University of Antwerp
Faculty Social Sciences
Academic year 2019 - 2020

MASTER'S THESIS

WHAT KIND OF BELIEFS DO FOLLOWERS HOLD ABOUT
INFLUENCERS' SPONSORED CONTENT?

A qualitative research in continuation of
Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan's Social Media Influencer Value-model

Lina Safi

Master's in Communication Science - specialization Strategic Communication
20175580

Thesis supervisor: Prof. Dr. Sara Pabian
Thesis Co-assessor: Mandate Assistant Katrien Maldoy

Universiteit
Antwerpen

Abstract

In de afgelopen jaren is Influencer Marketing de nieuwste marketingstrategie geworden waarin influencers, individuen met een aanzienlijk groot bereik op sociale media platformen zoals Instagram, worden gevraagd om een bepaald product of dienst te promoten in ruil voor geld of gratis producten. Dit zal in ruil daarvoor koopintentie genereren. De huidige studie heeft betrekking op het Social Media Influencer Value (SMIV)-model van het onderzoek van Chen Lou en Shupei Yuan (2019a), om te begrijpen hoe merkgerelateerde en gesponsorde inhoud van invloed is op consumptiegerelateerde beslissingen. Dit aan de hand van determinanten van bron geloofwaardigheid: expertise, vertrouwen, aantrekkelijkheid en gelijkenis. Er werden zeven diepte-interviews gehouden om te begrijpen wat voor overtuigingen volgers aanhangen met merkgerelateerde en gesponsorde inhoud. We benaderden de gegevens door middel van een thematische analyse omdat dit de juiste methode was om thema's en patronen binnen onze gegevens te identificeren, analyseren en rapporteren (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Met behulp van het SMIV-model hebben we conclusies getrokken op basis van een uitgebreid theoretisch model en hebben we kunnen concluderen dat naast de sceptische overtuigingen die volgers hebben voor merk- en gesponsorde inhoud, er ook economische redenen zijn zoals budget, behoefte, prijs, transportkosten en belastingen die een grote rol spelen bij het nemen van consumptiegerelateerde beslissingen.

Zoekwoorden: Influencer marketing, sociale media platformen, Instagram, SMIV-model, diepte-interviews, determinanten van geloofwaardigheid, gesponsorde inhoud, merkinhoud

Aantal woorden: 8,497 woorden

Table of contents

Table of Figures

1   Introduction

In recent years, Influencer Marketing has become the latest marketing strategy in which influencers, individuals with a considerable high reach on social media platforms, are asked to promote a certain product or service in exchange for money or free products (Müller, Mattke, & Maier, 2018). In return, companies wish to see a purchase intention among followers (Müller et al., 2018).

This master thesis discusses the credibility of influencer's sponsored and branded content, among influencer's followers. How do followers stand towards branded/sponsored content? How does this affect their purchase intention? Previous research implemented a theoretical comprehensive model, the SMIV-model, which discusses different concepts from different scientific theories. These concepts have their own determinants which decides how trust in branded content and brand awareness effects the follower's purchase intention (Lou & Yuan, 2019a).

However, it failed to discuss how source credibility and its determinants: expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and similarity influenced follower's trust in branded posts which in their turn influences follower's brand awareness and follower's purchase intention. Because previous research failed to discuss this, our thesis in continuation of Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan's (2019a) finds out what beliefs followers hold towards sponsored and branded content and how this in turn influences follower's purchase intention.

On the basis of a qualitative research, we are able to answer this question. More specifically, we will hold in-depth interviews with followers to discuss this matter. This will be coded and analyzed with NVivo to give us the insights we need to conduct our results and discussion. We hope that with these findings, we can fill the gap of the basic understanding of how Influencer Marketing, influencers and their branded or sponsored content affect consumer's behavior. This research serves as a foundation for how Flemish influencers and brand companies can use these determinants to construct their Influencer Marketing collaboration in a suitable and credible way, since there are not strict guidelines and rules about Influencer Advertising in Belgium (JEP, 2018).

1.1   COVID-19

December 31, 2019. The outbreak of a new coronavirus infection infected millions of people around the globe. We are advised to stay quarantined at home until the numbers of infection decreases and/or a vaccine can be made to cure people who are suffering from this disease. This also has an effect on the global mental health.

As a college student, this impacts me in several ways: my internship in Amsterdam is on hold which means I am back home in Belgium, my goals and motivation to finish my masters this year are completely lost and the stress that comes with this leaves me to struggle with my mental health again during home quarantining and social distancing. This interferes with my ability to think, feel, work, study, eat and sleep.

Studying at home is not easy for everyone and especially not if you live in a small house with a big family. I always need a break from the world and my big family, but I did not expect to do this at home while quarantined.

With all that going on, Covid-19 also effects my thesis as I rewrote my methodological framework at a very last minute: I planned on doing two focus groups which could have given me better insights than in-depth interviews for my research. However, I feel like it turned out really well and I hope this will not have an effect on my grades.

Not knowing if I will graduate this year, I hope that I still managed to write a scientific research with an exceptional effort during this pandemic. I conducted this research independently during a stressful time with help from a very amazing thesis supervisor. I hope to submit my thesis like a professional researcher submits his research in an international peer-reviewed journal. I hope this stressful time and pandemic does not affect my grades.

2   State of The Art

This chapter will discuss concepts and relevant previous literature on this research topic.

2.1   Influencer marketing

In recent years, Influencer Marketing has become the latest marketing strategy in which influencers, individuals with a considerable high reach on social media platforms, are asked to promote a certain product or service in exchange for money or free products (Müller et al., 2018). In return, companies wish to see a purchase intention among followers (Müller et al., 2018). According to Forbes Magazine, the Influencer Marketing industry will reach $10 billion in 2020 (Oriola, 2019). Given these factors, the closest definition for an influencer could be:

"A social media influencer is first and foremost a content generator: one who has a status of expertise in a specific area, who has cultivated a sizable number of captive followers— who are of marketing value to brands—by regularly producing valuable content via social media" (p. 59).

2.2   eWOM

Influencer Marketing is essentially virtual or electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through rich social media platforms like Instagram or Facebook (Moran & Muzellec, 2017). eWOM is a form of online product review made by the influencer. According to studies, online product reviews are perceived to be more trustworthy and reliable than traditional media (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Li & Zhan, 2011; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000). However in the contrary, Delrue (2018) argues that e-WOM through some influencers is becoming less reliable because they get paid for the product and offer fewer real experiences. These can be determinants that can prove that Influencer Marketing does not always appear credible as it seems.

2.3   Social media platforms

Chiara Ferragni, one of the biggest international fashion influencers, has created a platform of nearly 20 million followers for herself on Instagram for the past 10 years. Social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. are very popular with the generation with the most purchasing power (Woods, 2016). They are called the "millennials", where 90% of 18 to 29-year-olds in the US are active on social media (Woods, 2016). The audience is growing in size and they spent a lot of time on social media every year (Woods, 2016).

So, if Chiara advertises a lipstick from cosmetics company L'Oréal, for example, then L'Oréal hopes that her followers will also buy the product. Because Chiara is a well-known person in the industry, this strategy might work. However, other micro-influencers (this concept is explained later) can find it difficult to create a purchase intention if they do not know how to best promote their advertisement. This is crucial to optimize the efficiency of Influencer Marketing (Müller et al., 2018).

For some companies, it will always be a huge doubt and uncertainty as they will never know for sure that the influencer's followers will actually buy the product. To avoid this issue, there are solutions to measure the interaction between influencers and their audience, which is called the engagement ("State of Instagram Influencer Marketing in 2020," 2019). How many likes and comments the post gets, is called the reach. It measures how many times the post is seen by people on their Instagram account. After measuring the interaction and the reach, the company can measure how many people have bought the product which is the ultimate purchase intention companies wish to see (Müller et al., 2018).

For example, a lot of companies work with an unique personal promotion code that an influencer gets (Loren, 2016). In Chiara's case for example, this can be "Chiara15". This promotion code gives her followers 15% off the purchased lipstick and the company tracks how many times the code is used by her followers. If the code is used multiple times, then this strategy works on her because she generates a lot of sales. The company can suggest making this collaboration a long-lasting campaign (Loren, 2016).

2.4   Influencer Marketing vs Celebrity Endorsement vs Micro-Influencers

In the context of Influencer Marketing, there is no such thing as endorsement through celebrities. As they are relatively similar, people often mistake Influencer Marketing for Celebrity Endorsement. One can speak of Celebrity Endorsement when this type of marketing focuses on communication of promotional messages through celebrities that mostly have some kind of relationship or a related background to the product (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). When a company decides to attach a celebrity's name to its brand for the brand's awareness, that is when you speak of Celebrity Endorsement (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010).

Celebrities are mostly known to the public because of their accomplishments in acting, singing or other qualities while influencers created a network for themselves where their followers can relate to them. This is called the parasocial relationship which we will discuss later on this research (Breves, Liebers, Abt, & Kunze, 2019). One of the best examples of a Celebrity Endorsement is the partnership between the sports company Nike and basketball superstar Michael Jordan for the Air Jordans sneakers. The shoe collection has 33 editions with new releases and new designs with different colors every year (Kessler, 2018). When people see the Air Jordans sneakers, they automatically think of Michael Jordan and vice-versa.

In contrary to Celebrity Endorsement, there is Influencer Marketing. This phenomenon was created because celebrities were not relatable and approachable as influencers (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) showed that following an influencer online felt as having a long-distance friend. Mostly because they are like ordinary people and have a personality you can relate to (Chapple & Cownie, 2017). That is why people feel more similar to them. This is called the parasocial relationship (Breves et al., 2019). However, consumers are more attracted to the perfect and glamourous life of traditional celebrities when it comes down to wishful identification (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

In addition to influencers, there is also the concept of "micro-influencers". These are influencers with smaller amount of followers but with more loyal following (Main, 2017). They mostly have up to 30,000 followers on Instagram, but we also speak of micro-influencers when they have up to 5000 followers or even 100,000 followers. They matter because they deliver more engagement: the interaction between the influencer and their audience is bigger (Main, 2017). They are also cheaper than the bigger influencers and they drive more social buzz (Main, 2017) because their followers are much closer to them. Just because Chiara Ferragni has 20 million followers on Instagram does not mean that every campaign will be effective on her. Maybe someone with a smaller amount of followers can reach more potential audience (Main, 2017) because they have the right niche that follows them.

2.4.1   Fashion influencers

Influencers who mainly promote fashion through their social media are called fashion influencers. Their niche mostly consists of promoting clothes, shoe wear, … but they also go out of their niche sometimes to promote something else, like beauty products for example. Fashion companies need to improve their ideas and find new ways to reach their audience so as mentioned before, it is smarter to use influencers that are close to their niche to reach their audience. It makes it easier for the fashion companies to reach their target (Zietek, 2016). We will be focusing on this type of influencers in this research, particularly on the social media platform Instagram.

This platform has made it possible for influencers to turn their passion into their work and create many business models. Every year, Instagram creates new possibilities to make their business models more approachable. On this platform, the influencers promote their posts and get really creative with Instagram TV (IGTV), which is a platform for video series ("State of Instagram Influencer Marketing in 2020," 2019). With all of these possibilities, their content gets creative and stands out differently than on other social media platforms. Also, according to a report from Digimeter (2018) influencers have the biggest reach when it comes to receivers aged 16 to 24 years, where 67% claims to follow one or more influencers on Instagram. That is why we want to focus on the credibility of sponsored or branded posts from fashion influencers, on Instagram.

2.5 Sponsored/Branded posts

According to a report on eMarketer, around 70 million people online in the US block ads online because they find it really annoying (Perrin, 2018). As mentioned above, companies have to change and adapt to continue to reach their audience and since social media is also growing, companies are forced to find innovative ways on these platforms as well (Woods, 2016). That is why most of these companies work with influencers rather than traditional advertising because it triggers eleven times more return on investment (ROI) (Woods, 2016). This ROI is measured in terms of reach, engagement between the audience and the influencer, and ultimately a purchase (Woods, 2016).

Most of the time, a collaboration between an influencer and a brand company goes through a PR or advertising agency (Woods, 2016). These agencies recommend an influencer to a brand company with a fee in return, from the influencer's compensation. When doing a collaboration, there are also strict rules to comply with for the influencers. For example: what to write in the caption of the post, what hashtags they should use, how many times they should mention and tag the brand in the post, … (Van den Abeele, 2019). However, Van den Abeele (2019) argues that it is better to let the influencer be free in their creativity to make the best out of their sponsored or branded post. Because too many guidelines are not always recommended as they restrict the creative expression of the influencer which could have an effect on their credibility (Van den Abeele, 2019).

2.6 Ethical and Legal implications in Flemish IM

When it comes to guidelines, some of them are really vague. When should influencers use #Ad or #Sponsored and when should they not when they are promoting a brand? To answer these questions, there are new disclosures and endorsement guidelines around Influencer Marketing and its advertising imposed by the Federal Trade Commission for American influencers (Fair, 2019). If influencers in America do not disclose their connection to the brand, then they can get high fines and charges. These disclosures are created because consumers might not recognize a post as sponsored or not sponsored. They might think that it is just a credible e-WOM endorsement which leads to deceptive persuasion (De Veirman & Hudders, 2019). Woods (2016) argues that it is misleading and lying to consumers when you do not believe and stand behind the brand but still promote them because you are paid to do so. This is a potential ethical implication of Influencer Marketing (Woods, 2016).

In Belgium, we have the "Jury voor Ethische Prakijken (JEP)" or the Jury for Ethical Practice, which is an independent self-regulatory body of the Belgian advertising sector. Since they are independent, they can only give recommendations and advices to influencers. No strict rules and regulations are thus applied (JEP, 2018). In this organization, people can submit a complaint about influencers when they see advertisements that are not clearly defined as branded content.

