Influencer Marketing on Social Media

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Resumé

Specialet handler om influencer marketing på de sociale medier. Undersøgelsen er baseret på det amerikanske marked samt sociale netværksplatforme. Statistikker viser at forbruget af de forskellige sociale medie platforme kan være varierende, alt efter forskellige faktorer. Det viser sig bl.a. at resultaterne for mest populære platforme kan måles efter antal aktive brugere samt antal månedlige sessioner. Ved de to tilfælde varier resultatet kraftigt, hvilket indikerer at popularitet er relativt og skal tage udgangs punkt i én specifik kategori. Derudover er specialet baseret på word-of-mouth (WOM), word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM), forhold på sociale medier, identitet, forbrug samt præsentation af 'jeget'. Alle disse koncepter bidrager alle sammen til konstruktionen af influencer marketing. Studiet tager udgangspunkt i empiri der er indsamlet via interviews samt netnografi, de fleste interviews er fra digitale bureauer og derfor tager undersøgelsen udgangspunkt i en synsvinkel fra bureauerne. Ved hjælp af denne research kan der konkluderes, at influencer marketing har indflydelse på forbrugernes beslutningsproces.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

The motivation behind this thesis stems from an academic interest in market communication, marketing and social media, which is also my academic background. As a regular user of social media, I have observed certain changes within the different platforms over the years. I have been an active user of the social media platform Facebook since 2008, Instagram since 2012 and Snapchat around 2013. During these years, I have seen the platforms change as more users have joined them. This sparked an interest in social media and its possibilities. With my observance, I saw this 'new phenomena' appear under the name of: 'influencer marketing'. Social media made it possible for consumers to become an 'online celebrity' by gathering a large following. As a result came the possibility to influence due to the number of people they could reach.

The subject of influencer marketing on social media is interesting because it is currently a trending matter in general, as well as for marketers (see appendix 1). More companies are realizing that social media presence is important, however, most are still following the traditional ways of marketing and taking the 'old ways of doing' onto the social media platforms (DeMers, 2016). Through my academic background in corporate communication, with specialization within digital communication, I have learned that the use of traditional media cannot quite be applied to social media in the same manner. New ways of marketing and branding are needed; which is also why I was intrigued to research the subject of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing on social media is a phenomenon that has just started to rise within recent years (see appendix 1); therefore not much academic literature is available on the subject in isolation. This made it an interesting subject for me to research and shed some light on, by finding the different compounds and literature that make up this phenomenon. Apart from this, I knew a person who worked with influencers and influencer marketing, which was how I was originally

introduced to the subject and also where I obtained the term 'influencer marketing'.

I have since the beginning of the process learned that the term 'influencer marketing' may be used very broadly, as the term itself is not exclusive to the digital environment. However, when I previously, before starting my research, referred to influencer marketing I specifically meant social media influencer marketing. Social media influencer marketing specifies that the concept of influencer marketing is exclusively in context to social media.

1.2 Introduction

The way brand-related content is created, distributed and consumed, has changed significantly with time, evolution of web 2.0 and social media (Tsai & Men, 2013). Social media has given consumers the power of shaping brand images (ibid.), this shift in power could possibly explain the increased usage of influencers by brands, as it allows brands to still maintain a bit of control (Cole, 2016). With the rising popularity of social media, more consumers are increasingly relying on it, as one of their main information sources (Tsai & Men, 2013). Consumers are looking for user-generated content and word-of-mouth, especially when it comes to purchasing new products, as they find that type of information is credible (ibid.). Due to this tendency of consumers providing and exchanging information with one another, marketers have recognized the importance of online word-of-mouth (eWOM) and have begun to invest in it (Kozinets et al., 2010).

The increased interest in user-generated content has made it possible for consumers to gain large followings, by delivering suitable content. This has initiated the emergence of the phenomenon 'social media influencers'.
There are many social networking sites, however the most popular choices of marketers for the B2C market are: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Richter, 2016). The continuous growth in Internet advertising expenditure (Zenith, 2017) has created a market of Adblocks. According to Ricardo Bilton (2015) at Digiday,

'Adblocker' is a term used to describe a software or hardware that removes ads from a webpage. Users use Adblocks because they feel that there are too many ads online, most of which are irrelevant and annoying (See Appendix 2). This makes influencer marketing more attractive as it is a great way to avert the software, allowing companies to continue reaching consumers. Influencer marketing is on the rise and organizations are realizing this (See Appendix 1). The main leading goals of influencer marketing, among marketers, are improving brand advocacy and expanding brand awareness (ibid.). A Google Trends search shows that the interest in influencer marketing has reached an all-time peak in 2017, insinuating that this is currently a 'topic of conversation' on the market (ibid.).

1.3 Thesis statement

Influencer marketing has become the topic of conversation, indicating that it is now attracting more attention than ever. The span of the subject covers the field of strategic digital corporate communication. The subject of influencer marketing on social media broadly concerns the topics of: influencers, social media, marketing (e.g. WOM and decision making) and communication, relationships and consumers. It is imperative to understand what makes influencers on social media powerful, if they appeal to consumers and what factors known within marketing makeup the phenomenon of influencer marketing. It is relevant to look into this as it is a growing trend within digital marketing and may be staying for a period (see appendix 1). The purpose of the paper is to investigate what influencer marketing is and the effect, or lack thereof, in order to understand if this new way of marketing is effective. This brings me to the follow research question:

1.3.1 Research question

How can influencer marketing on social media influence consumers' decision-making process?

In order to answer the research-question it is important to also understand the digital environment, social media marketing and the behavioral aspects involved in influencer marketing. Therefore, I will also need to answer the following sub-questions:

1.3.2 Sub-questions:

- *Which marketing and communication concepts are apparent in influencer marketing?*
- *How does the usage of social media look on the American market?*
- *What is the process of influencer marketing in praxis?*

1.4 Limitations

Due to the vast amount of agencies, influencers and users it is not possible to get an insight that represents the market, phenomena and world as a whole. Factors such as culture and national trends have an impact on consumer response to influencer marketing, as well as the usage and preference towards different social media platforms. The amount of resources and access to information are also constraining to the research, as the topic is relatively new to the market. It is not possible, for someone in my position as a student, to collect enough data to cover the whole foundation and usage of the phenomenon. In addition to this, the various definitions and terms used for the phenomenon vary immensely. This means that the probability of available studies and research, labeled with a different term than 'influencer marketing', is great. This also limits the scope of my data gatherings. The restriction of overall empirical and theoretical data and regional information collection means that my paper cannot cover the phenomenon as a whole or generally applied concept.

My research data is limited to the United States of America and to agencies, which act as third parties in the process of influencer marketing. This means that the results in the paper are a reflection of the American market and may not be applicable to other countries, mainly due to trends and cultural aspects. The

research is also limited to studying the praxis of influencer marketing from mainly agency perspective. This empirical data has been collected in the shape of qualitative interviews and include: Three agencies and one influencer. There is a limitation to the data derived from the influencer in respect to social networking sites. The influencer mainly operates on Instagram and a bit on Snapchat. Given that the quantity of interviews is on the lower end, it limits the study, and can therefore not be a depiction of the US market as a whole. Due to the choice of market, I did not have the opportunity of conducting quantitative research in the form of questionnaire. For this reason I chose to research the matter from the perspective of the marketers: the agencies, instead of the consumers. Therefore this study's result will be based on marketers and theorists' findings, assumptions and experience on the subject.

1.5 Delimitations

In this section I will outline the empirical and theoretical delimitations of the research. The scope of the research involves social media and the phenomenon of influencer marketing. Given the time, space and resources there was a need to eliminate certain areas of study and methods.

1.5.1 Empirical delimitation

There are several social networking sites where influencer marketing can appear. However, I have chosen not to focus on a single platform, as I assessed that specific platform choice when using influencer marketing, is not relevant to the study of influence on decision-making. Platform choices are however relevant in relation to target groups and demographics. I chose not to choose a specific age group for my study, because the data I have collected is not age specific but market specific: social media. Age groups are however relevant in terms of platform and social media usage, in order to understand who influencer marketing targets; intentionally or unintentionally. The study is not conducted in Denmark, where I reside, but in the United States of America, because I found that there was more

data availability of the US market. Furthermore, influencer marketing agencies were scarce on the Danish market, indicating that it was less widespread and a less matured market.

1.5.2 Theoretical delimitation

I have chosen not to focus on consumers' buying decision and ROI for brands, as this would require for me to study a specific campaign and attain all the statistics involved, which was not an opportunity I had on hand. For this reason, I have chosen to study the possible effects influencer marketing could have on a consumer's decision-making, in order to assess the efficiency of influencer marketing. I have further delimitated the study by not including the psychological aspect of the concept of trust in a digital world. This decision was made on the basis that the issue of trust would be a study of its own and whilst it may add to the concept of influencer marketing, it is not crucial to the overall understanding and aspect. The subject of trust in a digital world could however be interesting, to further deepen the understanding of relationships online. Nevertheless, this subject would turn the paper towards a more psychological-based study field than marketing and communication study field.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2. Methodology

This chapter gives an insight on the empirical methods that have been used in this study, why they are relevant and how they assist in answering the research question. I will define the paradigms that the study is based upon, as these affect the direction and results of the paper (Nygaard, 2012). This chapter will give an insight into the online study field and data collection methods. I will additionally also introduce the interviewees' backgrounds.

2.1 Theory of science

There are several different theories and methodologies of interpretation and paradigms. However, I will not be addressing them all, but only those that are relevant to this study: hermeneutics and constructivism. These methodical approaches influence the direction and results of the study, as they decide how 'reality' is perceived. Paradigms consist of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Nygaard, 2012). The following illustrates these factors within hermeneutics and constructivism:

Paradigm:	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Hermeneutics	Limitedly realistic. The objects of science must be seen in the context of the human understanding, but is not directly created by human acknowledgement. The primary subject is the understanding of other people.	Subjective. Knowledge is always tied to a certain subjective understanding of the world. Therefore acknowledgement consists in expanding one's understanding.	Qualitative. Qualitative methods such as, interviews and participant observations, can uncover other horizons of understanding.

Constructivism	*Relativistic.* The objects of science are often created directly by the scientific observation. Reality consists primarily of social constructions.	*Subjective.* Objective knowledge is impossible, as the science is bound to distorting social constructions.	*Qualitative.* Qualitative methods are used to uncover how social constructions are created.

(Nygaard, 2012: 28).

2.1.1 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics originally revolved around understanding literary and religious texts. However, it was influenced by sociologist Max Weber and the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, and then became a method for social scientists (Nygaard, 2012: 31). The ontology of hermeneutics is categorized as 'limitedly realistic', because it is difficult to categorize as realistic or constructivist. 'Limitedly realistic', underlines that hermeneutics does not believe that science has unmediated access to reality or that the objects of science are pure social constructions. In fact hermeneutics stresses that out access to reality is bound to a certain understanding, which could resemble constructivism, and that this understanding of the world and other people, can be nuanced so it approaches the truth (ibid.). This certain understanding that hermeneutics refers to, is called pre-understanding. Pre-understanding consists of prejudices and assumptions of the world and other people, it controls how we view the world and how we respond. This pre-understanding of the world is a function of both cultural history and personal history (Nygaard, 2012: 32).

2.1.2 Constructivism

In constructivism the belief is that there is no 'final' truth of reality, because reality is a construction made by people. The belief is that 'truth' is what happens to be the agreement within a certain social community. The argument is that 'truths' within different social communities and cultures seem to vary. For this reason the ontology of constructivism is labeled as relativistic, as the perception of what is real and what is true depends entirely on the social, cultural and lingual perspective that is applied to reality (Nygaard, 2012: 36).

2.1.2.1 Social constructivism

Social constructivism is related to the constructivist point of view. Social constructivism believes that human development is socially situated and that knowledge is constructed via interaction with others. Essentially, the argument is that knowledge of the social reality is a social construction, which does not represent the actual social reality, but is instead created through interaction and negotiation with other individuals. It is largely the same as the constructivist belief but with an added social factor (Nygaard, 2012: 122). The argument regarding social reality being socially constructed means that reality isn't independent of us, but is something that occurs in the interaction between our own experiences and the structure of the community (Nygaard, 2012: 126).

2.1.3 Theory of science sum-up

The study is strongly impacted by a social constructivist approach, however hermeneutics are important to consider too, mainly in terms of pre-understanding. The two paradigms have some similarities and differences. The main difference between the two is the ontology. The hermeneutic approach cannot be defined as neither realistic nor constructivist. Whereas, constructivism, as the term implies is: constructivist. Whilst the two paradigms have their differences, I acknowledge that they are both present to some degree in my data collection. Hermeneutics is only present as an acknowledgement of my pre-understanding and subjectivity, which

may have been present in my data collecting process. However, it can possibly be argued that my pre-understanding is based on a socially constructed reality and therefore has no direct tie to the hermeneutic paradigm. This would imply that the pre-understanding is a constructed pre-understanding. Nonetheless, the theory of science that this paper is based on, is social constructivist and not hermeneutic. This is due to the digital environment in which this study takes place, which is a reality that is socially constructed. Hence, the subject of influencer marketing and all the elements involved in the process are also a socially constructed. Social media is a socially constructed 'place', where the interactions between people are what create the reality.

2.2 The Digital Platforms

The choice of social networking sites were made based on the qualitative empirical data, which indicated that these platforms were the top five choices. The order in which they are placed is randomized. In this section I will briefly introduce the five platforms: Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat. I will also introduce the Federal Trade Commission's Guidelines for endorsement, to provide an overview of the legal aspects of sponsored posts on social media.

2.2.1 Instagram

Instagram was launched on the app store in October 2010 and within hours there was already 10,000 users (Lagorio-Chafkin, 2012). Instagram has since grown into a community of more than 800 million people worldwide (Instagram, about). It is a social networking site that is made for sharing photos and videos. Whilst it can be accessed via computer, you cannot use most functions unless you are on a smartphone (Moreau, 2017). Instagram has in-app editing for photos and videos and videos have a maximum length of 60 seconds. Instagram also has a 'real time' function, similar to Snapchat, where users can posts stories in photos or videos of what they are doing at that exact moment. The stories feature location, tagging other profiles, time, and poll options; the videos are at a maximum length of 15

seconds. There are different types of video opportunities, such as the infamous Instagram boomerang. This is a feature where a few seconds of video is captured and replayed in play and rewind. The Instagram stories will only be viewable for 24 hours, unless they are pinned to the profile as 'highlights'. Highlights are a new function where you can pin you story to appear in the biography section of your profile until you manually remove it (ibid).

2.2.2 YouTube

YouTube was registered in February 2005, it was beta launched in May 2005 and was attracting around 30,000 visitors a day. However, it wasn't officially launched till December 2005 and at that point YouTube was serving more than two million views a day (Hosch, 2017). Today, YouTube has over one billion users located in 88 countries (Youtube for press). YouTube is a video platform where anyone with access to the Internet can upload content. You can like (thumbs up) and dislike (thumbs down) videos as well as comment, which is how users interact with each other and the content on the site. It is also possible to do live broadcasting with live chat where users can communicate to the broadcaster (Boswell, 2017).

2.2.3 Twitter

Twitter was founded in March 2006 and has more than 300 million users (MacArthur, 2017). Twitter goes under the category of micro-blogging, as there is a limit of 280 characters or less to each tweet. The social networking site is made for 'tweeting' short messages; it is possible to attach pictures or video to these messages as well. What makes On Twitter it is possible to like, comment and 'retweet'. Retweeting is like reposting, you can do this to any tweet and any comment posted by others and yourself. Twitter is a very popular choice for live news reporting, users enjoy being able to scan through information, which is the benefit of the 280 character limit. This function also enables frequent, short and precise reporting (Gil, 2017).

2.2.4 Facebook

Facebook started in February 2004, however it was not open for everyone to join until 2006 (Nations, 2017). Today there are more than 2 billion users on the site (Facebook, about). Facebook is the only one out of the mentioned social networking sites, where you can send friend requests and be friends. On the Instagram, YouTube and Twitter you follow other users and they may or may not follow you back. However on Facebook you can send a request to be connected. It is however also possible to follow someone on Facebook, which means that as a follower and not a contact, you can only see the public posts and not all the interactions of the person. There is also the option of creating groups – public or private, where users can share information relevant to the group. For businesses and brands there is the possibility of creating a 'page', which users can like and follow. On Facebook you can share photos, videos, links and write a status. Facebook is the all-round social networking site with almost no limits to the content type one can share. Facebook also has a live stream option where people can live stream video. Like Snapchat and Instagram there is also the added story function where users can post a photo or video that lasts up to 24 hours. It is also possible to play games and challenge your connections. Lastly there is the chat option, which can also be downloaded separately on your smartphone: Facebook messenger (Nations, 2017).

2.2.5 Snapchat

Snapchat was released in September 2011 and has more than 170 million daily users worldwide today (Molloy, 2017). Snapchat is a camera service, it is a social networking site that revolves around your camera. You have a user, not a profile that people can access. You can send pictures and video directly to people and control the length of view. You can also do the exact same thing but add it to your story which will be available for viewing for 24 hours. Snapchat features Geofilters, which are customized location tags, it also features face recognition filters, which means you can go from being you to being a dancing squirrel in a second

(Newberry, 2017). Snapchat is a mobile app where you can't deceive your audience in terms of time and most details to your content. It is meant to be a real time networking site, where you post and send 'here and now'. When you post something to the story, people can see in the left corner when the picture was taken. If the picture isn't taken in-app, a white frame will be on the content and it will say 'memories'. This is a function that allows you to share from your photo album or your in-app memories album. This function will show the date and time the memory picture was taken (ibid.). Snapchat is therefore not ideal for edited content, as it's intended to be used with the built-in camera on your phone. Depending on your personal settings, Snapchat can be a place where any person can follow you and see your story and interact with you if you allow this function, or it can be a place where only your friends can see your story and interact with you. Apart from the social and personal aspect of Snapchat, it also features a discover page on the app, where you can see the content of publishers and creators in the community. It has its own section so it is not mixed with the content section of your friends (ibid.).

2.2.6 Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

Endorsements made online on behalf on an advertiser goes under Section 5 of the FTC act, which generally prohibits deceptive advertising (www.ftc.gov). The FTC Endorsement Guide states that, any material connection between an endorser and marketer of a product should be clearly and noticeably disclosed. This means, that any connection that might affect the weight or credibility consumers give the endorsement, needs to be disclosed (ibid.). The Guideline is very specific and full of questions and answers to the point where the almost aren't any grey areas of doubt. A paid/sponsored post needs to disclose this information in the first few lines of text, it cannot be placed at the end of a long text where consumers will need to click 'read more', as they might miss this information and be misled (ibid.). The core of the Guides reflects the basic truth-in-advertising principle, which entails that endorsements must be honest and not misleading. It is therefore, by

law, not allowed to advertise and endorse brands and products if there is a hidden agenda or profit involved, without disclosing it (ibid.).

