it's hard to say. Like if they care or like I don't think they care that much but there's something about it that speaks to me anyway. I think it's because they answer people.

Moderator 1: So do you think this page, do you feel like update regularly as a way to engage their audience. .

Participant 3: I Mean they post a lot of pictures. Look at her feed. I don't know when they were posted but...

Participant 1: Could you look at when they posted pictures from these images? (Agreement)

Participant 3: But Also I guess for them it's quite easy because they don't have to take pictures themselves. They just have to find it.

Moderator 2: How often do they post? Once a day? Sometimes twice?

Participant 4: I guess they're pretty up to date. But also like you have to with the Instagram mechanism because people if don't like your picture like they will not be shown to them anymore. So if you want to see the pictures you always have to more or less like them.

Participant 2: I Think I would get tired. I wouldn't follow a page like that in the first place. But if they were posting like that every day it would just be annoying. I would find it annoying.

Participant 4: And Like it worked out well when I see the models and they are dressing nice it's sort of an inspiration of like how I could dress. And it's nice that they dress always differently.

Participant 6: It also seems like the pictures were there someone doing fitness on them. There's one picture where there was just like a picture of New York City or something there wasn't really that many comments on there. But the other fitness pictures it seems like it's a place where people tag each other, that's something that they share with each other...

Moderator 1: So this is a video loop. And it's a couple that has this profile.

Participant 5: That looks super cool.

Participant 4: Yeah, it's something different.

Participant 6: You know it really is something that stands out.

Participant 3: Looks like a lot of effort. But I don't know. Sometimes people make these videos because they can. Or did they just film it for them (Califia Farms). You know make...

Participant 1: It's a nice location.

Participant 6: but I feel like that's the most unique picture off of the ones there is like this one to remember. I've not seen many of those type of pictures.

Participant 3: You probably can see a lot of these settings and everything because there are a lot of outdoorsy people on Instagram taking pictures of them hiking.

Participant 4: Oh He's a commercial photographer a guest guess then he can just make cool stuff himself. He doesn't have to hire a crew to do work.

Participant 1: So it was a drone?

Participant 3: Or a Helicopter (Laughter).

Participant 1: So probably a drone.

Moderator 1: So His influence do you find him and her, no sorry. He's a photographer, do you find him to be believable, are you able to relate to him.

Participant 3: I mean I like hiking and not on that level. But I also take pretty alright pictures. It's Something that I could see myself doing.

Participant 5: like Personally I can not relate with the outdoorsy thing because like I don't really care too much about nature and being outside and sleeping in a tent. But I can kind of relate to like the scenario where you're with a friend and enjoying a beverage. And also when you look at the feed like the regular pictures of course is well taken.

Participant 1: But It also zooms out very far. So it's not like, yeah you do notice the product. Well it's also very small because it's zooms out so quickly.

Participant 4: I Like it that is zooms out because then it feels like it's not on the product but on like the whole set up in general (Agreement)

Participant 2: You just feel like you want to go there. (Agreement)

Participant 3: And the products you. I don't know what it's a coffee milk? I suppose you drink milk with coffee. It's just there because well they ended up hiking maybe over night till a nice location, woke up, got out of their tent. And now they're out there, that is an amazing feeling to just have a coffee in the morning see the sunrise.

Participant 1: He Also states that it's made for the company. So he's not hiding that.

Participant 3: Oh that is cool I mean that resonates with me. He's upfront about what he does. If he would now say it's a super product, I would still be like oh maybe since he's shooting for them. Maybe it's not a super product but it's probably a pretty good product.

Participant 2: I Like that he's not talking like he's a photographer, sure. Some of the others were like this smoothie changed my life and things like that. And I like that he's not trying to sell the product in the in the profile or in the picture text but he's just showing off a nice location.

Participant 6: I Really like that as well.

Participant 3: Pretty Low key. That's nice. Not so in your face. Buy this now or die.

Moderator 1: So so do you think the way the influencer, this photographer, the way he uses the product does that mimic how you would use it or not?

Participant 3: I Don't drink milk with my coffee. Yeah I could see myself taking it hiking. Because you have the coffee you don't need to brew it because then you to bring the water and I don't know how much coffee you take out there. So it's all done already which is quite convenient and probably wouldn't bring the milks since I don't like it but I guess is almond milk so it can get warm you don't need a fridge.

Participant 1: I wouldn't go hiking at all.

Participant 4: But I think the way that the mom did. I think that that is more like I would use it because if I'm only buying something more expensive than I would do or something super nice just not consume it somewhere. As a student you know sometimes you have to treat yourself but you don't have that much money so you just make something that tastes really good.

Participant 5: But Yeah it just seems like a lot of hassle. Of course if you're like really into the whole plant based diet thing like that's a way of doing it but it just seems like a lot of hassle to have all that equipment out there and bringing those cans of coffee and a milk compared to you just have like had the beans have already been prepared. You just need water, water.

Participant 1: I guess, if they are hiking they do have to bring...

Participant 3: You have to bring the water to make the coffee anyways...

Participant 1: It didn't look like there was anything (water) nearby. Just rocks.

Participant 4: It makes sense but also but I don't really see the backpacks or a tent. So they just went out to just have the coffee or take the picture and like well I cannot relate to that that much. I could see myself sitting there and also having coffee the same so you can totally see that there's especially after a morning like that I guess any coffee taste really good.

Moderator 1: Okay So. So this is this is it for the pictures. Now these these things we've talked about things like whether you trust the person or find them reliable and whether you think they know things about the product, whether you find them attractive or or how they're how popular they're thinking. So are any of these things making you believe them more.

Participant 3: Definitely like the last guy because I think that could be me. So if he's using it the same way then I mean probably makes sense. I can sort of relate to that. I Think hey he's probably not talking shit. We are on one level.

Participant 1: I think the model girl in the swimsuit she seemed like a nice girl. That picture with the coffee seems very very like an advertisement. Maybe if you follow her you, you see all the other sides to that person. Maybe You find her to be. Maybe you would trust her if you follow her? .

Participant 4: Yeah Because that is it was her job to be in a picture like that I could see that they would use it for an ad campaign. But she also posted the picture. (Agreement) And then it's cool like. I like that, like that model because there are a couple model that I also follow and if they get the opportunity to work with a company like that you know they care care about what they promised them that they wouldn't just advertise for, I don't know, McDonald's because that's at least I don't think they would. So I would trust them simply because they're quite picky with whom they work. They get so many offers.

Participant 6: For me, I i think it was like the last guy with the camping thing and the mom. In terms of they seemed most authentic. And also they were quite upfront about like if they were sponsored and also when you looked at their feed it seemed like it was something that they were doing. Like The outdoorsy guy who was outdoors and took pictures like that. And also the mom. She was someone that mades smoothies. And stuff like that, they seemed more trustworthy in that sense and that's very important for me that you can see that it is something that they do. Not Just something that they do because they have to been paid for.

Moderator 1: So do you have any personal experiences regarding what we've discussed, that you would like to add, something that comes to mind?

Participant 5: Regarding influencer marketing in general or?

Moderator 1: Yeah, or maybe you follow influencers.

Participant 3: I once bought a hat, a winter wool hat as I saw a guy wearing it, but I was also looking for a hat, and I figured if it looks nice and he is wearing it then it's not going to be shit, because all the other clothes he wears Is good quality. I didn't know the brand before.

Participant 5: I'm following a lot of fashion influencers and also like that are really into jewelry, I've bought at least a few rings because I've followed that person and he has posted pictures of those rings, and then I've thought 'oh, they look cool, I'll look them up and buy them.