To give an example, one of the complaints was about a collaboration between the fashion magazine Elle Magazine Belgium and coffee brand Nespresso. They worked together with an influencer, who gave a short interview on Elle.be about herself. On the pictures, the coffee brand Nespresso is seen everywhere and during the interview the influencer mentioned Nespresso numerous times. It seemed as they did the interview with her just to promote Nespresso and not really to get to know her better.

Nespresso later claimed that it was indeed for advertisement, but they never tried to hide it and they claim that the word 'advertisement' was mentioned clearly. At the end of the article they mentioned "Made Possibly By Nespresso" but according to the complainant and JEP, they should have mentioned that in the beginning of the article that this was paid advertisement so they do not mislead their consumers.

After a decision from JEP and discussing this issue, both Nespresso and Elle Magazine Belgium rewrote the article (*Nespresso - Elle België*, 2018). Because this complaint was free to consult online and for everyone to see, people can now question her credibility. Is she really promoting Nespresso because she loves their coffee or is she doing the interview just for money? However, to understand what makes one credible, we first need to understand which determinants of credibility there are.

2.7   Determinants of credibility

Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan (2019a) unified different theoretical determinants of social media influencer credibility into one model, which is called the Social Media Influencer Value model (SMIV-model) (Lou & Yuan, 2019a) through a quantitative study. This model was created by combining determinants linked to concepts from different theoretical models into one model. The concepts are ***advertising content value*** (Sheth & Uslay, 2007), ***influencer credibility*** (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), ***the perceived trust*** (Moorman, Deshpandé, & Zaltman, 1993), ***brand awareness*** (Keller, 2008) and ***purchase intention*** (Spears & Singh, 2004).

We will first discuss every concept from the SMIV-model and their determinants. Subsequently, we will discuss their research questions and their results obtained through quantitative surveys. We will then explain why this SMIV-model is such an important base for our research. This will all be discussed under the Theoretical Framework as this SMIV-model is our important basis for our research.

3   Theoretical Framework

3.1 SMIV-model

The first concept of the SMIV-model is the **advertising content value:** Ducoffe (1995) described advertising value as a *"subjective evaluation of the relative worth or utility of advertising to consumers"* (p. 1). He investigated the determinants that are related to advertising value and came up with three: the *advertising informativeness*, which is the ad's information that is needed to complete a purchase intention among consumers. The *advertising entertainment*, which is keeping in mind the uses and gratifications research (McQuail, 1987) to entertain the consumers. And at last the *advertising irritation*: the annoyance and irritation of advertising overloading. If we link these determinants to influencer marketing, we see that advertising informativeness is when influencers share more information about the product, about the usage or material for example. They can link this product information with their own personal experience which creates an entertainment for their followers. Lou and Yuan (2019a) did not include advertising irritation into their research because of the following argument:

"Whether or not influencers choose to publish sponsored branded posts to their followers, the perceived informative and entertainment value of their content, in general, may shape how followers react to specific branded posts. Therefore, the first two constructs that we include in the model are perceived informative value and the entertainment value of influencer-generated content" (p. 60).

Influencer credibility: Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) introduced two determinants of source credibility: *expertise* and *trustworthiness*. When someone is called an expert, it is when (s)he has the knowledge and skills to make claims about a certain topic (McCroskey, 1966). Trustworthiness is the honesty and the sincerity that a receiver thinks of a source (Giffin, 1967).

McGuire (1985) added a third determinant of source credibility called the *attractiveness*: the direct physical attractiveness of a person. Lou and Yuan (2019a) also included a fourth determinant based on Munnukka, Uusitalo and Toivonen's (2016) research on peer endorsers, which is the *similarity*. This is the perceived demographic, cultural or ideological factors that someone shares with his source.

With these concepts and their determinants in mind, Lou and Yuan (2019a) asked if influencer credibility, including expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and similarity positively influences consumers' awareness of advertised brands (**RQ1**) (p. 62). They also wanted to know if follower's perceived trust in influencer-generated branded content positively affects their awareness of advertised brands and purchase intentions **(RQ2)** (p. 63). They also added hypothesis to better understand their research questions.

Now you have a better understanding of the concepts and their determinants, as well as Lou and Yuan's research questions (2019a), you can find an overview here. These six determinants are combined into the SMIV-model as you can see on the left side of the model (Figure 1):

Figure 1: Lou & Yuan's proposed SMIV-model
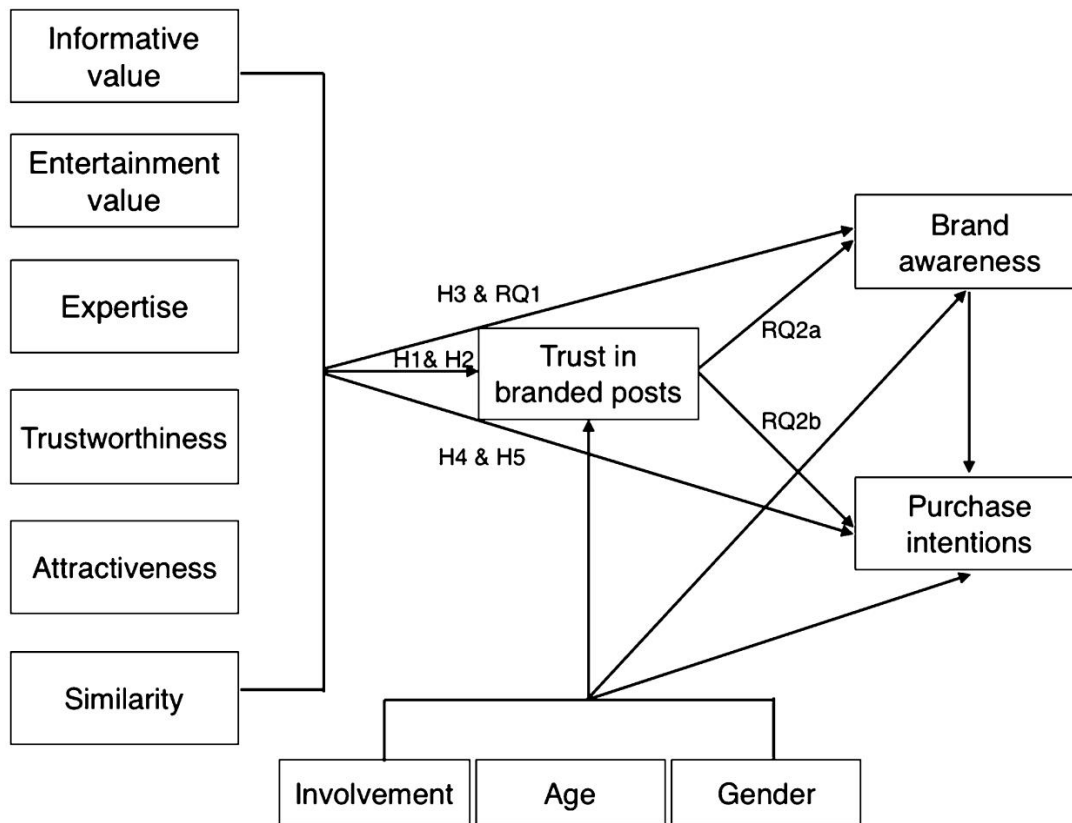
The purpose of Lou and Yuan's (2019a) quantitative study is to determine what factors makes branded posts trustworthy. That is why perceived **trust** was added to this model as well. Trust is the *"willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confident" – (p. 82).*

To have trust in a brand, it is important that consumers know about brands. That is why **brand awareness** was added, to see if consumers can recognize and separate brands. The ultimate goal is to generate a **purchase intention**. Covariates were added too: involvement, age and gender. Trust, brand awareness and purchase intention were measured through hypotheses mentioned earlier.

The results of the determinants are shown here in Figure 2:

I. <u>**Advertising Value**</u> **on branded posts and on brand awareness and on purchase intentions:**

It was stated here that the influencer's informative content (informative value) has a positive effect on their follower's trust in branded posts and purchase intention. The entertainment value did not play a role in affecting their followers' trust. They do not look at the entertainment value when making a purchase intention, but they do look at the informative value.

Figure 2: Partial least squares (PLS) path model. Only significant paths are shown; p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
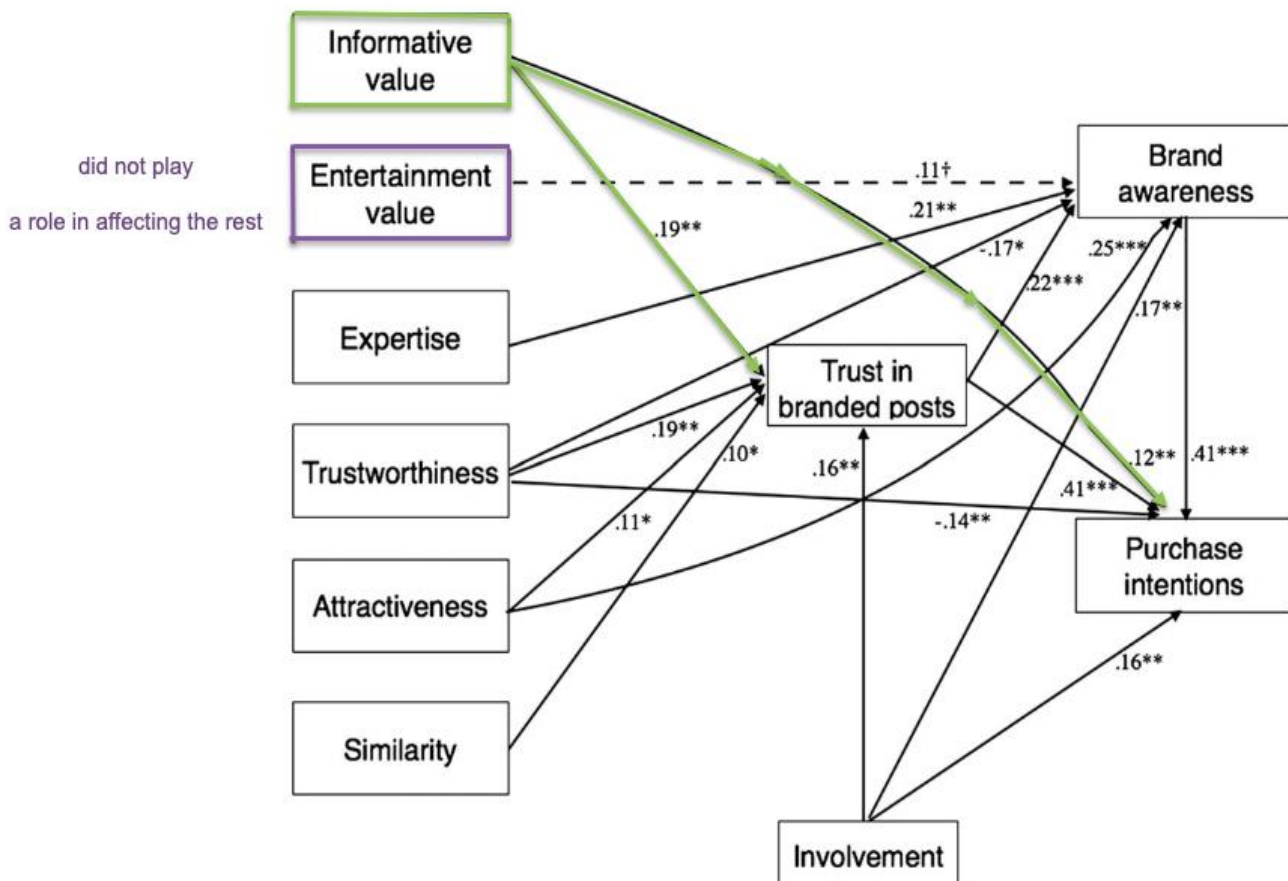
II. **Source credibility on branded posts and on brand awareness, see Figure 3:**

Trustworthiness and attractiveness positively affect trust in branded posts. Attractiveness even helped boost follower's brand awareness. Apparently, followers follow influencers with whom they identify with, and that is why similarity positively affects branded posts. Expertise did not influence trust in branded content. Lou and Yuan (2019a) argue that even if influencers have an expertise in something, this does not necessarily promise followers' trust in their branded content. However, it did help boost followers' brand awareness.

