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THE CREDIBILITY OF INFLUENCERS
AND ITS EFFECT ON SUSTAINABLE PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

Instagram

A case study on how young UK consumers' sustainable purchasing behaviour is influenced by the perceived credibility of Instagram influencers

Abstract

During the last couple of years, it has become more and more normal for brands to utilise influencer marketing on the social media platform Instagram. Simultaneously, the world has experienced a rise in sustainable consumerism. However, only little research has been focused on the combination of influencer marketing and sustainability, which is why this thesis has investigated this particular aspect. More specifically, this study has explored influencer credibility and its influence on consumers' attitudes and beliefs in regard to sustainable purchasing intention. This has been studied through a case study focused on young UK consumers. Hence, the aim of this thesis has been to investigate how the perceived credibility of UK influencers on Instagram influences young UK consumers' beliefs and attitudes in relation to purchasing advertised sustainable products.

In order to gain an insight into how young UK consumers' attitudes and beliefs toward sustainable promotions are influenced by influencers' perceived credibility, we utilised two theoretical approaches. First, we needed an understanding of source credibility, where we drew on Ohanian's (1990) three credibility attributes of trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Second, Fishbein and Ajzen's Reasoned Action Approach (2010) provided us with a deeper understanding of how individuals form purchasing intentions and reach purchasing behaviour based on behavioural, normative, and control beliefs.

To answer our research question, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with five UK citizens in the ages 19-29 years old, who all followed one or numerous UK influencers who had promoted sustainable products on Instagram. To manage our data retrieved from the interviews, Nigel King's Template Analysis was used, which allowed us to create themes and gather an overview of the vast amount of data. We created themes and codes mainly deductively based on the theoretical framework and structured the analysis based on the themes. This provided us with an in-depth understanding of the various aspects that influence the interviewees' attitudes and beliefs in terms of sustainable purchasing intention and behaviour. Finally, the analysis was completed with a synthesis, gathering significant findings from the different themes in order to understand how credibility had influenced the different interviewees' attitudes and behaviours.

Based on the analysis, it was found that the attribute of trustworthiness was the most important credibility attribute for the interviewees in regard to sustainable purchasing behaviour. The attributes of expertise and attractiveness were found to be able to enhance and support influencers' perceived trustworthiness, making influencers more credible. The analysis demonstrated that perceived credibility could influence behavioural beliefs and control beliefs, though it was not found that perceived credibility could directly influence normative beliefs. Interestingly, the study has discovered aspects that influence perceived credibility, namely background factors, attitudes, and normative beliefs.

Hence, it can be concluded that the perceived credibility of UK influencers has been able to influence the interviewees' attitudes and beliefs concerning purchasing sustainable products promoted by influencers on Instagram. This is mainly done through the attribute of trustworthiness which can influence the interviewees' behavioural and control beliefs.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, brands have started to rely greatly on social media as a relevant marketing channel (Statista 2022 a), and social media advertising is increasingly influencing consumers' purchasing behaviour (Statista 2019). Brands are now active on social media in various ways, ranging from owning a brand account to using native advertising[1] and influencer marketing. The increase and interest in conducting business on social media have also been found in recent academic work, where marketing and branding effectiveness on social media have been studied, among others (Awobamise et al. 2020; Zhang & Du 2020; Cao et al. 2021; Doyle, Su & Kunkel 2020).

The social media marketing strategy *influencer marketing*, which, in brief, regards marketing through individuals who have social impact and the potential to influence others (Nadanyiova et al. 2020, 111), has only continued to grow during the last couple of years (Statista 2021 a). Marketers worldwide believe that Instagram is the most important platform for influencer marketing (Statista 2021 b), and the platform continues to gain popularity in brand-sponsored influencer posts (Guttmann 2020).

The concept of influencer marketing is not new and can even be traced back to the Two-Step Flow of Communication in 1944, which suggests that information flows through opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet 1944). However, as influencer marketing is still a new practice, interest in researching this field has only recently started to grow (Vrontis et al. 2021), resulting in a current need for more research within the field (Taylor 2020). One of the most studied aspects of influencer marketing is *credibility* (Vrontis et al. 2021), which, among others, has been found to enhance consumers' purchasing intention (Fink et al. 2020; Weismueller et al. 2020; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020).

Simultaneously with the rise of influencer marketing and its effect on consumer behaviour, there is a growing tendency among consumers concerning an increased awareness of sustainable consumerism. Consumers across the globe are now more and more interested in purchasing eco-friendly and sustainable products (Gelski 2019; Tighe 2022; Van Gelder

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[1] "Native advertising is the use of paid ads that match the look, feel and function of the media format in which they appear." (Outbrain n.d.)

2021), and this tendency is especially seen among the younger generations (Petro 2021; Pope 2021). Brands offering green and sustainable products, such as MINI, Allbirds, and Sky[2], have also taken advantage of the popular influencer marketing strategy to reach potential consumers through social media.

An interesting observation within the academic field of influencer marketing is the relatively little research concerned with the combination of influencer marketing and sustainable products. As previously stated, researchers have found the aspect of credibility to be an important factor in influencer marketing as credibility affects consumers' purchasing decisions (Fink et al. 2020; Weismueller et al. 2020; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020). However, the aspect of credibility in influencer marketing has mostly been investigated from a fashion or beauty industry point of view (Vrontis et al. 2021). Considering the growth of sustainable consumerism and the growth of influencer marketing, a combination of the two in regard to credibility would, both from an academic and a practitioner perspective, be an interesting aspect to investigate. In terms of personal interest, both credibility in influencer marketing as well as the communication of sustainable brands have previously been fields of interest to us, though studied separately. In a study of ours from 2020 (Lassen et al.), we investigated the connection between influencer credibility and message processing. Later the same year, we investigated the communication of a sustainable brand and how actors on social media challenged the brand's communication (Holm et al. 2020).

By investigating an aspect of sustainable consumerism in the field of influencer marketing and perceived credibility, we can provide academics with a new perspective within the fields of both influencer marketing and sustainable market communication. Moreover, a study like this can provide practitioners within the sustainable industry with greater knowledge regarding influencer marketing, assisting in the strategic use of this practice. Additionally, this study can help actors within the field of influencer marketing in understanding how influencers' credibility can influence the promotion of sustainable products. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to investigate how the perceived credibility of influencers advertising for sustainable products influences consumers' beliefs and attitudes in relation to purchasing behaviour.

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[2] Mini, Allbirds, and Sky are brands used as examples in our interviews. Please see the section "Methodological considerations" for more information on how these brands have been selected as examples.

As this is still a relatively broad research area, this thesis seeks to delineate the research area of interest to provide a more specific research question. Hence, as previous research within influencer marketing has primarily focused on the US (Vrontis et al. 2021), this study seeks to explore the UK as this is one of the largest markets within influencer marketing in Europe (Shepherd 2022; Influencity n.d.; Statista 2018). Moreover, it has been found that UK consumers are adopting more sustainable consumer behaviours (Tighe 2022). Narrowing the area of interest even further, this study will investigate the younger population in the UK as younger consumers are more influenced by influencers than other age groups (Droesch 2020; Williams 2019) as well as more interested in sustainable consumerism (Petro 2021). The final narrowing of the research area concerns the social media platform that will be investigated. Due to several reasons, Instagram is the platform of interest. As previously mentioned, Instagram is the most important platform for influencer marketing (Statista 2021 b) and also the most important social media for young UK users (Statista 2022 b). All these considerations have resulted in the following research question, which this thesis seeks to explore:

How does the perceived credibility of UK influencers on Instagram influence young UK consumers' beliefs and attitudes in relation to purchasing advertised sustainable products?

Structure of the thesis

In this section, the overall structure of this thesis is presented to provide an overview of the different chapters, including their contents. The illustration below demonstrates the overall structure:

1. Literature review 2. Theoretical approach 3. Methodological considerations 4. Analysis 5. Discussion 6. Conclusion

Illustration 1: Structure of thesis
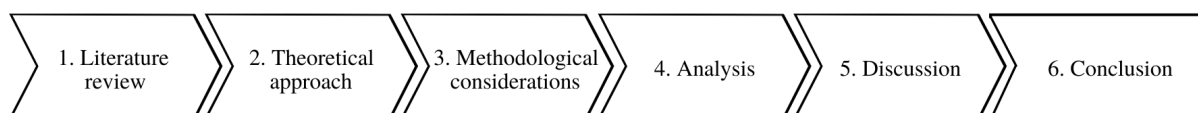
In chapter one, relevant literature within the fields of interest is reviewed, which has resulted in three main sections. First, literature on *influencer marketing* is reviewed, which includes defining influencers and influencer marketing and investigating what research has been done within this particular field. In relation to influencer marketing, the field of *credibility* is

presented, where relevant theories are presented as well as recent studies. Next, literature regarding *consumer behaviour* is reviewed, where theories concerning attitude-behaviour relationships are presented. Finally, definitions and research regarding *sustainability* are reviewed to provide a greater understanding of this particular field in relation to our study.

The theoretical framework of the thesis is presented in chapter two. This chapter includes an account of *Ohanian's three credibility attributes*, trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, as well as an account of *Fishbein and Ajzen's Reasoned Action Approach*, which includes the concepts of behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs as well as how these aspects can assist in understanding and predicting behaviour.

In chapter three, our methodological considerations are presented. First, we present our theory of science and discuss how *social constructionism* influences our research. Second, we account for how we have collected our data, which includes an explanation of our methods for conducting *qualitative interviews* and how our data is analysed by means of the *Template Analysis*. The qualitative interview method will enable us to gather rich and meaningful understandings of our interviewees' attitudes and beliefs. By utilising the Template Analysis, we will gain a thematic overview of our data, enabling us to analyse our interviewees' answers.

Our analysis is carried out in chapter four which is structured based on the themes from our template analysis. These themes include aspects related to both source credibility and the Reasoned Action Approach. Finally, we finish the analysis with a synthesis, where the relation between the different themes with respect to influencers' perceived credibility and consumer behaviour is stated more explicitly in order to answer our research question.

In chapter five, our findings are put into perspective. This includes a discussion of the impact of our findings, implications for our research and other practical and empirical consequences.

Finally, in chapter six, we summarise our main findings from the analysis, which help us answer our research question.

1. Literature Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature and terms within this thesis' area of interest. As our research takes place in the field of influencer marketing, this field is examined in the following sections. This includes a presentation of the field source credibility, which is a key aspect of our research, as this is highly related to the field of influencer marketing. Afterwards, the field of consumer behaviour is explored to provide an understanding of the development and different theoretical approaches in the field. This review is necessary in order to know which theoretical approach to rely on. Finally, the behaviour in question in this thesis concerns the purchase of sustainable products; therefore, a literature review on sustainability is presented. This chapter provides definitions and presents theories and studies related to the different important fields of this thesis.

1.1. Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is an important field to examine in connection with our research, and it is essential to gain an understanding of the terms *influencer* and *influencer marketing* as our understanding of these terms influences who and what we investigate. Hence, we start by examining these two terms. Next, we present a review of research within the field of influencer marketing to gain knowledge and a better understanding of the field. As stated in the introduction, it is important to emphasise that influencer marketing is still a somewhat new practice, and there is not as much research available within this field (Vrontis et al. 2021).

1.1.1. What is an influencer?

In recent times, the term influencer has been defined differently by both researchers and practitioners. As this paper examines the perceived credibility of influencers on social media, the definitions reviewed in this section mainly focus on social media influencers (SMIs). It is important for us to have a clear understanding of the term as this definition plays a crucial role in sampling our interviewees.

Before defining SMIs, it is relevant to briefly examine the roots hereof. In 1859, English philosopher John Stuart Mill highlighted the importance of personal influence when influencing people's opinions (Mill 1859), which later resulted in an increased focus on

studying influential persons, also referred to as opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld, & McPhee 1954; Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955; Katz 1957). Katz and Lazarsfeld (1995), who contributed greatly to the field, argued that opinion leaders are individuals who are more influential in their respective social networks than other individuals. The concept of opinion leaders is conceptual and depends on the specific context in terms of how and why this particular opinion leader is more influential. The definition of opinion leaders resembles the more recently proposed definitions of influencers. Leung, Gu, and Palmatier (2021, 228) even incorporate the term opinion leader in their definition, "Online influencers are individuals, groups of individuals, or even virtual avatars who have built a network of followers on social media and are regarded as digital opinion leaders with significant social influence on their network of followers.".

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d), an influencer refers to a person who has the ability to influence other people's opinions and behaviour. Components of this definition can also be found in Freberg et al.'s (2011, 90) definition of SMIs, where they define influencers as, "a new type of independent third party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media.". Saima and Khan (2021) further argue that SMIs are people who shape others' perceptions of brands or products through social media. A key difference between the definition of opinion leaders and SMIs is the addition of influencing through online platforms.

Some researchers argue that SMIs are also defined through quantitative measures such as the number of followers, likes, and comments (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders 2017; Enke & Borchers 2019; Haenlein et al. 2020). However, according to Haenlein et al. (2020), one cannot solely rely on these measures to define SMIs as people can purchase fake followers and likes, hence, manipulating the reality of how many individuals they truly influence. Moreover, the relevance of the number of followers an individual has to have in order to be perceived as an influencer may be questioned as terms such as nano-influencer, micro-influencer, macro-influencer, and mega-influencers suggest that influencers can vary in following size (Hudders, De Jans, De Veirman 2021; Nayar 2022; Santora 2021). Nevertheless, it appears as though several practitioners believe individuals should have at least 1000 followers to be defined as an influencer and that there exists no upper limit to the number of followers (Nayar 2022; Santora 2021).

Furthermore, some researchers also differentiate between individuals who gain fame outside social media and people who reach fame through social media (Haenlein et al. 2020; Leung, Gu & Palmatier 2021; Hudders, De Jans, De Veirman 2021). A fundamental difference lies in the source of fame, where it is argued that individuals who reach fame outside social media are not to be included in the definition of SMIs, i.e. footballer Cristiano Ronaldo would not be regarded as an SMI even though he has more than 400 million followers on Instagram (@cristiano n.d.). In contrast, individuals who reach fame and celebrity status through social media are to be included in the definition of SMIs (Leung, Gu & Palmatier 2021; Hudders, De Jans, De Veirman 2021). An example of such an individual is Addison Ray, who has more than 87 million followers on TikTok (@addisonre n.d.) and 40 million followers on Instagram (@addisonraee n.d.). She became famous through TikTok and later signed a deal with Netflix and released a single (Digital Marketing Institute 2021).

Through the investigation of relevant definitions of influencers, it can be argued that an overall agreed-upon definition is still to be found. In this thesis, moving forward, influencers are defined as individuals who have the ability to shape audience attitudes and influence behaviour through social media. Influencers are not defined by quantitative measures such as following size or number of likes and comments. Moreover, this thesis does not include individuals who have gained fame outside social media as influencers.

1.1.2. What is influencer marketing?

Now that the definitions of influencers have been reviewed in the previous section, we proceed to review influencer marketing definitions. As with the definition of influencers, the term influencer marketing has also been defined in many ways, some of which the following section presents.

Based on the definition of Leung, Gu, and Palmatier (2021), influencer marketing is a strategy where the enhancement of a firm's performance is the goal. The strategy involves firms selecting and motivating influencers to engage with their followers on social media platforms. Firms hereby attempt to utilise the influencers' resources, including network and follower trust, to promote the firm's products and services (Leung, Gu & Palmatier 2021). As stated in the introduction, Nadanyiova et al. (2020, 111) claim that influencer marketing concerns marketing through individuals who have social impact and the potential to influence

others. Similarly, Gallegos (2016) argues that influencer marketing can be regarded as a marketing tool where brands rely on individuals who are popular on social networks to promote the products or services of the brand or simply just the brand itself. Likewise, Iwashita (2019, 1) defines influencer marketing as a marketing method where, "[...] information of products/services is scattered through influencers with social impact for intending the increase of awareness and interest in the market.". These definitions are important for this thesis when assessing the cases of influencer marketing that will make up the foundation of this study. From these definitions, it can be argued that influencer marketing is a marketing strategy brands use that involves an influential individual on social media who exposes or endorses either brands, products, or services with the purpose of increasing a brand's performance.

Influencer marketing further entails that the influencer is paid in exchange for exposure and endorsement on a social media platform through the influencer's channel (Enke & Borchers 2019; Hudders, De Jans, De Veirman 2021; Vrontis et al. 2021). Payment is not necessarily provided in cash but can also be provided in the form of free products or services, gift cards, etc. (Vrontis et al. 2021; McClure 2021). The dimension of payment is another important aspect to consider when assessing the cases of influencer marketing for this thesis. This dimension is what differentiates a completely voluntary exposure or endorsement of a brand, product, or service from influencer marketing.

So far, these sections have provided the thesis with an understanding of influencers and influencer marketing. The following section seeks to review studies on influencer marketing. This is done in order to gain a broader understanding of what has been studied within the field and to identify key findings.

A common theme of research within the field of influencer marketing concerns the content published by influencers and how the content affects consumer outcomes. According to the study by Casaló Ariño, Flavián, and Ibáñez-Sánchez (2018), it was found that when consumers perceive content to be original and unique, they experience increased intention to interact with the influencer, follow the advice proposed by the influencer, and recommend the influencer to others. In a study by Ki and Kim (2019), it was found that consumers develop positive attitudes towards influencers who post content that is perceived to be informative, interactive, visually appealing, and prestigious. Such content further influences consumers'

behavioural outcomes, such as purchase intention and electronic word-of-mouth (Ki & Kim 2019). Jin and Muqaddam (2019) argued that consumers were more favourable toward photos where the influencer appeared alongside the endorsed product compared to photos of merely the endorsed products. Furthermore, Jin and Ryu (2020) demonstrated that consumers experience higher purchase intention when exposed to self-promotional photos compared to group photos.

Several researchers have also investigated sponsorship disclosure and its influence on consumers. Several studies have found that the most important aspect of disclosing an advertisement is to make sure consumers recognise the content as an advertisement (De Jans, Cauberghe & Hudders 2018; De Jans & Hudders 2020; Boerman 2020; Kim & Kim 2020). Studies have found both positive and negative consequences derived from disclosing sponsorships. Some of the positive outcomes include increased recollection of the brand, increased post engagement intentions (Boerman 2020), enhanced purchase intention (Kay, Mulcahy & Parkinson 2020; Weismueller et al. 2020), and higher liking of the brand (De Jans et al. 2020). In terms of negative outcomes, De Veirman and Hudders (2020) reported that advertisement disclosure influences brand attitude negatively as consumers become sceptical towards the ad, which contradicts the findings of De Jans et al. (2020). Moreover, this scepticism is then transferred to the influencer and influences the perceived credibility of the influencer negatively (De Veirman & Hudders 2020).

Many studies have investigated deeper psychological processes consumers go through when they are exposed to influencers and influencer marketing. Several studies have touched upon parasocial interaction (PSI), i.e. the illusion of friendship (Hu et al. 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020; Lee & Watkins 2016; Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast 2020). Lee and Watkins (2016) found a positive relationship between purchase intention, homophily[3], and PSI. This relationship was later supported by Sokolova and Kefi (2020). Ki et al. (2020) found the emotional bond created between influencers and their followers to be the source of influencers' influential power. The effectiveness of influencers' endorsement has been linked with the perceived fit between the influencer and the endorsed product, e.g. a good fit could be an influencer advocating for a sustainable lifestyle who endorses a sustainable product. A number of studies have found that when there is a good fit between the influencer and the

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[3]Homophily is the concept of bonding with people who are similar oneself (Dictionary.com n.d.)

brand or product endorsed, consumers tend to have more positive attitudes toward the ad, the brand, and the product, and such fit tends to enhance purchase intention (Kim & Kim 2020; Torres, Augusto & Matos 2019; Silva et al. 2020 a; Kapitan & Silvera 2016). Additionally, Martínez-López et al. (2020) argued that the influencer's trustworthiness and the credibility of the post are positively affected when there is a good fit between the influencer and the endorsed brand or product.

One of the most prominent research themes within influencer marketing, which is also the focus of this thesis, regards influencer characteristics and how these influence consumers. Much research suggests that the success of influencer marketing is dependent on an influencer's perceived credibility (Sakib, Zolfagharian & Yazdanparast 2020; Reinikainen et al. 2020; Sokolova & Kefi 2020), which has its roots in source credibility. This particular aspect is important to cover as we seek to explore how perceived credibility influences sustainable purchase intention. The following sections explore literature within the field of source credibility, which involves the characteristics associated with credibility as well as the effect of source credibility.

Source Credibility

It can be argued that the concept of credibility was first introduced by the Greek philosopher Aristotle via the concept of ethos (Giffin 1967; McCroskey & Young 1981; Ohanian 1990; Finn et al. 2009). Ethos was presented as one of three persuasive appeals and was argued to persuade through the good character of the source. According to Aristotle, ethos was a more powerful persuasion appeal than logos, i.e. logical argument, and pathos, i.e. emotional argument, because once the sender gains trust, the receiver becomes more favourable towards the sender's messages, including the remaining two types of appeal. (Miyawaki 2017).

Since the introduction of ethos, many studies have addressed the topic of source credibility, i.e. ethos, in communicative circumstances (e.g., Andersen & Clevenger 1963; Applebaum & Anatol 1973; Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1953; McCroskey & Young 1981; Perloff 2017).

Source credibility has been defined as the, "[...] attitude toward a source of communication held at a given time by a receiver." (McCroskey & Young 1981, 24) and is often associated with trusting and believing someone (Shimp 2010). Gass and Seiter (2018) stress that credibility is receiver-based and perceptual, meaning that a source may be perceived as being

credible by some receivers while other receivers do not find the same source credible. For this thesis, it means that one interviewee might perceive a specific influencer to be credible while another interviewee does not.

Moreover, scholars have stated that credibility is multidimensional, i.e. consists of several elements and characteristics (e.g. McCroskey & Young 1981; Ohanian 1990; Shimp 2010; Gass & Seiter 2018). Many scholars have presented their views on which characteristics constitute the dimension of credibility (e.g. Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1953; Berlo, Lemert & Mertz 1969; Ohanian 1990; Shimp 2010; Gass & Seiter 2018), among which several scholars have identified the characteristics of expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (e.g. Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1953; Dholakia and Sternthal 1977; McCroskey & Young 1981; McGuire 1985; Ohanian 1990, Shimp 2010, Gass & Seiter 2018). Other scholars have used terms corresponding to expertise, such as "authoritativeness" (McCroskey 1966), "competence" (Whitehead 1968; McCroskey & Young 1981), and "qualification" (Berlo, Lemert & Mertz 1969). Trustworthiness has also been referred to as "honesty", "sagacity", "safety", and "character" (McCroskey & Teven 1999). Lastly, according to McGuire (1985), attractiveness is evaluated based on similarity, familiarity, and liking. It is important to note that scholars claim that attractiveness is not merely physical attractiveness. Other characteristics that have been argued to belong to the dimension of credibility include goodwill (McCroskey & Teven 1999), dynamism (Whitehead 1968; Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz 1969; McCroskey & Young 1981), composure and sociability (McCroskey & Young 1981).

From the above, it can be seen that source credibility encompasses several different aspects and characteristics, which, to a high degree, highlights that source credibility is a receiver-based and perceptual phenomenon. In section 2.1., we account for our approach to source credibility, which will lay the foundation for our further research.

Theories, models, and studies on source credibility

The work of Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) is considered foundational in the field of source credibility (Hocevar, Metzger & Flanagin 2017). Their work examined which characteristics would lead to a communicator's perceived credibility, where they concluded that expertise and trustworthiness made up source credibility (Hovland, Janis & Kelley 1953). Kelman's paper "Processes of Opinion Change" argues that different source characteristics lead to different processing modes. The three source characteristics presented are credibility,

attractiveness, and power. Credibility entails processing through internalisation, attractiveness makes people process through identification, and finally, power causes processing to occur through compliance (Kelman 1961). McCroskey and Young (1981) studied the dimensions of source credibility, and their study proposes that competence and character are the two dimensions that represent source credibility. McGuire (1985) linked the aspects of similarity, familiarity, and likeability to the dimension of attractiveness in the Source Attractiveness Model, which explains the effects of source attractiveness in regard to messages (McGuire 1985). In 1990, Ohanian proposed a scale to measure a source's perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian 1990), and in 1991 she presented a study exploring the impact celebrity endorsers' credibility has on consumers' purchase intention, where she concluded that the perceived expertise of celebrity endorsers had the greatest influence on purchase intention (Ohanian 1991). Finally, Shimp (2010) developed the TEARS model, which proposes that the attributes of trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, respect, and similarity constitute the concept of source credibility.

A vast amount of studies in the field of source credibility have been concerned with the endorsement of products, services, and brands (e.g. Ohanian 1991; Goldsmith, Lafferty & Newell 2000; Bhatt, Jayswal & Patel 2013; Weismueller et al. 2020; Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget 2020). A study by Fink et al. (2020) found that the perceived credibility of influencers is capable of enhancing purchase intention, and Weismueller et al. (2020) argue the same. Uzunoglu and Kip (2014) argued that an influencer's ability to influence consumers' purchase intention highly relies on the attribute of trustworthiness as influencers try the endorsed products themself. Torres, Augusto, and Matos (2019) found the attribute of attractiveness, which includes likability and familiarity, to be important to consumer outcomes, such as purchase intention and attitude towards both the endorsement and the endorsed brand. De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) argue that an influencer's number of followers affects likeability as it impacts consumers' perception of the influencer's popularity. Additionally, Hill, Troshani, and Chandrasekar (2017) claim that popularity enhances an influencer's perceived credibility and influences purchase intention positively. However, De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) demonstrated that high numbers of followers can negatively influence consumers' attitudes towards the endorsed product or brand when the endorsed product or brand is divergent.

The previously mentioned studies on celebrity endorsers' credibility carried out by Ohanian (1990; 1991) are some of the most cited works in this field of source credibility (Halder, Pradhan, & Chaudhuri 2021). Several studies within influencer marketing have applied Ohanian's (1990) source credibility model in the context of social media and have argued that an influencer's credibility consists of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise (e.g. Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget 2020; Weismueller et al. 2020; Cuomo et al. 2019). The study of Schouten, Janssen, and Verspaget (2020) compared influencers and celebrities with each other, and they found that the participants identify with, trust, and feel more similar to influencers than to celebrities, which then influences the effectiveness of an endorsement. Weismueller et al. (2020) found that Instagram influencers' attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise increase purchase intention in regard to product endorsement. Cuomo et al.'s (2019) UK study revealed that the credibility of celebrity endorsers is a great factor in positively influencing purchasing intentions of sustainable luxury goods.

As the literature on source credibility has illustrated, researchers have found many different characteristics that constitute the phenomenon of source credibility. However, it can be seen that the three characteristics mentioned by Ohanian (1990; 1991) are the three most acknowledged characteristics throughout the field. Hence, this thesis relies on the same three characteristics; trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

Finally, it is worth mentioning some of the more general focus areas within research in the field of influencer marketing. The platform that has received the most attention is Instagram, which is also the platform we investigate in this thesis (Vrontis et al. 2021). However, this thesis differs from the general focus areas with respect to market, product focus, and method. As mentioned in the introduction, most research on influencer marketing has explored the American market, and the product focus has mostly been on fashion and beauty (Vrontis et al. 2021). Therefore, it is likely that our findings regarding influencer marketing will differ from previous findings as the participants of our study will be influenced by a different culture. Additionally, it is expected that the difference in the product focus will produce different findings compared to previous studies focused on fashion and beauty. Moreover, a vast majority of studies have relied on quantitative methods to investigate different aspects of influencer marketing (Vrontis et al. 2021), whereas this study relies on qualitative methods. Finally, it could be expected that our findings in relation to influencers' credibility will differ

from other findings presented as it is argued that credibility is a receiver-based and perceptual concept.

1.2. Understanding Consumer Behaviour

As part of our thesis is based on human behaviour in terms of how attitudes and beliefs influence behaviour, we initiate this literature review by exploring the origins of human behaviour.

According to Farnsworth (2019), behaviour is an interplay between actions, cognitions, and emotions. Actions are viewed as transitions from one state to another. Cognitions are argued to describe thoughts and mental images as well as comprising skills and knowledge; that is, knowing how to perform certain actions or memorising specific things. Finally, emotions are defined as conscious experiences based on intense mental activities and not on reasoning or knowledge. According to Farnsworth, these three factors are connected and dependent on each other (Farnsworth 2019). Lundborg and Tamhankar (2014) argue that human behaviour is influenced by several factors, including culture, attitudes, emotions, values, ethics, authority, and persuasions. Moreover, they argue that individuals' actions are based on aspects such as genetics, social norms, and core faith. Based on Farnsworth's (2019) and Lundborg and Tamhankar's (2014) two definitions, it would seem that a great deal of factors influence how humans behave. These factors will also be discussed in the following, where more specific definitions of consumer behaviour are reviewed. Consumer behaviour is relevant to our thesis as we seek to gain an understanding of how credibility influences consumers' sustainable purchase intention and behaviour. Therefore, the following sections review definitions and perspectives related to consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour has its roots in several theories and approaches from psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and neuroscience and concerns various concepts such as motivation, incentives, perception, culture, and attitudes (Sethna & Blythe 2016). Various researchers and scholars have attempted to provide a definition of consumer behaviour, and the following sections explore some of them. In the research of Zhao et al. (2021), consumer behaviour is defined as, "[...] the study of groups, individuals, and organizations and the processes they utilize to choose products, services, experiences, or innovations to meet their requirements and impact on the consumer and society" (Zhao et al. 2021, 1). Additionally,

Zhao et al. argue that the study of consumer behaviour seeks to understand buyer decision-making processes. According to Wells (2014), behaviourism has influenced consumer behaviour for the last 50 years, and behavioural concepts and analyses have been brought into the consumer behaviour field. Foxall (2001) highlights the behaviour principles in relation to consumer behaviour; however, he also emphasises the lack of coherent literature on consumer behaviour as situationally influenced. Our research will contribute to reducing this lack as our focus entails the behaviour as being situationally influenced because of our specific case study. This will be further elaborated on in our methodological considerations. Priest, Carter, and Statt (2013, 5) define consumer behaviour as, "The mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires.". Solomon, Russel-Bennett, and Previte (2013) argue that consumer behaviour concerns the study of individuals' processes when they select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires. Noticeably, this definition greatly resembles the previous definition provided by Priest, Carter, and Statt (2013). Finally, Sethna and Blythe (2016, 6) rely on the definition stating that, "Consumer behaviour is the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services.", which also has many of the same characteristics as the two previous definitions. Overall, these three definitions contain many of the same aspects, and they do not differ much from one another. However, for this study, we will mainly rely on Priest, Carter, and Statt's (2013) definition because mental and emotional activities are incorporated into their definition. We are, to a high degree, interested in the consumers' emotions and attitudes towards influencer marketing and not solely whether they have bought an item or not.