In 2017 Instagram decided to enable a feature as a response to the issue of transparency. They added the feature of being able to put 'Paid partnership with' and then a tag to the brand, right under the user name, where location would usually appear. This way there would be no doubt or confusion to the nature of the post, which makes it easier for influencers and brands to be transparent with consumers (Cohen, 2017).

2.3 Netnography

Netnography is an adaptation of ethnography, which is a traditional technique based on participant observation. Ethnography translates to 'writing about cultures'. Netnography is the adjustment of ethnography for the digital environment: online communities and online cultures (Kozinets, 2010). It is a method used to find cultures and communities, as well as understand them as social phenomena. When using netnography one investigates the online communications and interactions that are already available. This can be done by following conversations and finding online interactions, then capturing the data and analyzing it by searching for commonalities. The search of commonalities can be merged with interviews (ibid.). It is essential that the researcher has a participative role when conducting netnography, due to the importance of possessing profound knowledge and experience of the cultural context. This knowledge will help the researcher understand and interpret the meaning of interactions and conversations (ibid.).

The field of netnographic research includes the social media platforms: Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Snapchat was not included in the netnographic research, as it is a platform without a visible community forum to observe or partake in actively. There were no specific demographic variables involved in the choice of posts. The content I targeted were sponsored posts, where I observed the

engagement of followers. This includes engagement in terms of likes or dislikes and comments and their nature. The only variable included was, that they be from communities in which I had participated, in order to obtain the embedded cultural understanding. On social media different communities create their own culture, however an impairment of netnography is, that the cultural context in which the consumers originate from outside the Internet, is not clear. This means that there may be some data, interpretation and understanding that go unconsidered. However, the assumptions and objective is to study the social culture that is created online, regardless of the real life cultural context of the participants involved. The main objective of the netnographic research is to obtain data regarding consumers' attitudes towards sponsored posts, both in terms of their attitude towards the influencer as well as toward the brand or product involved.

2.4 Interviewees & Qualitative Data

This paragraph will introduce the subjects that were interviewed for the study and their backgrounds. All the subjects involved are based in Los Angeles, California. All interviews were conducted via phone call and not face to face, as the subjects found this to be most flexible and convenient form.

2.4.1 Agencies

The three agencies that were interviewed were: MostlySunny, The Audience and Vampped.

2.4.1.1 Mostly Sunny

Mostly Sunny is an influencer marketing agency that was founded in 2015. They have worked with a lot of big brands such as H&M, Tommy Hilfiger and Rituals (www.mostlysunny.co).

The interviewee was the co-founder and CEO, Eve Noir. She has worked as a journalist, junior publicist and eventually ended up working in social media about seven years ago. In 2015 she saw an opportunity and decided to start the agency.

2.4.1.2 theAudience

theAudience was established in 2011 and is an agency that connects brands and consumers. They refer to themselves as a 'culture company', that is a new kind of integrated communications agency (www.theaudience.com). They have offices in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Dubai and are specialized within social media and influencer marketing. They have worked with many big brands and high profile celebrities and influencers (ibid.).

The person I interviewed was the CEO, Patrick Mulford. His educational background was surprisingly a different route than where he currently is. Patrick holds a bachelors degree within architecture, but found his way into marketing, where he has been for more than 10 years now. He has been with theAudience for four years and is originally from the United Kingdom.

2.4.1.3 Vampped

Vampped is a management group and creative marketing agency that was created in 2013 (www.vampped.com). They see themselves as a new age hybrid and have worked with big brands such as starbucks, Daniel Wellington, Universal and GQ (ibid.).

The person I interviewed was the founder and creative director, Lindsey Heppner. She has more than 15 years of experience in the fashion industry as a model, designer, creative director and producer. In 2013 she got into a car accident and decided to change the direction of her career, which became the beginning of vampped. Initially she started the agency as a creative agency, but was asked by a model to start managing her, which then led to the agency's current position.

2.4.2 Influencer

I met this influencer personally in 2016, which is how I came across him and had the opportunity of interviewing him.

2.4.2.1 Jason John

Jason John is an influencer under the username of @jasonjohnofficial on Instagram, with 170,000 followers (per January 2018) (www.instagram.com/jasonjohnofficial). He is an Australian born actor and model who has been living and pursuing his career in Los Angeles for some years. His main following is on Instagram, which is also where he is mainly active. He is also on Snapchat, but he started using that less as Instagram launched their story function. His Instagram has no special theme such as e.g. makeup, traveling, photography or blogging. His Instagram is just about him, different special occasions and sponsored posts. All of his pictures are of him and most of them are model and professional pictures. He has gotten free travel stays in Bali for posting, paid sponsorships for promoting accessories and beauty products, free clothing for posting and tagging clothing brands as well as free car rentals for posting. However, he never directly mentions on his posts that these are sponsorships or ads. However he indirectly indicates on his posts by saying things such as 'thank you (brand name) for (product/service)'. In his opinion he doesn't find it necessary or relevant to do so. He doesn't just take any and every offer he gets however, as he feels that what he is promoting needs to be in line with whom he is and his style. He doesn't want to put his face to anything and everything; it needs to be something he feels he can own up to.

2.4.2 In-depth Interview conduction

The interviews were conducted by using an interview guide, which is a script of questions that structured the interviews more or less tightly (Kvale, 2007: 56). This is also know as a semi-structured life-world interview, as it *"(...) seeks to*

obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon; it will have a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some suggested questions." (Kvale, 2007: 51). The semi-structured interview guide was designed with open-ended questions to allow natural conversation. Semi-structured interviews have two objectives: to obtain insight on the topic from the expert's perspective and experience, and to find out if the knowledge the researcher already possess can be confirmed by the expert or not.

The interviews were not video recorded and transcribed with body language indication, some communication in terms of body language and other cues, might have be lost (Kvale, 2007: 93). The interview guide (see appendix 3) was a guiding framework for the interviews and the points I needed answers to. Yet, the questions were not necessarily asked in the order or same wording as written. This was a conscious choice, as the conversation needed to flow and not be a question-answer type of interview, this way I would get information I perhaps had not thought to ask about.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis. It will provide an understanding of the different concepts and elements that make up influencer marketing. This chapter introduces the marketing perspective and strategies involved in selling to and influencing consumers on social media. Furthermore the theory behind relationships in context to social media will be elaborated, as well as the motivations and strategies involved in the process of creating a personal site and becoming a communicator in the digital environment. Additionally, the concept of identity and self-presentation will be presented as well, to further understand the psychological aspects involved.

3.1 Social media and social networking sites

Mangold & Faulds (2009) state that social media is also referred to as consumer-generated media. They mention that this form of media "(…) describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues." (Mangold & Faulds, 2009: 357). According to Vatrapu (2012): "Social media are fundamentally scalable communications technologies that turn Internet-based communications into an interactive dialogue platform." (ibid.: 147). Cuauhtemoc & Torres (2015) define social networking sites as being "(…) web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." (ibid.: 1).

Social media can therefore be defined as *media content*, which could be a video, photo, podcast, e-book etc. Where social networking sites, are social media platforms such as e.g. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (Burke, 2013).

The purpose of social networking sites is to build and maintain relationships (Tsai & Men, 2013), simultaneously it has also enabled consumers to voice their thoughts and opinions publicly. This has created a social trend called the 'groundswell', where consumers get the things they need from each other instead of companies (Li & Bernoff, 2008). In return, companies no longer control all content and information available concerning their products/services (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Consumers are increasingly turning toward social media for information and to make their purchasing decisions (ibid.), to the point where it has become one of the primary information sources (Tsai & Men, 2013). It is perceived as being a more trustworthy source of information regarding products and services in comparison to corporate-sponsored communications through traditional instruments of marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Firm-created vs. user-generated content

Social media enables consumers to communicate with each other and accelerates communication between unknown consumers. The main difference between firm-created and user-generated communication is, that firm-created and traditional communication only transports positive information which results in increase consumer brand awareness, which positively affects brand attitude. On the other hand user-generated content has no limits or filters, and could be either positive or negative, this means it may raise brand awareness, but not necessarily increase positive brand attitude (Bruhn et al., 2012). However, it is not in all industries that user-generated content has an influence or is preferred, e.g. in the pharmaceutical industry, users rely more heavily on qualified specialists opinions.

3.2 Social media marketing & WOM

Bruhn et al. (2012) have found that consumers consciously differentiate between firm-created and user-generated information. The study reveals that firm-created

social media communication increases functional brand image contrary to user-generated social media communication, which affects hedonic brand image (ibid.). Functional brand image is based on brand associations related to a product's attributes, while hedonic brand image is based on brand associations, unrelated to its specific attributes (Bruhn et al., 2012: 774). The findings suggest that firm-created social media communication cannot be used to improve hedonic brand image. However, companies may be able to influence consumer-to-consumer communications through different measures. One way would be to reinforce word-of-mouth (WOM) by directly inviting consumers to promote their brand. This can be done by sending product packages to consumers and asking them to talk about the brand to their friends and acquaintances (ibid: 783). Bruhn et al. (2012) mention that companies have to beware of the risks involved in 'buying' WOM as it could raise consumer skepticism. It is therefore crucial that a strategy for influencing consumer-to-consumer social media communication is carefully developed, in order to be successful (ibid.: 783).

Kozinets et al. (2010) introduce the term WOMM, which is an abbreviation for word-of-mouth marketing, also referred to as social media marketing. They describe it as "(…) the intentional influencing of consumer-to-consumer communications by professional marketing techniques." (Kozinets et al., 2010: 71). Kozinets et al. (2010) suggest that WOM has evolved from being 'organic' to being influenced by marketers. They propose three models to cover the evolution of WOM:

FIGURE 1
The Evolution of WOM Theory

A: The Organic Interconsumer Influence Model

Consumer → Marketing message and meanings → Consumer

Marketing-Mix Elements

Marketer

B: The Linear Marketer Influence Model

Opinion Leader → Marketing message and meanings → Consumer / Consumer / Consumer

Indirect influence (advertisements, promotions)

Marketing-Mix Elements

Marketer

C: The Network Coproduction Model

Consumer ↔ Marketing message and meanings → Consumer / Consumer / Consumer / Consumer

Direct influence (seeding, one to one)

Marketing-Mix Elements

Marketer

(Kozinets et al., 2010: 72)

The organic interconsumer influence model shows how WOM occurs between two consumers, without any direct prompting, influence or measurement by marketers; it is therefore considered organic (ibid.). The linear marketer influence model illustrates how marketers actively attempt to influence consumer WOM

through traditional means e.g. advertising and promotions. Marketers try to identify and target potential opinion leaders and influence them. This takes us to the last model, the network coproduction model, where marketers directly target consumers in an attempt to directly manage WOM activity. In this model consumers are considered active coproducers of value and meaning. This new model has two differentiating characteristics: first, new tactics and metrics are used to deliberately and directly target and influence the consumer or opinion leader by marketers. Second, it is acknowledged that market messages and meanings are exchanged among members of the consumer network (ibid.). Kozinets et al.'s (2010) findings reveal that WOMM is part of a complex cultural process that follows an ascertainable pattern. Although it may seem to have many similarities to the use of public relations or other forms of paid promotions, they conclude that they are different due to "(...) a range of novel contextual and institutional elements that do not generally exist in the professional journalistic or advertising relationship, the WOMM campaign is injected into less established, less defined, and more complex cultural relationships. These elements encompass and are related to the networked coproduction of marketing-related communications." (ibid.: 74).

WOM communications that is of interest to marketers is influenced by four important factors. The first factor is related to the communicator 'character narrative', which concerns the communicating consumer and their personal 'brand'. Kozinets et al. (2010) exemplify this factor with a blogger whom self-identifies with the character of a loving mom, which in return results in a narrative that stresses kindness, helpfulness and caring. This influences the communication as the narrative sets the foundation for associations and the type of audience the message reaches (ibid.). Second factor to be considered is where the WOM communications take place, as its embedded in a particular forum, which are usually themed e.g. sports, health, fashion, beauty etc. Third factor that affects WOM communications is communal norms that govern the expression, transmission and reception of messages and their meanings. These norms vary depending on the size of the community, the average age among members, their

interests and lifestyles, among many other factors. The fourth factor concerns the effect that promotional characteristics of the WOMM campaign and related promotions have on the messages and meanings of the WOMM communication (ibid.). These four factors change the nature of the WOMM message and its associated meaning, as they influence its expression, manifestation and reception. "Word-of-mouth marketing is based on the assumption that marketers can harness the credibility of consumer-to-consumer WOM." (Kozinets et al., 2010: 83). Social networks are about sharing information, but also about building trust, friendship and alliances. Kozinets et al.'s (2010) findings indicate that, "(…) identifying with and adhering to "communal norms" is critical for a consumer to "evaluate a reviewer"."(ibid.: 83). The communicator, such as e.g. a blogger, is expected to follow those communal norms and post messages accordingly. In order to sustain a trustworthy relationship with other members of the community, WOMM communicators balance promotional messages with non-promotional messages that display a consistent character narrative.

Kozinets et al. (2010) identify four different 'narrative strategies for the communal reference expression of WOMM': evaluation, embracing, endorsement and explanation. The evaluation strategy uses concealment, this means that the communicator minimizes or avoids mentioning the WOMM campaign and their participation. This is to draw attention to the good or service rather than the campaign. Communicators try to demonstrate that their information and opinions are trustworthy. However, when ignoring the moral tension, this strategy can backfire and generate tension between the communicator and the community. When using the embracing strategy, the communicator uses terms of enthusiastic acceptance to mention the WOMM campaign and their participation in it. They use self-interested justification, and adopt the dual role as a consumer and marketer, using professional language and terms of marketing. The endorsement strategy discloses the campaign as well as the communicator's participation. The communicator expresses and acknowledges the commercial-communal tension. They acknowledge that it may not be in the best interest of the community, however they will argue for their own self-interest. Lastly there is the explanation

strategy. This strategy also openly discloses the campaign and the communicator's participation in it. The communicator explicitly acknowledges and discusses the potential conflict of interest, whilst simultaneously proclaiming the importance and interests of their communities, in a way that states their own value to the community as a safe and preferred source of information. Thus displaying a continued shared affiliation with the community and presenting the WOMM campaign in a manner that may lead to strengthening the communal ties (ibid.).
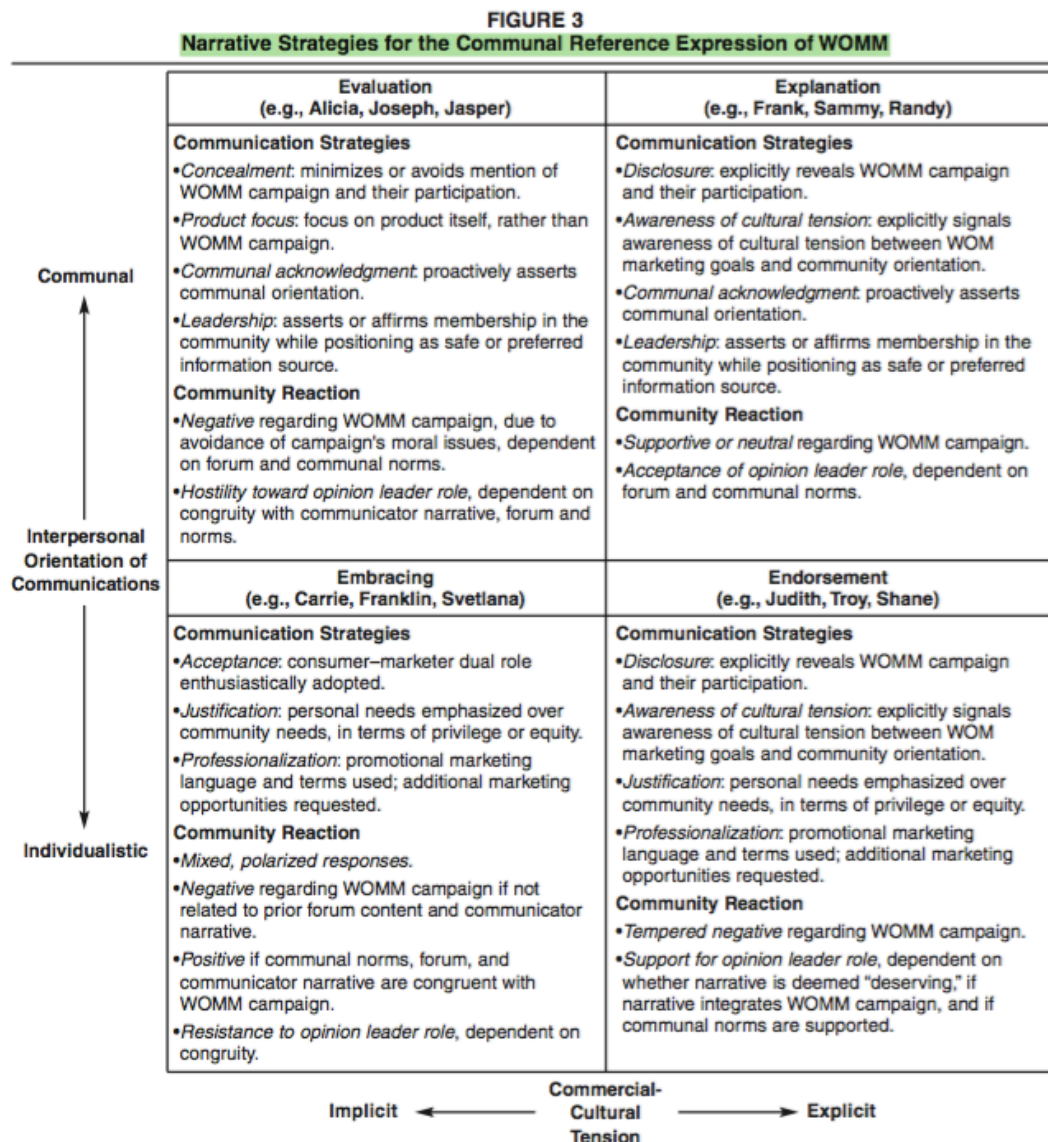
FIGURE 3
Narrative Strategies for the Communal Reference Expression of WOMM

	Evaluation (e.g., Alicia, Joseph, Jasper)	Explanation (e.g., Frank, Sammy, Randy)
Communal ↑ Interpersonal Orientation of Communications ↓ **Individualistic**	**Communication Strategies** • *Concealment*: minimizes or avoids mention of WOMM campaign and their participation. • *Product focus*: focus on product itself, rather than WOMM campaign. • *Communal acknowledgment*: proactively asserts communal orientation. • *Leadership*: asserts or affirms membership in the community while positioning as safe or preferred information source. **Community Reaction** • *Negative* regarding WOMM campaign, due to avoidance of campaign's moral issues, dependent on forum and communal norms. • *Hostility toward opinion leader role*, dependent on congruity with communicator narrative, forum and norms.	**Communication Strategies** • *Disclosure*: explicitly reveals WOMM campaign and their participation. • *Awareness of cultural tension*: explicitly signals awareness of cultural tension between WOM marketing goals and community orientation. • *Communal acknowledgment*: proactively asserts communal orientation. • *Leadership*: asserts or affirms membership in the community while positioning as safe or preferred information source. **Community Reaction** • *Supportive or neutral* regarding WOMM campaign. • *Acceptance of opinion leader role*, dependent on forum and communal norms.
	Embracing (e.g., Carrie, Franklin, Svetlana)	**Endorsement** (e.g., Judith, Troy, Shane)
	Communication Strategies • *Acceptance*: consumer–marketer dual role enthusiastically adopted. • *Justification*: personal needs emphasized over community needs, in terms of privilege or equity. • *Professionalization*: promotional marketing language and terms used; additional marketing opportunities requested. **Community Reaction** • *Mixed, polarized responses.* • *Negative* regarding WOMM campaign if not related to prior forum content and communicator narrative. • *Positive* if communal norms, forum, and communicator narrative are congruent with WOMM campaign. • *Resistance to opinion leader role*, dependent on congruity.	**Communication Strategies** • *Disclosure*: explicitly reveals WOMM campaign and their participation. • *Awareness of cultural tension*: explicitly signals awareness of cultural tension between WOM marketing goals and community orientation. • *Justification*: personal needs emphasized over community needs, in terms of privilege or equity. • *Professionalization*: promotional marketing language and terms used; additional marketing opportunities requested. **Community Reaction** • *Tempered negative* regarding WOMM campaign. • *Support for opinion leader role*, dependent on whether narrative is deemed "deserving," if narrative integrates WOMM campaign, and if communal norms are supported.