Participant 4: There is this girl from paradise hotel that I follow, and once she posted a picture of a cafe in Copenhagen where she wrote thanks for great coffee bla bla bla and we ended up going there the next day and I think most likely because she said it was nice.

Participant 6: I've actually also tried something similar, but that was just an Instagram story where I saw a girl that was on an influencer, and it looked super cool, so the next time I was in Copenhagen I wanted to swing by, which I did.

Moderator 2: What about you guys?

Participant 1: I do follow some people that do makeup and also some fashion bloggers. Sometimes it can give ideas or advise so that you can do it yourself like incorporate it into your style. I don't

think, like, I know they are advertising it but they still seem like nice people to me and sometimes they are funny and things like that. But I also follow a couple of people form paradise hotel mostly just if there is drama or something.

Participant 2: yeah, I don't follow influencers. I follow a couple of stores just to (pauses) like store pages just to get news or discounts, but I try to avoid like things that kinda look to fake to me.

Participant 6: I actually use to follow a lot of influencers but then I got so annoyed that my feed got cluttered up that I decided to unfollow basically all of them, so now I'm basically just following my friends.

Participant 2: Yeah, I don't a bunch of advertising if I can avoid it.

Participant 6: no, because then there is the Instagram advertisement like on facebook, and then there is all the influencers who also are advertising and it gets annoying.

Participant 4: I only follow a few anymore, because I basically are looking at ads all the time. Sometimes it is nice to get some ads if you are looking for it, and if it is something that you care about, but if they start advertising for, I don't know, new tools like a drill, and it is a guy that I usually look up because he dresses well, then what the fuck.

Moderator 1: Okay, so now we are gonna, we want to talk a bit about this brand Califia farms that we've, we've showed you. Did you have any prior experiences with the brand? [All the people says no]

Moderator 1: None of you? Okay. So how do you feel about the brand now that you've seen a few pictures?

Participant 1: I don't really have an opinion - it seems okay

Participant 6: Now thinking that you guys said it was a plant-based vegan company I can't really see that that comes across anywhere

Participant 3: You can see that it's a bit healthy. You have the models that look good, you have the fitness page, the hiking thing. You know, hiking are also trendy, but you hike not if you love Burger King and eat it everyday, you go hiking if you..

Participant 2: Yeah, I also think it's just, I mean it is pretty normal to products to be 'oh we are vegan', because there is quite a lot of vegans and or vegetarians.

Participant 3: And it's cool

Participant 2: Yeah, and it's just easier to say that you are that, and then you can sell to everyone

Participant 4: and I guess that coffee is always vegan, isn't it?

Participant 2: I don't know.

Participant 4: At least it is plant-based.

Participant 2: Yeah

Moderator 1: So what kind of things do you associate with the brand?

Moderator 2: Maybe it is easier to just give us one word that you associate with the brand. After seeing the pictures.

Participant 5: I would say refreshing

Participant 4: I would say cool

Participant 1: I don't really know like, it just looks like, it doesn't really do anything for me. It just seems like a drink. I don't really have an opinion.

Participant 3: Yeah, to me it looks a bit, how would you say [stops talking]

Participant 1: Expensive, maybe?

Participant 3: Yeah, that but they are trying to hard to be hip, hipster. Well you can say try hard or hipster. Because cold brew is pretty hip, and with the almond milk thing

Participant 2: yeah, I guess they are the buzzwords, right? Maybe.

Moderator 1: Okay, what about credibility? How do you think about the brand in terms of credibility?

Participant 3: What do you mean by that?

Moderator 1: Like do you trust the brand? Now we've talked about that they have this vision or they're doing plant-based products, they want to improve the world and not have a large footprint and things like that. So, do you think that this company wants to create a healthy world and sustainable planet after seeing the pictures?

Participant 5: I really can't, if it is only based on the pictures then I don't really get the vibe at all.

Participant 3: I mean it's a small company, it's not Nestle, that we know is somewhat evil (people laugh), and they are (pause) I'm just assuming since they are not working with George Clooney, like you can sort of trust them in that regard. But I really don't know that much about the company afterwards.

Participant 2: And isn't every company saying that they want to make the world better?

Participant 3: I guess you can always trust the smaller companies more than some of the bigger companies.

Participant 5: For me personally, if I had trust that they wanted to achieve their goal, then I would have to like, get some more knowledge about how it is produced and all that. What they do for the farmers and stuff like that. Because it is pretty cheap to say that you want to improve the world in an advertisement.

Participant 1: Yeah it is a bit, bit vague.

Participant 5: Actions speaks larger than words.

Participant 4: It would be cool to have like, I don't know, an influencer or I don't know a celebrity or what ever, that is known to really care about it. Like Leonardo DiCaprio is really known to be on the forefront with that. To have him go to the farm and look at these kind of things and (pause) I don't know. Maybe that would make me think that the company cares about it a bit more.

Moderator 1: So do you think from the pictures that the company can actually do this? Like can they make a better world? Do they have what it takes?

Participant 3: A better world? I mean I don't know, they are a small company, and it is called Califia Farms, maybe like, are they are a Farm? Do they have their own I don't know almonds? But if they are just a weird start-up that get their almonds from somewhere else and ship it all around the world, then how do you make the world a better place, if you send your products around in planes. That is really bad for the environment

Participant 6: Yeah, I basically, I don't really get the impression at all. They should kinda show some action instead of just talking

Participant 3: I guess to push the plant based and vegan stuff, if you make it cool the products and the people will most likely eat it or drink it as well. The whole plant-based drink stuff

Participant 2: I think it's just advertising speak, oh I want to make the world better. Maybe they do, but I don't think they care that much, I think they want to sell a product

Participant 3: I mean, yeah it would be really good to see how they do it as well, maybe their products line are super energy efficient (Participant 2 agrees)

Participant 2: Yeah, or maybe are paying to charities maybe or something

Participant 3: Yeah, or don't use that much water for the almonds.

Moderator 1: So in general, how important is it to you that a brand is an expert in what they do for you to consider buying it?

Participant 3: it is nice, if they know how to do things, if they actually have the knowledge - you know when a big company says we want to make an electric car, and they build an electric car then they have like their standard measures and everything, and I would probably buy that electric car if it is the same price as a weird startup that have just made an electric car since they don't really know how to make cars, they don't have the experience as a company or knowledge.

Participant 1: I guess I buy a new iPhone every 2 years, and I mean, I just usually know they are good like, they are always good, so you don't have to think too much about it when you buy the new one, and you know that you are going to be happy with it - at least I have.

Participant 6: I think for me it really depends on the product itself. Like this being coffee and all, for me it is not really that important that they know a lot about coffee as long as it tastes great. And is sanitary and all that, then it doesn't really matter that much

Participant 3: Also with coffee, are there even that big differences between coffees?

Participant 4: There are, if you really care about coffee.

Participant 3: Yeah, but if you don't really care that much

Participant 4: Yeah then it probably wouldn't really matter that much.

Moderator 1: Okay, I want to hear a bit about if it is important or to what extent is it important or not important that you buy the same products as your friends or family do? Or even those that you follow on social media?

Participant 3: I don't want to be left out, like if all my friends buy a grill, like a little one time use grill to go grilling, then I'm not going to be the one that asks, hey can I put my stuff on yours, then I'm most likely gonna buy my own as well.

