CBS
COPENHAGEN
BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

FROM HOBBY TO BUSINESS: THE CHALLENGES OF PROFESSIONALISING THE INFLUENCER PROFESSION

MASTER'S THESIS

Hand-in May 15, 2020

Photo credit: Pernille Teisbæk

Can.Soc CBP
Management of Creative Business Processes

Cecilie Knudsen 103627
Maria Juel 108620
Supervisor Fabian F. Csaba

Pages 117 / Characters incl. table of content and spaces 266,201

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the profession of influencer marketing in relation to creative industries and professionalisation. The study aims to fill in a gap within existing marketing literature on influencer marketing, as influencer marketing has never before been studied in relation to creative industries and professionalisation. The importance of this study is particularly relevant as influencer marketing is an emerging industry heading towards a complex process of professionalisation. The argument is, that if we do not understand the essence of influencer marketing, it becomes challenging to handle its process of professionalisation properly and we risk killing the industry.

Through an explanatory study of semi-structured interviews with five influencers and three industry experts, we capture the essence of influencer marketing. Our findings show that influencer marketing has several characteristics in common with creative industries, and therefore qualify as a creative industry. Furthermore, we identify five challenges to the professionalisation of influencer marketing: (1) an in-conclusive definition of influencer marketing; (2) an industry with no rules; (3) influencers' lack of development of skills and personal competencies; (4) influencers' unwillingness to be organised; and (5) a missing acknowledgement of the professionalisation as a shared responsibility. Thus, the research raises the question, whether a categorisation of influencer marketing within the creative industries with respect to its own traits, will shed light on the industry's capabilities and vulnerabilities, and improve its process towards professionalism and acknowledgement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDIX LIST

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE INFLUENCER LANDSCAPE

With the desire for exotic travels, great dining, nice products and exclusive clothes, many young people today are easily attracted by the superficial lifestyle of influencers. The prominence of social media influencers as a highly desirable and influential profession has been widely mediatised. In a survey among the graduates of the ninth-grade students in Denmark, 64% stated that they want to be influencers when they grow up (Arendt, 2020). "In just a few years, influencer marketing has become a livelihood for individuals [and] a new business area for agencies in the advertising industry" (Wang & Thomsen, 2019b). While they may have begun as average people sharing their everyday life from their platforms through a stream of videos, blogs and photographs, they have today become key intermediaries between brand-advertisers and consumers (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). Social media influencers have gained increasingly significant attention and have become a popular marketing strategy for brands to utilise. "Individuals have more publishing power than the largest media companies in the world had less than 20 years ago, and where the eyeballs and attention are, the advertising dollars likely will follow" (Levin, 2020, p. 17).

The advent of social media marketing and the rise of Instagram have disrupted the traditional media and advertising landscape in which influencer marketing is gaining momentum. The emergence of influencer marketing has brought new dynamics and become a market in tremendous growth. In 2018, the Danish influencer-agencies had revenue above DKK 100 million, which was a doubling compared to the same period the year before (*Kort Nyt: Influencer-Bureauer 2018*, n.d.). According to a Danish influencer-agency, although the Danish influencer economy is still booming it is far from mature yet and estimated to be worth DKK 10 billion in 2020 (Arendt, 2020). Today, at least 16 creative agencies in Denmark are primarily working with influencer marketing (Kielgast, 2018).

However, the influencer landscape has begun to face consequences of the tremendous growth this phenomenon has diverted. Many headlines have been filled with influencers buying followers, which has contributed to a negative reputation. News media have also reported the increasing challenge that especially young influencers face today, where one article from The Danish Radio stresses that youtubers are a society problem (Christiansen, 2020). Several young influencers have filled the headlines in the media the last couple of years, as they struggle with stress and pressure to keep delivering on their platform towards their followers (Kielgast, 2018).

With the constant pressure to behave as role models as well as deliver trustworthy content in order to be authentic towards their followers, the influencers are today facing higher expectations than ever. As a result, especially young influencers are now meeting great challenges as some are facing depressions and developing anxiety in order to keep up with the pressure. This has become an increasing problem according to Martin Wiinholt from Gonzo Media: “As a society, we have fallen asleep in this development, and we are only waking up now that we see that it has consequences for the youtubers” (Christiansen & Bjerge, 2020, sec. *Vi har sovet i timen*). One of the influencers is Alexander Husum, who along with other youtubers is asking for help in dealing with this new digital world to both protect themselves and their followers (Christiansen, 2020). In general, one of the greatest challenges for many of these influencers is that they have had to navigate in this process all by themselves as there has been no guidelines to begin with. Many of these new social media influencers are young people not fully aware of the playing field which they are entering (Kielgast, 2018).

Several influencers and advertising agencies describe the industry of influencer marketing as "the wild west" because of the lack of regulations and transparency (Wang & Thomsen, 2019a). This can give rise to several disputations. Many influencers may find it difficult to understand the marketing law, which can lead to covert advertising (Wang & Thomsen, 2019a). According to Dorte Bak, vice chairwoman of Danish Bloggers, it is not the advertising legislation that is unconstrained. Rather it is the interpretation that can be perceived ambiguously because there are so many grey areas to consider (Wang & Thomsen, 2019a). The general guidelines from the consumer- ombudsman of the advertising law can be expected to be obeyed in the case of large and well-established media houses, but with young people it is not a guarantee that they have the same attention and awareness of the current regulations and legislations (Kielgast, 2018).

For the first time in Denmark, an influencer has been charged with breaking the Danish advertising legislation (Hecklen & Ingvorsen, 2020a). The Danish consumer-ombudsman has previously been giving educational warnings and reprimands to several influencers who were not complying with the advertising law (Hecklen & Ingvorsen, 2020b). Yet, this case is the first in Denmark, where an influencer is actually being prosecuted. According to Lisbeth Kiel, the chairwoman of Danske Bloggere, the majority of the influencers today are aware of the Danish advertising legislation and are trying diligently to comply with it, but that there is still a need for common guidelines (Christiansen, 2020). She further highlights that every time a case like this

appears it is contributing to pulling down the reputation of the entire industry. Thus, it becomes important to push forward more positive influencer cases to balance out the predominantly negative comments, as it does not take very many negative cases to bring down the entire industry (Arendt, 2020).

Hence, although many influencers have their own platform and have become a commercialised media, the profession of influencers is still not recognised as a professional profession but rather as a self-employed independent function. Despite its great attention, one cannot expect the same professionalism from these new young social media influencers as you can from well-established media houses. "[...] when hundreds of young people go on to become their own commercial media, it's hard to expect the same professionalism that one sees in large established media houses" (Kielgast, 2018, sec. *Forbrugerrådet bekymret*). One way to accommodate this is by creating guidelines as "common standards are an important step towards recognising being influential as a profession" explains PhD-fellow Anna-Bertha Heeris Christensen to the Danish Radio (Christiansen, 2020). However, how these ethical guidelines should be formed has given rise for disagreements. According to the Danish Minister of Children and Education, Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil, suggests that Danish bloggers and influencers can just be subject to the same press ethical rules as journalists. She stresses that it is crucial to develop some ethical standards since "children and young people can do just what suits them on social media, without any guidelines. It doesn't work" [ed.] (*Forening: Bloggere Bør Følge et Etisk Kodeks [Union: Bloggers Should Comply with an Ethical Codex]*, 2019). However, Lisbeth Kiel agrees that ethical standards are necessary but that the press ethical rules are not suitable for influencers and bloggers; "Blogs are not a mass media, it is a personalised media. So having editorial responsibilities is not something that you really can enforce bloggers" [ed.] (*Forening: Bloggere Bør Følge et Etisk Kodeks [Union: Bloggers Should Comply with an Ethical Codex]*, 2019). Hence, defining the work of bloggers and influencers presents some ambiguities.

Though, the first step is for the government to recognise influencers work as a real profession, according to Anna-Bertha Heeris Christensen (Christiansen, 2020). According to Anna-Bertha Heeris Christensen, we risk killing the industry if we treat influencer marketing as traditional media (Christiansen, 2020). The influencers' work can, in general, be considered to be a communicative product, and the industry of communication is categorised within the creative industries as according to the Danish Ministry of Economic Affairs. The creative industries include fashion,

music, design, architecture, digital games, movie and tv, radio, communication, advertising, content and apps in media platforms, animation, furniture, interior, performing art, publishing. The creative industries are an important trade in Denmark and employ around 117.000 workers in total. In 2016, the creative industries contributed to the revenue of DKK 348 billion together and are thus important industries for Denmark (Erhvervsministeriet, 2019). Thus, the creative industries are an important contribution to the Danish economy, which underlines the importance that the influencer profession becomes acknowledged as a real professional industry.

1.1 Research question and purpose

Despite the widely mediatisation of the influencers' credibility and trustworthiness, the transformation towards a profession's professionalism and its acknowledgement have surprisingly received only limited scholarly attention. Who are those influencers and what characterises their profession? Because the influencer industry is not a well-established industry, it is a changeable and dynamic field. With such dynamics, it generally becomes more difficult to define (Caves, 2000; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Thus, it problematises a professionalisation of a creative industry.

On this basis, the aim of this thesis is to explore the profession of influencer marketing in relation to creative industries and professionalisation. Thus, the purpose of this project is to answer the following research question:

> How can the influencer profession be defined within the cultural and creative industries, and why is it challenging to professionalise this industry?

The first part of the research question seeks to investigate how influencer marketing can be defined within the creative industries. It is important to understand the essential characteristics of the influencer industry in context to the creative industries before it is possible to answer the second part of the research question properly. On the basis of the findings from the first part of the research question, we are then able to address the second part of the research question, to evaluate what challenges that emerge in the process of professionalisation of this industry. This includes identifying possible tensions that have been part of the challenge to consider this industry to be professionalised.

We will argue that the profession of influencers can be defined within a fusion of creative and cultural industries, including creative labour, emotional labour and self-professionalisation. This combination in relation to professionalisation has not been researched before, why this paper aims to fill in the gap.

1.2 Motivation and purpose

The motivation behind the thesis originates from a fascination of influencer marketing as a prominent and emerging marketing medium, in addition to the work surroundings of the influencers' creative processes. The motivation for choosing this topic is due to its enormous and current relevance. It has been fascinating to witness how the topic takes a lot of space in the media. Hence, there seems to be a huge necessity for research which investigates how this professionalisation issue should be addressed. The motivation is, therefore, to contribute to this discussion by giving a suggestion on how the professionalisation of influencer marketing should be addressed. Thus, the aim of this research is to contribute with knowledge of the managerial matter, which serves to enable the state, upcoming unions and different stakeholders to take reasonable initiatives when dealing with the professionalisation of influencer marketing. As touched upon, the aim of the research is not to design explicit solutions, but rather to shed light on different factors which are important to take into consideration, when professionalising this industry.

This research project seeks to discover and unfold the motivations for working as an influencer and the challenges that are impacting their profession. This will deepen the understanding of why it is difficult to organise for a new industry and to become professional recognised in society. The ambition is, therefore, to explore those challenges from both the view of influencers themselves to that of the industry actors. The aim of this thesis is to examine and challenge that understanding of influencer marketing in contrast to traditional marketing practices. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore how the profession becomes a recognised profession that receives the same benefits as other workers of other industries. However, it is important to stress that the purpose of this thesis is not to offer recommendations on which guidelines or regulations would be most beneficial to implement but rather to offer insights on elements that have shaped the challenges of professionalisation, and thus hope to guide the discussion forward.

1.3 Delimitation

This research project seeks to discover the practices of influencer marketing through a critical review of selected theory. As a focus area can take multiple directions within research it is important to know the research's own limitations to scope and focus. Influencer marketing is a broad concept developed as a medium within the marketing discipline. Thus, the main scope of the paper is limited to understanding the profession and the challenges that can arise in the process of professionalisation of this industry. Moreover, we have chosen to view influencer marketing from the influencer's perspective, since they are the central element in this ecosystem. This means that we have also chosen not to include general consumer marketing theory in this research since the focus is not on the output and effect of influencer marketing but rather on the industry itself.

Furthermore, this study has chosen to solely concentrate on influencers and influencer marketing in the Danish market, because each country is subject to its own advertising legislation, thus making it difficult to address the influencer situation across borders. Besides, the aim of this research is to understand how the influencer industry is evolving as an economy. As touched upon, the aim of the research is not to come up with concrete solutions, but to put light on different factors which are important to take into consideration, when professionalising this industry.

1.4 Outline of paper

In the following, Figure 1 illustrates an overview of the overall structure for this paper with the different components.

Figure 1. *Outline of this paper*

The paper is divided into four parts. First part has initially introduced the topic of influencer marketing and the profession of influencers. By illustrating the challenges of becoming recognised and acknowledged as a profession, the basis for our research question was developed. The

second part introduces the methodological choices for collecting data to answer the research question. This includes the philosophy of science, research approach, strategy and design, and conclusively the quality of data. Following, the third part will demonstrate the literature currently published in academia on influencer marketing. This will give the foundation for understanding the theme of influencer marketing, and thus help provide a basis for our theoretical framework that followers. The theoretical framework underpins the theory of creativity, creative labour and professionalisation. These will serve as a basis for understanding the influencer profession as creative work and thus how we can define their profession within the cultural and creative industries. Establishing a solid fundament in the theoretical framework helps the basis for the fourth part, our analysis. In the analysis we will discuss whether or not the profession of influencer marketing can be understood within the creative industries and identify challenges to its professionalisation. Lastly, the fifth part will finally conclude with an answer to this paper's research question.

1.5 Conceptualising influencer marketing

Social media influencers have during its short existence been subject for many names in the media circus which include "blogger", "vlogger", "youtuber", "instagrammer", "ambassador", "taste maker", "opinion leader", "social media celebrity", "endorser", and "content creator". Many of these terminologies are associated terms with the practice of influencer marketing (Backaler, 2018). Thus, the term social media influencers can arguably be considered to be a broader term that covers and combines all interpretations into one common understanding (Backaler, 2018). Yet, denoting the term "influencers" as a whole can, however, be misleading. In fact, we can all be considered to be influencers, as we influence each other in our everyday lives. However, a key distinguishment is that we are not all necessarily commercialised in our influence towards each other. Hence, this paper will denote influencers interchangeably with social media influencers as a common understanding. Associated marketing disciplines include "social media marketing", "word-of-mouth marketing", "celebrity marketing", "sponsorship marketing", "eWOM" and "earned media" (Backaler, 2018). However, one should not be confused with these marketing practices as substitutes for influencer marketing. In fact, each of these represents their own marketing approach, yet similar and related to that of influencer marketing. Influencer marketing can be seen

as a hybrid, and thus influencers as a new type of third party endorsers (Childers et al., 2019). In general, influencers are typically defined by the type of platform they perform on, such as “YouTubers” for those who operate on YouTube, and “bloggers” for those operating on blogs (Backaler, 2018). Furthermore, social media influencers can be categorised into levels of micro, macro and mega, depending on how many followers they have (Childers et al., 2019). Mega influencers are often considered to be celebrities who typically have over 1 million followers, where macro influencers are often experts who have between 10,000 to 1 million followers. Finally, micro influencers are often considered to be consumers, who’s influence with brands and audiences is experience-based and typically has between 500 to 10,000 followers (Childers et al., 2019).

Although words such as "bloggers", "youtubers", "nstagrammers", "influencers" and "likes" have first appeared in the public media landscape within the past few years, the concept of influencer marketing and social media influencers is not a new phenomenon (Wang & Thomsen, 2019b). Influencer marketing can be seen as a fusion between product placement, word-of-mouth, and social media (Arendt, 2020). As such, the phenomenon of integrating opinion leaders or worth-of-mouth marketing in order to utilise a brand message cannot be considered to be new. Thus, influencer marketing can simply be said to be just “old wine on a new bottle”, yet on a new media (Arendt, 2020). Facilitated by the marketing perspective, the classic idea of the word-of-mouth approach has become digitalised with new engaging and trustworthy content through social media platforms. The use of influential people in TV-commercials and printed advertising, who have a positive impact on a brand have always existed, however, this was a market previously predominated by celebrities (Pringle, 2004). This is no different for influencer marketing. What they have in common is that they have direct influence on their followers, because of their special connection towards their followers they appear more trustworthy and authentic, which brands can utilise (Kielgast, 2018). As young people shift their focus from the traditional media towards the social media, it is no wonder that the advertising industry follows in an attempt to gain their attention (Kielgast, 2018). “Influencers alternate seamlessly between the role of the advertising column and the host in their own universe. A fashion blogger can write about the coolest clothes right now, where she also mentions that half is sponsored” (Kielgast, 2018, sec. *Reklame ligner almindeligt indhold)*. Because it is nicely produced, then followers do not care if it is advertising or not. In general, followers today have become used to sponsored posts, and thus commercialised content on their social media platforms (Kielgast, 2018).

2 METHODOLOGY

To investigate how influencer marketing can be defined within the creative industries and what impact it has had on its professionalism, this study has combined in-depth interviews of influencers with different industry-actors that work with influencers. These two groups of participants complement each other; the interviews of influencers provide insight into how they experience their own profession, while the industry-actors provide insights into the influencer marketing landscape from their perspective.

Thus, the following chapter aims to clarify and justify the methodological choices which we have made in order to answer our research question. In any research it is fundamental to be transparent, enabling others to validate the foundation on which the research results have been made; allowing others to possibly repeat the research. Below in Table 1 we present an overview of the methodological choices regarding collecting and analysing the data. The section will start out by explaining the chosen philosophy of science and the research approach, followed by the research design and strategy, and the data collection. Lastly, a section about the quality of this research will finalise this chapter.

Approach	Choice
Philosophy	Phenomenological
Research approach	Abductive
Research design	Explanatory empirical interview study
Research strategy	Qualitative data
Data collection	In-depth interviews

Table 1. *The methodological choices*

2.1 Philosophy of science

Within natural and social science, it is important to understand the study's own philosophy of science. This thesis will take its point of departure in the phenomenological research tradition since we, as researchers, aim to explore the influencers' own perspective and to describe the reality as

they perceive it. The phenomenological view allows that, as it focuses on the question of how individuals make sense of the world around them and how in particular the philosopher should bracket out preconceptions in the grasp of that world. As such, the phenomenological perspective does not distinguish between what is apparent and what is real to the subject. With the focus on the influencers' reality from their point of view, subjectivity has a fundamental importance in the interpretation of that phenomenon (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). However, it also stresses the importance of not taking the 'appearing' for granted, why it is crucial to still raise questions and listen carefully in order to make sure that knowledge becomes representative and factual (Jacobsen et al., 2010). This advocates the importance of the concept of life-world that is the key to the understanding of the phenomenological perspective, which is the everyday world we find ourselves in collectively rather than one's individual unique experience. Thus, phenomenological reasoning takes interest in the intersubjective and how meaning is created, which is particularly relevant for studying influencers' own perception of their role in this industry's professionalism.

Each philosophy is subject to an ontological and epistemological position. Whereas ontology concerns the nature of human beings from one's own reality, epistemological reasoning is the theory of knowledge, thus the "ability to attain knowledge" (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012, p. 14). In phenomenology, the "subjectivity and interpretation plays a crucial role on both the ontological and epistemological levels" (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012, p. 21). In social science, both realism, constructivism and phenomenology are popular research traditions often favoured in organisational studies (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). Where both phenomenology and constructivism reasonings are on the basis of subjectivism and multiple realities, the view of realism is opposed because of its critical position to the ontology by which realism operates on. However, this study underpins the phenomenological rather than the social-constructivism perspective, simply because the phenomenon of influencer marketing from the influencers' experiences are what underlies their interpretations of truth within their reality. The primary focus is not on the language and how the respondents articulate discourses, but instead on how their reality has been created through the phenomenon itself which places their lifeworld in the heart of the analysis. However, as this project seeks to investigate a complex phenomenon of influencer marketing that is perceived highly subjective, the phenomenological paradigm cannot provide concrete answers but in turn attempt to elucidate qualitative insights into this phenomenon.

2.2 Research approach

In conjunction with the phenomenological position, this paper takes an abductive approach to link the relationship between theory and data in the analysis. “Abduction refers to an inferential creative process of producing new hypotheses and theories based on surprising research evidence” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 170). The abductive process combines the reasonings of deductivism and inductivism, as it allows going back and forth between empirical data and theory (Bryman, 2016). The approach to our data collection was predominantly driven by an inductive approach yielding an open mind set of whom to interview. In contrast, the data process of coding is both inductively and deductively driven by initiating a template as a framework for the influencer interviews (this will be further elaborated in the coding process). On the basis of our data collection, the selective theory is guided by specific themes which indicates a deductive driven approach.