Figure 3: Lou & Yuan's Source credibility on branded posts and on brand awareness
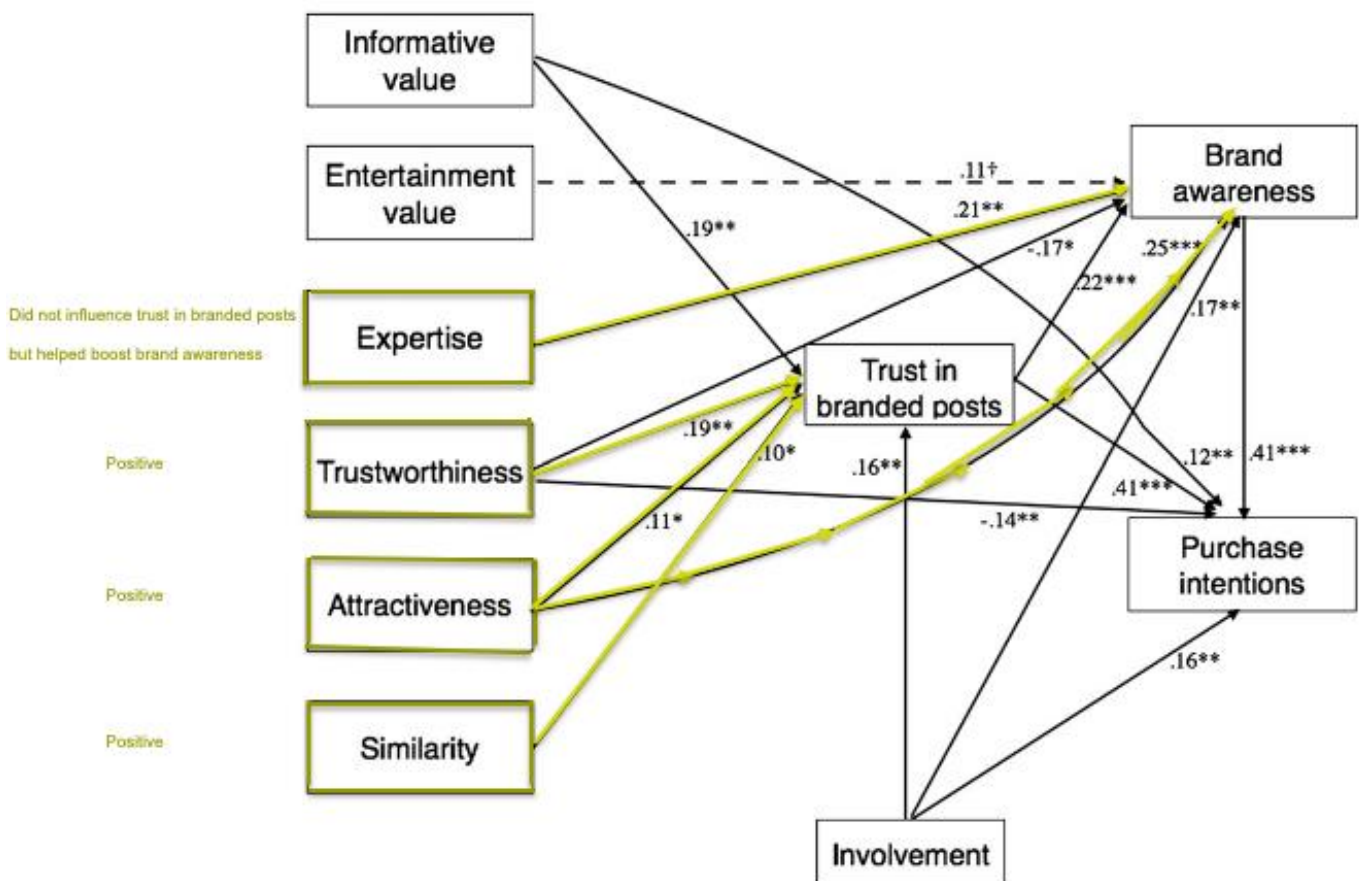
III. <u>**Source credibility**</u> **on purchase intentions, see Figure 4:**

Trustworthiness, attractiveness, similarity and expertise have a negative effect on purchase intentions.

Figure 4: Lou & Yuan's Source credibility on purchase intentions
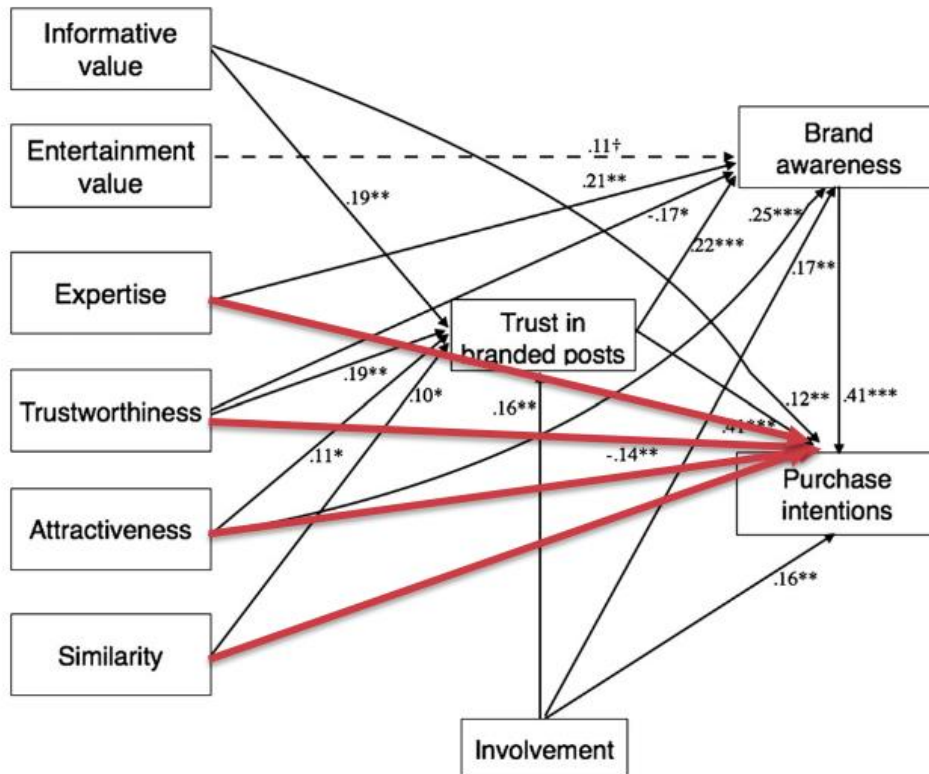
Lou and Yuan (2019a) argue that:

"Even though influencers- generated content's informative value generally carries over and influences followers' trust in their branded posts, followers may hold ambivalent or skeptical beliefs about the influencers' motive and thus may discredit influencers when forming consumption-related reactions. Nonetheless, <u>this unexpected finding deserves further research (p. 69).</u>"

So, how is that? What is behind the followers' beliefs about influencers' branded content? How does this affect their purchase intention? We want to answer our research question with the following sub question:

(1) What kind of beliefs do followers hold about influencers' branded content (RQ)?

(1.1) How does this affect their purchase intention?

Since Lou and Yuan's (2019a) quantitative research could not answer these questions, we will opt a qualitative research with in-depth interviews. Using the SMIV-model, we will find conclusions based on a comprehensive theoretical model. This research will also fill the gap of the basic understanding of how Influencer Marketing, influencers and their branded content affect consumer's behavior.

We also want to serve this research as a foundation for how Flemish influencers and brand companies can use these determinants to construct their Influencer Marketing collaboration in a suitable and credible way, since there are not strict guidelines and rules about Influencer Advertising in Belgium. This thesis can generate a maximum return on investment, for consumers to hold a positive attitude towards Belgian Influencer Marketing and its advertising if they take the determinants of credibility into account.

Since this is the first research about credibility of Influencer Marketing and its advertising in Flanders, this research can be used for comparative analysis.

4   Methodological Framework

4.1 Method

Lou and Yuan's research (2019a) was a quantitative research based on surveys. Since their method did not fill the gap and answered our questions, we held a qualitative research to give us more understanding in "how and why" of the results and not so much on the quantity of the results. We thus held a qualitative exploratory and explanatory research (Mortelmans, 2013).

With in-depth interviews, we obtained more thorough information on this topic with a small number of participants than we might have obtained through a questionnaire or survey because of the one-on-one interaction (Adams & Cox, 2008). We wanted to make the participant feel at ease while answering our questions, so we made a semi-structured interview so they could also add things. This way it allowed us to understand deeper with the participants and gain extra knowledge. We have put them at ease by going through an introduction of the interview and by signing a consent form. We also asked for their permission to audio and video record the interview which we needed to analyze later (Adams & Cox, 2008). These in-depth interviews lasted from 35 minutes to 60 minutes. This was also hold online, through Skype.

4.2 Sample

The purpose of a qualitative survey is not to generalize to the population. However, to make sure that we conducted enough rich data to answer our research question, we opted a theoretical sample. This sample told us to first collect data through a few participants that most likely will answer our research question. Subsequently, we coded and analyzed that data to decide if new insights and findings were required. If so, more in-depth interviews should be held to develop a theory. If not, we will reach a saturated sample (Mortelmans, 2013). This is when no new findings and insights are left to be found, after collecting all the data.

We started with a pilot interview that later became a really resourceful interview with rich data. Then we decided to begin our in-depth interview with 4 participants. We noticed after coding these interviews that we could have asked more deeper questions. Consequently, we rewrote our topic list and did more interviews. After the 5th and 6th interview, we reached our saturated sample.

4.3 Participants

Those who use social media at least every day and follow at least one fashion influencer on the social network platform Instagram were contacted through Instagram and our University e-mail.

Through Instagram, we posted a story on our personal Instagram account with a call to action to find participants. Through snowball sampling, we found 7 participants including our pilot interviewee. Through our University e-mail, an invitation to participate the in-depth interview was sent to all students of our department Social Sciences. Two participants were interested but unfortunately, they did not meet our qualifications.

Gender and age were not an important factor in Lou and Yuan's (2019a) research and in our research, but all our participants were coincidental women, with an average age of 23 years old and a standard deviation of 1,40. They all followed one or more fashion influencers on Instagram and used that platform on a daily basis. All of them were studying at a University, finishing their master's degree.

4.4 Topic list

As mentioned before, we made a pre-prepared topic list with questions regarding the determinants. We made the questions so that each and every determinant could be answered. Of course, during the interview, we also asked more questions to go deeper in their answers (Adams & Cox, 2008).

After two interviews, we realized that some questions should be better left out as it was not really resourceful. Instead we added other questions. Not every question was asked because during the interview, the participants already answered some of the questions during other questions. Also, after the second interview, we rearranged the order of our questions.

We also took Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan's (2019a) research limitations into account:

"Although we provided participants with detailed information about the phenomenon of influencers and influencer marketing on social media, future studies may also want to control whether participants actually understand the concept of social media influencer" (p. 70).

Thus, we asked our participants before starting the interview what they understood under "Fashion Influencers" and "Sponsored/Branded posts" and gave our definition afterwards so that we were on the same line.

4.5 Data Analysis

The in-depth interviews were audio and video recorded with Skype. It was hold in Dutch and the data were analyzed with the software program NVivo to provide as an accurate representation of the responses.

We approached the data by thematic analysis as this was the right method to identify, analyze and report themes and patterns within our data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We started to get familiar with our data by transcribing our data first and then repeatedly reading it to find meanings and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once we understood a list of ideas about what was in our data, we started to generate codes into a list that were interesting to us. After that, the codes were sorted into potential themes. We reviewed those themes so it could cohere together meaningfully (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

5   Results + Discussion

Applying the data analysis described above, we revealed that:

When asked what they understood under "Fashion Influencers" and "Sponsored/Branded posts", all participants gave us an accurate definition like Lou and Yuan's (2019a) definition. They averagely spend their time on Instagram between 2 to 3 hours. We also asked if they scrolled fast or slow through their Instagram feed, which is the home screen where you see all the photos that the people you follow have posted, because we wanted to know if they actually pay attention to branded post or if they ignore it on their feed. They all said that they scroll really fast through their Instagram feed, barely pay attention to people's post or just like the first 3 pictures on the feed. Some pay more attention to Instagram stories than Instagram feed because:

"*The fact that they post that (branded content) on stories is more nuanced for me than on the feed because the feed is a scenario put together and stories is more of a snapshot that happened on the day itself, it comes out much credible.*" *– Pilot interviewee, 24 years old, woman*

When it comes to **following an influencer**, these reasons were mentioned the most: Participants first look at their:

Authenticity: "*For me, someone I follow has to emit authenticity in the way she emits herself, even though an influencer has 1 million followers or 1000, for me the most important thing is what they emit and what is authentic*" *– Participant one, 21 years old, woman*

Content + Instagram feed (The 'feed' is the home screen where you see all the photos that the people you follow have posted.): "*I mainly look at eumh content they post, eumh now there is such a trend on Instagram that many eumh of those influencers are going to post very minimalist and that attracts me and I especially look at eumh the feed of the person who is nicely connected and forms eumh yes for example Aimee Song she is very into that eumh I also see what she does and posts and she also has her own clothing line and I follow that and that also gives me inspiration and I save those posts.*" *– Participant one, 21 years old, woman*

and/if they have sort of a personal connection with the influencer that evolves when they follow an influencer for a very long time: "*I follow I mean, for example, that is very concrete but that makes my explanation clear: for example a Turkish influencer for 6 years and I literally grew up with her and saw her evolve then if you follow her like that she basically becomes your friend and if she would recommend something I would take that 60 or 70 percent as the truth.*" *– Pilot interviewee, 24 years old, woman*

"There is an influencer, Mathilda, and I started following her because she is creating a very personal bond with her followers and is also open about everything and that is really a trend now and that is very much appreciated and I really like that about her." – Participant one, 21 years old, woman

This goes in line with previous research of Van den Abeele (2019) where she argued that it was better to let the influencer be free in their creativity to make the best out of their sponsored or branded post. Because too many guidelines are not always recommended as they restrict the creative expression of the influencer which could have an effect on their credibility (Van den Abeele, 2019).

This also goes in line with another study that suggests that originality and uniqueness, whether on an Instagram post or story, are essential factors to be perceived as an opinion leader (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018). This opinion leadership effects consumer behavioral intentions whereby followers will interact with influencer's Instagram account, will follow their fashion advice for inspiration, etc. which in turn generates purchase intention that companies wish to see (Müller et al., 2018). The interaction could be in comments, likes or by saving the posts for inspiration as participant four said. The authenticity then flows from the originality and creativity of an Influencer's Instagram feed and content (Audrezet, de Kerviler, & Guidry Moulard, 2018).

We also understood that most of the followers have a personal connection with their influencer, so we asked them more questions about whether they found influencers **as a source of inspiration.** We concluded that the participants had mixed feelings about this as participant two said that she can imagine why influencers can be seen as a source of inspiration because they have a lot of followers but to her personal, they are not a source of inspiration. Where participant five said that it is definitely a source of inspiration to her.