As stated at the beginning of the section, several concepts are dealt with within the field of consumer behaviour, including motivation, perception, and attitudes. As this thesis seeks to analyse the attitudes and beliefs of influencers' followers and how influencers' perceived credibility can influence behaviours, we will look into the field of the attitude-behaviour relationship in the following.

1.2.1. Attitude-behaviour relationships

A final field to explore is the relationship between attitudes and behaviour and the theories that have been developed within this field. This is important to explore as we seek to gain an

understanding of the relationship between consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. This section will present three major theories in relation to attitudes and behaviour that dominate their respective field within attitude-behaviour relationships (Perloff 2017). The three theories differ in terms of which elements influence this relationship and also differ in relation to the purpose of the attitudes and behaviours in question. Therefore, the review will provide a rather broad review of attitude-behaviour relationships and ensure a broad and extensive understanding of the types of theories within this field.

Theorists who have studied and developed methods of analysing this attitude-behaviour relationship are, among others, Fishbein and Ajzen, who have developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which later has been modified and improved several times (see section 2.2.) (Fishbein and Ajzen 2010). The TRA provides a theoretical framework for predicting and changing behaviour by taking behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs into account[4]. Since its introduction, the theory has been utilised extensively (e.g. Perloff 2017; Hale, Householder & Greene 2002; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen 1992; Montaño & Kasprzyk 2015). Several studies have applied the TRA in relation to social media (e.g. Ting et al. 2015; Copeland & Zhao 2020). For example, Ting et al. investigated which factors influence behavioural and normative beliefs on Instagram. They found that behavioural beliefs are composed of features such as usefulness, personal gratification, product information, socialising role, and entertainment, while normative beliefs are composed of siblings, relatives, Facebook friends, close friends, friends in general, and application reviewers (Ting et al. 2015). In the study by Copeland and Zhao (2020), it is even argued that social networks should be added as a component in the TRA.

Another theory considering attitudes and behaviour is The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo (1996), who proposes two different systems in terms of how individuals process information. According to the ELM, people process either peripherally or centrally and focus more on attitude change and how to influence a potential attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo 1996; Perloff 2017; Zheng, Phelps & Pimentel 2019). The ELM includes terms such as motivation, ability, and need for cognition (Petty & Cacioppo 1996; Perloff 2017). Lee and Theokary (2021) utilised the ELM as a theoretical framework to understand influencers on social media and concluded that social media influencers exploited linguistic

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[4] See section 2.2 for an explanation of behavioural and normative beliefs.

style and emotional contagion to persuade their followers. Xiao, Wang, and Chan-Olmsted (2018) used the ELM to analyse influencer marketing and perceived credibility on YouTube, and their analysis revealed a strong and positive relation between information credibility and brand attitudes.

The final theory to be presented is the Cognitive Dissonance Theory by Festinger (1957), which argues that individuals have a need for cognitive consistency. This theory differs a lot from the TRA and ELM as the theory explores the inconsistency of individuals' attitudes and how people attempt to rationalise their behaviour, which might not always be successful (Festinger 1957). For example, a person might know that smoking cigarettes is bad but continues smoking and afterwards rationalises the behaviour with various arguments, for instance, by arguing that s/he might gain weight by quitting cigarettes which will also affect her/his health negatively (Festinger 1957). The Cognitive Dissonance Theory has produced numerous studies throughout the years (Perloff 2017) and has, among others, been used in Belanche et al.'s study (2021), where they explored the role of congruence between influencers, products, and consumers. Among other findings, they concluded that strong congruence between consumer and product resulted in favourable attitudes concerning the promoted product. Qian and Park (2018) analysed the impact of brand-endorser image congruence in relation to consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions regarding luxury fashion brands. This study also found that the perceived fit between brand and influencer plays an essential role in creating favourable attitudes toward the marketing effort and brands.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the three theories presented have different purposes and differ in terms of the elements and concepts included. However, this somewhat broad review has provided us with an insight into the extensive field of attitude-behaviour relationships. Moreover, based on this review of the vast and complex fields of human behaviour, consumer behaviour, and some of the relevant theories connected to the different topics, this thesis will use Fishbein and Ajzen's approach to attitudes and behaviour as a secondary theoretical understanding that will allow us to gain a better insight into consumers' attitudes of Instagram influencers' sustainable promotions. Fishbein and Ajzen's approach has been chosen over the other theories because of the various elements and concepts it considers. We find this to be a crucial factor as consumer behaviour is a complex matter, and we will need many of the elements Fishbein and Ajzen present in order to gain the needed understanding of the consumers' attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, this theoretical approach

aligns with the definition of consumer behaviour that we rely on in terms of the mental and emotional aspects that influences purchase, as these are also elements that are present in the TRA's background factors. Additionally, this theory both considers the actual behaviour and the intention of performing the behaviour, which will also be helpful in this research as it is not a criterion for our interviewees to have actually bought a sustainable product. The theory will be presented in section 2.2.

1.3. Sustainability

Finally, literature on sustainability is reviewed since the product focus of this thesis lies within the topic of sustainability. Sustainability and sustainable products are crucial elements in terms of the purchasing intention and behaviour we seek to study. As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, sustainable consumerism is increasingly gaining awareness, and more consumers are purchasing sustainably (Gelski 2019; Van Gelder 2021; Tighe 2022). The following sections seek to provide an understanding of what sustainability is and how we view it moving forward in the thesis. Moreover, the following briefly presents what sustainable marketing entails and which studies have been made within the field.

1.3.1. What is sustainability?

Sustainability was first used in an academic connection in the mid-1980s, and the term has evolved in the academic world ever since (Portney 2015, 1). The definition of sustainability provided in 1987 by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) is the most widely spread definition, and much research within this field relies on this definition (e.g. Portney 2015; Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019; Wasieleski & Weber 2020). The WCED argues that, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, 37). Moreover, terms such as 'green' and 'environmentally friendly' are often used interchangeably with sustainability (Peattie 1995).

Other influential works and models that assist in understanding sustainability include the three pillars of sustainability (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019), Karl-Henrik Robèrt's four systems conditions for sustainability (The Natural Step n.d.) and Richard Heinberg's five axioms (Heinberg & Lerch 2010), among others. The three pillars of sustainability, also

referred to as 'dimensions' (e.g. Lehtonen 2004; Mori & Christodoulou 2012), 'components' (e.g. Du Pisani 2006; Zijp et al. 2015), and 'aspects' (e.g. Lozano 2008; Tanguay et al. 2010), consist of economic, social, and environmental factors. With the three pillars of sustainability, it is argued that sustainability is achieved by balancing the three factors in harmony (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2019). Regarding the four systems conditions for sustainability, Robèrt implies that nature should not be subject to a systematic increasement of digging, dumping, and destroying, while people should not be subject to a systematic undermining of capacity to meet their needs (The natural Step n.d.). Finally, according to Heinberg (2010), societies will collapse if they continue to use critical resources in an unsustainable manner, and population growth and an increase in resource consumption cannot be sustained. Moreover, he argues that renewable resources must be used at a rate that is at least equal to natural replenishment, and nonrenewable resources must be used at a decreasing rate in order to be sustainable. Finally, he claims that human activities that introduce substances to the environment can only be sustainable if they do not harm the biosphere.

As mentioned previously, the WCED's definition of sustainability is the most widely spread definition with much research relying on this definition. As for this thesis, we will also rely on WCED's definition because of its broad definition, which allows for a broader inclusion of sustainable products advertised by influencers. Moreover, by relying on the WCED's broad and widely used definition, we are able to be more inclusive of our interviewee's answers and perceptions of sustainability.

1.3.2. Studies on Green Advertising

This next section will investigate studies concerned with sustainability in advertising, also called *green advertising* (Agarwal & Kumar 2021). According to Banerjee, Gulas, and Iyer (1995), green advertising refers to advertisements that meet at least one of the following criteria: "1. Explicitly or implicitly addresses the relationship between a product/service and the biophysical environment. 2. Promotes a green lifestyle with or without highlighting a product/service. 3. Presents a corporate image of environmental responsibility." (Banerjee, Gulas & Iyer 1995, 22). In short, it can be argued that green advertising regard using environment-friendly claims in advertisements in order to influence receivers to purchase a product or a service (Agarwal & Kumar 2021). This understanding is important for us to

consider in relation to the influencer marketing advertisement cases that make the foundation of our analysis.

Studies on green advertising have increased significantly over the last couple of years (Agarwal & Kumar 2021). Areas of research within the field include the effectiveness of green advertising (e.g. Pittman & Abell 2021; Kumar & Tripathi 2019; Blasche & Ketelaar 2015), greenwashing[5] and scepticism derived from green advertising (e.g. Luo et al. 2020; Silva et al. 2020 b), and content of claims and appeals in green advertising (e.g. Pittman, Oeldorf-Hirsch & Brannan 2022; Matthes, Wonneberger & Schmuck 2014; Jäger & Weber 2020). In the following, some of the findings that touch upon endorsers, social media, credibility, purchase intention, and purchase behaviour are presented as these findings are related to our area of interest.

Green and Peloza (2014) examined in which context self-benefit appeals and other-benefit appeals[6] were more effective regarding purchase intentions in terms of environmentally friendly products. They found that when consumers evaluate advertisements in public contexts, other-benefit appeals are more effective, whereas self-benefit appeals are more effective when evaluating advertisements in private contexts. Jäger and Weber (2020) also investigated the effectiveness of self-benefit and other-benefit appeals and found that other-benefit appeals are more effective in generating green purchase intention. Moreover, they explored the effectiveness of abstract versus concrete message framing in green advertising. Here, it was found that concrete messages are perceived as more credible than abstract messages. Spack et al. (2012) claim that perceived credibility, perceived product greenness, and attitudes are influenced by argument strength; however, they also found that weak arguments were just as effective as strong arguments regarding purchasing intention. A study by He et al. (2019) investigated endorsers' effectiveness on green behaviour. The study found that advertisements with endorsers of high social status are more likely to positively influence consumers' behavioural intentions and attitudes when the endorsers are presented alongside injunctive norm appeals. Interestingly, the study further found that advertisements with 'ordinary consumer endorsers' are more likely to influence consumers' intentions and attitudes when using descriptive norm appeals. Another study concerned with celebrity

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[5] Greenwashing regards providing misleading information that makes brands and products appear more environmentally sound than what they actually are (Kenton 2022).
[6] Self-benefit appeals regard consumer benefits, such as cost savings, and other-benefit appeals regard societal benefits, such as lower emissions (Green & Peloza 2014)

endorsers found that the credibility of a celebrity influences consumers' attitude towards the advertisement, but the credibility had no direct influence on purchasing intention or attitude toward the brand (Kumar & Tripathi 2019). Blasche and Ketelaar (2015) concluded that green advertisements using pro-environmental celebrity endorsers, compared to non-green celebrity endorsers, are more likely to produce positive attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand as well as entail more favourable purchasing intentions. It has further been found that product endorsements from less popular green influencers are more likely to increase purchase intention and produce more positive attitudes than when a product is endorsed by a popular green influencer (Pittman & Abell 2021). Pittman, Oeldorf-Hirsch, and Brannan (2022) demonstrated that brand authenticity is the most persuasive mechanism on social media for generating purchase intention, whereas, on news websites, brand quality is the most persuasive effect of appeal. Finally, the study by Luo et al. (2020) concluded that scepticism toward green advertising on social media has a negative effect on purchasing intention.

These studies provide an insight into the findings within the field of green advertising in relation to endorsers, social media, credibility, purchasing intention, and purchasing behaviour. This literature review on sustainability has given us knowledge and an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with the findings and conclusions made in relation to sustainability. However, it has not been possible to identify any studies interested in all dimensions at once like this thesis is.

To summarise the observations from the literature review, it has been established that this thesis views influencer marketing as a marketing strategy brands use that involves an influential individual on social media exposing or endorsing either brands, products, or services to increase a brand's performance. Furthermore, the influencer has to receive payment of some kind in order for us to view it as influencer marketing. In terms of source credibility, it was found that several researchers agree that trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness are the three attributes that constitute credibility. Hence, our theoretical understanding of credibility relies on the same three attributes. When reviewing the field of consumer behaviour, we found that the definition that includes a focus on mental, emotional, and physical activities aligned most with how we approach consumer behaviour. Considering this definition and our research interest, we will incorporate Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of consumer behaviour as a secondary theoretical approach, which will provide us with an

understanding of attitudes and beliefs. Finally, the literature review on sustainability provided us with several perspectives on sustainability resulting in us relying on the broad definition provided by the WCED that argues that, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

2. Theoretical Approach

As this thesis seeks to understand how perceived credibility influences purchase behaviour on Instagram, the theoretical concept of credibility is accounted for in the following. As mentioned in the previous chapter, our theoretical understanding of credibility relies on the three attributes that Ohanian, among others, highlights as the constituting attributes of credibility.

Even though our primary interests relate to credibility, the theoretical understanding of credibility is in itself insufficient to explain and understand the phenomena of intentions and behaviours. Therefore, this section also includes an account of the Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), as their theory can provide us with a deeper understanding of how influencers' followers develop purchasing intentions through attitudes and beliefs.

2.1. Source Credibility and Its Underlying Attributes

As stated in the literature review on source credibility, scholars have identified many attributes that constitute credibility. Ohanian (1990; 1991), who is one of the most cited scholars within the field of credibility, identified three attributes that constitute the phenomenon of source credibility. Therefore, this thesis primarily relies on Ohanian's understanding of credibility and the underlying attributes.

2.1.1. Credibility

When describing source credibility, Ohanian states that it implies, "[...] a communicator's positive characteristics that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message." (Ohanian 1990, 41). Ohanian argues that defining and understanding source credibility can be confusing due to the many different ways source credibility previously has been presented. When Ohanian elaborates on which attributes constitute credibility, she relies on the work by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953) as well as McGuire's Source-Attractiveness Model (1985). The three attributes that Ohanian argues constitute source credibility are trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Ohanian 1990, 41). She refers to Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953) for the

attributes of trustworthiness and expertise and refers to McGuire (1985) for the attribute of attractiveness.

According to Ohanian, it is important to gain an understanding of source credibility in regard to advertising, especially in relation to endorsers. She argues that by considering an endorser's credibility dimensions along with the demographics and psychographics of consumers, one might be able to predict a consumer's attitude toward a product as well as a consumer's purchase intention (Ohanian 1990, 49).

The following sections elaborate on the three attributes of credibility. Ohanian, and the scholars she has relied on when defining source credibility, make up the foundational theoretical understanding of credibility this thesis relies on. However, other scholars have provided their definitions and understandings of the three attributes. Hence, in order to provide a thorough account of the attributes, several scholars' views on the three attributes are included.

ATTRACTIVE
CLASSY
BEAUTIFUL
ELEGANT
SEXY

ATTRACTIVENESS

EXPERTISE

EXPERT
EXPERIENCED
KNOWLEDGEABLE
QUALIFIED
SKILLED

CREDIBILITY

TRUSTWORTHINESS

DEPENDABLE   RELIABLE   TRUSTWORTHY

HONEST   SINCERE
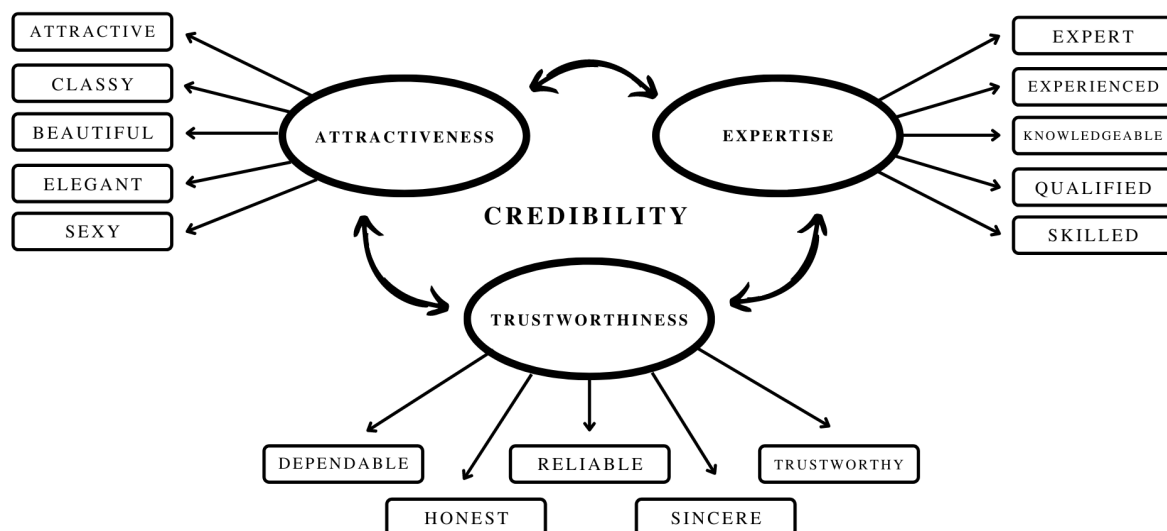
Illustration 2: Ohanian's Credibility Attributes

Trustworthiness

The first dimension Ohanian presents in relation to credibility is trustworthiness, which refers to, "[...] the listener's degree of confidence in, and level of acceptance of, the speaker and the message." (Ohanian 1990, 41). She relates the attribute of trustworthiness to Aristotle's concept of ethos and what Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) refer to as source credibility (Ohanian 1990).

According to Ohanian, trustworthiness includes being dependable, honest, reliable, sincere, and trustworthy (Ohanian 1990, 46). Honesty is also an aspect highlighted by Shimp (2010) and McCroskey and Young (1981). Additionally, Shimp (2010, 252) argues that trustworthiness refers to integrity and believability.

Ohanian argues that many would view a friend as a trustworthy source in most situations, whereas a salesperson might be more difficult to perceive as trustworthy due to their own interests (Ohanian 1991, 47). This aspect is also highlighted by Shimp, who argues that a receiver's perception of an endorser's motives influences the perceived trustworthiness of the endorser. Hence, if the receiver believes that the endorser is motivated by self-interests, the endorser will appear less trustworthy in the eyes of the receiver (Shimp 2010, 252).

By drawing on several studies, Ohanian claims that trustworthiness has a positive influence on persuasion and attitude change (Ohanian 1990, 41-42). Additionally, other scholars argue that trustworthiness might be the most important attribute of credibility as it is argued that if trustworthiness is not present, other attributes might become less effective. This could consequently result in the endorser's communication being incapable of changing the receivers' attitudes (Freeman & Chen 2015, 665; Gass & Seiter 2018, 89).

Expertise

The second dimension Ohanian presents is expertise (Ohanian 1990, 42). Ohanian relies on the definition provided by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953), who state that expertise refers to the receivers' perception of whether the source can make valid claims (Ohanian 1991, 46). To elaborate on the definition, Ohanian states that expertise, "[...] is the knowledge that the communicator seems to possess to support the claims made in the advertisements." (Ohanian 1991, 46). Hence, endorsements are more appropriate when an endorser advertises a product or service related to the profession of the endorser (Ohanian 1991, 46-47). Moreover, expertise is seen as a contextual and perceived phenomenon (Gass & Seiter 2018, 89; Shimp 2010, 252). What is important in relation to credibility is how receivers perceive the source and the context in which the source communicates. Shimp argues that a source perceived as an expert on a certain subject is more persuasive than a source who is not perceived to be an expert regardless of their actual expertness in the field (Shimp 2010, 252). Gass and Seiter provide the example that a doctor might often be perceived as having expertise, but members of an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting might perceive an alcoholic who has been sober for

many years to have more expertise (Gass & Seiter 2018, 89), e.g. due to actual experience on the subject.

Within expertise, Ohanian identified the following five adjectives to provide a better understanding of the attribute: expert, experienced, knowledgeable, qualified, and skilled (Ohanian 1990, 46). Similarly, Shimp argues that expertise refers to perceived knowledge, experience, and skills within the topic the source communicates about (Shimp 2010, 252), and O'Keefe refers to the attribute as authoritativeness, qualification, competence, expertness, and intelligence (O'Keefe 2002, 292).

As with the dimension of trustworthiness, Ohanian refers to several studies concluding that perceived expertise influences attitude change positively. One study claims that sources perceived to be both experts and trustworthy have a significant effect on attitude change (Ohanian 1990, 42).

Attractiveness

The third and final attribute Ohanian presents as a dimension of credibility is attractiveness (Ohanian 1990, 42). Ohanian does not present a clear definition of the attribute, but, as with the two other attributes, she presents five adjectives that refer to the term attractiveness: attractive, classy, beautiful, elegant, and sexy (Ohanian 1990, 46), which are all contextually dependent. It can be argued that Ohanian's interpretation of attractiveness especially is concerned with aspects that can be judged by simply looking at the endorser. However, other scholars have stressed that attractiveness does not simply refer to physical attributes but also characteristics such as personality properties, intellectual skills, athletic superiority, lifestyle characteristics, and the like (Shimp 2010, 252).

Besides the characteristics mentioned above, scholars have claimed that the aspect of similarity is an important part of attractiveness. McGuire (1985) presented the aspect in the Source Attractiveness Model, which also included the aspects of familiarity and likeability. McGuire defined the aspect of similarity as the resemblance between the receiver and the source. Shimp has argued that consumers prefer an endorser they perceive as being similar, e.g. in age, gender, and ethnicity (Shimp 2010, 253).

Being respected and admired because of personal accomplishments and qualities are other important aspects of attractiveness which might even surpass the physical characteristics of

attractiveness (Shimp 2010, 253). This means that endorsers may be respected for their values, athletic skills, overcoming personal matters, etc. Therefore, an unknown source might find it more difficult to persuade through respect as receivers most likely do not know any of the source's accomplishments or qualities (Freeman & Chen 2015, 666). Shimp further argues that brands might be able to acquire a resemblance of the accomplishments and qualities that an endorser is respected for (Shimp 2010, 253).

Ohanian states that attractiveness is important in terms of the receiver's first impression of an endorser (Ohanian 1990, 42). Additionally, Ohanian presents a study that claims that attractive sources are more likely to persuade people and create positive attitude changes (Ohanian 1990, 42). According to Shimp, receivers get persuaded through identification, where the receiver detects an aspect in the source that they like and find attractive. An important outcome of identification regards receivers being more likely to adopt the same behaviours, preferences, and interests as the endorser (Shimp 2010, 252). Finally, scholars argue that identification is the process that best explains how endorsers achieve persuasion (Freeman & Chen 2015, 665).

2.1.2. Discussion of Credibility Approach

As previously mentioned, Ohanian is one of the most cited scholars within the field of credibility; however, we did find Ohanian's approach to have some limitations, which we discuss in the following.

First, as the previous section also demonstrated, Ohanian herself does not provide in-depth accounts of the three attributes, which is why it has been necessary to include supporting claims and explanations by other scholars who could provide us with a more thorough understanding of what the different attributes imply. Moreover, it is important to remember that source credibility and the underlying characteristics are perceptual phenomena, meaning that it can be difficult to provide a clear and definite understanding of the term as what may be attractive for some receivers are not for others, as credibility is a contextually dependent concept.

Moreover, Ohanian's approach could be argued to be a bit outdated as her approach is from the 1990s; however, studies continue to rely on Ohanian's work, indicating the continued relevance of her work (e.g. Weismueller et al. 2020; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget 2020;

Cuomo et al. 2019). Ohanian published her work before the emergence of social media, meaning that her work has not been developed with consideration to social media. We are, therefore, aware of Ohanian's credibility attributes not being focused on social media influencers but on celebrity endorsers. However, we argue that her approach to credibility can be applied to social media influencers as well since a social media influencer can be regarded as an endorser present on a new platform. We do, though, expect certain factors related to social media to influence our thesis, such as the expected importance of visually pleasing pictures. It can further be seen that other researchers have applied Ohanian's approach to social media influencers (e.g. Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget 2020; Breves et al. 2019; Djafarova & Trofimenko 2019; Weismueller et al. 2020) which illustrates that her understanding of credibility is still applicable when working with influencers. Due to credibility being such a conceptual and perceptual concept, we have been including other theorists' views on credibility to enhance our understanding of the complex concept.

Finally, as the credibility approach does not account for any behavioural aspects, it is insufficient in itself to answer our research question. Therefore, we include Fishbein and Ajzen's Reasoned Action Approach, which will allow us to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and beliefs connected to consumers' perception of influencers' credibility on Instagram.

2.2. The Reasoned Action Approach

Fishbein and Ajzen's Reasoned Action Approach has been under development for more than 45 years (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 17). In 1975, the two published their first book on attitudes and beliefs determining behaviour, and, in 1980, they introduced the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in their second joint book (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 18). Hereafter, Fishbein and Ajzen went their separate ways to test and develop the theory. As a result, Ajzen developed an extension of the TRA called the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) which introduced and emphasised the concept of perceived behavioural control as an extra predictor of intention and behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 18; Ajzen 1991). In 2010, the two joined forces once again, and as a result, The Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) was created. Fishbein and Ajzen's goal for this new 2010 edition was to demonstrate that the conceptual framework of the Reasoned Action Approach can be used to account for any social behaviour of interest and that it can be applied directly to deal with new issues and behaviours. They

also argue that the RAA allows researchers to understand and appreciate the domain-specific attitudes and personality characteristics (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 17). According to Perloff, Fishbein and Ajzen's approach offers one of the most systematic explanations in the field of attitude-behaviour relations (Perloff 2017, 165) and has more than 1,000 published studies that have tested the approach (Perloff 2017, 172).

As stated above, Fishbein and Ajzen have worked much on their theory regarding attitudes and beliefs determining behaviour, resulting in several different preceding theories. The Reasoned Action Approach is their latest and most updated contribution. The following sections account for their theoretical framework as the RAA is used in this thesis to gain an understanding of the influence attitudes and beliefs may have on intention and behaviour.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen, it is essential to identify the behaviour in question before it is possible to investigate its determinants (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 20). Moreover, Fishbein and Ajzen assume that human social behaviour, "[...] follows reasonably and often spontaneously from the information or beliefs people possess about the behavior under consideration." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 20), and they argue that beliefs depend on social backgrounds, individual differences, and personality traits.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen, beliefs are defined as subjective probabilities (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 221), and they identify three types of beliefs: *behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs*, and *control beliefs* (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 20-21). First, people hold behavioural beliefs about negative or positive consequences, which determine people's *attitude towards personally performing the behaviour*. Second, normative beliefs concern social pressure and whether important individuals approve of performing the behaviour, resulting in the normative belief producing a *perceived norm*. Finally, control beliefs are grounded in personal and environmental factors and the ability to actually carry out the behaviour, which Fishbein and Ajzen refer to as *perceived behavioural control* (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 20-21). When these attitudes, perceived norms, and perceived behavioural control have been formed, they are capable of guiding *intentions* and *behaviour*. Fishbein and Ajzen argue that the combination of attitude toward the behaviour, perceived norm, and perception of behavioural control forms a readiness to perform the behaviour, namely, a behavioural intention which then determines the performance of the behaviour. The stronger the intention, the more likely it is that the behaviour is performed (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 21). However,

factors such as skills and abilities, or the lack thereof, can prevent individuals from acting on the intention, meaning that they may lack actual control, and it is only when people have actual control that intentions can be used as a good predictor of behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 21).

According to the theory, intention is the best predictor of behaviour, but, as mentioned previously, environmental factors, skills, and ability should be taken into account. At the lowest level of explanation[7], Fishbein and Ajzen argue that individuals perform a behaviour because they intend to do so and have the required skills and abilities without any environmental constraints. The next level provides a deeper understanding as determinants of intentions are considered and, "We now learn that people will intend to (and thus will) perform a behaviour if they have positive attitudes toward personally performing the behaviour and if they perceive normative pressure to do so." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 21-22). Once again, potential lack of control must be considered (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 21-22). The final level, the level of beliefs, is capable of providing information about the considerations that influence decisions and insight into how people think about a behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 22-23).

The following sections will elaborate on the terms and concepts presented in the theory.

Background factors

The first concept to be presented is the background factors. Fishbein and Ajzen argue that these background factors are the origins of the behavioural, normative, and control beliefs as several types of variables potentially impact beliefs. Fishbein and Ajzen mention the following variables, "age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, nationality, religious affiliation, personality, mood, emotion, general attitudes and values, intelligence, group membership, past experiences, exposure to information, social support, and coping skills." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 24). Even though these background factors are recognised as being potentially important when predicting behaviour, there may not be a connection between the background factors and the beliefs, as this would be an empirical question. Fishbein and Ajzen also recognise that it can be difficult to determine which factors should be considered without further theoretical guidelines, which is not a part of their theoretical framework. With that said, Fishbein and Ajzen do provide an examination and account for

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[7] See Figure 1 for an illustration of the levels.

background factors and the impact they potentially have on beliefs (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 24-25).

Background factors are extremely important to consider, as it is assumed that beliefs are acquired and formed based on daily encounters with the social world and experiences (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 224). Even though the number of background factors virtually is unlimited, Fishbein and Ajzen still propose certain clusters that can be relevant to explore, such as personal characteristics, demographics, social and cultural factors, and exposure to media and information (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 224). It is implied that a given background factor can be associated with the performance of a behaviour if the background factor is related to the behavioural, normative, or control beliefs that determine the considered behaviour. Moreover, it is believed that individuals who differ in terms of certain background factors also will differ in the beliefs they hold, meaning that it would be expected that they differ in the likelihood of performing the behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 224).

Behavioural beliefs

As briefly mentioned when introducing the theory, behavioural beliefs concern the outcome expectancies, i.e. the positive or negative consequences that might be associated with performing a given behaviour. More importantly, behavioural beliefs are argued to determine people's attitudes toward performing the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 20).

Attitude toward the behaviour

Fishbein and Ajzen argue that an attitude is, "[...] a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favorableness or unfavorableness to a psychological object. The attitude object can be any discriminable aspect of an individual's world, including a behavior." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 76). To elaborate on the definition, Fishbein and Ajzen argue that an attitude in its nature is evaluative (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 76) and refer to the term attitude as the evaluation of an object, concept, or behaviour, and they recognise that an attitude can be influenced by factors such as mood and emotion (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 78).