In general, deductivism is prominent within quantitative studies as it takes points of departure in a particular domain of theory in order to derive relevant hypotheses to be confirmed or rejected (Bryman, 2016). In contrast, the inductive approach is often favoured in the qualitative research and can be viewed as the “outcome” of the research (Bryman, 2016, p. 22). In spite of the two distinct approaches to theory, they are often not in their pure form during the process, why each approach often entails an element of the other. It is therefore important just to consider the approaches to be a general orientation in linking the relationship between theory and research (Bryman, 2016).

Even though the inductive approach is a popular method in research, it may only result in facts, simply because it does not allow to generate new theories (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Instead, if the aim of the research is to construct theory, the researcher should approach the study with an abductive approach. With a logical form, the process “starts with consequences and then constructs reasons” that can result in the production of original knowledge (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171). Brinkmann (2013, 2014) suggests that abduction is the proper method to employ when the researcher seeks to understand situations of uncertainty; an explanation of something about to happen, yet still unknown. This allows us to explore new areas of theories emerging from the data itself that is particularly important for shifting between existing and unknown perspectives on influencer marketing and creative professions.

This research is primarily based on qualitative interviews, it is as such not quantitatively measurable. Deduction as the primary approach would therefore not provide the necessary richness and in-depthness from qualitative interviews as intended for this project's purpose. Although our research is not initiated to test hypotheses, the deductive approach allows for prior knowledge to shape themes within the research, e.g. in the coding process.

The abductive process is emphasised in the development of the selected theory that has emerged from our data collection. In example from our first interview with the academic expert Christensen, the topic and concept of emotional labour appeared throughout the conversation, which was then researched and thus added to the theoretical framework. Similarly, it was the initial thought to include theory of co-branding in order to explain the brand-influencer alliances. However, this was quickly dropped after the first interviews. With the abductive approach, this paper seeks "[...] a situational fit between observed facts and rules" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171). Combining that with current literature within the topic in question it allows the research process to move back and forth between data and theory. New information along the process will impact the next moves accordingly. This can also be referred to as the 'creative moment in the analysing process' according to Justesen and Mik-Meyer (2012) as theory and data become an integral process when developing the analysis.

2.3 Research design and strategy

This paper is designed by an explanatory research, which is a valuable tool to seek explanations within a subject. Our data is collected from reality, which makes it an empirical study. As the first part of our research question is a how, the answer must be descriptive. The second part of the research question is a why, which fosters an explanatory answer. Thus, this research is both a descriptive and an explanatory study. Hence, the explanatory design is applicable as we intend to seek the explanations of the impacts on this influencer industry's professionalisation.

Visualised in Figure 2, the strategy of our data collection towards the analysis is illustrated. First, we sought to get an understanding of our topic by initially researching the subject of influencer marketing across library databases. Based on the initial research we formulated an initial research question to guide our research and specifically the data collection. Then a strategy for collecting primary data was established. After collecting our primary data, a thorough literature review

proceeded. With our literature and theory as a basis, the coding and analysis of our primary data began. This has ultimately resulted in a conclusion to this paper's research question.

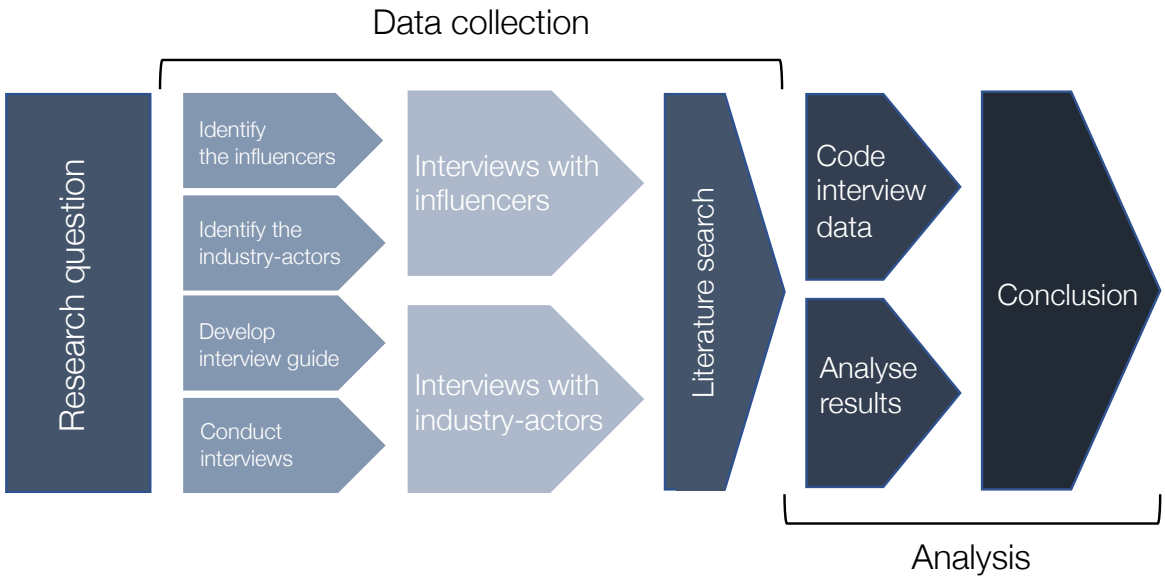

Figure 2. *The research outline of data collection and analysis*

Researchers can approach data with two distinct methods; quantitative and qualitative. This research takes its point of departure in the qualitative approach in order to understand the social processes of influencer marketing. This allows the research to get in-depth understanding and insights into the influencers' reality from their perspective through in-depth semi-structured interviews with selected individuals relevant to the study.

In social science, a qualitative approach is most common to understand and describe the human experience including social processes, whereas the quantitative approach aims at investigating numerical data statistically (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010b). The quantitative research approach concerns statistical averages in order to generalize, while the qualitative concerns other premises rather than collecting numerical data. As this paper is focusing on social realities rather than numerical statistics, the qualitative method will thus allow us as researchers to understand specific persons—in this case the influencers—and their social processes to get a deeper insight into how they feel, think, learn, act, and develop (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010b).

2.4 Data collection

This project utilises both secondary and primary data to answer our research question. In the following chapter, the different considerations about the primary and secondary sources will be presented.

2.4.1 *Secondary data*

As an initial step to develop and investigate our research question from a more academic angle, this study utilises secondary data through articles, books and podcasts to support our knowledge and understanding of the influencer phenomenon. This encouraged the starting point of our research and gave us a preconception of the field for the influencer industry. Based on information gathered from online articles, podcasts and Instagram accounts, it enabled us to prepare relevant questions for our interviewees.

2.4.2 *Primary data*

Interviews

The collection of primary data consists of in-depth interviews with two different groups of respondents; social media influencers and industry-actors. As the primary method to obtain knowledge about the phenomenon of influencer marketing, this research includes eight semi-structured interviews with selected individuals relevant to the study.

Interviews can have distinct purposes according to the different types of interview. The purpose of the research interview is to produce knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015b). In qualitative research, interviews are the most common approach as this approach allows the researcher to gain insights into people's opinions, attitudes and experiences of different phenomena form their perspective (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010b). Thus, the benefits of using interviews are to unfold the meaning of respondents' experiences, thus uncover "their lived world" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015a, p. 3). Interviews are very useful for many reasons, especially to study behaviour that cannot be observed (i.e. private meetings). By understanding the narrative through the interviewee as a witness of past history and thus exploring the emotional landscape, one is able to get insights into the reflection and self-assessment of one's own action. Interviews are especially useful to reveal information with regards to what the respondents say they feel, do, and

experience, as they provide an opportunity to talk at length. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015b) highlight that the people in focus are an essential part of the meaning-making by engaging actively in the interview.

According to Kvale (1996), research interviews can simply be understood as "an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012, p. 51). Similarly, Justesen & Mik-Meyer (2012) adopted this definition to be interpreted as "two people exchange knowledge and experiences" (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012, p. 51). Hence, this should be considered in a broad sense, as the interview easily can involve more than two persons since several interviewers and interviewees can be present during the interview, as the author highlights.

Different forms of structure can give different results. It can be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured with either an individual, a group or focus groups. While the loosely structured will form a conversation, the rigidly systematic dialogue will strictly follow a carefully designed interview guide (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). The semi-structured interview can follow an interview guide more loosely which allows the conversation to develop within the chosen topics of relevance. Interviews can be conducted at a physical meeting, by email, by phone or through a video conference (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). It is common to develop the interview guide before the actual interview as it can support the interviewer and serve as a checklist during the interview. However, in a semi-structured interview, it is important to be flexible and allow the conversation to develop, and the questions may therefore be asked in a different order than first presumed. It can, therefore, be important to ask open-ended questions that allow a certain degree of improvisation. The interview guide can thus help to ensure that all relevant topics are covered during the interview but can also quickly lock the interviewer in a rigid position. Thus, it becomes important for the interviewer to be a 'good' and active listener who is actually able to move between topics and questions when needed as the conversation develops.

Interview guides for the purpose of our study were built upon key themes with several sub-questions and were piloted prior to conducting the interviews. The key topics to be uncovered in the interview were situated around motivation, challenges and improvements. One general interview guide was developed for the influencer group, whilst separate guides were created for each industry-actor. However, each interview guide was carefully reviewed and designed to match the respondents' specific area of interest for each interview. The interviews include both in-person

and telephone interviews. Four face-to-face interviews and five telephone interviews were conducted. Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the preferable type of interview due to the likelihood of receiving elaborated answers from the respondents. The telephone interview was only chosen when preferred by the respondent. The same interview guides for both types of interviews were used but resulted in certain limitations to the telephone-interview and possible bias, which will be further elaborated in the section "Quality of research".

This study consists of different informants who all contribute to the study in different ways. In the two tables below, we have visualised the different interviews for a quick and comparable overview of the informants (see Table 2 and Table 3). As Table 2 shows, we have chosen to include influencers who are at different stages in their work as influencers in order to be able to reveal and include different experiences, needs, thoughts and challenges in our research.

Our influencers were recruited by general searches on Instagram. Potential influencers as interviewees were then contacted via the Instagram direct messaging system or directly by email if available. Our sample was limited to only include influencers from Denmark, as we seek to investigate the professionalism of the influencer industry from a Danish perspective. Our selection criteria were first of all that the influencers should have at least 5000 followers on Instagram, as this level is where influencers typically begin to initiate brand-influencer collaborations. We sought to include influencers that had worked together with brands, which meant that their feed should include at least one post of sponsored content. The presence of brand-influencer collaborations was indicated by hashtags like #reklame and #annonce or through the caption with explicit mentioning of a brand name. Similarly, Instagram has enabled a business button on top of the picture that states "paid partnership with" which also indicated cooperation.

The influencers are primarily women, which is not a choice as such but the circumstances of a highly female-influenced landscape. It was also a wish to include more influencers, but the recruitment turned out to be a challenge. 65 influencers were contacted by e-mail because this was the only available contact information, and only one agreed to participate by email. Some of the influencers had an auto-mail, stating that they were busy and did not have time for student projects. It is our impression that Influencers receive a big amount of inquiries for student projects because it is a highly popular topic.

Influencer name	Instagram followers (April, 2020)	Influencer as status (2020)	Started on Instagram (year)	Age (2020)	Educational background/ side job	Interview length
"Anna"	5K	Hobby/ casual	2012	23	Bachelor HA.Kom	33.36
"Emma"	13K	Part-time	2015	22	Bachelor Communication	29.50
"Fiona"	45K	Part-time	2012	26	9th grade Storage assistant	28.58
Cana	50K	Full-time	2014	33	Midwife, Author self-employed	100.06
"Nina"	103K	Part-time	2015	30	Master's in journalism self-employed	100.07

Table 2. *Overview of influencer respondents*

Note all participants, except Cana have been provided with a pseudonym.

Title	Occupation	Business	Length
Academic expert Anna-Bertha Heeris Christensen	PhD-fellow/influencer marketing	Copenhagen Business School	46.31
Agency expert Louise Bonfils Høck	Head of Influencer Marketing and Communication consultant	Mindshare (Media agency)	30.54
Union expert Anonymous	Consultant	Dansk Journalistforbund (The Danish Union for Journalists)	34.28

Table 3. *Overview of industry respondents*

They were therefore hard to recruit because they do not have the time and the desire to participate in all of them. The rest of the interviewees were thus recruited within our own network, as acquaintances, but not close friends. Another interviewee was by coincidence located at a seminar at CBS, and yet another one was recruited through an influencer's network.

Table 3 shows different industry informants who have been chosen since they all bring important views on influencer marketing from another perspective than the influencers. The first

interviewee is PhD-fellow Anna-Bertha Heeris Christensen, who has been studying influencer marketing for more than five years and is currently writing her PhD in influencer marketing. Due to her position and her high degree of knowledge within influencer marketing, she can be categorised as an expert, and her interview as an elite interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015b). We have chosen to include her since she can contribute with a broader understanding of influencer marketing and with interesting points of views from her research. Moreover, we have chosen to interview an employee from a marketing agency, Louise Bonfils Høck, who is head of influencer marketing in the media agency Mindshare. She can also be categorised as an elite informant due to her leading position and knowledge from working in a marketing agency (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015b).

Marketing agencies play a major role in the influencer marketing landscape, and we therefore saw it important to include her as a representative for marketing agencies. The knowledge she brings to the study is her experience from working with influencers and brands. Finally, we have chosen to interview a representative from Dansk Journalistforbund (The Danish Union of Journalists). He can also be considered as an elite informant due to his leading position as a consultant with 20 years of work experience in the union. He was chosen as an alternative representative to the union Danske Bloggere, as it was not possible for us to get access to Danske Bloggere. Unions in general also play a major role in professionalising industries, which is why we find them important to include. This interview helps address the necessity for a union and possible challenges in establishing one. Although all of our interviews provide useful insights into the phenomenon of influencer marketing, the sample is simply too limited to provide a generalisable picture. As this paper is driven by a phenomenological approach the aim is rather to provide unique descriptions of specific cases than to generalise from findings in a representative sample (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

Instagram posts

In this research we have also included Instagram posts from our influencer Cana. Cana's content has been subject for analysis, as she is the only one who did not wish to be anonymous. The review of her content has provided insight into the development of influencers content and the variety of posts they share. Her content is used in our analysis to demonstrate what influencers produce and to evaluate the level of creativity which such posts consist of.

2.5 The coding process

In any qualitative research, it is crucial to be explicit and transparent about the process of how and why the project is approached the way it is. This section therefore serves to unfold the coding process, from initial audio to text and then to analytic themes of codes. This research project exercises the Template Analysis approach in the coding process towards the empirical data of the influencer interviews (King & Brooks, 2018). The template coding enables a flexible data technique that can be adapted to the particular study (King & Brooks, 2018). With this approach, it ensures consistency throughout the data coding process by offering certain generic and typical procedural steps to follow. These include (1) familiarisation with data, (2) preliminary coding, (3) clustering, (4) producing an initial template, (5) applying and developing the template, and (6) final interpretation (King & Brooks, 2018). Generating coding through a template setting establishes a framework of themes as an overall structure, which secures coherence.

Before initiating the coding analysis, all the transcripts of our interviewees were uploaded to the software program NVivo. Computer Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysiS (CAQDAS) provides the advantages of storing the data and work in teams (King & Brooks, 2018). Further, it enables easy and complex searches and the opportunity of visual features. Uploading the text into this software program provides the benefit of an easier and more flexible coding process. We used NVivo in order to easily create nodes and compare those across the influencer interviews in order to control the coding process and ensure consistency. In Table 4 we present the template of our codes developed for the influencer interviews.

Table 5 provides an excerpt of the interviews' content as an example of how the quotes have been coded in the template for the influencer group. In Appendix 15-17 the coding list for each of the industry expert is available. We first started out by reading all the transcripts and highlighted relevant sections. This allowed us to become familiar with the content of each interview and initiated the preliminary coding. A starting point in the template analysis is to develop the first codes on the basis of the first two to three interviews. These codes that will be developed in those interviews serve as a framework for the rest of the interviews in the coding process. Through the coding process it is important to proceed with an open mindset as new potential codes can emerge.

Influencer perspective framework	
Codes	Sub codes
Audience interaction	Personal distance
Content-creation	Creative expression
	Performance boundaries
	Product excellence
	Self-evolvement
	Working process
Future reflections	
Industry conditions	Regulations
	Unions
Influencer journey	Instagram
Influencer reputation	
Motivations	Demotivation
	Motivational factors
Partnerships	Who to work with?
	Who not to work with?
Personal characteristics	Educational background
	Side-job
Self-employment	Agent
	Strategic thinking
	Market improvement
	Market insecurities
	Responsibility
	Work autonomy
	Work-life balance

Table 4. *Template of influencer perspective framework*

Using a template analytic strategy enables the researcher to easily review and compare codes across the influencer-interviews, in order to identify any similarities and differences (King & Brooks, 2018). In contrast to the coding process of the influencer interviews, the coding process for the industry-actors follows an overly inductive approach, as each code is developed in relation to the

interview. For this group of interviews, the template analysis is not applicable and relevant, as each respondent represents a distinct position within his/her respective discipline and thus has a specific tailored interview guide.

Code	Sub code	Example
Content-creation	Creative expression	"I have always been happy about taking pictures" (Anna) "I think, that the fun part for me is the creative aspect, to take pictures and edit them" (Emma)
Influencer journey	Instagram	"Well, it has developed gradually. It was not something I decided to just do. I just downloaded Instagram when it was released" (Fiona)

Table 5. *Codes and sub codes in influencer interviews with examples*

2.6 Quality of research

When evaluating the quality of research, certain quality criteria are of importance. Quality criteria such as validity and reliability are commonly used. They are, however, argued to be more suitable for quantitative research since they rely on positivist and objective premises, hence many qualitative researchers have discussed how the criteria can be altered to qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). The following section will address the quality of this research in relation to relevant quality criteria within qualitative research, and biases which may have affected the method.

2.6.1 *Transparency, coherence and consistency*

Qualitative research has a high degree of credibility if the reader believes that the choices that have been made in the study, are the right ones in relation to the research question (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). A quality criterion of great importance is, therefore, to be transparent about the choices which have been made. For this reason, the methodology section serves to present and thus justify those choices and how they have been adjusted throughout the process. Within qualitative studies, coherence and consistency are essential qualities. In order to evaluate a study's

coherence, one looks at how logically coherent the different components of the research are. There must, for instance, be a logical coherence between the choice of the research question, methodology and theory. By extension, consistency is the criteria that those choices stay consistent throughout the project. Coherence and consistency are hence concerned with the logical requirement of non-contradiction (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

2.6.2 *Validity, reliability and bias*

Validity is the question of whether the researcher measures what she says she will measure (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). Our research question is explanatory and descriptive with the aim of getting the interviewees' subjective experience of the phenomenon influencer marketing. In this relation, the qualitative and phenomenological approach can be argued to be a suitable choice, as this gives insight into people's life world. After conducting our research, we can conclude that this research approach has enabled us to measure what we claimed to measure. However, we have also come to the conclusion that visual data of the influencer's content could have enriched our research, as this could help determine the creativity and professionalism in our influencers' content.

Validity is also concerned with generalisation. The interviewees of this study are not a randomly selected sample and can therefore not live up to the generalization requirement for representativeness which applies in quantitative studies. However, as previously mentioned, for phenomenologists the aim is not to generalise from findings in a representative sample, but to give unique descriptions of specific cases (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). Qualitative researchers, therefore, suggest a soft type of generalisation named analytical generalisability, which is more concerned about how the findings can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation. The way to achieve a great degree of generalisation is then to compare the results with theory or other case studies in the same field (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). This we have sought to obtain through comparing our results with those of other relevant research. An example is for instance when we compare influencer labour with the theory of creative labour, or when we conclude that Erz and Christensen (2018) similarly to our study found that influencers have developed from hobby to business.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers can increase validity by triangulation which is a tool for minimizing bias. Triangulation is about adopting more than one angle on the object being studied (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). The way triangulation has been used in this study, is by interviewing different actors in the field. This was chosen because the aim of the study has been to address the professionalisation of influencer marketing, which include different actors across the industry. If only influencers had been interviewed, it would not have been possible to get a broader understanding of the field. For the same reason, it was chosen to include different data sources, such as news articles which demonstrates that our findings are also prominent in society.