Participant 1: Like I said, I follow some fashion bloggers, and I get inspired by what they do, but I also think about like does this, would this look stupid, like some bloggers are very like (pauses) they become very high fashion and it sort of looks like, it looks like something a blogger would wear and not something that I could wear out here. So I guess you sort of - it is sort of a balance. I do get influenced by what cloths and things that my friends would like

Participant 4: I mean once I bought some purse or wanted to buy a purse and like basically I bought the same ones as my one friend had, because I had seen her use it and everything and she was happy with it, and then I knew the brand, but I didn't know it that well, you had to buy it via the internet, so I couldn't see it before for myself, so I just had to trust it because she had it.

Participant 1: I also like, for electronic stuff, like I had to buy a TV so I asked my brother what would be a good TV for my, like the money I had.

Moderator 1: Okay, so have you ever bought a product in order to live up to order people's expectations?

Participant 3: I mean, I was working in the southern part of Jutland, and they asked me to bring some beer from the border, and I also said I was going to bring beer, I could have bought like the cheapest that was on sale, because that is usually what we drink, but I knew that they didn't ask me

to bring beer that was on sale because you can get it all over as well, so I had to bring some beer from a small local brewery, which was a bit nicer one.

Participant 1: Sometimes, I know sometimes I've felt pressured in a store to buy something where I've regretted it afterwards, and had to return it, but I bought it in the situation because I felt pressured to do it.

Participant 4: Yeah, sometimes when you are out with friends, they say oh this is really cool, you should get it as well, because I have something similar. And then you have it at home, and you don't really use it and then you are like this is stupid. But you bought it anyways.

Participant 5: I think for me, I remember sometimes at a social setting, where it's like a dinner party, where there was a lot of people that was into wine, and then I've kinda felt pressured to buying more expensive wine than I usually buy. Because I know they don't really like the cheap stuff.

Participant 1: Yeah, and you don't really want to be seen as cheap either.

Participant 5: No, so I kinda felt a bit pressured even though no one said anything, but I felt a bit pressured to go and spend more money than I usually would (Some people agree)

Participant 4: But I think that it doesn't happened that often, I really have to think about a few examples now. Maybe it does happened.

Participant 1: Sometimes if we go out to eat, sometimes it can be a more expensive restaurant than I was expecting and like, you sort of have to just do it anyway, you can't really leave when you are at a restaurant.

Participant 3: Also it feels weird if you eat pizza with friends at like a nicer restaurant and you order a margarita because it is the cheapest, then they would make fun of you. Scrooge McDuck (Sarcastic fake laugh) not funny.

Moderator 1: Okay, so all in all from what we've talked about today, how likely is it that you would buy the product? Or buy a product from Califia Farms? Why or why not?

Participant 5: it depends on where I can get it, if I had to order it online then I probably wouldn't get it. It's too much hassle.

Moderator 1: It is not for sale - but lets say it was.

Participant 5: if it was, then I defiantly would try it because I think that the cold brew looks very delicious now that is very hot out. So if I was walking the aisles at my local supermarket and I saw it, then I defiantly would try it - it of course also depends a bit on the price.

Participant 3: Yeah I think I would as well. I really like the pictures that are hiking, maybe that we've also talked a bit about it, then I would need more pictures from him drinking it and using it, and see like how he turned like form groggy and sleepy to [Boom - sound] fully energized. Like this is the perfect morning. But I think I would try it.

Participant 1: How much did you say the products costs?

Moderator 2: The product costs 8 US dollars for two bottles.

Participant 1: Okay, I guess I would try it. I mean there is also other expensive drinks, there was the whole trend with vitamin water or coconut water, and I guess that I'm curious now that we've

talked about it, but I don't know if I just had seen it and didn't know anything about then I don't know if I would have thought about it. Maybe.

Participant 3: Yeah, that's true. I mean if, like I follow this one model that also does a lot of food stuff, if she had it then I probably would take a look at it, like look it up on the internet and then maybe buy it afterwards if it is cool, but at least it would go in that direction. But also I don't really like I make my coffee usually myself, and don't use milk so I don't not what it offers me that much.

Participant 2: I think, I've bought other smoothies so I guess I could also buy this. It depends on like, if it costs the same as getting a freshly pressed smoothie at a juice bar, then it probably wouldn't make sense.

Participant 6: For me personally, I don't really care too much about the whole vegan and plant-based thing, so I don't think I really would go for it.

Moderator 1: So you wouldn't pay extra?

Participant 6: No, I think I would rather just go to some of the usual sports that I go to. Like Baresso or Starbucks or something.

Moderator 2: We've sort of come to the end. Is there anything else you want to add, like in regard to the focus group itself, or all the stuff that we've talked about to day?

Appendix 5: Pictures Used in Focus Group

Influencer 1

<u>Picture</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BiXM-g2lT8C/

<u>Picture of Profile</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/itsemilyvaldez/
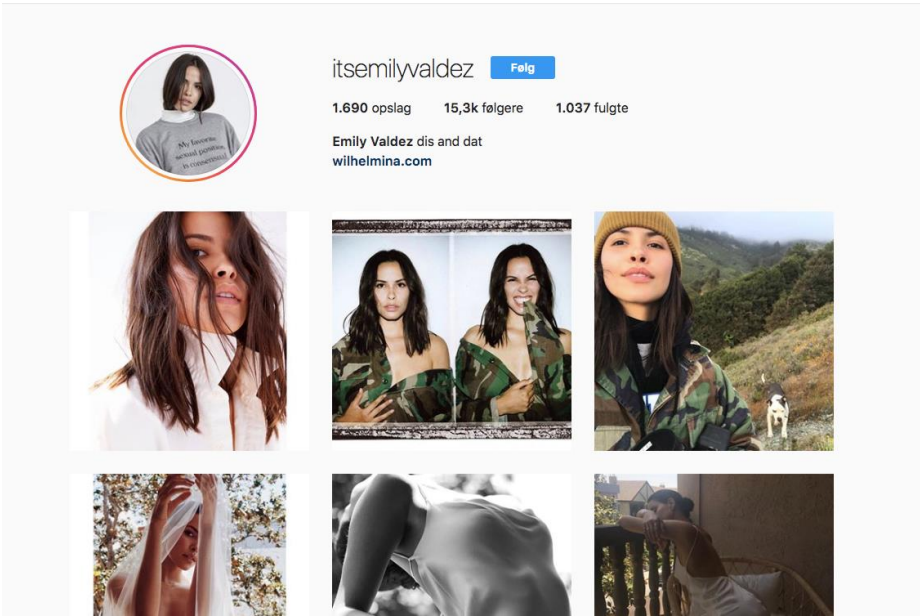
Influencer 2

<u>Picture</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bh67hqJByM3

<u>Picture of Profile</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/margaretannpowell/

Influencer 3

<u>Picture</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BibVOwQHTqk/
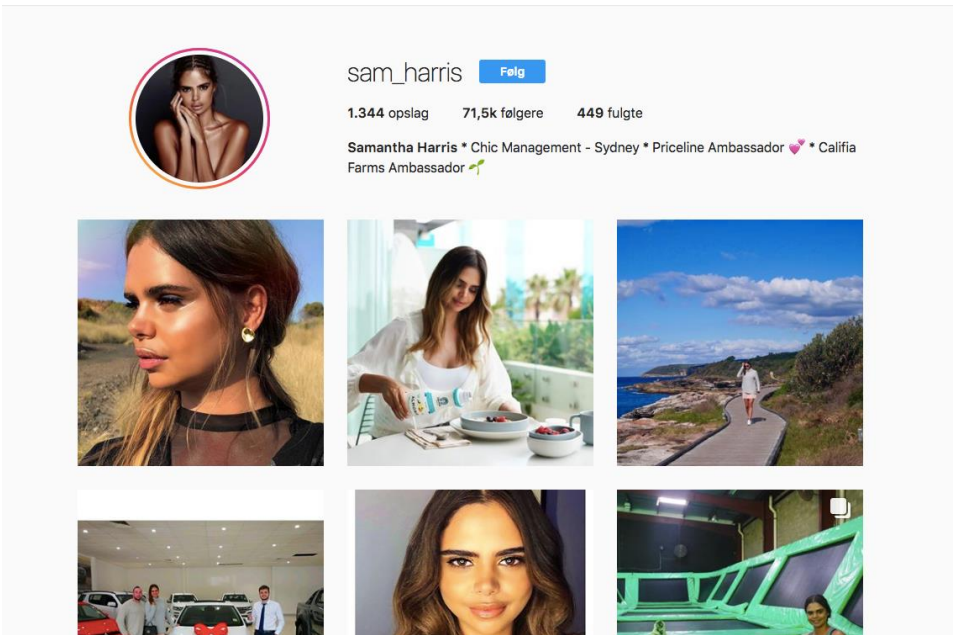
<u>Picture of Profile</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/sam_harris/