Normative beliefs

Fishbein and Ajzen's concept of normative beliefs is based on the general assumption that the social environment can strongly influence individuals' intentions and actions and is also referred to as a social norm, which concerns acceptable or permissible behaviour in society

(Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 129). This means that norms are perceived as ensuring that behaviours serve the interests of the larger social system and not only the individual. This further explains why individuals often conform to social norms, as breaching these norms results in some type of punishment. Another perspective views social norms as a means of creating meaning in social interaction; hence, norms provide meaning in the sense of guidelines concerning appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. A final view defines norms as behavioural regularities, meaning that people are guided by the patterns of the common behaviour in their social environments (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 129).

Fishbein and Ajzen define norms as perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a certain behaviour, and they believe that the stronger the perceived social pressure, the more likely it is that individuals will perform the behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 130). Fishbein and Ajzen distinguish between two types of norms: injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Injunctive norms concern the perception of what should be done in terms of performing a behaviour, and descriptive norms relate to the perception that others are or are not performing the behaviour. These two norms capture the totality of social pressure (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 131).

Control beliefs

Fishbein and Ajzen argue that individual differences in perceived control are important aspects of human functioning and behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 153). In short, perceived behavioural control concerns perceived control in terms of personal competences and perceived ability (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 153) and is defined as, "[...] the extent to which people believe that they are capable of performing a given behavior, that they have control over its performance." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 154-155). This aspect of perceived control is important to include as attitudes and perceived norms are influenced by perceived control and because a favourable attitude and social pressure can be insufficient in terms of forming intentions and behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 154). Factors to consider within perceived behavioural control include the availability of information, skills, opportunities, and other resources that may be required to perform the behaviour. Barriers and potential obstacles should also be considered (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 155). If people do not believe they have the necessary control to perform the behaviour, they are less inclined to form a strong behavioural intention to perform the given behaviour even if they hold positive attitudes and feel a strong social pressure (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 155). Finally, Fishbein

and Ajzen argue that perceived behavioural control is reflected in both internal (e.g. skills, abilities, motivation) and external factors (e.g. luck, circumstances, other people) (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 154).

Actual control

The concept of actual control is an additional concept to perceived control. In relation to explaining what actual control covers, Fishbein and Ajzen recognise the difficulty of uncovering which internal and external control factors need to be considered (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 330). However, they highlight control factors such as skills and knowledge as these will almost always be relevant factors to consider (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 330).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen's approach, when people have high perceived control and actual control, they have the skills, abilities, willpower etc. that are required to perform the behaviour, and they will be able to overcome potential external barriers (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 335).

Intention

Based on the previous sections where the different beliefs and background factors have been introduced and defined, we can now move forward with exploring and accounting for intentions and behaviour. This section accounts for how attitudes, norms, and control function as predictors for intention.

Fishbein and Ajzen argue that, "Behavioral intentions are indicators of a person's readiness to perform a behavior." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 39). Intentions can be expressed in several ways, but the main dimension in terms of characterising intentions is the person's evaluation of the likelihood or perceived subjective probability of performing a certain behaviour. A great part of Fishbein and Ajzen's definition of intention relies on the concept of the subjective probability dimension, but they also recognise that additional factors and characteristics should be considered, including accessibility in memory, confidence, and personal relevance of the behaviour to the person (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 39-40).

Behaviour

As previously mentioned, it is crucial to define the behaviour in question. This will guide how the behaviour is to be assessed, how to conceptualise and evaluate the behaviour, and

other constructs relevant when analysing the specific behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 29). Fishbein and Ajzen argue that a behaviour is composed of four elements, "[...] the action performed, the target at which the action is directed, the context in which it is performed, and the time at which it is performed." (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 29). Fishbein and Ajzen recognise that these elements are arbitrary, meaning that it is up to us as researchers to define these behavioural criteria as it best fits our research question. The definition of these behavioural criteria is closely related to the research question, meaning that the behaviour in question is whether our interviewees have formed intentions and/or bought sustainable products based on influencers' promotions on Instagram.

Fishbein and Ajzen operationalise the theory through the following illustration:
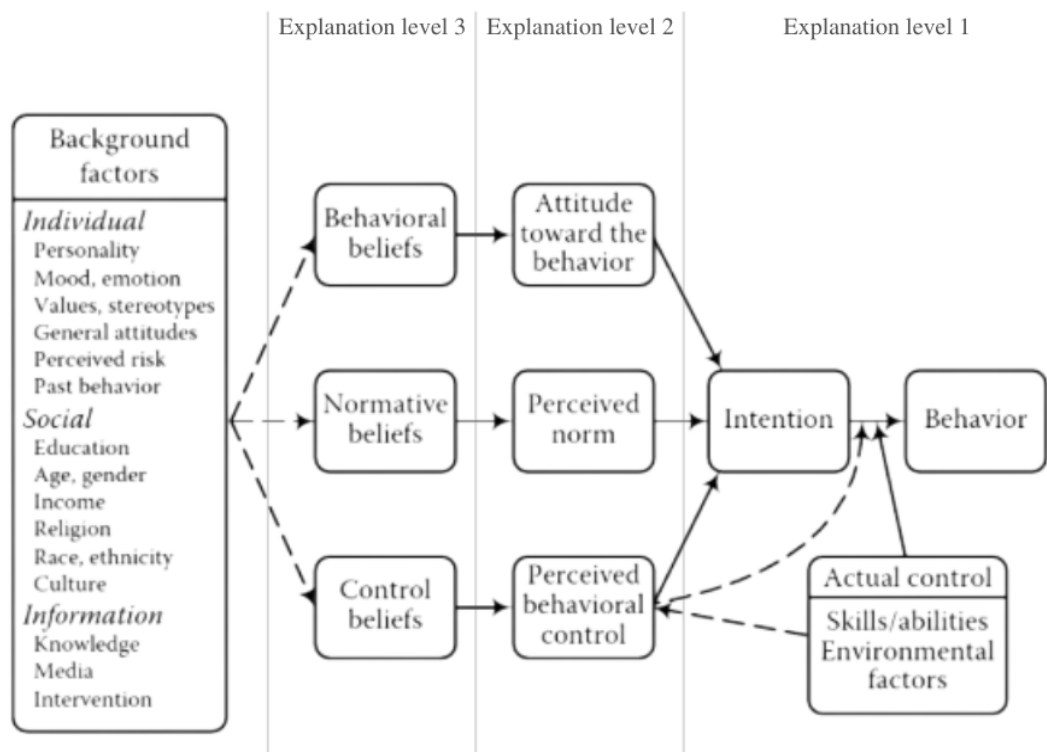
Figure 1: The Reasoned Action Approach

2.2.1. Discussion of the Reasoned Action Approach

As both argued by Fishbein and Ajzen and other influential theorists such as Perloff (2017), the RAA has undergone a substantial amount of development based on much literature within the field as well as it has been used in thousands of different studies within different behavioural domains (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 281; Perloff 2017, 172). However, as with

many other theories and models, this approach also has its challenges which we will discuss in the following.

First, the choice of word in terms of *reasoned* must be addressed. Fishbein and Ajzen clarify that the word *reasoned* does not imply that they believe people to always be rational or logical every time they engage in any behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 23; Fishbein 2008, 835; Fishbein 2007). They argue that their theoretical framework both allows for deliberate and spontaneous decision-making. Furthermore, the beliefs held by the individuals need not be rational either but may be inaccurate, biased, or irrational (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 23-24). Fishbein and Ajzen believe that once a set of beliefs has been formed, a cognitive foundation of attitudes, perceived norms, and perceptions of control, intentions, and behaviours are expected to follow in a reasonable and consistent manner (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 24).

Second, we found that Fishbein and Ajzen do not account for or discuss whether behaviour is always intentional or sometimes can be unintentional. The RAA argues that intentions and behaviour are influenced by the three beliefs, behavioural, normative, and control beliefs, meaning that the theory dominantly focuses on intentional behaviour. However, other researchers focus more on the complexity of behaviour. For example, Johns (2020) argues that behaviour can be intentional, unintentional, and non-intentional. We recognise this complexity when dealing with human behaviour, but as we focus on our interviewees' consumer behaviour in very specific cases, we still argue that the RAA is applicable with its view on intentions and behaviour. Additionally, Fishbein and Ajzen argue that their theory also allows for spontaneous decision-making, as also mentioned above.

Third, we find the approach to be somewhat static and not take possible feedback loops or cross-relations into account. We came across this challenge several times during the analysis, where it, at times, could be difficult to know how to code certain pieces of data and, afterwards, analyse how and which different theoretical aspects influenced the interviewees' thoughts and answers. As we see it, there are two reasons why we found this challenging. First, as we argued at the beginning of this section, we believe that the different elements of the theory are more related and intertwined than what Fishbein and Ajzen argue. Therefore, the different elements can be difficult to separate from one another as all factors depend on each other and also overlap at times. Second, as our main focus in this thesis is on the

perceptual concept of credibility and not actual behaviour, it is more difficult to analyse behaviour precisely.

Finally, we would, once again, like to highlight that this theoretical framework is supplementary to our main focus of the credibility attributes and perceptions. We are also aware that Fishbein and Ajzen's view and approach to science differ from our social constructionist worldview and orientation as the theory is based on psychology and behaviourism, which differs from many of the main focuses of social constructionism. Nonetheless, we argue that the two theories share the view that people are not isolated and without influence from society when we create certain perceptions and attitudes. We argue that Fishbein and Ajzen's approach to beliefs, attitudes, and intentions will provide us with the necessary insight and knowledge we need in order to fully understand how influencers' perceived credibility can influence consumers' intentions toward promotions concerning sustainable products. Moreover, this approach will also allow us to make suggestions to practitioners who work with influencer marketing, as our analysis will uncover and highlight how consumers perceive various aspects when being exposed to promotions on Instagram. More specifically, we will be able to present which credibility attributes matter to consumers and how underlying attitudes and beliefs influence these perceptions.

3. Methodological Considerations

The following section explains and elaborates on our methodological considerations. We initiate our methodological considerations by presenting our theory of science, where we discuss how social constructionism influences our study. Next, we briefly present our methodology, followed by our data collection method. Our section concerning the data collection method will be structured using Kvale and Brinkmann's seven stages of interviewing (2009). In their fifth stage, analysing, we present our method of analysis where we rely on Nigel King's Template Analysis (n.d).

3.1. Theory of Science

The following sections provide an account of the theory of science that influences this thesis. Before accounting for our approach to science and how it influences our research, we account for social constructionism. Subsequently, we account for the ontology and epistemology connected to the philosophy of science. These aspects are important to cover as they influence our approach to science, including our theoretical considerations and methodology. These considerations will be visible throughout the thesis.

3.1.1 Social Constructionism

In much literature, social constructivism and social constructionism are often used interchangeably and are referred to as social constructionism (Young & Collin 2004; Gergen & Gergen 2004; Gergen 2014; Kim 2001). We do not intend to differentiate between the two, but we are aware of the two approaches. However, Kim argues that they are, "[...] two ways to talk about the same thing." (Kim 2001, 5).

According to Young and Collin, social constructionism has a social focus (Young & Collin 2004, 376), and Gergen and Gergen (2004) support this claim as they argue that social constructionism emphasises relationships. Taylor (2018) also argues that social constructionism focuses on social interaction and argues that meaning is created through the processes of this interaction. Gergen defines social constructionism as, "[...] an account of knowledge in which all assertions about what is the case are traced to negotiated agreements among people." (Gergen 2014, 1772) and emphasises that knowledge is created in the social sphere. Furthermore, Burr argues that social constructionism is historically and culturally

specific and that language, in particular, is important for social constructionists as language constructs knowledge (Burr 2015, 4-5). Gergen and Gergen also highlight language as a central concept in social constructionism (Gergen & Gergen 2008, 161). Moreover, Gergen and Gergen recognise the importance of language, but they argue that all forms of cultural life are essential for social constructionists (Gergen & Gergen 2004, 14). In this thesis, we seek to understand and analyse attitudes and beliefs which are articulated and constructed through language. However, the main focus of this thesis is not to study particular words, but we still need to analyse what our interviewees say and not what they do, as we are not observing behaviour.

This section has briefly explored the field of social constructionism, including the different views of social constructions and human perspectives. The following elaborates on how the social constructionist approach influences our thesis.

3.1.2. Our approach to theory of science

This section will further elaborate on social constructionism in terms of its ontology and epistemology as well as how these concepts influence us and our approach to science.

First, our ontology must be established as this is considered the starting point of all research (Grix 2002, 177). Ontology concerns how we view reality, and Grix uses the metaphor of ontology being the image of social reality (Grix 2002, 177). More specifically, we have taken the position of the relativist ontology as we believe that reality is socially constructed (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013). This entails that we, as social constructionists, believe that reality is constructed through human activity and that reality cannot be discovered as reality does not exist prior to its social creation (Kim 2001). For this reason, we are conducting semi-structured interviews, which allows us to create reality through the social interaction we have. It is especially important to conduct in-depth interviews as this method will enable us to explore the many nuances of our interviewees' attitudes and beliefs. Moreover, the qualitative interviews allow our interviewees to think and reflect on their own opinions when we ask questions related to certain aspects of their lives. Additionally, the relativist ontology entails that human experience is reality and vice versa (Levers 2013, 2). Thus, the relativist ontology is represented in our study as our views and beliefs influence the study. For example, our backgrounds as students, our interest in the field, and our research and literature review

influence our understanding and will affect how we approach the research. In our research, we conduct interviews, and the questions asked throughout the interviews are based on our understanding of reality and how we understand our theoretical standpoint as well as how we understand the answers provided by our interviewees. By having a relativist ontology, we believe that reality is relative and is conditioned by how individuals perceive and understand the world. Through the interviews, we gain a better understanding of how our interviewees see their world and reality.

Second, epistemology is considered. According to Grix, epistemology deals with the theory of knowledge and, more specifically, how we obtain and gather knowledge (Grix 2022, 177). This thesis has adopted the subjective epistemology as we believe that knowledge is socially constructed, including our own (Presskorn-Thygesen 2013). This epistemology reflects our relativist ontology, where it is believed that reality is subjective. Moreover, adopting the subjective epistemology means that knowledge is viewed as a social product which is influenced by social and cultural aspects (Kim 2001) and that knowledge is value-laden (Levers 2013, 3). In this thesis, we will create the social product by interviewing our interviewees and asking about their individual reality and prior social experiences. An important note in relation to the subjective epistemology is the belief that observers and researchers influence the observations and research and vice versa. This means that we will influence our interviewees by asking them certain questions as well as their answers influence us. Furthermore, our subjective beliefs and attitudes will also influence how we interpret and analyse the data. Moreover, the subjective epistemology entails that we take our interviewees' backgrounds and prior experiences into account. We emphasise that we do not seek to discover one truth as we believe that every individual's reality is their truth. Our theoretical approach also recognises this as the theorists within credibility argue that credibility is a perceptual concept, meaning that individuals express their own realities differently. Additionally, Fishbein and Ajzen argue that beliefs held by individuals do not need to be rational either but may be contradictory, biased, or irrational (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 23-24). Even though our interviewees may express contradictory attitudes, it still represents their reality. Our interpretations are influenced by society and our own realities, meaning that we cannot be objective in our approach to the study (Levers 2013, 4). To validate our research, we provide an in-depth account of our methodological approach so that our research process may be reproduced. Finally, the subjective epistemology emphasises the focus of subjective research; developing an understanding, highlighting ethical and moral

issues, as well as personal and political independence (Levers 2013, 3). In this research, the ethical and moral issues are mainly related to the relationship between the interviewers and the interviewees. It is important to be aware of not harming the interviewees, meaning that they should not be pressured or lured to comment on aspects they are not comfortable sharing with strangers. The research needs to be conducted with respect to the interviewees and be sensitive to both confidentiality and consent (Brinkmann 2013, 156).

3.2. Methodology

For this thesis, we are grounded in the qualitative approach to research. When working qualitatively, research focuses on content and words to understand and interpret how individuals perceive the social world (Bryman 2015, 32-33). This means that we are not interested in measuring data or performing experiments which characterise the quantitative approach to research (Bryman 1988, 11-12). In relation to this specific research, it means that we are *not* interested in measuring or observing consumers' behaviour in relation to purchasing behaviour but, on the other hand, in *understanding* their perceptions, attitudes, and constructions regarding influencers' perceived credibility when promoting sustainable products on Instagram.

3.3. Data collection method

As also implied in the structure of the thesis, we have chosen qualitative interviews as our data collection method. The reason for choosing interviews compared to other types of data collection methods, such as surveys, texts, or social media content, lies in our aim to truly understand the consumers' perceptions of influencer marketing in relation to perceived credibility and sustainability. In order to achieve this, we found that qualitative interviews were the most suitable method as the interviews allow for dialogue and conversations, which will enable us to explore and analyse their attitudes and beliefs more thoroughly compared to surveys, for instance, where we would not be able to ask any types of follow-up questions etc. (Liamputtong 2020; Brinkman 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009; Kvale 2007).

3.3.1. The Seven Stages of Interviewing

In qualitative research, in-depth interviews are one of the most widely employed methods to gather data. In order to gain an understanding of people and how they view their world, it is

important to talk with them (Liamputtong 2020, 53-54). By conducting in-depth interviews, we are able to, "[...] capture, in the participants' own words, their thoughts, perceptions, feelings and experiences." (Liamputtong 2020, 54). This is important to our research as we seek an understanding of the followers' perceptions regarding influencers' credibility and its influence on purchase intention. By interviewing, we gain information through the conversation we have with the interviewees, which we then use to construct knowledge about the interviewee's reality (Liamputtong 2020, 54). For this thesis, we employ semi-structured interviews as it allows for a useful framework where questions can be adapted throughout the interviewing process (Liamputtong 2020, 56).

Our interview method is based on Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann's seven stages of an interview investigation. The stages are thoroughly elaborated in the following sections and include 1) thematising, 2) designing, 3) interviewing, 4) transcribing, 5) analysing, 6) verifying, and 7) reporting (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 122-123). Kvale and Brinkmann have been chosen for this study as they provide a useful framework and guidelines for conducting qualitative interviews. In the sixth step, analysing, Nigel King's (n.d; Brooks & King 2014) Template Analysis will be incorporated.

First Stage: Thematising

In the initial stage of our interview investigation, we need to thematise our thesis by asking and answering the *why*, *what*, and *how* (Kvale 2007, 37).
These have been answered in the previous chapters of the thesis and are briefly recapped in the following. In the introduction, the why and the what of the thesis were introduced as we presented the research topic and the research question. Next, the what was elaborated by reviewing literature on the topics of interest: influencer marketing, source credibility, consumer behaviour, and sustainability. The section of our theoretical approach elaborates both the what and the how by presenting the aspects of source credibility that this thesis investigates as well as Fishbein and Ajzen's Reasoned Action Approach, which will be used to gain an understanding of purchase behaviour. Finally, this section on methodological considerations presents the how in greater detail (Kvale 2007, 37-38).

Second Stage: Designing

The second stage of our interview method is concerned with planning the design (Kvale 2007, 35). Interviewing is a knowledge-producing activity where we as researchers take part in the production through the interview. To explain this understanding, Kvale uses the metaphor of interviewers being travellers, in contrast to being mine workers. Viewing ourselves as travellers, we do not believe that our interviewees possess knowledge that we can discover. On the contrary, we believe that knowledge is constructed through our interactions with the interviewees (Kvale 2007, 19-20). This relates to our social constructionist approach to science, where we argue that we create knowledge and meaning together with our interviewees.

Additionally, this thesis takes a deductive approach where we investigate individual instances, i.e. how individual consumers' sustainable purchase intentions are affected by influencers' credibility. These instances are then analysed and used to discover tendencies among them (Brinkman 2013, 53-54). The deductive approach particularly influences this thesis as our interview questions have been created based on our theoretical approach. Therefore, we also expect to find themes closely related to our theoretical terms and concepts. This is further elaborated in the section concerning the Template Analysis. However, even though we greatly rely on a deductive approach, the inductive approach will also be present as we seek to be open-minded in terms of our data and allow for new themes and findings to occur throughout the process.

In terms of our interviewees, we have distinguished between selection and sampling. Selection refers to the overall decisions of who is in focus, and sampling regards the process of selecting the subset of the selected population (Brinkmann 2013, 57).

The first selection parameter important to this thesis regards UK consumers as this study aims to explore this particular market as it was found that there has been less research on this market despite the UK being one of the largest markets for influencer marketing in Europe (Shepherd 2022; Influencity n.d.; Statista 2018). The age-group 18-34-year-olds is another parameter as it has been found that this is the age group in the UK who are most influenced by influencers (Droesch 2020; Williams 2019), and young UK consumers show greater interest in sustainable consumerism (Petro 2021). Hence, it is relevant to gain more knowledge on this particular age group when advertising sustainable goods through

influencers. Finally, another important selection parameter concerns Instagram users following at least one influencer who has promoted a sustainable good on the platform, as this increases the likelihood of the interviewee having been exposed to an influencer marketing post involving sustainable products. As previously mentioned, Instagram is the platform of interest as it has been found that Instagram is the most important social media platform for young UK users (Statista 2022 b) as well as Instagram being the platform found most important for influencer marketing (Statista 2021 b).

Regarding sampling, we have used a purposive sampling method (Liamputtong 2020, 17). More specifically, we relied on criterion sampling, where our interviewees had to meet specific criteria crucial for the research (Liamputtong 2020, 20). These criteria are presented in the section above as selection parameters. In order for us to sample interviewees, we began searching for UK influencers who had promoted sustainable goods through a paid collaboration on Instagram. In this process, Banerjee, Gulas, and Iyer's (1995) three criteria for green advertising (cf. section 1.3.2) were taken into consideration. Three out of four influencers, Jim Chapman, Niomi Smart, and Finn Harries, were found based on personal knowledge. The fourth influencer, Yasmin Johal, was found by searching on Instagram using the keyword "Sustainable". The influencers have advertised for various brands and various types of products ranging from cars and TVs to running shoes and toilet paper (App. A). These products cover a fairly broad range of products, both in terms of how big and expensive a purchase is and in terms of usage. Therefore, we expect different reactions and purchase intentions to be articulated in the interviews, which will likely give a more nuanced understanding of how credibility influences intention. The influencers whose posts have been selected as examples vary in following size from 15,000 followers to 2.2 million followers. Two of the influencers, Finn and Yasmin, could be considered to focus greatly on sustainability and green living, whereas Jim and Niomi's posts, in general, are far less focused on sustainability and green living. It is therefore expected that the interviewees following Finn and Yasmin have a personal interest in sustainability while the interviewees following Jim and Niomi might not necessarily have an interest in sustainability. This may once again provide a more nuanced view of how influencers' credibility influences different individuals in terms of green advertising. The posts that have been identified, which included advertising for sustainable products, can be seen in Appendix A. These posts have further been used as examples when interviewing the participants where the interviewee was shown the posts from the influencer they follow. Once the influencers were identified, we started

reaching out to some of the young UK consumers following one of the influencers. This was done rather randomly from the influencer's list of followers. The followers were contacted through Instagram, where we sent a short message. The message included an introduction of who we are, information on how we found the person, a brief description of the purpose of contacting the person, and encouragement to contact us for any questions. If the person had not replied within a couple of days, we would send a follow-up message where we would kindly ask the person to let us know whether they wanted to participate. Through this process, we reached out to more than 250 individuals, among which 32 got back to us, and eight agreed to participate. However, three of these eight interviewees called off the interview later, resulting in five participants. We attempted to recruit new interviewees to replace the three that cancelled; however, none of the 50 people we contacted afterwards agreed to participate. Among our interviewees, four identify as female, and one identifies as male. In terms of age, the interviewees span from 19 years old to 29 years old. Geographically our five interviewees are spread throughout the UK, with four from England and one from Northern Ireland. The table below provides an overview of each individual interviewee.

Interviewee	Age	Gender	Location	Influencer
Interviewee 1	22	Female	London, England	Yasmin Johal
Interviewee 2	26	Male	Cornwall, England	Finn Harries
Interviewee 3	19	Female	Devon, England	Finn Harries
Interviewee 4	29	Female	Bristol, England	Niomi Smart
Interviewee 5	24	Female	Belfast, Northern Ireland	Jim Chapman, Finn Harries & Niomi Smart

Table 1: Overview of interviewees

We decided to conduct five interviews as this sample size allowed us to go into depth with each interview without having a too extensive amount of data that would require more resources to exploit it to its fullest. The five interviews are empirical examples that provide insight into how influencers' credibility influences young UK consumers' attitudes and sustainable purchase intentions. It is, though, important to note that the five interviews do not provide us with a generalisable understanding of young UK consumers; however, this has

never been the purpose of this research. As our interviewees are UK citizens, we needed to be aware of potential cultural elements and maybe even cultural barriers that may occur during the interview. The main factor we needed to be aware of is the potential language barrier as we are not native speakers of English, and our interviewees may speak in different dialects. However, as part of our education, we have practised the language for several years. Moreover, due to prior research, we are experienced in interviewing UK participants resulting in us being more comfortable interviewing in English. After conducting the interviews, it was found that neither culture nor language was a barrier when interviewing.

Third Stage: Interviewing

This next stage is concerned with many different aspects of the interviewing process, from making the interview guide to conducting the interview (Kvale 2007, 51). As previously stated, we have used semi-structured interviews as these seek to uncover the interviewees' descriptions and understandings of their life-world. The semi-structured interviews cover certain themes that are to be covered along with predefined suggested questions. Semi-structured interviews further have the advantage of a certain openness as questions may be changed throughout the interview in order to follow up on interesting answers and gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of specific aspects found to be important for the research. Hence, the interview questions in one interview may not be equivalent to those in another interview; however, the interviews still cover the same themes (Kvale 2007, 51).

Before developing the interview guide questions, we discussed whether we should present our research purpose rather directly and ask direct questions using the terminology related to credibility and the Reasoned Action Approach or whether we should present it more indirectly. We decided to rely on the more indirect approach as a too direct approach might, to a higher degree, influence how our participants would articulate their experiences and attitudes. As a result, the questions developed reflect a more everyday vocabulary, giving the interviewees a possibility of expressing their experiences and attitudes using their own language and vocabulary to a higher degree (Kvale 2007, 58).

Our initial interview guide containing the themes and predefined suggested questions can be seen below.

Themes	Questions	Follow-up
Background information	Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?	Age, occupation, interests
Overall influencer credibility	What makes an influencer credible in your opinion?	So that means that...
		So an influencer is credible when...
Overall influencer marketing	Is it important for you that an influencer is credible when they advertise for a sustainable product on Instagram?	If so, what can then do to make you perceive them as credible
		Why/why not?
	In your opinion, what is important when an influencer promotes a sustainable product on Instagram?	Why is it/is it not important?
	What is your reaction when coming across sponsored posts involving sustainable products?	Why do you think this is your reaction?
Specific influencer credibility	How long have you been following *influencer*?	
	Why do you follow *influencer*?	
	What comes to mind when you think about *influencer*?	Is that good or bad in your opinion?
	What do you specifically like about *influencer*?	Is there anything you dislike?
	Do you associate *influencer* with sustainability?	Why/why not?
Influencer marketing and credibility	What would your reaction be if *influencer* promoted a sustainable product?	Just to be clear, you believe a sustainable product is....
		When is a product sustainable in your opinion?
	Do you remember seeing this/these posts?	
	Do you remember what you thought when seeing it for the first time? / What are your initial thoughts on the post?	Do you think others would think the same way?
	What do you think about *influencer* posting about *the sustainable product*?	Do you think you would react the same way if you saw anyone else promote this product?
	Do you think it is appropriate for *influencer* to promote this product?	Why/ why not?
		So what you mean is...
	What do you think about *the sustainable product* now that you have seen these posts?	What makes you feel this way?
		Is this a sustainable product in your opinion?
		Do you think *influencer* is part of making you feel this way?

	Does *influencer's* promotion of the product make you want to buy the product?	What could make you consider buying the product?
	Do you think your perception about *influencer* influences your attitudes towards the product and your intentions to purchase it?	Why do you think you are/ are not influenced?
		If so, how?
	Do you have any final comments on influencers promoting sustainable products?	

Table 2: Initial interview guide

Our themes and questions have been developed deductively primarily based on our theoretical approach to credibility. The first half of the initial interview guide is focused on understanding our interviewees' views on credibility, sustainability, and influencer marketing as well as gaining insight into the interviewees' relations and opinions on the specific influencer they follow. The second half of the initial interview guide is related to the specific examples we show our interviewees, where we discuss their attitude toward the sustainable advertisements. However, it is important to note that the examples that we provide are not the main focus as we are not interested in analysing these four influencers' sustainable marketing, but they function as examples, also meaning that other influencers and examples might occur based on the interviewees' experiences. The examples are mainly included to provide the interviewees with a concrete example they can refer to when answering the questions. This has been decided as previous research of ours has demonstrated that it can be challenging for the participants to come up with examples themselves, which is why we decided to provide examples that would result in more specific and thoughtful answers.

After our initial interview guide was developed, we conducted a pilot interview to test whether an interviewee would understand our questions, whether we needed to cover additional themes, and whether our questions would provide us with answers that may help us answer our research question. Our pilot interviewee was a female Danish student studying at Copenhagen Business School. Even though all participants during the pilot interview could speak Danish, the interview was conducted in English as this gave a more accurate representation of how the actual interviews would proceed. A relevant aspect to have in mind is that the interviewee for the pilot interview does not have English as her native language, which could result in some vocabulary limitations. However, throughout the last three years, she has spoken English to a great extent in her personal life resulting in rather fluent English skills. The pilot interview went well, and we found many of the interviewee's answers useful

and meaningful. However, we did find that we lacked more specific questions related to our three credibility attributes and some general attitudes towards influencers and influencer marketing. Therefore, we created additional questions accommodating this. For example, this resulted in the question, "What are your initial thoughts when I say 'an influencer'?", which would provide us with some general attitudes towards influencers, and the follow-up question, "Is there enough information?" (App. B) which expectedly would provide us with insight into the attribute of expertise but without explicitly mentioning the word 'expertise' so our theoretical approach did not directly influence the interviewees. Our revised interview guide can be seen in Appendix B, and this was the interview guide used when conducting the interviews.

Before initiating the interviews, we made sure to retrieve signed consent forms from the interviewees. The consent form was created based on Aalborg University's guidelines, which included the purpose of the thesis, the interviewee's rights, how we process and store the data, and our student emails so the interviewees could contact us. One of the main points in the consent form concerned the participants' anonymity, meaning that their names will not be part of the study. This helped ensure a safe space for the interviewees where they could safely express their attitudes. Furthermore, in our emails to the interviewees containing the consent forms, we encouraged them to contact us if they had any questions concerning the content of the consent form. The template for the consent form can be seen in Appendix C.

Conducting the interview

The following sections will go into depth with how we conducted the interviews.