"Gosh that's hard to say ... I wouldn't say that it's really an inspiration for me but when I see how many followers they have and that they influence many followers I can imagine why that is but in general I don't see them as a source of inspiration." – Participant two, 25 years old, woman

"Yes definitely, I am interested in photography so definitely for inspiration and for fashion actually also, to see what there is trending or if I would wear it." – Participant five, 24 years old, woman

"Gosh yes ... I think I am like yes how should I say that ... they are in the source they have followers and get things sent and that are all together in the fashion industry so that is an inspiration source so how can I wear it in a different way so that is nice to see but that they are also creative and you can combine that in different ways and you can do that at home too." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

When asked if they could **identify themselves with these influencers**, participants had to say that if influencers are closer to their culture, they are more likely to follow these people. Whereas others said that they could definitely not identify themselves with influencers because they share such a different life that is not relatable.

"People who are closer to my culture, yes I am more likely to follow those people" – Pilot interviewee, 24 years old, woman

"Oh yeah, that is good that you say that because all the influencers I follow, they are all Arab Muslims because yeah just when I see that coming by, I recognize myself in them, yeah blonde girls in bikini I mean, that is also nice but of all the influencers I follow, they are all Arab Muslims and although I am not influenced when I see those things (sponsored/branded content) go by, I like to see that I can identify myself in them." – Participant two, 25 years old, woman

"No, hehe my life is really completely different from those influencers who live their lives but not really a problem, that is not a reason for me to not follow them."
Lina: you don't relate with them in any way?
"Euhm sometimes if they post sincere and honest things like body positivity but if they are on an event then not, that's not my life at all." – Participant 5, 24 years old, woman

Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) showed that following an influencer online felt as having a long-distance friend. Mostly because they are like ordinary people and have a personality you can relate to (Chapple & Cownie, 2017). That is why people feel more similar to them. This is called the parasocial relationship (Breves et al., 2019). This too was demonstrated in our research as participants said influencers were a source of inspiration and they could identify themselves with these influencers. Whether it was for cultural reasons, same age or same clothing style. This goes in line with the source credibility determinant's: attractiveness and similarity.

This also goes in line with Lou and Yuan's (2019a) research where they discussed that the influencers that were closer to them, cultivate more credible and appealing and so affect their followers' trust in their sponsored content (Lou & Yuan, 2019a).

When it came down to **trusting influencer's** recommendation, participants said that if influencers are closer to them they will most likely believe them.

"Euhm .... I mean ... that depends on who it is, I think for example if I eumh Sara (influencer) because I know her better as an influencer that she is honest and she is not going to influence her followers just to buy some products eumh ... just when people are going to hype a product like "wowww it's soooo good" I mean, maybe it is good, I don't think every product they promote is so hyped and good, it does not seem so credible to me." – Participant two, 25 years old, woman

"Gosh that is difficult, I feel like that is so personal euh you can have an opinion on a nice pull or a good quality of shoes, but an opinion is personal and also: define quality?" – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

With eWOM, it gets less reliable because influencers get paid for the product and offer fewer real experiences (Delrue, 2018). That too was illustrated in our research. However, participants also said that when influencer post recommendations, they would more likely believe it when it happens on Instagram stories than on Instagram feed because stories are a snapshot that happens on the day itself and comes out more credible. Obviously, as one participant said: trust in recommendation is higher when it comes from an influencer, they share a parasocial relationship with.

When we asked if **expertise** played an important role when following an influencer, half of the participants found it important and the other half did not find it important:

"Preferably, yes. Because you then have the feeling that the person is not being cheated on because you have some of that credibility." – Participant six, 24 years old, woman

"Euhm I think that's an added value anyway because yes I think that is also a job and you prefer people I mean… it's the same as you go to a doctor then you prefer someone who is specialized in his profession so for an influencer I think that it is important too but I have the feeling that not many influencers have expertise but I think that is important but if they do not have it then look, it is what it is." – Participant five, 24 years old, woman

When posting recommendations, participants also said that **expertise helps** them to get influenced but it is not a crucial factor to follow an influencer or to make a purchase intention. It is *an added value* and definitely when it comes from an influencer they follow for a long time and when they share that parasocial relationship with. This also goes in line with Lou and Yuan's (2019a) research where they had argued that expertise did not influence trust in branded posts.

Half of the participants also felt that influencers **are not obligated to work with brands within their niche** because they do not have to "label" an influencer in a particular sector. However, they did say that it is better for an influencer to focus on one thing as you cannot influence someone on every topic. Some said that influencers are also people with a household so if an influencer decides to promote a vacuum cleaner then that is totally fine. Others said that *"you do not have to be an influencer for everything"* so promoting something out of your niche is *"weird"*. Some even unfollowed influencers who were posting too many branded and sponsored posts and when they went out of their niche, this goes with the annoyance of ads (Perrin, 2018). When we asked if an influencer decided to post something else than fashion anyway, if that would influence them to buy the product. Participants said that only if they are interested in that product too or when they have money to buy it.

When the information was gained about the reason why the respondents followed influencers and how they felt about expertise and trust, we questioned them about sponsored posts and their feelings towards this.

Participants hold really mixed feelings about sponsored posts and whether influencers should mention the sponsorship or not. Some feel like it is ok not to mention it, but some feel it is more sincere and it gives their public more visibility in what post is sponsored and what post is not sponsored. One participant also said *it is the choice of the influencer*. Instagram has an option to mention if a post is sponsored or not so an influencer can choose to mention this. However, when influencers do not mention that the post is sponsored and their followers find that out, they think it is misleading and lying even though they say that they do not care if the posts mentions the sponsorship. This goes in line with the example from Nespresso and Elle.be, where we explained how it could affect the influencer's credibility if she is not transparent about sponsored posts (*Nespresso - Elle België*, 2018).

"Euhm yeah… it comes across as sincere even though it might not be so sincere, if they mention it is sponsored, they actually emphasize it more that it is sponsored and they got paid for it but it comes across less fake to their followers if they do mention it but I mean.. it's kind of psychological…" – Participant two, 25 years old, woman

"I am usually neutral about it, to me it doesn't really matter if they add a hashtag ad or hashtag sponsored, it also gives the public more visibility but to me honestly, I don't care" – Participant one, 21 years old, woman

On the other hand, when it comes down to products that are usually given away for free (PR products), they had to say:

"Gosh sometimes I am like "there they are again, I can't…." sometimes I like to see it because it is not so basic anymore: click we are going to take photo with the products that we get no, now they are going to make a fun video and I think it is great when they get creative about it." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

"If they are transparent about that PR package received then no problem but if they make a post like wow I have a new cream and then they don't use that or it is not clearly if they bought it or received that then I think that is misleading." – Participant three, 24 years old, woman

Now we understand how all the above positively affected trust in branded content, for example: parasocial relationships positively affected trust in branded content, we thus wanted to know how and why source credibility had a negative effect on purchase intentions.

We first asked **how expertise and trustworthiness would affect their purchase intention.** Participants said that if they need it, they will buy it. The price whether they have to pay transport costs and the taxes with the product are also crucial factors that affects their purchase intention.

"If I really like the product and if I need it, I think I would still buy it regardless of whether the person mentioned it (ad or sponsored) but it is also important to me what I think of it." – Participant five, 24 years old, woman

"Yeah… I don't know if that is credible... and I know they get paid for that and if they find it legit awesome they will post it on Instagram so I prefer to buy from people who are like me and test that because influencers will only say that it is soooo good, blablabla." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

"If I like it yeah…, a nice sweater for example… then I will click that through and also it is useful that Instagram has that shop tool, it's really easy, I have done that often to click on the items. But to buy it immediately... I mean… I never did that, but I always clicked on the products etc and then I think ooh that is too expensive or that comes from America, so it has those transport costs + taxes..." – Participant six, 24 years old, woman

We then asked how **attractiveness and similarity had an effect on their purchase intention.** Participants said that if the influencer is someone who is close to them, in terms of cultural reasons or how long they have been following that influencer, that it most likely will affect their purchase intention.

"Yea…. I am like…. if the person is one of my favorites and I have that personal connection with her then I tend to buy it or I would use her discount code but also I think with others that I have a less connection with." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

"Yeah, Rianne (influencer) for example promoted a lipstick from Charlotte Tilbury and I actually didn't think about it and I bought that too, that's someone I've been following for a long time, so it affects you quickly." – Participant three, 24 years old, woman

"Yes, because if they post things then I will save the brands but I do know that it is quite expensive and also because it is often expensive it also stops me from buying it but then I start looking for alternatives and that influences me." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

The number of followers that an influencer has or **the number of following**, did not really influence their followers on sponsored posts and on purchase intention.

"Not necessarily based on followers although it does matter: people with 1000 followers look less credible but are not, I mean... having a lot of followers plays a role but it's not the breaking point of "ohh yeah I believe her because she has so many followers", it does influence us but does not come at the first place." – Pilot interviewee, 24 years old, woman

"Gosh pff no I don't actually do that ... looking at followers ... it's just when it comes to my page or feed and I see that and I like it then I will buy that but regardless of the followers because they probably have number of followers that have been bought therefore I am not really attached to followers." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

Some participants did not find it important whether influencers mention #ad or #sponsored but other did find it important to be clear and transparent towards their followers, are aware of influencer's motive behind sponsored posts, share a parasocial relationship with their influencer and this affects the purchase intention quickly, … The most important reason why participants do not take consumption related decisions quickly is that it was more about the interest, need, budget, clothing size, transport costs and taxes that comes with it. Sponsored posts are indeed not completely reliable according to participants, but it is not a groundbreaking reason why people will not opt for a purchase so quick. Because of the budget, participants will look for alternatives. For example:

"Yes, because if they post things then I will save the brands but I do know that it is quite expensive and also because it is often expensive it also stops me from buying it but then I start looking for alternatives and that influences me." – Participant four, 22 years old, woman

This study offers these insights to the association between source credibility and purchase intention from Lou and Yuan's (2019a) study.

6   Conclusion + Limitations

In recent years, Influencer Marketing has become the latest marketing strategy in which influencers, individuals with a considerable high reach on social media platforms, are asked to promote a certain product or service in exchange for money or free products. In return, companies wish to see a purchase intention among followers (Müller et al., 2018).

This study is in continuation of Chen Lou and Shupei Yuan's (2019a) research about source credibility and its effect on purchase intention among followers. By examining what kind of skeptical beliefs followers hold about influencers' branded content and how this negatively affected their purchase intention, our study extended Lou and Yuan's (2019a) research and their SMIV model. We did so by conducting in-depth interviews to give us that one-on-one interaction and thorough information from our participants.

Using the SMIV-model, we made conclusions based on a comprehensive theoretical model that was allowed to answer our research question and the following sub question: **(1) What kind of beliefs do followers hold about influencers' branded content (RQ)? (1.1) How does this affect their purchase intention?**

Thus, besides the follower's skeptical beliefs about influencer's motive of sponsored posts, *it is also the economical reasons like price, need, budget, transport costs and taxes that plays a big role besides the interest and clothing size* when it comes to making consumption related decisions when seeing a branded or sponsored content. These findings filled the gap of the basic understanding of how Influencer Marketing, influencers and their branded or sponsored content affect consumer's behavior.

This research also served as a foundation for how Flemish influencers and brand companies can use these determinants to construct their Influencer Marketing collaboration in a suitable and credible way, since there are not strict guidelines and rules about Influencer Advertising in Belgium (JEP, 2018). This thesis generates a maximum return on investment, for consumers to hold a positive attitude towards Belgian Influencer Marketing and its advertising if they take the determinants of credibility into account. But also, a maximum return on investment for companies to provide an honest and sincere collaboration with influencers so they can generate a purchase intention. Since this is the first research about credibility of Influencer Marketing and its advertising in Flanders, this research can be used for comparative analysis.

Since Instagram creates new possibilities to make their business models more approachable, for example the Instagram TV (IGTV: a platform for video series), future research is required to also research how this type of possibility affects the consumer's purchase intention ("State of Instagram Influencer Marketing in 2020," 2019).

Our research conducted in-depth interviews with women, but there is a lack in understanding in how men feel about influencer's branded content? Will this research go in line with men's beliefs about men fashion influencers and their sponsored and branded content? Future research on this topic is needed and required.

7 References

Adams, A., & Cox, A. L. (2008). Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. In P. a. C. Cairns, Anna L. eds. (Ed.), *Research methods for human computer interaction* (pp. 17-34). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2018). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Bickart, B., & Schindler, R. M. (2001). Internet forums as influential sources of consumer information. *Journal of interactive marketing, 15*(3), 31-40. doi:https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.1014

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2019). The perceived fit between Instagram influencers and the endorsed brand: How influencer–brand fit affects source credibility and persuasive effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research, 59*(4), 440-454. doi:10.2501/JAR-2019-030

Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2018). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005

Chapple, C., & Cownie, F. (2017). An investigation into viewers' trust in and response towards disclosed paid-for-endorsements by YouTube Lifestyle vloggers. *Journal of Promotional Communications, 5*(2).

De Veirman, M., & Hudders, L. (2019). Disclosing sponsored Instagram posts: the role of material connection with the brand and message-sidedness when disclosing covert advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 1-37.

Delrue, L. (2018). *What is the impact of Instagram's Social Influencers on Consumer Attitude and Purchase Behaviour of lifestyle products of young Belgian women?* (Master Marketing Communications). Louvain School of Management, Louvain. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/thesis:14950 Digital Acces To Libraries, DIAL database.

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior, 68*, 1-7.