Implicit ← **Commercial-Cultural Tension** → Explicit

Figure 3: Narrative Strategies for the Communal Reference Expression of WOMM. (Kozinets et al., 2010: 84).

It was previously assumed, that consumers that communicate marketing messages to other consumers, engaged in this behavior as a result of altruism, reciprocity or to attain higher status. However Kozinets et al (2010) study reveals that the motivations to participate in the world of network coproduction of WOM are more complex and culturally embedded than previously assumed, shaped by communal interests and communicative orientations.

Given that social networks are a part of social media, it is relevant to look at social network advertising and how it is different from standard Internet advertising. Cuauhtemoc & Torres (2015) present six main characteristics, which are a relevant extension to Kozinets et al. (2010) theory on WOMM. It is relevant to identify and understand the elements that are in play on social networks in relation to advertising, which can apply to both the communicating consumer as well as the receiving consumers.

Cuauhtemoc & Torres (2015) propose the following six characteristics, which differentiate network advertising from any other standard Internet advertising: 1) *Social exchange*, social networking sites offer two-way dialogue between companies and consumers, which could contribute to value creation. 2) *Private space*, social networks are perceived as private and personal space, e.g. information that is not relevant to the user may be perceived as intrusive. 3) *Rituals and shared meanings*, apart from personal preferences and beliefs, consumers are also targeted based on the beliefs, preferences and behaviors they share with other members in their social network. 4) *Personal branding*, e.g. "(…) social network advertising may interfere with consumers' goals of projecting their image and enhancing their personal brand; thus, it may be received with skepticism (…)" (Cuauhtemoc & Torres, 2015: 3). 5) *Perception of risk*, e.g. if consumers believe that firms are trying too hard it may be perceived as risky. 6) *Place for friends*, social network advertising could cause resentment if e.g. it is perceived as intrusive to the consumer's 'place for friends'.
Cuauhtemoc & Torres (2015) found that consumers do not dislike advertisements on social networks as they rarely notice them among all other content. However

when advertisements are noticed, they are more likely to be avoided if it is not relevant to the user or if the user is skeptical toward the message or medium.

In the past years a variety of strategies for selling on social media have emerged. Nevertheless it is crucial that a company choses a strategy that provides for ways that social media can coexist and integrate with other traditional selling models, whilst simultaneously allowing social media enthusiasts to engage with a company's brand (Smith et al., 2011). Smith et al. (2011) propose three broad social media selling strategies that consist of multiple approaches: *accessing social consumers, engaging the hive* and *appealing to influencers.*

Figure 8.3: Examples of Social Media Selling Strategies in the Market Today. (Smith et al., 2011: 125).

The first strategy, *accessing social consumers*, covers the following three points: user reviews, social media wildfire and creating urgency/spontaneous selling. User reviews have been proven highly valued in the buying decision of consumers. Reviews provided by consumers are perceived as more influential than those by

'professionals'. This is due to the fact that consumers check reviews of products before purchase, and often make their purchasing decision based on this. For this reason, a majority of companies offer some type of review mechanism (Smith et al., 2011). The social media wildfire strategy uses social media content through a combination of unique applications or placements to create interest in a product. The intention with this strategy is to create content that is engaging and interesting, to the point where the target audience are compelled to share and promote the content for the company. The creating urgency/spontaneous selling strategy takes advantage of immediacy. The immediacy of social media is a major advantage that companies make us of. This can be achieved by promoting limited-time or special offers that appeal to niche customers, which creates a sense of urgency to buy 'before it's gone' (ibid.).

The second strategy, *engaging the hive*, consists of: 'pass it along' promotions, recruiting others/group selling and customers as 'community organizers'. The 'pass it along' strategy uses individuals to begin chain reactions among their personal network. This is done by e.g. asking individuals to share a post to their personal network in order to enter a contest or tagging friends on the brands post. The recruiting others/group sales strategy involves encouraging consumers to team up by offering benefits, such as price discounts, that are only retainable when making volume purchases. The customers as 'community organizers' strategy consists of creating the opportunity for people to sign up as organizers for their network of friends and colleagues. An example of this strategy in praxis is Dunkin' Donuts' "Dunkin' Run" campaign, which allowed an individual to start a 'run' and invite others to place orders on their run. The runner's invitees could then place their orders individually, which Dunkin' Donuts would then compile. This meant that the person initiating the run would pick up everyone's order (Smith et al., 2011: 129).

The third strategy, *appealing to influencers*, involves: influencer-led development and selling, "pro-sumer" – product development collaboration and engaging the advocates. The influencer-led development strategy is similar to the 'pass it along' approach, however this strategy specifically targets individuals with significant followers as well as demonstrated influence in their communities. It is based on

the notion that the influencer can sway an overwhelming percentage of audiences. Alongside that, if a company can influence the influencer then it's more likely to have success in that community (ibid.). Smith et al. (2011) mention a study by Columbia University that found that "(...) 90 percent of an audience is influenced by an opinion leader and that word of mouth rates are tightly linked to sales growth. The more positive the word of mouth, the stronger the growth." (Smith et al., 2011: 129). Overly engaged product users are referred to as 'pro-sumers'. These consumers are usually passionate and loyal. The pro-sumer strategy involves engaging pro-sumers in identifying how a product differentiates from the next one on the shelf, as well as developing new products or features that would appeal to members of their community. The engaging the advocates strategy uses advocates, whom subtly differ from influencers and pro-sumers. Smith et al. (2011) define the differences as following: "(...) influencers are looking for the "best" to pass along to their followers and pro-sumers actually are engaging a company primarily on their own behalf, advocates represent a constituency – consumers, buyers, sellers, patients, citizens, and so on – looking either to effect change or to protect themselves from change. They serve as lightning rods between organizations (e.g., companies, governments, and political parties) and networks of concerned or vulnerable people." (Smith et al., 2011: 132). Recognizing, engaging and managing advocates can be just as important to successful social media strategy as pursuing and influencing influencers. There is potential of increasing the social status of a company when appealing to advocates, as it has a major ripple effect (ibid.). Social media and the groundswell has made it possible for consumers to be in control of the buying process, which is why it is important for companies to choose a suitable strategy and engage consumers.

3.3 Relationships on Social Media

The accessibility and availability of Internet and digital devices in todays world, has enabled civil society actors to record and share their lives and realities. Social media has made it possible to comment on personal lives, social interactions and

experiences with goods and services (Vatrapu, 2012). According to Vatrapu (2012) this new human relationship with external reality that has emerged is termed 'digital positivism'. "In digital positivism, the objective reality of an event is inter-subjectively established through the warrants of digital artifact that are themselves based on technological grounds." (Vatrapu, 2012: 148). Tsai & Men (2013) state that the purpose of social networking sites is to build and maintain relationship, and in their study they consider social media dependency and three relationship-oriented factors. The three factors are: parasocial interaction, perceived credibility and community identification. Parasocial interaction, also referred to as PSI, refers to audience having an illusion of an intimate and personal relationship with media personalities (ibid.: 78). This was the definition of PSI in relation to television, before social networking sites (SNS). Tsai & Men (2013) propose redefining PSI as "(…) a user's interpersonal involvement with media personality (including brands' SNS representatives) through mediated communication."(Tsai & Men, 2013: 78). Social media communication involves a higher level of PSI in comparisons to traditional media. This is because users can observe, interact and familiarize themselves with the communicator through their posts. PSI indicates an active and involved relationship with the media personality. Followers of a media personality may feel personally connected to them through frequent and prolonged PSI. Often they will feel as if the media personality is an identifiable friend whom they trust and rely on for content, advice and information (ibid.). It is found, that sometimes we treat strangers as friends or acquaintances based on certain situational cues that activate heuristics (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). When a communicator is a brand representative, a strong PSI can increase positive attitudes and intentions. This can lead to positive effects, such as consumer engagement with brand SNS pages (Tsai & Men, 2013).

Perceived credibility is another aspect of social relationships related to consumer engagement. As an information source, the perceived credibility of brand SNS pages, is particular crucial to the sharing and WOM activities of brand engagement. An essential element for establishing trusting relationships with consumers, and to strengthen consumer engagement, is the credibility of information provided. Credibility within marketing communications is examined from three key

perspectives: source, message and medium credibility (ibid.). Tsai & Men's (2013) study is based on blogs. They argue that there is an inherent peer-review mechanism on blogs, because errors can be spotted and corrected, which enhances the credibility and trust toward the blogger. A blog post can be changed entirely in comparisons to e.g. Instagram and YouTube, where you cannot change the uploaded media, but only the text and tags added to the original content. The same is applicable for Facebook, however a record of your edits will be accessible to viewers. On SNS such as Twitter and Snapchat cannot be changed at all. Tsai & Men (2013) claim that readers consequently perceive blogs as more credible than other news media. However if a user shares brand-related content with their contacts, the contacts will likely take the credibility of the source of information into account. Additionally users are more likely to turn to brand SNS pages, instead of official websites, for product information. This is because it is possible for the brand to address user questions and concerns in an open and direct way. The last relationship-oriented factor is social identity and community identification. Community identification is both a cause and an indicator of level of engagement. SNS pages are brand communities, where consumers can socialize with brand representatives as well as other users who share similar brand preferences. Additionally, user-generated content, such as product reviews, enrich the appeal and informativeness of brand SNS pages. In summary, a brand SNS page is attractive because it provides useful and entertaining information, and may possibly serve as a communal environment as well (Tsai & Men, 2013). Social identities of individuals are formed and managed through group affiliations and community participation. SNS activities are often visible to a user's online network, which means that activities such as liking or joining/following a profile, are used to express and manage their social identities through their affiliations with brand communities. Furthermore, Tsai & Men (2013) suggest, "(…) consumers who share similar social identities based on their membership in the same online communities tend to develop a group attitude, follow group norms, and sustain group dynamics, such as actively participating in community conversations and activities. In other words, community identification should stimulate group-oriented attitudes and behaviors, including community engagement." (Tsai & Men,

2013: 79). Summing up, their study reveals that when users perceive their relationship with a brand or communicator as intimate and personal, they are more likely to engage on their pages and content. PSI had a particularly larger effect on content consumption activities in comparisons to their contributing activities. Similarly, community identification with the brand communities on SNS pages had a substantial influence on consumer engagement. A sense of belonging to the community demonstrated a stronger engagement amongst those who perceived similarities with other users visiting the same brand SNS pages. They were also more likely to engage in advocacy behaviors. Tsai & Men's (2013) study found that source credibility did not considerably influence consumer engagement, especially when users' motivations for seeking information were considered.

To further elaborate on the aforementioned theory with respect to social factors that affect consumers' buying behavior, it is relevant to look into the concept of 'groups'. Reference groups, family and social roles and statuses are social factors that affect a consumer's buying behavior (Kotler et al., 2016). All groups that have a direct or indirect influence on a consumer's attitudes or behaviors are considered reference groups. Groups that have direct influence are referred to as membership groups, and groups that an individual interacts with relatively continuously and informally with are considered primary groups. Secondary groups are usually more formal and need less continuous interaction. Members in reference groups are influenced in at least three ways: attitudes, self-concept and pressure for conformity. The groups they do not belong to, and even the ones they do not *want* to belong to, are also influential. The groups a person hopes to join are called aspirational groups. Dissociative groups are groups that an individual does not belong to and whose norms, values and behavior they reject. Groups which a person belongs to, but whose norms, values and behavior an individual seeks to avoid are categorized as disclaimant. Kotler et al. (2016) emphasize the importance, in the aspect of marketing, of reaching and influencing the opinion leaders or other influential individuals of the strongest reference group. They define opinion leader as the following: "(...) the person who offers informal advice or information about specific product or product category, such as which of several

brands is best or how a particular product may be used. Opinion leaders are often highly confident, socially active and involved with the category, and are often perceived by other consumers as highly credible information sources." (Kotler et al., 2016: 221). They also identify another role, which is also perceived as offering credible advice by consumers: market mavens. Market mavens are defined as "(…) in contrast to opinion leaders market mavens are not influential because of a specialized product or product category expertise. Instead, they possess a more broad expertise concerning many different products and decisions related to the marketplace." (Kotler et al., 2016: 221).

3.4 Consumption, self-presentation & identity

"Consumption can be a self-defining and self-expressive behavior. People often choose products and brands that are self-relevant and communicate a given identity (…)" (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 385). Consumers consume to create a desired self through the images and styles conveyed through their possessions. They often choose brands and products that are self-relevant and communicate a particular identity. By associating with material objects and places makes identity tangible or self-present. With today's technology it has become possible to present yourself using digital rather than physical referents (Gilly & Schau, 2003). In the digital environment, participants are only limited by their own imaginations and technology access. This means that participants may create multiple identities through digital manipulation, which do not necessarily relate or correspond to identities of real life. Gilly & Schau (2003) conceptualize self-presentation as the intentional and tangible component of identity. Consistent performances of coherent and complementary behaviors help maintain a desired impression of self. "The art of self-presentation is both a manipulation of signs (Wiley 1994) and an embodied representation and experience (Brewer 1998) to impart identity." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 387). Consumers try to impress others, in any given context, on the daily through their choice of clothes, hairstyles, automobiles, logos, etc. Social media has allowed consumers to self-present without the borders of time and

space, which means they can do it 24/7 with the whole world as their audience. In the digital environment, the boundaries that apply in real life are diminished, this means that one can portray themselves in a way that may not be true to reality, but may be true to the self they wish they had. "Identity is characterized by the tension between how a person defines herself as an individual and how she connects to others and social groups in affiliative relationships (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995). Individual identity is the self as distinguished from others and unique." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 387). Identity is reflected in possessions, as they demonstrate an individual's accomplishments, skills, tastes and efforts. Identity can be collective and establishes a 'we' in comparisons to individual identity, which demonstrates 'me'. The 'we' identity is referred to as affiliative identity, and is important for positioning the self within the social world and communicating identity to the intended audience. This can be expressed by e.g. wearing an official sports shirt, which reflects a desired affiliative identity. Identities represent two kinds of values: operating or ideal. The operating values are those practiced by an individual or a social group, these are apparent in everyday behaviors, such as choice of wear or being on time for appointments. On the contrary, ideal values are the values an individual or group seeks to have, but may not be able to maintain in reality. Some examples of this is consumers who self-present in participation of fantasy-based role-play, religion and nostalgia. In the digital environment, it may be easier to express and reveal ideal values in contrast to real life (Gilly & Schau, 2003). Often the strategies of self-presentation revolve around repressing personal information or displacing it with altered or fabricated details that are more fitting with a desired self. Gilly & Schau (2003) mention that self-disclosure in the digital environment may be easier than in physical life, as there may be a pressure of social desirability. This may suggest that individuals may feel that a digital environment, such as SNS, allows for more open self-expression. However it may also enable individuals to conceal aspects of their selves that they find undesirable. This means, that one can portray a self in the digital world that represents as much or as little as your physical self in real life, as one pleases (Gilly & Schau, 2003).

The relationship a person has with an object is not two-way (person-object), but in fact three-way (person-object-person), this means that person-object relationships communicate between people. Consumers obtain and display belongings as tangible symbols of identity. This includes what one refrains from purchasing, e.g. someone drinks Pepsi because they are not a Coca-Cola consumer. In other words, the semiotic rules in the digital environment. Personal sites are personal because they represent the self, however they are public because they are available on a broadly accessible platform. Gilly & Schau's (2003) study is based on personal web sites, but is equally applicable to SNS profiles, as both present the self on a public accessible platform. Gilly & Schau (2003) propose different factors for the initial motivation of creating a personal web space as well as different self-presentation strategies.