In terms of the practicalities of interviewing, it was chosen to use computer-aided interviews due to the geographical distance between the interviewees and us as well as the widespread locations of our interviewees across the UK (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 168-169). As for the type of computer-aided interview, we have relied on videoconferencing. Based on the age of our interviewees and their presence on social media, we evaluated that the use of videoconferencing would not be a barrier for our interviewees. Additionally, the COVID pandemic has, to a great extent, familiarised people with and normalised the use of online meeting platforms (Taneja, Mizen, Bloom 2022). A disadvantage of using online videoconferencing is the risk of a bad connection, possibly making the video and the audio lag or, in the worst case, inaudible. Zoom was the platform used to conduct the interviews as

we, through the university, have a licence to the platform. Moreover, the platform is widely used across the UK, possibly making it more familiar to our interviewees (Weston 2020). Finally, Zoom is one of the platforms that allow for recording meetings, and the platform further provides transparency by showing all participants that the meeting is being recorded. In general, videoconferencing did not cause problems besides one instance where an interviewee moved to another room during the interview, which caused a momentarily bad connection.

The interviews were initiated with a short briefing where we introduced ourselves properly. Both of us were present during the interview; however, only one of us acted as the primary interviewer while the other was mostly observing with the possibility of asking additional follow-up questions if she noticed an interesting aspect the primary interviewer did not follow up on. It was important for both of us to participate in the interviews, as it can be argued that the interpretation of the data already started while conducting the interview. The briefing further included a short presentation of the study's purpose. Hereafter, we confirmed the interviewees' consent to record the interview for transcriptive purposes and asked whether the participants had any questions before initiating the actual interview (Kvale 2007, 55). During the briefing, it was important for us to quickly make the situation pleasant for the interviewee and come off as attentive, understanding, interested, and respectful. This was important as the interviewee should feel comfortable freely sharing their experiences and thoughts (Kvale 2007, 55).

After briefing the interviewee and establishing a trusting relationship, we continued to the actual interview relying on the interview guide. The interview guide contained introductory questions, e.g. "Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?", direct questions, e.g. "Do you remember seeing this/these posts?", and structuring questions, e.g. "Let's now talk about *influencer*: how long have you been following *influencer*?" (App. B) (Kvale 2007, 60-62). Besides the scripted interview questions from the interview guide, other types of questions were asked as second questions during the interviews. These include follow-up questions, e.g. "Yeah" (App. D, 31, l. 9), probing questions, e.g. "You slightly discussed this already but could you try to elaborate?" (App. D, 6, l. 11), interpreting questions, e.g. "Okay, so there's a sense of loyalty towards her?" (App. D, 15, l. 4), and silence.

During the interview, we expressed interest in what the interviewee said by nodding, smiling, and using affirming expressions such as 'uh-huh'. During the interview, we were aware of

altering predefined questions to match the individual interviewee's vocabulary, perception and understanding to make sure the interviewee understood the questions asked.

Similarly to briefing the interviewees before initiating the interviews, we ended the interview with a short debriefing to ensure our participants left the interviews feeling comfortable. This was important as the interviewees had shared a lot about themselves by exposing their thoughts and attitudes. The debriefing consisted of us thanking them again for their willingness to participate, asking whether they had any final questions about the interview, and telling them that they at any time can contact us if any questions arise. Only when the interviewee had no further questions the interview would come to an end (Kvale 2007, 55-56).

Interview quality

An important aspect to keep in mind when conducting the interview is the quality of the interview (Kvale 2007, 80). During the interviews, we attempted to ask short, concise and specific questions that enabled the interviewees to provide in-depth answers. We further attempted to verify our interpretations of the answers by asking interpreting questions throughout the interviews (Kvale 2007, 80).

Another important factor influencing the quality of the interviews regards the qualifications of the interviewer, as she possesses an important role that involves making on-the-spot decisions regarding the questions to be asked (Kvale 2007, 81). The selected interviewer for this research has previous experience from interviewing in a research context. Besides being experienced in the method, it was considered important that the interviewer was knowledgeable within the area of interest. Both researchers have obtained this knowledge through reviewing relevant literature and gaining a thorough understanding of the theoretical approach of the thesis. The interviewer made sure to be structured by keeping the interview guide in front of her during the interviews, which further assisted in guiding the course of the interview. The interviewer was aware of being gentle, sensitive, and open during the interview as well as being attentive in order to ask interpretive questions which could be confirmed or disconfirmed by the interviewee (Kvale 2007, 81-82).

Another aspect influencing the quality of the interviews is the quality of the interviewees. The participants for our interviews were motivated and cooperative, which is demonstrated by their willingness to participate in the interview voluntarily, find a suitable date, and sign

the consent form. Several of the interviewees were interested in our research and expressed interest in the study. The interviewees were able to stay on topic and give thoughtful and detailed answers (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 187).

A final comment in relation to the interview quality is the use of leading questions. Brinkmann (2013) argues that all questions, to some degree, are leading as we are leading our interviewees in the desired direction in terms of our research purpose, also meaning that all of our questions have been leading to a certain point. We are aware that we are influencing the interviewees with our questions, but this has also been necessary to gain precise and relevant answers.

Fourth Stage: Transcribing

The fourth stage, transcribing, concerns preparing the collected data for the analysis; however, we argue that a part of the analysis already starts during the interview. There have been several aspects to be aware of when translating oral language into written language (Kvale 2007, 92-93).

When recording the interviews, both audio and visuals were recorded using Zoom's video recording function; however, audio might have been sufficient. Although, by recording visuals, lip-reading could assist us in situations where it was difficult to distinguish between two words. In general, the recordings were audible, with only a few passages and words being inaudible.

Through the process of transcribing, body language was lost. However, this thesis does not seek to analyse and interpret the interpersonal interactions between interviewer and interviewee, meaning that the loss of body language is not considered critical for our analysis.

We chose to rely on the verbatim oral style of transcribing as we wished to maintain as much context and authenticity in our transcripts as possible. This entails that the transcripts include elements such as laughter, "hmm-mmh's", and "uhm" (Kvale 2007, 95) to better demonstrate the interviewees' emotions. We believe that this method of transcribing ensures the most validity compared to translating to formal written style as verbatim style can, to some degree, preserve the context in which something is said, e.g. if the interviewee is hesitant or unsure. When the interviewee paused and needed time to think before answering or continuing the sentence, the pause is transcribed as "...".

Even though we have transcribed the interviews separately, we have both overlooked all transcriptions and verified that the style of transcription was fairly identical. Additionally, we have helped each other in situations where the other had difficulties hearing the audio.

Only once the thesis has been completed the recordings were deleted. It could have been chosen to delete the recordings after completing the transcripts; however, for safety reasons, the transcripts were first deleted once it was certain they would no longer be of use. All transcripts can be seen in Appendix D. Note that the transcripts contain our codes.

Fifth Stage: Analysing

Template Analysis

In order to manage and analyse the raw data from our interviews, we need a qualitative coding method. For this thesis, we apply Nigel King's approach to coding by means of his Template Analysis, which is a specific method of thematically analysing qualitative data (King n.d.; Brooks & King 2014, 4). This coding method is especially suitable for this thesis as we are interested in researching and understanding the content of our interviewees' attitudes and beliefs rather than the role of language (Brooks & King 2014, 5); however, we acknowledge that their attitudes and beliefs are expressed through language. This also means that the template analysis does not seek to code each word or line in the transcripts but rather to seek an understanding of the meaning and content as a whole. King and Brooks argue that the template analysis is particularly well-suited for researchers concerned with human action and human phenomena, which matches this thesis' research purpose (Brooks & King 2014, 5). Moreover, they also argue that this coding method can be used by researchers taking a constructivist approach where it is believed that several interpretations and realities exist and that these interpretations and realities are influenced and shaped by the social world (Brooks & King 2014, 5; King n.d.). This matches our view on research and how we approach and conduct our interviews as we do not seek to find one truth or one certain reality but, on the other hand, seek to explore and understand all of our interviewees' different values, attitudes, and beliefs. Finally, the template analysis has been chosen for this thesis, as it is argued that it is a useful tool for analysing and working with text and allows researchers to gain insight into the specific research topics (King, Brooks & Tabari 2018, 200).

Hence, the template analysis will work well with our theoretical approach as it will allow us to analyse and explore the content of our interviews in relation to our interviewees' thoughts and beliefs on influencer marketing and sustainable products promoted on Instagram.

The following section accounts for King's methodological approach to the template analysis as well as explanations and examples of how we have used the template analysis to analyse our data. Briefly, King proposes the following steps when coding with the template analysis: 1) Familiarisation with the data, 2) Preliminary coding 3), Clustering 4), Developing the initial template 5), Modifying the template 6), Defining the 'final' template 7), Using the template to interpret the data (King, Brooks & Tabari 2017, 201-203). With the overall coding method outlined, the following section elaborates on the different steps.

According to King, the purpose of conducting a template analysis is to develop a coding "template", where we summarise important and relevant themes and patterns followed by organising them in a meaningful manner. A coding analysis often begins with a priori codes, which are codes that identify themes that are strongly expected and related to the analysis (King n.d.). For example, as we have created our interview questions based on our theoretical understanding of credibility, we expected to find themes related to the various credibility attributes and attitudes toward influencers and influencer marketing. This is a deductive approach, but the template analysis also allows for elements of the inductive approach as the a priori codes will need revising and consideration, allowing for the inductive and open approach to influence the research.

Before initiating our actual coding process, we formulated the following a priori themes with the attached codes. Our themes are structured based on the attributes of credibility and the RAA's schematic structure, which is why the theme Background factors includes more aspects compared to what normally is associated with background factors.

Theme	Code

Background Factor	- Age
	- Occupation
	- Location
	- Education
	- Interests/hobbies
	- General attitude toward influencers
	  - Positive
	  - Negative

	- General attitude toward influencer marketing - General attitude toward sustainability

Influencer Credibility	- Credibility is important
	- Credibility is less important
	- Trustworthiness
	    - Dependable
	    - Believable
	    - Honest
	    - Reliable
	    - Sincere
	    - Trustworthy
	    - Integrity
	- Expertise
	    - Knowledgeable
	    - Expert
	    - Experienced
	    - Qualified
	    - Skilled
	    - Authoritativeness
	    - Intelligence
	- Attractiveness
	    - Similarity
	    - Respect
	    - Attractive
	    - Personality properties
	    - Intellectual skills
	    - Lifestyle characteristics
	    - Classy
	    - Beautiful
	    - Elegant
	    - Sexy

Behavioural Belief	
Normative Belief	
Control Belief	
Intention to purchase sustainable product	- Interest in product

	- Interest in brand	
	- Interest in influencer	
Behaviour	- Has bought sustainable products	
	- Has bought sustainable product because of influencer	

Table 3: Priori themes and codes

First, we included the theme Background Factor as this is a major part of Fishbein and Ajzen's RAA as well as being important in relation to understanding our interviewees as individuals where their own background influences their understanding of the world. Several of our interview questions, e.g. "What are your initial thoughts when I say 'an influencer'?" (App. B), are expected to provide us with useful background information about our interviewees, which we will be able to draw on throughout the analysis. Drawing on the example above, we also formulated the a priori code "General attitude toward influencers" with the additional options of labelling the code as either a negative or positive attitude. Second, we imagined that we would be able to form themes based on whether our interviewees found influencers' credibility to be important or not. Naturally, we do not expect the answers to be that concrete as to whether or not it was important or unimportant, but the themes could demonstrate different perspectives on the importance of perceived credibility. Within the theme of Influencer Credibility, we believe that Ohanian's three credibility attributes would be visible from our data in the form of codes. As also discussed in section 2.1.1, the concept of credibility is perceptual and contextual, so we included the related characteristics to each attribute. However, we expect to find additional and different words used to describe credibility due to its perceptual nature, which is why we expect each interviewee to use different words to describe influencer credibility. As we are coding from a deductive perspective, we included the RAA's three beliefs; behavioural, normative, and control beliefs. However, we do not expect these three themes to be dominating in our data compared to our Influencer Credibility theme. Nevertheless, we include the three themes as we are using the RAA to understand certain intentions and behaviours. We also expected to discover some themes related to purchasing intentions based on the influencers' promotions of the sustainable products, as this is an essential part of Fishbein and Ajzen's theory, but also because a potential purchase intention would be a very direct and specific reaction to the influencers' promotion and an indication of the promotion being successful or not. Within

this theme, we included three codes consisting of an interest in the product, brand, and influencer as we expect these three codes to be able to have an impact on the interviewees' purchase intentions, both positively and negatively. For example, the interviewee might not particularly like the influencer but may be intrigued by the product the influencer is promoting. Similarly, the interviewee may not like the promoted brand but might like the influencer, which may influence the purchase intention positively. Finally, we included the theme Behaviour as we expect to discover elements of our interviewee's actual behaviour throughout the interviews. Within this theme, we have included the code regarding having bought a sustainable product regardless of influencer marketing and another code concerning having bought a sustainable product because of influencer marketing.

Concerning the step "familiarisation with the data", we argue that we are familiarising ourselves with the data during the interviews and transcriptions. However, following the interviews and transcription processes, we also read through the transcripts where we already began highlighting certain pieces of data we believed to be relevant. After having conducted and transcribed the interviews, the preliminary coding process begins. This is the very initial step where anything interesting and relevant in the data is highlighted (Brooks & King 2014, 6). For example, during the transcription of Interviewee 1, the following piece of text stood out, "Obviously, I like to be sustainable but I'm not always in the position to research and to find all of these things." (App. D, 6, ll. 12-13), and it was noted that this statement could be related to Fishbein and Ajzen's control beliefs. Another example of our preliminary coding is demonstrated by Interviewee 5's statement, "The word credibility? That someone is, like, trustworthy." (App. D, 65, l. 1), where we coded this section "Credibility = being trustworthy". Note that our preliminary codes were deleted when the initial coding started, hence, not being visible in our appendixes.

With the preliminary coding process completed, we started to cluster and group the codes and our a priori themes. In this step, we began defining main themes and codes embedded within these (King, Brooks & Tabaria 2017, 202). This was an ongoing process and can even be seen in our a priori themes where we grouped codes within the Influencer Credibility theme, for example. Again, because of our deductive approach, many of our codes within the themes concern the theoretical concepts and terms. The process continued in the initial coding process, which is further explained below.

Subsequently, the initial coding starts (King n.d.; Brooks & King 2014, 7; King, Brooks & Tabari 2017, 202). The template analysis uses hierarchical coding, meaning that more specific codes are embedded in wider themes. The template analysis is rather flexible in terms of the amount of coding levels, and the method focuses more on encouraging coding relevant and rich pieces of data (King, Brooks & Tabari 2018, 200). When conducting the initial coding, an initial coding template is defined where the relationship between the different themes or codes is represented (Brooks & King 2014, 7). Our initial template was created after conducting preliminary coding on two transcripts. Based on the two transcripts, we had the necessary understanding needed to initiate our initial template (Brooks & King, 2014, 7). The initial template can be seen below.

Theme	Code

Background factor	- Age
	- Occupation
	- Location
	- Education
	- Past experiences
	- Interests/hobbies
	- General attitude towards influencers
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	- General attitude toward influencer marketing
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	- General attitude toward sustainability
	    - Positive
	    - Negative

Influencer Credibility	- Credibility is important
	- Credibility is less important
	- Credibility when advertising
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	- Credibility when advertising sustainable products
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	- Influencers are credible

	- Influencers are not credible
	- Trustworthiness
	    - Dependable
	    - Believable
	    - Genuine
	    - Honest
	    - Reliable
	    - Sincere
	    - Trustworthy
	    - Integrity
	- Expertise
	    - Knowledgeable
	    - Expert
	    - Experienced
	    - Qualified
	    - Skilled
	    - Authoritativeness
	    - Intelligence
	- Attractiveness
	    - Aesthetics
	    - Similarity
	    - Respect
	    - Attractive
	    - Personality properties
	    - Intellectual skills
	    - Lifestyle characteristics
	    - Classy
	    - Beautiful
	    - Elegant
	    - Sexy

Attitude	- Influencer
	    - Sustainable
	    - Not Sustainable
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	- Sustainable promotion
	    - Positive
	    - Negative

	- Influencer Marketing
	    - Positive
	    - Negative
	    - Sustainable promotion
	        - Positive
	        - Negative

Behavioural belief	- Positive - Negative
Normative belief	
Control belief	

Intention to purchase sustainable product	- Interest in product
	- No interest in product
	- Interest in brand
	- Interest in influencer
	- Influencer influences intention
	    - Yes
	    - No

Intention to purchase product	- Interest in product
	- Influencer influences intention
	    - Yes
	    - No

Behaviour	- Sustainable behaviour - Has bought sustainable products - Has bought product because of influencer - Has bought sustainable product because of influencer

Table 4: Initial template

Next, we modified the template (King, Brooks & Tabari 2017, 202). In this stage, we continued coding our data as well as recoding where needed. Brooks and King refer to this process as the iterative process, where the template is being tested and modified (Brooks & King 2014, 8). This process might result in new themes, deleting previous themes, and/or redefining themes and clusters (King, Brooks & Tambari 2017, 202). Our initial template was modified through several rounds and reviews as new themes and codes continued to be found

as well as finding new ways to label these codes. We found two inductive themes, Attitude and Intention to purchase product, and several new codes. The inductive theme, Attitude, is not directly connected to the concept of credibility or the RAA but concerns the other essential elements of this thesis, that is, the attitudes toward influencers, influencer marketing, and sustainability. These codes are especially used when our interviewees would express some type of attitude related to one of the three codes but without it being directly connected to credibility or background factors in relation to the general attitudes, which would be more general attitudes to the concepts. The differentiation between the theme Background Factor with the three attitudes toward influencer, influencer marketing, and sustainability and the theme Attitude with the codes influencer, influencer marketing, and sustainable promotion might seem very similar; however, the two themes do hold different meanings. For example, the code' general attitude toward influencer' would contain the interviewees' overall and general opinion of influencers, such as, "My initial thoughts would be somebody who has a large following on social media [...]" (App. D, 49, l. 8). Whereas the code influencer within the theme Attitude could be concerning a rather specific attitude toward a specific influencer, for example, "I think she has a positive mindset but also I suppose just constantly trying new things [...]" (App. D, 53, l. 18). The differentiation was, at times, difficult to make as it could be challenging to separate certain meanings as many of the concepts and elements are intertwined and related. However, we found the differentiation necessary to demonstrate how perceptual and contextual this topic is. The inductive theme Intention to purchase product was included based on the interviewees' own examples and past experiences with influencer marketing.

A final modification to the template is our use of the labels positive and negative. These are used to determine some type of attitude toward the theme and code in question, but the labels positive and negative are not to be understood as "either-or" as it fluctuates, and there may be different degrees of the two labels. The labels have been made to gain an overall understanding of the attitudes and opinions expressed in the given context, and the analysis will provide a much more nuanced approach to the positive and negative attitudes. An example of a piece of text being labelled positive is Interviewee 5 saying, "[...] so if they have more micro companies or small businesses it is a lot more sustainable in my eyes." (App. D, 4, ll. 20-21), which we coded 'Credibility when advertising sustainable products - Positive'. Thus, we interpreted that Interviewee 5 had a positive attitude toward the sustainable promotion due to her stating which aspects would be sustainable in her eyes.

Though, this is our interpretation of the interviewees' statements, meaning that other researchers may interpret it differently.

The sixth step, "defining the "final" template", concerns the goal of recognising that the template is good enough. However, "final" has been surrounded with quotation marks as the template may never be completely final, and it will always be possible to modify or refine the template (King, Brooks & Tabari 2017, 202). After applying the initial template to all five transcripts, it was found that some codes from the initial template were not applied to the transcripts. These codes have been removed from the final template. An example of a code from the initial template that has been removed from the final template is the code belonging to the theme Background Factor 'General attitude toward sustainability - Negative'. The final template can be seen in Appendix E. Table 5 below illustrates how the final template is structured.

Theme	Code	Interviewee	Page & line no.

Table 5: Illustration of final template

Finally, the seventh step, "using the template", can proceed and is a part of our analysis, where we present our findings from our coding process. The themes will be presented, interpreted, and analysed based on our interviewee's answers and our theoretical framework.

With the coding method and our application of the method accounted for, we found that the template analysis entailed certain challenges. At the beginning of the section, we argued that the template analysis provided a very flexible coding method which allowed us to adapt the coding method to our specific research. However, at times we also found it challenging that King did not offer more specific guidelines. This resulted in many and various modifications during and after finishing our template analysis, which the different examples throughout the sections also demonstrate.

Sixth Stage: Verification

In terms of verification of the interviews and research, it is relevant to briefly discuss the concepts of reliability, validity, and generalisation (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 270; Kvale 2007, 120).

Concerning the reliability of our findings, we argue that our interviewees' answers are trustworthy and, to a large degree, consistent. We perceive our data to be trustworthy as we believe that our interviewees are answering truthfully and are providing us with their truth and their perception of the social world, which we, as social constructivists, believe to be reality. However, we are also aware that their current attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions are influenced by context, which also implies that their attitudes are subject to change as their context and reality might change over time. Nonetheless, we do not expect our interviewees to drastically change their attitudes any time soon, meaning that we would expect them to provide similar answers at a later time. In regard to validity, we cannot validate our data and findings, but we can validate our research by providing a thorough account of our methodological consideration and approach. Finally, we would like to briefly comment on the generalisation of our findings, i.e. whether our thesis' design and findings can be transferred to other similar situations (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 287; Kvale 2007, 126). Due to our qualitative approach and very case-specific approach, we argue that our findings cannot be generalised, nor has this been the purpose of this thesis.

Seventh Stage: Reporting

The final step of the interview guide deals with reporting (Brinkmann 2013, 67). All the different stages of the interview investigation are reported throughout this thesis. As previously mentioned, thematising was presented through the introduction, research question, literature reviews, and theoretical framework. Designing, interviewing, and transcribing have been presented in these sections concerning our methodological considerations. This has also included methodological considerations regarding our analysis. Next, the analysis and verification are presented in the following chapter regarding analysis and discussion. Finally, the results found from analysing are presented in the conclusion.

4. Analysis

The following sections present our findings from the Template Analysis in relation to our theoretical framework of credibility and the RAA. The analysis is structured based on the themes, followed by a synthesis that sums up the findings based on each interviewee.

4.1. Background Factors

When developing themes for our template analysis, the first theme created was Background Factors. This theme was created due to different reasons; first, in relation to our social constructionist approach, it is important to gain an overall understanding of the interviewees as different factors may influence their reality, and second, Fishbein and Ajzen argue that background factors can be associated with performing a given behaviour. Thus, background factors are important to consider when moving forward with the analysis as these may influence how the interviewees are influenced by influencers' credibility in regard to purchasing sustainable products and which attitudes are formed based on the background factors.

Within the theme Background Factors, several different codes were created, such as 'Age', 'Occupation', 'Interest/Hobbies', and several variations of general attitudes toward specific concepts. Codes from this theme were present throughout all five interviews, with some codes appearing only in some interviews while other codes were present in all interviews. In Appendix E, all codes can be seen, as well as it can be seen which codes appeared in which interviews.

In order to gain an overall background understanding of the five interviewees, the following sections present an account of the interviewees with respect to codes from the theme Background Factor. This analysis will be useful throughout the remaining analysis as it will enable us to relate findings to these background factors.

Interviewee 1

Interviewee 1 is a busy 22-year-old woman who lives in London, where she studies at university. Besides studying, she works in customer care at a company which connects care homes and people. When talking about her interests, Interviewee 1 mentioned her love for

travelling and visiting different places as well as her big interest in vegan food which is evident from her having a vegan food Instagram account (App. D, 1, ll. 14-15). Her vegan lifestyle is possibly a result of her general positive attitude toward sustainability. When talking about sustainable products, she mentions that it is, "Something that is working towards being eco-friendly, good for the planet, and just an ethical company." (App. D, 3, ll. 8-9). The words 'good' and 'ethical' entails her positive attitude toward the concept. Her positive attitude toward sustainability most likely influences her behaviour. An example of this can be seen when she says that she would buy an electric car because she thinks, "[...] that is the way to go sustainability-wise." (App. D, l. 2-3). When asked about her initial thoughts on the term 'influencer', she mentioned that she views an influencer as being, "Someone who you trust and who can persuade you to maybe purchase an item." (App. D, 1, l. 23), which demonstrates that she immediately connects influencers with influencer marketing. She further expresses a positive attitude toward influencer marketing (App. D, 3, l. 2) and argues that influencers can have a loyal audience that trusts the influencer as the followers see the influencer every day (App. D, 2, ll. 25-27). Finally, she has had a good previous experience with purchasing a product recommended by an influencer, which can have a positive influence on her future behaviour (App. D, 14, ll. 4-5).

Interviewee 2

Our male participant, Interviewee 2, is 26 years old and lives in Cornwall in the Southwest of the UK. He finished his film course five years ago and is now running his own small film production company (App. D, 17, l. 4), where he, among others, has worked with the Eden Project (App. D, 23, ll. 17-21), which is an enterprise focused on protecting the planet (Eden Project n.d.). Interviewee 2 claims to be a strong supporter of sustainability as he argues that sustainability should not be a question or an option but rather the standard (App. D, 20, ll. 7-8). He further claims that sustainability, "[...] is just the way that the world has to go." (App. D, 20, ll. 16-17). This strong positive general attitude toward sustainability is likely to impact his purchase behaviour and attitude toward the products advertised by influencers on Instagram. When asked about his initial thoughts on influencers, Interviewee 2 said that his initial thoughts were, "[...] pretty negative, to be honest." (App. D, 17, l. 8) and that he does not like when people call themselves influencers and merely post selfies. His negative association with the word 'influencer' stretches to such an extent that he avoids using it as he is afraid to offend someone by calling them that. He argues that the negative association

comes from relating influencers to self-promotion rather than helping others (App. D, 17, l. 11). Finally, in terms of influencer marketing, Interviewee 2 has a general positive attitude toward it, "[...] as long as the people that you [the advertised brand] choose to work with are the right types of influencers" (App. D, 19, ll. 8-9) and the advertised brand does not simply use influencer marketing for reach and does not reinforce social media stereotypes (App. D, 19, ll. 10-14).

Interviewee 3

Our youngest participant, Interviewee 3, is a 19-year-old woman who lives in the countryside in the Southwest of the UK, where she studies floristry and animal care. She likes to read and is in that connection involved with her local libraries (App. D, 33, l. 9). When asked about influencers, her initial association was, "people who get lots of deals or money for promoting fast fashion." (App. D, 33, l. 14), and in relation to this, she says that, "[...] you always have adverts popping up with people promoting brands and uhm it's always there on your phone even when you don't want it there. You can't really look away" (App. D, 33, ll. 17-19). Based on these two statements, it is difficult to determine whether she is fond of influencers and influencer marketing or not. However, later in the interview, she expresses a more explicit general negative attitude toward influencer marketing as she argues that influencer marketing often is clickbait and fake deals. Though, she acknowledges that influencer marketing is good for the advertised brand (App. D, 37, ll. 9-10). When coding the interview, it was found that Interviewee 3 has a general positive attitude toward sustainability and sustainable products. She thinks that, "[...] one should make [sustainable] changes where they can." (App. D, 47, l. 8) and that, "You can't fix the world. You can only really do your bit." (App. D, 43, l. 7). Her general attitude toward sustainability can explain her negative general attitude toward influencers since she associates them with promoting fast fashion, which is regarded as a non-sustainable fashion production (Rauturier 2022).

Interviewee 4

Bristol-based Interviewee 4 is a 29-year-old woman who works as a nurse. She is interested in style and, therefore, follows influencers in that niche as well as beauty-related influencers (App. D, 49, ll. 5-6). She uses several social media sites and, "[...] tend to follow some influencers, not a huge amount [...]" (App. D, 49, ll. 4-5). She views influencers as someone with many followers who promote products to their followers (App. D, 49, ll. 8-9). In

general, she believes influencer marketing can be effective; however, not if the influencer is promoting many various brands (App. D, 50, ll. 19-21; 53, ll. 8-10) as, "[...] it doesn't look good on them and it doesn't look good on the brand." (App. D, 50, ll. 20-21). Regarding Interviewee 4's general attitude toward sustainability, she believes that, "[...] it's a way people have to try to live by and buy sustainable products." (App. D, 51, l. 2). She further acknowledges that she is not the 'perfect' sustainable consumer, but she is mindful of trying to be more sustainable (App. D, 51, ll. 3-4).

Interviewee 5

Our final participant, Interviewee 5, lives in Northern Ireland and is 24 years old. Some of her interests include reading and watching movies. She has a science degree but is no longer in the science industry and is currently working for several different organisations where she works with their social media content. Furthermore, Interviewee 5 has previously worked as an influencer herself (App. D, 64, l. 11) which, to some degree, influences her behaviour, e.g. "I think coming from me being in that world as well it's nice to support smaller creators as well as, like, the big ones." (App. D, 66, ll. 19-20). Having worked in the industry herself, her general attitude toward influencers and influencer marketing is, not surprisingly, positive (App. D, 64, ll. 15-17; 66, l. 10). She, however, expresses an ambivalent attitude toward the term 'influencer' as she believes that everybody can influence (App. D, 64, l. 12). Though she argues that influencers should be viewed in a positive light as, "[...] people have followed them because they appreciate them and do actually care for their input." (App. D, 64, ll. 16-17). Interviewee 5 is aware that she does not know the influencers she follows, but she knows of them and, thereby, knows general things about them (App. D, 66, ll. 3-4). Finally, in relation to her general attitude toward sustainability, she expresses an overall positive attitude, although she acknowledges that she is not living fully sustainable, "So I'm a big fan of sustainable products. So I, like, I try to use as many sustainable products as possible. I'm not always great at it." (App. D, 67, ll. 3-4).

The theme Background Factors has provided an overall understanding of the interviewees, including demographics and general attitudes toward influencers, influencer marketing, and sustainability. Two of the interviewees, Interviewee 2 and 3, expressed a negative general attitude toward influencers or influencer marketing, while the remaining interviewees had

more positive attitudes; Interviewee 5 even worked as an influencer herself. All interviewees expressed a positive general attitude toward sustainability and sustainable products, which relates well to the finding that young consumers are interested in purchasing sustainable and eco-friendly products (Gelski 2019; Tighe 2022; Van Gelder 2021). By providing an overall understanding of the interviewees, we are able to draw on these findings when trying to explain and understand the remaining statements made by each interviewee.