Influencer 4

<u>Picture</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BhWg8cunvtj/
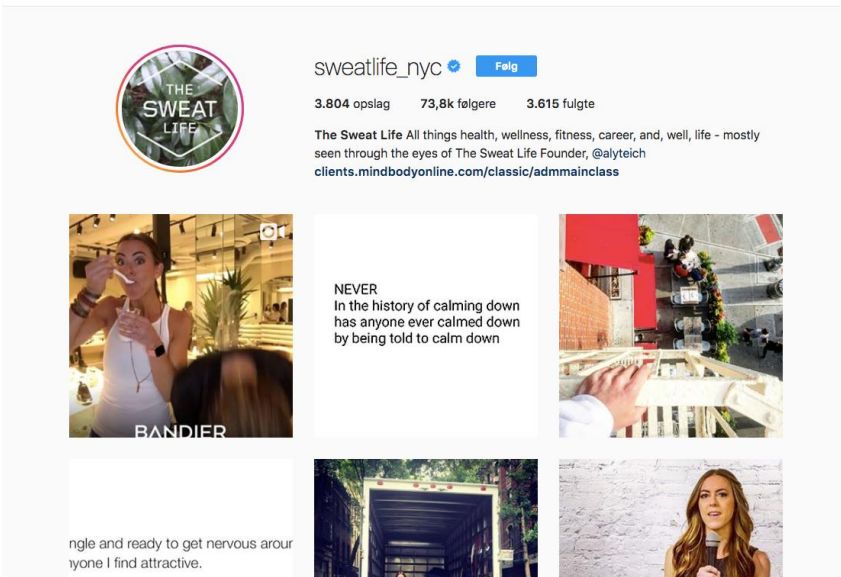
<u>Picture of Profile</u>

Source: https://www.instagram.com/sweatlife_nyc/

Influencer 5

Screenshot of Video

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/BhoqkqmnDf7/

Picture of Profile
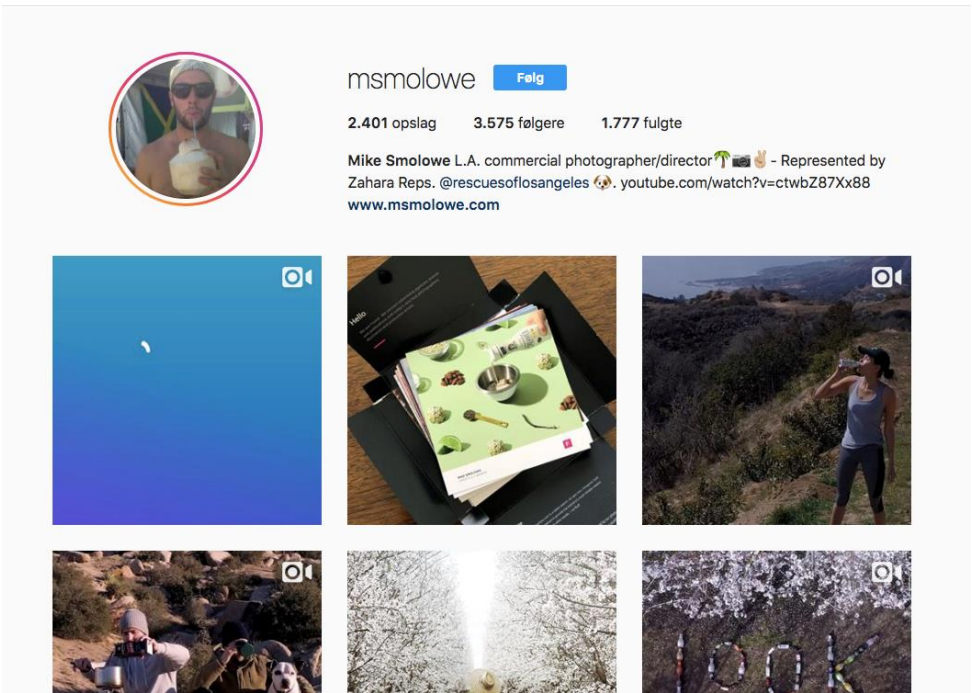
Source: https://www.instagram.com/msmolowe/