FIGURE 2

CONSTRUCTING PERSONAL WEB SITES
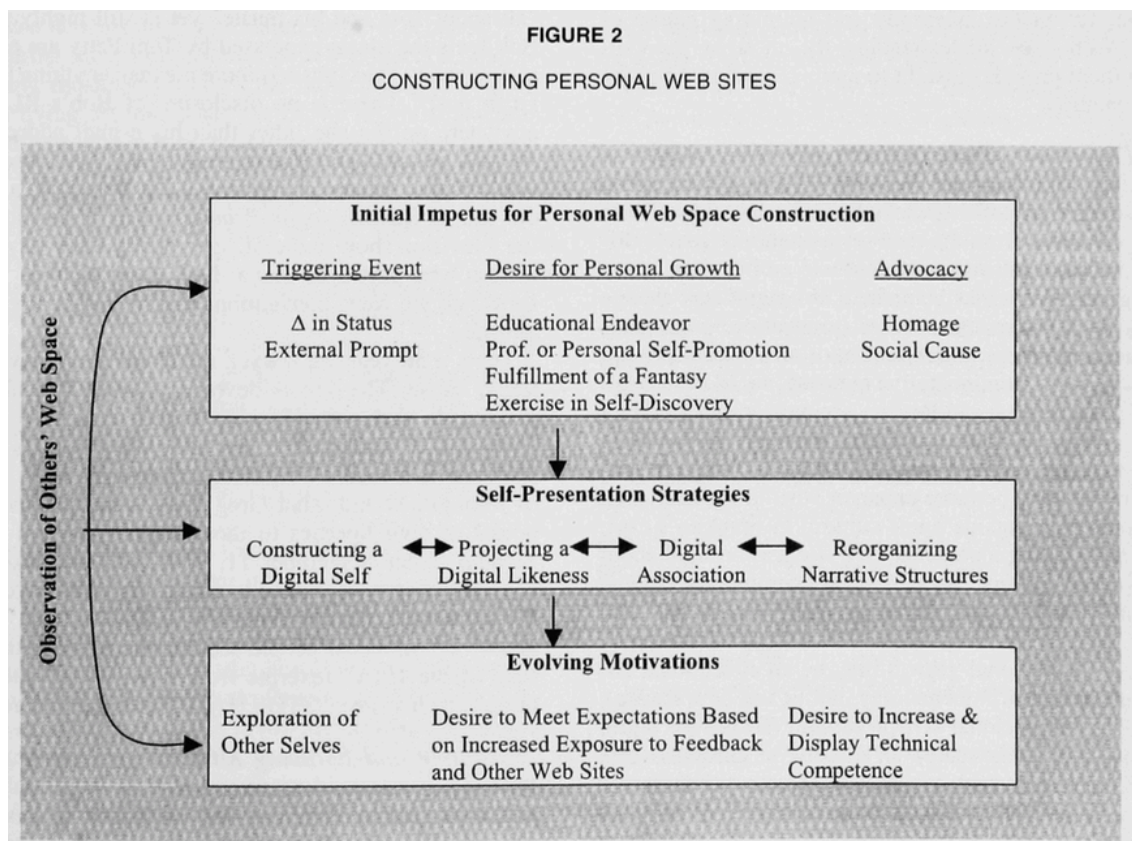
Figure 2: Constructing personal web sites (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 391)

Gilly & Schau (2003) identify three different types of initial motivations for creating a personal site: a triggering event, a desire for personal growth and advocacy. A triggering event is defined as "(…) a significant change in personal or professional status (graduation, promotion, engagement, marriage, parenthood), or an external prompt (class assignment, administrative mandate, social prodding)." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 392). The desire for personal growth may be "(…) an educational endeavor (mastering of a technology, adroit use of software), professional and personal self-promotion (search for a job, win clients, find a date/mate), an exercise in self-discovery, or a fulfillment of a fantasy." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 392). Advocacy may be to tribute a favorite artist, artistic work or genre, brand or a social cause.

Apart from motivation, Gilly & Schau's (2003) study reveals that there are four strategies involved in digital self-presentation: constructing a digital self, projecting a digital likeness, digital association and reorganizing linear narrative structures. The construction of a digital self as a telepresence is universal among communicators. Personal sites are a form of visible self-presentation and every element is chosen for its semiotic potential. This means that the digital self is constructed on the basis of semiotics; every element and detail symbolizes something that the communicator wishes to communicate about his or her 'self'. This can be from the style of communication to recognizable names that act as cultural background cues. Projecting a digital likeness is different to constructing a digital self. The two differences between them are: the general intent and the relationship of the physical body to the process. When creating a digital self one imparts a social presence whether it relates to the body or the intangible self-concept. One strategy for digital likeness is to reference the real life body directly through pictures and textual descriptions; this could be e.g. a selfie that one feels represents one the best, a photo of an important moment such as graduating or a photo with geographical context. When a communicator projects a digital likeness, they are trying to reference their physical bodies. Digital association is concerned with referencing relationships with object, places, etc. Communicators can add depth to their digital selves by using brands and their logos as shorthand for a

compound of meanings. "Digital association is a new form of possession not dependent on ownership or proximity." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 398). Reorganizing linear narrative structures has to do with hyperlinks, and how these empower the reader. This was the communicator does not need to describe certain things themselves, but can hyperlink to it. Gilly & Schau (2003) describe it as such; "Dismantling hierarchies of linear writing, hyperlinking allows resumes and life stories to be told with detailed elaboration only when the reader clicks the hyperlink. In essence, hyperlinks allow narratives that have no distinct beginning, middle, or end but, rather, many modes of elaboration." (Gilly & Schau, 2003: 398). Gilly & Schau's (2003) study concludes that the reasons that consumers self-present online, are in many respects similar to the reasons they do it offline. In both environments consumers desire to communicate a constructed self. However unlike reality, personal sites are a consumer narrative where several selves are made comprehensible. Communicators link themselves to the symbolic meanings and the public understandings derived from them. Their study reckons that without direct financial cost, a digital communicator can trigger a sort of cobranding and create relationships between brands. This is due to the fact that in real life association is limited to financial capacity. An individual may want to express their identity in correlation to a specific brand, but may not be able to afford or acquire it. This boundary does not exist in the digital world, where communicators are only limited by their imagination and technical skills.

To further expand the theory of self, it is relevant to look at Kotler et al. (2016) to understand how human personality and brand personality interplay, and how these correlate to presentation of self.

According to Kotler et al. (2016) every individual has personality characteristics that influence their buying behavior. They define personality as "(…) a set of distinguishing human psychological traits that leads to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli (including buying behaviour). We often describe it in terms of such traits as self-confidence, dominance, autonomy, dereference, sociability, defensiveness and adaptability." (Kotler et al., 2016: 224). Kotler et al. (2016) argue that brands have personalities too, that consist of specific

mix of human traits that can be attributed to a particular brand. They identify five brand personality traits: Sincerity (down to earth, honest, wholesome and cheerful), excitement (daring, spirited, imaginative and up to date), competence (reliable, intelligent and successful), sophistication (upper class and charming) and ruggedness (outdoorsy and tough). However depending on country, a dimension may be replaced, such as e.g. 'peacefulness' instead of 'ruggedness' in Spain and Japan. In addition, in Spain, 'passion' replaced the dimension of 'competence'. The implication of brand personality traits is that they will attract people who are high on the same personality traits. Nevertheless, the match may also be on a consumer's ideal self or even the ideal self one thinks others perceive of them, instead of the actual self. In summary, brands communicate certain values, which individuals may use to communicate either their actual or ideal self that they aspire to be (Kotler et al., 2016).

3.5 Influencers & Marketing

The term 'influencer marketing' is constructed by two words: influencer and marketing. To get a clarification of the meaning of the term, I will elaborate on what the terms 'influencer' and 'marketing' are defined as. These definitions, as well as the definition of influencer marketing by Brown & Hayes (2008), are what apply to the foundation of understanding in this paper. Furthermore, given that the focus of the research is within digital communication, any reference to the term 'influencer marketing' is meant within the context of social media unless else is stated.

3.5.1 Influencer

According to Cambridge dictionary an influencer is: "Someone who affects or changes the way that people behave." (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.), it also suggests that in 'business English' the definition is: "A person or group that has the ability to influence the behavior or opinions of others." (ibid.). Brown & Hayes (2008) define

an influencer as follows: "A third-party who significantly shapes the customer's purchasing decision, but may ever be accountable for it." (Brown & Hayes, 2008: 50).

3.5.2 Marketing

Marketing is a term that has been defined in various ways by various sources. According to Kotler et al. (2012) "Marketing is about identifying and meeting human and social needs." (ibid. 2012: 7). Kotler et al. (2012) suggest another, more detailed definition proposed by Professor Christian Gronroos, which involves customer value, relationship marketing, services marketing and the promise concept. "Marketing is a customer focus that permeates organizational functions and processes and is geared towards making promises through value propositions, enabling the fulfillment of individual expectations created by such promises and fulfilling such expectations through support to customers' value-generating processes, thereby supporting value creation in the firm's as well as its customers' and other stakeholders' processes." (ibid., 2012: 8).

3.5.3 Influencer marketing

According to Brown & Hayes (2008) Influencer marketing is: "(…) a new movement in marketing that directly and specifically enables sales forces. It directly addresses the most common sales process barriers within prospective customers and focuses on those who advise decision-makers." (Brown & Hayes, 2008: xii). However, if combining the two definitions of the words separately, influencer marketing could shortly be defined as 'marketing that creates value, identifies and meets social needs through the usage of influencers.'
Brown & Hayes (2008) discuss Malcom Gladwell's three types of influencers: connectors, mavens and salesmen. Connectors talk to many people and are known as extreme networkers. They love making introductions and typically know people across a range of social, cultural, professional and economic circles. Mavens are knowledgeable; they consume and share information with others. Because of this,

they are insightful, and can often detect patterns and trends. Salesmen are charismatic persuaders that possess powerful negotiation skills. Their influence is soft rather than forceful, often their source of influence is the tendency of others, and may subconsciously imitate them (Brown & Hayes, 2008: 38). Brown & Hayes (2008) underline the issue with identifying connectors, as it is possible to have many connections with no significant relationship – or even fake connections, a number of connections that are not real. They therefore underline that the three terms: connectors, mavens and salesmen only describe how individuals pass messages along, but not the types of messages. For this reason, Brown & Hayes (2008) chose to look at how influencers impact on the decision process of consumers. They mapped a series of specific messages that are carried based on different key points in the process. They propose ten different roles that an influencer may play, in the decision process:
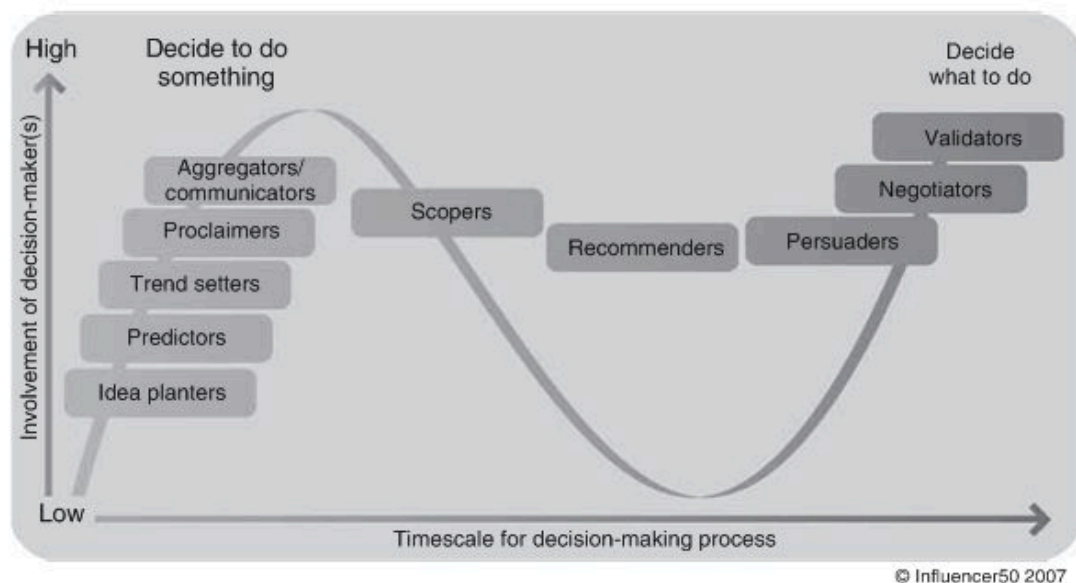
Figure 5.1   Influencer roles in the decision process

Figure 5.1: Influencer roles in the decision process. (Brown & Hayes, 2008: 40)

Idea planters typically provoke and challenge opinions and conventional wisdom. However if their ideas are too controversial, they may be ignored or sidelined. Nevertheless, they are the sources of uncertainty, they sow seeds that grow into

future agenda matters, point out shortages and inadequacies in current practice. Predictors communicate what they believe will soon be adapted. As the term implies, they predict future adaptations. Trendsetters are communicators who are early adopters. They create the direction for the market by setting themselves as reference points. Trendsetters are usually specific to a specific market and do not translate from one type to another. Proclaimers, as the term suggests, proclaim that the world will be how they want it to be. Usually they are in a position to be listened to and acted upon. Proclaimers often work for government agencies and departments, regulators and legislators or similar. Aggregators/communicators gather and disseminate information. Scopers map out limitations, parameters and dimensions of a problem and likely solutions. Recommenders are usually passive in their influence, as they will propose a decision but ultimately the final decision is left to the decision-maker. Persuaders are opposite to recommenders; they're not passive and convey precise direction rather than advice. To some extent they can be compared to Gladwell's 'salesmen'. Whilst recommenders tend to make judgments based on balance and analysis, persuaders may not have the evidence for their opinions but will convey them with passion and conviction. Negotiators, as the name communicates, negotiates the implementation of a decision. Validators are the safety net for decision-makers. They validate a decision, and make sure all options have been covered, before it's final (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

The ten influencer roles suggested by Brown & Hayes (2008) can be applied in various contexts and environments, although they were detected in order to describe the complexity of business decisions. However many of the roles can be applied to different contexts as they are not exclusive to businesses, e.g. the role of a trendsetter can be found outside the context of a business decision, and may instead be influential to consumer buying decision.

According to Hayes & Brown (2008), it is important for companies to start influencing rather than placing ads. This can be done by: persuading influencers to test products, encouraging consumers to create content, to feedback via social media and communicate their views and opinions on SNS. They also state that there is a mandatory clause, which is to issue a disclaimer, whenever an influencer is being directly asked or paid to carry a message. This will enhance credibility for

the influencer and the reputation of the brand, as it communicates that there is no attempt to deceit. Consumers are primarily influenced by themselves, this means that their own experiences weigh the most. Thereafter come the people they know and trust; these are the people they have had actual interactions with, not just people they know of. People that are like themselves, as they expect that their experience will be similar to their own, also influence consumers. Consumers trust people that aren't experts due to reason that experience confers authority. Credibility is given when an individual uses a product and then provides an opinion. It is trusted that these opinions are based on an individual's experience, unless it is stated as paid, in which consumers might be more critical toward the credibility of the message. An example of this would be salespeople that aren't on commission and therefore have no financial incentive to promote one product over another. In a case as such, a consumer will trust the credibility of the salespersons recommendations and opinions as their own. However if the salesperson is commissioned the consumer will question if their opinion is honest or if their motivation is based on the financial benefits (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Brown & Hayes (2008) claim: "Influencer marketing can't be a prescriptive formula. Every company, very market sector, every size of organisation has its own infrastructure and requirements when it comes to working with its influencers." (Brown & Hayes, 2008: 222). They predicted that in five years (from 2008) no one would question the role of influencers and their importance, and that the stress on marketers will be on listening not talking (ibid.).

This chapter outlines that influencer marketing is a phenomenon that is constructed by many different factors. The term and meaning of the concept can be simplified, however there are many elements that partake in the creation of it. It is a three-way phenomenon, as there are aspects that influence the phenomenon from the perspectives of the influencer, the consumers and the marketers. This includes the interaction and WOM between consumers, self-presentation, identity, consumption, relationships and marketing strategies.

Chapter 4

Analysis

4. Analysis

The analysis chapter is sectioned into three parts. The first part will analyze statistics in order to understand consumers' consumption of social media across age groups. The second part will analyze how consumers interact on influencers' sponsored posts, to get an insight into indications, meanings and overall attitudes. The third part will analyze the findings from the interviews and their correlation to the theoretical framework.

4.1 Social media in the US

4.1.1 Quick facts about the US

The US is a federal republic that consists of 50 states. Measured in terms of gross domestic product, the US is the world's greatest economic power. The population is highly diverse due to immense and sustained global immigration (www.britannica.com). Today, the United States of America has a population of more than 326 million (per January 2, 2018) (www.census.gov).

4.1.2 Statistics of social media worldwide

Social media has become relatively widespread and marketers are spending more money on Internet advertising (Statista, 2017). Nevertheless, it is important to analyze the market in order to target specific audiences. Factors such as age and trends have a presumably high role in successful targeting, as these will help narrow down suitable platforms and content type.

WeAreSocial, which is a global social media agency (WeAreSocial.com, What we do), and Hootsuite, a platform for managing social media (hootsuite.com, About us), published a report: '*Digital in 2017: Global Overview*' (Kemp, 2017), which is an overview of how the world's population uses the Internet and social media. According to the report, the total population of the world (per January 24, 2017) amounts to 7.476 billion, out of which 3.773 billion are Internet users, and 2.789

billion are active social media users. This shows that a staggering 37% of the world's population is active on social media (Digital in 2017: Global Overview, 2017:5). Statista (see appendix 4) states that the two most used social networking sites worldwide are Facebook and YouTube. Facebook ranks at 2.047 billion active users, YouTube at 1.5 billion, Instagram at 700 million and Twitter at 328 million (ibid.). However since the statistic, Instagram has grown to 800 million (Instagram, about).

4.1.3 Statistics of social media in the US

In statistics from May 2017, Facebook was ranked the most popular mobile social app in the United States, measured in the amount of monthly users, which added up to 113.97 million (see appendix 5). Instagram measured in at 55.77 million, Twitter at 39.19 million and Snapchat at 34.22 million (ibid.). However, when measuring popularity by monthly sessions (May 2017), the results look slightly different. Facebook still manages to hold up first place at 199 sessions, however, Snapchat overtakes Instagram and Twitter with 102 sessions (see appendix 5). Instagram comes in on a third place at 93 and Twitter at 64 (ibid.).

It is important to note that these numbers are only relevant for mobile usage, and do not include any usage made through e.g. computer, which might suggest that YouTube is perhaps not a mobile choice for consumers, although it ranked at number two most popular social app worldwide by active users. The statistics also suggest that the number of users do not necessarily state the actual popularity of a platform, when compared against actual engagement.

Statistics show that as of January 2017, YouTube was the most popular social app in the U.S. among users under the age of 30, whilst Facebook was the most popular for those aged 30 and over (see appendix 6). Users aged under 30 use YouTube more frequently out of all social apps, however, it was less favored at the time compared to six months prior. On the contrary, Facebook ranked second and was more favored at the time in comparisons to six months prior (ibid.).

Users aged 30 and over use Facebook the most, however that was less favored at

the time compared to six months earlier. YouTube, which was second to Facebook, was more favored at the time compared to six months prior (ibid.). Twitter scored relatively low with both groups, it ranked in at number 6 with the group under 30, and number 5 with the 30 years and over.

A significant difference between the two age groups is the popularity of Snapchat. The group under 30 had Snapchat in fourth place, almost sharing third place, which Instagram had by only 1% more. Another difference between the two groups is the distribution of percentages within each social app. While the group under 30 has a clear preference towards YouTube, the popularity of Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat is relatively evenly distributed (ibid.). This could suggest that consumers use Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat at an almost equal rate, but their main need for entertainment is primarily provided through video content, which in this case, is found on YouTube. However, the group aged 30 and over has a big percentile gap from their usage of Facebook to all other apps. Here it seems as if Facebook messenger, Instagram and Twitter are the apps that are used at an almost equal rate (ibid.). This suggests that they get most of their needs fulfilled on Facebook and partly YouTube, but that the remaining services have little interest.