Ducoffe, R. H. (1995). How Consumers Assess the Value of Advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 17*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1080/10641734.1995.10505022

Fair, L. (2019). *Disclosures 101: New FTC resources for social media influencers*. FTC: Federal Trade Commission Retrieved from https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/business-blog/2019/11/disclosures-101-new-ftc-resources-social-media-influencers

Giffin, K. (1967). The contribution of studies of source credibility to a theory of interpersonal trust in the communication process. *Psychological Bulletin, 68*(2), 104–120. doi: https://doi.org/10.1037/h0024833

Halonen-Knight, E., & Hurmerinta, L. (2010). Who endorses whom? Meanings transfer in celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(6), 452-460.

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). Communication and persuasion.

JEP. (2018). *Aanbevelingen inzake online influencers* jep.be: JEP Retrieved from https://www.jep.be/sites/default/files/rule_reccommendation/aanbevelingen_van_de_raad_voor_de_reclame_online_influencers_nl.pdf

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business horizons, 53*(1), 59-68.

Keller, K. L. (2008). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (3 ed.). Upper Saddle River: NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kessler, J. (2018). 30 notable celebrity endorsements. Retrieved from https://thestacker.com/stories/1830/30-notable-celebrity-endorsements

Li, J., & Zhan, L. (2011). Online persuasion: How the written word drives WOM: Evidence from consumer-generated product reviews. *Journal of Advertising Research, 51*(1), 239-257.

Loren, T. (2016, September 22, 2016). How to grow your business with Instagram Influencer Marketing. Retrieved from **https://later.com/blog/instagram-influencer-marketing-for-business/**

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019a). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 58-73. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019b). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 59.

Main, S. (2017). Micro-influencers are more effective with marketing campaigns than highly popular accounts. Retrieved from http://www.adweek.com/digital/micro-influencers-are-more-effective-with-marketing-campaigns-than-highly-popular-accounts/

McCroskey, J. C. (1966). Scales for the measurement of ethos. *Speech Monographs, 33*(1), 65-72. doi:10.1080/03637756609375482

McGuire, W. J. (1985). *Attitudes and Attitude Change* (Vol. 2). Handbook of Social Psychology.

McQuail, D. (1987). *Mass communication theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.): Sage Publications, Inc.

Moorman, C., Deshpandé, R., & Zaltman, G. (1993). Factors Affecting Trust in Market Research Relationships. *Journal of Marketing, 57*(1), 81-101. doi:10.1177/002224299305700106

Moran, G., & Muzellec, L. (2017). eWOM credibility on social networking sites: A framework. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 23*(2), 149-161. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2014.969756

Mortelmans, D. (2013). *Handboek kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden* (2 ed. ed. Vol. 563 p.): Acco.

Müller, L., Mattke, J., & Maier, C. (2018). # Sponsored# Ad: Exploring the Effect of Influencer Marketing on Purchase Intention.

Munnukka, J. (2016). Credibility of a peer endorser and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 33*(3), 182-192. doi:10.1108/JCM-11-2014-1221

Nespresso - Elle België. (2018). JEP: JEP Retrieved from https://www.jep.be/nl/beslissingen-van-de-jep/nespresso-elle-belgie-26062018

Oriola, S. (2019, Aug 8, 2019). How Is Influencer Marketing Changing? *Forbes Magazine,* 1. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2019/08/08/how-is-influencer-marketing-changing/

Perrin, N. (2018). Demanding a better ad experience: why one in four internet users say no to ads. Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com/content/demanding-a-better-ad-experience

Rodgers, S., & Thorson, E. (2000). The interactive advertising model: How users perceive and process online ads. *Journal of interactive advertising, 1*(1), 41-60.

Sheth, J. N., & Uslay, C. (2007). Implications of the Revised Definition of Marketing: From Exchange to Value Creation. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 26*(2), 302-307. doi:10.1509/jppm.26.2.302

Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 26*(2), 53-66. doi:10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164

State of Instagram Influencer Marketing in 2020. (2019). Retrieved from https://later.com/blog/instagram-influencer-marketing-report/

Van den Abeele, E. (2019). *De influencer aan het woord: Kwalitatief onderzoek naar de perceptie van influencers over hun rol in influencer marketing.* (Communicationsciences Scientific qualitative research). University of Ghent, Scriptiebank. Retrieved from

https://www.scriptiebank.be/scriptie/2019/de-influencer-aan-het-woord-kwalitatief-onderzoek-naar-de-perceptie-van-influencers Scriptiebank database.

Vanhaelewyn B., D. M. L. (2018). *Digitale Mediatrends in Vlaanderen*. Retrieved from www.imec.be: https://www.imec-int.com/drupal/sites/default/files/inline-files/457015-IMEC-DIGIMETER-2019-NL-v9.pdf

Woods, S. (2016). # Sponsored: The emergence of influencer marketing.

Zietek, N. (2016). Influencer Marketing: the characteristics and components of fashion influencer marketing. In.

8   Attachments

8.1   Commitment to confidentiality form in Dutch

Ik, **ondergetekende Lina Safi,** aanvaard de volgende voorwaarden en bepalingen van deze verklaring:

In het kader van het uitvoeren van mijn **masterproef** aan de **Universiteit van Antwerpen** ("UAntwerpen") binnen de faculteit Sociale wetenschappen, onderzoeksgroep **"MIOS"**, met als promotor(en) **Sara Pabian "SARA PABIAN"** tijdens het Academiejaar **2019-2020** OF in de periode **februari tot eind mei** zal ik toegang krijgen tot (persoonlijke) Informatie van UA en/of derde partijen, in geschreven, elektronische, mondelinge, visuele of eender welke andere vorm, met inbegrip van (maar niet beperkt tot) documenten, kennis, know-how, data, tekeningen, foto's, filmmateriaal, modellen, materialen en prototypes. Deze Informatie wordt gezamenlijk met informatie voortkomend uit het door mij uitgevoerde onderzoek beschouwd als "Vertrouwelijke Informatie".

Ik zal de Vertrouwelijke Informatie uitsluitend aanwenden voor het uitvoeren van het onderzoek in kader van mijn **masterproef** binnen UAntwerpen. Ik zal:
   a) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie voor geen enkele andere doelstelling gebruiken;
   b) de Vertrouwelijke Informatie niet zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van UAntwerpen op directe of indirecte wijze publiek maken of aan derden bekendmaken.
   c) De Vertrouwelijke Informatie noch geheel noch gedeeltelijk reproduceren.

Ik verbind mij ertoe om alle onderzoeksdata, ideeën en eventuele uitvindingen niet vrij te geven buiten de onderzoeksgroep tenzij met uitdrukkelijke toestemming van mijn promotor(en).

Na de beëindiging van mijn **masterproef** zal ik alle verkregen en gecreëerde Vertrouwelijke Informatie en kopieën daarvan, die nog in mijn bezit zouden zijn, aan UAntwerpen terugbezorgen.

Naam:	Lina Safi
Adres:	Maalderij 18, 9120 Beveren
Geboortedatum:	19 januari 1995
Geboorteplaats:	Kapisa, Afghanistan
Handtekening:	

8.2 Ethical file

8.2.1 Attachment 1: Application form ethical clearance Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities (English)

PROJECT INFORAMATION

Peoplesoft project-id (Antigoon): N/A

DECLARATION OF HONOUR

I hereby confirm that the information in this document has been provided to the best of my knowledge and beliefs and I take full responsibility for it.

I understand that it is my responsibility to monitor the study at all times, to state any unforeseen circumstances, and to put an end to the study if need be.

I am aware of my responsibility to be informed of the most important legal guidelines with regard to the protection of personal data and act in accordance to them.

I understand that I cannot start the study without obtaining a (preliminary) positive ethical clearance.

Date: 06/01/2020

Promotor Sara Pabian
(The formal promotor of the research)

A. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

Title: What kind of beliefs do followers hold about influencers' branded content?

Expected start date:[1] February 1, 2020

Expected end date: May 27th, 2020

Researcher(s): Lina Safi

Promotor(s): Sara Pabian [https://www.uantwerpen.be/nl/personeel/sara-pabian/]

Spokesperson N/A

TYPES OF RESEARCH

Does the research involve cross-border research in different countries?

YES - NO - N A

If so, what are the other international research groups involved:

Is it a national consortium project involving several research centers/research groups?

YES - NO - N/A

If so, what are the other cooperating research groups (including those at other institutions):

Is the research about the reuse of existing data collected by yourself or someone else? Please also indicate whether the consent has been obtained from the participants for reuse, as well as the original source of the data.

YES - NO - N A

FUNDING

How will the study be funded? Specify the funding programme (e.g.. BOF-DOCPRO, EU-ERC, FWO-postdoc, FWO-SB beurs…) and the year[2]

Government (FWO, BOF, …): N/A
Own means:
Industry:
Other (please exlain):
Project ID external funder (if available, eg FWO number): N/A

---

[1] This is the start date of the specific work package of the project for which an ethical advice is required.

[2] If this advice applies to multiple sources of funding, the information must be provided for each of these sources.

B. DOCUMENTS FOR ASSESSING EVERY STUDY

Obligatory attachments	Present
Document 1: Methodology of the study (in Dutch or English)	▬
Document 2: Information sheet for the participant (or justification why it is not applicable, for example when data is reused)	▬
Document 3: Consent form for the participant (or justification why it is not applicable, for example when data is reused)	▬
Optional attachment:	
Document 4: A list of ethical committees to which the research proposal will be presented	▬

C. RISK ANALYSIS

	Yes	No	Remarks:
1. **Will you collect personal data?** If so, on which legal ground (e.g. legitimate interest, consent)?		X	
2. If participants **are reimbursed** for participation, is this compensation completely anonymous? (can you reimburse without using any personal data?)		X	
3. Does the intended population also consist of **minors**? State the specific age category under "remarks".		X	Participants will be contacted from the age of 18 to 24 year old.
4. Is the intended population (also) composed of **vulnerable groups and persons**?		X	
5. Do questions from the study deal with **sensitive topics**?		X	
6. Does the research entail making **audiovisual recordings**?	X		Yes, audio + video recording.
7. Does the research require **lengthy or repeated tests** where **personal data** is required for linking the data?		X	
8. Is there a risk that participants will be exposed to **physical or psychological disadvantages** during the study (stress, anxiety, humiliation, use of experimental methods such as hypnosis?)		X	
9. Will you **mislead** the participants at the start of the study (because you cannot state the exact purpose of the study from the start).		X	
10. Will you (now or later) share data with partners from other countries (i.e. will you do **cross-border research**)?		X	
11. Could ethical risks arise during the study that were not mentioned above?		X	

IF THE ANSWER TO ANY OF THE QUESTIONS ABOVE WAS 'YES', PLEASE PROCEED TO PART D

IF THE ANSWER TO ALL OF THE QUESTIONS ABOVE WAS 'NO', YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR APPLICATION. Make sure whether you have filled out the declaration of honour on page 1.

D. SPECIFIC INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

PARTICIPANTS

1. Who are the participants (number, gender, age, etc.)? On the basis of which criteria are they selected? If the target group consists of minors and/or vulnerable groups and/or persons, provide the necessary details.

In-depth interviews: we began with a pilot interviewee who was a woman, aged 24 years old. We then conducted 6 more in-depth interviews until we reached a saturated sample.

2. Will the participants receive compensation? If so, which kind of compensation?

No.

3. What are the potential risks for the participants?

None.

PERSONAL DATA & OTHER DATA: COLLECTION, STORAGE AND PROCESSING

4. In which way will personal data and/or other data of the participants be collected and processed? (for example by audiovisual recordings). Please indicate this step-by-step cycle starting from recruitment until the end of the study. Please structure your answer; state clearly and logically where personal data is dealt with in the collection and processing process.

During the in-depth interviews, an audio + video recording with Skype was made to code and analyze our results afterwards with the software programmer NVivo. This will only be used for this study.

5. Will data be pseudonymized during the study? How will you do this? And when will you do this? Clearly state this again and step by step.

No, when referring to participants in our results we used their gender and age.

6. Who will collect data? Does this researcher (s) already have experience with the planned methods? (If not, please specify how this will be remedied). Do these researchers know the EASHW guidance note? (Have they read the guidance note or will they?)

The one who writes this thesis will collect data, thus myself, Lina Safi.

7. Who will process data? Does this researcher (s) already have experience with the planned methods? (If not, please specify how this will be remedied).

During our lecture "Qualitative Research Methods" in our first year of college, we had to do an interview about a topic for our professor Dimitri Mortelmans. This was to pass the lecture. Thus, I do have knowledge of taking interviews and filling in consent forms by the participants. I might have not done a lot of research, but I will take this experience into account for my own thesis.

8. For non-anonymous studies: Will all employees who collect and/or process data sign a confidentiality statement (You must attach a template for this)?

N/A

INFORMATION, CONSENT EN RIGHT TO DISCONTINUE PARTICIPATION

9. Is the consent of the participants obtained after a clear and objective explanation of the purpose and the risks of the research? If this is not the case, what is the reason participants are not informed? Add the <u>information sheet for participants</u>.

Yes, see attached.

10. Does the research initially use deception to achieve the research objectives? How are the participants subsequently informed about this deception? Please enclose the <u>debriefing form</u> with this application.

No.

11. In which way will explicit permission be obtained from the participants? If no permission can be obtained, please justify this and indicate how this problem will be addressed. Add the <u>consent form</u>, or a <u>description of how you will obtain explicit consent</u>.

Please see attached the consent form.

12. In the case of a study of children, is the permission requested from the legal representatives? Add the <u>consent form for the parent/guardian or a description of how you will obtain explicit consent from the parent/guardian</u>.

N/A

13. If written permission cannot be obtained due to urgency, will the participant or legal representative be asked as soon as possible?

This will be obtained on time but yes if it will not.