Appendix 6: Overview of Articles Used in Literature Review

Appendix 6: Overview of Articles Used in Literature Review

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Agrawal & Kamakura	1995	USA	Content-Analysis	110	Celebrity endorsements drive stock prices. However, they did not fully account for other effects that might drive stock prices. It should thus be seen with a grain of salt.	Interpretive
Ajzen	2015	N/A	Commentary	N/A	TRA & TPB are still relevant, most critism is based on a bad understanding of theory and can be debunked using studies employing proper understandings	Functionalistic
Ajzen	1991	USA	Conceptual framework proposal	N/A	The TRA is extended with perceived behavioral control. Discusses findings in previous studies to support conceptual proposal.	Functionalistic
Albarracin & Shavitt	2018	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	"We characterize this period as one of significant progress toward an understanding of how attitudes form and change in three critical contexts. The first context is the person, as attitudes change in connection to values, general goals, language, emotions, and human development. The second context is social relationships, which link attitude change to the communicator of persuasive messages, social media, and culture." (Albarracin & Shavit, p. 299)	Functionalistic
Alhidari et al.	2015	USA	Survey	247	"Results of this study indicate that eWOM is positively associated with both involvement and risk-taking, but not with self-reliance. Self-reliance was also not associated with purchase intention. Further, eWOM mediates the relationship between involvement and purchase intentions on SNS." (Alhidari et al, 2015, p.107)	Functionalistic
Amatulli & Guido	2011	Italy	Interviews	40	"Results showed that consumers buy luxury fashion goods mainly to match their lifestyle, thus satisfying their inner drives." (Amatulli & Guido, 2011, p. 123)	Interpretive
Amos et al.	2008	N/A	Meta-Analysis	32	The source credibility dimensions of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise exert the strongest influence on purchase intention, brand attitude and ad attitude	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Armstrong et al.	2000	USA, France	Secondary datasets	400	"Purchase intentions can provide better forecasts than a simple extrapolation of past sales trends." (Armstrong et al., 2000, p.2)	Functionalistic
Ayeh	2015	Saudi Arabia	Survey	661	Trustworthiness and expertise are shown to drive brand attitude and have thereby an indirect effect on purchase intention	Functionalistic
Baek & Whitehill King	2011	USA	Survey	385	"The results indicate that brand credibility exerts a strong effect on purchase intention, [...] brand credibility's impact on purchase intention varies under different conditions with regard to utilitarian and hedonic services." (Baek & Whitehill King, 2011, p. 260)	Functionalistic
Baek et al.	2010	USA	Survey	150	"The results suggest that both brand credibility and brand prestige positively influence brand purchase intention through perceived quality, information costs saved, and perceived risk under different product categories representing the high and low self-expressive nature. " (Baek et al., 2010, p. 662)	Functionalistic
Bagozzi	1981	USA	Survey	157	"The attitude-intentions relationship was stronger when expectancy-value attitude measures were used as predictors than when semantic differential measures were employed."	Functionalistic
Bergkvist & Zhou	2016	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	126	Celebrity endorsement leans strongly on source credibility, however often a strong emphasis is laid on it without considering context and cultural dimensions. However, source credibility is a relevant construct across cultures but ist dimensions weigh differently depending on cultural context	Functionalistic
Bergkvist et al.	2016	Sweden	Survey	199	It is shown that the expertise of an endorsing celebrity has a positive effect on attitude towards the brand. They propose using attitude towards the endorsement to simplify quantaitaive processes	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Bhaduri	2017	USA	Mixed Model Experiment	459	"findings showed that changes in attitude towards the brand before and after message exposure were statistically significant" and "Consumers indicated more favorable attitude toward the brand which claims to source products from USA, when they, in general, held more favorable attitude toward brands which source from USA."	Functionalistic
Bianchi & Andrews	2015	Chile	Interviews	12	The interviewees believe that by engaging with consumers online in interatice conversation they build goodwill and are also perceived as actually doing what they promise (brand credibility)	Interpretive
Bougoure et al.	2016	Australia	Survey	879	"The results show that a service firm's effective complaint handling positively impacts satisfaction with complaining, overall satisfaction and service brand credibility." (Bougoure et al., 2016, p. 62)	Functionalistic
Casaló et al.	2017	Worldwide	Survey	548	Content on Instagram is often perceived to be unique. Photos of people are often associated with a certain uniqueness	Functionalistic
Chae	2018	South Korea	Survey	782	Consumers are jealous of influencers success and this manifests itself in consumers feeling pressured to adapt certain behaviors e.g. by imitating said influencers. There is also the notion that being an influencer is something to aspire to become.	Functionalistic
Chan et al.	2013	China	Focus Group	76	Celebrity endorsements drive the intention to purchase a prodct, it is mostly driving by the celebrities attractiveness. Other aspects were seen as being only relevant at a threshold level.	Interpretive
Chandon et al.	2005	France, USA	Survey, secondary data from Morwitz et al. (1993)	8023	Examines mere-measurement effect, finds "On average, the correlation between latent intentions and purchase behavior is 58% greater among sur- veyed consumers than it is among similar nonsurveyed consumers." (Chandon et al., 2005, p. 1)	Functionalistic
Chang et al.	2015	China	Survey	392	Shows the need to appear popular in social media interactions	Functionalistic
Charness et al.	2013	USA	Experiment	404	Ambiguity in attidues was proven to be a relevant factor, thus deeming a dichotomy of positive - negative attitudes as useless in most cases	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Cheung & Thadani	2012	N/A	Systematic Literature Review	N/A	Socal influence has a considerable impact on purchase intention	Functionalistic
Cheung & To	2017	China	Survey	480	"In addition, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control were found to positively predict users' intention" (Cheung & To, p. 102)	Functionalistic
Childers & Rao	1992	USA, Thailand	Survey	345	Study confirms a reference group's influence on consumers' purchase behavior. Special focus is put on family members	Functionalistic
Choi & Lewallen	2018	USA	Content-Analysis	510	Digital representations are very much focus of getting one's personal style across when posting personal pictures on Instagram	Interpretive
Chung & Cho	2017	Singapore	Survey	400	" source trustworthiness had a positive effect on brand credibility, which, in turn, led to purchase intention. Implications for research and practice are discussed" (Chung & Cho, 2015, p. 481)	Functionalistic
Coleman et al.	2011	UK	Survey	504	"The findings support the hypothesis that green consumption intentions affect actual green consumption behavior. The findings show how nuances occur between measures of attitudes, subjective norms, and intention" (Coleman et al., p. 107)	Functionalistic
Colliander & Dahlén	2011	Sweden	Survey	285	"In an analysis of consumer responses to identical brand publicity in seven popular blogs and seven popular online magazines, the authors found that blogs generated higher brand attitudes and purchase intentions." (Colliander & Dahlén, p. 313)	Functionalistic
Colliander & Marder	2018	Sweden	Experiment	215	Photos using a snapshot aesthetic build trust and underline expertise much better than those taken in a studio, they also drive brand attitude to a larger extent	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Crano & Prislin	2006	USA	Review	N/A	"This review has pointed to some likely foci of attention and, hopefully, progress in the years to come. We expect that considerable efforts will continue to be made to understand the nature of attitudes that are measured via explicit versus implicit methods." (Source: p. 363)	Functionalistic
Davis et al.	1989	USA	Survey	107	Subjective norm is not well-understood and should thus be currently disregarded until further research is conducted	Functionalistic
de Veirman et al.	2017	USA	Experiment	235	Only in limited cases did a higher follower count and thereby popularity increase the effectiveness of an ad on instagram.	Functionalistic
del Mar Garcia de los Salmones et al.	2013	Spain	Survey	329	Celebrities can also drive the success (credibility & attitude towards) non-profit organisations	Functionalistic