A statistic that shows the interest of young teenagers in the United States from 2012-2017, illustrates how Facebook has been on a decline since 2012. There is a slight incline from Spring 2015 to Spring 2016 but it declines again after that (see appendix 7). It also shows how Snapchat has had a continuous incline since 2015, and Instagram has had a reoccurrence of inclines and declines, with its highest peak in the Fall of 2015. Another aspect to consider is the inclines and declines of each social app in respect to each other, e.g. as Instagram declined in Spring 2016, Facebook inclined (ibid.). These statistics show that the popularity of a social media platform cannot solely be measured in numbers of active users, but also needs to take engagement and consumption into account. Furthermore, it is important to consider the age of the target audience too, as the popularity of the various social media platforms cannot merely be measured as a whole by including all age groups.

The statistics indicate that the popularity of social networking sites fluctuate within short periods of time, which means that marketers constantly need to monitor preferences. It is especially important when deciding on a target group, as the preferences differ based on demographics. Furthermore, the statistics suggest that factors such as number of active users, monthly sessions, mobile usage and desktop usage also play a significant role in determining the right platform. The statistics are not similar in any way when comparing those factors against each other, which means that different platforms indicate how consumers use them. E.g. given that YouTube was not included in the statistics over most popular mobile apps, it suggests that YouTube is used on computer or TV and rarely on the go. Apart from this, the statistic over most popular SNS ranks YouTube second, which indicates a high level of consumption. These statistics together suggest that YouTube has become a popular choice of entertainment at home, with a preference towards a larger screen when using it. This is just an example of how complex it can be to find out what platform, and type of influencer, to market on in accordance to choice of target audience. The platform choice also has an impact on choice of influencer, as most influencers have one platform that they are most known for, like e.g. Jason John.

4.2 Analyzing the interaction on sponsored posts

I have selected posts from YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. I've been following the different influencers between 6-12 months, which has given me an insight in what their brand and presentation of self is. This is crucial information to understand the influencers as well as the followers and their attitudes and reactions. The best way to understand influencers and the community is to follow the influencer on more than one platform. My insights are therefore a result of seeing the different sides on different platform, as the usage of each of them is different. The social media selling strategy (Smith et al., 2011) is the same for all the posts: appealing to influencers. The posts will be put into perspective in terms

of WOM narrative strategies, credibility and relationship-orientations. The results I will discuss in this section are a reflection of what I have observed in these communities. I have chosen some specific posts to showcase specific situations, however the following is also what I have found to be true during the time of observing the communities, apart from the example of negative reactions with Nick on Twitter, the other examples represent typical interaction and engagement.

4.2.1 YouTube – Zoella & Shonagh Scott

The first influencer is Zoella, who is a YouTube vlogger with more than 12 million subscribers (www.youtube.com/zoella). She is mainly a lifestyle vlogger, so her content is relatively diverse. Her channel is about her, so she makes videos about shopping, makeup, hair, challenges, recipes and Q and A's (ibid.). The community seems to love her for who she is as a person and all the tips, tricks and insights she provides. She posts ads every now and then, the response on them are pretty similar. The post I've chosen says in the description box that there are affiliate links (see appendix 8). The community doesn't seem to mind this information; this can be seen by the amount of likes vs. dislikes. In fact it is common to have some dislikes on video even if they're not sponsored, as they represent what people feel about the content. This post does not have a significant amount of dislikes in reflection to the number of views which is over 1.3 million, and likes which add up to 65,000. The comments are unanimous and I didn't find a single negative comment. No one commented on the affiliate links, they only commented on how they feel about her, her look, what she was addressing in the video. All the comments were positive and full of love towards her. One comment even related to Zoella regarding cold sores, which was something she addressed in the vlog. The vlog, although it had affiliate links, was very true to Zoella, her brand and style (ibid.). The narrative strategy (Kozinets et al., 2010) applied to this post cannot be categorized within one of the four. This is because, although Zoella discloses her affiliation in the description box, she does not mention it in the video. However, the focus in her video is very much on the products, therefore the strategy it comes

closest to would be the evaluation strategy. As mentioned however, she does disclose it in her description box. The way she talks about some of the products makes it seem as if she is a pro-sumer (Smith et al., 2011) to some extent, and might've gotten the affiliate links because of her love of the products, rather than pretending to love them because of the affiliate links. It seems as though the community is very PSI centered (Tsai & Men, 2013), as most comments are talking to her as if she's a friend. People are commenting and saying how much they love her, her videos, and that they just love listening to her talk no matter what she's talking about. They also comment in relation to the things she says in her video as well as mention how excited and happy they get when there's a notification of a new video upload. Some of the comments imply a certain aspiration towards being like Zoella, everything from her room décor, to her hair and makeup.

The second influencer is Shonagh Scott who is a beauty and makeup artist with more than 409,000 subscribers (www.youtube.com/shonaghscott). Her videos are mainly makeup tutorials in the range of everyday wear to special effects. She also shares makeup and beauty related tips and tricks as well as hairstyling tutorials (see appendix 8). She recently started vlogging as well, where she shows her life outside of makeup and YouTube. These videos are more personal and show her as a person. The response from the community was very positive and people were excited to get to know her on a more personal basis. The sponsored post I chose is sponsored makeup by L'oreals (ibid.). The comments are very similar to Zoella, in fact many of the traits are the same in the community. However, unlike Zoella's post, Shonagh Scott's post has a comment where, a consumer implied that they are going to buy some of the makeup because they loved how it looked (ibid.). Like in Zoella's post, it is difficult to place Shonagh Scott's post within one of the four narrative strategies (Kozinets et al., 2010), the sponsorship is disclosed however not much else is said about the matter. The video itself is without speech as it just shows her applying the makeup with music. However, it seems as if the products are in the interest of the community and in line with her brand. Nevertheless, the narrative strategy that she comes the closest to is the embracing strategy (ibid.), as she discloses the sponsorship and presents the products in an enthusiastic

manner. She acts as both a consumer and a marketer. She uses the products as a consumer and she markets them by demonstrating the use of them, whilst profiting from it.

4.2.2 Twitter – Nick Trainer Tips

The third influencer is Nick Trainer Tips who is a Pokémon Go YouTuber, with more than 670,000 subscribers on YouTube (www.youtube.com/trnrtips). He has more than 144,000 followers on Twitter as well, where he posts about Pokémon Go too, but also more personal things such as family or everyday related things (see appendix 8). The post I chose was a sponsored post he did with the telephone network company Sprint. Whilst the post did get more than 1,000 likes and 66 retweets, the comments were more interesting. Most of the comments were very negative, some were negative towards Sprint or iPhone, some were towards Nick for the sponsorship and some for all the mentioned. Many were very unhappy about his choice to work with Sprint, as they didn't like the company and felt that Nick was a sellout. Some were upset about the switch to iPhone, because Nick has always been an android user. Others, among few, commented on their negative feelings towards Sprint, but how they understood that Nick probably needed to pay bills and such. This indicated an understanding towards Nick financially and that as followers, they understood that the content they consume in itself doesn't pay Nick's bills. However the overall response was very negative towards Sprint, as well as Nick for working with Sprint and promoting them (ibid.). What most of his followers express is a lack of connection between who they understand him to be and the sponsorship. As with the previous posts, it can be difficult to place the post within the narrative strategies (Kozinets et al.,2010). However, although many of the points within the endorsement strategy aren't explicitly communicated, they are implicitly indicated. The indications are that Nick most likely wasn't surprised about the negative backlash, as he does not reply or comment on the matter. He must have been aware that communicating one thing and doing another would have created that response. Therefore he was aware of

the tension it would create. By recognizing this issue and still going through with the sponsorship he also communicates that his personal needs are emphasized over the community's. All of these indications, suggest that the narrative strategy used in Nick's post is the endorsement strategy (Kozinets et al.,2010). Yet, the small detail that could be in favor of his community is, the offering of 100 PokéCoins (Pokémon Go money) when switching to Sprint. There are also implications of PSI (Tsai & Men, 2013) here, as it seems that the community feel that Nick is a friend, who has done something that goes against their trust in him. They feel that they know him and that this goes against his usual behavior and person. Given that consumers assess credibility based on the influencer, as well as the brand (Tsai & Men, 2013), means that the credibility of Nick among the commenters is very low on that post. Those consumers clearly do not trust the sponsor brand Sprint, which is reflected in their engagement as well as their attitude towards Nick. As a result that post may not have had a positive effect for the brand and its image nor the influencer, as it seemingly backfired on both parties. However, it is difficult to assess whether or not it was a successful sponsorship, as the post did get a fair amount of engagement. Although the comments were all towards the negative side, there were only 103 comments in comparisons to the 1,100 likes.

4.2.3 Instagram & Facebook

In the Instagram and Facebook posts of Kenzas, Song of Style and Wendy's Lookbook the results are very similar to that of Zoella and Shonagh Scott (see appendix 8). The consumers seem distracted by the post and don't pay much attention to the detail of it being sponsored. They comment on the looks and outfits of the influencers and how they love it. The comment sections mainly consist of a lot of positive comments and interest in their makeup and outfits. There is only evidence of one consumer on Kenzas' Daniel Wellington posts that seems to be slightly annoyed, by the level of sponsored Daniel Wellington posts on the influencer's different channels. Another comment that stood out on that post is

a consumer that is happy about affiliate discount code, commenting to her friend that 15% discount is better than nothing (ibid.).

An additional observing that I made was that engagement on Facebook seemed to be much lower than the other social networking sites. To properly demonstrate, I included two posts from Song of Style, one from Instagram and one from Facebook. First detail to note is that she has over 874,000 followers on Facebook, but an overwhelming 4.7 million on Instagram (ibid.). Comparing the amount of followers to likes on each respective platform, shows that the engagement level on Facebook is around 0.06% whilst on Instagram it is 9%. Apart from that, there are many comments on the Instagram post as opposed to Facebook where there are only 2 comments. The sponsored post by Wendy's Lookbook has an engagement level of approximately 0.08%, which is a bit more than Song of Style, but still in the lower end of the spectrum (ibid.). This indicates that either the interest for engagement on Facebook is low or the posts are not reaching many followers' feeds.

4.2.4 Sponsored posts

The general result is that consumers are not bothered by or negative towards sponsored posts as long as they correlate to the influencer. In fact they almost dismiss it as being sponsored because it does not seem out of the ordinary and is in line with the influencers usual behavior and brand (see appendix 8). This also reflects the consumers' assessment of credibility towards the influencer. However, when a sponsorship contradicts the brand and behavior of the influencer, the followers feel betrayed and negative towards the behavior. Whilst most however, feel strongly and very negatively about it, a few understand that it is a business deal. They accept that the influencer promotes the product because they relate to them, and can understand that they need to earn money from somewhere (ibid.). It is also evident that Kozinets et al. (2010) WOM model, the network coproduction model, is evident. Marketers have directly influenced the influencer and there is communication from the influencer to consumers and vice versa. However the consumers are also commenting on each other's comments as well as liking each

other's comments, which shows agreement and engagement amongst the community (see appendix 8).

4.3 Results of interviews

The following section covers the data I gathered form the interviews with the influencer and three agencies. I will cover the influencer's motivation behind creation of the Instagram account, as well as how the influencer uses self-presentation strategies and WOM narrative strategies. I will also cover the relationship the influencer has with his followers as well as his influencer role. Furthermore, I will elaborate on the praxis of influencer marketing from brand to agency to influencer.

4.3.1 Influencer: Jason John

Jason John created his social media accounts because of his pursue of a career in acting as well as his modeling work. He felt that it was important to be present online and would make it easier for him to get jobs, but most importantly exposure. It can therefore be said that his motivation for creating his Instagram account was 'a desire for personal growth' (Gilly & Schau, 2003). It was for professional and personal self-promotion, which has gathered a relatively large fan base today. His Instagram account has helped him get jobs as it serves as a somewhat online portfolio. He mentioned how it was quite important in Los Angeles, Hollywood especially, to have a large following and engagement on social media as it projected some sort of likeability as well as success. He explained how people don't take you seriously or think that you are worth hiring if your social media is lacking, as it is often seen as a reflection of you as a person. The numbers also reflect your success and likability, all of which influence chances of getting hired. Jason mentioned how some brands are more likely to work with you if your social following is high, as they hope to be featured on the profile. In terms of material possessions, he felt that the brand wasn't always important, as long as it just looked unique or great. In terms of clothing he didn't put too much thought

into designer brands, as he felt like that wasn't the type of items he could afford due to high living costs. However, he mentioned that cars were his passion and that he felt that cars say a lot about a person. He used to own a Porsche, which he was very proud of, but was forced to sell it when economic issues started to appear. He felt that owning that car was a reflection of him, as a person, as it reflected certain preferences in life and success. He hasn't owned a car since he sold his Porsche, but has however been doing some sponsorship with car dealers and receiving free rental of different cars. He enjoys this a lot as the cars are often brand new models and on the high end of luxury, but not in the same spectrum of Porsche. When asked about the importance of his looks, he emphasized that it was very important to him that the pictures he posted looked good. In fact, he mentioned that when taking photos for his Instagram, it was almost like a mini photo-shoot with a camera phone. Most of the photos on his account were in fact posed and only very few of them were a representation of the real him and his real everyday life. This information correlates to Gilly & Schau's (2003) theory on consumption being self-defining and self-expressive. Furthermore, this also confirms that we portray ourselves differently online opposed to real life. He wants to portray a self that is flawless and always looking good. These statements also confirm the concept of three-way relationship with objects (Gilly & Schau, 2003), as he speaks about cars and his Porsche. The car and the brand communicated something to other people. In his opinion what it said about him was that he was doing well, that he was fun and adventurous, sporty and somewhat sexy even. He felt that it was a piece of him in the form of a car. From my interpretations I found that he felt that the car gave him a special status, like he was worth more because the car itself was worth quite a bit. Almost like the car reflected some of his existing qualities as well as qualities he wish he had. This further conforms Gilly & Schau's (2003) theory regarding the digital self and semiotics. Jason has a desire to communicate and construct a self in both the digital world as well as real life. He did however say that his real life self wasn't as polished as his digital self, which means that he has managed to construct a digital self. However, he has also managed to 'project a digital likeness' (ibid.), as he references to his real life body directly through pictures. As mentioned previously,

he does make a bit of use of brands and logos, which therefore means that he also fulfills the strategy of 'digital association' (ibid.).

Jason interacts with his followers, he tries to comment back to people as much as he can, especially if they are his longtime followers, which he has a few of. Although he is very invested in making his account grow in follower count, his feelings towards his followers and community isn't particularly strong. He mainly spends time responding to people for professional reasons, to keep the engagement on his posts going. This along side my observing, suggests that his community mainly consists of people that are interested in his aesthetics. This seems to weaken the bond between influencer and fan, as his account is not really personal and doesn't show the real side of him. Jason is in fact an excellent example of self-presentation with the strategy of repressing personal information. Given that his account isn't particularly personal, it could indicate that his followers view him as a part of a group that they hope to be a part of: aspirational group (Kotler et al., 2016). Jason portrays a self that he himself aspires to truly be, the polished version of himself. It could mean that his followers follow him for the same reason that he portrays himself, aspiration. He self-presents through the way he looks: his hairstyle, his clothing, his poses and cars.

When it comes to his sponsored posts his narrative strategy can be categorized as 'evaluation' (Kozinets et al., 2010). He does not clearly disclose that the posts are sponsored, no hashtags or anything alike. He only thanks the companies in the posts for whatever service or product they have provided him. However, there are no negative comments or anyone asking if they are sponsored posts. Nevertheless, this is in violation of the FTC guide, as it is not stated clearly that the posts are sponsored. The lack of disclosure could potentially have a negative impact on his credibility. The indications on his account are that there is no negative outcome yet.

Jason is an influencer that aligns very much with many of the theoretical standpoints. His motivation for creating his account, self-presentation strategies and narrative strategy are all very pronounced. Having interacted with Jason in real life outside of social media gives an insight in the real differences between his

real life and portrayed digital self. This type of data would most likely not have been detectable if I had not had the opportunity of interacting with the subject in real life environment.

4.3.2 Brand to agency to influencer

The reason why agencies exist as a third party link between brand and influencer is mostly because of network. The agencies are usually have influencers that are tied to their agency, brands can then reach out to be matched with an influencer. Influencers are their own brand and have their own identity and self, as described in the previous section. Equally, brands have identities and qualities linked to them too. Agencies match their brands and influencers based on identity, as these need to be in correlation to each other. Another element that weighs in is the brand's target audience, as the audience that the influencer has needs to be relevant to the brand. What is different about influencer marketing, as opposed to paid ad-spots on social networking sites, is that it needs to be engaging. Good influencer marketing is when the content is similar to what the influencer usually posts, true to the influencer, but with the sponsored elements. The point of influencer marketing is to let the influencer be the content creator and director; their followers follow them for their original content. Bad influencer marketing is marketing the same way as on other media and trying to force the same type and model into influencer marketing. It's unoriginal and unappealing to consumers; they don't want ads that look like ads. They want content that makes them feel or think something about the brand and less about being commanded to purchase a product. Influencer marketing is about taking the identity of the influencer and associating it with the brand and vice versa, it is about increasing the likability of a brand by creating associations. Influencer marketing is not like an online ad posted through a different channel, the unique effect of influencer marketing will be lost if done that way. It puts emphasis on user generated content, identity and self-presentation. Influencers usually want to work with brands that help them maintain and improve their self-presentation. Out of the four narrative strategies

(Kozinets et al.,2010) the explanation and endorsement strategy are the most appropriate choices for social influencers as these both disclose the involvement and sponsorship, which is a requirement when working with an agency. As proposed by Cuauhtemoc & Torres (2015), the characteristics that differentiate social networking sites advertising compared to standard advertising, is the social aspect. The ads are moving into 'private space' (ibid.), which means that the line from acceptable to intrusive can easily be crossed. To successfully run an influencer marketing campaign, it is important not to cross that line. This is done by letting the influencer stay true to their brand, style and selves. By allowing the influencer to stay in the role of the content creator, this is achieved. As long as the brand does not want to dictate the content itself, but only the expectation of the end result, then the lines of intrusiveness are less likely to be broken. The agencies work as intermediaries, which have the knowledge of both sides: the brand interests and expectations, as well as the influencer and community. The agencies possess the knowledge of how influencer marketing can best be executed, how to match brands and influencers and how to let it stay as organic and natural as possible. The agencies are like matchmakers that understand both of the worlds: the marketing world and the social media influencer community. This knowledge, the knowhow and span of network, is what makes these agencies attractive and existent.