Another central quality criterion is reliability, which is concerned with whether the researcher's results can be repeated by others if they follow the same methodological steps (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). It is a suitable criterion for quantitative research where it is a good quality indicator when other researchers can repeat the same experiment and end up at the same results (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010a). This is however difficult to apply to qualitative studies whose results are not based on measurable experiments but are more context-dependent. It is a difficult criterion to meet in qualitative research since it is impossible to freeze a social setting and the circumstances (Bryman, 2016). Some researchers, therefore, argue that reliability in qualitative research should be replaced by transparency, where the aim is to enable others to evaluate the results and inspire them to make a similar study in a similar or different context (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2010a). For this reason, our interview guides, transcriptions, and coding have been made explicit to the reader and attached in the appendix (see Appendix 1-17).

To elaborate on this in relation to our study, it is doubted that the findings of this research can be repeated by others. The interviews rely very much on social and contextual factors which are difficult to replicate by others. An example here could be our role as interviewers which possibly have affected the respondents' answers. Moreover, the landscape of influencer marketing is constantly evolving, and the market has not yet reached its maturity. If the same questions from our interview guides were asked later on, the responses could possibly be very different due to the dynamic contextual changes.

As a final touchpoint, many researchers also point out the importance of ethics in qualitative research. Kvale argues that the researcher should consider any consequences for the respondents if the study is published. In that sense, the researcher should obtain consent and reassure anonymity if desired by respondents (in Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). In this study, we

have therefore obtained consent forms and made our respondents anonymous when it was desired by our respondents. We also hoped that this would give better chances that our respondents would share sensitive topics with us, as we knew beforehand that some influencers deal with stress and anxiety, and the fact that some do not strictly comply with the legislation.

2.6.3 *Quality of interviews*

Another important quality criterion is for the researchers to reflect upon what role their own positions and experiences have played in the research, which can be denoted as *reflexivity* (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2012). Below we will therefore present the reflections upon the quality of our interviews.

In-person interviews vs. telephone interviews

It is important to be aware of the fact that the quality of interviews can be affected by the format. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2002), there are some limitations in doing a telephone interview compared to a face-to-face interview. Holstein and Gubrium (2002) point out that there is a bigger chance of getting self-generated answers in face-to-face interviews, whereas it is more likely that the respondent gives more brief and undeveloped answers in a telephone interview. Face-to-face interviews have a more natural contextual environment where it is easier to interact and elaborate on questions, which is difficult to replicate in a telephone interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). Based on the above, face-to-face interviews are preferable since more detailed and elaborated answers give greater insight into their lifeworld. However, two influencer interviews were conducted by telephone due to geographic distance. Moreover, two of our industry-expert's interviews were also conducted by telephone, since this was preferred by the interviewees for timesaving reasons.

Reviewing our interviews, we notice that some of our interviews may have been affected by the telephone format. If for instance we compare our in-person interview with our influencer Cana with the telephone interview with our influencer Fiona, the telephone interview is shorter and has less elaborated answers. As an example, we see that Cana uses more examples and stories from her own life than Fiona does. However, the other influencer telephone interviews do not seem to have been affected by this format. Our telephone interview with Nina is almost the same length as

the in-person interview with Cana. Furthermore, the telephone format does not seem to have affected the quality of the interview either, as Nina's answers were just as elaborated as Cana's answers. Nina and Cana have been full-time influencers for a long time which may explain the length of these two interviews as they have more experience to share. Moreover, Nina also works as a consultant within influencer marketing, and therefore has more knowledge. Hence the influencer interview with Cana and Nina can be argued to be the two influencer interviews of the highest quality.

When it comes to our industry expert interviews, we can definitely see that the interview with our agency expert and our union expert have been affected by the format. Those interviews were limited to 30 minutes, and it was therefore not possible to ask as many follow-up questions as we wanted to. In those interviews, more descriptions and examples from their daily work with influencers could have improved the quality of our data. In contrast, our in-person interview with the academic expert Christensen is the longest interview, includes elaborated answers and can thus be argued to be the expert interview of the highest quality.

Furthermore, Holstein and Gubrium (2002) argue that interviews should ideally be conducted in private because it fosters more honest and in-depth responses. Two of our face-to-face interviews with influencers were conducted at cafes in inner-city, and the answers of our influencers may therefore have been affected by the appearance of other people in the cafe. However, we do not think that this has affected our interviews. The cafes created a cosy atmosphere which made the interviews appear less strict and formal. Moreover, our influencers showed a relaxed body language, and they both stayed for further discussions after the audio recordings were turned off, which indicates that they were feeling comfortable.

Another influencer interview was conducted in a study room at the CBS campus. This interview allowed us to get very honest answers, as she explained how some influencers, including herself, do not follow tax rules. In the view of Holstein and Gubrium (2002), this may be a consequence of having no one else in the room. Therefore, there might have been a connection between the place the interview was conducted, and the sensitive information which was given. It therefore raises the question whether we could have gained more sensitive answers if all of our interviews had been conducted in private, which hence could have improved our data quality.

2.6.4 *Subjects to improvement and biases*

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015b), the quality of interviews determine the quality of the following analysis. They present six quality criteria for interviews. (1) The degree of spontaneous, rich and relevant answers. (2) The shortest possible questions from the interviewer, and the longest answer from the interviewee. (3) To what extent the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meaning of relevant aspects of answers. (4) That the interviewer interprets the answers during the interview. (5) That the interviewer attempts to verify their interpretations of the interviewee's answers during the interview. (6) That the interview is a story in itself and does not require further explanation. With other words, the aim of this research approach is to get as rich and developed answers as possible.

There are, however, some parts of our interviews which could be improved in this regard. The interview with our influencer Cana is the longest and most superior one in relation to the six criteria. Her responses are long and descriptive, and she showed a willingness to talk. However, at one point in the interview when she was asked questions about young people in the industry, this was not the case. One of the questions asked was: But if there are ethical rules for models at the age of 15, why shouldn't we also have it for influencers? To which she replied: “Maybe we should, but that is not what I focus on. I simply do not know how to answer questions about children and young people, because it does not interest me” (Cana, 1.04.00). The same issue applied in the interview with our academic expert Christensen, when she was asked questions about how to improve the industry and she replied: “I'm the one addressing problems and not the one to find solutions” (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 27.42, 23.09). As interviewers, we should be careful about asking questions that they are not able to answer since they foster unrich, undeveloped and possible irritable answers, which is not desirable within this research approach. Summing up, quality criteria 1 (rich and relevant answers), and 2 (long answers) and 4 (interpret answers during the interview) could have been improved in our research.

Another noticeable area to address concerns our interview questions, which at some point showed to foster less elaborated answers in one of the interviews. During the interview with our influencer Anna, she was asked about her considerations of having an agent. She responded: “Sure it would be nice (laughs). I actually don't know how it works when you have such an agent” (Appendix 10, Anna, 9.35). The reason why she was struggling answering those questions is

possibly because she is in the early stage of her influencer journey and has not thought things through yet and does not have the knowledge or the desire to become a full-time influencer. During the interview, we therefore left out some of the planned questions. We realised that the interview questions had been influenced by our background as business school students and were business-oriented. It took us by surprise for us that she neither did desire to take on a full-time job as influencer, nor had thought about how to earn money.

It is also important to address possible bias within this interview, which can have limited the degree of spontaneous, rich and relevant answers (1). A possible bias concerns some information she was given prior to the interview. In a messenger chat, she expressed her concern about being judged and tested in current legislation. We therefore found it necessary to inform her that this was not the aim of the interview. She was then told that the interview would be about motivation, and that one question could be about how familiar she was with current legislation and tax rules, etc. Many of her responses in the interview were circling around her concerns on tax rules, even though there could have been other and more adequate responses to the questions. This can be considered as a bias, since her answers might have been affected by information she was given prior to the interview.

To sum up on the quality of this research, we would recommend others who consider to make a similar research to improve the quality by integrating more visual data, conduct more in-person interviews instead of telephone interviews, adjust interview questions to be more suited for what the respondent is able to answer, and consider more phenomenological questions which is not too business-oriented.

3 THEORY SECTION

This section will present a literature review and a theoretical framework. The main scope of this thesis is influencer marketing, why the literature review will unfold previous and current literature within this topic. At its most basic, the literature review will provide a summary of relevant research, in order to identify gaps, contradictions and consensus among the studies.

The theoretical framework will instead serve as a foundation for our analysis, constituting the themes; cultural and creative industries, creative people, creative labour, and professionalisation, as those are the main topics, we find relevant to our study. Thus, the aim is to contribute with a new framework that will conceptualise influencer marketing.

3.1 Approach to literature review

The resources that have been used in our study are the primary bibliometric databases of *Libsearch*, *Scopus* and *EBSCOhost; Academic Search Elite*. The first word we searched for was "influencer marketing". Searching on the term "influencer marketing" at Academic Search Elite gave 1,666 hits, which are available today (April 3rd, 2020). However, many of those hits are more related to general marketing literature, rather than specific influencer marketing practices, since the verb "influence" has a general connotation. To make sure the literature was related to actual influencer marketing practices, we then limited the results to only include the articles within the 'subject term' of "influencer marketing" and "social media", since influencer marketing has emerged from social media. The results then decreased to 750 hits (April 3rd, 2020). From our search, we can conclude that literature on influencer marketing appeared at its earliest in 2008 on Scopus, and in 2011 on Academic Search Elite. Yet, it is in recent years that it has started to grow remarkably. As presented in Figure 2, academic research on the terminology of influencer marketing is in particular significant in 2019 with 377 hits on Academic Search Elite and 117 hits on Scopus (April 3rd, 2020).

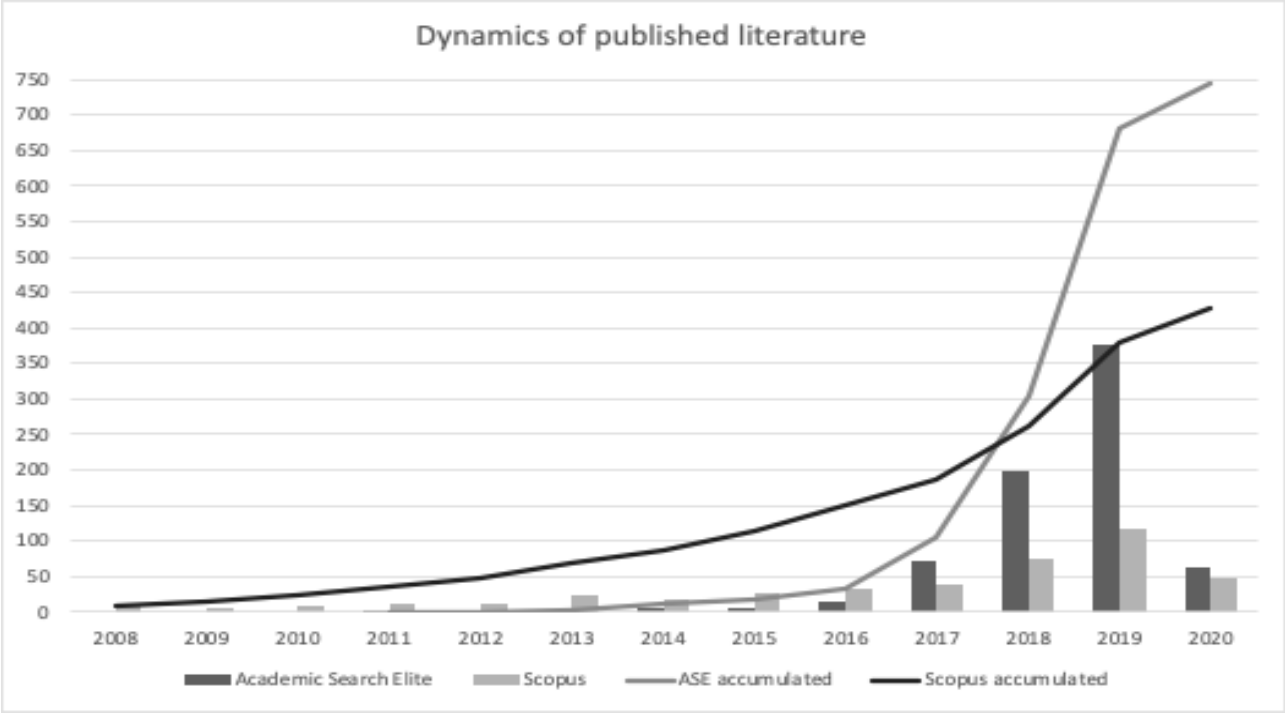

Figure 3. *The dynamics of the publication activity on the subject of influencer marketing*

As the figure illustrates, the amount of annual publications on this subject has increased rapidly in previous years, which indicates that it hasn't reached its majority yet, why it will most likely continue to exhibit growth in the subsequent years. However, comparing the number of articles published on the topic of influencer marketing to the general term of marketing in the period of 2016-2020, then 341,619 hits (April 3rd, 2020) appeared. Thus, hits on influencer marketing in that period only constitutes 0.2% of the total amount of marketing articles published in the same period. Arguably, the literature on influencer marketing can in comparison be considered to be relatively low.

After reviewing current literature on influencer marketing, we then extended our search range to include relevant topics; professionalisation, creative industries and self-employment, to address our research question. When we included those terms in relation to influencer marketing, that specific combination gave no successful result. However, when broadening the search to include two of the combinations in relation to influencer marketing, it gave few results with relevance. Although we did our search for literature in multiple databases, it became clear that influencer marketing as professionalism from the perspective within the creative industries has yet not been treated much in academia.

3.2 Literature review on influencer marketing

Two key articles have formed this paper's focus. In contrast to much literature which has been written on influencer marketing, these are particularly focusing on professionalisation of the influencers content and working processes.

The first article we were inspired by is the one by Erz and Christensen's (2018) named "Transforming Consumers into Brands: Tracing Transformation Processes of the Practice of Blogging". Through their study of five blogger's blog posts, they explore how the bloggers have developed over time; moving from a hobby to a professional practice. They identify three phases: *the individual consumer*, *collective blogger* and *blogger identity phase*, and two turning points; *developing the blogger narrative*, and *revising the blogger narrative and developing a brand narrative,* through which the blogger has developed. Their findings show that the bloggers have transformed into human brands, through a continuous process of identity negotiation, adaptation, and reinterpretation with different stakeholders.

Similarly, van Driel and Dumitrica (2020) demonstrate in their article "Selling brands while staying "Authentic": The professionalization of Instagram influencers", how traveling influencers have professionalised their practice of Instagramming. They demonstrate that influencers have become more professionalised by using apps for planning and editing content; investing in better equipment; and posting what is loved by their influencers and what is desired by advertisers. Driel and Dumitrica place influencers within the cultural industries, as what they do is cultural content production and circulation. They argue that bloggers' main asset is to create authentic content, and that a part of becoming professionalised means more standardisation of their content and processes, in order to match the expectations from advertisers and followers.

In our point of view, this article raises the important question whether the professionalisation and thus, standardisation of content and procedures limit their creativity and what they value the most about their job; mainly creating authentic content without thinking of expectations from advertisers and followers. It raises the question whether this professionalisation results in their content becoming more like traditional advertising content which is standardised and highly curated. Interestingly, they also touch upon labour, addressing what the travel-influencers love and do not love about their job, and how this professionalisation affects them. This raises the question

if this professionalisation is then killing the core value in their content, and their motivation to work as an influencer.

Despite a few articles focussing on some aspects of the professionalisation of influencers, a majority of literature on influencer marketing has instead focussed on influencers' authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2018), trustworthiness and credibility (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), associated risks (Gürkaynak et al., 2018), and most commonly its value and effect (Alampi, 2019; Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Breves et al., 2019; Carr & Hayes, 2014; Hughes et al., 2019; Shan et al., 2019). Despite this not being the focus of this research paper, these articles bring knowledge about how influencer marketing has emerged, how it has been defined, and how it has been addressed positively and negatively by researchers, which will help us amplify our research. Below we will therefore address those topics under the titles; *the evolution*, *benefits*, and *scepticism*.

3.2.1 *The evolution*

Even though influencer marketing appears to be a new subject, Levin (2020) argues that influencer marketing in principle can be traced back almost 300 years ago to Staffordshire, England. Wedgwood, an English potter and entrepreneur, made a product line which was highly admired by the Queen. Wedgwood used the endorsement by the queen to sell his pottery, which was then printed in the newspaper. He was therefore the first "to leverage the right platforms and influential individuals to both build a brand and sell his products" (Levin, 2020, p. 2). Levin (2020) believes that Wedgwood can be attributed and credited the origins of modern marketing, considering he was the first to utilize taste-making and endorsement as an advertising medium.

In general, the influence of others has been studied for decades. Childers et al. (2018) give a comprehensive review of the historical context of influencer marketing, and state that one of the first instances of influencer-based research is that of Lazarsfeld and colleagues on political campaigns. The studies on presidential and political campaigns have resulted in the foundation of the two-step flow of communication. In response, Katz and Lazarsfeld furthered the model which "notes the influence from news media to opinion leaders (first step) and then from opinion leaders to the public (second step)" (cited in Childers et. al. 2018, p. 3). The model can be argued to be "an important component to the study of influence and decision making as it highlights

interpersonal communication networks and signifies a heightened attention placed on opinion leaders" (Childers et. al, 2018, p. 3).

The study of opinion leaders can also be found in later studies. Feick and Price (1987, p. 84) in their studies, define opinion leaders as "individuals who acted as information brokers intervening between mass media sources and the opinions and choices of the population". According to them, opinion leaders are someone who is motivated to talk about products, and who is influential due to their knowledge and expertise within those products.

Opinion leader is also a term that is used in describing influencers today, which for example can be found in "A dictionary of media and communication" that define "social influencers" as:

> A key individual with an extensive network of contacts, who plays an active role in shaping the opinions of others within some topic area, typically through their expertise, popularity, or reputation. In the two-step flow model, an opinion leader in the diffusion of media messages. (Chandler & Munday, 2020, n/a)

Influencers are today more accounted for their collaboration with brands, and we, therefore, see the rise of subcategories such as *brand-influencer* that can be defined as "in marketing, anyone in a position to have a direct impact on those who purchase products or services" (Chandler & Munday, 2020, n/a). Influencer marketing has become a mean for brands to amplify brand exposure online and thus utilise the impact on buying decisions; "the strategy of promoting brands, products, or services with selected individuals who are judged most likely to exercise a significant influence on purchase decisions within a particular target market" (Chandler & Munday, 2016). According to them, this can be argued to be similar to that of word-of-mouth marketing. Yet, a key difference is that influencer marketing does not necessarily include explicit personal recommendations, which is the fundamental aspect of word-of-mouth marketing (Chandler & Munday, 2016).

3.2.2 *Benefits*

As mentioned, much literature focuses on the benefits of influencers. Childers et al. (2018), is just one example of one who addresses the benefits of influencers. He argues that celebrities, experts and typical consumers have long been used in traditional marketing, but influencers have gained

popularity because they have higher credibility. The reason for this can be found in the way they communicate the brand message; "they talk about brands in authentic ways in an authentic media environment, whereas the endorser speaks scripted lines or is associated with an advertiser-written copy delivered to a mass audience" (Childers et al., 2018, p. 12). Influencers are in fact more credible because followers feel they have a personal relationship with them, which makes the content more meaningful (Solis, 2017 in Childers et al., 2018).

It is, however, not a new discovery that opinion leaders and word-of-mouth (WOM) are an effective marketing mean. Already back in 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld found that "positive WOM was two-times as effective as radio advertising, and even seven times more beneficial than print advertising to attain new customers" (in Childers et. al. 2018, 3; Katz, 1957). According to Chenecey (2019), people in general have more trust in each other than they have in branded messages, why word-of-mouth is the most valuable form of marketing. The advantages of the word-of-mouth method is also recognised by Brown and Hayes (2008). They argue that influencer marketing is a good alternative to traditional marketing by emphasizing that "marketing doesn't work because there are too many marketing messages bombarding prospects, all the messages sound the same, and even if your message is heard, prospects don't believe you. But they do believe influencers" (Brown & Hayes, 2008, p. 10). According to Brown and Hayes (2008) influencer marketing is much more honest and trustworthy, compared to other marketing disciplines.