4.2. Attitude

This theme revolves around our interviewees' attitudes toward certain influencers, sustainable promotions, and more specific examples of influencer marketing. As mentioned in section 3.3.1., this theme is an inductive theme which contains codes used when our interviewees would express an attitude which is not directly connected with credibility or aspects directly related to the RAA. Moreover, the codes in this theme are not the interviewees' general attitudes, which are to be found in the theme Background Factors, but rather more specific attitudes, e.g. toward a specific influencer or a specific promotion.

4.2.1. Influencer

As part of the theme Attitude, we created the two codes 'Influencer - Sustainable' and 'Influencer - Not Sustainable'. These two codes are relevant to explore as they can influence how the interviewees perceive the promotions revolving around sustainable products. Therefore, it is essential to explore whether the interviewees perceive the influencers as being sustainable and if it matters whether or not they are. First, we explore the interviewees who find the influencers to be sustainable.

Interviewee 1, 3, and 5 expressed that they perceived the influencers promoting the sustainable products to also have a sustainable character. For instance, Interviewee 1 initially followed Yasmin because she was vegan and because the influencer promotes smaller companies, which in Interviewee 1's eyes is a sustainable initiative (App. D, 7, ll. 20-23). Because Interviewee 1 views Yasmin as being a sustainable influencer, she automatically trusts Yasmin's promotions, meaning that Interviewee 1, first of all, expects the influencer to promote sustainable products. Second, Interviewee 1 does not necessarily expect Yasmin to very explicitly label the promotion or products as being sustainable because Interviewee 1 would automatically expect the promotion to be sustainable (App. D, 16, ll. 1-2). This

demonstrates that Interviewee 1 has placed a lot of trust and some sort of expertise in Yasmin because of her sustainable persona.

Interviewee 3 has a very similar attitude toward Finn Harries, and her first reaction when Finn was mentioned in the interview was, "He's the guy who does climate activism, right?" (App. D, 40, l. 6), indicating that Interviewee 3 would expect Finn to promote sustainable products because of his persona (App. D, 41, l. 17). In relation to Finn Harries, Interviewee 5 also associates him with sustainability partly due to his education and prior occupation (App. D, 80, ll. 4-7; 81, l. 23). As it will be discussed in section 4.3.2. concerning expertise, Interviewee 5 highly relies on her perception of expertise, which helps explain why she finds Finn particularly sustainable as his studies relate to sustainability, and he has some expertise in the field. Interviewee 5 also finds Niomi Smart sustainable but does not elaborate further besides her believing Niomi's sustainable promotion is, "[...] fitting in with her vibe of like health lifestyle while promoting the sustainable, like sustainable jumpsuit. I think it's also very fitting with her brand, I would say." (App. D, 76, ll. 21-22). This indicates that Interviewee 5 does not have the same expectations of Niomi as she has of Finn because Niomi's persona is not solely focused on sustainability but is just an aspect of her overall brand. When asked why Interviewee 5 finds Niomi's promotion credible, it is not due to the sustainable aspect or any expertise-related attributes but because, "She seems very interested in the product." (App. D, 77, l. 3).

In terms of the interviewees not viewing the influencers as sustainable, Interviewee 2, 4, and 5 have expressed this aspect. Interviewee 5 also found some influencers to be sustainable, but Interviewee 2 and 4 did not find the discussed influencers to be associated with sustainability. When commenting on influencers not being sustainable, Interviewee 2 said that, "[...] if they have done nothing their whole lives and they've never stood up for that type of… sort of stood up for the environment, or stood up for changing people to have better habits [...]" (App. D, 20, ll. 25-27), which is not specific to a particular influencer but his opinion on influencers and what would make him think influencers are not sustainable, and hence, not credible. In relation to Finn Harries, Interviewee 2 used to perceive him as being very focused on sustainability, which is why he initially followed him on Instagram. However, it does not seem that Interviewee 2 still believes this, as he would, "[...] be really angry if I saw him posting a [sustainable] product because that is not…. He's spent years building up to the stage where the idea… the idea is that he's trying to sell based towards education and if I then

see that he's now making money from that… when that's not really the whole point of it."
(App. D, 24, ll. 1-4), indicating that Interviewee 2's attitude toward Finn and his sustainable
persona has changed due to the factor of influencer marketing. This is very different from the
other attitudes toward Finn from Interviewee 3 and 5, who very much associate him with
sustainability and finds him credible because of it. Because Interviewee 2 does not positively
associate Finn with sustainability, Finn's promotions involving sustainable products will
appear less credible in the eyes of Interviewee 2 as there is a conflict in terms of the
sustainable aspect and Finn profiting from it.

Interviewee 4 did not articulate many statements concerned with whether or not the
influencer, Niomi Smart, was sustainable or not, but she did once clearly state that she did not
associate Niomi with sustainability (App. D, 54, ll. 3-4) despite her sustainable promotions.
Interviewee 4 further elaborates her view on Niomi not being sustainable due to a
collaboration with a homeware brand which Interviewee 4 does not associate with
sustainability, indicating that Interviewee 4 does not find Niomi credible anymore because
she entered a collaboration with a non-sustainable brand (App. D, 54, ll. 6-8). Finally,
Interviewee 5, who found Finn and, to an extent, Niomi to be sustainable, does not associate
Jim Chapman with sustainability (App. D, 70, l. 15) as she believes that, "[...] he just
mentioned it as a passing point." (App. D, 82, l. 14). This is closely related to what will be
discussed in section 4.3.2. concerning expertise and using sustainability as a buzzword which
several interviewees found not to be credible. However, even though Interviewee 5 does not
associate Jim with sustainability, it does not negatively influence her opinion of Jim when he
mentions sustainability in his promotions (App. D, 82, l. 20). Based on this section, it would
seem that Interviewee 5 is the only one of the five interviewees that is not necessarily
negatively impacted by a "non-sustainable" influencer promoting sustainable products.

The next two codes concern the interviewees' attitudes towards influencers. These codes
differ from the codes concerning the theme Influencer Credibility as these pieces of data
could not be coded in direct relation to credibility, hence being labelled either 'Influencer -
Positive' or 'Influencer - Negative'. As also discussed in the methodological section
regarding the template analysis, the labels 'positive' and 'negative' are not to be understood
as "either-or" as it fluctuates, and there may be different degrees of the two labels. This
section will explore these attitudes in-depth and explore how these attitudes can influence
consumers' perceived credibility of influencers. The two codes are rather prominent, and all

five interviewees have expressed both positive and negative attitudes in relation to influencers.

First, the positive attitudes are explored. In the transcripts of Interviewee 1, 3, and 4, not many pieces of text were coded 'Influencer - Positive'. When Interviewee 1 does perceive an influencer positively, it is when the influencer is relatable, for example, when the influencer Yasmin, "[...] posted of her doing exercise from, uh, on like YouTube, from a YouTube tutorial and it was just so real. It was all of us doing this and she wasn't afraid to show herself do it as well because she's not a fitness person. She's not like a health blogger. It was just like all of us are trying to do that but we never see anybody like us." (App. D, 8, ll. 3-7). This aspect is closely related to the attribute of attractiveness, more specifically similarity, due to Interviewee 1 emphasising "all of us" and "we never see anybody like us" indicating that Yasmin is very relatable and similar, further resulting in Interviewee 1 forming positive attitudes of Yasmin. All of these factors additionally contribute to Yasmin appearing more credible as a person which most likely will transfer to her promotions as well. Interviewee 4 thinks positively of Niomi Smart for several reasons. For example, Interviewee 4 likes that Niomi tries new things and is a good person (App. D, 53, ll. 18-19). Additionally, she believes that Niomi has a positive mindset, which was coded in relation to personality properties. The two former aspects, trying new things and being a good person, can also be closely related to the attribute of attractiveness, thereby forming an overall positive impression of Niomi. Additionally, Interviewee 4 highlights Niomi's lifestyle as a reason why she follows her where the element of lifestyle characteristics from attractiveness is a part of the positive attitude of the influencer. This example demonstrates how the different codes influence one another, in this case the lifestyle characteristic influencing the attitude toward the influencer positively. Another example of codes being closely related is Interviewee 2's account of the influencers the Turner Twins, "I work with these two adventurers and they are called the Turner Twins and they are fantastic. They are professional adventurers who try to only use vehicles that are electric-powered and every time they go on a new exhibition they try to find a way of logistifying the whole operation to make it more sustainable and I love that!" (App. D, 26, ll. 4-8). This quote both contains a positive attitude toward the Turner Twins, a sense of respect, and the element of lifestyle characteristics. Additionally, Interviewee 2's occupation also plays a role in this example as Interviewee 2 works with the influencers, which most likely contributes to Interviewee 2 perceiving them to be more attractive. This example demonstrates how different credibility attributes can influence

Interviewee 2's attitude of influencers. Finally, Interviewee 5 shared an interesting remark in relation to Finn Harries and his twin brother Jack Harries. First, Interviewee 5 claims that she is a big fan of the twins (App. D, 80, l. 2), but she does not classify them as influencers (App. D, 80, l. 3) in spite of them both doing paid partnerships on Instagram. It seems that Interviewee 5 not classifying the twins as influencers contributes to her positive attitude toward them and their promotions. This could be due to her drawing on the twins' occupations and expertise within sustainability when they advertise on Instagram, resulting in the promotions being, "[...] very on brand." (App. D, 80, ll. 13-14). This correlates well with Interviewee 5's impression of the twins being sustainable (App. D, 80, l. 5), thereby, meaning that she finds their promotions to be positive even though she does not associate them with being actual influencers.

In terms of our interviewees perceiving influencers negatively, Interviewee 2, in particular, stands out. His negative attitudes toward influencers have been discussed several times during the analysis, and this code and the amount of codes that have applied to his transcript once again demonstrate his opposition toward influencers. To add to what has already been found concerning Interviewee 2's attitude toward influencers, he provided us with a prior experience that helps explain his negative attitude toward Finn specifically, ""Well, what do you guys think, you know, of Finn and Alice?" and they said, "oh, we were really pissed off with them! Because we started working with them a few months back and then they cut ties with us and then used the project that we had come up with, the idea that we came up with", and that really upset them, like, what is this? Is this self-promotion? [...] So, yeah, after that I did look at them in a different light, yeah." (App. D, 23, ll. 22-28). Here, it can be seen that his negative attitude toward Finn has been influenced by others' experience and what other people say, which is related to the concept of normative beliefs. Interviewee 4 had some negative attitudes toward the influencer Niomi Smart as, "[...] it just felt like I was watching somebody acting." (App. D, 62, ll. 16-17) in one of Niomi's promotions. This example stands out as Interviewee 4 compares Niomi's promotion with an act. This perception of a previous promotion will most likely influence Interviewee 4's future perception of Niomi and her promotions also meaning that it most likely will influence Interviewee 4's purchase intentions. This is also demonstrated later on where Interviewee 4 states that she does not pay attention to the products Niomi promotes but focuses more on Niomi's "acting skills" (App. D, 62, ll. 21-22). A final note in relation to negative attitudes toward influencers concerns Interviewee 1's comment regarding her viewing influencers somewhat negatively when they

share too much on their profiles (App. D, 7, 25-28). However, Interviewee 1 is also divided in relation to this, as she finds it inspiring that Yasmin has, "[...] sprouted off into loads of different direction [...]" (App. D, 7, l. 27), indicating that there must be some sort of balance in the type of content influencers share in order for Interviewee 1 to perceive it positively.

4.2.2. Sustainable promotion

Within the theme Attitude, codes concerning sustainable promotions were developed and applied to some of the transcripts. Note that there is a difference between these types of codes and the codes more specific toward sustainable promotions within the field of influencer marketing, which are investigated in section 4.2.4. Even though our primary focus regards sustainable promotions in influencer marketing, it is still interesting to explore the attitudes our interviewees have toward sustainable promotions.

When Interviewee 5 talks about sponsored posts concerning sustainable products, she says, "I'm generally not mad at sponsored posts in general. [...] I think it's good. I like seeing them because it gives me more ideas of things that you can do yourself whether it's that specific product or not. But it's good to see and get ideas." (App. D, 68, ll. 19-22). This quote demonstrates that Interviewee 5 likes to see sustainable promotions as they provide some kind of inspiration in terms of which sustainable products she can use. Her appreciation for gaining inspiration can be related to her general positive attitude toward sustainable products combined with her self-awareness of not always being great at using sustainable products (App. D, 67, ll. 3-4). Interviewee 2 expressed his positive attitude toward sustainable advertising several times throughout the interview. In general, he does not seem to be much impacted by the sustainable aspect of advertisements as "It's becoming more normal to see it [...]" (App. D, 21, ll. 1-2). However, he still views sustainable advertisements in a positive light, "I just think, the first thought that comes to my head is good [...]" (App. D, 22, l. 2) and finishes by saying, "More, we need more of that." (App. D, 22, ll. 5-6). He expresses a positive attitude toward larger companies who advertise for more sustainable products, "If you're getting advertisements from companies as large as Shell or even BMW and they started to move towards more electric cars... [...] I look at that stuff as a real progress." (App. D, 22, ll. 12-16). However, Interviewee 2 contradicts himself as he later in the interview says that he does not like Finn's promotion of MINI, which is owned by BMW. This is further elaborated in section 4.2.4. Interviewee 3 also expresses a positive attitude toward seeing,

"[...] more electric things being made available for a wider use." (App. D, 44, ll. 7-8). These positive attitudes toward sustainable promotions are likely to transfer to situations where influencers promote sustainable products. This particular aspect is investigated in section 4.2.4.

4.2.3. Influencer Marketing

This section explores some of the positive and negative attitudes shared by the interviewees. Compared to the general attitudes toward influencer marketing from the theme Background Factor, these codes are more specific and case-related, meaning that these findings will provide a more thorough understanding of the interviewees' views on influencer marketing, which is an essential element of our research question. First, the positive attitudes are investigated, followed by the negative.

In spite of Interviewee 2's negative attitudes toward influencers and influencer marketing, he does also share positive views on influencer marketing. For example, he understands why some influencers and content creators are dependent on paid partnerships (App. D, 26, ll. 8-12) and that influencing and doing influencer marketing is a livelihood (App. D, 27, ll. 3-5). Moreover, he also believes that influencer marketing can influence people in "the correct way" (App. D, 29, ll. 10-11). However, as previous sections exploring Interviewee 2's attitude have demonstrated and following sections also will demonstrate, these positive attitudes toward influencer marketing do not dominate Interviewee 2's thoughts as he is still sceptical toward influencers and their promotions. Hence, it would not seem that these few positive attitudes influence Interviewee 2's overall attitude or intentions. Interviewee 1 had a positive general attitude toward influencer marketing (App. D, p. 3, l. 2) and also expressed some more specific positive attitudes as well as she gave her opinion on the benefits of influencer marketing, "I think it's a low-budget way as well to do something so effective and it also doesn't take as much from, maybe, the company. It's more an actual person who's speaking to you so - which is always great." (App. D, 3, ll. 2-4). As with Interviewee 2's statements above, Interviewee 1 expresses some sort of understanding regarding the business benefits related to influencer marketing. Where Interviewee 2 focused on influencer marketing being a livelihood for content creators, Interviewee 1 focused on the advantages influencer marketing can have for brands as she perceives it as being a low-budget strategy for companies. Additionally, she mentions in the quote above that influencer marketing is

effective because of the actual persons promoting the products and not the brand. Finally, Interviewee 5 shared that she finds influencer marketing to be more trustworthy when smaller influencers recommend products through influencer marketing, meaning that Interviewee 5 perceives influencer marketing with smaller influencers to be more positive. Hence, if brands use bigger influencers to promote their products, Interviewee 5 would perceive this as less positive and trustworthy. She does not necessarily trust "big names" as she would not trust that the big influencer's beliefs align with the company, which is one of Interviewee 5' negative attitudes toward influencer marketing. Interviewee 4 generally views influencer marketing negatively and says that, "Because I just see 'paid partnership' at the top and I usually just switch off when I see them." (App. D, 55, ll. 12-13). Hence, when Interviewee 4 sees that the Instagram post is a promotion, she automatically becomes sceptical, and when it comes to Niomi Smart, she explicitly said that she would not be inclined to click on any of her promotions (App. D, 54, ll. 7-8). This is especially related to Interviewee 4's impression of Niomi not being selective in her collaborations, which gives an insight into Interviewee 4's thoughts on when influencer marketing is less credible and effective, that is, influencers accepting various and too many collaborations (App. D, 53, ll. 22-24; 54, ll. 13-14). This relates well with Interviewee 5's account of big influencers not being as credible because she would believe that these influencers accept all types of collaborations without necessarily aligning with the brand. Interviewee 3 taps into a similar topic as she states, "[...] if you're promoting something that's clearly not you then what's the point of promoting it at all because it won't have the effect that you want." (App. D, 45, ll. 6-8). Thus, it is important for both Interviewee 3 and 5 that influencer and brand match in terms of beliefs and interests if the promotion is to be perceived positively and believable. Additionally, Interviewee 3 finds influencer marketing to be less believable because, "I just think that they're being paid. That's kind of just what comes to mind. That they made a deal with a company so they got paid." (App. D, 45, ll. 19-21). This quote is closely related to Interviewee 3's previous quote above regarding the influencers needing to actually like the product or else it will be perceived as a mere business deal with no real interests or authenticity, which would result in Interviewee 3 perceiving the promotion negatively. Interviewee 2 shares Interviewee 3's view on the element of payment, as Interviewee 2 states, "[...] that him personally is making all that money in a flash, that pisses me off." (App. D, 27, ll. 7-8). The statements regarding Interviewee 2 and 3 perceiving influencer marketing negatively because the influencer is being paid are closely related to the discussion of self-interests, which will be discussed later. The aspect of self-interest is related to trustworthiness, and based on Interviewee 2 and 3's

statements, it could indicate that they find influencer marketing to be less trustworthy because they perceive the influencer to be partially motivated by money.

4.2.4. Influencer Marketing - Sustainable promotion

The final codes to be explored within the theme Attitude regard our interviewees' attitudes toward influencers promoting sustainable products. Interestingly, many codes concerning both positive and negative attitudes have been applied throughout the transcripts. These attitudes may be important when attempting to understand our interviewees' assessment of the influencers' sustainable promotions.

In general, Interviewee 4 seems to have a positive attitude toward Niomi promoting sustainable products, "Well I mean it's great. Like if it makes some people buy these products and it kind of opens people's eyes to what's available." (App. D, 55, ll. 18-19); however, she argues that it does not impact her (App. D, 55, l. 19). Hence, even though Interviewee 4 has a positive attitude toward Niomi promoting these products, she argues that the promotions do not affect her. This might partially be due to Interviewee 4 not finding Niomi credible anymore. Moreover, in relation to a specific sponsored post, Interviewee 4 argues that the caption seems scripted and says, "[...] which makes me think it's maybe not genuine." (App. D, 55, l. 3). The negative attitude toward the advertisement can stem from the written caption, which Interviewee 4 perceives to be ingenuine, and this can, to some degree, influence Niomi's perceived credibility.

When coding the interviews, a couple of text passages were found to concern influencers promoting sustainable promotions that were neither positive nor negative in their connotation. When asking Interviewee 2 whether he associates influencer marketing with sustainable promotions, he said, "No. No not on the whole. But I'd say it's getting more common, more and more common." (App. D, 22, ll. 22-23). Considering his attitude toward sustainable promotions (c.f. section 4.2.2.), where he says that he wants to see more sustainable promotions, Interviewee 2 should supposedly be happy to see that it is becoming more common that influencers promote sustainable products. However, when investigating his other statements that have been coded in relation to influencers promoting sustainable products, his attitude appears to be rather negative. Two positive codes were applied to his transcript; one of which where he said, "So, your average influencer when they share a sustainable product, I'll look at that and be like, "great" [...]" (App. D, 22, ll. 10-11).

However, he further elaborates that it would not impact him much (App. D, 22, l. 11-12) and that he would be more impacted by seeing larger companies promote sustainable products (App. D, 22, ll. 12-18). Thus, even though he appears to be rather positive toward influencers advertising sustainable products, he still does not believe that those promotions would really influence him. Considering what Interviewee 2 says about liking sustainable promotions, especially from larger brands, it suggests that he would be fond of Finn's collaboration with MINI regarding electric cars; however, that is not the case, "Yeah, the second post [the MINI collaboration] is equally as bad if not worse." (App. D, 29, l. 5). The quote demonstrates, quite contradictory, that Interviewee 2 does not approve of Finn's promotion concerning MINI's electric car. He says that he does not like the promotion because Finn accepted "[...] money from MINI who are owned by BMW, who have such an enormous impact on climate change…. Then that just really shows a lack of foresight for him. It shows a lack of care of who you choose to work with, I think." (App. D, 29, ll. 11-13). This quote demonstrates that Interviewee 2 does not emphasise the fact that BMW is making electric cars but that Finn accepts money from a brand with a big climate footprint. Before presenting the example of Finn's promotion, Interviewee 2 said, "I'd be really angry if I saw him posting a [sustainable] product because that is not…. [...] the idea is that he's trying to sell based towards education and if I then see that he's now making money from that… when that's not really the whole point of it. [...] So, I think if you're following someone like Finn whose whole goal, it seems, is to try and educate people, I don't think they should be sharing profit-making schemes." (App. D, 24, ll. 1-11). Interviewee 2 appears to expect Finn to share educational content, and, therefore, it would upset him to see that Finn was being paid to say certain things about brands. Interviewee 2 even says that if Finn were to share such promotion, it would be in order to purely profit of it (App. D, 24, ll. 6-7), which relates to the concept of self-interest that can influence trustworthiness negatively. Interviewee 2's negative attitude toward Finn's sustainable promotions can also be seen in regard to the promotion concerning electric scooters, where he says that he is, "Pretty pissed off." (App. D, 25, l. 26) when he sees the ad. Once again, Interviewee 2 draws on the concept of self-interest and says that, "[...] he would have been paid hundreds of thousands for that post…yeah, which is not right to me." (App. D, 27, ll. 2-3). He further expressed that the promotion, "[...] just doesn't help anyone." (App. D, 28, l. 10), which again illustrates his negative attitude toward Finn's sustainable advertisement.

Interviewee 1 expressed many both positive and negative statements regarding influencers promoting sustainable products. In general, Interviewee 1 believes that she would always be somewhat intrigued when seeing an influencer promoting sustainable products (App. D, 6, l. 12). Though she is quite aware of influencers often posting promotions where they simply add the word 'sustainable' without the products even being sustainable (App. D, 4, ll. 13-14). This negative attitude could be related to the aspect of greenwashing because the influencer is attempting to appear more sustainable. If Interviewee 1 actually perceives a promotion to be greenwashing, it could influence the influencer's perceived credibility negatively. Moreover, it appears that Interviewee 1 has a more positive attitude toward promotions that include smaller companies, "I think… sustainability for like influencers maybe is not always going to the big companies. It's hard to always achieve sustainability with big companies so if they have more micro companies or small businesses it is a lot more sustainable in my eyes." (App. D, 4, ll. 19-21). Thus, Interviewee 1 finds it more sustainable when influencers collaborate with smaller companies, and this could make her more inclined to buy the promoted products as she actually views the products and brands to be more sustainable than she would have if it had been a larger company.

Interviewee 1 further expressed a positive attitude toward influencers' sustainable advertisements if the influencer and the promoted products matched in some way. Interviewee 1 said that she would not be surprised if the influencer Caspar Lee made a promotion about a sustainable car similar to Yasmin's promotion because Caspar has a connection with Audi (App. D, 9, ll. 17-18). In relation to Yasmin's promotion, Interviewee 1 had a slightly negative attitude of the promotion which is rooted in Interviewee 1's perception that Yasmin would not normally post such products, "It's not something that she would normally post about." (App. D, 9, ll. 1-2). In relation to another one of Yasmin's promotions, Interviewee 1 explains that she would not be surprised if anyone made a promotion regarding sustainable toilet paper because that is a product everybody uses (App. D, 9, ll. 23-24). This perceived match appears to be important for Interviewee 1 as she finds influencers more credible when they promote products that match themselves (App. D, 4, l. 9). The sense of match between influencer and product was also expressed by Interviewee 3, where she argues that it would be accurate for Finn to promote sustainable products because, "That's just what he would do." (App. D, 41, l. 15). Moreover, when presented with specific examples, she says that the promotions are appropriate for him to post "[...] because he's all about sustainability, new environmentally better products. So I don't see why he wouldn't promote

something like that." (App. D, 45, ll. 16-17). This quote demonstrates that match, in terms of sustainable promotions, is linked to whether Interviewee 3 perceives the influencer to be a sustainable influencer or not. As found in the literature review, scholars have found that when consumers perceive influencers to promote a product that fits the influencer, the influencer's trustworthiness and credibility are positively affected (Martínez-López et al. 2020), and a good fit can also enhance purchase intention (Kim & Kim 2020; Torres, Augusto & Matos 2019; Silva et al. 2020 a; Kapitan & Silvera 2016).

From the coding process, it appears that Interviewee 5 has a rather positive attitude toward sustainable promotions in an influencer marketing context. She believes that anyone can promote sustainable products as long as their, "[...] persona is not actively against it." (App. D, 71, ll. 3-4). Moreover, her positive attitude is demonstrated when she says, "I think it's nice when anyone promotes things that are sustainable because it's good to get the word out there and especially if it's something that they are interested in themselves." (App. D, 70, ll. 22-24). From these quotes, it appears that Interviewee 5 is simply happy that sustainable products are being promoted and less concerned with the match between the influencer and the product, although the influencer's persona should not be against sustainability. Thus, it would be a bonus if the influencer actually cared for the product.

More specifically toward the selected examples of sustainable influencer marketing, Interviewee 5 expressed a positive attitude toward Jim's advertisement concerning Sky Glass (App. D, 72, ll. 6-8). It seems as though her positive attitude toward the advertisement is related to the authenticity of the post, as she does not believe that the photo is staged (App. D, 72, ll. 6-8). Her positive attitude toward the advertisement has even led to WOM, as the interviewee has told others about the product (App. D, 73, ll. 20-24). Interviewee 5 further expressed a positive attitude toward Finn's advertisement and said, "I think it's good to promote things like this [...]" (App. D, 80, l. 12), which also demonstrates her positive attitude toward sustainable products. Finn's advertisements also received a positive attitude from Interviewee 3, who likes that, "He's not promoting bad brands." (App. D, 43, l. 1). Interviewee 3 does not elaborate on what "bad brands" are, but this quote illustrates how perceptual attitudes are as it was previously seen that Interviewee 2 indicates that BMW, who owns MINI, is a bad brand in terms of sustainability (App. D, 29, ll. 11-13).

This section has found that the attitudes our interviewees have toward the sustainable promotions posted by influencers are influenced by many different aspects, such as their

attitudes toward the influencer, the perceived match between the influencer and the promoted product, and their attitude toward the product.

4.3. Influencer Credibility

This section concerning the theme Influencer Credibility is divided into two topics; first, our initial findings related to credibility, where our interviewees' attitudes toward credibility related to influencers and influencer marketing are explored, and second, an in-depth analysis of the three credibility attributes; trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

For the first part of the analysis of this theme, the codes' Credibility is important', 'Credibility is less important', 'Credibility when advertising', 'Credibility when advertising sustainable products - Positive', 'Credibility when advertising sustainable products - Negative', 'Influencers are credible', and, 'Influencers are not credible' are discussed.

As a part of investigating the concept of credibility, we needed an understanding of whether our interviewees even found the concept to be important. All of our five interviewees made an explicit statement regarding credibility being important, and only one expressed that it could be less important. However, the reasons why they either find it important or less important differ greatly. For instance, when asked if they found credibility to be important, Interviewee 1 and 3 seemed to somewhat agree on the importance of consistency, which they related to being credible. For example, Interviewee 3 elaborated on why credibility is important, saying, "No, I think it's more important because if you're trying to get people to do something that's more environmentally friendly. That would need to have, like, a bigger impact because you have to be consistent when you're using environmentally friendly products. So, yeah, it's great if you buy the product but then what if you don't buy again and it's just like a one-time thing then it's kind of, like, counteractive." (App. D, 38, ll. 20-24). There seem to be two significant elements as to why credibility is an important factor; first, the fact that it concerns a sustainable product, which would appear to require a higher sense of credibility, and second, that the influencer has to be credible in order for the consumers to be consistent in their sustainable consumer behaviour. These two elements combined made up Interviewee 3's beliefs on why credibility is important. On the other hand, Interviewee 5 was more hesitant and unsure of her view on credibility, "I don't think so. I think it's uhm… It's obviously good, I think." (App. D, 67, l. 13). Based on the quote, it could be argued that

Interviewee 5 perceives credibility as a benefit or a bonus, but not an essential factor. She further elaborates that the importance of credibility depends on the influencer and the promoted product. So, even though Interviewee 5 expressed that credibility is not more important when advertising sustainable products, she still viewed credibility as a good thing.

Moving on to the subject of whether they then found influencers to be credible or not and the role of credibility when advertising, all interviewees expressed more specific views, which the next sections will explore. When discussing credibility in closer relation to advertisements on Instagram, all five interviewees had something positive and negative to say. Interviewee 5, in particular, seemed to have a rather positive attitude toward advertisements in relation to credibility, which most likely relates to her own personal experiences of having worked with influencer marketing. Moreover, she finds many sustainable promotions to be positive as she appreciates the sustainable agenda and products being focused on (App. D, 70-71, ll. 22-4). This also means that she did not have that many expectations for sustainable promotions, as she argues that anyone can promote sustainable products as long as it does not entirely contradict other of the influencer's promotions or lifestyle (App. D, 71, ll. 3-6). For example, when discussing influencer Jim Chapman's promotion of the sustainable TV, she did not expect him to live a fully-committed sustainable lifestyle or know everything about the TV in order for him and the promotion to be credible. It was only the other way round where she had a negative view of advertising; that is, if a dedicated sustainable influencer or a climate advocate suddenly promoted a non-sustainable product that it would impact her perception of the influencers' credibility negatively. This indicates that Interviewee 5 focuses much on the influencer's purpose and lifestyle when assessing whether their advertisements are credible. In addition to that, it would be important for the influencer to be consistent with their purpose or 'brand' and not contradict themselves by, for example, promoting completely different products that may even contradict each other. Interviewee 1 also had many positive views on influencers' credibility when advertising sustainable products, but compared to Interviewee 5, it would appear that Interviewee 1 has more requirements in order for the promotion to be perceived as credible. For example, in order for her to perceive the promotion as being credible, Interviewee 1 found it more credible if the influencer had talked about and used the product before promoting it (App. D, 4, ll. 4-5), if there is a sense of match between the influencer and product (App. D, 4, l. 9), and if the influencer is collaborating with smaller companies, as she views these as being more sustainable (App. D, 4, ll. 20-21). When coding Interviewee 1's

transcript, only one piece of data was coded 'Credible when advertising - negative' (App. E), but when focusing on the sustainable products, she had more reservations, implying that influencers promoting sustainable brands and products are subject to higher expectations and need to be more credible in order for the promotion to be credible. For example, Interviewee 1 finds it more credible when the influencer explains how they use the advertised product in their personal life, so she knows that they actually like the product they are promoting. Additionally, she finds it credible when they explain why they like that the product is sustainable because if they do not give this explanation, "[...] it is just a word really." (App. D, 16, l. 21). This indicates that influencers should be aware of not using the word sustainability as a mere buzzword, as Interviewee 1 would expect the influencer to be able to explain more about the product and why it has had a positive impact on their life.