The process starts with a brand; the brand and agency make a marketing plan, with desired outcome and expectations. The objectives, goals and target audience. From this information, and based on the brand as it currently stands, the agency finds the best match. When the best match is found, the agency works with the influencer to create the content. The influencer is provided with some minimum requirements and is then on the task of creating the content, whilst the agency keeps an eye on the sideline. However, sometimes the requirements are specific, and require no creative thinking for the influencer to execute the request apart from adding their personal touch to the overall idea. Essentially, the idea with influencer marketing is for the consumers to feel something. It is not supposed to feel like an ad, but with no hidden agenda, it is disclosed that it is. The main idea is that the consumer doesn't feel that it's intrusive and irrelevant to them, which it

would not be if the content isn't out of the ordinary like e.g. Zoella's video. Influencer marketing is interesting and different because it is the closest form of personalized advertising, as the assumption is that you follow a person because you like them. If you like them, you listen to what they have to say because it interests you, and if the sponsorship is in line with the person's style, then you don't mind it.

Chapter 5

Discussion & Conclusion

5. Discussion & Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

In relation to Cuauhtemoc & Torres' (2015) findings regarding users' attitudes towards advertising on social networks, it may explain the rising use of AdBlocks. Since their paper was published social networks have changed the way advertisements are displayed on social networks. The way ads are displayed is much more intrusive and forced today, which is why consumers opt to block firm-created ads. User-generated ads on the other hand, cannot be blocked at these are personal, but sponsored posts. With the rise in demand for user-generated content, it is no wonder that marketers have turned towards it too. Consumers understand each other and their communities better than marketers do and can, as they are a part of the identity. The core and drive of influencer marketing is word-of-mouth, more specifically the WOM of an influencer. When the WOM is paid for or in any way influenced by marketers it transcends into the category of WOM marketing, also referred to as WOMM. Essentially the fundamentals of influencer marketing and WOMM are much the same, however in influencer marketing there are many more elements that have an influence on the overall process and creation of the phenomenon. Through netnography of different communities of influencers, interviews with agencies and an influencer, I gained an insight in a few of the point of views and aspects of the concept. Apart from many of the conceptual elements that are present in influencer marketing, there are also a lot of different groups of people involved: the influencer, the consumers, the brand and the agency. The agencies' role is most important towards the end when it comes to matchmaking. However the other three groups are important in themselves. The identities, relationship and presentation of self of these three groups all contribute individually to the phenomenon. The extent of the phenomenon is therefore very wide and can be studied from several points of views.

The influencer's choice of narrative strategy is crucial to the reception of the sponsored posts. I proposed the four propositions of Kozinets et al. (2010), which are useful to get an overall understanding of the concept of narrative strategy. However, it can be discussed that the strategies are in need of adaptation to social

networking sites and different types of content. It was difficult to directly apply the strategies to e.g. video content, as this involves some text as well as the video itself. The strategies in such content therefore differ tremendously in comparison to written content such as blogs. Brown & Hayes (2008) proposals of influencer roles also need an adaptation to the social media and social networking sites environment. Whilst the roles were proposed in the context of business decisions, some of the roles are present in the social media context too and set the theme of SNS accounts. It can also be argued that almost all of the roles are present on social media, sometimes they just aren't influencers. I have experienced that members of communities will sometimes engage at a high level in the comment sections, here it is sometimes possible to find idea planters, predictors, aggregators, recommenders and validators (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

Nevertheless, the theoretical framework as well at the netnography suggests that consumers have a high level of trust towards influencers, as they are viewed as credible. It is also evident that many consumers view influencers as someone relatable and a friend. The community grows to care for the influencer on a personal level, which makes the relationship the consumers have towards them personal too. As it is proven that our friends can influence us, this means that we take the words of an influencer into consideration. Consumers believe that just as they wish the best for the influencer, the influencer does the same, which means that their level of trust is empowered through the relationship-orientation. The relationship-orientation sets the foundation of credibility and trust a consumer has towards an influencer, who is essentially a stranger, but is accepted as a friend. Social media creates an environment where people can meet, and based on different factors, they form an opinion about each other. Usually one is judged on the content we put out, this means that we are evaluated as people through our digital self. Our online self-presentation sets the foundation for who we are on each respective account and how we want the world to see us and think of us. We create this content based on how we look and what we like, we then communicate it with symbols, which say more than words do. We self-present ourselves with brands that either represent who we are as people, who we want to be or both. Most often it is the best qualities and the qualities we aspire to acquire that we

present, in order to project a digital likeness. When we follow a person on social networking sites, we are influenced by their self-presentation. This self-presentation is what sets the foundation of our relationship-orientation towards them. Through prolonged exposure to an individual's content and life we form parasocial interaction. We get to know the person through the digital environment, and most often it is a one-way experience from the follower towards the followed. As the PSI is strengthened over time, our positive attitudes and intentions increase as well, which indicates that with time the credibility and trust towards an influencer grows. This trust can however be broken, if we detect a change of behavior in favor of sponsorship. Such action will create a doubt towards the influencer's care and intention towards their community, which can ultimately break the trust and credibility. Through prolonged PSI consumers learn who the influencer is and how they are and can therefore instantly detect when there is a change in behavior, more so if there is finances involved. This was evident in the comment section of Nick Trainer Tips on Twitter. Whilst consumers may be more forgiving when a person they like works with a brand they dislike, because they understand and relate to the influencers financial aspects, they may be less forgiving the other way around. If a brand a consumer likes works with an individual they don't like, this could affect the perception and associations an individual has with the brand. They will translate that the brand believes that the person represents their brand identity; the other way around is not as powerful, as consumers view the brand as being the most powerful. What this means is that usually when brands work with individuals it is mainly to their benefit and their call of action, than the other way around. Therefore when a brand decides to work with a person, it is based on mutually shared identity properties. Yet, when a person decides to work with a brand that doesn't represent them, it will usually be because of the financial aspect. Consumers have an understanding towards that, as they identify influencers as their friends and therefore equals, which mean that they can easily put themselves in their shoes. Therefore an influencer might be affected in terms of trust and credibility, but a brand might be affected in terms of loyalty and sales, as it could possible impact a consumer's decision-making process. A brand is something the consumer can buy, and if their associations with

the brand become a reflection of the person they dislike, they are more likely going to avoid association with the brand because of identity conflict. This only highlights that brand and identity associations are exchanged between a brand and influencer. This can mean that a scandal or less desirable behavior of an influencer could potentially be damaging to a brand, depending on the timing of sponsorship.

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of the thesis has been to research the relationship between influencers and consumers, in order to establish how influencer marketing can influence consumers' decision-making process. The intention was to understand the foundation of influencer marketing, the different elements that have an influence on the subjects involved in influencer marketing and to what extend and how consumers on the American market use social media. All of these research areas help understand and answer the research question:

How can influencer marketing on social media influence consumers' decision-making process?

The results showed that many aspects needs to be taken into consideration in terms of the parties involved in the creation of the phenomenon: influencer marketing. Elements such as word-of-mouth, word-of-mouth marketing, relationship-orientation, presentation of self, identity and consumption all have a significant role in the creation and understanding of influencer marketing. Furthermore the study revealed that consumer preferences and social media consumption could be difficult to predict. Consumer preferences towards social networking sites change within short periods of time and usage is affected by device type as well. It was also found that the number of active users on social networking sites did not necessarily indicate popularity, as the statistics based on number of monthly sessions on different platforms, showed a different rank of

preference. Lastly demographics showed to have an influence on preferred social networking sites too, which differed quite a bit from the group of over 30 compared to the group under 30. These statistics indicated that the choices of social networking sites are crucial for marketers in terms of target group. Essentially the choice of target group should dictate the most appropriate platform, which could furthermore help identify a suitable influencer. Additionally, the vast amount of different influencers makes it more manageable when there is an agency involved. Agencies are the intermediaries between brands and influencers. They make sure to understand the message and objectives of a brand and make a suitable match with an influencer. Preferably the influencer will be in charge of the content creation with the help of guidelines as well as must-include elements from the brand and agency. There are legal factors such as the FTC guide that the agencies must help with as well, which means that agencies act as the experts within social influencer marketing, the brands are the clients and the influencers are communication channel.

Influencer marketing on social media can influence consumers' decision-making through many different factors. Consumers' decision-making process can be influenced through the relationship-orientation the consumer has with the influencer, as influencers fall within a consumer's reference groups. Identity of the consumer, identity of the influencer and brand identity are also elements that can influence a consumer, as discussed in the previous section. An alignment or aspiration towards these identities can influence the decision-making process. The desire of self-presentation and the belonging of aspirational groups can also influence an individual. Influencer marketing can influence consumers' decision-making process through their symbolic communications, self-presentation and associated identity. Essentially a consumers desire to self-present a desirable self can influence the process. In this study many of the consumers aspired to be as the influencers, influencer marketing can therefore influence the decision-making process through the desire of aspiration. Which could influence the process as they aspire to be and therefore own the same objects as the influencer, to express some of the same values.

Chapter 6

Perspective

6. Perspective

The study confirms that the elements of identity, relationship and consumption all affect the level of user engagement. However, the element of trust is also something that is relevant to dig deeper into and understand. It could've been relevant to look into Belk's (2013) theory on the extended self as well to get an understanding of 'the self' on digital media such as Instagram. This would be an extension to the theory on identity and consumption and could be used to analyze an influencer as well as users. Belk (2013) proposes theory on the concepts of digital possessions and virtual consumption. He argues how our digital selves are an extension to our real selves. He also studies the psychology behind the reason of people blogging and how this behavior may contribute to affirmative behavior. This would have been interesting to look at in order to further deepen the understanding of the digital and real self and its psychological effects.

Furthermore, the theory of co-creation would have changed the direction of the study. Co-creation is a process where companies and their stakeholders develop products, services and experiences collaboratively (Ramaswamy, 2009). This means that consumers, such as influencers, can co-create the value of a product. Often brands co-create lines with influencers, which is beneficial to both parties. In collaboration they create a new product that meets a new and different need that the brand has not met yet. The influencer gets to put a name to the brand and vice versa. Co-creation with influencers on social media is another aspect to influencer marketing, but with a twist that goes beyond advertising and into a larger spectrum of value creation.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1:

What role do you see influencer marketing playing in your organization in the next three years?

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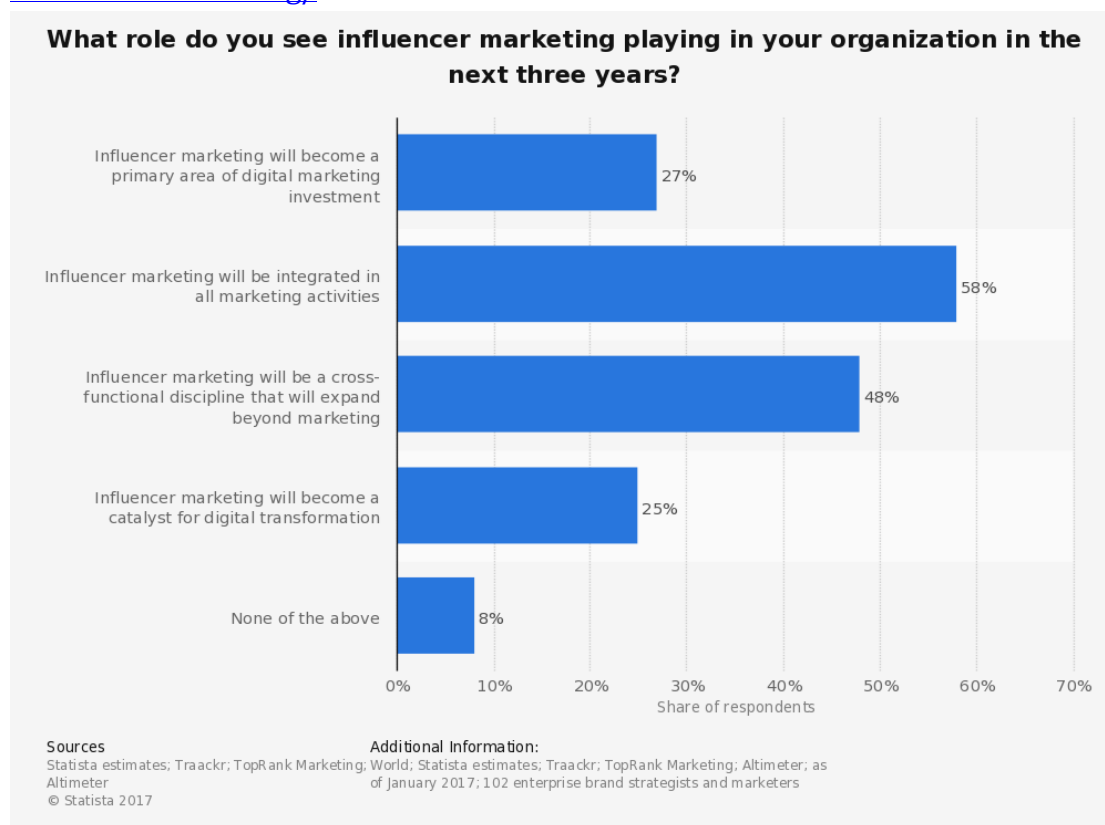
Leading goals of influencer marketing worldwide as of January 2017

Brandchannel. (n.d.). Leading goals of influencer marketing worldwide as of January 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 25, 2017, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/666426/goals-influencer-marketing/

Leading goals of influencer marketing worldwide as of January 2017

Goal	Share of respondents
Improve brand advocacy	94%
Expand brand awareness	92%
Reach new targeted audiences	88%
Increase share of voice	86%
Improve sales conversion	74%
Manage reputation	68%
Drive lead generation	67%
Accelerate digital transformation	64%
Improve customer satisfaction	63%
Improve employee's influence	52%

Sources
Traackr; TopRank Marketing; Altimeter
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Additional Information:
World; Traackr; TopRank Marketing; Altimeter; as of January 2017;
102 enterprise brand strategists and marketers

Google Trends: Influencer marketing

Information retrieved on August 25, 2017
https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=today%205-
y&q=%2Fm%2F026bgmq,influencer%20marketing
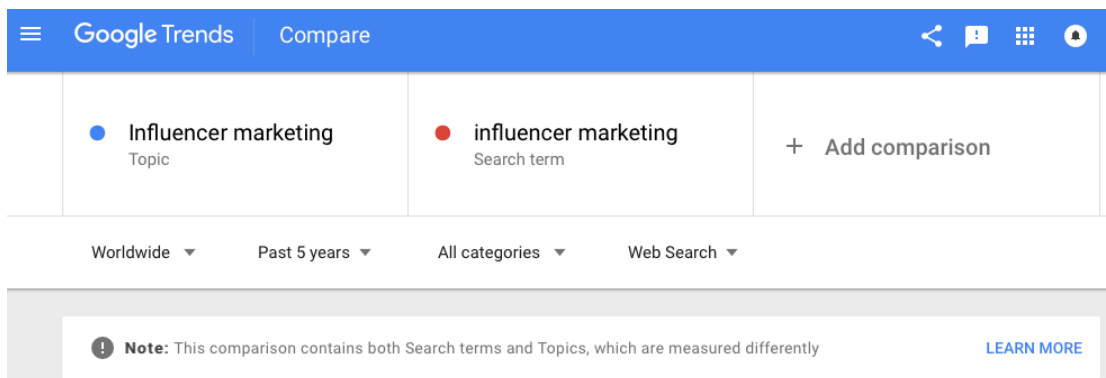
Appendix 2:

What are your main reasons for blocking ads while you use the Internet?

Statista. (n.d.). What are your main reason for blocking ads while you use the internet?. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/682127/reason-adblocking-use/

What are your main reason for blocking ads while you use the internet?
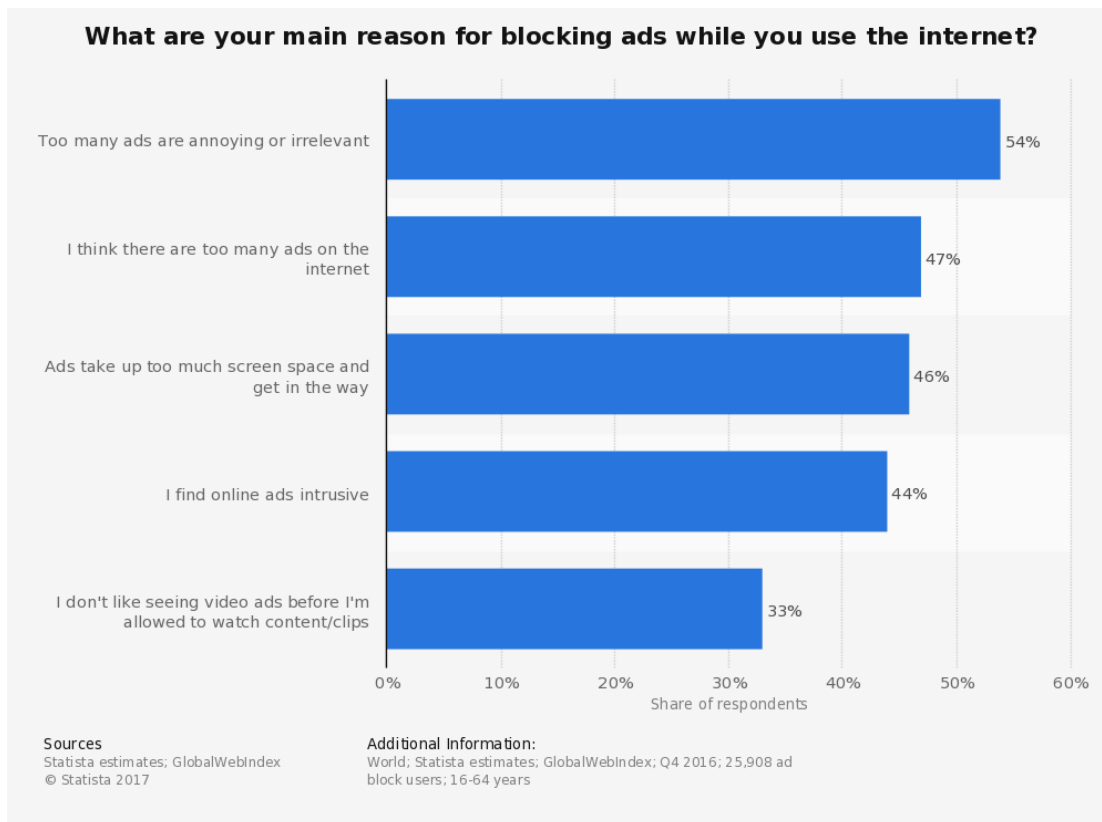
Interview Questions Guide

Agency interview guide

- Who are you? (Company, personal – background, years of experience/story etc.)

- What do you work with/what is you position?

- What is influencer marketing?

- What is an influencer? / When is someone considered an influencer?

- Why is influencer marketing existent? – Does it replace something? Is it an extension of some other form of marketing?

- Is influencer marketing efficient/useful? If so, why?
  What makes it a good tool? / Why does work?

- What would you say influencer marketing is most useful for? / What can brands expect to get out of using an influencer?