14. Are the participants informed of the right to discontinue their participation in the study at any time?

Yes*.*

STORAGE AND ARCHIVAL OF DATA

15. How will the data be stored during the course of the study?

Data will be stored 10 years on a USB stick by my promoter, Sara Pabian.

16. <u>In what way and for how long will you archive the data after completing the research?</u>

10 years on a USB stick.

17. Can/will various data from your research be used for purposes other than those described in the current research project (e.g. re-use of data)? If so: will participants be informed that the data they provide may be reused after the study?

No.

18. Who will you possibly share the data with after the study? Consider the (re) use of the data by fellow researchers. If these are foreign colleagues (i.e. cross-border research): explain how you will share which data. And will participants be informed of this at the start of the study?

The data will not be used by other people.

RIGHT TO INSPECT & INFO ON THE RESEARCH RESULTS

19. Taking into account the chosen legal basis for the processing of the personal data: Are the participants informed that they (i) have access to the personal data collected about them and (ii) possibly can have them adjusted?

If they wish to see this then yes, they are always allowed to only see their own transcription of the interview. Not someone else's.

20. At the end of the study, the participants will be informed of the results of the study. If so, how? If not, why not?

They will be contacted through mail.

E. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS TO ASSESS THE STUDY AFTER COMPLETION OF SECTION D

Obligatory attachments if you filled out section D	Present
Document 5: All information that will be used to contact the participants	🟩
Document 6: All the diaries or surveys that will be presented to the participants, if already available	▭

Optional attachments if you filled out section D (these might be obligatory in some cases)	Present
Document 7: Information sheet for the parent/guardian	▭
Document 8: Consent form for the parent/guardian	▭
Document 10: Debriefing form (in case of initial deception)	▭
Document 11: Example of the confidentiality statement for all employees in non-anonymous research (not yet signed; only document that will be used to add)	▭
Document 12: Contracts between the researchers and sponsors	▭

8.2.2   Attachment 2: Consent form for participants in Dutch

What kind of beliefs do followers hold about influencer's branded content?

Deel enkel bestemd voor de deelnemer of de wettelijke vertegenwoordig(st)er:

Hierbij bevestig ik, ondergetekende (naam & voornaam) _____dat ik over de studie ben ingelicht en een kopie van de "Informatie voor deelnemers" en het "Toestemmingsformulier" heb ontvangen. Ik heb de informatie gelezen en begrepen. De uitvoerder van het onderzoek heeft mij voldoende informatie gegeven met betrekking tot de voorwaarden en de duur van de studie, én het effect hiervan. Bovendien werd mij voldoende tijd gegeven om de informatie te overwegen en om vragen te stellen, waarop ik bevredigende antwoorden gekregen heb.

– Ik heb begrepen dat ik mijn deelname aan deze studie op elk ogenblik mag stopzetten nadat ik de uitvoerende onderzoeker hierover heb ingelicht, zonder dat dit mij enig nadeel kan berokkenen.
– Ik ben mij bewust van het doel waarvoor de door mij aangeleverde gegevens verzameld, verwerkt en gebruikt worden in het kader van deze studie en dat zij vertrouwelijk zullen worden behandeld.
– Ik ga akkoord met de verzameling, de verwerking en het gebruik van deze gegevens, zoals beschreven in het informatieblad voor de participant. Ik ga eveneens akkoord met de overdracht en de verwerking van deze gegevens in andere landen dan België.
– Ik ga akkoord met het gebruik van de door mij aangeleverde onderzoeksgegevens voor andere onderzoeksdoeleinden (exclusief persoonsgegevens).
– Ik stem geheel vrijwillig toe om deel te nemen aan deze studie en om mee te werken aan alle gevraagde onderzoeken. Ik ben bereid informatie te verstrekken i.v.m. mijn achtergrond en eventuele deelname aan andere studies.

- Ik geef de toestemming aan **Lina Safi** om mijn persoonsgegevens te verwerken voor **dit onderzoek** op de wijze en onder de modaliteiten zoals omschreven in het informatieformulier. Hiervoor wordt er een audio opgenomen van het interview om dit later te verwerken en te analyseren.

Datum: _____

Handtekening deelnemer (of wettelijk vertegenwoordig(st)er):_____

Indien nodig, handtekening onafhankelijke getuige:
_____

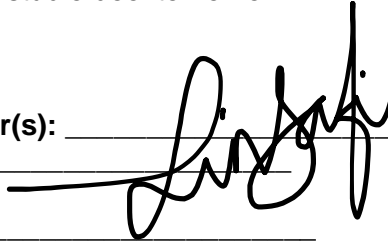*__Deel enkel bestemd voor de onderzoeker die de studie uitvoert:__*

Hierbij bevestig ik, ondergetekende **Lina Safi,** dat ik met _____ de procedures zoals beschreven in het inlichtingenblad heb besproken, waarbij ik specifiek heb gewezen op de mogelijke risico's of ongemakken verbonden aan het onderzoek. Ik heb expliciet de vraag gesteld of er nog onduidelijkheden of vragen overbleven en heb deze naar mijn beste vermogen beantwoord. Tevens bevestig ik dat _____ toestemming heeft gegeven om aan de studie deel te nemen.

Datum: _____

Handtekening uitvoerende onderzoeker(s): _____
Contactgegevens: _____

Handtekening woordvoerder: _____
Contactgegevens: _____

Participant Nummer: _____

What kind of beliefs do followers hold about influencer's branded content?

U wordt uitgenodigd om vrijwillig deel te nemen aan een onderzoeksproject inzake **de geloofwaardigheid van influencer's sponsored posts.** Dit wordt uitgevoerd door **Lina Safi, onder de leiding van Sara Pabian (Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen, Department Communicatiewetenschappen).** Vooraleer u toestemt om aan deze studie deel te nemen, is het belangrijk dat u dit formulier aandachtig leest. In dit informatie- en toestemmingsformulier worden het doel, de onderzoeken, de voordelen, risico's en ongemakken gepaard gaande met de studie beschreven. Ook de voor u beschikbare alternatieven en het recht om op elk ogenblik de studie te verlaten, zijn hieronder beschreven. Er kunnen geen beloften gedaan worden noch waarborgen gegeven worden betreffende de resultaten van het onderzoeksproject. U hebt het recht om op elk ogenblik vragen te stellen over de mogelijke en/of bekende risico's/ongemakken die deze studie inhoudt.

Doel en beschrijving van de studie
Dit is een wetenschappelijk onderzoek waaraan naar verwachting ongeveer *5* deelnemers zullen deelnemen **aan diepte-interviews** in België.

Deze studie heeft tot doel **bepaalde determinanten te bekomen aan de hand van een kwalitatief onderzoek (diepte-interviews) dat aanwijst wat een sponsored post geloofwaardig maakt volgens een volger/ontvanger van een influencer. U zal op basis van dit interview uw perceptie tegenover een sponsored posts meedelen. U kan hierdoor bijdragen tot een optimale Influencer Marketing in Vlaanderen waar u als volger/ontvanger van een influencer een beeld kan geven over de geloofwaardigheid van de influencer's sponsored posts. Deze masterproef zal ongeveer een half jaar duren.**

U werd uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan deze studie omdat **u een belangrijke meerwaarde biedt als volger/ontvanger in de Influencer Marketing.**

U kan deelnemen aan deze studie door toestemming te geven van uw participatie aan **een dit interview met de onderzoekster, Lina Safi.**

Opdrachtgever van de studie
De opdrachtgever van de studie is **het Universiteit van Antwerpen.**

Duur van de studie
Er zal u gevraagd worden gedurende ongeveer *90 minuten* aan de studie deel te nemen. In de loop hiervan zal u minstens *1* maal **gecontacteerd worden.**

De studie zal ongeveer ***een halfjaar duren.***

Onderzoeken in het kader van de studie
Indien u aanvaardt aan de studie deel te nemen en u voldoet aan alle voorwaarden voor deelname aan de studie, dan zullen de volgende tests en onderzoeken worden uitgevoerd: **een diepte-interview dat ongeveer 90 minuten zal duren. Dit zal opgenomen worden via een laptop om de data achteraf te analyseren. Op geen enkele wijze zal deze audio en schermopname gedeeld worden met anderen.**

Vrijwillige deelname
U neemt geheel vrijwillig deel aan deze studie en u hebt het recht te weigeren eraan deel te nemen. U heeft steeds de mogelijkheid om al dan niet aan deze studie deel te nemen of om uw deelname aan de studie stop te zetten.

Indien u aanvaardt om aan de studie deel te nemen, zal u deze informatiefolder krijgen om te bewaren en zal er u gevraagd worden het aangehechte toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen.

De onderzoeker kan zelf op elk ogenblik een einde stellen aan uw deelname aan de studie, zelfs zonder dat hij/zij hiervoor uw toestemming moet vragen, om één van de volgende redenen:
– u houdt zich niet aan de instructies voor deelname aan de studie;
– er wordt naderhand ontdekt dat u niet aan de studievoorwaarden voldoet;
– de opdrachtgever zet de studie stop wegens andere, momenteel onbekende redenen.

U hebt het recht om uw deelname aan de studie op elk ogenblik stop te zetten, zelfs nadat u het toestemmingsformulier ondertekend heeft. U hoeft geen reden te geven voor het intrekken van uw toestemming tot deelname. Het intrekken van uw toestemming zal geen enkel nadeel of verlies van voordelen met zich meebrengen. Deze keuze zal ook geen invloed uitoefenen op uw beoordeling of verdere studies

Risico's en ongemakken
Niet van toepassing.

Voordelen
Indien u toestemt om aan deze studie deel te nemen, kan dit al dan niet nuttig blijken te zijn voor **de Influencer Marketing.** De uit deze studie bekomen informatie kan bijdragen tot een betere kennis over **de geloofwaardigheid van sponsored posts.**

Vergoeding
Deze studie gebeurt op initiatief van de onderzoeker. De reis- en/of parkeerkosten die u maakt in het kader van dit onderzoek zullen/zullen niet worden vergoed.

Bescherming van de persoonlijke levenssfeer
Uw identiteit en uw deelname aan deze studie worden strikt vertrouwelijk behandeld. U zult niet bij naam of op een andere herkenbare wijze geïdentificeerd worden in dossiers, resultaten of publicaties in verband met de studie.

Persoonsgegevens

Het interview waar u aan meedoet zal opgenomen worden via een laptop (Skype: video- + audio opname). Deze informatie wordt opgenomen omdat we dit achteraf nodig hebben om te verwerken. Alle gegevens die in deze studie verzameld worden, worden vertrouwelijk behandeld door de onderzoekers. Data waarbij uw identiteit te achterhalen valt zullen indien mogelijk vernietigd worden of afzonderlijk bewaard worden (bv. een door u ondertekend toestemmingsformulier). Alle over u verzamelde gegevens van deze studie worden enkel voor onderzoeksdoeleinden gebruikt. U heeft het recht de resultaten van deze studie op te vragen en persoonsgegevens verzameld via toestemmingsformulieren achteraf nog in te kijken. Neem hiervoor achteraf contact op met de hoofdonderzoekers. Ook wordt uw perceptie/mening/visie over de geloofwaardigheid van Influencer Marketing vertrouwelijk behandeld binnen dit interview en onderzoek en zal dit op geen enkele wijze gedeeld worden met derden.

Om de doeleinden omschreven in dit formulier te bereiken, zullen de volgende personen en/of diensten toegang hebben tot uw persoonsgegevens:
- **Onderzoeker: Lina Safi**
- **Promoter: Sara Pabian**
- **Medebeoordelaar: Katrien Maldoy**

Uw persoonsgegevens zullen steeds verwerkt worden onder de verantwoordelijkheid van **Lina Safi** met telefoonnummer **+32487029620** en met e-mailadres **linasafi1@hotmail.com**

U hebt in het kader van de verwerking van persoonsgegevens bedoeld in dit formulier te allen tijde recht om uw persoonsgegevens kosteloos in te zien en om in voorkomend geval alle onjuiste en/of onvolledige persoonsgegevens die op uzelf betrekking hebben, kosteloos te laten verbeteren. Daarbij kan u tevens vragen dat wij uw persoonsgegevens tijdelijk niet verder verwerken (behalve in een aantal wettelijk bepaalde gevallen) totdat wij de juistheid van uw persoonsgegevens hebben gecontroleerd.

U heeft voorts het recht om te vragen dat wij een kopie van uw persoonsgegevens overmaken aan uzelf en/of rechtstreeks aan een andere instelling of persoon van uw keuze in een formaat dat toelaat om deze persoonsgegevens gemakkelijk over te dragen.

Indien u meent dat **Lina Safi** uw persoonsgegevens niet meer mag verwerken, dan kan u in bepaalde gevallen ook vragen dat uw persoonsgegevens definitief gewist worden. In plaats van wissing kan u als alternatief ook vragen dat uw gegevens wel opgeslagen blijven, maar niet verder worden verwerkt (behalve in bepaalde wettelijk omschreven gevallen).

Uw persoonsgegevens zullen in elk geval niet langer bewaard worden dan nodig is voor de doeleinden omschreven in dit formulier.

Wij zijn evenwel wettelijk verplicht om uw persoonsgegevens minimaal **10** jaar te bewaren. Indien blijkt dat de bewaring intussen niet meer nodig is voor de doeleinden omschreven in dit formulier, dan zullen uw persoonsgegevens conform onze wettelijke verplichting nog wel worden bewaard, maar niet meer worden gebruikt voor deze doeleinden.

Voor het uitoefenen van de bovenstaande rechten, kan u contact opnemen met **Sara Pabian** en met e-mailadres: **sara.pabian@uantwerpen.be**

Voor bijkomende vragen over uw rechten en alle andere aangelegenheden betreffende de verwerking van uw persoonsgegevens kan u ook steeds terecht bij onze functionaris voor gegevensbescherming via het e-mailadres **privacy@uantwerpen.be.**
Deze functionaris ziet op onafhankelijke wijze toe op de naleving van de privacywetgeving.