Next, we explore some of the interviewees who expressed more negative views on credibility in relation to advertising. As also highlighted in the theme Background Factor, Interviewee 2 had a rather negative general attitude toward influencers but had an overall positive attitude toward influencer marketing as long as it is the "right influencer" promoting the product (App. D, 19, l. 9). However, even though Interviewee 2 expressed that influencer marketing could be a good and effective strategy, he expressed many negative views in this theme, Influencer Credibility, and in the code 'Credibility when advertising sustainable products - negative', (App. E) and he is the interviewee that is most represented in this code indicating his sceptic view toward influencer and influencer marketing. As mentioned in the theme Background Factor, Interviewee 2 was very interested in and passionate about sustainability, and it is also mainly the element of sustainability that impacts his attitudes toward the promotions, and he also has more requirements for the promotion in order for it to be credible, just as Interviewee 1. For instance, when asked if it was important to be credible when advertising sustainable products, he answered, "So, I think, I think for the influencer to themselves, they have to look at that and think "what is this, is this actually going to be incredibly damaging? Is my work here of passing on this company's message, this company's product is this gonna be insanely damaging? Or is this just because I'm not credible or…"" (App. D, 21, ll. 22-25), demonstrating his expectations to influencers considering promoting sustainable products. Interestingly, Interviewee 2, as the only one, did not believe that it was necessarily more important to be credible when advertising sustainable products compared to other "normal" products, simply because it already is more credible to promote sustainable products compared to non-sustainable products as these are more damaging (App. D, 21, ll.

16). The four other interviewees either answered that it was more important or equally important, indicating Interviewee 2's strong attitude toward sustainability. Another interviewee who shared rather many negative views on credibility in relation to advertisements is Interviewee 4, who focused on the influencer's motivations when promoting products. For instance, she was very aware of whether she perceived the influencer to be motivated by money and not by genuine interests in the product, as seen in this example, "When she started working with that homeware brand and just where she jumps from one brand to another. I don't think I can really go back from that now because I know she's in it for the money, which I know is her job but… it's just money-driven, yeah." (App. D, 56, ll. 9-12). When Interviewee 4 questions the influencer's motivations and believes that the influencer is driven by self-interests, such as earning money, it can have a direct impact on Interviewee 4's perception of the influencer's trustworthiness. This can have a long-lasting effect in the sense that Interviewee 4 often will be sceptical towards the intentions and motivations behind the promotion, further meaning that Interviewee 4, most likely, will not purchase many or any products from this particular influencer.

The final codes to be analysed in this section are the two codes concerned with whether influencers are perceived as being credible or not. Interviewee 3 stood out in the data when it came to what contributed to an influencer's credibility, as she emphasised the importance of interaction between influencer and followers. According to Interviewee 3, the interaction, which can consist of Q&As[8] (App. D, 36, ll. 15-16), showing daily life (App. D, 35, l. 7), and the influencer asking questions (App. D, 36, l. 14) enables the influencer and followers to connect on a deeper level, which Interviewee 3 prefers compared to influencers who, "[...] just kind of post photos of themselves and videos and then promote products without the interaction." (App. D, 35, ll. 7-8). This aspect could very well be related to the concepts of homophily and parasocial interaction (PSI), which were introduced in section 1.1.2, that is the illusion of bonding with each other and having a friendship. It seems that these are concepts Interviewee 3 appreciates and would influence her positively in terms of perceiving the influencer to be more credible. The quote above also demonstrated how influencers are less credible, according to Interviewee 3. Influencers are, for example, less credible when they appear more superficial and promote products without any indication of personal relations or interactions. Interestingly, it does not seem that Interviewee 3 has any objections

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[8] An occasion where the audience can ask questions (Merriam-Webster n.d.)

when influencers promote many brands or products, which other interviewees expressed, as long as the aspect of interaction is present when promoting the products. One other interviewee sharing a very similar view is Interviewee 1, who also emphasises the aspect of talking to the audience and sharing one's life (App. D, 5, ll. 21-24). Interviewee 4, on the other hand, did not find it credible when influencers promoted too many brands, as she stated, "I suppose if they're jumping from brand to brand that sells similar things then you actually just think it's potentially just money-driven and it's not actually due to what their audience would want to see." (App. D, 50, ll. 10-12). Once again, Interviewee 4 highlights the aspect of self-interest due to influencers might being 'money-driven', making the influencers appear less credible.

As also mentioned in the theme Background Factor, Interviewee 2 does not care much for influencers, even to the extent that he uses the words "content creator" or "people" throughout the interview in order to avoid using the word because of his negative associations (App. D, 27, l. 12). Thus, if Interviewee 2 comes across a person on Instagram identifying him/herself as an influencer, Interviewee 2 will immediately perceive them as less credible. However, simultaneously, he recognises that some "genuinely influencers" (App. D, 17, l. 26) can be credible because they do not explicitly call themselves influencers but might still work and conduct themselves in the manner we identify as influencers. Interviewee 2's view on influencers is somewhat contradictory. He is very much focused on his negative association with the word influencer, which is a consistent feature throughout the entire interview, resulting in various contradictory attitudes, as the remaining analysis will demonstrate. When commenting on what distinguishes a credible influencer from a less credible influencer, he argues that a credible influencer must consider the following, "So, if you ask yourself every time you post something, "How is this actually gonna help someone? How is this going to help someone other than me? Or how is it gonna actually inspire someone else rather than just as sort of a body image or a so much looking really pretty?". If it's an actual deed or something that they are creating or something that genuinely catch someone's imagination for a few seconds, that is something that I would say is real influencing." (App. D, 18, ll. 7-12). From the example, it would be expected that Interviewee 2 most likely does not follow many influences and probably also follows some rather different influencers compared to some of our other interviewees who follow influencers that work within more common niches such as fashion, beauty or lifestyle. In contrast, Interviewee 2 probably follows influencers whose sole profession is not being an influencer but has another focus, such as being a climate

advocate like Finn Harries. These factors will also be discussed in the sections to come, where the three attributes of credibility are analysed, including more in-depth and specific attitudes and beliefs related to influencers' perceived credibility.

Having explored the attitudes of our interviewees with respect to credibility in general, we will now proceed to examine the three characteristics of credibility presented by Ohanian (1990; 1991).

4.3.1. Trustworthiness

Within the theme Influencer Credibility, the code 'Trustworthiness' was developed with several more specific codes related to trustworthiness; 'Believable', 'Genuine', 'Honest', 'Reliable', and 'Trustworthy'. All of these codes have been used to some degree when coding the interviews. However, the codes 'Dependable', 'Sincere', and 'Integrity' from our initial template were not applicable to any section of text. In the following, the dimension of trustworthiness is analysed.

Interviewee 3 is the participant who expressed the importance of trustworthiness the least; however, when asked about what she thinks about the word 'credibility' she said, "Someone who is believable, I guess. Tells the truth, also." (App. D, 33, l. 21). Thus, it would seem that the aspects of being believable and honest are important aspects to her when assessing a credible influencer. As mentioned in the section covering the theme Background Factor, Interviewee 3 has a general negative attitude toward influencers and argues that they promote fake deals (App. D, 37, ll. 1-2). It can, therefore, be argued that Interviewee 3, in general, does not view influencers to possess trustworthiness as the promotions of fake deals do not correlate with the aspect of being honest. Moreover, it has been found that Interviewee 3 associates influencers with being paid big amounts of money when doing influencer marketing (App. D, 33, l. 14). An aspect that makes influencers more believable in her opinion is when influencers are selective with their collaborations. She argues that the influencers Alfie Deyes and Poppy Deyes are, "[...] not really the type of people to promote anything, just like anything. They really pick out what they promote." (App. D, 48, ll. 6-7), which she argues makes the promotions more believable. This particular aspect can be related to the concept of perceived motivation. When influencers are selective with their collaborations, Interviewee 3 could be more inclined to believe that they care for the advertised product and that the advertisement is not merely based on self-interest. The aspect

of self-interests, in this case income, might influence Interviewee 3's perception of influencers' trustworthiness negatively when they advertise products, as she might view the promotion as solely motivated by self-interests. Consequently, Interviewee 3 may be hesitant to trust influencers promoting sustainable products. Another participant who articulates the aspect of honesty in relation to motivation is Interviewee 2, who says that, "some people don't try and lie about their motivations when it comes to online selling. Because that is what it is, it's selling." (App. D, 27, ll. 12-13). From this, it seems that it is important for Interviewee 2 that influencers are honest and transparent about their motivation for promoting products. Thus, if influencers are trying to hide their motivation, it could influence how Interviewee 2 assesses their trustworthiness when promoting sustainable products. Moreover, he continues by saying that, "nobody watches that and thinks, "oh, they just love electric motorbikes". Everyone knows it's an advert." (App. D, 27, ll. 14-15). This statement implies that Interviewee 2 would not trust an influencer's attitude toward the advertised product because he would know that the influencer is being paid for posting about the product and, therefore, he might be sceptical toward it. In contrast, Interviewee 1 expressed that influencers' advertisements can reduce her scepticism toward products because she may perceive some influencers as being honest due to her perception of the influencer being nice, "[...] there's lots of things that I'm sceptical about and then I'll see somebody who I like say something good and I think, well they wouldn't lie because they're so nice even though I've never met them." (App. D, 5, ll. 9-11). The contrasts between Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 1 can stem from their general attitude toward influencers. Interviewee 2 has a negative general attitude toward influencers, which could explain why he would not trust influencers or find them honest. On the contrary, Interviewee 1 expressed a positive general attitude toward influencers and influencer marketing when she states that an influencer's audience already trusts the influencer. Finally, being honest and transparent is also of importance to Interviewee 5, who says that an influencer is credible when, "They would be transparent about what they're doing and only promote products that they genuinely care about and that they aren't pushing like a false narrative." (App. D, 65, ll. 4-5). This shows that trustworthiness is a key dimension of credibility for Interviewee 5 when assessing the credibility of an influencer's promotion.

In the quote above, Interviewee 5 mentions genuineness as an aspect that makes influencers credible. Later in the interview, she mentions genuineness again, "[...] it means they are being very selective about the things that choose to promote, so it's definitely something they are

genuinely passionate about." (App. D, 81, ll. 16-17). Here, she more explicitly articulates that she perceives influencers to be genuine when they are selective in their promotions. As for Interviewee 4, she argues that an influencer needs to use the products of the advertised brand in order for the advertisement to be perceived as genuine. As mentioned previously in section 4.2, Interviewee 4 is very aware of the influencer's motivation when advertising and finds that influencers who are money-driven are not very credible. This may explain the importance of using the products of the advertised brand prior to the promotion, as this can reduce the perception of the influencer advertising the products solely because of being paid for doing it. When talking about influencers being genuine, Interviewee 1 mentions another aspect, "[...] there's no cover on her face, you know. If she's having a hard time she will show it [...]" (App. D, 7, ll. 1-2). This shows that in order for Interviewee 1 to perceive an influencer as genuine, which influences her perception of the influencer's trustworthiness, the influencer needs to share her/his life as naturally as possible, e.g. by not editing their face in pictures and by sharing both the good and bad things in life. A rather different approach to genuineness can be seen from Interviewee 2's statement, where he argues that influencers who do not call themselves influencers are more genuine and credible (App. D, 17, ll. 26-27). Here, it can once again be seen how much Interviewee 2's attitude toward the term 'influencer' affects his view on influencers and their perceived credibility.

The code 'Trustworthiness - Trustworthy' is a rather prominent code that has been applied in four of the five transcripts; the only transcript that does not contain this code belongs to Interviewee 3. As just mentioned in the final part of the previous section, Interviewee 2 is very affected by his view on the term 'influencer'. He even says that we would be less likely to trust an influencer who uses that term, "I am so much more likely to instantly trust someone if they… if they don't bring up that word ever unless you are trying to have a campaign, whereby the actual campaign is trying to influence someone. Not just one person. So if your campaign is to try and reduce the amount of plastic that is used in restaurant industries or bar industries then that's a campaign where you can use the word influencer all you'd like because it makes sense." (App D, 30, ll. 17-21). Here, Interviewee 2 explains very directly that it would be harder for him to trust someone who calls themselves influencers unless they are trying to make a greater change. Another aspect that influences whether Interviewee 2 views influencers as trustworthy is linked with the aspect of expertise. He argues that he would trust an influencer more if s/he explicitly articulates that they have gained knowledge from an outside source (App. D, 32, ll. 1-3). Moreover, he says that when

experts are involved, he would be more inclined to trust what is being said and not research the matter himself, "[...] you're gonna be, like, "wow, great of course I don't have to go look that up because you've just shown me 12 research experts on a sentence subject. So I'm not gonna go look that up because I think I trust that."" (App. D, 32, ll. 11-13). This demonstrates how credibility attributes influence each other as it can be seen that perceived expertise further influences the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer. When Interviewee 4 discussed the aspect of trusting the influencer Grace Beverly's sustainable advertisements, which she used as an example, she highlights that her trust comes from Grace's sustainable lifestyle and her consistency in working with sustainable brands, "Well from her Instagram you can see that she lives much more sustainable than the average person so that's why I would trust her more as well." (App. D, 58, ll. 15-16), and "[...] she only works with sustainable brands so that's why." (App. D, 57, l. 20). Interviewee 4 has even purchased a razor that Grace promoted and argued that part of what influenced her was her trust in Grace, "I don't follow that girl because of beauty-related things but I trust her opinion and I trust her judgement." (App. D, 58, ll. 11-12). Moreover, Interviewee 4 elaborates on another aspect that makes her trust influencers more, namely perceived friendship, "So I have this trust in them because they're speaking to me like I'm a friend even though there are, like, a million other people watching that they are making this personal recommendation to me." (App. D, 61-62, ll. 25-2). Here, Interviewee 4 expresses that the way influencers speak in their advertisements plays an important role in gaining her trust. When influencers speak as they would do when addressing friends, it influences the trust Interviewee 4 has in them, which correlates to what Ohanian says about friends often being perceived as more trustworthy. This indicates that the influence of PSI plays a role in perceived credibility, which might be why PSI influences purchase intention positively (Lee & Watkins 2016). Similarly, Interviewee 5 says, "[...] especially the ones that I would, like, had conversations with and would know. I would trust them." (App. D, 66, ll. 18-19). Here, it can be argued that the concept of illusionary friendship is present again. She might be more likely to perceive the influencers she knows and those she has had conversations with as friends, which increases her trust in them. Moreover, Interviewee 5 says quite explicitly that her purchase intention is influenced by the trust she has in the influencer, "As for me, sometimes I'm more likely to buy things on recommendations from smaller influencers who I, like, would know better and trust better than I would from someone, like, massive." (App. D, 66, ll. 14-16). In the case of Interviewee 5, she finds smaller influencers more trustworthy as she believes she would know them better, and this particular aspect influences her purchase intention. Finally, Interviewee 1

bases her trust in Yasmin Johal based on a previous experience, "[...] she has recommended things in the past which I have had and they have been good so I now trust her enough to make the right recommendations even if it's a completely different product." (App. D, 14, ll. 4-6). This quote illustrates that the aspect of Background Factor, in this case, past experiences, influences the trust Interviewee 1 has in the influencer. Her trust is influenced by a previous good experience she has had with the influencer, and this good experience has now resulted in Interviewee 1 trusting Yasmin's recommendations.

This further relates to the code of being reliable. Now that Interviewee 1 has had a good experience with Yasmin's recommendation, Yasmin can, to some degree, be perceived as a reliable influencer even when recommending other types of products. Interviewee 1 further says that Yasmin previously said that she would not share bad products, which gives Interviewee 1, "[...] reassurance that the good things actually are good." (App. D, 7, ll. 16-18).

A final aspect to be presented is authenticity, which Interviewee 5 mentions a couple of times. Interviewee 5 says that she likes Jim Chapman's advertisement for Sky Glass because the posts, "[...] feel authentic to the creator" (App. D, 73, l. 11). She actually believes that Jim and his family would watch TV together and that it is not, "[...] just something that's been set up for like the photo." (App. D, 72, ll. 7-8). This relates well with the finding from section 4.2. about Interviewee 5 finding it important that the influencer is consistent with their 'brand'.

By investigating the dimension of trustworthiness, it has been found that several aspects are important for the interviewees when assessing influencers' perceived trustworthiness. This section has also demonstrated that the interviewees assess trustworthiness differently, which illustrates how subjective the concept of trustworthiness is, and it has been shown how trustworthiness can influence purchase intention and behaviour. The influence of trustworthiness on purchase intention and behaviour is further included in other parts of the analysis, especially when discussing intention and behaviour in greater detail.

4.3.2. Expertise

The theme Expertise consists of the codes 'Knowledgeable', 'Expert', 'Experienced', and 'Qualified'. The characteristics of 'Skilled', 'Authoritativeness', and 'Intelligence' from our initial template were not applied to the transcripts. The code 'Knowledgeable' is the most

prominent code, whereas the remaining codes are less used throughout the transcripts. Every used code is analysed in the following sections with examples highlighting significant pieces of data. Other codes and aspects are also included at times, as all themes and codes influence one another at some level.

Only two interviewees expressed something related to the code 'Expertise'; however, this does not necessarily mean that the concept of expertise is less important or less present in the interviews as we focused on labelling the codes with the more specific characteristics related to expertise when possible. Hence, this explains why only Interviewee 2 and 5 are represented with this code. As we shall see in the following sections as well, Interviewee 2 is highly aware of and focused on expertise. An example of Interviewee 2 expressing the attribute of expertise is him stating that an influencer, content creator according to him, is credible when they spread well-informed ideas (App. D, 31, l. 14). This statement relates well to the discussion at the end of section 4.2 concerning Interviewee 2's views on when influencers are credible, where it was discussed that Interviewee 2 expects more thoughtful and purposeful content from influencers. He elaborates with what he believes are well-informed ideas, and here it is clear that he draws on his occupation as a film-maker, as he states that a well-produced production, or content, needs a "real focus" in order to influence and change people's minds opposed to self-promoting (App. D, 31, ll. 22-27). The word "self-promotion" is also a recurring topic in the interview with Interviewee 2 and can be related to the discussion on self-interest, which several of our interviewees have touched upon in different contexts and is perceived as being a negative and less credible motivation. However, in order to spread these well-informed ideas, it requires a certain expertise within the specific area, and influencers might not always be able to be perceived as having expertise within all of the different areas in which they may promote products within. Therefore, it would seem that Interviewee 2 prefers influencers with specific niches and focus areas as the influencers might have this perceived expertise. Interviewee 5 is also represented in this code, and her attitude related to expertise is rather similar to Interviewee 2's attitudes in terms of influencers being more credible and being perceived as having expertise when they work within a niche. For instance, Interviewee 5 would expect a "sustainability blogger" to be more focused on sustainability and, hence, be more credible and perceived as having expertise in relation to sustainability (App. D, 75, ll. 7-8) as a result of the influencer being in that niche. This factor of influencers being perceived as having more expertise when working within certain niches can be related to the negative attitudes many of our interviewees

expressed concerning influencers promoting too many products and jumping from brand to brand, which, for instance, was discussed in section 4.2. It can be argued that influencers promoting too many products or collaborating with too many brands may not be perceived as credible because they probably do not have expertise within all these different product categories and niches, which might be an important factor for some consumers, for example, Interviewee 2 and 5.

As the case was with the code 'Expertise', it is Interviewee 2 and 5 who find the code 'Expert' to be important in relation to credibility. According to Interviewee 2, influencers can not necessarily appear credible on their own, but by including experts, it can contribute positively to the promotion and its message (App. D, 31, ll. 14-18). Moreover, Interviewee 2 indicates that he perceives them as more trustworthy when influencers draw on experts. This illustrates that the different attributes of credibility influence each other. Interviewee 5 is of a similar opinion, as she found the influencer's promotion to be more credible due to the inclusion of a climate partner (App. D, 82, ll. 5-8). Hence, if the influencer does not have the required expertise, it can be a good strategy to include experts who are educated within the particular field and "borrow" the source credibility from the expert and, thereby, create a more credible promotion, at least according to Interviewee 2 and 5 in relation to sustainable products.

The next code, 'Knowledgeable', is by far the most represented code within the theme Expertise, and all of the interviewees have, in some manner, expressed that influencers are more credible when they are perceived to be knowledgeable. First, we will look at the interviewee where it would appear that knowledge is not as important in order for influencers to be perceived as credible, namely Interviewee 3. It is interesting because Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 2 both identified Finn Harries as being connected to sustainability, and where Interviewee 2 would expect more expertise from Finn because of his sustainable persona, this does not seem to matter to the same extent to Interviewee 3. She seems to be less critical of the promotions and says that it is, "Good for him. He's getting money. He's not promoting bad brands. These are good… or they are better than other alternatives." (App. D, 43, ll. 1-2), suggesting that she believes that it is good that the influencer promotes sustainable brands but without having the same expectations for the promotions as Interviewee 2. When asked whether she thought that Finn provided enough information about the products he promoted, Interviewee 3 answered yes, which can be interpreted as her believing Finn has the necessary

knowledge in order to be perceived as having expertise. However, she did not elaborate on why the information was sufficient or what effect it had on her, indicating that this particular attribute does not mean a lot to her when evaluating promotions on Instagram. On the contrary, Interviewee 4 found knowledge to be more important, and she also provided us with an insight into how influencers can communicate knowledge by saying, "Yeah, she gave a whole breakdown of the razor and why it's sustainable and a bit about the brand as well and where they come from." (App. D, 57, ll. 1-2). There are several elements that the influencer appears to be knowledgeable about in this quote, including knowledge about the product itself, why it is sustainable, the brand, and it's background story, meaning that the influencer must know quite a lot about the product and brand in order for Interviewee 4 to find the influencer to possess expertise. Similarly, Interviewee 5 also finds the aspect of being knowledgeable to be important. More specifically, that influencers are knowledgeable about the sustainable product they are advertising in order for her to know if the influencers are greenwashing and saying that a product is sustainable, when it may not be, just to make the promotion appear more appealing (App. D, 67-68, ll. 25-3). The concept of greenwashing is extremely relevant to this topic and its meaning has also been touched upon previously by Interviewee 1 in section 4.2., where she said, "[...] probably talking about it a bit more in the sense why they like sustainable instead of just that it is sustainable. Why do they like that it's a sustainable because if not it is just a word really." (App. D, 16, ll. 19-21). Interviewee 1 did not find it credible if influencers simply used the word sustainability as a buzzword and if they were not able to explain why the product was sustainable. So, it seems that Interviewee 1 and 5 agree that it is important that influencers do not take advantage of the benefits of sustainability; however, Interviewee 5 is also slightly contradictory later in the interview. Interviewee 5 follows Jim Chapman, who promoted the carbon-neutral TV and used that as a selling point in his caption (see Appendix A). However, Interviewee 5 does not associate Jim with sustainability, and her initial thoughts on the TV being promoted did not revolve around sustainability either; and even though she stated that it would have been nice if Jim had elaborated on the sustainable aspect, it does not necessarily influence her opinion of him or the post because Jim, "[...] was promoting it from a standpoint of it is a TV that my family can watch or if it was coming from a sustainability blogger, they would probably focus more on the sustainability aspect of it, if that makes sense, [...] (App. D, 75, ll. 6-8). Here it would seem that Jim, to some degree, has used the fact that the TV is carbon neutral as bonus information, but, interestingly, Interviewee 5 does not seem to mind because she knows Jim is not a "sustainability blogger" and, therefore, she does not expect him to know much or

provide additional information in relation to sustainability. Even though this is in slight contrast to her initial view regarding greenwashing, this contradiction also emphasises how contextual and perceptual expertise is as she clearly would expect a sustainability influencer to know more about the advertised sustainable product.

The next code, 'Experienced', has been applied in the transcripts of Interviewee 2, 3, and 4. Interviewee 3, in particular, finds perceived experience to have a positive effect on promotions. The following example from Interviewee 3 is closely related to the example provided in the theoretical account of expertise regarding members of an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting perceiving an alcoholic who has been sober for many years to have more expertise (Gass & Seiter 2018, 89). According to Interviewee 3, perceived experience can have the same positive influence on her, and she gives the example of a beauty influencer promoting skincare, "If they have, like, a personal experience; say with, like, skincare and you've seen that they suffered with, like, acne or something and they've supposedly used these products. I guess that would make it more believable." (App. D, 34, ll. 4-6). Hence, Interviewee 3 finds it credible when influencers share personal experiences and recommend products to their followers, for instance, skincare products, based on their personal experiences. In relation to experience, Interviewee 3 is the only one focusing on these types of personal experiences, whereas Interviewee 2 and 4 are more focused on influencers being experienced within the field of sustainability and knowing what they are talking about because of their experience. This is, for example, highlighted by Interviewee 4, who finds influencer Grace Beverly to be more credible than Niomi Smart because Grace is experienced in working with sustainable brands (App. D, 57, l. 20). So, Grace may not be an expert or educated within sustainability, but because she is experienced and has sustainability as her niche, she appears more credible.

The final code, 'Qualified', is found in three of our interviewees, but each interviewee only expresses the aspect of qualification one time each, meaning that this particular code is not that prominent in the data. Interestingly, all three codes are related to the influencer Finn Harries. Interviewee 3 and 5 have relatively positive attitudes toward Finn and find him qualified to promote certain sustainable products (App, D, 45, l. 2; 81, ll. 23-25), but Interviewee 2 provides us with an example of who would be more qualified to promote the electric scooter compared to Finn. Interviewee 2 said that, "I would think it's a joke, yeah. I would be less inclined. I would be like, yeah what a joke. They would have been much better,

uhm, trying to, I don't know, maybe talk to some professional scooter athletes *laughs*"
(App. D, 27-28). Hence, Interviewee 2 does not believe Finn is qualified to promote the
scooter and, half-jokingly, suggests that a scooter athlete would be a better fit for this
promotion. This is also related to the fact that Interviewee 2 does not believe that the electric
scooter is a sustainable product that helps people or has a meaningful purpose but is a mere
toy. This quote is further related to a behavioural belief as Interviewee 2 very explicitly says
that he is less inclined to use the scooter and because he has a negative evaluation of the
scooter as he thinks it is a joke.

Based on this analysis of the code 'Expertise' and its underlying characteristics, it was found
that all interviewees somehow found expertise to contribute positively to influencers'
credibility, but some interviewees definitely found expertise to be more important than others.
For instance, Interviewee 2 was represented in all codes related to expertise, and Interviewee
5 was also highly represented. On the contrary, Interviewee 4 was not represented in many
codes but found knowledge to be especially important. A final note regarding this theme
concerns the different characteristics being closely related and, at times, overlapping.
Nonetheless, the distinction has allowed us to explore the attribute of expertise in-depth,
providing us with valuable insight into the interviewees' attitudes toward expertise.

4.3.3. Attractiveness

The last attribute Ohanian includes in her account of credibility is the attribute of
attractiveness which is analysed in the following sections. Our initial template included many
codes related to the attribute; however, far from all codes have been applied to the transcripts.
The codes from the "final" template related to attractiveness include 'Aesthetics',
'Similarity', 'Respect, 'Attractive', 'Personality properties', and 'Lifestyle characteristics'.
The following investigates what the interviewees have expressed in relation to the different
codes to provide an understanding of their view of attractiveness.

As explained when accounting for credibility, the attribute of attractiveness is not merely
concerned with physical attributes. When coding the transcripts, it became clear that the
physical and visual attributes did not play a significant role for our interviewees. The code of
aesthetics was only applicable in the transcripts of Interviewee 1 and 3. As we expected,

several statements concerned the aesthetics of the posts on the platform. Interviewee 1 said, "She always does her positioning really well and the quality is really good and colourful [...]" (App. D, 10, ll. 19-20), which shows her appreciation for the aesthetic properties of the posts Yasmin shares on Instagram. She further continues and says, "[...] so if I wanted to buy a car it would be appealing." (App. D, 10, ll. 20), which indicates that the aesthetic properties are likely to influence Interviewee 1's purchase intention. Another interesting remark from Interviewee 1 regards the type of post shared by the influencer. Interviewee 1 says that she is more fond of video posts compared to photos as they appeal more to her (App. D, 10, ll. 15-16). Interviewee 3 also appears to appreciate videos, in this connection from the influencer Finn Harries, "He's a filmmaker, right, so he makes things eye-catching so you can't look away." (App. D, 41, ll. 2-3). Additionally, when talking about the influencer Zoe Sugg, she argues that she likes her content because, "You could say it's quite aesthetically pleasing." (App. D, 36, l. 4), whereafter she mentions that it is the camera work that makes it aesthetically pleasing and interesting (App. D, 36, ll. 6-7). Interviewee 3 addresses the aspect of posts being aesthetically pleasing several times throughout the interview (App. D, 43, l. 23; 48, l. 5), which emphasises the importance of aesthetics on the platform.

Still speaking of the more physical properties of attractiveness, Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 3 comment on the looks of particular influencers. When asked what Interviewee 3 likes about Finn Harries, she immediately says, "He's good-looking." (App. D, 40, l. 19), which indicates the strong influence looks have on Interviewee 3. In relation to the advertisement Yasmin makes about the sustainable toilet paper, Interviewee 1 says, "I like that she's in it as well, so you know, she always looks amazing in her posts." (App. D, 9, ll. 9-10). By saying this, it can be seen that the looks of the influencer has some influence on Interviewee 1 when she assesses what she likes about the sustainable promotion. Other things that seem to influence whether interviewees find influencers attractive or not are aspects that go beyond physical properties. Interviewee 2 says that he likes the way Finn speaks (App. D, 23, ll. 12-13), which shows that Interviewee 2 is somewhat attracted to Finn as a communicator. Moreover, it appears that Interviewee 2 has some degree of respect toward the Turner Twins because of their mission of only using electric vehicles to travel (App. D, 26, ll. 6-8). Interviewee 3 argues that promotions can be made more exciting by including a deal on the product or service promoted (App. D, 39, ll. 11-12), which may influence her purchase intention. Interestingly, Interviewee 3 previously expressed a general negative attitude toward influencers due to their deals, "[...] that aren't actually real" (App. D, 37, ll. 1-2). These two

statements may indicate that Interviewee 3 is attracted to the advertisements at first sight; however, her general negative attitude might influence her in a way in which she might not proceed to interact with the ad as she may consider the deal to be fake.