- Does influencer marketing influence consumers decision-making? If so, how? And if not, why?

- Does influencer marketing drive sales for brands? (Does it influence purchase decision)

- Who would you say are the target group/audience for influencer marketing?

- How do match brands and influencers? / What are the 'match criteria'? (See if you can get information about influencer identity, brand identity and influencer roles without directly mentioning those terms)

- What platforms are used for influencer marketing?

- What is a good influencer marketing campaign? (Content form, type of results)

- What is a bad influencer marketing campaign? (Content form, type of results)

- Has the number of influencer marketing projects gone up within the past 1-2 years in your agency?

- (if yes to previous Q) What elements do you think have played a role in influencer marketing becoming popular?

- Do you know what Adblocker is? (if no, explain it)

- Do you think Adblocker has contributed to the interest in influencer marketing?

- Do you think Adblock is the sole reason why brands are turning to influencer marketing? Or is its contribution small?

- What would you say the future of influencer marketing looks like? Will it continue or will it decline? –and why?

Influencer interview guide

- Who are you? / What's your story?

- What do you work with/do?

- Why do you have your social media accounts? (/Instagram

- How much do you care about your looks? – and why?

- Do you know what influencer marketing is?

- What is an influencer? / Do you think of yourself as an influencer?

- What would you say your role as an influencer is on your platform? (if doesn't know, ask if they are e.g. a trend setter or recommender etc.)

- When you buy things, do you think about the brand? / Are the brands on your material possession important to you?

- The brands you wear and show on your account, what do they mean to you? (/Do you feel like they say something about you as a person?)

- Why do you think brands use influencers?

- Do you mark your posts as sponsored posts? If yes, why? If no, why not?

- How do you feel about your followers? Do you feel any responsibility towards them when you post sponsored posts? Why/Why not?

- Would you advertise any and every brands/product/service?

- Has the number of requests for sponsored posts gone up for you in the past 1-2 years? / and why do you think that is?

- Do you think that your sponsored posts have any effect on your followers? /In terms of decision-making / consumption?

Appendix 4:

Leading social networks worldwide as of August 2017, ranked by number of active users (in millions)

We Are Social. (n.d.). Most famous social network sites worldwide as of August 2017, ranked by number of active users (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 21, 2017, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/
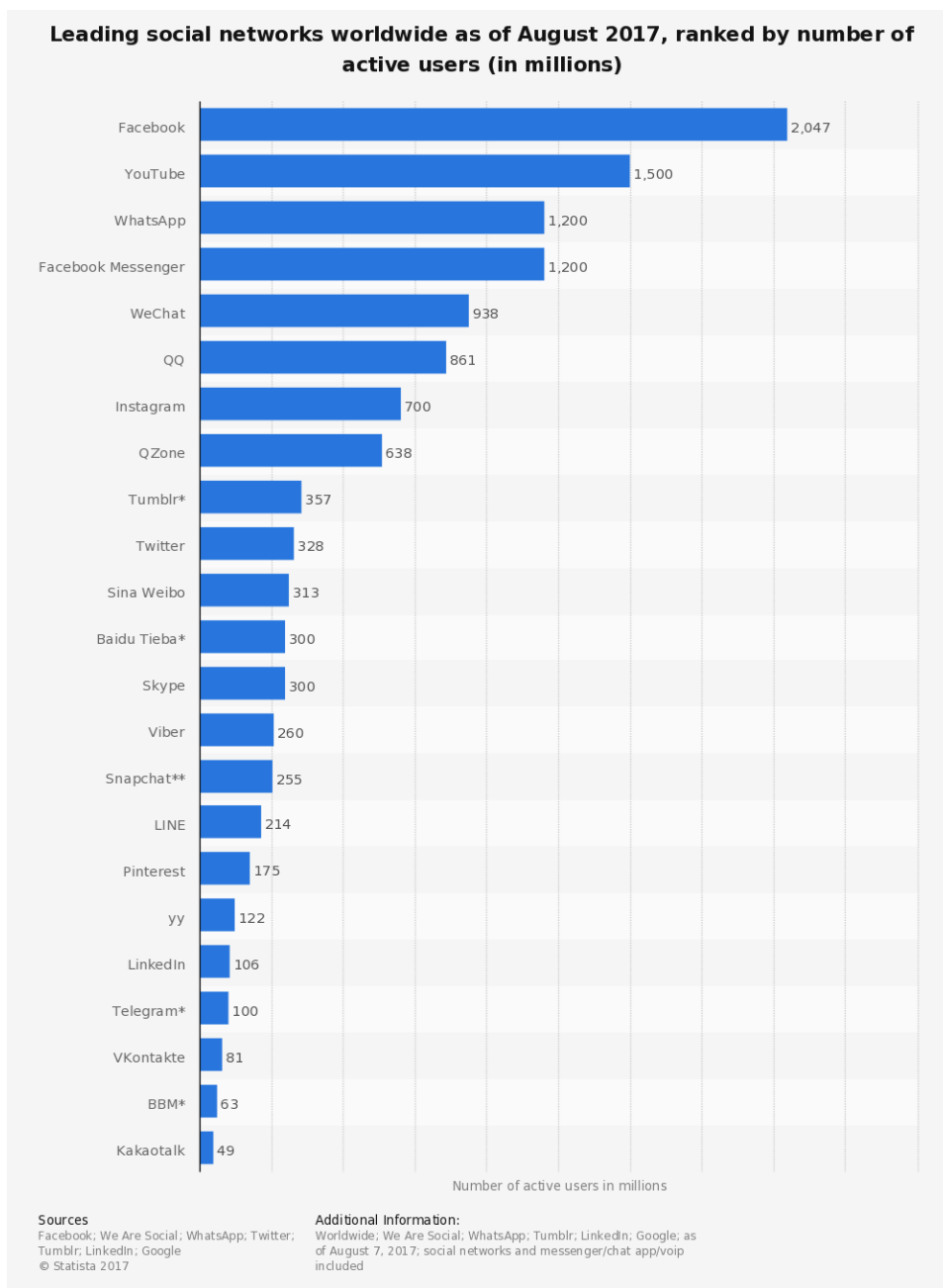
Appendix 5:

Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by monthly users (in millions).

Verto Analytics. (n.d.). Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by monthly users (in millions). In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 24, 2017, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/248074/most-popular-us-social-networking-apps-ranked-by-audience/

Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by monthly users (in millions)

App	Million unique visitors
Facebook	113.97
Facebook Messenger	102.94
Instagram	55.77
Google Hangouts	45.13
Google+	41.12
Twitter	39.19
Pinterest	35.86
Snapchat	34.22
WhatsApp	21.77
Skype	17.07
Tumblr	8.95
Tinder	6.88
GroupMe	6.35
Kik	6.02
LINE	2.19

Source
Verto Analytics
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Additional Information:
United States; Verto Analytics; May 2017
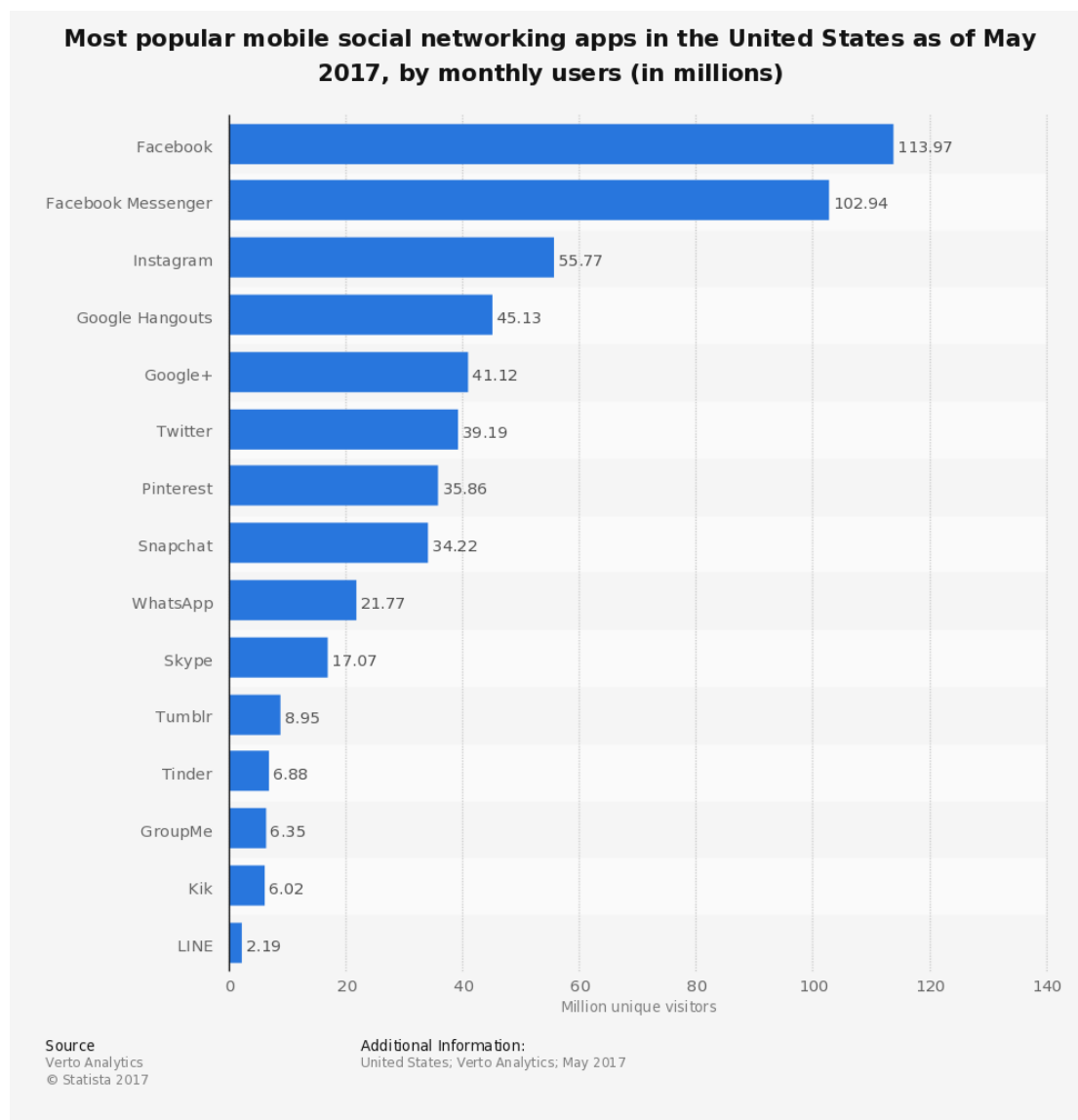
Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by number of monthly sessions

Verto Analytics. (n.d.). Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by number of monthly sessions. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 24, 2017, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/579443/top-us-social-networking-apps-ranked-by-monthly-sessions/

Most popular mobile social networking apps in the United States as of May 2017, by number of monthly sessions

App	Average sessions per user per month
Facebook	199
WhatsApp	150
Kik	137
LINE	106
Snapchat	102
Instagram	93
Tumblr	77
GroupMe	70
Facebook Messenger	68
Twitter	64
Google Hangouts	46
Tinder	32
Google+	19
Pinterest	19
Skype	15

Source
Verto Analytics
© Statista 2017

Additional Information:
United States; Verto Analytics; May 2017; 18 years and older

Reach of selected social networks in the United States as of February 2017

Statista Survey. (n.d.). Reach of selected social networks in the United States as of February 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved January 14, 2018, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/183682/us-social-media-website-ranking-by-number-of-users-logged-on/

Most popular social apps among users aged under 30 years in the United States as of January 2017

Goodwater Capital. (n.d.). Most popular social apps among users aged under 30 years in the United States as of January 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 24, 2017, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/678556/under-30s-popular-social-apps-usa/

Most popular social apps among users aged 30 years and over in the United States as of January 2017

Goodwater Capital. (n.d.). Most popular social apps among users aged 30 years and over in the United States as of January 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*.

Retrieved August 24, 2017, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/678592/over-30s-popular-social-apps-usa/

Most popular social apps among users aged 30 years and over in the United States as of January 2017

App	Favorite six months ago	Favorite now
Facebook	63%	55%
YouTube	14%	17%
Facebook Messenger	7%	8%
Instagram	6%	8%
Twitter	6%	6%
WhatsApp	2%	4%
Snapchat	2%	3%

Share of respondents

■ Favorite now ■ Favorite six months ago

Source
Goodwater Capital
© Statista 2017

Additional Information:
United States; Goodwater Capital; January 2017; total survey
n= 2,076; 13 years and older

89
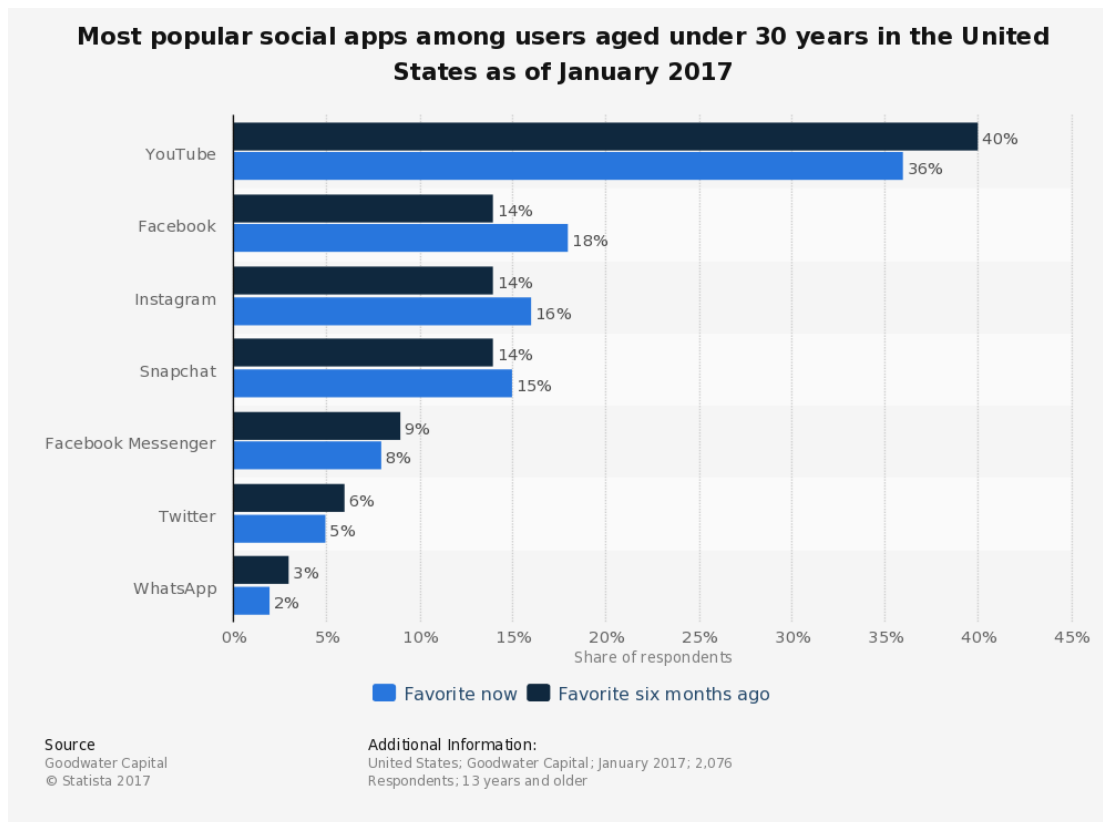
Appendix 7:

Most popular social networks of teenagers in the United States from Fall 2012 to Spring 2017

Fortune, & MarketingCharts. (n.d.). Most popular social networks of teenagers in the United States from Fall 2012 to Spring 2017. In *Statista - The Statistics Portal*. Retrieved August 24, 2017, from https://www-statista-com.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/statistics/250172/social-network-usage-of-us-teens-and-young-adults/

Most popular social networks of teenagers in the United States from Fall 2012 to Spring 2017

Sources
Piper Jaffray; Fortune; MarketingCharts
© Statista 2017

Additional Information:
United States; Piper Jaffray & Co.; Fall 2012 to Spring 2017; Spring 2017 n = 5,500; most recent wave average age 16 years
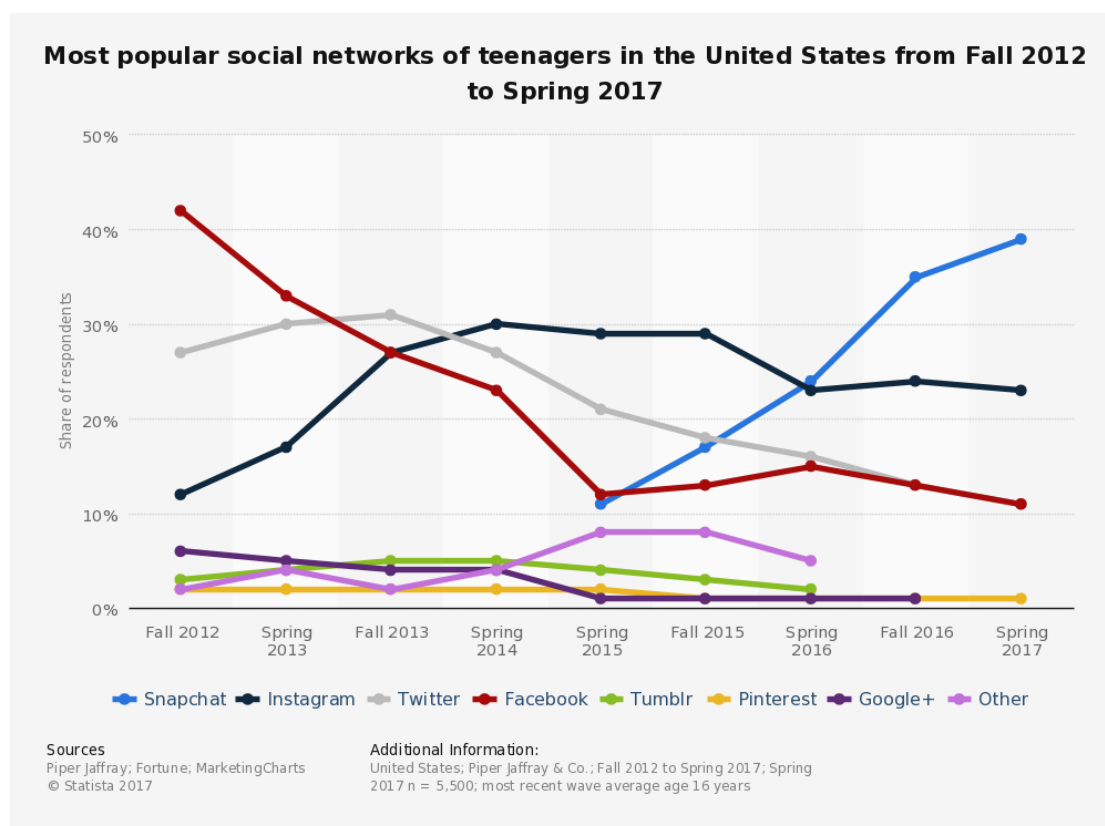
Appendix 8:

Sponsored posts

YouTube

Zoella – affiliate link
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0f_P5OlKHhM

September Favourites 2017 | Zoella

1,396,000 views   👍 65K   👎 794   ➔ SHARE   ☰+   •••

Zoella ✔
Published on Oct 15, 2017   SUBSCRIBE 12M

September Favourites 2017
⇢ Previous Video: http://bit.ly/2kQ4CfN
⇢ Halloween Shopping Vlog: http://bit.ly/2ylIQDY

⇢ Links below marked with a "*" are affiliate links - which means I receive a percentage of
the revenue made from purchasing products through this link ⇠

Amb x 2 months ago
I feel like Zoella is so genuine and nice and for the amount of time she has been on
YouTube she is so committed to her channel

REPLY   184   👍   👎

Jade Naylor 2 months ago
Sending the love🖤 Love your videos 😘

REPLY   86   👍   👎

Chu Go 2 months ago
LOVING THE BOLD LIPSTICK GURLLLL

REPLY   188   👍   👎

View all 2 replies ⌄

Jumana Al-naqi 2 months ago

Zoe could literally talk about water in her favorites video and I would TOTALLY watch it!! 🙌❤️❤️❤️❤️

REPLY   224   👍   👎

View all 3 replies ⌄

Natalie Wall 2 months ago

I am actually just obsessed with your aesthetic Zoe!! Just the background, your outfit and makeup are so beautiful 😍😍

REPLY   415   👍   👎

View all 3 replies ⌄

BlondeHilton 2 months ago

I love how much you're glowing😍✨✨ that lippie on you too love!