With the rise of digital technologies, much word-of-mouth today takes place as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) that can be defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39). It is the desire for social interaction, economic incentives, concern for other consumers, and the potential to enhance own self-worth, that are the motives for using eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The rise of new social media platforms has created greater opportunities for brands to utilize eWOM through influencers and to reach more consumers. Instagram, in particular, has given these opportunities, where users can share photos of their lives with other users, which has developed into an advertising platform (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Instagram is currently one of the most popular platforms for influencer marketing (Evans et al., 2017). According to Abidin (2016, p. 89), Instagram campaigns can be considered to be a newer form of eWOM, where "advertising

messages are circulated from influencers to consumers and from consumers to consumers". In line with the rise of new social media platforms, the number of influencers has grown rapidly, and brands have started to realise the advantages of using those influencers. As stated by Alampi (2019, p. 203), "influencers are in high demand because of their effectiveness in helping brands increase their return on investment". Influencer marketing is thus desired by brands because it is less expensive than traditional advertising (Evans et al., 2017), but also because it helps brands to reach their target groups more effectively (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

3.2.3 *Scepticism*

Later research has started to question the benefits of influencer marketing. When Brown and Hayes in 2008 concluded that influencer marketing was a more effective, trustworthy and honest alternative to traditional marketing, influencer marketing was at its early stages. Back then, brands only had a few influencers in their databases, and marketing departments had no idea who the influencers were, their ranking of importance, and how to identify them, as there were no formalised programs to contact them (Brown & Hayes, 2008). The reality today is another. Whilst the convergence of technology and the popularity of social media have increased significantly, consumers are today "bombarded with the messages from social media influencers" (Gürkaynak et al., 2018, p. 17). A scepticism towards the trustworthiness and value of influencer marketing can be identified within various researches. Some scholars are concerned with how consumers perceive influencer advertisement and emphasise the problem of missing and misleading disclosures.

Earlier research argued that influencers credibility "is attributed to the perceived neutrality of an opinion leader who is free of the influence and bias often associated with traditional media" (Hackett, 1984 in Carr & Hayes, 2014, p. 48). However, in Carr and Hayes's (2014) study of blog reviews, they conclude that consumers do not perceive online reviews as subjective, but rather influenced by the paid collaboration. Consequently, the credibility of the blogger may erode and reduce his or her credibility to align more with the credibility associated with traditional media (Carr & Hayes, 2014).

Other researchers express their concern that influencer marketing is misleading. Childers et al. (2018) points out that legal commissions like the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) are sending

educational and warning letters to influencers, because consumers are not fully aware of the sponsored and incentivised promotions. Moreover, Childers et al. (2018, p. 13) emphasise the problem that advertising professionals take on the perspective that “everyone knows it’s paid”. They argue that advertising professionals' background as professionals in the advertising industry may blind them to how consumers in the real world perceive influencer marketing, which blur the content and persuasive messages. As a consequence, they put their influencers and clients at risk for legal penalty, why they point out the need for more consumer-based disclosure awareness and education in the future (Childers et al., 2018). Such disclosures of paid brand-influencer collaborations are defined as “a visible indicator, such as a written text that [...] include words or hashtags such as ad, paid, in collaboration with, or sponsored” (Levin, 2020, p. 151).

Evans et al., (2017) accounts for the same issue regarding influencers’ unclear brand disclosures, and consumers who do not understand what they see is actually advertising. Companies must make proper disclosures so that the consumers are not being misled. In their study of how different disclosures are perceived by consumers, they found that marking content has a positive impact on advertising recognition and disclosure memory, but that it can also impact attitudes and behavioural intention negatively. This is also supported by Gürkaynak et al. (2018), who argue that it can be difficult for consumers to know whether the influencer genuinely uses and likes a product, or whether there is a commercial relationship between the brand and influencer. Likewise, it can be difficult to know what the influencers’ real motives are for posting a product. Similarly, Reijmersdal and Dam (2020) in their study of influencer videos conclude that especially early adolescents (age 12-14) are vulnerable to influencer advertising, since they do not understand the intent of sponsored influencer videos when this is not given in a disclosure. Middle adolescents (age 15-16), in contrast, are better at recognising advertisement and the intent, when disclosures of advertising are given. Middle adolescents also become more critical towards the influencer and the brand when disclosures are given, whereas early adolescents show no resistance.

In many jurisdictions, it is yet not clear how existing legislation within covert and misleading advertisements should be converted to this relatively new form of marketing discipline (Gürkaynak et al., 2018). However, it is a golden rule within fundamental principles of marketing law, to make the consumer aware of commercial content; “the consumers have a right to know which content they view is of commercial nature and a right to choose to view that content with their eyes fully

open" (Gürkaynak et al., 2018, p. 18). Another assimilated concern is that consumers can change the intensity and meaning of a brands original message (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013), which can harm the brand's authenticity (Gensler et al., 2013). "A brand story is authentic when it appears to be 'the original' or 'the real thing'" (Grayson & Martinec, 2004 in Gensler et al., 2013, p. 251). Thus, the issue is then that brands cannot fully control how consumers articulate their brand message on social media.

3.2.4 *Sub conclusion literature review*

The literature already published is in general viewing influencer marketing from a marketing perspective and is very concerned with the credibility and efficiency of influencer marketing. In general, we can conclude that influencer marketing is constantly being questioned, which is a relevant observation to include when we address the challenges of becoming professionalised later in our thesis. From the literature review we can also conclude that limited empirical research can be found on studies from the influencers' own perspective, as well as literature concerning influencer marketing as an emerging professionalised industry. In order to answer our research question, we will therefore need to establish our own theoretical framework as a basis for our analysis.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

To understand how we can define influencer marketing within the cultural and creative industries we will establish a theoretical framework that includes research of cultural and creative industries, creative people and self-employment. To address the second part of our research question concerning challenges to the professionalisation of influencer marketing, we will include research on professionalisation. In the following we will address what defines and characterises the cultural and creative industries.

3.3.1 *Cultural and Creative Industries*

Until the late 1900s, the creative industries had received very little attention in academia. For a long time, economists have ignored and neglected academic research on how and why the creative industries were organised as they were (Caves, 2000). In spite of being marginalised in literature for years, academic research within the creative industries has accelerated increasingly in the past 20 years as a result of growing attention from scholars. Today, the literature has become widespread as research into creative industries has expanded significantly. Scholars, as well as policymakers and industry representatives have sought to map and explore the creative industries' economic significance and potential for the economy as a whole, in addition to their cultural and social role (Caves, 2000; Hartley, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

The cultural and creative industries were first given policy and industry prominence in the UK in 1997 (Hartley et al., 2013). The British government was one of the first European countries to denote which industries to include by the establishment of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). DCMS defines the creative industries as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent which have a potential for job and wealth creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 1998, p. 3 in Hartley et al. 2013). These industries include 13 sectors which are "advertising, architecture, art and antiques, computer games/leisure software, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio" (DCMS, 1998, p. 3 in Hartley et al., 2013, p. 59). The DCMS list established a foundational understanding of how to define creative industries as "it mainstreams the economic value of culture, media and design" (Hartley et al., 2013).

Despite the DCMS's definition and prominent list of 13 creative sectors from 1998, the definitions of the cultural and creative industries are today still surrounded by various interpretations (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Through the years, scholars have attempted to define which associated industries to include within the cultural and creative industries. In Table 6, the associated industries of Caves (2000), Hesmondhalgh (2002, 2013) and Hartley (2005) are presented to provide an overview and compare each of their included industries.

Caves (2000)	Hesmondhalgh (2002, 2013)	Hartley (2005)
Creative industries	Cultural industries	Cultural industries
• Publishing of both magazines and books • The performing arts, • Cinema and TV films, • Sound recordings, • Fashion, • Toys and games	• Broadcasting • Film • Music • Print and electronic publishing • Video and computer games • Advertising • Marketing and PR • Webdesign	• Museums • Galleries • Art • Broadcasting • Music • Performing arts • Literature
	Borderline cases	Creative industries
	• Consumer electronics, • Information technology and other areas of the internet industries • Fashion industries • Sport industries	• Advertising agencies • Architecture • Design • Interactive software • Film and TV • Publishing • Music • Performing arts

Table 6. *Overview of scholars' associated industries within the creative and cultural industries*

As the table demonstrates, Caves focus on the term creative industries and present few associated industries to be creative. He defines the creative industries as organisations which supply "goods and services that we broadly associate with cultural, artistic, or simply entertainment value" and touch upon the balance between art and commerce (2000, p. 1). What Caves notes as being characteristic of the creative industries is that creativity possesses a great deal of risks and uncertainties; an example of a risk being that producers are not able to predict how consumers will receive and value the product. This he conceptualises as "nobody knows" as creative products are indeed "experience goods" (Caves, 2000, p. 3). This leaves the producers in the dark as no certainties are given when it comes to the consumers' subjective reaction. Another typical characteristic for the creative industries according to Caves (2000) is the importance and necessity of contracts and deals that collaboration between artists and partners rely on. This illuminates the

relationship between artists and agents as an important and dyadic, mutually interdependent relationship, which is notable for the creative industries.

Unlike Caves, Hesmondhalgh (2013) is instead favouring 'cultural industries' as creative industries otherwise easily can become too broad. He emphasises that the term 'cultural industries' draws attention to historical importance and refers to a type of industrial activity in itself that invokes traditions. These cultural industries represent their own dynamics in which they interconnect and interact with each other, which is rarer in comparison to other industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2013). In fact, cultural industries can be characterised as particularly risky business and are challenging to define in its simplicity. Hence, the core cultural industries are what he defines as those "centered on the production of texts that can be bought and sold" and centrally concerned with the cultural production of social meaning (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 27). The industries that are related directly or indirectly to the cultural industries, but where their output is not related to cultural production or circulation of text is what Hesmondhalgh introduces as borderline cases. He highlights that the commodities of cultural industries can be considered "semi-public goods", because the consumption by one does rarely diminish the possibility of consumption by others (Hesmondhalgh, 2013, p. 29). What is especially characteristic about Hesmondhalgh's' definition of the cultural industries is that he describes the work of artists as symbolic creativity whilst the artists themselves can be expressed as symbol creators which are more inclusive terms that intend to cover and include all associated work involved in the cultural production. The activities surrounding can be defined as cultural artefacts that are texts involved in the production of social meanings and circulation of content that influence our understanding and knowledge (Hesmondhalgh, 2013).

Hesmondhalgh's view is therefore slightly different from that of Caves, in the sense that Caves focuses on artistic value in his definition of creative industries, while Hesmondhalgh emphasises the cultural production of texts which is involved in the production of social meaning. In general, the associated industries related to the creative and cultural sector presents some consensus. However, the fashion industry is for example not included in the core cultural industries as Hesmondhalgh argues it to be a borderline case in its complexity.

Hartley (2005) on the other hand, considers the creative industries to be the whole to which the cultural industries are contributing. According to Hartley (2005) the creative and cultural industries represent different industries, and it would therefore be wrong to use them interchangeably. He focuses on the creative arts in his definition of creative industries to which the

individual talent is contributing. The cultural industries is instead “defined by public policy function and funding” (Hartley, 2005, p. 30). He emphasises that generally the creative industries have been difficult to identify as one entity because of the “shape and extent has yet to be properly mapped and understood” (Hartley, 2005, p. 26). In general, the creative industries cannot be categorised like “old-style industries” as the steel industry, automobile industry and airline industry that are easily named after what they produce (Hartley, 2005, p. 26). This is because that creative industries are not defined by their production, as creativity can be considered to be “an input, not an output” (Hartley, 2005, p. 27).

Despite the scholars' different associated industries of the cultural and creative industries, we are not interested in defining whether influencer marketing belongs to either the cultural or the creative industries. We will treat all the above characteristics as dimensions to identify if influencer marketing has creativity in its core. We therefore denote the term cultural and creative industries interchangeably as a shared definition of those industries which are dependent on creativity. In our analysis we will compare those characteristics to influencer marketing in order to determine how influencer marketing can be defined within the cultural and creative industries.

Identifying and classifying creative products and industries

Above we have presented those industries which are classified as cultural and creative industries and presented an example of the DCMS list which includes specific industries. From such lists it is according to Jones and his colleagues “not easy to identify the underlying dimensions for what is included or not as a creative industry” (Jones et al., 2015, p. 3). They therefore present some dimensions for identifying and classifying creative products and industries. We will present these below as this will help evaluate the creativity of influencer marketing.

Jones et al. (2015) “suggest that research on the arts and the cultural industries can be seen as subsets of creative industries because they depend on creativity and derive value from this creativity.” (p.3). Creativity is in fact what cultural and creative industries have in common. But what defines creativity? Creativity originates from the Latin word ‘creare’ which means “to produce, to make” (Hartley et al., 2013, p. 66). It is “a process of generating something new by combining elements that already exist” (Boden, 1990; Romer, 1990; Runco and Pritzker, 1999; Sternberg, 1999 in Jones et al., 2015, p. 1). It is therefore also often referred to as innovation. A consensus

among literature states the attributes of creativity and innovation to be newness, valueness and usefulness (see Caves, 2000; Hartley et al., 2013; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Thus, to be "creative" requires originality and novelty (Hartley et al., 2013).

Jones et al. (2012) determine creativity and creative industries in relation to the creativity in process and product. These serve as dimensions that define the level of creativity in a particular creative field within the creative industries, as visualised in the Figure 4.

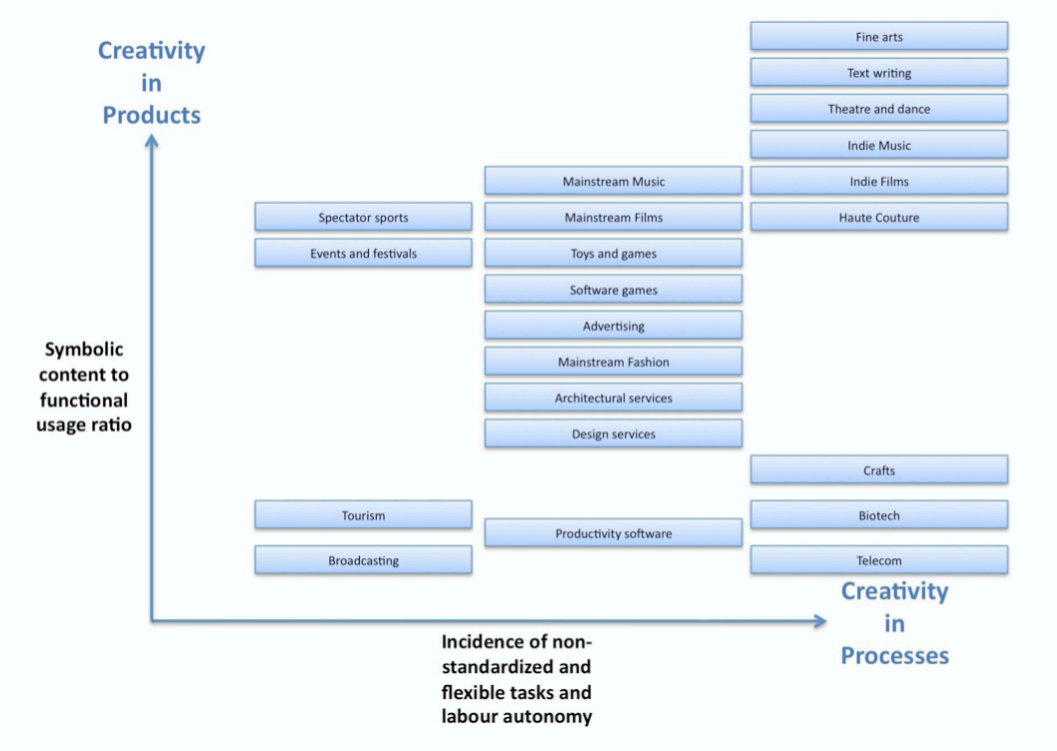

Figure 4. *The dimensions of creativity in industries (from Jones et al., 2012)*

The level of symbolic content in contrast to functional usage ratio determines the creativity in the product offered, whilst the incidence of non-standardised processes and flexible tasks with autonomous labour determine the process' level of creativity. Industries with products of a high symbolic content are perceived to be the most creative as they tap into cultural meanings. In contrast, those products with higher functional usage are rather mainstream, hence less creative. Those products that invoke a high symbolic content are those not scalable for mass production, as they engage in highly creative and experimental work processes i.e. by customisation. They can be considered to be creative in nature because they employ high labour autonomy and flexible

tasks with non-standardisation by empowering experimentation (Jones et al., 2012). In effect, this creates a higher potential for producing something new.

Evidently, some industries score high in one of the dimensions of creativity but not necessarily in both. Those most creative in both product and process are among others the organisations within fine arts, theatre, dance, and haute couture according to Jones et al. (2012). These in particular represent a high level of symbolic content in the product in addition to low standardisation of process, which means a high level of labour autonomy and flexible tasks. In contrast, those creative organisations that score low in both product and process creativity are the ones related to tourism and broadcasting, according to Jones et al. (2012). Following this view in relation to our research, these dimensions can help determine whether the influencers' product is high in symbolic content or more functional, as well as whether they engage in more creative work processes or more standardised.

Creativity can also be defined by other dimensions. In their later work, Jones et al. (2015) presents two dimensions of creative products; semiotic codes and material base, which help to identify and classify creative products and industries. The semiotic code denotes the symbolic nature of a creative product, whereas the material base denotes both the materials which form the creative product and the technologies which enable production and consumption. "The pattern among symbolic elements comprises a semiotic code that is called a style in the visual arts or genre in music" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 4). An example of a material base could, for instance, be the digital format. Jones et al. (2015) further address how changes in semiotic codes and material base drive new business models. Dependent on high or low change combinations in the semiotic codes and material base, they characterise four types of change; "Preserve (slow change in semiotic codes and the material base), Ideate (fast change in semiotic codes but a slow change in the material base), Transform (fast change in the material base but a slow change in semiotic codes), and Recreate (fast change in semiotic codes and the material base)" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 9). Those changes are often initiated by one or more of their four identified drivers; demand, technology, policy and globalisation. A well-known example of a technology change which changed the traditional business model of the consumption of music is the emergence of Spotify. It made it possible for artists to produce and distribute music directly to their consumers (Jones et al., 2015). This is interesting as we can use their typologies to identify how the influencer marketing industry has emerged through such changes.

3.3.2 *Creative people*

Creative and cultural industries are very dependent on human creativity. But what characterises creative people and what drives their motivation?

Many scholars have concentrated on how organisations can foster human creativity in order to produce original and novel products. A prominent scholar is Amabile (1997) who has studied the underlying reasons for motivating creativity. Although her research is based on organisational contexts, her fundamental thoughts on intrinsic motivation and external factors impacting creativity can be drawn into our study. Amabile (1997) examined the intrinsic motivations for individual creativity and the dependencies on the personality. She defines intrinsic motivation as "the motivation to work on something because it is interesting, involving, exciting, satisfying, or personally challenging" (Amabile, 1997, p. 39). Evidently, those who are primarily intrinsically motivated are in fact more creative than those who are extrinsically motivated i.e. by competition, surveillance, rewards or expected evaluations. Thus, intrinsic motivation determines one's own creativity in the work, why the key to creativity depends on maintaining that motivation and passion.

To determine the level of creativity that can occur, Amabile developed a componential theory of individual creativity that includes three major components necessary for creativity to consider; (1) expertise, (2) creative thinking skill, and (3) intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1997). A "creativity intersection" can be ascertained when these components overlap, which is the level of creativity that can occur in any given domain (Amabile, 1997, p. 42). Hence, an important aspect is to determine a "creativity intersection" by identifying each of the components of the creative individual, as "creativity will be higher, the higher the level of each of the three components" (Amabile, 1997, p. 42). Accordingly, this can help amplify how we can define influencers' creativity level by identifying their skills, expertise and intrinsic motivation.

Focusing more on the creative labour as a cultural production of the creative industries, "creative labour is really a compressed version of creative work in the cultural industries" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 9). To avoid ambiguity, the term creative labour is preferred instead of artistic labour, as it is associated with symbol-making activities that are centred rather on interpretive knowledge than around art (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Artistic labour can thus be attached to the concept of art, which connote other associations of "conservative traditionalism"

and limit the functions (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Hence, creative labour is more appropriate to represent the creative workforce of cultural production.

To better understand the concept of creative labour, we will present a model of *good and bad work* in the following section. The model is developed by Baker and Hesmondhalgh (2011) and offers a specific framework for the creative industries and thus, the creative labour, relevant to our research.

Good work

Creative labour as a tool for framing our analysis enables a deep understanding of the influencers' work, which provides insights into what they view as good and bad work of their profession. With this knowledge, it is our assumption that we can better identify possible challenges to becoming professionalised. Therefore, this model helps address both the first and second part of our research question.