Dens & Pelsmacker	2010	Belgium	Survey	509	"The results of this study confirm that advertising is important for extensions, not only to induce favorable attitudes toward the new extension itself, but also to enhance parent brand attitudes."	Functionalistic
Djafarova & Rushworth	2017	UK	Interviews	18	Endorsing via non-traditional media is more powerful than using traditional media channels to do so	Interpretive
Djafarova & Trofimenko	2018	Russia	Interviews	38	They present their own new dimension to source credibility on Instagram. In addition they confirm the relevance of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness	Interpretive
Düsenberg et al.	2016	Brazil	Survey	1025	"The empirical results support the relationship between a sport celebrity's endorsement and purchase intention. The moderating effects of gender and sports-involvement were also empirically supported, but only partially." (Düsenberg, et al., 2016, p. 1) Supports Pornpitakpan's (2003) findings.	Functionalistic
Edwards et al.	2013	USA	Experiment	145	"Results demonstrated that the mock twitter page with a high klout score was perceived as higher in competence and character than the identical mock twitter page with a moderate r low kout score" (Edwards et al., 2014, p. A14). This shows that external quality seals have an impact similar to the offline world	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Edwards et al.	2014	USA	Experiment	169	"findings suggest that Twitterbots are perceived as credible, attractive, competent in communication, and interactional. Additionally, there were no differences in the perceptions of source credibility, communication competence, or interactional intentions between the bot and human Twitter agents." (Edwards et al., 2013, p. 372)	Functionalistic
Eisend	2004	N/A	Meta-Analysis	53	Credibility is an important and effective way to influence consumers. Over the years the impacts of source credibility has increased due to more suspicious consumers. It is argued that this trend will continue in the future and that the internet might facilitate this.	Functionalistic
Eisend	2006	Germany	Meta-Analysis, Survey	178	A generalized approach to source credibility incorporates the dimensions of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness for a spokesperson. Slight changes in the nuances apply to salesperson credibility etc	Functionalistic
Erdem & Swait	1998	USA	Survey	178	Brands can be used to communicate certain aspects about products in order to decrease consumers' uncertainty and drive sales	Functionalistic
Erdem & Swait	2004	USA	Survey	164	"We find that brand credibility increases probability of inclusion of a brand in the consideration set, as well as brand choice conditional on consideration. [...] Finally, our results indicate that trustworthiness, rather than expertise, affects consumer choices and brand consideration more." (Erdem & Swait, 2004, p. 191)	Functionalistic
Erdogan	1999	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Celebrity endorsements have increased over the year. They draw heavily from credibility and a good match between celebrity and product to invoke positive feelings in consumers	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Erkan & Evans	2016	UK	Survey	384	Extends the Information Adoption Model (IAM) with TRA components to become the Information Acceptance Model (IACM). "The results confirm that quality, credibility, usefulness and adoption of information, needs of 85 information and attitude towards information are the key factors of eWOM in social media that influence 86 consumers' purchase intentions." (Erkan & Evans, 2016, p. 1)	Functionalistic
Eshghi et al.	2017	India	Focus Group, Survey, Experiment	400	"The findings of this research offer several insights for developing online advertising copy to be directed at adolescent consumers. First, the findings suggest that generating AMI is crucial in creating a favorable brand attitude among adolescents. Second, narrative ad copies elicit greater AMI [advertising message involvement] and brand attitude compared with factual ad copies among adolescent consumers	Functionalistic
Evans et al.	2017	USA	Experiment	237	Disclosing an ad according to federal law, prompts consumers to process it differently and be more suspicious about the communicated message. In some cases a negative effect on brand attitude was reported when presented with a disclosed ad.	Functionalistic
Fardouly et al.	2015	UK	Experiment	112	Women using facebook, are in a worse mood. Study points to social pressure regarding beauty ideals and behavior (traveling alot) as factors for mood change	Functionalistic
Fitzsimons & Morwitz	1996	USA	Experiment	3796	Looks at effects of measuring intent on car buyers. "The results demonstrate that current owners of cars are more likely to repurchase the brands they currently own when they are asked intent questions. In addition, the purchase behavior of current car owners is more consistent with their brand attitudes when they are asked intent questions. First-time car buyers, on the other hand, are more likely to purchase brands that have large market shares when asked intent questions." (Fitzsimons & Morwitz, 1996, p. 1)	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Ghirardato et al.	2004	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Elaborates on the ambiguty problem surrounding attitude in the research world	Functionalistic
He et al.	2016	USA	Survey	207	The study conclude"that a long-term (versus short-term) temporal orientation is associated with more positive post- purchase brand attitude over time."	Functionalistic
Heider & Hufer	2013	Germany	Survey	392	Athletes are an especially effective product endorser given a good match between product and persona. In general they are regarded as more credible than other celebrities.	Functionalistic
Hovland & Weiss	1951	USA	Experiment	204	Initial research on the importance of trustworthiness. Information from untrostworthy sources are not processed and disregarded by consumers	Functionalistic
Hur et al.	2017	South Korea	Survey	450	"rgument quality leads to an increased activity in information seeking and entertainment motives, while source credibility positively influences information seeking, entertainment, and relationship maintenance motives." (Hur et al., 2017, p. 170)	Functionalistic
Hutter et al.	2013	German-speaking countries	Survey	311	"findings demonstrate that engagement with a Facebook fanpage has positive effects on consumers' brand awareness, WOM activities and purchase intention. Results further indicate that annoyance with the fanpage leads to negative effects in respect to the overall commitment to and involvement with the fanpage and WOM." (Hutter et al., 2013, p. 342)	Functionalistic
Jalilvand & Samiei	2012	Iran	Survey	341	"The paper found that e-WOM is one of the most effective factors influencing brand image and purchase intention of brands in consumer markets." (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012, p. 460)	Functionalistic
Jeng	2016	Taiwan	Survey	420	"The results indicate that airline brand credibility increases consumer purchase intention by increasing consumers' decision convenience and enhancing affective commitment." (Jeng, 2016, p. 1)	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Jin & Phua	2014	USA	Experiment	318	The amount of followers is used as an indicator for credibility by certain individuals and also drives behavioral intention. In similar fashion does the interactivity between influencer and followers drive credibility and therefore allows brand to drive the consumers brand attitude this way	Functionalistic
Johnson & Kaye	2016	USA	Survey	1267	Social media websites strongly rely on interactivity to drive credibility. It is much more important as in traditional media. With traditional media, users are not used to interactivity and thus construct credibility using different antecedents	Functionalistic
Johnson & Kaye	2015	USA	Survey	1267	Different social media sites lend different levels of credibility to the information posted on them. Twitter takes the title of being the least credibile.	Functionalistic
Juster	1966	USA	Survey	3547	Probability scale is a better measurement tool than "yes, no, maybe" intentions scale.	Functionalistic
Kaikati	1987	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Celebrity endorsements have increased, but their effectiveness has decreased	Functionalistic
Kamins et al.	1989	USA	Observations	52	Celebrity endorsements are an effective way of driving a company's own credibility.	Interpretive
Kemp & Bui	2016	USA	Survey	217	"credible brand minimizes risk and increases consumer confidence. When consumers believe that a brand is credible and repeatedly purchase it, a commitment to the brand can develop" (Kemp & Bui, 2016, p. 429)	Functionalistic
Keng et al.	2016	Taiwan	Experiment	193	The scholars "confirmed that consumers had more confidence in websites that they perceived to have high, vs. low, social presence"	Functionalistic
Khamis et al.	2017	N/A	Theoretical Conceptualization	N/A	Social media influencers are celebrities of their own kind and stretch the conventual celebrity terminlology. However, from a theoretical point of view there are more arguments for them being celebrities than against	Interpretive