The concept of perceived similarity between the influencer and follower has been found across different interviews ranging from more physical properties to properties related to lifestyle. Interviewee 3 said, "I think the best way influencers get across to their audiences is by relatability." (App. D, 44, l. 13) which shows that it is important to her that she is able to relate to the influencer in some way in order for the message to get across to her. She continues saying, "And I can't really relate to him because he's a twenty-something year old male so I didn't think I'd be using the same deodorant or body wash as him." (App. D, 44, ll. 13-15). This example illustrates her thought process when she assesses whether she is interested in the advertised product or not. In this example the lack of similarity between her and Finn is essential to her purchase intention. Other interviewees express similarity in terms of lifestyle-related aspects. Interviewee 2 stated that he started following some influencers because their jobs were closely related to his job, for example, "I know she's director of photography and that's sort of very similar job to mine, so I thought, well this just sort of doing very similar thing to me but they're there later on in their careers so that's why, that's why I started following." (App. D, 23, ll. 6-9). Hence, Interviewee 2's initial interest in these influencers are related to his own personal life and he might, therefore, identify more with these particular influencers. According to the theoretical account of the concept of credibility, identification is likely to cause Interviewee 2 to adopt the same behaviour, preferences, and interests as the influencers (Shimp 2010) which, thereby, can influence his purchase intention when he is exposed to an influencer's advertisement. Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5 also express their similarity to the respective influencers they were asked about (App. D, 8, l. 9; 79, l. 5; l. 7-9). When talking about Jim, Interviewee 5 argues that "[...] most people who follow him would be in a similar stage in life." (App. D, 73, l. 15), thus, his promotion may appeal to his audience as, "It's something that they would consider buying rather than someone whose target age is maybe teenagers who aren't going to be buying a TV." (App. D, 73, ll. 15-17). By saying this, Interviewee 5 exemplifies the effect of similarity when doing influencer marketing. She appears to believe that people in a similar stage in life as Jim might be more likely to be influenced by Jim's advertisement compared to people who are not in a similar stage in life. She mentioned that she is in a similar stage and that she is, "[...] ready for it now [...]" (App. D, 73, l. 14), and she later mentioned that she would consider buying

the TV if she was in a position to do so (App. D, 74, ll. 19-20). This again illustrates that the concept of similarity appears to influence purchase intention.

The code 'Lifestyle characteristics' has been applicable several times throughout the coding process. It appears that several interviewees find the lifestyle characteristics of influencers to be attractive. Interviewee 3 likes Finn because he is a climate activist (App. D, 40, l. 8), Interviewee 5 finds it appealing that Niomi's lifestyle, "[...] doesn't seem unattainable." (App. D, 78, l. 22), and Interviewee 2 likes that the influencers Turner Twins are adventurers (App. D, 25, ll. 4-5). When talking about Niomi, Interviewee 4 said, "Yeah I like her mindset and I suppose I follow her for her lifestyle." (App. D, 53, l. 15) and that the reason she started following Niomi was because of something yoga related (App. D, 53, l. 4). This demonstrates that Interviewee 4 finds Niomi attractive because of the lifestyle Niomi lives. However, Interviewee 4 would not be interested in Niomi's sustainable promotion and again argues that she does not follow Niomi for her promotions but her lifestyle, "I don't think I'd rush to click on any links if she was to promote anything. It's more for her lifestyle and other things that I follow her for." (App. D, 54, ll. 17-18). Previously in the interview, she mentioned that she does not trust Niomi in relation to her promotions because she seems to be working with many competing brands. In this example, it can be seen that perceived trustworthiness is more important than the aspect of attractiveness when influencing the purchase intention of Interviewee 4. Another example which illustrates that the lifestyle characteristics of an influencer actually influence the perceived trustworthiness of the influencer, "Well from her Instagram you can see that she lives much more sustainable than the average person so that's why I would trust her more as well." (App. D, 58, ll. 15-16). This is rather interesting as it appears that the lifestyle characteristics of an influencer cannot exceed the importance of trustworthiness, but it can take part in making the perceived trustworthiness stronger. The quote above is stated in relation to a sustainable promotion, and it can, therefore, be argued that Interviewee 4 finds it more attractive and trustworthy when an advertisement relates to the influencer's lifestyle. Another interviewee for whom the connection between advertisements and lifestyle characteristics appears to be important is Interviewee 5. In relation to Jim's advertisement, she says that she finds the advertisement credible and elaborates by saying, "I think they fit in with the vibe of the page, like, Jim's account. They generally fit in with that theme that it's all about his family [...] (App. D, 73, ll. 9-10). Then again, when discussing one of Niomi's advertisements, Interviewee 5 again says that she finds the advertisement credible because, "It's fitting in with her vibe of like health lifestyle

[...]" (App. D, 76, ll. 20-21). These examples illustrate that when Interviewee 5 perceives the advertisements to fit with the influencer's lifestyle, it makes the advertisements more credible.

In regard to personality properties, Interviewee 1 says, "[...] they wouldn't lie because they're so nice [...]" (App. D, 5, ll. 10-11). Here, it can be seen that Interviewee 1's perception of influencers' trustworthiness is affected by the personality properties she perceives influencers to possess. The perceived personality properties of influencers further seem to be important when it comes to why our interviewees like certain influencers. For example, Interviewee 5 commented on how normal she perceives Jim to be, which is a personality property she likes about him as well as her perception of him as a good and nice person (App. D, 70, ll. 6-10). Interviewee 4 said that she likes the positive mindset of Niomi (App. D, 53, l. 18), and she further said that she likes it when influencers open up and become personal as this helps in perceiving the influencer as a friend (App. D, 62, ll. 11-12). As previously mentioned, perceiving influencers as friends can affect the influencer's perceived trustworthiness, which can have great importance when persuading consumers to perform a purchasing behaviour. Hence, the personality property of being open and personal can once again influence the perceived trustworthiness of an influencer.

From the analysis of attractiveness, it appears that attractiveness is important for the interviewees but not to the degree that attractiveness surpasses the importance of trustworthiness. Interestingly, it can be seen that aspects of attractiveness, e.g. lifestyle characteristics and personality properties, may actually influence an influencer's perceived trustworthiness.

4.4. Behavioural belief

The next theme analysed is Behavioural belief, which stems from the RAA. The codes from this theme concern some type of outcome expectancy where our interviewees express the positive or negative consequences they associate with performing a given behaviour. These include the attitude toward the products and the behaviour.
First, we will be investigating the positive behavioural beliefs found throughout the interviews. In terms of some of the positive attitudes expressed concerning the advertised products, Interviewee 3 said she likes electric cars (App. D, 43, ll. 19-20). This is said in relation to Finn's MINI promotion; however, she also expressed that even though she likes

the product, she will not purchase it due to her financial situation, which is further discussed as a control belief in section 4.6. Interviewee 1 was the participant who expressed positive behavioural beliefs the most. For example, regarding Yasmin's post about the car, Interviewee 1 expressed a positive attitude toward the product, "I thought it was really cool the car, like you could plug in your appliances to it, which was what I thought, yeah that's really cool [...]" (App. D, 12, ll. 10-12), and, "I think that's a very cool feature to have. [...] that you could plug something in." (App. D, 13, ll. 7-8). The positive attitude clearly stems from the feature of being able to plug in appliances into a car. Hence, Interviewee 1 has a positive outcome expectancy where she believes that if she purchases the electric car, she will be able to plug in appliances into the car, which is something she finds to be "cool". Considering the post about sustainable toilet paper, the positive outcome expectancy is related to the product being sustainable. She shows interest in the product and says it is, "[...] something I haven't changed to sustainable yet." (App. D, 12, l. 16), which shows that the positive consequence of purchasing the toilet paper would be to become more sustainable. Moreover, Interviewee 1's outcome expectancies for a promoted product are closely related to what the influencer communicates in the post. An example of this is when she says, "[...] if she kind of said it was life-changing and this is now her favourite toilet paper, I would definitely go and buy it." (App. D, 14, ll. 15-16). Here, it can be argued that Interviewee 1 would expect the toilet paper to be life-changing if the influencer said it was, and this could influence Interviewee 1's purchase behaviour. In another example, Interviewee 1 said that Yasmin looks happy with the product and believes that, "[...] I could be happy with that product as well and it could improve my life." (App. D, 13, ll. 23-24). By seeing that the influencer seems happy with the product, Interviewee 1 believes that she could be happy too if she bought the product. This might only be the case as Interviewee 1 finds Yasmin credible (c.f. section 4.2.) and, therefore, Interviewee 1 believes that Yasmin is actually happy, which transfers to her believing that she would experience the same outcome if she were to purchase the product. Finally, Interviewee 1 appears to have a positive behavioural belief directly related to Yasmin. Interviewee 1 believes that if she purchases something Yasmin promotes, Yasmin will benefit from that too, "So if she posts something I know if I buy it it will also be supporting her because they can see it comes from her [...]" (App. D, 15, ll. 2-3). This is interesting as it demonstrates that Interviewee 1's positive outcome expectancies do not necessarily have to be related to herself but can also be related to positive consequences for other parties, in this case the influencer. Moreover, Interviewee 5 expressed a positive outcome expectancy in relation to Jim's advertisement for Sky Glass. Interviewee 5 is

intrigued by the concept of the TV, where she would not need an aerial to watch TV as everything needed would be inside the Sky Glass TV (App. D, 71, ll. 22-23). Hence, she has a positive attitude toward purchasing the promoted TV because of that particular feature.

In terms of the code 'Behavioural belief - Negative', most statements concern attitudes toward the advertised product. Interviewee 2 said that the electric scooter promoted by Finn looks, "[...] as a toy for more rich people and that's fine. I think very little about that." (App. D, 28-29, ll. 29-1). By saying this, it appears that Interviewee 2 has a negative attitude toward the scooters because it has no use except for being a toy and further elaborates that he thinks the promotion is "a joke" (App. D, 29, ll. 27-28). A reason why Interviewee 2 has this negative attitude toward the product and the advertisement might be because of his expectations of Finn as an influencer who should promote educational content. With Finn's promotion of MINI, Interviewee 2 again expresses a negative attitude toward the product where he says, "I don't agree with their products as such." (App. D, 30, l. 7) and argues that, "We don't need MINI's that cost maybe thirty grand, we don't need them." (App. D, 29, ll. 18-19).

By investigating the theme of behavioural beliefs, it has been found that most statements concern the interviewees' attitudes toward the product and, to a lesser degree, the consequences of purchasing the promoted products. Interviewee 1 was the only interviewee to express rather explicit behavioural expectancies and consequences where it was found that several aspects were important to her, such as features of the products, the positive outcomes of the product experienced by the influencer, and consequences related to the influencer when purchasing the product.

4.5. Normative belief

As explained in section 2.2., normative beliefs concern the perceived social pressure to perform a particular behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, 130). Moreover, normative beliefs include two types of norms; injunctive, which deals with the perception of what should be done in relation to performing the behaviour, and descriptive norms, which concerns the perception of others performing or not performing the behaviour. The two norms form the totality of social pressure (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 131). The following section explores how the interviewees experience normative beliefs in relation to influencer marketing and sustainability. Indications of normative beliefs were found in the transcripts of Interviewee 2, 3, and 5; however, it can be argued that a sense of normative belief is present in all interviews

as the influencers themselves and their promotions in a way represent a normative belief as the influencers' behaviours demonstrate a behaviour they find to be acceptable, and this behaviour is transferred to the interviewees who observe and interpret this behaviour.

From the interview with Interviewee 2, it would seem that he, to a great extent, relies on injunctive norms as he often mentions his friends' opinions when arguing for his own attitudes. For example, when sharing his view on influencers and that he often associates influencers with self-promotion, he says, "That's where the negative association comes in for me at least and I know a lot of my friends think that too." (App. D, 17, 22-23). Even though this quote is not directly related to a behaviour, but an attitude, it can still provide an insight into Interviewee 2's attitudes, intention and, thereby, possibly, his future behaviour. As Interviewee 2 believes that his friends have the same attitude as him, his normative belief is confirming his negative attitude, probably meaning that it is relatively unlikely that Interviewee 2 is influenced by an influencer's promotion, further influencing his purchasing intentions and actual behaviour. Interviewee 2 also expresses a descriptive norm in relation to his negative view on Finn as Interviewee 2's friends have had a previous bad working experience with Finn, "I asked him afterward, "[...] Well, what do you guys think, you know, of Finn and Alice?" and they said, "oh, we were really pissed off with them!"" (App. D, 23, ll. 22-23). This descriptive normative belief has clearly influenced Interviewee 2's attitudes toward Finn negatively, as much of the previous analysis has demonstrated as well. Additionally, Interviewee 2's opinion of sustainability is also, to a certain degree, influenced by a normative belief. When explaining his attitude toward sustainability, he immediately refers to one of his best friends who works with sustainable designs and uses her explanation to account for his own opinion (App. D, 20, ll. 6-7). Finally, Interviewee 2 is influenced by a descriptive norm regarding entrepreneur Elon Musk, his local community, and two trustworthy influencers, as Interviewee 2 said that, "You wouldn't see Elon Musk doing something like that. Well, you wouldn't see… you wouldn't see some of the local people down here doing that. The… Lydia or Gale, you just wouldn't. You wouldn't." (App. D, 28, ll. 24-26). This is a descriptive norm as Interviewee 2 believes that these people are doing what should be done in terms of promoting and spreading the word of climate change and sustainability. Hence, these highlighted people are performing the "right" behaviour, whereas Finn is not. This analysis of Interviewee 2's normative beliefs would suggest that these beliefs have a strong influence on his intentions and behaviour. Another interviewee also emphasising elements related to normative beliefs is Interviewee 5. When Interviewee 5 was

accounting for her attitudes towards influencers, sustainability, and sponsored posts including sustainable products she referred to what she perceived other people to think, for example, "I'm generally not mad at sponsored posts in general. I think they're very… Uhm people don't like them but I don't have a problem with them." (App. D, 68, ll. 19-20). In all of her statements, she does not agree with the social norm or standard opinions that she refers to, nonetheless, she still includes them in her argumentation. A reason for this could be this social pressure and that she actually feels the pressure, meaning that it does, to some extent, influence her thought process but not necessarily her beliefs and attitudes, as she would claim that she did not view it in the same way. This could mean that this injunctive norms does not seem to influence her intentions or behaviour much. In terms of descriptive norms, Interviewee 5 refers to some of these. For example, when she refers to having seen other influencers promoting the same products (App. D, 71, ll. 3-4), it is an indication of a descriptive normative belief as it would seem that Interviewee 5 is influenced by several influencers, and, thereby, reminded of what the influencers want her and the other followers to do, namely clicking on a link, purchasing a product and so on. Having several influencers included in the same campaign is, to a high degree, contributing to the perceived social pressure. Finally, Interviewee 3 similarly relies on normative beliefs, one descriptive and one injunctive. The injunctive norm concerns Interviewee 3 believing that, "some people are attracted to influences that post about their real life as well." (App. D, 35, ll. 6-7), indicating that she perceives influencers sharing their real life is an acceptable behaviour, as a certain pressure by "some people" can be influencing Interviewee 3. In terms of the descriptive norm, Interviewee 3 refers to the MINI promotion by Finn, which, accordingly, also was promoted by several other UK influencers (App. D, 42, ll. 8-9). Once again, Interviewee 3 has possibly been exposed to a high degree of social pressure via the many different promotions from various influencers. By having several influencers promoting the same product, it can be perceived to be a more acceptable promotion, which potentially can influence Interviewee 3's attitudes and intention toward the product. She elaborates that she thinks highly of more influencers promoting the MINI, and she also has a positive attitude toward the electric car (App. D, 42, l. 12).

4.6. Control belief

Control beliefs are important to explore as attitudes and normative beliefs are influenced by perceived control and because a favourable attitude and social pressure can be insufficient in

terms of forming intentions and performing behaviours (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 154). Control beliefs include internal factors such as skills, abilities, motivation, and external factors including luck, circumstances, and other people. Control beliefs were found in the transcripts of Interviewee 1, 3, and 5.

Interviewee 1 expresses two types of control beliefs, one internal and one external. In terms of Interviewee 1's internal control belief, she said, "I think I'm always intrigued. Obviously, I like to be sustainable but I'm not always in the position to research and to find all of these things [...]" (App. D, 6, ll. 12-13). Because of this internal control belief of not always being able to do her own research on sustainable products, she finds it helpful when influencers promote these and do some of the research she cannot do herself. Of course, this requires that Interviewee 1 actually believes in what the influencer says, and as parts of the analysis have demonstrated, Interviewee 1 does find influencers to be credible, particularly Yasmin, whom she trusts and is very loyal towards. Additionally, it would seem that Interviewee 1 is rather motivated when it comes to making sustainable choices; however, it would also seem that her abilities and skills, to a certain degree, are lacking as she chooses to rely on Yasmin and other influencers' recommendations and promotions. Interviewee 1's external control belief deals with her financial situation in relation to Yasmin's promotion of the electric car. Interviewee 1 had a rather positive attitude toward the promotion of the car as, "Yeah, I think that it is sustainable moving away from fuel, which is always great. I mean, again if I had the money, I would definitely get an electric car and I think that is the way to go sustainability-wise." (App. D, 13, ll. 1-3). However, because of her perceived behavioural control of not having enough money to buy an electric car herself, the likelihood of her having an increased intention in terms of purchasing the car is low. Similarly, Interviewee 3 is very aware of the external control belief concerning finances (App. D, 43, l. 20; 43, l. 20; 46, ll. 14-15). Moreover, Interviewee 3 mentions another type of external control belief regarding her living in the countryside, hence, not believing that the scooter in Finn's promotion can be used in her hometown (App. D, 42, l. 17; 46, ll. 20-2). These two aspects of perceived behavioural control can be a significant barrier for Interviewee 3 to overcome in order for her intentions to purchase the scooter to be likely. To overcome these barriers, Interviewee 3 would need a certain amount of skills, abilities, willpower etc. to overcome the barrier. Based on her intentions regarding Finn's promotions (App. D, 46, l. 11), it does not seem that she is interested in overcoming the barriers, hence, not having any further intentions to pay more attention to the promotion. Interviewee 5 shares Interviewee 3's perception of control beliefs

in relation to Finns' promotion of the scooter, as she says, "I, again, don't live in London so it's not anything I would ever need, but I think it's good to promote things like this cause it's also definitely something…[...]" (App. D, 80, ll. 11-12). Here, she indicates that she has a fairly positive attitude toward the promotion, but she is less inclined to use the product because of her perceived behavioural control. This control belief is further reinforced by Interviewee 5 saying that she cannot drive or ride a bike (App. D, 81, ll. 1-2), meaning that she does not have the required skills to overcome her barriers.

This section on control beliefs has highlighted some of the aspects that have influenced the interviewees' perceived behavioural control. This has provided us with valuable knowledge in predicting and assessing the interviewees' intentions and behaviour in relation to sustainable purchases.

4.7. Intention to purchase sustainable product

With the different behavioural beliefs, attitudes, and credibility attributes analysed, the interviewees' intentions can now be explored. When dealing with the RAA's intention, it is believed that behavioural intentions can be an indication of the interviewees' readiness to perform the given behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010, 39). Additionally, when searching for expressions regarding intentions, the main dimension of characterising the intention is to look for the interviewees' evaluation of their likelihood to perform the behaviour. When analysing the transcripts in relation to intentions, two themes were created, Intention to purchase product and Intention to purchase sustainable product. The theme Intention to purchase product turned out to be rather small, with only two codes from two interviewees. Moreover, this theme concerns more general intentions, whereas the other theme Intention to purchase sustainable product is more specific and case-related. This section will commence with a short analysis of the theme Intention to purchase product followed by a more thorough analysis of Intention to purchase sustainable product.

An example of an interviewee expressing an intention in terms of purchasing a product promoted by an influencer is Interviewee 3, who says that, "I wouldn't buy everything she's promoting. But that's the same with anyone really." (App. D, 48, ll. 12-13). This quote is related to Interviewee 3 finding the influencer Poppy Deyes trustworthy, but she would still not blindly purchase every product Poppy promotes. This seems rather natural as not every

product would be relevant or affordable for Interviewee 3. However, the quote does demonstrate some type of readiness to buy some of Poppy's promoted products, as Interviewee 3 is not entirely dismissive of the likelihood of purchasing some products based on Poppy's promotions. Interviewee 5 also expresses a readiness related to the code 'Influencer influences intention - Yes' where she claims that, "I'm more likely to buy things on recommendations from smaller influencers who I, like, would know better and trust better than I would from someone, like, massive." (App. D, 66, ll. 14-16). This quote illustrating Interviewee 5's intention is closely related to her perception concerning smaller influencers being more trustworthy, which, to a high degree, explains her readiness and intention to buy products. Hence, in this case, Interviewee 5's intention is greatly influenced by her perception of smaller influencers being more trustworthy, further demonstrating the importance of influencers' perceived credibility.

With the first theme investigated, the bigger theme Intention to purchase sustainable product can now be analysed. This theme contains several codes such as 'Intention to purchase sustainable product - Influencer influences intention - Yes', which, by far, is the most prominent code represented in the theme. As the label indicates, this code concerns whether the influencers can influence our interviewees' purchase intentions, which is an essential code to this research. Within this code, Interviewee 1's intention especially seems to be influenced by influencers, as she said, "Yeah I would be influenced. There's lots of things that I would, like, like doing. I don't know if you've seen the new roller thing, face things - there's lots of things that I'm sceptical about and then I'll see somebody who I like say something good and I think, well they wouldn't lie because they're so nice even though I've never met them." (App. D, 5, ll. 8-11). Several aspects play a role in Interviewee 1 believing she is influenced by influencers. For instance, there is an aspect of honesty and personality properties present as she says that they would not lie and are nice, indicating that these credibility attributes have influenced Interviewee 1's purchase intentions. Moreover, Interviewee 1 perceives the influencers as a kind of 'test subject' (App. D, 5, l. 15), meaning that she likes that influencers try out the products and make recommendations or promotions, whereafter Interviewee 1 can evaluate whether the product would benefit her. In some way, this matches what was found in the literature review, where scholars argue that influencers influence consumers' purchase intention by trying the promoted product themselves, which transfers to influencers being perceived as trustworthy (Uzunoglu and Kip 2014). In relation to the specific example of Yasmin's promotion of the electric car, Interviewee 1 is not

particularly persuaded to actually buy the car, but Yasmin's promotion did influence her attitude, as she said, "It makes me feel like, maybe look into sustainable cars a bit more." (App. D, 12, l. 10). Even though it is not an immediate purchase intention and Interviewee 1 is not entirely ready to make such a big purchase, it did inspire her which can have a significant influence in terms of future intentions and purchases. An interesting intention from Interviewee 1 is when she combines aspects related to sustainability and credibility when explaining why Yasmin can influence her, "Yeah, sure. I would be more inclined to buy something because now I know it's all sustainable and she's been promoting it which means it's got a review from somebody that I, I feel like I know, but obviously I don't really know her." (App. D, 14, ll. 19-21). Based on this quote, it would seem that Interviewee 1 is influenced by Yasmin's sustainable persona and her perception of knowing Yasmin, which can be related to the concepts of parasocial interaction and homophily (c.f. section 1.1.2). This quote also contains a positive behavioural belief concerning Interviewee 1 having a positive evaluation of the sustainable product, which further contributes to the likelihood of her being more inclined to purchase the product based on Yasmin's promotion. Interviewee 5 is another interviewee expressing a readiness to buy a sustainable product, as she claims that she is ready to buy the Sky Glass TV promoted by Jim (App. D, 73, l. 14). However, in a later section, Interviewee 5 stated that she is not considering or in a position to buy a TV (App. D, 74, ll. 18-20), indicating that she is not likely to purchase the TV at the moment despite her readiness and favourable attitude toward the promotion and the product. This could indicate that her behavioural beliefs are positive, but her control beliefs hinder her from performing the behaviour. Finally, Interviewee 1 gives an interesting insight into why her purchase intention is influenced by influencers, as she prefers to see the product through Yasmin's life rather than seeing it from the brand's advertisement (App. D, 14, ll. 24-25). This is a clear indication of influencers being able to influence consumers in a different and, at times, more effective manner compared to the brands themselves.

Interviewee 4's intentions are also greatly influenced by influencers, both positively and negatively. In terms of her positive evaluations regarding purchase intentions, she highlights the influencer Grace Beverly, who supposedly influences her more compared to Niomi. It would seem that especially two aspects have importance in order for Interviewee 4 to be influenced, "Yeah, she's an influencer who promotes sustainability where she is very selective with her posts and I think if I saw her posting something like that, I'd be a bit more willing to buy it than with Niomi." (App. D, 56, ll. 4-6). First, Interviewee 4 highlights that

Grace is more sustainable than Niomi, and second, Grace is more selective in her promotions, meaning she does not accept every deal, which it seems that Interviewee 4 appreciates and finds more credible. This can be related back to the discussion of the influencers' self-interests and motivations where it would appear that Interviewee 4 perceives Grace to have more genuine motivations compared to Niomi who is, "in it for the money which I know is her job but… it's just money-driven, yeah." (App. D, 56, ll. 11-12). Interviewee 4's different perceptions of Niomi and Grace's motivations have a clear effect on Interviewee 4's purchase intentions, also meaning that the likelihood of Interviewee 4 purchasing any of Niomi's promoted products is rather unlikely, but because of her more positive attitudes toward Grace, she could be likely to purchase products based on Grace's recommendations and promotions. A noticeable remark from Interviewee 5 in terms of intentions, concerns Niomi being able to influence her even though Interviewee 5 did not know the brand or product beforehand (App. D, 77, 10-11). It would seem that this particular intention is influenced by a positive behavioural belief as she thinks, "[...] it's definitely something that appeals to me." (App. D, 77, l. 11). This positive evaluation of the product combined with Niomi who, "[...] seems very interested in the product." (App. D, 77, l. 3), seems to be two factors that influence Interviewee 5's purchase intention.

Within this theme, an 'opposite' code was created as well, namely 'Intention to purchase sustainable product - Influencer influences intention - No', meaning that this code concerns the interviewees not believing that they are influenced by the influencers' sustainable promotions. Interviewee 3, who was not represented in the previous code, has made several expressions concerned with her not being more inclined to purchase products based on influencer promotions. For example, Interviewee 3 expressed several times that she was not influenced by Finn or other influencers (App. D, 46, l. 11; 46, l. 14; 46, l. 24). According to Interviewee 3, "[...] it just comes down to the product. What the actual product is. If you can afford it. If it fits with your lifestyle. And not necessarily to do with who is promoting it." (App. D, 46, ll. 14-15). Thus, Interviewee 3 focuses more on the product being promoted and not who is promoting it when considering to purchase it. However, as also discussed in the section of normative beliefs, it can be argued that influencers represent a sense of the perceived social pressure. Hence, it is unlikely that the influencers do not influence Interviewee 3 at all. More specifically, Interviewee 3 follows Finn, whom she found to have a sustainable persona and has certain characteristics related to attractiveness, such as being good-looking (App D, 40, l. 17), meaning that Finn possesses some of the attributes that

could make Interviewee 3 perceive him to be more credible. Therefore, it would be likely that she, at some level, is influenced by him but without it translating directly to a purchase intention. Likewise, Interviewee 2 does not believe that he is particularly influenced by Finn's promotions (App. D, 29, ll. 5-6) or any sustainable promotion for that matter (App. D, 22, ll. 11-12). Overall, this relates well to the previous findings concerning Interviewee 2's attitudes toward influencers and influencer marketing, as he probably does not pay much attention to the promotions because of his negative attitudes. This can further be linked to why Interviewee 2 follows Finn, whom he associates with being an influencer now but not when he started following Finn, where he started following because, "I was interested and thinking, "well, who is this one guy? Why is he talking so much about sustainability and the science of it?" [...] And then he started working together a lot with this one girl Alice. Alice Aedy and I thought this is… this is starting to get really interesting as I know she's director of photography and that's sort of very similar job to mine, so I thought, well this just sort of doing very similar thing to me but they're there later on in their careers so that's why, that's why I started following." (App. D, 23, ll. 4-9). This indicates that Interviewee 2 did not follow Finn because of the influencer or influencer marketing aspects but rather because of similar interests and occupations. Hence, this can help explain why Interviewee 2's purchase intentions are not influenced much by Finn's promotions.

With the two most prominent codes from the theme Intention to purchase sustainable product analysed, the three additional codes' Intention to purchase sustainable product - Interest in product', 'Intention to purchase sustainable product - No interest in product', and 'Intention to purchase sustainable product - Interest in brand' will be explored. Each will be analysed in the following. In terms of the code' Intention to purchase sustainable product - Interest in product', Interviewee 1 provides an insight into her purchasing process on Instagram by stating that she would go on to the brand's Instagram profile instead of paying any further attention to the influencer's promotion of the brand's product (App. D, 10, ll. 12-13). This statement demonstrates that Interviewee 1, in this instance, does not rely much on the influencer's post but merely uses influencers as a source of inspiration for new products. Hence, it would seem that influencers do not play an essential role in Interviewee 1's purchase intention. However, it must be argued that the particular promotion has been a success if Interviewee 1 finds the product interesting enough to visit the brand's profile. In terms of an interviewee expressing not having an interest in the product and, therefore, not being inclined to purchase it based on the promotion is Interviewee 2 in relation to Finn's

scooter promotion. Here, Interviewee 2 clearly indicates that he has no purchase intention, as he said, "I would think it's a joke, yeah. I would be less inclined." (App. D, 29, 1. 27). Several aspects affect Interviewee 2's intentions in relation to the electric scooter, for instance, a negative behavioural belief and a different perception of a credible influencer who would be more appropriate to promote the scooter. According to Interviewee 2, Finn is not the right influencer to promote the product because of lacking qualifications, which contributes to Interviewee 2 being less inclined to purchase the product.