Through a mix of original research and a synthesis of existing studies, Baker and Hesmondhalgh (2011) investigate how creative labour is experienced by workers within the television, music and journalism sector. As visualised in Figure 5, their model of good and bad work, includes the concept of good work; "autonomy, interest and involvement, sociality, self-esteem, self-realisation, work-life balance and security", whereas the concept of bad work includes "control by or dependence on others; boredom; isolation; low self-esteem or shame; frustrated self-realisation, overwork and risk" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 36).

	Good work	*Bad work*
Process	Good wages, working hours, high levels of safety	Poor wages, working hours and levels of safety
	Autonomy	Powerlessness
	Interest, involvement	Boredom
	Sociality	Isolation
	Self-esteem	Low self-esteem and shame
	Self-realisation	Frustrated development
	Work–life balance	Overwork
	Security	Risk
Product	Excellent products	Low-quality products
	Products that contribute to the common good	Products that fail to contribute to the well-being of others

Figure 5. *Conceptualising good and bad work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 39)*

Autonomy is the first term in their model of good work. It concerns the desire for independence and plays a central role in the understanding of creative labour and good work. Creative autonomy is "the degree to which 'art', knowledge, symbol-making, and so on can and/or should operate independently of the influence of other determinants" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 40). The importance of autonomy is central to cultural industries where "struggles over aesthetic and professional autonomy generates tensions and contradictions in cultural production", also known as the tension between "art and commerce" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, p. 81). When it comes to managing autonomy, creativity and commerce, one main point which can be drawn from their study is that creative people have to be managed as creative people. They should be given a great amount of trust and freedom to unfold their creativity, and they should not be obligated to too many rules and duties.

Interest and involvement are closely related to autonomy, because where workers have autonomy, they are often also more involved in the production. If the job is challenging and complex enough, the job is by many seen as rewarding, and compensate for the insecurity and lower wages which often follows with creative jobs.

Sociality is another positive aspect of good work, which also is related to meaningfulness. Many creatives value sociality, friendship, teamwork, shared enjoyment and interest with colleagues. However, this is more in relation to working in teams, which freelancers do not enjoy. Many freelancers experience isolation which is an aspect of bad work, which will be addressed later.

Self-esteem is people's sense of fulfilment and development over time. Work can either enhance or diminish our self-esteem, which is affected by others' respect and recognition of our work.

Self-realisation is closely related to self-esteem and is defined as "the fulfilment by one's own efforts of the possibilities of development of the self" (the Oxford English Dictionary's definition in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 33). Also defined as "realising one's own personal talent or potential" (Abraham Maslow, 1954/1987 in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 33). Pressure and overwork are mentioned as features which have a negative impact, which is also closely connected to work-life balance and security.

Work-life balance is the ability to balance work and leisure, which is possible where the worker is not exposed to overwork. It can be difficult for creative workers as their jobs are often combined

with a blurred line between pleasure and obligation, freedom and constraints. At some points the work can be hard to disentangle with the rest of life.

Bad work

Control by or dependence on others is the first term within their model of bad work and is in great contrast to autonomy. It is the condition of powerlessness which is the effect of control and manipulation by others. It is also connected to meaninglessness which is in contrast to meaningfulness the process of production (product, organisation and how it fits into one's life) that should thus feel meaningful as it otherwise is meaningless and contributes to bad work.

Boredom follows self-estrangement work and threatens self-esteem. It is a consequence of lack of interest and involvement.

Isolation happens where the worker feels no sense of belonging and is unable to identify with the organisation and its goals. It is closely linked to self-esteem and self-estrangement and has a negative impact. “When work is self-estrangement, occupation does not contribute in an affirmative manner to personal identity and selfhood but instead is damaging to self-esteem” (Blauner, 1964 in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 29).

Low self-esteem and *shame* are closely related to insecurity, which was stressed earlier. Insecurity is combined with feelings of vulnerability and self-doubt. This is related to how their work and status is viewed by others, which negatively could be affected by a comment such as “go get yourself a proper job”. On the other hand, creative jobs are also viewed positively as cool and glamorous, which have a positive impact on self-esteem (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

Frustrated self-realisation happens where work limits the possibilities to develop competencies. Overwork and risk can prohibit self-realisation at workplaces.

Risk is also often connected with creative labour as they often have short-term contracts, which results in insecurity. Insecurity might be a threat to the employees’ physical health and cause anxiety and stress. Insecurity also especially occurs where workers are on short-term contracts and feel insecure about their future. In this relation, it’s being argued that freelancers have more need for union support than permanently employed workers. However, many creative workers do not use unions, and especially not freelancers, due to the uncertainty of freelance work and its short-term contracts. Creative industries are highly competitive, and especially inexperienced

workers are desperate for employment. They are too afraid to be replaced and gain a bad reputation if they, for instance, try to negotiate payment (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

Good and bad products

Finally, good and bad work also concerns the product itself. Here, good work includes "producing goods and services that are excellent and that promote aspects of the common good", and bad work includes "production and dissemination: a) inferior goods and services, b) products that diminish the well-being of others in society - or even harm them" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 36). They believe that creative workers prefer to create good products, which also contribute to the well-being of consumers, when they are given the choice to do so. Many of their interviewed workers revealed the motivation for producing a good product lies in the ability to produce something that is widely consumed, the possibility to communicate with a big audience, creating something which is real and important, and they especially feel a sense of satisfaction and pleasure if it also has an impact on society. Quality contributes to a sense of meaning and purpose for creative workers. Participating in the production of bad products, however, can instead lead to frustration and disappointment, and give a sense of purposelessness. It can, in fact, be a real pressure to come up with something new and original, and they are very concerned with the aesthetic quality of what they produce. There are certain circumstances that can prohibit workers from succeeding in creating good products, such as pressure, restrictions, careless and meaningless ideas (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

Even though the model of good and bad work (and good and bad products) offers a specific framework relevant to our case, it is important to note that not all concepts within the model are directly applicable to our case, since they are highly concerned with workers within organisations. However, they also touch upon freelancers, which is highly applicable to our case. Nevertheless, the model can help give a broad understanding of creative labour which we can compare to that of influencer marketing, in order to evaluate where the influencer profession is different or similar to that of creative industries. Another important part of creative labour that Hesmondhalgh and Baker address but is not included in their model of good and bad work is emotional labour, which we now will address.

Emotional labour

Emotional labour is defined by Hochschild as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983, in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 162). This type of work requires the worker to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983, in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 162). Hochschild demonstrated with her studies that "employees had become subject to managerial remote control" and that they were "selling an emotional part of their selves to their employing organisations in exchange for a wage" (Hochschild 1983, p. 7 in Ward & McMurray, 2016 p. 5). It is especially the negative consequences of emotional labour and what it does to our well-being, physical health and job satisfaction, which have been of interest to many scholars. The topics under investigation by scholars have included emotional exhaustion, self-estrangement and stress (Ward & McMurray, 2016).

The relevance of emotional labour in the context of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), is that emotional labour can act as a threat to autonomy and positive self-realisation. Creative workers sometimes struggle to distance themselves from the emotional effects which follow from emotional labour. The pressure which they are exposed to through their work, affects their ability to perform emotional labour. If they do not perform well, it can damage their reputation, which they are very dependent on, in order to get new and better job opportunities. It can lead to stress and anxiety, limiting autonomy and self-realisation. The consequences of emotional labour can therefore be added to that of "bad work" as well as working in an industry which is full of pressure and uncertainty. The job is often short-term; it is unstable and competitive why they are forced to take a side-job; their creative autonomy is limited; and they are very dependent on having a good reputation in order to get their next job. Despite those conditions of bad work, creative workers stick to it, because they have a passion for it.

Ward and McMurray are addressing even darker sides of emotional labour in their research of "Darker occupations" where workers "undertake work that requires them to interact with, perform, manage and/or cope with emotions and feelings that are socially and psychologically difficult, dirty, inappropriate and sometimes traumatising" (2016, p. 11). Moreover, they reinterpret existing studies. They argue that emotional labour is not for everyone "some people can do it and some people can't" (Ward & McMurray, 2016, p.14). The difference lies in emotional capital which is

developed through exposure, experience and praxis, acquired from our life history and experiences, which impact how people tolerate and perform emotional labour. Others can tolerate more, because they have been exposed to similar situations previously in their lives and are good at distinguishing their emotions from work (Ward & McMurray, 2016, p.14).

Self-employment

In order to establish a theoretical framework for defining influencers as self-employed creative independent professionals within the creative industries, we will next present the theories of self-employment and freelancing, as it has in general been closely tied to self-employment and to professions within the creative industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011).

Based on 15 qualitative interviews, Mathisen (2017) describes and identifies freelancers with the focus on journalists as either entrepreneurs or idealists. Associated with this line of work, different tensions can evolve when being self-employed; between autonomy and freedom in contrast to precarity and constraints associated with the line of work. In spite of the vulnerabilities and insecurities associated, several freelancers are valuing and emphasising flexibility, freedom and greater autonomy with being a freelancer, which has presented a high level of job satisfaction. In fact, for all the freelancers interviewed, it was an active choice rather than a forced situation. The author elaborates that "one could argue that freelancers and self-employed journalists experience greater autonomy than regular employees in that they control the content of their professional lives and can realize their own ideas beyond the sphere of conventional workplaces" (Mathisen, 2017, p. 917). An interesting observation in her study is that one of the interviewees found that the entrepreneurial work could best be described as a lifestyle, however, that the lifestyle demanded many deadlines, why the privilege, in reality, is sometimes an illusion of freedom in self-employment. "Important is also the fact that freelancers do depend upon their own professional skills in order to operate independently" (Mathisen 2017, p. 922). The journalists' professional independence has been questioned for years:

> Professionalization has been a key concept in journalism studies during the past 40–50 years, but more as a process than as a question of whether or not journalism counts as a profession (Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska, and Anikina 2015, 79). Professional autonomy is a vital concept within this context. Freidson (2001, 17) finds self-control essential for

> professions. She defines professionalism as a set of institutions that permits the members of an occupation to make a living by controlling their own work. [...] In many cases freelance journalists are unable to defend their professional independence since they work without any organizational attachment or support and are therefore more vulnerable. (Mathisen 2017, p. 911)

Baitenizov and colleagues (2019, p. 13) define freelancers to be "a creative and innovative form of self-employment of individuals using modern information and communication technologies and devices, carrying out projects of varying degrees of complexity and duration and having different customers that they meet on all sorts of freelance exchanges". While there tends to be a decrease of self-employment in traditional areas like agriculture, and unskilled labour and services, there is an expansion of modern, creative and innovative spheres of services when it comes to self-employment. Looking at the motivation for freelancing and self-employment, they are practically the same. Yet, for self-employed workers the value and qualities are centred around self-dependence and independence, while for the freelancer, the values of freedom and no restrictions of geographic, temporal or psychological, are what profoundly engines the motivation, which indeed can be found in the "semantic core of the word" itself (Baitenizov et al., 2019, p. 10). Today self-employment is not necessarily by necessity but is mostly by opportunity why it becomes "'self-employment that enhances opportunities' of highly qualified professionals in a freelance format that increases income and a level of professionalism that provides opportunities for self-realisation and self-improvement" (Baitenizov et al., 2019, p. 14).

Arguably, self-employment can thus be said to be an innovative formation of freelancing. Indeed, similarities can be depicted between freelance and self-employed (journalists). Thus, this can help characterise the line of work for influencers by applying the characteristics of freelancers and self-employed journalists to our study of influencers.

3.3.3 *Professionalisation*

In order to answer the second part of our research question, we find it necessary to address what professionalisation is, how it unfolds, and possible barriers which can prohibit professionalisation to happen successfully.

There is a lot of literature on professionalisation, yet, there is no definitive definition of what it is and how it unfolds. For many decades, there have been several attempts to define professionalisation and to find empirical evidence for professionalisation as a process (Mieg, 2008). However, one definition which we find prominent is the following by Hoyle: "professionalization is a process whereby occupations have become, or seek to become, publicly recognized as professions" (2001, p. 15473). Likewise, we can view professionalisation as a matter of pursuing status and improving skills (Hoyle, 2001). Professionalisation can also be defined in a narrow and wider sense. Professionalisation in its narrow sense as "the transformation of an occupation into a profession, that is an occupation with a certain autonomy in defining and controlling the standards of the work of its members" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502). In a wider sense, professionalisation "denotes the transition towards paid work that is subject to binding quality standards. In this wide sense, people and activities can be professionalised, gaining in professionalism" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502).

According to the main scholar on profession, Abbot Freidson, "professionalism means the self-organisation and self-regulation of experts" (2001, in Mieg, 2008, p. 502). With this definition, Freidson understands professionalism as "a third organisational logic of work, besides the market logic and the logic of planning or bureaucratic administration" (in Mieg, 2008, 502).

Furthermore, professionalisation can from a historical point of view be argued to be an open-ended process, which can happen "from within" or "from above". Mieg describes those two processes as following: "on the one hand professionalisation 'from within', with the occupation being the driver and owner of the process of professionalisation. On the other hand, professionalisation 'from above' with the occupation being subject to governmental regulation" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502). Mieg emphasises this, by giving an example from France, where "the main occupations had been shaped 'from above' by state-defined education programmes and regulations for occupational work" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502).

Moreover, Mieg stresses some general conditions for professionalisation: "(1) First of all, there are specific tasks which involve a high degree of uncertainty and require specialized knowledge" (2008, p. 502). He exemplifies this with the medical profession, which is concerned with explaining and curing illness. "(2) Secondly, there is a socially central value involved" (2008, p. 503). With the example of medicine, the value here would be health. "(3) Thirdly, there is a growing body of academic knowledge" (2008, p. 503), noting that not all professions have evolved from

universities. “(4) Fourthly, there is a national professional association”, with the note that professions are organised in occupational groups (Mieg, 2008, p. 503).

Another scholar who attempts to identify the process of professionalisation is Wilensky, known for his work “The Professionalization of Everyone”. On the basis of his study of several professions, he has identified a typical sequence of events that professions go through in their process towards professionalisation (Wilensky, 1964). Mieg has later simplified this process in a sequence of seven steps:

> (1) a job becomes a full-time occupation;
> (2) establishing a training school;
> (3) establishing a university program;
> (4) founding a local professional association;
> (5) founding a national professional association;
> (6) creation of a state license;
> (7) creation of a code of ethics.
> (Mieg, 2008, p. 504)

Wilensky criticizes the general assumption that all professions are becoming professionalised through the process of “increasing specialization and transferability of skill, the proliferation of objective standards of work, the spread of tenure arrangements, licensing, or certification, and the growth of service occupations” (Wilensky, 1964, p. 137). Instead, he argues that professions are only truly becoming professionalised if they follow his identified sequence of steps. Organisations are therefore not becoming professionalised in cases where “the whole effort seems more an opportunistic struggle for the rewards of monopoly than a "natural history of professionalism" (Wilensky, 1964, p.157). Cases which do not follow the steps of education and ethical code of ethics, can therefore not be accounted for being professionalised according to Wilensky (1964).

It is noticeable, that Wilensky argues that “the right” professional status is the end-goal for many professions/occupations. However, “remarkable few of the thousands of occupations in modern society attain it” (Wilensky, 1964, p. 141). He argues that “the idea that all occupations move toward professional authority - this notion of the professionalization of everyone - is a bit of sociological romance” (Wilensky, 1964, p. 156). In order to attain professionalisation, he argues “any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the

public that its services are uniquely trustworthy" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 138). Both scientific and non-scientific knowledge can serve as a technical base, but it is more likely to achieve professional authority, where it is valued by society, as is the case with medicine (Wilensky, 1964).

The reason why some occupations struggle for professionalisation is due to some major barriers which Wilensky has identified: "organizational contexts which threaten autonomy and the service ideal, and bases of knowledge which threaten exclusive jurisdiction" (1964, p.146). The issue is linked to the problem that "many occupations rest on a base of knowledge or doctrine which is (1) too general and vague or (2) too narrow and specific for achievement of the exclusive jurisdiction and autonomy of a profession" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 157). Wilensky, therefore, argues that "the future of professionalism depends on developments in the organization of both work and knowledge" (1964, p.146).

When addressing professionalisation, it is, therefore, worth noting that the matter of professionalisation is to some point a competition for authority and legitimacy. In order to succeed, occupations must pursue status and develop skills which are valued by society. In our analysis, we want to use the presented theory to identify where influencer marketing is in this process of professionalisation and identify possible challenges there may be in attaining it.

3.3.4 *Sub conclusion for framework*

A theoretical synthesis of the selected theories which we will apply in our analysis is visualised in Figure 6.

In our theory section we have presented theories within the three main topics: cultural and creative industries, creative people and professionalisation. Within the topic of cultural and creative industries, we have discovered the ambiguous definitions on cultural and creative industries. We found creativity to be the main core of those industries, why creativity is the fundamental aspect we will identify in our analysis. Caves, Hesmondhalgh and Hartley has provided us with some main characteristics of cultural and creative industries which we will apply in our analysis; artistic value, contracts, and "nobody knows" (Caves, 2000) and symbol creators and production of texts (Hesmondhalgh, 2011).

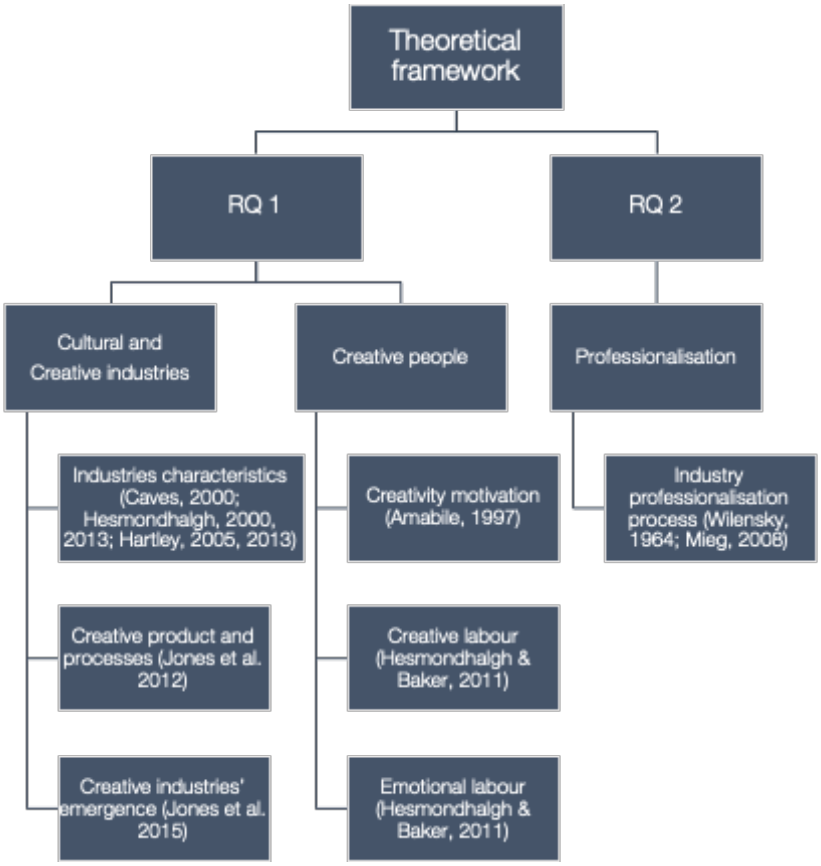

Figure 6. *Theoretical framework for selected theories*

Within the subtheme: creative product and products, we have discovered Jones and colleagues' dimensions of creative product (symbolic content) and creative process (non-standardisation and flexible tasks), which we will use to identify the level of creativity in our influencers' profession (2012). Within the subtheme: creative industries emergence, we have discovered Jones et al.'s dimensions of symbolic base, material base, and drivers of changes including technology, which we will use to address how the influencer marketing industry has emerged and qualifies as its own industry.

With the theme creative people, we have sought to identify what characterises creative people. Within the sub theme *motivation*, Amabile (1997) has provided some terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, expertise and skills, which characterises creative people. Within the sub theme *creative labour*, Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) have provided a model of good and bad work which creative people employ. We will identify all their concepts within our data in order to evaluate whether the work of our influencers can be categorised as creative labour. The sub theme

emotional labour has shed light on a characteristic which is especially evident to creative labour, which we will compare to our influencers. Finally, we will address the theme *professionalisation* in which we will apply Wilensky's (1964) seven steps of professionalisation, and his barriers to professionalisation to conclude on influencer marketing challenges towards professionalisation. We thus have established a framework, which will help identify the essence of the influencer profession and serve as a fundament to identify the challenges of influencer marketing professionalisation.