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Kim & Brown	2015	USA	Survey	808	Credibility is an important aspect in social media communication. Source credibility can drive brand credibility. The latter is especially of concern in social media	Functionalistic
Kim & Ko	2012	South Korea	Survey	362	"In light of a growing interest in the use of social media marketing (SMM) among luxury fashion brands, this study set out to identify attributes of SMM activities and examine the relationships among those perceived activities, value equity, relationship equity, brand equity, customer equity, and purchase intention through a structural equation model. Five constructs of perceived SSM activities of luxury fashion brands are enter- tainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word of mouth. Their effects on value equity, relationship equity, and brand equity are significantly positive. For the relationship between customer equity drivers and customer equity, brand equity has significant negative effect on customer equity while value equity and relationship equity show no significant effect. As for purchase intention, value equity and relationship equity had significant positive effects, while relationship equity had no significant influence. Finally, the relationship between purchase intention and customer equity has significance." (Kim & Ko, 2012, p. 1480)	Functionalistic
Kim & Lee	2017	South Korea	Survey	252	"The results also confirm the effects of interactivity on brand attitude, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions. "	Functionalistic
Kitchen et al.	2014	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	It is pointed out that in an online context, consumers are mostlikely relying on the peripherial route due to it information overload. Credibility and specifically source credibility become an important aspect of communication on social media	Functionalistic
Knoll & Matthes	2017	N/A	Meta-Analysis	46	There are a plethora of contexts that moderate cleberity endorsement. In general, it can be said that male endorsers work better than female endorsers. However, it is argued that this is because fewer men tend to endorse products, thus making it appear more special and credible to consumers	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Labrecque et al.	2011	USA	Observation & Interviews	12	In the realm of personal branding, it is an important aspect to emphasize one's uniqueness. Especially true in an online context.	Interpretive
Langaro et al.	2018	Brazil and Portugal	Survey	203	"Brand attitude also substantially benefits from users' participation, but this relationship is mediated by brand awareness. The findings help to validate SNSs' significant role on building brand knowledge and to position users' participation at the core of brands' SNSs objective"	Functionalistic
Langdridge et al.	2007	UK	Survey	897	Analyzed proposed variables to extend the TRA in different ways. Results were mixed from analysis method to method.	Functionalistic
Lavorgna & Sugiura	2018	Australia	Content-Analysis	N/A	"the argument is presented that the promotion of one's self as a health expert and subsequently being outed as a fraudster encourages techniques of neutralization and particular presentations of self to respond and manage negative labeling and the stigma attached" (Lavorgna & Sugiura, 2018, p. 1)	Interpretive
Lee & Hong	2016	China	Survey	420	"It proposes and tests a conceptual model of the formation of online user's behavioral responses with regards to SNS advertising. The results of our empirical tests of the model reveal that informativeness and advertising creativity were key drivers of favorable behavioral responses to an SNS ad and that intention to engage in favorable user responses was positively associated with purchase intention." (Lee & Hong, p. 360) In addition to these findings, subjective norm was found to postively impact purchase intention.	Functionalistic
Lee & Koo	2016	South Korea	Experiment	102	The study shows that attractiveness is more important than expertise in the realm of source credibility. An attractive endorser always drives purchase intention via source credibility. But when the endorser is an expert in the field, consumers engage in more elaborate thinking and doe not consider source credibility as much	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Lee et al.	1997	USA	Content-Analysis	N/A	A comparison between measured buying intentions vs. extrapolation of sales data over a 15-year period. "The results show that simple time-series extrapolations provide more accurate forecasts than the judgmental approach. Very little support is found for using buying intentions as a forecasting tool for predicting the sales of durable goods." (Lee, et al., 1997, p. 127)	Functionalistic
Li & Suh	2015	Hong Kong	Survey	135	The interactivity of a source exerts a strong influence on the credibility of said source. It is argued that this could be based on increased familarity between the two parties	Functionalistic
Lin et al.	2016	USA	Survey	696	Using non-content attributes, source credibility was evaluated. There are several attributs that are used as heuristics to source credibility: such as authority	Functionalistic
Machleit et al.	1993	USA	Experiment	80	"For mature brands, ad-evoked affect will not have a strong influence on brand attitude; they formulate brand interest, a new construct as a more relevant consequence of ad-evoked affect."	Functionalistic
McCormick	2016	USA	Survey	300	Even unfamiliar celebrities can drive positive attitudes towards a brand, they do however not drive purchase intention and brand attitude in the same way that celebrities known to the consumer do	Functionalistic
McCracken	1989	N/A	Theoretical Conceptualization	N/A	McCracken provides an understanding of celebrity endorsement in a culturally embedded context. Celebrities transfer the meanings they have been endowed with through culture.	Functionalistic
Mishra et al.	2018	India	Survey	793	"potential eWOM behavior of male teenagers is influenced by the existing peer norms" (Mishra et al. 2018, p. 394), female counterparts are less influenced by existing norms in general. But in regards to beauty (fashion, make-up) they exhibit higher likeliness to conform to existing peer norms	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Mitchell & Olson	1981	USA	Experiment	71	The results of the study is that " product attribute beliefs mediated attitude formation. However, another variable, termed attitude toward the advertisement, also mediated brand attitudes and purchase intention"	Functionalistic
Moon et al.	2016	South Korea	Survey	212	Narcisim has a strong influence on social media behavior. Narcicists care a lot about possible social pressures and social media has increased this trend.	Functionalistic
Morwitz & Fitzsimons	2004	USA	Experiment	736	"The results show that when asked to provide general inten- tions to select a product in a given category, respondents are more likely to choose options to- ward which they hold positive and accessible attitudes, and are less likely to choose options for which they hold negative and accessible attitudes, compared to a control group of participants who are not asked a general intentions question" (Morwitz & Fitzsimons, 2004, p. 64)	Functionalistic
Morwitz et al.	1993	USA	Experiment	80000	Intention is measured in waves, with varying number of intention measurement-items. "The results reveal that the effect of merely asking intent to buy once is an increase in the subsequent purchase rate. The effect of repeatedly asking intent for those with low levels of intent is a decreased propensity to buy with repeated measurements. These two effects are reduced given prior experience with the product." (Morwitz et al., 1993, p.46)	Functionalistic
Morwitz et al.	2007	N/A	Meta-analysis	140	Analyzes two meta-analyses and details conditions for when purchase intention and purchase behavior are most correlated.	Functionalistic
Nekmat et al.	2015	USA	Experiment	208	"Cognitive elaboration positively mediates this influence and was conditionally affected by high source credibility. Direct influence from personal issue involvement and perceived self and technological efficacy was also observed." (Nekmat et al., p. 1)	Functionalistic
Ngai et al.	2015	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Emphasizes the use of attitude and subjective norm to predict purchase intention in existing research on social media	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Nixon	1936	USA	Survey	317	Nixon coludes that there "ought to be some relationship between the attitude thus revealed, and the tendency to buy or not to buy the product."	Functionalistic
Ohanian	1990	USA	Survey	755	Develops a 15-item scale to assess credibility of celebrity endorsers.	Functionalistic
Ohanian	1991	USA	Survey	542	Applies Ohanian (1990) framework of celebrity source credibility with the extension of purchase intention. Only finds significant links to perceived expertise, but not trustworthiness and attractiveness.	Functionalistic
O'Reilly et al.	2016	USA	Interviews, Artifact Analysis	21	Source credibility is an important factor in driving eWOM. However, expertise and trustworthines are both only important at a threshold level. Similarity is another big influence, it can be distinguished in usage and persona similarity	Interpretive
Parsons	2013	USA	Content-Analysis	70	Brand credibility can be build using social media. Often times, it is a very important source of brand credibility e.g. for smaller companies as it can be build using relatively few fincancial resources	Interpretive
Perugini & Bagozzi	2001	Italy	Survey	230	The TRA is extended with desire + others. "The findings show that desires fully mediated the eåects of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and anticipated emotions on intentions." (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001, p. 79)	Functionalistic
Perugini & Bagozzi	2004	UK	Survey	437	"The findings provide robust evidence of structural differences between desires and intentions and, secondarily, between desires and goals." (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2004, p. 80)	Functionalistic
Phua et al.	2017	USA	Survey	305	Among all major social media platforms, Instagram is the one most often used by users to receive style advice	Functionalistic
Pookulangara & Kösler	2011	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Subjective norm is seen as influence on purchase intention based on previous studies and the general conceptualization of models using the TRA. It is argued that subjective norm is an important factor regardless of cultural setting but might have different effects depending on the setting	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Pornpitakpan	2003	Singapore	Survey	880	Finds all three source credibility dimensions to have significant influence on purchase intention	Functionalistic