Indien u zou menen dat uw persoonsgegevens niet rechtmatig en volgens de wettelijke vereisten worden/werden verwerkt, dan heeft u ook steeds het recht om klacht indienen bij de Privacycommissie (contactgegevens beschikbaar via: www.privacycommission.be). In geval van klachten raden wij evenwel aan om eerst onze functionaris voor gegevensbescherming te contacteren. Vaak zullen eventuele problemen of misverstanden zo eenvoudig opgelost kunnen worden.

Indien u niet wenst dat wij uw persoonsgegevens verwerken voor de doeleinden omschreven in dit formulier, dan mag u uiteraard steeds weigeren om uw toestemming te geven zonder dat u daartoe een reden moet opgeven.

Indien u wel uw toestemming heeft gegeven, maar nadien van gedacht verandert, zal u bovendien steeds uw toestemming kunnen intrekken door dit te melden aan **Lina Safi** via het e-mailadres: **lina.safi@student.uantwerpen.be** zonder dat u daartoe een reden moet opgeven. Indien u uw toestemming intrekt, zal **Lina Safi** uw persoonsgegevens niet verder gebruiken voor de doeleinden omschreven in dit formulier. De intrekking doet echter geen afbreuk aan de rechtmatigheid van de gegevensverwerkingen die reeds plaatsvonden vóór de intrekking van uw toestemming of van gegevensverwerkingen die zonder uw toestemming mogen worden uitgevoerd

Indien u besluit om te weigeren of om uw toestemming in te trekken, dan zal dit geen enkel nadeel met zich meebrengen voor u **als volger/ontvanger van een influencer.**

Kennisgeving van nieuwe informatie (indien relevant voor voorliggende studie)
Soms komt er in de loop van een onderzoeksproject nieuwe informatie aan het licht over het bestudeerde topic. Indien dit het geval is, zal u op de hoogte gebracht worden van nieuwe informatie die uw bereidheid om aan deze studie verder deel te nemen, kan beïnvloeden.

In dat geval zal u gevraagd worden een nieuw informatie- en toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen. Mocht u naar aanleiding van de nieuwe informatie besluiten met het onderzoek te willen stoppen, dan is dit op elk tijdstip mogelijk.

Hergebruik van gegevens

Om optimaal gebruik te kunnen maken van alle verzamelde onderzoeksgegevens, zullen de datasets mogelijk in een later stadium hergebruikt worden voor andere onderzoeksdoeleinden. Hierbij garanderen wij dezelfde zorgvuldige omgang met de verstrekte gegevens als bij de initiële verzameling.

Commissie voor ethiek
Deze studie is beoordeeld door een onafhankelijke commissie voor ethiek, nl. de commissie **EH SHW**, die een gunstig advies heeft gegeven op *……………..*

Contactpersonen in geval van vragen in verband met de studie
Indien u meent studiegebonden schade te hebben opgelopen of indien u vragen heeft over het onderzoek of uw rechten als studiedeelnemer, nu of tijdens of na uw deelname, dan kan u contact opnemen met: **Lina Safi.**

Alvast bedankt om de tijd te nemen dit informatieformulier te hebben doorgenomen. Voor verdere informatie kan u steeds contact opnemen met **Lina Safi**

Datum:

Handtekening uitvoerende onderzoeker(s): _____
Contactgegevens: _____

Handtekening Woordvoerder: _____
Contactgegevens:_____

8.3 Topic list

Nogmaals bedankt voor je deelname aan het onderzoek. Ik zal mezelf even kort voorstellen: mijn naam is Lina, ik ben een studente aan de Universiteit van Antwerpen en ik studeer Communicatiewetenschappen. Ik werk aan mijn thesis dit jaar rond de geloofwaardigheid van influencer marketing en het interview van vandaag maakt daar deel uit van. Met dit onderzoek wil ik peilen hoe geloofwaardig je een influencer content vindt, maar meer specifiek hun branded content of content die gesponsord is.

Tijdens het interview zal er een audio-opname + een video opname gemaakt worden. Deze opnames worden verder niet verspreid en dienen enkel voor de analyse van dit onderzoek. Ga je akkoord met het maken van een audio-opname + video opname? Verder heb je ook een toestemmingsformulier gekregen hiermee bevestigt u op een vrijwillige basis deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek en dat u toestemt met de opname van audiogeluid tijdens het onderzoek. Graag wil ik vragen om het toestemmingsformulier even te overlopen en, indien je hiermee akkoord gaat, te ondertekenen. Verder wordt je naam niet overgenomen in het onderzoeksrapport, als hierin een quote wordt gebruikt van jou dan zal er enkel naar uw leeftijd en geslacht verwezen worden.

Er zijn verder geen foute of juiste antwoorden tijdens dit interview. Ik zal je ook enkele foto's of video's laten zien, zodat jullie kennismaken met voorbeelden van sponsored posts, influencers, ... Het interview zal ongeveer een uur tot anderhalf uur duren, is het goed dat je ergens op een rustige locatie zit zodat we ongestoord verder kunnen? Zijn er op dit moment nog vragen voor we het onderzoek beginnen?

Openingsvraag

Vooraleer we beginnen, zou je jezelf nog even kort kunnen voorstellen?

- Wie ben je + hoe oud ben je?
- Als ik "Fashion Influencer" zeg, wat betekent dit voor jou dan?
- Als ik "Sponsored Content" zeg, wat betekent dit voor jou dan?
- Kan je enkele Fashion Influencers opnoemen die je volgt?
- Hoeveel uur per dag zit je op Instagram?
- Scrol jij snel of traag door uw Instagram feed (= de 'feed' is het startscherm waarin je alle foto's ziet die de mensen die jij volgt hebben gepost)?
    - Like je dan ook de foto's van influencers die je voorbijziet op uw feed of scrol je heel snel door uw feed?
    - Zijn er foto's die je bewust niet liket?
        - (Bijvoorbeeld: "gesponsorde content like ik niet…")

Inleidingsvraag

Zoals aangehaald gaat het onderzoek over de geloofwaardigheid van Influencer's Sponsored/Branded Posts.

- Eerst en vooral:
    - Influencers zijn: in de eerste plaats content creators (makers van inhoud): iemand met een status van expertise op een specifiek gebied, die een aanzienlijk aantal volgers heeft ontwikkeld voor zichzelf - die van marketingwaarde zijn voor merken - door regelmatig waardevolle content te produceren via sociale mediakanalen.
    - Sponsored/Branded content zijn: content die gecreëerd worden door influencers, waarvoor ze in ruil geld krijgen door het merk waarvoor ze content maken.
        - Dat kan in de vorm van een Instagram Post zijn of een Instagram Story.
            - Wij beschouwen dit als één geheel.

Hoofdvragen

Expertise + Trustworthiness on Purchase Intention

- Wat is voor jou belangrijk als je een influencer volgt?
    - (<u>Expertise</u> bijvoorbeeld: "ik volg iemand omdat ik weet dat die bevoegd is om over bepaalde onderwerpen te praten en dat geeft soort van vertrouwen in de influencer.")
    - (<u>Het aantal volgers</u> bijvoorbeeld: "als iemand veel volgers heeft dan weet ik dat die <u>betrouwbaar</u> is en dan zou ik daarom die persoon volgen.")
        - Of: kijk jij naar het aantal personen die de influencer volgt?
    - (De <u>waarheid</u> die veel influencers delen over hun gesponsorde content.)

- Hoe voel jij je wanneer influencers hun PR producten op Instagram delen?
    - (PR producten: zijn meestal gratis weggegeven producten)

- Vertrouw jij de mening/aanbeveling van een influencer?
    - Ja: hoe vertrouw jij een influencer?
    - Nee: wanneer verlies jij je vertrouwen in een influencer?

- In hoeverre vind je het belangrijk dat een influencer betaalde samenwerkingen aangaat met merken binnen haar niche (dus Fashion Influencers met Fashion merken en niet met, bijvoorbeeld, stofzuigermerken)
    - Heb je ooit een influencer daarom unfollowed omdat zij/hij uit haar/zijn niche is geweest?
    - Heeft dit alsnog jouw aankoopintentie beïnvloedt? (Heb jij dan ook een stofzuiger gekocht?)

- Zou je een influencer sneller unfollowen omdat zij/hij te veel gesponsorde content post?

In België hebben we de JEP: Jury voor Ethische Praktijken die aanbevelingen en adviezen geeft aan influencer: of ze al dan niet moeten vermelden dat het gaat om gesponsord content.

- Hoe belangrijk vind jij het om influencers te volgen die duidelijk vermelden dat het om gesponsord content gaat?

- Als de influencers content maken over producten die gesponsord zijn zonder te vermelden dat het gesponsord is, hoe kijk jij hiertegen op?
    o Omdat het gesponsord is maar niet vernoemd wordt, doet dit jou het product dan ook aankopen?
    o Vaak doen ze ook een aanbeveling over het product bij hun gesponsord content, doet dit jou het product dan ook aankopen?

- Hoe kijk jij ertegenop als ze wel vermelden dat het gesponsord is?
    o Omdat het gesponsord is en ook vernoemd wordt, doet dit jou het product dan ook aankopen?

- Zou je het gesponsord product sneller kopen omdat die persoon <u>veel volgers</u> heeft en daarom ook meer betrouwbaarder is?
    o Waarom wel of waarom niet?
- Zou je het gesponsord product sneller kopen omdat die influencer <u>veel personen volgt</u> en daarom ook meer betrouwbaarder is?
    o Waarom wel of waarom niet?

- Denk je dat influencers veel <u>kennis en expertise</u> hebben wanneer ze producten plaatsen op hun Instagram?
    o Waarom wel of waarom niet?

In bijlage heb ik je twee afbeeldingen verstuurd:

- o Wat is het eerste dat je opmerkt?
- o Welke versie verkies jij?
    - ▪ En waarom?
- o Spreekt de boodschap jou aan?
    - ▪ En waarom?
- o Als jij door jouw Instagram feed scrolt en het gesponsord content (links) voorbij ziet gaan, besteed jij hier aandacht aan?
    - ▪ (bijvoorbeeld: ja, als het gaat om een merk dat ik interessant vind.)
- o Doet het gesponsord content jou het product ook kopen?
    - ▪ Op welke manier?
- o Wanneer was het de laatste keer dat je door een gesponsorde content iets hebt aangekocht?

Attractiveness + Similarity + Parasocial Relationship on Purchase Intention

- Kijk je op naar deze influencers als een soort van inspiratiebron?
    - Ja, op welke manier?
    - Is dit ook een reden waarom je influencers volgt?

- Kan je jezelf identificeren met deze influencers?
    - Ja, op welke manier?
        - (Culturele/religieuze/leeftijd/regio/… redenen bijvoorbeeld)
    - Is er een bepaald moment geweest dat je een band creëerde met deze influencers?
        - Ja, waarom en op welke manier?
        - Is dit een online band met een influencer die je niet kent?
        - Of heb je ook een offline band met deze persoon omdat je die ook persoonlijk kent?
    - Beïnvloedt dit jouw aankoopintentie?
        - Ja, op welke manier?

In bijlage heb ik jou twee Instagram links gestuurd (twee fashion influencer profielen: 1 fashion influencer profiel die heel veel doet aan gesponsorde samenwerkingen (@whowhatwear) en 1 fashion influencer profiel die meer over haar leven/familie/cultuur/… vertelt en minder aan gesponsorde samenwerkingen doet (@sazan):

- o Als je beide Instagram profielen bekijkt, wat merk je op?
- o Welke Instagram profiel spreekt jou het meest aan en waarom?
  - ▪ (als ze voor @sazan hebben gekozen): waarom heb je niet gekozen voor @whowhatwear?
  - ▪ (als ze voor @whowhatwear hebben gekozen): waarom heb je niet gekozen voor @sazan?)
- o Als @whowhatwear een gesponsord content zou plaatsen, zou jij dat ook aankopen?
- o Als @sazan een gesponsord content zou plaatsen, zou jij dat ook aankopen?

Besluitende vragen:

- In hoeverre denk je dat de Influencer Marketing in België een verbetering nodig heeft?
    - o Met wat heeft dit te maken (vb: de ongeloofwaardigheid van de Influencer's gesponsorde content…)?
- Hoe zie jij de toekomst van de Influencer Marketing?
- Zijn er vragen/dingen/elementen van de topic van vandaag dat we niet hebben benoemd maar je wel wilt bespreken?
- Zijn er na dit gesprek nog dingen die je graag wilt toevoegen?

Dan is hierbij het interview afgelopen, graag wil ik je nogmaals bedanken voor uw deelname aan het onderzoek!

8.4   Codebook / Datasets and/ or written interviews

See attachment e-mail.