4 ANALYSIS: THE INFLUENCER PROFESSION - CREATIVE LABOUR AND THE DILEMMAS OF PROFESSIONALISATION

Through an analysis of the collected empirical data in relation to the selected theory, this section will lay out the foundation for answering our research question:

> How can the influencer profession be defined within the cultural and creative industry, and why is it challenging to professionalise this an industry?

The structure of this analysis is two-folded. The first part of the analysis seeks to investigate the profession of influencers by capturing the essence of creative labour, creative motivation and creativity in product and process, as the foundation to understanding how we can define influencer marketing within the creative and cultural industries. The second part of our analysis will address where influencer marketing is situated in the process towards professionalisation and will unfold the challenges faced in the process.

4.1 Influencers as creative and cultural producers

Social media influencers have enjoyed a great deal of attention in the past couple of years. While they may have begun as simply average people sharing their everyday life from their platform through a stream of videos, blogs and photographs, they have today become key intermediaries between brand-advertisers and consumers (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). Despite its great attention, a common understanding of their profession is still neglected in academia and in the media landscape. Who are those influencers and what characterises their profession? This chapter will, therefore, discuss the principles and processes of the influencers' profession within the creative field.

4.1.1 *Presenting our influencers*

Table 7 provides an overview of our influencers interviewed (all participants, except Cana have been provided with a pseudonym in order to stay anonymous).

Name of participant(s)	Follower count on Instagram (April 3, 2020)	Subject	Professional status	Age
Anna	5K	Fashion	Hobby/casual	23
Emma	13K	Fashion	Part-time	22
Fiona	45K	Fashion	Part-time	26
Cana	50K	Lifestyle	Full-time	33
Nina	103K	Fashion	Part-time	30

Table 7. *Overview of influencer participants*

Note all participants, except Cana have been provided with a pseudonym.

Anna

Our influencer Anna is 23 years and is our influencer who is least experienced. She has around 5.000 followers on Instagram and is primarily interested in fashion content. Because of her current focus on being a student, she is only engaging in brand-influencer collaborations on a hobby basis.

Emma

Influencer Emma is similarly young but has explored the functions of Instagram and brand-influencer collaboration for several years. She started with first writing blog posts but has later shifted her focus towards Instagram. She has around 13.000 followers on Instagram but is only considering it as a side-job along with her studying on the side.

Fiona

Our influencer Fiona is 26 years and works part-time as an influencer while also working full-time in a fashion company. She has around 45.000 followers on Instagram and has been exploiting the opportunity of Instagram since it emerged in Denmark several years ago. She is engaging in brand-influencer collaborations primarily within fashion content and has around 2-3 campaigns each week.

Cana

Cana is the only one of our influencers who are not anonymous. She is the oldest and also the most experienced of our influencers and is the only one currently working as a full-time influencer. She has around 50.000 followers on Instagram and focuses on life-style content. She has worked as a midwife for several years before becoming a full-time blogger and influencer. Besides working as an influencer, she is also an author of two books on pregnancy and becoming a mom.

Nina

Our influencer Nina is the influencer with most followers on Instagram and has both worked full-time and part-time as an influencer. She is one of our oldest and most experienced influencers and is primarily focusing on fashion content. She has a Master's degree in journalism and has today her own company which specialise in social media marketing.

4.1.2 *Shared characteristics among our influencers*

In this study, the average influencer is female, who maintains her Instagram account part-time while studying or working a regular day job. In fact, most 'social media influencers' are predominantly females within the subjects of beauty, fashion, lifestyle, or family (Abidin, 2015, 2016; Audrezet et al., 2018; Hou, 2019). The fashion theme is also predominant in our study, where only one influencer is focusing on lifestyle.

The participants in our study represent different backgrounds. The two youngest participants, Anna and Emma, are currently undertaking a university degree, while the two oldest influencers, Nina and Cana, have completed educations as journalist and midwife respectively. Only one of our influencers, Fiona, has no formal education other than primary school (9th grade). Commonly to our influencers is their age as they are relatively young. While the youngest of our participants is 22 years old, the oldest is 33 years old, resulting in an age difference of only 11 years. Only one of our influencers makes a living exclusively from her Instagram activities being a full-time influencer. Most of the influencers are part-time influencers having a side job or studying at a university. One influencer described being an influencer as more of a casual hobby rather than a part-time job.

The influencers' number of followers varies across their professional levels. However, from our study there seems to be no direct correlation between the number of followers and their choice

of work as full-time or part-time influencers. The influencer who works full-time and exclusively as an influencer is not the one with the most followers on Instagram. However, she is neither the one with the least followers of our participants. She is also the only one that is considered a lifestyle influencer, whereas the rest are fashion influencers. The one who stated being influencer as more of a casual hobby is evidently also the one with the least number of followers. The youngest influencers in our study who also study a university degree are in fact the ones with fewest followers. This might be because they primarily focus on education rather than on being an influencer. Another explanation may simply be their age, as they are the youngest and thus have been in the influencer game for a shorter time. Yet many factors can impact the number of followers. Additionally, our influencers present only a small sample, not suitable for generalisations. Nevertheless, they all share a similar path of why they started in the first place. This will be elaborated further in the following section.

4.1.3 *Influencer journey*

Common to all our influencers is that they have started their influencer journey more or less by coincidence. A great example is influencer Anna, who discovered her interest for taking and posting pictures when she was out with her sister to take some pictures for her work:

> I think it was because my sister was a designer for Hosbjerg, so ehm… we had to go out and they had to have some content for their profile and then we went out and took some pictures where I was with them, which I think was a lot of fun. Then I posted them myself, and they posted them on their profile, and something like that, and then I just started to get some followers and stuff, and then I thought it was a lot of fun, and then I could also spend some time with my sister. (Appendix 10, Anna, 1.15)

Our influencer Nina, also started by coincidence, when she downloaded Instagram and got fascinated by the social and aesthetic opportunities that followed:

> So I would say when I downloaded Instagram, I remember being totally fascinated by the world. Ehm where at that time it was not so much about the likes and everything like that. It was all about being able to get all these impressions from all over the world, and you could be allowed to talk to people from all over the world. So I think it was so

> tremendously exciting from both such an aesthetic, but also a social perspective. Ehm and then I found out that I thought it was kind of nice to go and take pictures. Ehm so it was really because I thought it was fun to create something. (Appendix 14, Nina, 5.35)

In line with Anna, Nina enjoyed the fun aspect of taking pictures which she then posted on Instagram. The same applies to our influencer Fiona, who argues that becoming an influencer was not something she decided to do. It just happened gradually when she downloaded Instagram, and she enjoyed taking pictures which she posted on Instagram (Appendix 12, Fiona, 1.23, 3.02). In contrast, Emma and Cana started their journey with a blog as they enjoyed writing. Later they also decided to join Instagram to keep up with the trend, and they suddenly discovered their motivation for taking pictures (Appendix 11, Emma, 3.22; Appendix 13, Cana, 3.40).

We therefore conclude that the influencer journey for all of our influencers started as a hobby, with a shared passion for taking pictures and posting them on Instagram. From thereon they gradually gained more followers. Other researchers have come to the same conclusion. Van Driel and Dumitrica (2020) for instance states that influencers "have started out as ordinary people documenting their everyday life through a stream of photographs" (p.1). Similarly, Erz and Christensen (2018) has documented the transformation from hobby to business through three phases, as we addressed in the literature review. It therefore seems to be a strong tendency which characterises influencer marketing.

4.1.4 *From hobby to business*

Three of our influencers have turned their hobby into a business. It is interesting that our influencers in general explain that becoming an influencer and earning money based on a hobby was not a choice as such, it just "suddenly happened" as Fiona expresses it:

> And then ehm you start taking some pictures yourself and then you get some inspiration from others and. Then you learn a little all the time and find out, alright, but I rise a bit in followers when I do this, and then it turns into a sport. And then I really just started spending more and more time on it. And then when you can see that you get these more followers and something like that, you also get more excited. And then all of a sudden you make money on it, and so it's even more fun, and like making more of it if

> you can say it like that. So it's just come gradually that it's been evolving all the time and you always get inspiration from others too and stuff like that. (Appendix 12, Fiona, 1.23)

A recurrent theme is that all influencers mention that gaining followers was a motivational factor, which encouraged them to continue. Similarly, Cana argues that becoming an influencer is not something you decide to become, it just happens. She compares this to those who make it to the national football team; it is not something everyone can become, it is a matter of hard work, luck and timing (Appendix 13, Cana, 1.01.09).

However, Cana chose explicitly to turn her hobby into a full-time job, as she decided to take her blogging to a new level:

> I stood in front of some upheavals in my life, and then I had started this blog and there were a lot of people reading it, and at that time I had an Instagram profile and maybe I had, I don't know, 8000 followers or something. And I thought I must be able to do something here. Ehm and then I thought, well now I just try it, and then we have to see where it goes. (Appendix 13, Cana, 2.35)

She further explains that she "jumped into it" because she wanted to become a home mom and spend more time with her family (Appendix 13, Cana, 0.45). Similarly, Nina expresses that she decided to turn her hobby into a student job; "it started when I started studying Media Science. Because I couldn't find any study-relevant work, and then I thought, well, maybe I could combine my hobby with Instagram" (Appendix 14, Nina, 1.17).

For three of our influencers, money has become a motivational factor. Fiona mentions that one of her main motivational factors now is the money (Appendix 12, Fiona, 2.23), Nina mentions that she has to pay her bills (Appendix 14, Nina, 38.59), and Cana explains that she needs food on the table (Appendix 13, Cana, 14.23). As a contrast, Anna and Emma who work as influencers on a hobby basis, the motivation is mainly to have fun (Appendix 10, Anna, 2.36; Appendix 11, Emma, 7.29).

From the above it can therefore be concluded that our influencers have evolved into influencers from their hobby. They did not plan to become influencers, it "just happened" to them. Three of our influencers have turned their hobby into a real business, thus they are no longer working just for fun but also for the money.

4.1.5 *What do they produce*

One definition of influencer marketing as we touched upon in the literature review, states "the strategy of promoting brands, products, or services with selected individuals who are judged most likely to exercise a significant influence on purchase decisions within a particular target market" (Chandler & Munday, 2016, n/a). Influencers are today increasingly engaged in brand collaborations, and hence are being defined as "brand influencers". A similar description is given by our agency expert Høck, who describes influencer marketing as brands using influencers to promote their products (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 2.18). However, our academic expert Christensen's definition on influencer marketing presents a new perspective on how to understand influencer marketing. She argues that it is important to understand that influencers are not "just another medium", as they actually sell authenticity and emotions (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 4.03, 32.29). She stresses that "influencers' core [...] is their personal narrative. The way they do authentic advertisement is to put in emotions, and the emotions are their own" (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30). According to academic expert Christensen, influencers are therefore not just someone who promotes products, but someone who sells their own identity. In relation, academic expert Christensen states that influencers' credibility is that they present their own personal narratives, in contrast to celebrity branding where the actor is hired to present the brands' narrative (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 4.46). Our agency expert Høck, also recognises that influencer marketing is about the personal narrative, and for this reason she argues that influencer marketing is something unique compared to other marketing disciplines:

> You get some content that the influencer herself makes, based on their personal twist on whatever they are doing. So you get a lot of personal content creation and you get a personal voice on the brand actually, you are going to talk to your target audience through an influencer who is a real person, and that's not something you can do otherwise through mass media. And so it is the case, if we talk good influencers, it is a very authentic and credible medium, because it carries this very personal angle. (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 2.44)

Noticeable is also that she defines "good influencers' to be those who create the most authentic content. However, academic expert Christensen seems to be the only one acknowledging that influencers sell emotions, which puts pressure on them as they have to be "good influencers":

> Yeah, the issue is that if they become actors and it becomes less transparent, they are no longer authentic, and then they are not a business case. And they need a business case because they live off this. So they are completely, they're constantly challenged about showing my own emotions, being authentic, being transparent, to earn more money. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 37.49)

The tension is also recognised by other scholars. Van Driel and Dumitrica (2020) for instance stress: "for the Instagram influencer to be perceived as successful, they need to negotiate a tension: they need to appear authentic, yet also approach their followers in a strategic way to remain appealing to advertisers" (p. 1).

Finally, it can therefore be argued that influencer marketing at first sight can be seen as a simple activity of promoting products. However, as illustrated above, it becomes clear that the core product of influencer marketing is authenticity. Influencers create authentic advertisements by investing their own emotions and displaying their personal narratives.

4.2 Creative product and process

The question is then whether influencer content can be defined as creative products. In fact, a creative product and process are factors that help distinguish a creative sector from another, which will help us to determine where we can define influencers' profession within the creative field. Jones et al. (2012) states that creative and cultural industries can be defined by their product and process' level of creativity. The products that are high in symbolic content and thus have a cultural meaning, are highly creative, whereas products with a high functional usage are those with the least symbolic value and thus a low creativity level. Furthermore, a high level of creativity in the work processes is characterised by flexible tasks, non-standardisation and labour autonomy. Correspondingly, a lower creativity can be ascertained when the work processes and tasks become routines and consequently standardised.

4.2.1 *Creative product*

Considering that influencers are selling authentic content of identities, emotions and personal narratives, their content can be argued to have a symbolic value. In the view of Hesmondhalgh

(2013) those producing texts of symbolic value can be considered "symbol creators". Texts are involved in the production of social meanings and circulation of content that influence our understanding and knowledge, and in a broad sense are open to interpretation. Influencers can be argued to be symbols creators by producing content that can be considered texts, which circulate on social media. Similarly, van Driel and Dumitrica (2020) argue that "regular people" can gain symbolic power from producing content on social media. They emphasise that user generated content (UCG) which influencers employ "is a form of creativity and an ethos of collaboration, where everyone builds upon everyone else's content in ways that can lead to new and unanticipated outcomes" (Berthon et al., 2012; Potts et al., 2008 in van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020, pp. 2-3). They define UCG as cultural content production that is grounded in one's personal life. Accordingly, in relation to the view of Hesmondhalgh the influencers' content can therefore be argued to be cultural production of texts which is involved in the production of social meaning.

If we compare this to the definition of creativity as "a process of generating something new by combining elements that already exist" (Boden, 1990; Romer, 1990; Runco & Pritzker, 1999; Sternberg, 1999 in Jones et al., 2015, p. 1), thus influencer content can be argued to be a creative product. However, one can argue that sharing a picture that presents styling of clothes has in its simplicity limited symbolic value and more of a functional usage. Hence, the fashion-influencers can be argued to have a higher functional value in their product because they rather share style pictures as inspiration rather than emotions in their pictures and captions. In contrast, our life-style influencer Cana shares pictures with stories and topics that are engaging with her followers by integrating her emotions. However, for Cana as well, the sharing of pictures of interior, beauty advice, food, etc that do not represent a greater or relevant story can be argued to have similar functional usage. Thus, for their product to represent a higher symbolic value rather than functional, it becomes necessary for the influencers to contribute and integrate their emotions into the content, rather than simply advice on style, interior, beauty, food, etc. We therefore argue that influencers according to their focus, represent different creativities, and the type of content in their picture being shared can vary in product creativity.

Another characteristic indicating that influencer content is a creative product, is the "nobody knows" aspect, defined by Caves (2000). Caves defines creative products as experience goods, where you do not know how consumers will receive and value the goods. This is also stressed by our agency expert Høck, who argues that influencer marketing is difficult to price (Appendix 8,

Agency expert, 16.38). She further argues that "with influencers you never know entirely what you get, and you put a lot of control aside. It is sort of a premise with influencer marketing, that you should dare not to control everything, as you normally do in other media practices" (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 15.21).

With the software program Woomio, brands are actually able to measure the campaign's performance and get an indication of which content that performs well (Woomio, 2020). However, influencers cannot repost the same photo which performed well, too many times. As previously touched upon, creative products need novelty in order for consumers to engage in the product. Arguably, the influencers risk losing followers if they do not vary their creative expressions in their content. One way they in contrast can diminish the "nobody knows" is by using a program, which can provide the influencer with data on their followers. Such a program can help them prepare future posts to better match the interest of their audience.

Hence, if we consider the creativity of the influencers' product, we argue that it is relatively high in creativity. Their product is content creation where they create, develop and post content onto their account, but what they really sell is an authentic personality. According to our academic expert Christensen, influencers create authentic content by displaying emotions. Thus, their authenticity is what determines their creativity, why the product itself is high in symbolic value rather than functional usage as it has a cultural and social meaning.

4.2.2 *Creative processes*

The interviews in our study revealed that our influencers can also be argued to be creative in their working processes, as their work is characterised by non-standardisation, flexible tasks and labour autonomy.

Our influencer Emma explains the brand collaboration process by first receiving a message from the brand typically through an email or in her Instagram inbox which initiates the first step in the brand partnership (Appendix 11, Emma, 07.29). This message often entails all the information needed regarding the potential campaign. This includes the brands' demands and expectations to the influencer as well as what their compensation will be. Influencer Emma states that next she checks out the brand and its products to determine if she finds it relevant to her and her audience. If so and she agrees to the terms of the brand she writes back listing the products she likes, which

will then be sent to her. After receiving the products, the next step then depends on her,as she then has to decide where, when and how the content should be created focusing on the product. Emma emphasises that this often requires some coordination with the brand. In the end, she will create stories or post pictures on her profile depending on what is agreed upon in the collaboration process (Appendix 11, Emma, 07.29).

The flexible tasks and non-standardised processes emerge as the influencers collaborate with different brands and are very selective when choosing with whom they want to collaborate. In fact, Emma described it as a large puzzle because she has to balance the visuals of each content in order for everything to be aligned (Appendix 11, Emma, 10.14). In general, all influencers put a lot of thoughts into which brands they want to represent on their profile. "I could never enter into a collaboration with anyone, who was not interesting to me or my followers. Because those who follow me follow me for a specific reason" (Appendix 12, Fiona, 3.45). Similarly, Nina expresses that it has to make sense to the audience, and it should make sense to her as well (Appendix 14, Nina, 12.24). This is also emphasised by Emma as an important factor in brand partnerships:

> So, it has to be items I want to wear as well, so items I would like to buy myself. [...] So it's more that it actually suits my personal style also. That's probably what I think most about, that it is something that I actually want to buy myself. (Appendix 11, Emma, 10.52)

To appear real and authentic, the influencers repeatedly highlight the importance of reflecting on whom to collaborate with. For Cana it solely depends on one's values:

> Today, I think it has become really easy, because it is all about one thing. Can I vouch for these things, and is it something that I actually want to spend my money on? Is it something that fits into my life and my world, and the values I really want to share? [...] So, it is important for me that it is something that I want to lean on. So, you have to see, that, every collaboration is some way a type of co-branding. So, they lean on me, but I also lean on them. (Appendix 13, Cana, 6.30, 7.40)

Each collaboration can in Cana's point of view be considered as a type of co-branding. As co-branding in general is associated with the alliance of mutual enhancement of two brands (Blackett & Boad, 1999), it can be considered as a highly creative process with low standardisation. A co-branding collaboration entails that both parties benefit equally from the collaboration. However,

from our influencers' descriptions of the process, we can identify an unequal balance. Several of our influencers describe that some brands tend to ask for more stories or posts than they have initially agreed upon, which our influencers consider inappropriate behaviour. This is particularly experienced by our younger influencers who have not been working as long as some of the more experienced influencers in our sample. The brand-influencer relationship does not reflect an equal balance, which is why some brands can be argued to take advantage of the younger and inexperienced influencers by "just asking for more". Some of our influencers indicate that they do not always get the appropriate compensation compared to the number of hours spent on creating the content. This shows an uneven balance as the brand seems to benefit more than the influencer.

Another uneven balance is the fact that our influencers never contact the brands themselves. There has been a critique of influencer-newcomers, who have contacted brands themselves and asked for free clothes, food etc, in return for a post. In such situations, it will be the influencer who benefits the most from the collaboration as they enjoy gifts and the fame of the brand, in comparison with their often-low number of followers. This is possibly the reason why many of our influencers do not contact brands themselves, as they will appear unprofessional.