The final code to be explored is 'Intention to purchase sustainable product - Interest in brand'. This code differs slightly from the purpose of this research; nonetheless, it does provide useful knowledge concerning the interviewees' purchasing considerations when being exposed to sustainable promotions on Instagram. For example, Interviewee 4 is more interested in Niomi's promotion because of the brand she is promoting (App. D, 55, ll. 13-16). However, Interviewee 4 does rely rather much on Niomi's caption in the post, as Interviewee 4 believes that Niomi provides good background information regarding what the shoe is made from (App. D, 55, ll. 15-16). Based on these different aspects, it would seem that Interviewee 4 is slightly conflicted in terms of which aspects increased her intention and interest as she simultaneously refers to the brand itself, Niomi providing useful knowledge about the product and the product itself. Nonetheless, Niomi's promotion has been able to make Interviewee 4 disregard her usual negative attitude toward paid partnerships and increase her intention of purchasing the promoted shoe. Finally, Interviewee 5 also expressed some interest in the brand involved in Niomi's promotion (App. D, 77, ll. 13-15). What is noticeable in this example is that Interviewee 5 is not particularly interested in the specific product in the promotion, but she is interested in the brand, and she said that, "It would be something I would consider clicking into." (App. D, 77, ll. 14-15), meaning that Niomi's promotion has had a significant influence on Interviewee 5's intention to look into the brand.

This section has analysed some of the interviewees' indications of purchase intentions and has found that the influencers' promotions have a considerable influence on the interviewees' intentions. Furthermore, the section explored some of the different aspects influencing the intentions, where the codes demonstrated that the product, brand, and influencer itself contribute to increasing the likelihood of the purchase intentions.

4.8. Behaviour

The final theme to be analysed is Behaviour. This theme includes codes that both relate to more overall behaviours; 'Behaviour', 'Sustainable behaviour', and 'Has bought sustainable products', and codes more closely related to influencer marketing; 'Has bought product because of influencer', and 'Has bought sustainable product because of influencer'. The main focus in this section concerns the codes related to influencer marketing, as these may provide a greater understanding of the influencers' role in performing a purchase. However, we first explore the codes related to more overall behaviours.

In relation to Finn's promotion concerning electric scooters, which may be used in larger cities, Interviewee 3 explains that she usually walks wherever she can (App. D, 42, l. 20). Interviewee 3 lives in the countryside, where public transportation possibilities may be less available compared to larger cities. Therefore, it could be argued that Interviewee 3's behaviour of walking is influenced by her demographics, which has been further elaborated as a control belief in section 4.6. Prior to stating this behaviour, Interviewee 3 says, "I don't think I'd ever use a scooter." (App. D, 42, l. 15). Hence, it can be seen that her current behaviour and her perception of what she generally does influence her intention not to use the promoted product.

Another type of behaviour revolves around our interviewee's sustainable behaviour. Several of the interviewees expressed sustainable behaviour both in terms of more overall sustainable measures and in terms of purchasing sustainable products. Six years ago, Interviewee 2 decided to cut out red meat from his diet and will now only eat fish on special occasions or if he catches the fish himself (App. D, 21, ll. 4-9). Among other initiatives, Interviewee 3 buys items with less plastic wrapping (App. D, 37, ll. 24-25) and refills shampoo and conditioner at a local shop (App. D, 38, ll. 4-5). Interviewee 4 argues that she does not purchase from companies that she knows do not retail any sustainable products (App. D, 51, ll. 6-7). Finally, Interviewee 5 buys second-hand clothes (App. D; 67, ll 4-5), refills her deodorant (App. D, 67, l. 7), and she uses the website called good on you to verify the sustainability of brands (App. D, 68, ll. 8-12). As these examples illustrate, several of our interviewees already perform certain sustainable behaviours, and it is, therefore, more likely that these interviewees would purchase other sustainable products compared to people who have rarely performed sustainable behaviour.

It has been found that Interviewee 1 and 4 have purchased products because of an influencer's promotion. Interviewee 1 said, "They are called FIGHT vitamins and I bought them because she [Yasmin Johal] advertised them. I think actually quite a while ago, and I got them because of her [...]" (App. D, 7, ll. 6-7). In this quote, Interviewee 1 explicitly explains that she chose to purchase the vitamins because of Yasmin. When asked why Interviewee 1 purchased the product, she mentioned several aspects that influenced her behaviour. First of all, Interviewee 1 was searching for gummy vitamins, like the FIGHT vitamins; however, she had a previous bad experience with such vitamins that tasted bad. Hence, at this stage, it seems that Interviewee 1's outcome expectancies were influenced by her previous experiences. Then, once Yasmin promoted the FIGHT vitamins, Interviewee 1's outcome expectancies seem to have changed as she does not believe that Yasmin would lie about the taste of the vitamins, "[...] and I felt like she wouldn't lie [...] So that made me think that I could try it." (App. D, 7, ll. 11-13). This shows Interviewee 1's perception of Yasmin's trustworthiness influences her behavioural beliefs to such a degree that Yasmin's credibility influenced Interviewee 1's behaviour. Interviewee 1 further said that now that she has had previous good experiences with products advertised by Yasmin, i.e. the vitamins, she now trusts Yasmin's recommendations to a higher degree (App. D, 14, ll. 4-5). This indicates that Interviewee 1 may now be more inclined to purchase other products that Yasmin advertises, including sustainable products.

Interviewee 4 explains that she has previously bought a sustainable razor advertised by the influencer Grace Beverley (App. D, 56, ll. 21-22). Again, several aspects appear to play a part in the purchasing behaviour. Interviewee 4 said that she had previously heard of the brand with the sustainable razor (App. D, 57, ll. 9-10), which possibly influenced her interest in the product. Then, Interviewee 4 said that once Grace advertised the razor, she got inspired to purchase the razor herself (App. D, 57, ll. 10-11). What Interviewee 4 liked about Grace's promotion was that, "[...] she gave a whole breakdown of the razor and why it's sustainable and a bit about the brand as well and where they come from." (App. D, 57, ll. 1-2). This relates to the dimension of expertise where Grace appears to have knowledge about the promoted product. Hence, it may once again be argued that the influencer's credibility, in this case Grace's expertise, has had an influence on a sustainable purchasing behaviour.

The first findings presented in this theme regard more overall behaviours performed by our interviewees. They give a greater understanding of why some of our interviewees might be more inclined to purchase sustainable products advertised by influencers. The second half illustrates that influencers' credibility plays a role in purchase behaviour by influencing the behavioural beliefs associated with purchasing the promoted product.

4.9. Synthesis of influencer credibility and intention

With all of the themes and related codes analysed, the following section will sum up the findings in relation to each interviewee. This will enable us to connect all of the findings from the various codes and discuss how the specific interviewee has been influenced in relation to the credibility attributes and concepts from the RAA.

Interviewee 1's interview primarily revolved around the promotions of Yasmin Johal, who is an influencer Interviewee 1 finds credible. Throughout the preceding part of the analysis, it was found that Interviewee 1, to a great degree, relies on perceived trustworthiness which influences her purchase intention and behaviour. It appears that perceived trustworthiness, in the form of honesty, reduces her scepticism toward the product and the promotion. In relation to this, it was further found that Interviewee 1 finds influencers more credible when they have used the promoted product prior to the promotion. Moreover, Interviewee 1 finds it important that influencers are genuine in order to perceive them as trustworthy, and this may be showcased by being true to yourself and your life, e.g. not editing your face and sharing the good and bad parts of life. Besides Interviewee 1 finding Yasmin trustworthy based on the above, her trust in Yasmin further comes from a previous positive experience Interviewee 1 has had concerning a product Yasmin promoted. This positive experience has reinforced her trust in Yasmin and has made Yasmin reliable in the eyes of Interviewee 1. Attractiveness was found to be a dimension that supports trustworthiness as the personality property of being nice influences Interviewee 1's perception of Yasmin's honesty. In relation to attractiveness, it was further found that Interviewee 1 perceives herself and Yasmin to have some similarities. Moreover, Interviewee 1 likes it when Yasmin appears in the photos with the promoted products as she finds Yasmin to be good-looking. Finally, the most important finding concerning expertise is that Interviewee 1 finds it important that influencers only use the word 'sustainability' when the products actually are sustainable. This shows that Interviewee 1 expects influencers to have a certain degree of knowledge of the promoted

products. It can be seen that Interviewee 1's trust in Yasmin influences her purchase intention. For example, it has been found that Interviewee 1's behavioural beliefs are influenced. By finding Yasmin trustworthy, Influencer 1 believes and trusts what Yasmin says about the products she promotes, e.g. that a product has been life-changing, that it makes her happy, or that something tastes good, and this influences Interviewee 1's outcome expectancies as she believes that she will experience the same outcome by purchasing the promoted products. Moreover, it was found that Interviewee 1' internal control belief of not being able to research the products herself is not a barrier because of the perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the influencer. She trusts that the influencer has researched the promoted products and, therefore, Interviewee 1's internal control belief does not influence her purchase intention as greatly as it would, had she not perceived the influencer to possess expertise and trustworthiness. Hence, Interviewee 1's behavioural beliefs and control beliefs are positively influenced when she perceives the influencer to possess trustworthiness and expertise, and this influences her intention to purchase the promoted sustainable products. Finally, according to the RAA, when one has a favourable intention toward performing a behaviour, they are more likely to actually do it. This is also the case with Interviewee 1 where it can be seen that her positive outcome expectancy toward a promoted product, influenced by the influencer's perceived trustworthiness, has influenced Interviewee 1's purchase intention to such a degree that she actually purchased the promoted product. Thus, Interviewee 1's purchase intention and behaviour are influenced by influencers' credibility as perceived trustworthiness and expertise influence her behavioural beliefs and control beliefs.

An aspect that has been pervasive throughout the analysis of Interviewee 2's interview is his negative attitude toward influencers which has been found to influence credibility as he would not trust influencers who call themselves influencers. On the other hand, he argues that influencers appear more credible when they promote sustainable products, which likely is related to his positive attitude toward sustainable products. According to Interviewee 2, trustworthiness comes in the form of being honest and transparent about the promotions the influencers are doing. However, he would always be sceptical toward promotions as he is very aware that the influencer is being paid for talking positively about the promoted product. A way in which an influencer can be perceived more trustworthy is if they refer to an outside source, preferably an expert of some kind. This illustrates that expertise again influences the perceived trustworthiness. Additionally, in terms of expertise, Interviewee 2 prefers that

influencers who promote sustainable products are somehow experienced within the field. According to Interviewee 2, Finn is expected to express more expertise in his sustainable promotions because of his sustainable persona compared to other influencers who are less focused on sustainability. The main reason why Interviewee 2 started following Finn was because of their similarities, an aspect of attractiveness. By having these similarities, Interviewee 2 is more likely to identify with Finn, which, theoretically, would make Interviewee 2 more likely to adopt the same attitudes and behaviours as Finn. However, the findings from the preceding analysis show that Interviewee 2 is not positively influenced by Finn's promotion despite their similarities. Interviewee 2 holds a negative attitude toward both the MINI and the electric scooter, which influences his attitude toward the promotion negatively. Interviewee 2 does not seem to find Finn honest and transparent in his promotions and dislikes that Finn earns money on these promotions when he should be sharing educational content. Hence, Interviewee 2's behavioural beliefs can be slightly influenced by Finn's lack of perceived trustworthiness because Interviewee 2 does not trust that the promoted products have the sustainable outcome that Finn argues they have. It further appears that Interviewee 2's negative outcome expectancy of purchasing the products influences his purchasing intention and behaviour negatively. As mentioned, Interviewee 2 expressed a great importance of perceived expertise but did not believe that Finn expressed expertise in his promotions. Interviewee 2's behavioural beliefs could possibly be positively influenced through a promotion from an influencer he perceives to be credible; however, our interview has not been able to demonstrate this.

Based on the interview with Interviewee 3, it was found that she perceived credibility to be more important when influencers promote sustainable products compared to non-sustainable products. Interviewee 3 particularly connected credibility with consistency, especially when dealing with sustainability. She believes sustainable influencers should be very consistent in remaining sustainable in order to be perceived as a credible sustainability influencer. When elaborating on what influencers could do to be perceived as credible, she emphasised the importance of interaction between the influencer and the followers. In addition to the aspect of interaction, it would seem that Interviewee 3 highly valued the perception of homophily and PSI as this contributed to the influencers and followers connecting on a deeper level, which she found to be more credible compared to superficial influencers who do not prioritise interaction. Moreover, Interviewee 3 emphasised the importance of influencers being believable and honest. These attributes are essential to her as she often associates influencer

marketing with fake deals, which is why it would be important for Interviewee 3 to perceive the influencer to be believable and honest. She further elaborated that influencers could portray believability and honesty by being selective in their partnerships, indicating that they are not solely motivated by self-interest, such as money, but actually care about the product. In terms of expertise, Interviewee 3 found experiences to be more important compared to actual knowledge or qualifications. According to Interviewee 3, the attribute of perceived personal experiences contributes to the influencer's believability. Within the attribute of attractiveness, Interviewee 3 particularly found the concept of similarity to having a positive influence on her view on influencers. She even mentions that relatability is the best way influencers can influence their followers, meaning that similarity and relatability are important for her. This also helps explain why Interviewee 3 was not persuaded by Finn's promotions because of the lack of similarity between the two, which further directly influences her purchase intention. Interestingly, Interviewee 3 did not express many behavioural beliefs due to her being very influenced by her control beliefs. For instance, even though Interviewee 3 liked Finn's promotion of the electric MINI-car and she likes that he promotes sustainable products, her control beliefs in terms of finance were a significant barrier, resulting in her not forming any significant behavioural beliefs about the products. Interviewee 3 was, to a certain extent, influenced by a normative belief as she had noticed that several UK influencers promoted the MINI, meaning that the perception of social pressure can have influenced her into liking the promotion more. Additionally, Interviewee 3 was influenced by an injunctive norm concerning her belief that, "some people are attracted to influences that post about their real life as well." (App. D, 35, ll. 6-7). Interestingly, this could indicate that this normative belief can potentially influence how she perceives influencers to be credible as the part of "posting about real life" can be related to the aspect of honesty. Hence, in this case, Interviewee 3's normative belief could influence how she assesses influencers' trustworthiness which should be illustrated by posting about one's real life. Circling back to Interviewee 3's perceived control beliefs, these were found to highly influence her intentions. She further indicates that her intentions can be influenced positively by trustworthy influencers. However, generally, Interviewee 3 does not believe that she is influenced much by influencers as she focuses more on the product and whether it is relevant to her or not. Thus, from the examples presented to Interviewee 3, it appears that her control beliefs were a barrier to such a degree that her purchase intention and behaviour were not influenced by credibility. However, this did not prevent her from forming a positive attitude

toward the promotion of sustainable products, as she appreciates that Finn spreads the word about sustainable products through promotions.

An essential and consistent aspect of Interviewee 4's interview has been the importance of influencers being very selective with their collaborations, and this aspect of selectiveness has, to a high degree, been her main criteria in relation to credibility. This attention to selectiveness was also a critical point when discussing Niomi Smart, whom Interviewee 4 did not perceive as credible due to her not being consistent and selective with her brand collaborations. The reason behind this was related to the influencer's motivations being perceived as being money-driven. The same perceived motivation was also important in terms of the products promoted, as Interviewee 4 found it more credible when the influencers had used the products before entering the collaborations. If they did not, Interviewee 4 would assume that the influencers promoted the product because of the money. Hence, the influencers' motivations and self-interest are of great importance to Interviewee 4. She did not find Niomi credible, but Interviewee 4 included another influencer whom she did find credible, and here it was found that she perceived Grace to be more credible due to her sustainable lifestyle and consistency in working with sustainable brands. Because she found Grace credible, she purchased a product from one of her promotions, especially due to the attribute of expertise being represented by providing a lot of background information about the product. Within the attribute of expertise, the two aspects of knowledge and experience particularly played a role in her purchasing the product. With Interviewee 4, the illusion of a friendship also influenced her positively due to the personal connection it entailed, hence contributing to the influencer being more trustworthy. The attribute of attractiveness also influences Interviewee 4, specifically lifestyle characteristics, which is the primary reason why Interviewee 4 follows Niomi. However, it would still seem that perceived trustworthiness is more important as Interviewee 4 does not find Niomi to be a particularly credible influencer in spite of her liking Niomi's lifestyle. Another indication of trustworthiness being the attribute that influences Interviewee 4 the most is when she compared Niomi's promotion with an act, which implies that Interviewee 4 believes that Niomi is being untruthful and is pretending. Additionally, she does not find it genuine when the captions seem scripted, once again highlighting Interviewee 4's focus on trustworthiness. The lack of trustworthiness and general credibility is rather clearly influencing Interviewee 4's perception of Niomi, also meaning that she probably is less inclined to purchase any products based on Niomi's promotions. On the contrary, we found that Interviewee 4's

purchase intentions were stronger when discussing the more trustworthy influencer, Grace. Hence, it appears that trustworthiness is an important factor for Interviewee 4. Unfortunately, the interview with Interviewee 4 did not uncover any significant indications of how credibility may or may not influence behavioural, normative, and control beliefs. However, it would seem that credibility influences her behavioural beliefs in terms of forming an interest in the promoted sustainable product.

Our final participant, Interviewee 5, has personal experience of working as an influencer herself and argued that anyone can promote sustainable products as long as one's persona does not contradict sustainability to a great degree. However, according to Interviewee 5, sustainable influencers should be aware of not promoting products that are not sustainable since this influences their perceived credibility. This is important to Interviewee 5, as she finds it important that influencers are consistent with their purpose and their personal brand in order to be perceived as credible. The preceding analysis found that Interviewee 5 perceived influencers to possess trustworthiness when they are honest, transparent, authentic, and genuine in their promotions. The aspect of illusionary friendships is also present in the interview of Interviewee 5, as she finds influencers whom she has communicated with to be more trustworthy. Trustworthiness is an important dimension for Interviewee 5's purchase intention as she argues that she would be more likely to purchase products recommended by influencers with whom she has communicated and trusts more. Regarding expertise, Interviewee 5 perceives influencers to possess more expertise within a specific field when the influencer's Instagram account revolves around that specific field, i.e. an influencer is perceived to have more expertise within sustainability when the influencer is sticking to the niche of sustainability on their Instagram. To Interviewee 5, it is important that influencers are knowledgeable about the products they promote so greenwashing is less likely to occur. According to Interviewee 5, influencers can also 'borrow' expertise from outside sources in order to be perceived as more credible. In relation to attractiveness, Interviewee 5 appreciates some sense of similarity between herself and the influencer. Moreover, lifestyle characteristics and personality properties are important for Interviewee 5. In relation to the TV promoted by Jim, Interviewee 5 expresses a positive outcome expectancy toward the product; however, it is difficult to determine whether Jim's perceived credibility influences this outcome expectancy. On the other hand, it has been found that her normative beliefs influence her in some way, as she has seen several influencers promote the TV and might, therefore, perceive an aspect of social pressure toward purchasing the TV too. Moreover, this

social pressure might be a reason why she expresses a positive outcome expectancy in relation to her behavioural beliefs. This can possibly be enhanced by seeing influencers, whom Interviewee 5 perceives to be credible, promote the TV. Concerning Niomi's promotion of the sustainable jumpsuit, Interviewee 5 expresses a positive behavioural belief as she has a positive attitude toward the promoted sustainable product, which appears to be a result of Niomi's perceived credibility. Interviewee 5 argues that Niomi appears to be very interested in the product, which can be understood as Niomi being authentic and genuine. Moreover, Interviewee 5 finds Niomi trustworthy because of her sustainable lifestyle, so when Niomi talks about how the promoted product fits in with her sustainable life, Interviewee 5 may perceive that the product would also fit into her own lifestyle, where she attempts to be more sustainable. From the analysis of Interviewee 5, it appears that credibility influences her in different ways. Accordingly, Interviewee 5 expresses that trustworthiness influences her purchase intention, which can possibly influence her behavioural beliefs.

5. Discussion

With the analysis completed, we will now put our findings into perspective and discuss various results, complications and consequences of our thesis.

5.1. Findings

As also discussed in section 2.2.1., we expected the concepts of the RAA to be more intertwined and related than Fishbein and Ajzen suggested. This expectation has been demonstrated in the analysis where we found that the three beliefs, to a high degree, influenced each other. This was, for instance, illustrated in the example of Interviewee 5, where normative beliefs affected her behavioural beliefs (c.f. section 4.9). Therefore, we would suggest that the theory prospectively considers this to a greater extent than it currently does.

The same point can be applied to the three credibility attributes. For example, we often found that expertise and attractiveness contributed to consumers perceiving influencers as more trustworthy. This further indicates that trustworthiness appears to be the most important attribute of credibility when it comes to influencer marketing, which relates well to Uzunoglu and Kip's finding that influencers influence consumers' purchase intention through trustworthiness. This finding of ours contradicts Ohanian's finding from 1991, where she found that perceived expertise was the attribute that influences consumers' purchase intention the most. Discovering that the importance of the different attributes differs may result from credibility being a receiver-based and perceptual phenomenon. This is further seen in the findings where our interviewees view the different attributes differently, both in terms of which is more important to them and how influencers can express the different attributes in their promotions.

Regarding potential additions to the theories and concepts, we found that several of our interviewees contributed with two additional aspects that could influence the influencers' credibility: consistency and selectiveness. These two aspects could not be related directly to the already existing credibility attributes, but they would appear to impact several of our interviewees significantly. Both aspects are especially connected to influencer marketing, as consistency refers to influencers being consistent with the types of promotions they do and

selectiveness being directed at the influencers needing to be selective when accepting collaborations in order to be perceived as credible. We argue that these two aspects are important to consider in terms of credibility when doing influencer marketing. Therefore, it could be interesting to investigate these two aspects more in-depth to understand their impact on perceived credibility. Additionally, such investigation might uncover other similar aspects that could be gathered in one umbrella term, as with trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

Our analysis found that perceived credibility influences several aspects of a consumer's purchase behaviour, including behavioural beliefs and control beliefs, thereby influencing intention and behaviour. On the other hand, we found that normative beliefs could influence how our interviewees assess credibility, as they would draw on friends' attitudes and what they think other people find credible when forming their own attitudes of perceived credibility. Moreover, it was found that background factors can influence perceived credibility, e.g. if one has a previous negative experience, it may influence perceived credibility negatively, or if one has a general positive attitude toward sustainability, it can influence perceived credibility positively. Finally, in our coding process, the theme Attitude was found inductively, and it was subsequently found to influence perceived credibility, e.g. if one has a negative attitude toward a specific influencer, it can influence the influencers' perceived credibility negatively.

As stated in the literature review, influencers can be divided into different categories depending on their number of followers, but, in this study, it was decided that influencer size was not of interest. However, during our interviews, it was found that some of our interviewees' perception of credibility was influenced by the size of the influencer. Moreover, other scholars have found that the number of followers impacts the perception of the influencer's popularity (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders 2017) and that popularity enhances perceived credibility and influences purchase behaviour positively (Hill, Troshani, and Chandrasekar 2017). For further research, it could be interesting to investigate how the size of influencers affects perceived credibility and purchase behaviour concerning sustainable promotions.

Moreover, our findings suggest that our interviewees, to some degree, were sceptical when seeing promoted posts on Instagram. This correlates well with the finding from De Veirman

and Hudders (2020), who found that consumers become more sceptical toward posts with advertisement disclosure and that it influences the perceived credibility of the influencer negatively. In this relation, we found that the interviewees questioned the influencers' motives and self-interests when they promoted certain products. Many of the interviewees were aware of the aspect of the influencers earning money on these sustainable promotions, once again highlighting the importance of being perceived as credible. A final aspect to be put into perspective from the literature reviews concerns the perceived fit or match between influencer and product, where scholars have found that such fit enhances purchase intention (Kim & Kim 2020; Torres, Augusto & Matos 2019; Silva et al. 2020 a; Kapitan & Silvera 2016) and influence influencers' credibility positively (Martínez-López et al. 2020). This aspect has also been found in our study, where interviewees stress the importance of a perceived fit in order to be perceived as credible.

5.2. Implications and Perspective

In terms of possible implications of this research, we have been aware of which questions we asked our interviewees and how we articulated the questions. However, we also acknowledge that we have influenced the interviewees with our questions and wording, which has had certain implications in terms of the answers they provided.

When specifying and choosing our sample criteria, we made certain choices, thereby meaning that we also made certain deselections. We chose to focus on young British consumers within the context of sustainability but had we chosen other sample criteria, our findings probably would have been very different. However, before settling on these criteria, we considered focusing on US consumers in relation to the fashion industry, which would have resulted in very different findings due to a different culture and other products. For example, it turned out that our interviewees had rather strong attitudes toward sustainability, even though that was not a criterion, and these types of strong attitudes had not necessarily been found in an industry like fashion. Moreover, our choice of platform, i.e. Instagram, also had implications for the research, as we, for example, through the attribute of attractiveness, found that some of the interviewees appreciated visually pleasing pictures. The same attitudes might not have been that apparent if we had investigated influencer marketing on Facebook or Twitter, as these platforms are less focussed on visual aspects. Furthermore, we chose to explore the younger population, 18-34-year-olds, meaning that our interviewees were more likely to be

familiar with influencers, using Instagram, and being exposed to influencer marketing. Had we chosen the slightly older age group, we would probably also have had other findings due to different generational cultures and customs. Finally, as also mentioned in section 3.3.1., we attempted to recruit eight interviewees, but only five individuals ended up participating, meaning that we potentially missed out on other perspectives and different attitudes.

Finally, this thesis has contributed empirically to the study of influencer marketing. Through the five qualitative and in-depth interviews, our case study has provided valuable understandings of how influencers' perceived credibility can influence sustainable consumer behaviour on Instagram. We have, in particular, contributed with new research on influencer marketing on the UK market, as we found that many current studies focused on the US market. Finally, our literature review demonstrated that many studies applied quantitative methods, whereas we have relied on qualitative methods, which has provided us with a unique understanding of our five interviewees' attitudes and beliefs about sustainable promotions on Instagram.

This study can prove valuable for practitioners, influencers, and brands who work with influencer marketing and sustainable marketing on Instagram. Through our analysis, it has been found that trustworthiness is of great importance in relation to influencing sustainable purchase behaviour, whilst expertise and attractiveness can be used as supplementary attributes to enhance trustworthiness. This is important for practitioners to know as our analysis found that consumers always are a bit sceptical towards sponsored content on Instagram, where trustworthiness can then reduce this scepticism. Additionally, practitioners should be aware of their target audience as the audiences' control beliefs can be crucial for how credibility can influence purchase intention. It was found that perceived credibility had little to no influence on purchase intention when our interviewees had a control belief that influenced their intention negatively. Moreover, perceived credibility hardly influenced these control beliefs. This indicates that control beliefs were rather important for our interviewees regarding whether influencers influenced their purchase intention positively. Hence, from our findings, practitioners should be aware that influencers' perceived credibility will be most effective in influencing behavioural beliefs. Moreover, a good perceived match between influencer and product has been an important factor for our interviewees. Therefore, brands should do their due diligence and research the influencers before considering a collaboration. Influencers should, likewise, consider if the brand and product fit in with their personal brand

and lifestyle and, thereby, be selective, as several of our interviewees wanted the influencers to be. When all these different aspects are considered by brands, it could be beneficial to utilise several influencers for the specific campaign, as this was found to influence the interviewees' normative beliefs and, thereby, add to the social pressure, further influencing the interviewees' purchase intentions.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to investigate how the perceived credibility of UK influencers on Instagram influences young UK consumers' beliefs and attitudes in relation to purchasing advertised sustainable products. This has been investigated through a case study where five young UK consumers were interviewed, and their beliefs and attitudes were analysed.

Through the analysis, we found that an influencer's perceived credibility can influence several factors that affect the consumers' sustainable purchasing behaviour. As expected, it was found that the influence of perceived credibility is contextually dependent and differs from interviewee to interviewee, meaning that consumers interpret credibility differently from one another and that the importance of credibility differs depending on the context in which the sustainable product is promoted. In relation to this, a significant finding from our analysis concerns that the attribute of perceived trustworthiness appeared to be the most important credibility attribute for several of our interviewees. However, our interviewees differ in their perceptions of what trustworthiness entails, as our synthesis demonstrated. For example, one interviewee argued that trustworthiness could be expressed through the aspect of honesty, where the interviewee says that influencers should be honest about their motivation for doing collaborations. On the other hand, another interviewee would perceive the influencer as trustworthy when the influencer had previously used the promoted product. Hence, our interviewees all emphasised different aspects that need to be present in order for influencers to be perceived as trustworthy, but they did also, at times, agree on certain aspects, e.g. that influencers appear more trustworthy when there is an illusion of friendship. Additionally, it was found that the attributes of perceived expertise and attractiveness were important dimensions, for example, being knowledgeable about the promoted product and brand or looking happy in the photo. However, it was found that expertise and attractiveness were particularly important attributes in supporting and enhancing perceived trustworthiness. Hence, in relation to our interviewees, it can be concluded that perceived trustworthiness is the most important attribute of credibility for influencing our interviewees' sustainable purchasing behaviour.

Perceived credibility appeared to influence both behavioural beliefs and, to a degree, control beliefs. Our analysis found that perceived credibility could influence the outcome

expectancies of the promoted product, e.g. by trusting that a product tastes good. Moreover, perceived credibility was found to potentially influence control beliefs, for example, by helping overcome internal control barriers by trusting an influencer's research. Based on our interviewees, we can, thus, conclude that perceived credibility was capable of influencing behavioural beliefs and internal control beliefs but not external control beliefs, as many of our interviewees were not able to overcome their external control beliefs and related barriers, despite possibly having favourable behavioural and normative beliefs. Hence, this study has found that perceived credibility can influence sustainable purchasing intentions and behaviours by influencing behavioural beliefs and, to a degree, influencing internal control beliefs.

Not only did our analysis demonstrate how perceived credibility influences our interviewees' sustainable purchasing intention and behaviour, but the analysis also found that background factors, attitudes, and normative beliefs influence how our interviewees assess influencers' perceived credibility. We did not necessarily expect background factors to influence perceived credibility; however, it was, for example, found that previous experiences influenced perceived trustworthiness. Additionally, the theme regarding attitudes demonstrated the importance of the interviewees' attitudes toward several aspects concerning whether they perceive influencers and their promotions as credible or not; for instance, it was found that influencers who are perceived as sustainable are also perceived as more credible when advertising for sustainable products. Finally, this study did not find examples where perceived credibility could directly influence the interviewees' normative beliefs; however, the interviewees' normative beliefs were able to influence how our interviewees assessed influencers' credibility. Therefore, this would suggest that background factors, normative beliefs, and attitudes are important in terms of how the interviewees perceive an influencer's credibility.

Based on this case study, it can be concluded that the perceived credibility of UK influencers is capable of influencing the young UK interviewees' attitudes and beliefs concerning purchasing sustainable products based on influencer promotions. This is mainly done through the attribute of trustworthiness which can influence the interviewees' behavioural and control beliefs. Additionally, it can be concluded that aspects of the Reasoned Action Approach and attitudes can influence the young UK interviewees' perceptions of UK influencers' credibility.

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