8.5   List of Figures
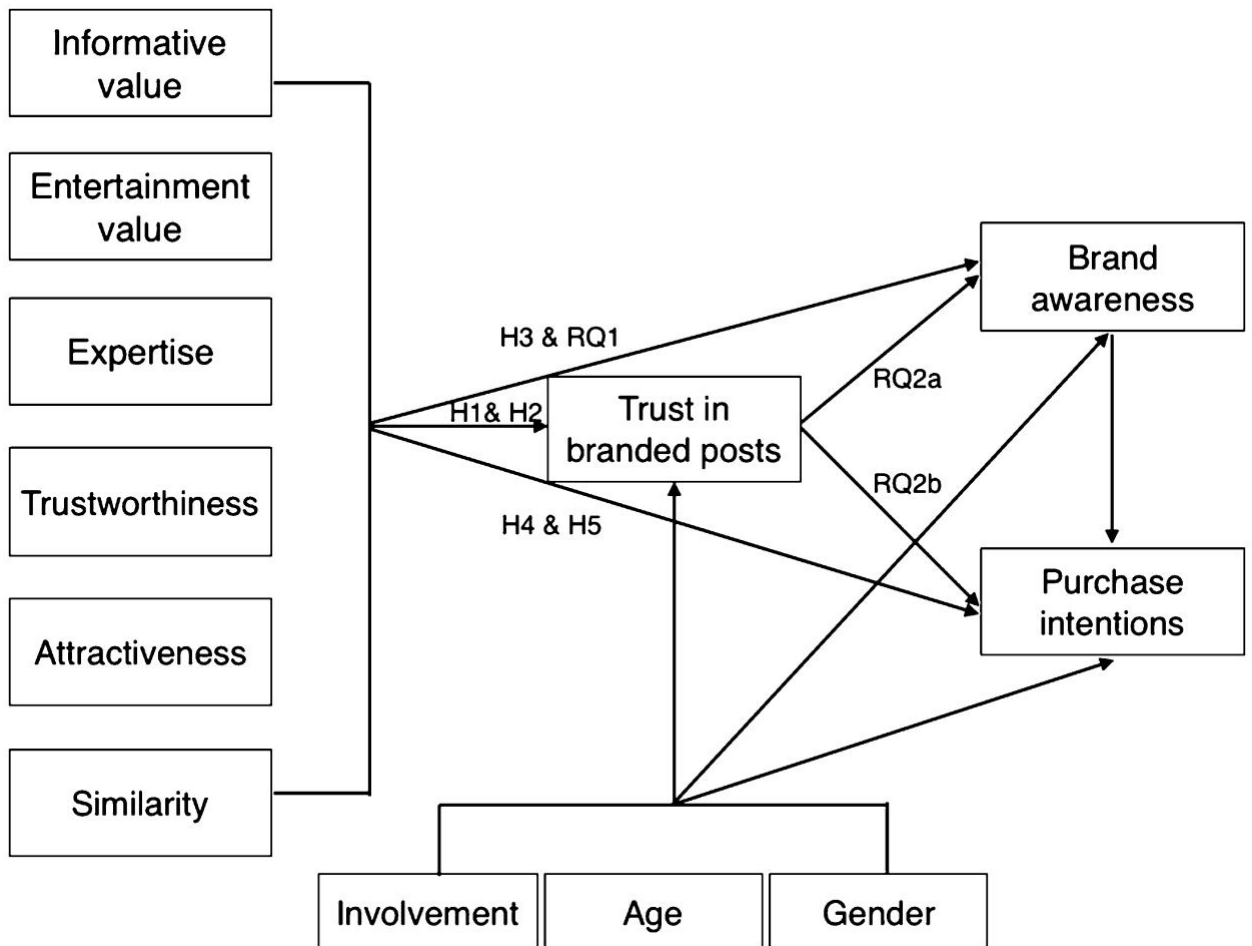
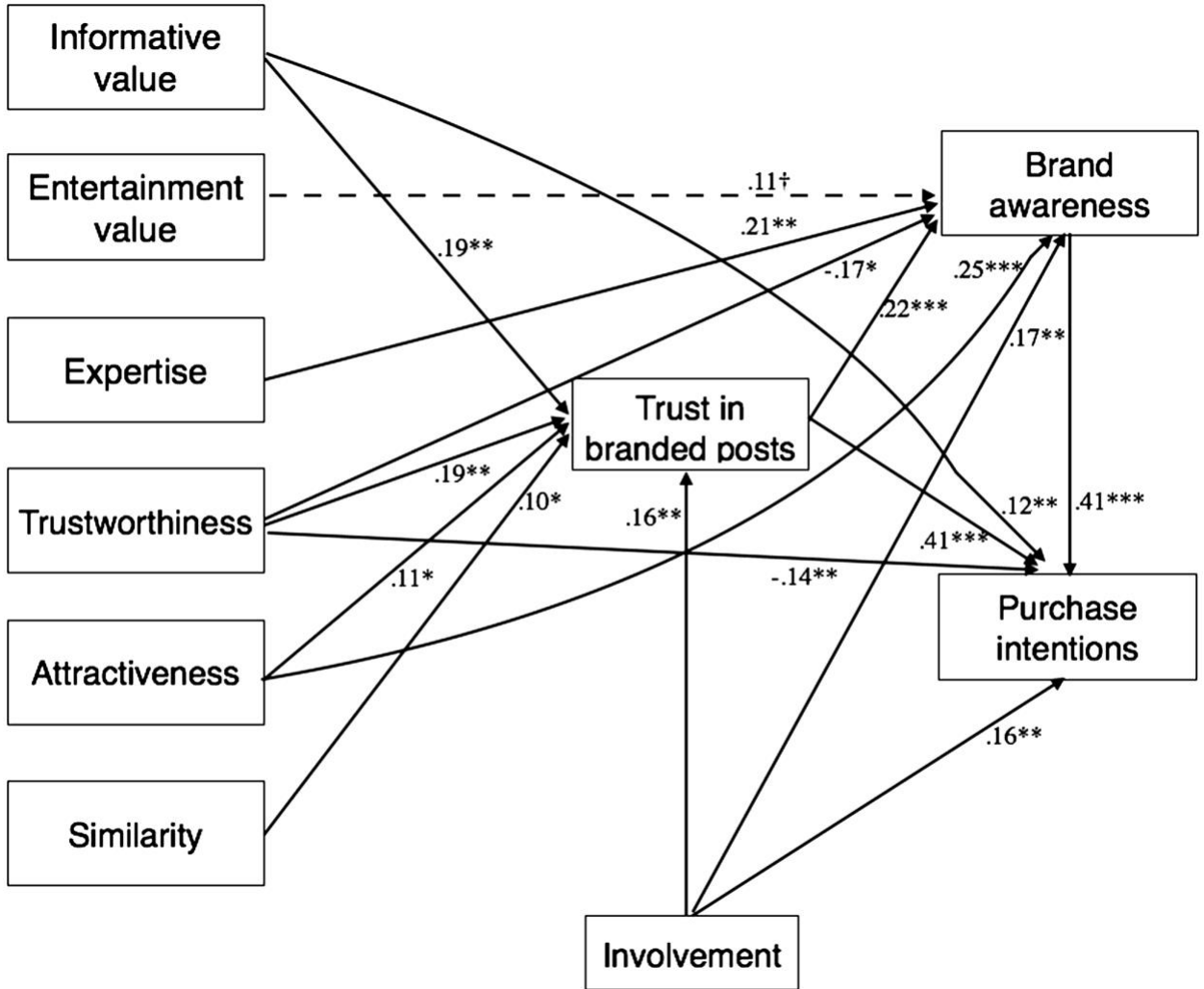*Figure 1. Lou & Yuan's Proposed SMIV-Model*

*Figure 2. Partial least squares (PLS) path model. Only significant paths are shown; †p < .10; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.*
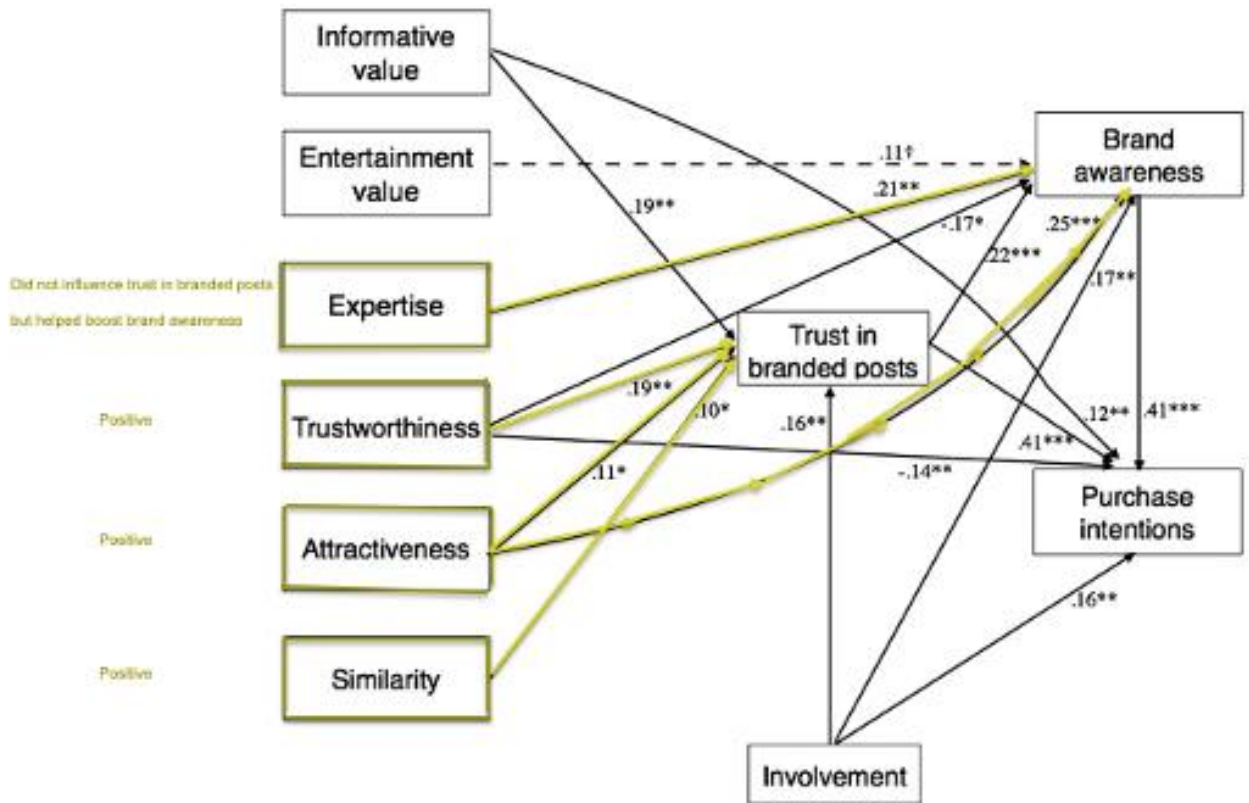
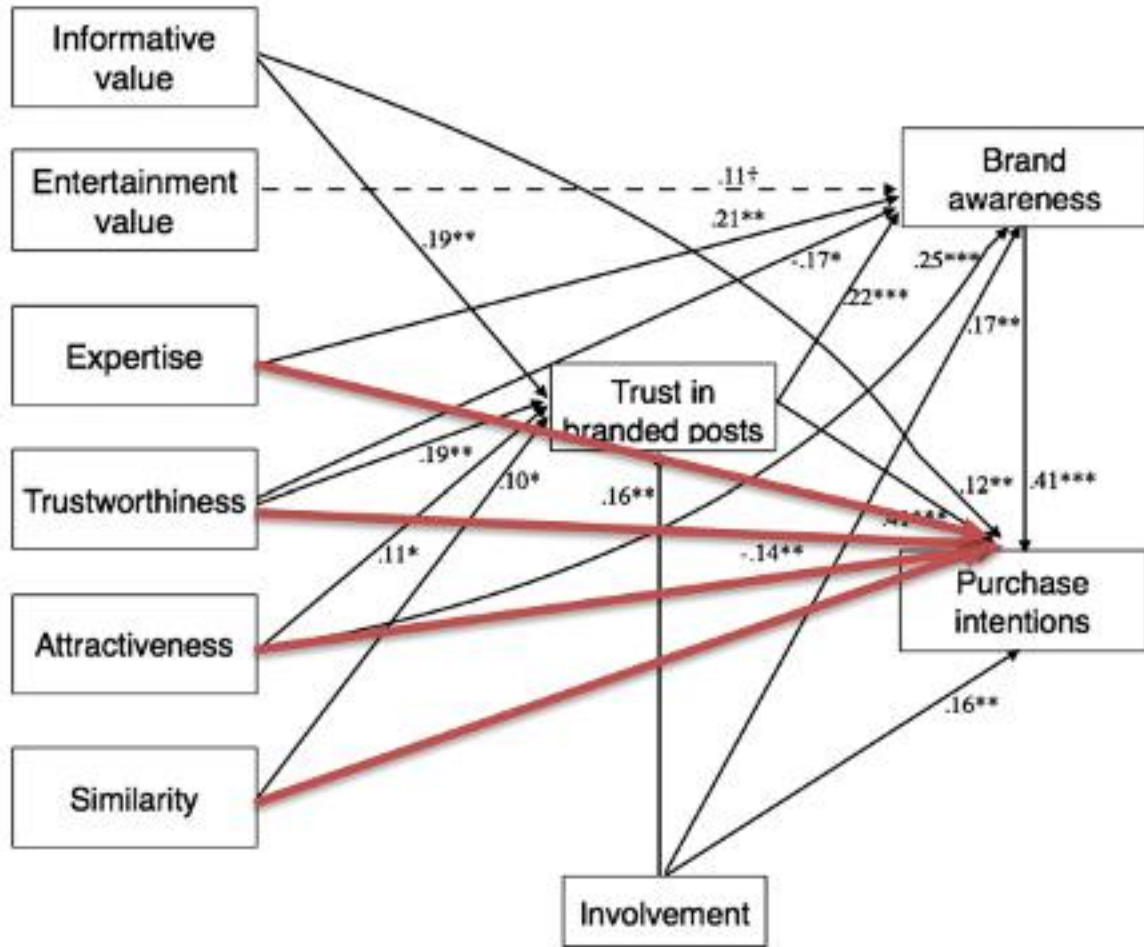*Figure 3. Lou & Yuan's Source credibility on branded posts and on brand awareness*

Figure 4. Lou & Yuan's Source credibility on purchase intentions