Another characteristic that indicates that they have non-standardised processes and flexible tasks, is that they need to tailor each collaboration to the specific campaign purpose. Commonly, the influencers emphasise that it is all about credibility and trustworthiness of their profile both towards themselves as well as towards their followers, when choosing whom to collaborate with. Although our influencers repeatedly highlight the importance of being real and authentic, they still have to pay their bills. It can therefore be difficult to decline every offer of partnerships. However, many of the participants are engaged in careful planning of their own content, which is why they plan in advance to make sure they have enough content. Hence, their working processes are rather non-standardised, as they have to differentiate their procedures to get different outcomes for each collaboration. Evidently, the influencers can be argued to be engaging in a high level of creativity in their work processes. However, influencers can also be argued to be less creative in their processes. Van Driel and Dumitrica (2020) stress that some influencers tend to undermine their creativity while striving to meet expectations of their followers and have become more standardised in the work processes. “As influencers become more invested in the economic success of their account, they look toward those with large followings in an effort to emulate their

practices" (Driel & Dumitrica, 2020, p. 12). As a result, their production of posts becomes more standardised, why some influencers are today more mainstream and less creative than others.

Labour autonomy is another characteristic in determining the creativity in working processes. In fact, the influencers in our study particularly emphasise autonomous labour as a prerequisite of developing "good" creative content. Thus, they value a high level of work autonomy in their work processes deciding themselves how to wear the products and how to style the photo. As they vary the expression of their images for each content, for instance by selecting new clothes, posing differently, finding new angles, exploiting new locations, they are engaging in different creative processes each time and are thus creative in their process.

According to Emma, the creative process in the brand-influencer partnership can be described as a process where she has the autonomy to make the decisions. When she receives the creative brief from the brands with guidelines and payment of how many pieces of clothes she gets in return, she has the power of creative freedom to decide the content; how she wants to look, the place of the location, and the exposure of the clothes. For our full-time influencer Cana, despite the process being similar, she sometimes has to get her content approved by the brand before posting, which is limiting her autonomy. This means that her content for brand purpose may require checks and approval prior to posting. Even though she also has the power of creativity; by first deciding how to develop the content and the focus of the brand's product, she is somehow more limited in posting the content she desires.

Our agency expert Høck emphasises that it is important to her, as the intermediary between the influencer and the brand, to know the content beforehand, why she always approves the influencer content. To ensure that the content fulfils the guidelines provided in the creative brief, this is an important step for the brand to become happy with the content. She also states that it is essential to generally allow the influencers' creative freedom and autonomy to empower their creativity in their content development. This indicates that the influencers often working with a bureau are commonly limited in their autonomy to post the content without an approval. Thus, it is important for our influencers to have creative autonomy to both choose with whom to collaborate and how to promote the content, and thereby not be given too many restrictions and guidelines by the creative brief in the first place.

In conclusion we argue that influencers appear creative in both product and process. Because they sell identity and personality that is authentic, we argue that they have higher symbolic meaning

than functional usage. However, several of our influencers also describe an unequal balance between the brand and themselves, because some brands tend to ask for more stories or posts than initially agreed upon and thus take advantage of the younger and inexperienced influencers. As such, the brand seems to benefit more than the influencer compared to the amount of time they have put into the work. Yet, each collaboration and content is specially developed for the specific brand's purpose and tailored to the storytelling they want to promote on their platform. Thus, we argue that they engage in a high level of creativity in their working processes as well as in their product. However, it is important to stress that even though our participants did not imply any standardised products or processes in our interviews we have not analysed their Instagram profiles nor observed their actual working processes as such. We are therefore not able to actually determine how creative or standardised they are in reality in their working processes. Thus, our conclusion is simply a reflection based on their statements in the interviews.

4.2.3 *Positioning the influencer profession within the creative field*

With a high level of creativity in both product and process, the profession of influencers can be positioned relatively high in accordance with Jones and colleagues' (2012) model of creative dimensions. Visualised in Figure 7, the influencer profession can be positioned close to the industries of fine arts, text writing as well as theatre and dance that are located at the top of the scale of creativity, as according to Jones et al. (2012). Also, the influencer profession can be compared to traditional media and advertising, which Jones and colleagues have placed in the middle of the dimensions. In fact, we argue that the influencer profession can be compared to both the industry of advertising, and that of text writing, and as a result be placed in between the two. Great similarities can be depicted to these products and processes when it comes to the creativity level. However, as touched upon earlier, influencer marketing still shares great differences to traditional media and advertising, as influencers in contrast are contributing with personality and authenticity in their content. Yet, one could argue it has the opposite effect on their credibility and authenticity, as highlighted in our literature review, with the increase in commercial contents on the influencers' profile and the fact that every brand-influencer partnership is clearly disclosed in each post today. Hence, we argue that influencer marketing as a product is more creative in comparison to the traditional advertising product because it is higher in symbolic value.

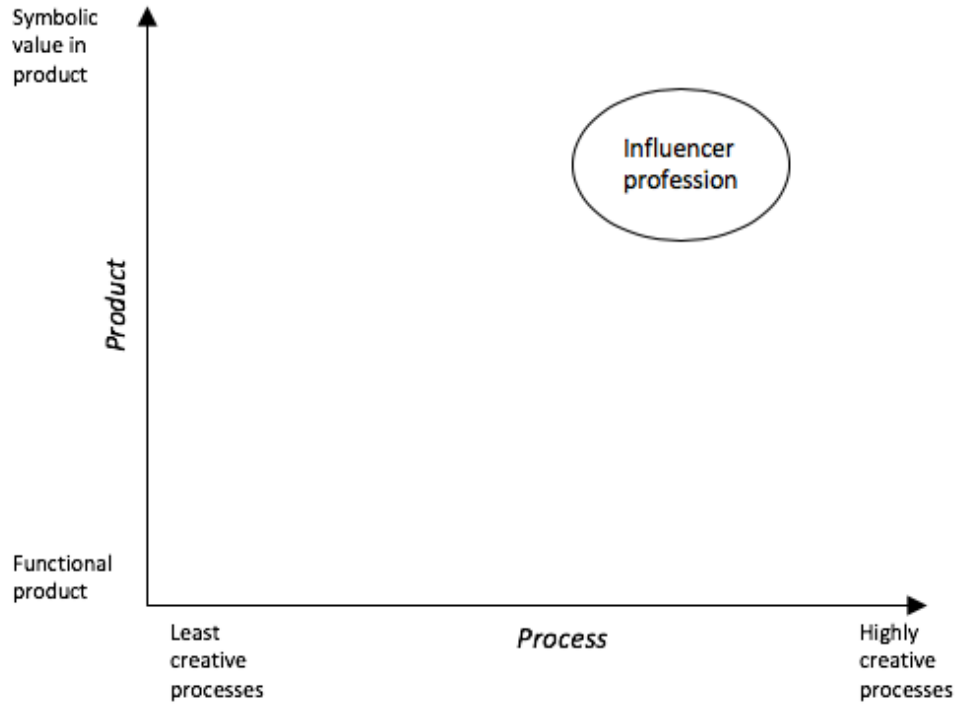

Figure 7. *Dimensions of creative product and process (adapted from Jones et al., 2012)*

Similarly, the influencer profession is more likely to engage in highly creative processes, because they indeed need to rethink styles, looks, settings and emotions as well as selectively tailor their creative content to the specific campaign purpose. Thereby, the product and process in the influencer profession can thus be ranked higher than the traditional media and advertising fields. As our literature review also demonstrated, influencer marketing is argued to have higher credibility than traditional media, due to this authenticity. Because the influencer industry is not a well-established area, it is changeable and dynamic with many processes that cannot be considered routines since both the production of content and everything surrounding it require improvisation and experimentation.

Despite this difference, influencer marketing shares similarities with other fields, such as journalism. Similar traits can be depicted in the product and process of writing text, as both influencers and journalists in a broad sense create content which includes text, visuals, audio and images, etc. The similarity between influencers and journalists are in fact so prominent that Cana explains that journalists and those employed within traditional media, criticise influencers for "stealing their work" (Appendix 13, Cana, 1.05.23). Indeed, influencers who are primarily focusing

on writing blog posts can be argued to share these similar traits to journalists, as both are focusing on communicating messages through the media. Similarities between journalism and influencer marketing is also acknowledged by our union expert. According to him, these communicative messages that both influencers and journalists are delivering are highly dependent on credibility (Appendix 9, Union expert, 19.30, 20.55). He emphasises that the general similarity is the creation of content to the media but that some influencers have a more journalistic angle than others:

> Some people write with such a communicative and demanding point of view, that is, to promote goods or alike. Other blogs could as well be a "paper column" in an old-fashioned newspaper. (Appendix 9, Union expert, 11.26)

Our union expert explains that those influencers who are writing blog posts with a predominantly journalistic angle where financing takes place in a different way than through the endorsing products, would indeed be able to submit and abide by the press ethics rules of the "Pressenævnet" (The Danish Press Council). A large number of influencers are however not posing such a journalistic publicist purpose but are rather developing content with endorsed products, why the press ethics rules may not be suitable to them (Appendix 9, Union expert, 30.23). Hence, when the influencers' work becomes more of an advertising medium than a journalistic focus, their work is distinguishable according to our union expert (Appendix 9, Union expert, 30.23). Nevertheless, whether the content is developed by an influencer or a journalist the same advertising legislation applies. Thus, no matter if the content is an advertisement endorsing products or is editorial material, our union expert emphasises that the consumers always should be able to differentiate between the two types of content (Appendix 9, Union expert, 30.23).

Other similarities can be depicted in regard to the working processes of journalists have similarities to those of influencer marketing, as they in general are characterised by autonomous labour, flexible tasks and this non-standardisation in their working processes as influencers. Similarly, the product of producing texts and articles presents more a symbolic value rather than a functional usage, as Jones et al. (2012) presents in their model. The influencer profession thus resembles journalism, as both processes are characterised by non-standardisation as well as both products have a high symbolic value.

Another creative institution with similarities to the influencer profession, is that of fashion magazines. Because of their highly creative processes of producing new content each month, it

consists of various flexible tasks and low standardisation in developing that content. This is very similar to that of an influencer. While the fashion magazine is producing a physical magazine each month, the influencer can instead be argued to have become an online magazine that is continually promoting editorial content. The hierarchy and bureaucracy in the magazine organisation are often indicating lower labour autonomy in contrast. When considering their product, a distinction is however that fashion magazines are scalable for mass production and thus possess a rather functional usage and consequently engage in a lower symbolic value in contrast to journalists and influencers.

The similarities which can be drawn is that they all produce content for the media (production of texts). Regarding their processes, they all enjoy labour autonomy, but influencer marketing processes can be argued to enjoy a greater deal of creative freedom and autonomy. Influencer marketing can also be considered to have higher symbolic value and credibility in comparison. Hence, we argue that the influencer profession despite its high degree of resemblances with other creative industries of advertising, journalism and fashion magazines, represents its own distinctive field within the cultural and creative industries.

4.2.4 *The emergence of the influencer industry*

Influencer marketing is “old wine on a new bottle” (Arendt, 2020) which indicates that influencer marketing shares similarities to existing traditional media but has emerged as a new format from technological development. This is also demonstrated by Jones et al. (2015) who argues that creative industries are dynamic as they “experience a variety of changes, which are driven by differing forces” (p.1). Jones et al. (2015) presents typologies which can be used to demonstrate more precisely how new creative industries emerge through changes in products' semiotic codes and material base. Those changes are often initiated by one or more of their four identified drivers; demand, technology, policy and globalisation. In this context, influencer marketing can be argued to have emerged as a result of the evolution of technology with the rise of social media and especially Instagram, which made it possible for regular people to create their own content and share it with other users. A change in the material base was initiated by the technology-driver, which made it possible for regular people to advertise for brands. This changed the original business model of advertisements through traditional media such as television, and created a new

industry, namely influencer marketing. Furthermore, it can be argued to be a change in the semiotic code as well. As we have previously demonstrated, our influencers creative visual expressions and put different emotions and narratives into play and thereby have the power to shape how their followers can interpret it, which is a change in the semiotic code. Hence, we can conclude that influencer marketing represents its own industry as a change in semiotic codes and material base that has resulted in a new and different business model.

4.3 Creative people

4.3.1 *Motivation as the key to creativity*

In context to Amabile (1997), in order to be creative, one must possess the components of thinking skills, motivation and expertise. Whereas expertise and creative thinking skills determine "what a person is capable of doing in a given domain", the intrinsic and extrinsic task motivations determine "what that person actually will do" (Amabile, 1997, p. 44). Those who are primarily intrinsically motivated (motivated by interest) are in fact more creative than those who are extrinsically motivated (motivated by competition, rewards, etc.). In the following we will define influencers' creativity level by identifying their skills, expertise and intrinsic motivation.

Creativity thinking skills

According to Amabile (1997), creativity thinking skills provide "something extra" within the creative performance and include taking new perspectives and exploiting new pathways. The influencers' creative thinking skills are particularly reflected in their creative work processes. In the view of our influencers, the basic skills of taking photographs and afterwards editing them are both self-taught. Thus, this is also one of the aspects they actually enjoy the most. To Nina it is fun to "create something" (Appendix 14, Nina, 5.35), while for Fiona it is all about "to be allowed to express myself and be a little creative" (Appendix 12, Fiona, 3.02). This is also emphasised by Anna, who enjoys finding new great places, that maybe not at first sight appear attractive. "You find some nice places and also sometimes a bit quirky places where you are like, woow this, this can actually be a bit nice anyway (Appendix 10, Anna, 4.07). Cana highlights that: "In fact, I think it's pretty exciting to go in and find out how I can best angle any campaign. I think it is hugely exciting and

taking pictures" (Appendix 13, Cana; 3.40). To Emma on the other hand, the creative aspect is more about editing the pictures; "so it all fits together and to get such a visual expression" (Appendix 11, Emma, 03.22). Furthermore, their acquired technical skills entail styling of clothes and items, visual designs and aesthetics as part of developing the content creation. Particularly, many of the influencers emphasised the important considerations regarding their visual expressions as their driving force. As the influencers' select and style new clothes, find new angles and exploit new locations, it allows them to vary their creative expressions and approach brand-partnerships with new perspectives in a creative content. Their creativity in styling and editing are what unfolds their creative performance. The setting by which the content is developed demands the influencers to think strategically in order to obtain the aesthetics and visual expression desired by themselves as well as the brand. Thus, the influencers creativity thinking skills can be considered to particularly unfold in the strategic thinking of whom to collaborate with and which products to promote.

Considering that influencers sell personality and authenticity, we also argue that this presents a unique skill in itself. Both personality and authenticity are not something you can be taught or decide to have. Cana emphasises that becoming an influencer and gaining many followers is not something you can just decide to do. Gaining attention and thus increasing your number of followers takes time and depends on the behaviour of your followers. You have to prove your worth and potential, to be rewarded with their engagement (Appendix 13, Cana, 28.47).

Thus, our influencers skills can be argued to be; selecting the right brands and which products to promote, taking photographs and editing them, and displaying personality and authenticity in their content. Hence, we can thus consider their creative thinking skills to be relatively high.

Expertise

To people in general, skills acquired are often the foundation of their expertise. But what defines one's expertise? Amabile (1997, p. 42) states that technical proficiency, factual knowledge and special talents are what determines one's expertise and that "expertise is the foundation for all creative work".

The influencers' expertise is first and foremost their insights into their own profile and knowing what generates the best outcome. Arguably, the influencers' expertise is based on their work

experiences and the fact that they best know their followers. Fiona emphasises that it is a learning process, where you learn all the time (Appendix 12, Fiona, 1.23). Along the way you learn what works as the increase in number of followers articulates when you post something that the followers like. The capabilities and competences needed are developing through time, as highlighted by Emma:

> I don't think I need anything specific to be an influencer, also because you can't really educate yourself to it. So it is also a bit lucky that there are just some people who bother to follow you. You may be doing all the right things, but if the pictures are not shown to anyone or no one likes it or follows it, then it is; you can't force people to follow you. (Appendix 11, Emma, 27.50)

Thus, their expertise includes their awareness of what photos are better suited for their profile based on the attention of the followers. To many of our influencers, this is the result of having worked in the field for many years. Most of our influencers are focusing on fashion, while Cana leans towards a lifestyle-influencer, as she engages in a broader spectrum of topics. In fact, her influencer journey began with a blog focused on topics related to be a midwife. Her educational background as a midwife enabled her to discuss these topics based on knowledge. As presented in Figure X, Cana states that "I really want to use myself and my professionalism" when she was interviewed in a Danish TV program called "Følg Mig" (Follow Me) where the audience is invited into her personal life as an influencer. As also visualised in Figure 8, Cana is highly motivated to exploit her factual knowledge in being an influencer and is proudly "using" herself to raise awareness or share important messages. Once she shared a post of how she looked before and after giving birth to emphasise that almost no one looks like a model right after giving birth (see Figure 8). With her education and work experiences as a midwife, Cana hopes that she will gain a stronger appeal towards women. Cana can be considered to be amplifying her credibility in her field with her expertise as opposed to the other fashion-influencers. As most influencers' work often start as a passion and a hobby, they have often not an underlying education to support the work. This is also illustrated in our sample of influencers, where only Cana has a related education relevant to her influencer topic.

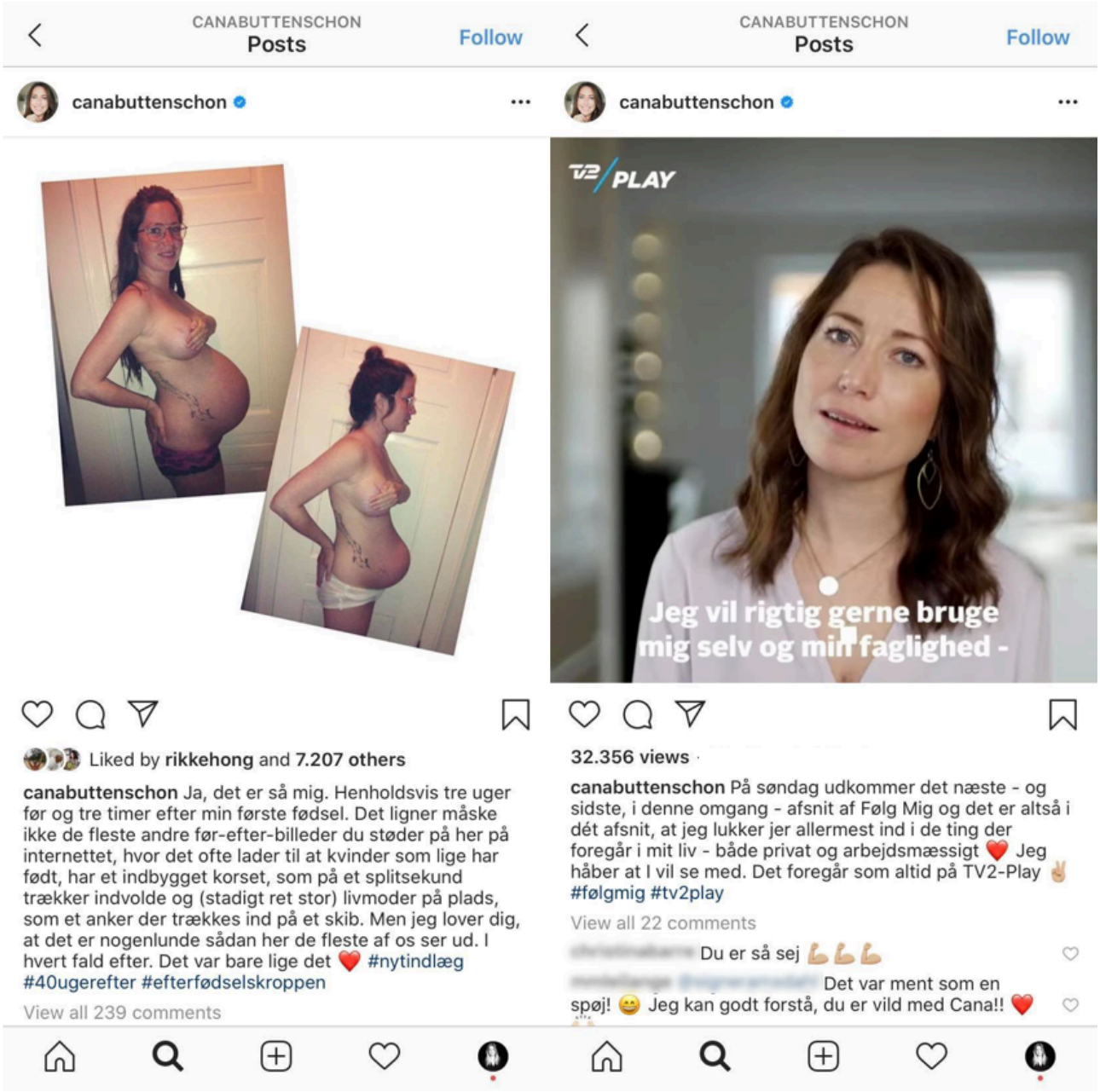

Figure 8. *Instagram posts from Cana's profile (2020)*

The experience from working as an influencer for years, has allowed the influencers to become experts in their own fields, and this is what the brands can utilise. This is also recognised by our agency expert, who works with influencers and is an intermediary between brand and influencer. She stresses that influencers know best what works towards their followers. "I think it is extremely important to understand that the influencers know their followers, way better than I do. It's their

channel. So, they may know something that I haven't thought about, so you have to take that into account" (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 10.58).