Pornpitakpan	2004	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	Source credibility is still an important aspect in persuasion regardless of field. It has grown in importance in marketing and advertising. There are numerous variables, that people use.	Functionalistic
Prendergast et al.	2010	Hong Kong	Survey	150	"Grounded in social comparison theory, social network analysis and the theory of reasoned action, a mall intercept survey of consumers in Hong Kong showed that both similarity between a user's interests and a forum's topic and user attitudes towards the forum strongly predict purchase intentions as well as having an indirect effect through helping determine the forum's persuasiveness. "(Prendergast et al., p. 687)	Functionalistic
Raij & Schepers	2008	China	Survey	45	"Results indicate that perceived usefulness has a direct effect on VLE use. Perceived ease of use and subjective norm have only indirect effects via perceived usefulness." (Raij & Schepers, p. 838) It is mentioned that subjective norm's	Functionalistic
Reichelt et al.	2014	Germany	Survey	839	Expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity exert strong influences that eventually manifest themselves in an indirect impact behavioral intention	Functionalistic
Rhodes & Courneya	2003	UK	Survey	605	"Results identified that a general subjective norm factor was an optimal predictive conceptualization over two separate injunctive and descriptive norm components" (Rhodes & Courneya, p. 129)	Functionalistic
Russel & Rasolofoarison	2017	USA	Experiment	143	Celebrity endorsements that appear more genuine, have a stronger impact on consumers.	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Sanz-Blas et al.	2017	Spain	Survey	642	"The results of the study indicate that accessing brands' mobile Facebook fan pages can satisfy the needs of understanding, orientation and play. These needs, in turn, influence users' attitude, as well as their active and passive participation. Besides, users' active participation in brands' fan pages is enhanced by the direct and positive influence of attitude and passive participation."	Functionalistic
Sanz-Blas et al.	2013	Spain	Survey	146	The scholars conclude that "relaxation/entertainment motivations positively reinforce adolescents' attitudes towards mobile social networking, whereas socialisation/informativeness motivations encourage more frequent access.". Further, "The results indicate that attitude towards mobile social networking has a direct, significant influence on the frequency of use of that social network.", and if companies hence want succes on a social media network they have to reinfornce the users attitudes by being entertaining and by creating a space where interactivity can flourish.	Functionalistic
Schepers & Wetzels	2007	N/A	Meta-Analysis	N/A	"Results indicated a significant influence of subjective norm on perceived usefulness and behavioral intention to use." (Schepers & Wetzels, p. 90)	Functionalistic
Schivinski & Dabrowski	2016	Poland	Survey	504	"The results of our empirical studies showed that both firm-created and user-generated social media brand communication influence brand awareness/associations; whereas user-generated social media brand communication had a positive impact on brand loyalty and perceived brand quality. Additionally, there are significant differences between the industries being investigated." (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2015, p.31)	Functionalistic
Schlosser	2003	USA	Multiple experiments	395	"Object interactivity will evoke vivid mental images of product use regardless of the users' goals and thus increase intentions" (Schlosser, 2003, p.184)	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Shamim & Butt	2013	Pakistan	Survey	400	Brand attitude exerts a strong influence on CBBE as well as purchase intention. It is also postulated to be a mediating factor in regards to brand attitude.	Functionalistic
Shams et al.	2017	Australia	Survey	295	"A structural equations model indicates that brands that are perceived as more innovative garner significantly higher purchase intent among consumers. The paper seeks to explain the mechanism by which this relationship occurs by introducing brand credibility as a partial mediating factor." (Shamim & Butt, 2013, p. 145)	Functionalistic
Sheeran	2002	N/A	Meta-analysis	N/A	Meta-analysis of meta-analyses of intention-behavior studies indicates that intention accounts for around 28% of variance in behavior	Functionalistic
Sheldon & Bryant	2016	USA	Survey	239	Instagram usage is different from other platforms, the authors connect it back to narcicissm. In it they also explain that people treat their profile like scrapbooks in which they emphasize their uniqueness from others	Functionalistic
Sin et al.	2012	Malaysia	Survey	297	Proves the influence of subjective norm on purchase intention in a social media setting	Functionalistic
Spears & Singh	2004	USA	Survey	93	Develops psychometrically valid measures for purchase intention and brand attitude. Findings support the constructs as separate, distinct constructs.	Functionalistic
Spence et al.	2013	USA	Experiment	200	Similarity plays an important aspect as to when users of social media websites believe information from an unknown source. This was especially relevant among African-Americans.	Functionalistic
Spry et al.	2011	Australia	Experiment	244	"Results suggest endorser credibility has an indirect impact on brand equity when this relationship is mediated by brand credibility. This mediating relationship was moderated by type of branding. However, the "endorser credibility-brand credibility" and "endorser credibility-brand equity" relationships did not vary according to the type of branding employed." (Spry et al., 2011, p. 882)	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Sweeney & Swait	2008	USA	Survey	722	" Results from samples of retail bank and long distance telephone company customers indicate that brand credibility serves in a defensive role: it significantly enhances word-of-mouth and reduces switching behaviors among customers;" (Sweeney & Swait, 2008, p. 2008)	Functionalistic
Thach et al.	2016	USA	Survey	375	Especially smaller wineries can profit from adopting social media marketing to build reach but also drive their credibility	Functionalistic
Thomas & Johnson	2017	India	Survey	109	"The study found that celebrity expertise has got a very significant influence on purchase intention indicating that the practitioner should focus on celebrity's field of expertise before deciding on the endorsement. The study also found that influ- ence of celebrity brand fit on purchase intention is mediated by the attitude towards advertisement and attitude towards the brand."	Functionalistic
Trafimow	2009	USA	Case study	N/A	Examines falsification in psychology, and argues against the TRA not being falsifiable.	Functionalistic
Trafimow	2012	USA	Theoretical discussion	N/A	Argues the importance of auxiliary assumptions in theory testing in psychology.	Functionalistic
Tzoumaka et al.	2016	Greece	Survey	289	Expertise and trustworthiness exert a strong influence on purchase intention. Further research should examine the linkage between these concepts and how exactly the influence is directed at purchase intention	Functionalistic
Walla et al.	2011	German speaking countries	Experiment	21	"Attitudes towards brands contain describable emotion aspects. Startle reflex modulation offers the opportunity to get insight into emotion-related aspects of brand attitude without demanding explicit responses. It overcomes the weaknesses traditional self-report measures of brand attitude have to deal with. It overcomes the issue that many responses to attitude questions may be measurement artefacts created simply because the question was asked"	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Wang & Yang	2010	China	Survey	469	"Results reveal that brand credibility exerts a positive influence on consumers' brand purchase intention. Brand image and brand awareness are found to positively moderate the relationship between brand credibility and consumers' brand purchase intention." (Wang & Yang, 2010, p. 177)	Functionalistic
Wang et al.	2017	Taiwan	Survey	637	The credibility of an endorser positively influences consumers' brand attitude, they also prove that it in turn influences purchase intention positively.	Functionalistic
Wang et al.	2012	China	Survey	469	"Online consumer socialization through peer communication also affects purchasing decisions in two ways: directly (conformity with peers) and indirectly by reinforcing product involvement." (Wang et al., p. 2012)	Functionalistic
Webb et al.	2017	N/A	Narrative Literature Review	N/A	(Young) people are experiencing social pressure when using social media making them adopt certain behavioral traits as well as losing those deemed negative by the majority	Functionalistic
Westerman et al.	2014	USA	Experiment	181	Recency of updates on social media pages positively correlates with source credibility. The study focuses mainly on news and stipulates that the aspects main use is within this field, but we can	Functionalistic
Woods & Scott	2016	UK	Survey	467	People with higher social media use appear to be more self-concious. They consider their behavior more and experience worse sleeping patterns compared to those with less social media use.	Functionalistic
Yoon & Kim	2016	USA	Survey	403	Attractiveness is an important driver of source credibility. In it the beauty aspect has the largest predicitive power for attractiveness.	Functionalistic

Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Summary	Paradigm
Zha et al.	2018	China	Survey	381	"Specifically, the current study explores the effects of the central route (information quality of social media) and the peripheral route (source credibility of social media and reputation of social media) on informational fit-to-task with focused immersion as an ability variable. The results indicate that focused immersion positively moderates the effect of information quality on informational fit-to-task and negatively moderates the effect of reputation on informational fit-to-task." (Zha et al., 2018, p. 227)	Functionalistic
Shan	2016	USA	Survey	480	"Study 1 found significant interactions between perceived similarity and source reputation on the evaluation of trustworthiness and expertise. Study 2 extended the findings of study 1 by examining how argument quality influenced credibility perception under different levels of similarity and source reputation." (Shan, 2016, p. 633)	Functionalistic