REPLY   4   👍   👎

Roberta Knight 2 months ago

Please can you you do makeup tutorial the makeup look your wearing bts I love you

REPLY   4   👍   👎

Samantha Downey 2 months ago

Hi Zoe I love you so much you are such a inspiration , you are always so happy and smiley and supportive you bring joy to my day every time you upload a new video ❤️ it would be a dream if you replied to this comment or you even just liked it so I got the notification 😉 I have always always wanted to meet you but sadly I live kind off far away I send you letters as much as I can . So if you could even just like this comment it doesn't have to be a comment but that would make my life fabulous i love you so so so much xxxxx
Show less

REPLY   3   👍   👎

Mariposa 2 months ago

Zoe, I feel you! I've had a massive cold sore under my lip for some three days and I feel like everyone is staring at it and it gets bigger and bigger, it's itchy and it hurts. I can recommend compeed cold sore patches if you are a person like me who can't get her fingers off it. They are slightly expensive, but sometimes they're 2 for 1 in Boots or so. It Read more

REPLY   6   👍   👎

View all 2 replies ⌄

Shonagh Scott – sponsored video
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg5FZ3U6nwY&t=110s

▶ ▶| 🔊 1:50 / 3:54   CC ⚙ ▢ 📺 ⛶

Lips Hacks Tutorial | Sponsored by L'Oreal Paris | Shonagh Scott | ShowMe MakeUp

3,742 views   👍 350   👎 2   ➔ SHARE   ☰+   •••

Shonagh Scott ✓   SUBSCRIBE 409K
Published on Jan 11, 2018

I've teamed up with L'Oreal Paris on this sponsored 'Lips Hacks' video! Forget lip fillers and semi-permanent makeup, you can achieve beautiful results using these tips and the L'Oreal Paris Infaillable Lip Liners! Available here: http://www.boots.com/loreal-paris-inf...

SHOW MORE

Carol Blackley 1 day ago
Wow wow wow! I rarely wear anything but a lip balm. Seeing this tutorial though, I can't wait to try this out! Thanks Shonagh! Ps, are we getting to see a tutorial on your eye makeup? 🤔 xx

REPLY 👍 👎

                          Hide replies ⌃

        Shonagh Scott ✓ 1 day ago   ⋮
        Glad to hear you're going to experiment! Yes, I think I will film a tutorial on the eye makeup :)

        REPLY 1 👍 👎

        Carol Blackley 1 day ago
        Shonagh Scott nice one! I can't wait 😁

        REPLY 👍 👎 ❤

Marilina Jiménez 2 days ago

I wish we have those here in Argentina! Maybe soon! you are stunning!

REPLY 1 👍 👎

imane emma 1 day ago

great tips thank you❤ love the eye makeup

REPLY 👍 👎

View reply ⌄

Louise Aldridge 1 day ago

Such great tips and the colours are stunning 😍 Loved the tutorial.

REPLY 👍 👎

⋮

View reply ⌄

Henrietta B 1 day ago

What is that purple eyeshadow omg?! 😍😍😍 also these lip liners actually look great!

REPLY 👍 👎

View reply ⌄

Angela Sasaki 2 days ago

This is such a beautiful makeup look!! I LOVE purples and I am just starting to experiment with them since I got my urban decay electric palette. I'm just now getting back into posting videos and doing tutorials and this video is so inspiring, thank you! Keep up the awesome work girl! :)

REPLY 1 👍 👎

Marie Stübner 1 day ago

Inspirational! Love your tutorials! Have a nice weekend!

REPLY 👍 👎

View reply ⌄

Sabrena Slawich 1 day ago

Excellent tips! I've never actually seen a lip liner tutorial before and will be using everything you suggested, Ty!

REPLY 1 👍 👎

View reply ⌄

Nina Vidal 1 day ago

Ooooohhh can we get a tutorial on the eye look???

REPLY 👍 👎

View all 2 replies ⌄

94

Armopa Ohnair 2 days ago

Ooooo im gonna get some !!!

REPLY 👍 👎 ❤️

View reply ⌄

Twitter

Nick Trainer Tips @trnrtips – sponsored post

https://twitter.com/trnrtips/status/951512192607666177

Nick ⚙ Trainer Tips
@trnrtips

Follow ⌄

Excited to try out AR+ on my new iPhone X from @Sprint! They're giving away $100 in free #PokemonGO PokéCoins when you switch! #sponsored

66 Retweets 1,090 Likes

💬 103   ↺ 66   ♡ 1.1K   ✉

Tweet your reply

John R. Hornung Jr @JohnHornungJr · Jan 11
Replying to @trnrtips @sprint
You done messed up, Nick. T-Mobile works in over 140 countries with your same number and SIM Card.
😭😭😭
Come back to #TMobile

💬 3   ↺ 1   ♡ 9   ✉

Verizon Wireless ✔ @VZWNow · Jan 11
Why not make the switch to the better network? DM us for the best deals on switching. *RRAM

✉ Send a private message

💬 7   ↺ 1   ♡ 15   ✉

Desert Dabstronaut @AZDabstronaut · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Nick. I've been complaining about @sprint in Arizona for 3 years now. Have fun with the throttling, limited speed, limited bandwidth,and excuses from over seas customer service. Ur a tool for letting marketing get to you.

💬   ⟲   ♡   ✉

Randall Singleton @randallsingletn · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

I'd call you a sell out but a man's got to eat. But Sprint though...lolz

💬 1   ⟲   ♡ 5   ✉

Claxan Cervantes @claxan · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

That is awesome man. Since will call you sellout, and people will hate on you because of sprint. But bills have to be payed. I bet more than half if the people hating wear a shirt with the company logo they work for. Yet they call others a sellout. #awesomehustle

💬 1   ⟲   ♡ 1   ✉

Paintball013 @Paintball_013 · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Hates the "corporate" world and doesn't like them in game, take a sponser from them, what's the patreon for again? 🤔🤔🤔

💬 1   ⟲   ♡ 2   ✉

Marcelo Goro @mjgoro · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Too bad Sprint only worries about new customers and never think about old customers i have been 17 years with them and i got ZERO from all those "fancy"offers!

💬 1   ⟲   ♡ 1   ✉

Verizon Wireless ✔ @VZWNow · Jan 12

Quality customer service is waiting for you on the better network. DM us for the best deals on switching. *RRAM

✉ Send a private message

💬   ⟲   ♡   ✉

97

Jeffrey Cannon @lunarfaze44 · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Not saying I wouldn't do the same... But damn. Totally plugging both Apple and Sprint.

○   ⇄   ♡ 2   ✉

Enriqjo42 @enriqjo42 · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

If you were given the same opportunity you would also take it. Don't hate.

○   ⇄   ♡ 2   ✉

LDGaming @LDGamn · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

I was about to say #sponsored??? And the. I saw you actually wrote #sponsored lol

○   ⇄   ♡ 1   ✉

Rylan Gilliam @RylanGilliam · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Remember back when he said "dont switch providers because of what they offer"

○   ⇄   ♡ 2   ✉

Neddy @NeddyRundle · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

This may be a sponsored post Nick, but Sprint is worse than T-Mobile. No amount of Poke coins is worth using a network thats worse than T-Mobile nor offers as much worldwide coverage/perks.

Bad etf fees, coverage, perks, customer service, speeds etc

○ 3   ⇄   ♡ 13   ✉

Neddy @NeddyRundle · Jan 11

Business is business and if this sponsorship helps your channel, bills, personal benefits then great...but a vast majority know Sprint has nothing worth having and know to stay away from. Only perks of Sprint is the connection to Niantic and Pogo ownership. Otherwise no.

✈🟠🏈 @CaMelGuY1337 · Jan 11

Replying to @trnrtips @sprint

Enjoy that terrible network Nick!

○   ⇄   ♡ 5   ✉

98

Instagram

Kenzas – ad & affiliate link
www.Instagram.com/kenzas

kenzas ✓ Follow ▼ ···

4,860 posts   1.7m followers   154 following

Kenza Zouiten Subosic Digital fashion entrepreneur from Stockholm. Co-founder of @ivyrevel 👗 Snapchat: zouitenk Scandinavia's most popular fashion/lifestyle blog
⬇️ youtu.be/hLpy-DRuiz0

kenzas ✓ • Follow

kenzas STRIPES. #revelista #ad
Load more comments

mlfigueiredo So beautiful
mygypsyworld Nice romper
jodyeevans @fogarty_kate
amandalinneas_ Hello babe
amandalinneas_ 😺
imaracarolina Love it 😍
mame_777 beautiful o(≥▽≤)o .。🌿🌸🌹💐🌻
lasirena.se 😍😍
celinrsr Wow !! 😍
paulinetteblabla Perfect love!
jackieeee.l 😻
anjaschuschu 👌🔥💕

❤️ 💬   🔖

43,944 likes
MAY 29, 2017

Add a comment...   ···

annabell_2102 Love your styling😍
jenmendes Este macacão 😍😍 @insta_tita_
thecaramelchronicles On point for summer 👌
lycasso_luong Nice
catwalkcrime Beautiful 💗💗💗
lavinia.in.milan Beautiful way of mixing the clothes. You create a style of your own and it is very inspiring. Keep up the good work. 🎀🎀🎀💄💄💄💄💄⚱️⚱️⚱️

yassih Love yellow bags - inspiring ❤️
josefineoijer Baaaabe
anne.ste 😍😍🔝😗
c_elia Your jumpsuit 💕 need it
tampetitsuisse 🔝💛💛💛🔝
oceanemeini Beauty 💕
loesfranquinet Gorgeous
simply_ivi Beauty 😍 Love your bag 😍
francaluisaa Gorgeous 💛
gizmo_light Nice!!!😍😍😍👍
biancaxxcastro Obsessed with that romper
leine_jm Perfecta
thisisjoiem Love your outfit 😍
arpitkkaur I love that outfit and the earrings 😍

99

kenzas ✓ • Follow
Paid partnership with danielwellington

Christmas gifts! 🎁 Get 15% off all @danielwellington watches with my code KENZAS. Can be combined with their holiday offer! 🎄 #DWforeveryone (in collaboration with @danielwellington)

Load more comments

latrendygirl love this

mariaakdemir Så fin, vad har du för storlek på klockan? 😍👍 @kenzas

nina_hoffmann_ So lovely😍

franziti Love this 😍😍😍

sandra.b Alldeles för mycket Daniel wellington reklam på varenda Instagram, blogg, Youtube 🤤 bara jag som blir helt anti till att köpa en klocka pga all reklam?

mrsbresch19 🌸

mirela___a 👍

anka_roi Pretty ❤

22,814 likes

DECEMBER 17, 2017

Add a comment...

elinthomsen @linneahalvarson 15% är ju bättre än inget ▦▦▦♀

greymilkyway Amazing photo 🌸💕❤nice editing

ep_designhouse 💗

theresadevienne 😍😍

Song of Style - ad
www.instagram.com/songofstyle

songofstyle ✓   Following ▼ ···

8,268 posts   4.7m followers   837 following

Aimee Song [Ah-Mee] rhymes with Mommy 송아미| New York Times Bestselling Author of #CAPTUREYOURSTYLE Forbes 30 Under 30 👇 Daily Vlog
youtu.be/UtPqmxX1k18

100
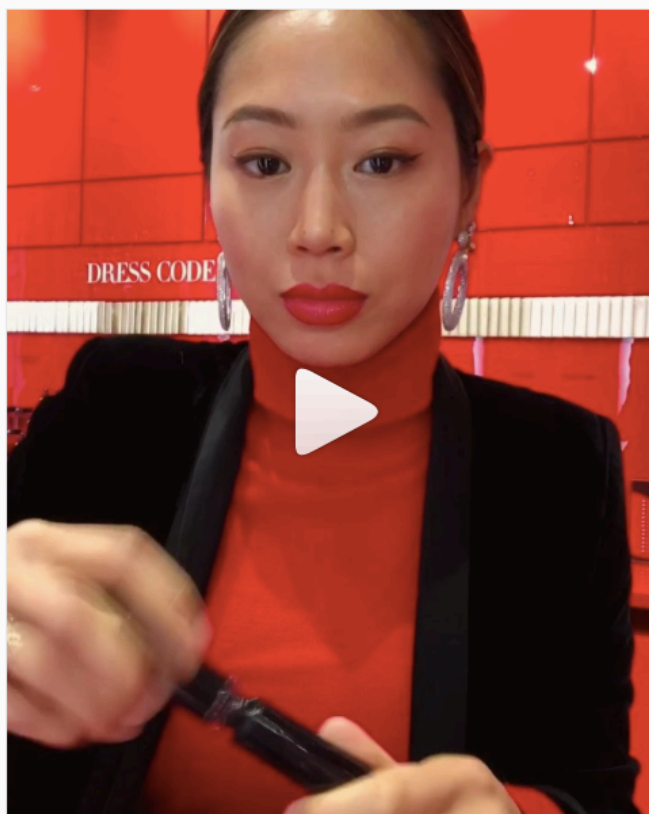
songofstyle ✓ • Following
Armani Box NYC

songofstyle Strong lips with a touch of Black Ecstasy Mascara in @armanibeauty. The perfect look for a day in SoHo. Can't wait to see you tonight at the #ArmaniBoxNYC (490 Broadway). P.S. 20% off everything in store during the event #ad

Load more comments

innerbeyouty So in Love with that Color 🌹🌹🌹

shop_pulchritude I call it the power look 💋

cocosaintdior Maman love u 😍😍

metallicsushi So quick

ekathe_bilbao So lovely!!!

lauray0 @songofstyle you have so beautiful lips! Wow!

thefridayissue You look so beautiful ❤️❤️❤️

438,977 views

DECEMBER 15, 2017

Add a comment...

kleidendrew Your skin is very very very nice!

dalelinews @songofstyle ah I can't wait! 😊

madame.lauri beauty 💋😍

70boo70boo どうしたら同じようなメークができるようになるのかな？ 強さの中に優しさがある...メイクではなく中身が顔に現れてるんですね😊 今の私の理想の顔💕

esmaru_ Love your earrings!

jannelcastillo Gorgeous lip color ❤️

jelinecatt Werk dat bold lip ❤️

xscapewithme

thy.time Loveeee that lip color on you 😍💋

latrendygirl love this

taijmeng6013 😍😍😍

jenandjuice927 What shade is that in the lip liner in @armanibeauty?

temitopera Those earings though!

caren_skaineh C coe ca quon devrait mettre du rouge a levre ps coe on le fait ns @kimkhairallah 😂

bliss_ssom 💗💗💗💗💗

zaraariel23 Beautiful

fabchristians FAB

tomnitahara Beautiful 👄 lips!

jackie.bieber Yesss momm

dianam94 Where are your earrings from???

fashionwontstop Such a nice and Christmas color❤️✨

jeanelle_couture Your earrings are gorgeous!!

karentang.y @songofstyle I love your red sweater! Where is it from?

101

Song of Style – ad

https://www.facebook.com/SongOfStyle/photos/a.419232251459661.86544.244466768936211/1199939200055625/?type=3&theater

Community   See All

👥 **Invite your friends** to like this Page

👍 884,404 people like this

📶 874,857 people follow this

Song of Style
Like This Page · February 4, 2017 ·

I was gon' stay home tonight and rest before tomorrow's show but then I just got this beautiful new @lauramercier editorial eye palette and now I've been playing with it and my makeup is on point so I kinda want to go out tonight! 💁 Anyone else have the same problem? #merciermuse #ad

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

👍❤ 525   Most Recent ▾

1 Share   2 Comments

Tonina Tagliamonte I can't tell why but there is some kind of sadness in your latest pictures??sending 😄 ❤ 🥦 🌷 🌀 to you.
Like · Reply · 49w

Deena Shakur Ward Take a ton of selfie. This is what I do everytime I am in the same situation lol
Like · Reply · 49w

Write a comment...   ☺ 📷 GIF 😺

Wendy's Lookbook – sponsored post

Community   See All

- **Invite your friends** to like this Page
- 588,716 people like this
- 578,173 people follow this

Wendy's Lookbook
Like This Page · February 2, 2017 · 🌐

For each door that the key does not open… the no's and rejections too many for me to count… maybe the best path is to carve your own door. These delicate pieces are layered with meaning, and also beautifully crafted to be layered everyday SWAROVSKI. More on http://www.wendyslookbook.com/2017/02/adventure-awaits-blush-tones-swarovski-crystal-wishes/ #Swarovski #givebrilliant #spon

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

😊😍👍 499   Top Comments ▾

Juanito Aguilar
MUCH LOVE!

Write a comment…

Nicky Tran What lipstick are you wearing?
Like · Reply · 46w

Lucy Renato Love her she is so stylish
Like · Reply · 48w

Samieze so nice! http://samieze.com/2017/02/metallic-pink-mini-skirt
Like · Reply · 49w   👍 1

Lissesst Algarci Que marca y color es el labial. Gracias
Like · Reply · See Translation · 49w

Juanito Aguilar
MUCH LOVE!
Like · Reply · 49w   👍 1