Motivation

The participants in our study are highly motivated to be influencers, as they are drawn towards their creative expression through taking photographs, editing pictures and being able to experiment with pieces, styles, location to gain the best result. To most of the influencers in our study, the influencer-journey began as a hobby with a great passion for fashion and lifestyle, which have since turned into a business. In general, our influencers emphasise that it is fun, and that fun is a prerequisite for working as an influencer. The influencers' motivation in our study are highly intrinsic driven by a deep interest and involvement in their work. Their commitment to satisfy their followers is what steers their curiosity and enjoyment for being an influencer. From an agency perspective, our agency expert Høck finds it crucial that the influencers are sincerely engaged and interested in the brand partnership, in order to create the best content:

> […] that the collaboration is something the influencer is interested in, literally, and something that they think is exciting. It is clearly my experience that these are the best prerequisites for them to actually create some good content, that is if they from the start actually think it is a good collaboration. […] You definitely get something better and more trustworthy for both parties if it is something, they actually think is fun to do, and something that they feel contributes something to their channel. (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 18.06)

It therefore becomes essential to encourage their intrinsic motivation in order to generate the best content creation possible. However, our participants also explain that–at least in the beginning–it was also an encouragement to gain more followers. These factors can be considered as a reward and are thereby more extrinsic motivated than intrinsic. Our influencers are thus highly intrinsically motivated as their passion of creating creative content is what drives their commitment and curiosity to work as an influencer.

Conclusively, we argue that there is an intersection of creativity in all components, but highly dominated by their intrinsic motivation. Amabile (1997) argues that a deficiency of creative thinking skills or expertise can to some extent be compensated by a high degree of intrinsic motivation. "A

highly intrinsically motivated person is likely to draw skills from other domains or apply great effort to acquire necessary skills in the target domain" (Amabile, 1997, p. 44). The intrinsic motivation thus becomes the primary component, while creative thinking skills and expertise come second in the "creativity intersection". We argue that the level of creativity in our fashion-influencers' expertise is rather moderate than high, as it is rather based on passion and interest in the topic than factual knowledge. Albeit, many have work experiences from working as an influencer, why we argue them to have a moderate expertise level. Yet, we argue that Cana's expertise is higher as she uses her educational background and work experience as a midwife, and thus has factual knowledge in that field. Hence, we argue that the influencers do possess high creativity thinking skills in addition to a moderate expertise by years of working experience and are rather highly intrinsically motivated in their work than extrinsically.

4.3.2 *Self-employment and Creative labour*

It is important to note that our influencers labour is characterised by self-employment. Self-employment and freelancing are typically favoured in the creative and cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). There is a great correlation between influencers within the creative industries and being self-employed. Influencer marketing can be categorised as a marketing discipline within its own rights, however with very similar and associated traits with traditional media. Yet, influencers are self-employed artists who do not report to a specific media agency but rely on their own performance. Like any other creative artist, influencers are depending on good performance and recommendations to attract more work and brand-influencer collaborations. "Important is also the fact that freelancers do depend upon their own professional skills in order to operate independently" (Mathisen 2017, p. 922). Mathisen (2017) denotes the tensions evolving when being self-employed between autonomy and freedom in contrast to precarity and constraints associated with the line of work. In spite of the vulnerabilities and insecurities associated, several freelancers are valuing and emphasising flexibility, freedom and greater autonomy with being a freelancer, which has presented a high level of job satisfaction. The following analysis will present how these characteristics are similar or different to that of our influencers.

In the following we will now address our influencers' labour and compare it to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) model of good and bad work. In conclusion we will argue how our influencers' labour qualifies as creative labour. To memorise the concepts, the model is visualised below.

	Good work	*Bad work*
Process	Good wages, working hours, high levels of safety	Poor wages, working hours and levels of safety
	Autonomy	Powerlessness
	Interest, involvement	Boredom
	Sociality	Isolation
	Self-esteem	Low self-esteem and shame
	Self-realisation	Frustrated development
	Work–life balance	Overwork
	Security	Risk
Product	Excellent products	Low-quality products
	Products that contribute to the common good	Products that fail to contribute to the well-being of others

Figure 9. *Conceptualising good and bad work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 39)*

Autonomy (powerlessness)

According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), autonomy is of great importance for creative people why it is listed as a concept of good work. Interestingly, autonomy is a prominent theme in our data which appears to be a vital aspect of the influencer profession.

Relevant is our agency experts' opinion on this subject, as she has experience from working with influencers. As we have touched upon earlier, it is according to her a premise for influencer marketing that one cannot control the influencers work (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 15.21). Influencers are real people and one cannot control when they do things (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 11.50). It is in fact her experience that the best influencer content is created when influencers are given a great amount of creative freedom. Besides, they know best what works on their channel (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 9.24). Despite giving the influencers creative freedom, our agency expert Høck argues that they as an agency do have some control over the process (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 9.24). They create concepts based on the brands requirements, which the influencers can buy themselves into (Appendix 8, Agency expert 10.58). The influencer can however still elaborate on the concept, if they want to make it more suitable for themselves. However, she argues that she would never give them a manuscript because that does not work

out very well. Instead they create briefs with some guidelines (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 9.24). Hence, we can from our Agency expert Høcks' point of view argue that influencers need autonomy in order to produce good content.

In line with our agency expert Høck's observations, our influencers argue that they do not like when brands try to control what they should do and say. Cana for instance expresses that she has been struggling a lot with brands that try to "put words in her mouth". She explains how she sometimes has had to be consistent and explain to brands that they cannot tell her what to say, and therefore should find someone else to collaborate with (Appendix 13, Cana, 44.58). Similarly, Nina expresses that she rejects campaigns when she is given a huge brief with a lot of requirements (Appendix 14, Nina, 11.11).

In general, our influencers enjoy a great amount of autonomy and creative freedom, as they stress that brands have very little control and impact on their content. They prefer to have as much creative freedom and autonomy as possible, which especially became clear when we asked them questions about preferences for having an agent or joining an agency. This shows that four of our influencers are sceptical towards agents.

Fiona for instance explains that she does not want an agent for several reasons. According to her they are too expensive, and she cannot say yes to jobs without the agents' approval (Appendix 12, Fiona, 8.06, 23.43). The agent becomes an "owner" of her profile and wants to decide who she can(t) collaborate with, and then it does not feel like her own profile anymore (Appendix 12, Fiona, 6.25, 20.34). She argues that because agents are more expensive and they want to negotiate, some brands will choose influencers who do not have an agent and she will therefore lose job opportunities (Appendix 12, Fiona, 7.19). She explains how she once had an agent, which she regretted a lot because they signed a contract that did not allow her to do much, and it took a whole year before the contract expired. Having an agent did not bring her more jobs, the agent took too big of a cut of 50% and she was not allowed to recruit jobs on her own (Appendix 12, Fiona, 21.36).

For similar reasons, our influencer Nina also argues: "I think that I am so autonomous in my work, that the idea that someone should have a bite of my cake, is not something I am comfortable with" (Appendix 14, Nina, 1.01.41). Similarly, Emma argues that she does not want an agent as it excludes too many job opportunities, why she prefers to control the negotiation herself (Appendix 11, Emma, 12.06). Anna, who is doing influencer marketing on a hobby basis explains that she

does not quite know how it works when you have an agent (Appendix 10, Anna, 9.35). However, she explains that the only positive thing she could imagine of having an agent is that the agent could negotiate for her, because she is not good at asking for compensation for her work and at negotiating prices herself (Appendix 10, Anna, 8.47).

In contrast, Cana is very positive towards having an agent. A couple of years ago she chose to have her own agent instead of being a part of a big agency. Cana describes the positive sides of having an agent, being that she has a "professional wingman" (Appendix 13, Cana, 14.23) who can help her make the right decisions and who takes care of the administration (Appendix 13, Cana, 15.46). Cana, however, also acknowledges that agents can be expensive, but it compensates for how much she gets out of having one (Appendix 13, Cana, 15.46). Cana stresses they have an 80/20 contract, which is in fact cheaper than normal (Appendix 13, Cana, 17.03). In contrast to the other influencers, Cana does not describe that she feels a loss of autonomy by having an agent, and that she is in charge of taking all the decisions herself (Appendix 13, Cana, 44.39). Instead she explains the positive sides of having an agent who cares more for her and her business, compared to bigger agencies which care more about the money (Appendix 13, Cana, 43.39).

Finally, we can therefore conclude that autonomy and creative freedom is important for our influencers. They express dissatisfaction when brands and agencies want to control what they should produce. Moreover, our influencers express scepticism towards having an agent as they do not want to lose autonomy. One influencer shows optimism about having an agent, but this seems to be because she does not experience loss of autonomy, as described and feared by the other influencers. Thus, it can be concluded that the influencer profession employs a great deal of autonomy which qualifies as good work.

Interest and involvement (boredom)

As stressed in the theory section, those workers who have high autonomy are also often very involved in the production, which makes the job more interesting. If the job is interesting enough, the job is seen as rewarding and compensating for lower wages (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). From our previous section autonomy, it became clear that our influencers enjoy a high level of autonomy and creative freedom, hence they can be argued to be very involved in the production

of their own content. From the section influencer journey, it was also evident that their influencer journeys started as a hobby, as they expressed enjoyment from taking pictures, creating visuals, and spending time with friends and families. Hence, it can be interpreted that our influencers see their job as rewarding enough to compensate for no or limited compensation. This is especially the case when they are at the early stages of their influencer journeys, as we can also see that Anna and Emma are mostly paid with products, for instance Emma receives five pieces of clothes and in return post two pictures (Appendix 11, Emma, 9.14). In contrast, as our influencer becomes more experienced, they show more interest in compensation of money, as also previously stated in influencer journey. However, if the job is interesting enough, they are willing to accept the offer, even though the payment is not necessarily money (Appendix 12, Fiona, 23.43). Nina also explains that she would accept a job offer from Chanel right away because she loves the brand and there is some prestige associated with it (Appendix 14, Nina, 12.24, 54.00). This can thus be interpreted that the compensation therefore has less relevance for her. In contrast, our influencers will reject job-offers if it is not interesting enough. Our influencers are in general expressing that they would reject a job if it is not relevant for their profile and their followers. An example is Nina who rejects a job offer from a bike company because it does not match her fashion profile, and because they asked for too much content in compensation for a bike she did not like (Appendix 14, Nina, 9.37).

Arguably, our influencers have a high interest and involvement in their production as they enjoy a lot of creative freedom and autonomy. This also shows, as they are willing to accept job offers of "lower wages" if the job is interesting enough and has relevance for them and their followers. Thus, it can be argued that our influencers have high interest and involvement and therefore no boredom which thus can be categorised as good work within the influencer profession.

Sociality (isolation)

Many creative people work in organisations where they have opportunities to work in teams, build friendships, and share the same interest with their colleagues (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). However, our influencers are self-employed, and do therefore not enjoy this form of sociality which is often associated with employment in organisations.

Some of our influencers indicate that a small part of their job does include a bit of sociality, which they enjoy. Two of our influencers for instance mention that they enjoy spending time with friends or family while taking pictures for their profiles (Appendix 10, Anna, 4.07; Appendix 11, Emma, 3.22). Emma also mentions that she has gained a lot of friends through her hobby as an influencer. However, our influencers also indicate the influencer profession is not social enough. For instance, Emma explains that she does not want to become a full-time influencer, because she wants to have a job where she can be surrounded by people. She elaborates that influencers often sit at home or go on coffee-dates or to PR-events, which she indicates would be too lonely for her (Appendix 11, Emma, 31.22). Similarly, Anna argues that she cannot see herself as a full-time influencer, as her days will become too unstructured ("flyvsk" ed.) (Appendix 10, Anna, 4.42). Similarly, Cana argues that she thinks it will be difficult to live an entire life without having to go to work in a traditional meaning. To her, the influencer life has felt like six years of maternity leave (Appendix 13, Cana, 59.12).

Thus, it can be concluded that our influencers desire more sociality which they do not have in their work as influencers. Hence, this part of their profession can be categorised as bad work in relation to isolation.

Self-esteem (shame)

As mentioned in the theory section, self-esteem is people's sense of fulfilment and development over time. Work can either enhance or diminish our self-esteem, which is affected by others' respect and recognition of our work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Our influencers both indicate aspects of self-esteem and shame.

Anna for instance explains that she does not brag about being an influencer, but she also does not feel embarrassed about being one (Appendix 10, Anna, 31.48). Her self-esteem for instance shows when she expresses proudness of her Instagram and feels satisfied when brands check it out, which she characterises as a form of portfolio (Appendix 10, Anna, 32.42).

From our data we can also identify indications of shame. Our influencers for instance explain that their profession has a bad reputation. Anna for instance mentions that she knew a guy who hated influencers and did not want to have an influencer girlfriend, while other people joke about having "influ-enza" (Appendix 10, Anna, 31.02). Nina also expresses that she never introduces

herself as an influencer, simply because she does not like the word. She feels it puts too much responsibility on her shoulders. She also believes that there is a negative view on the industry in general, especially from the media (Appendix 14, Nina, 47.37).

Several of our influencers mention the app Jodel, which is an anonymous platform where people have criticised and joked about influencers (Appendix 13, Cana, 27.22; Appendix 12, Fiona, 14.50). Nina for instance mentions that people at Jodel have criticised influencers for begging, as many influencers write to brands for sponsorships, why she does not contact brands herself (Appendix 14, Nina, 9.37). According to Nina, it is because of unprofessional influencers that the reputation has been destroyed (Appendix 14, Nina, 47.37). Similarly, Emma expresses how she does not think that people take influencers seriously, professional-wise (Appendix 11, Emma, 20.41). This is something Nina recognises as she argues how brands do not always treat her as a professional person (Appendix 14, Nina, 8.02, 8.15). In complete contrast, Cana argues that people and brands normally take her very seriously. Despite her 50.000 followers, she has not noticed anyone who has been disrespectful. In general, she feels that people treat her with respect and kindness (Appendix 13, Cana, 26.24).

On the other hand, our influencers feel that their job is also viewed as prestigious and with jealousy by many. Fiona for instance mentions that people are jealous of influencers because they earn good money (Appendix 12, Fiona, 14.50). Cana also expresses that some people wish they had become an influencer, as the job is full of privileges because they are paid well, receive gifts and trips, etc. (Appendix 13, Cana, 25.27, 1.01.09). Cana also views her job as the best job in the world and describes her job as a lifestyle rather than a job (Appendix 13, Cana, 24.24, 23.55).

From the above it has become evident that the influencer profession is viewed as a privileged job but that it also has a bad reputation among some. It seems like this is affecting our influencers' self-esteem since many of them do not want to present themselves as influencers. On the other hand, they are also proud of their work and find it privileged. Arguably, the influencer profession contributes to their self-esteem as they are proud of the aesthetic content they produce and because it is viewed as a privileged job by others. On the other hand, it is also connected to shame because it has a bad reputation and they do not want to call themselves influencers. Thus, we have been able to identify aspects of both good work and bad work as the influencer profession both contributes to *self-esteem* and *shame*.

Self-realisation (frustrated development)

As touched upon in the theory section, self-realisation is defined as "realising one's own personal talent or potential" (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 33). Pressure and overwork are in this relation features which have a negative impact on one's own self-realisation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). In this relation, it is noticeable to see that none of our influencers would like to go from part-time to full-time or pursue a career as influencers for the rest of their lives. One argues that a life as a full-time influencer would be too unstructured (Appendix 10, Anna, 4.42). Another argument is also that the influencer job is not challenging enough:

> But, I have found out that what also makes me happy is also to feel that I am getting smarter and gaining more knowledge and something like that, where you do not really get smarter from being an influencer, I feel like you do not learn anything new. (Appendix 10, Anna, 4.42)

She further argues that she at the moment works for a media company which she enjoys, and she would never replace it with a job as a full-time influencer (Appendix 10, Anna, 30.28). Similar to Anna, Emma argues that she wants to pursue a permanent job in the fashion industry, and indicates that a job as an influencer would be too unstructured (Appendix 11, Emma, 32.22).

Similar to Anna and Emma, Nina also does not want to work as an influencer for the rest of her life. When we asked her if she would still be an influencer in 5-10 years, her answer was quite compelling: "No I will not be. No I am not, no absolutely not" (Appendix 14, Nina, 46.36). Another argument for not becoming full-time is given by Fiona, who thinks it will be too stressful to be dependent entirely on her profile and that it therefore would not be fun anymore (Appendix 12, Fiona, 5.37, 6.07). This is something Nina can relate to as she has developed stress and anxiety from working as a full-time influencer. She explains how her performance was always being measured which made her feel like a product herself. It was therefore not fun anymore and she decided to go part-time again (Appendix 14, Nina, 2.06). The fact that most of our influencers want to keep it as a side-job, is also acknowledged by Cana, who argues:

> I simply believe that the influencer profession is becoming much more of a side job than it is today. Because I do not believe that anyone can continue to live such a `I just go home and lull around life´, or super exclusive luxurious life, (...) but I simply think that the

> most of us, we need to develop and go to a real work, and be more normal so people can relate to us. (Appendix 13, Cana, 58.11)

For those reasons, Cana can also not see herself as a full-time influencer exclusively in many years from now. “I have done this for five years now, and I need to spend some time on something else also” (Appendix 13, Cana, 59.12). However, she also explains that she does not have an interest in shutting down her own brand but instead to move it somewhere else. With that, she elaborates that she will use her influencer fame to start her own business and advertise more for herself than for other brands in the future (Appendix 13, Cana, 22.27).

Hence, it can be interpreted that the influencer-job does not contribute to our influencers’ sense of fulfilment and development. It either does not extend their knowledge or puts too much pressure on them which diminishes the fun part of being an influencer. They therefore prefer to have it as a side-job in order to obtain more self-realisation from other jobs, or to take it to the next level and build their own brand in the future. The influencer job can thus be argued to not contribute enough to our influencers’ self-realisation. Instead, this can be denoted as bad work in relation to frustrated development.

Work-life balance (overwork)

Some of our influencers express difficulties balancing spare time and work. Cana for instance describes her influencer work as “invasive” to her life. She explains how it is difficult for her to put her work aside and how she rarely has time off (Appendix 13, Cana, 20.50). She prioritises putting her work aside when she is together with her kids and friends, but she also explains that it stresses her out if she spends too many hours on leisure (Appendix 13, Cana, 20.50). The reason for this stress is due to the fact that she is dependent on delivering good numbers, which puts a pressure on her (Appendix 13, Cana, 17.28). She also explains how she especially in the beginning was thinking in Instagram posts wherever she went (Appendix 13, Cana, 17.28). For similar reasons, Nina describes how she got stress and performance anxiety (Appendix 14, Nina, 2.06). Due to such pressure Fiona argues why she has decided not to go full-time (Appendix 12, Fiona, 5.37). Our influencer Anna also recognises similar issues. She explains how she sometimes feels that she never has time off, as her work can be in her thoughts all day (Appendix 10, Anna, 15.38). In

line with Cana, she also indicates that it easily "swallows" her time, even though she sometimes tries to put a timer on (Appendix 10, Anna, 15.38).

From the above we can therefore identify issues of overwork and pressure. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) model, pressure and overwork has a negative impact on work-life balance. Thus, we can argue that work-life balance is a challenging aspect of our influencers' work. Hence, this aspect of their influencer profession can be defined as bad work in relation to overwork.

Security (risk)

Security is often connected to those workplaces that employ employees with permanent contracts. However, freelancers often feel insecure about their future as their contracts are short-term. The insecurity might also affect the employees' physical health and cause anxiety and stress (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). This insecurity can also be identified among our influencers, and is especially prominent in Nina's case:

> I felt that no matter what way I decided to go, I ran my head against a brick wall. Either I was too small, or too big, and then I did not have enough Danish followers, or then I had too many Danish followers. There was always something wrong. The competition has become overwhelming. (Appendix 14, Nina, 6.50)

As previously stated, this resulted in performance anxiety and stress. The quote also illustrates that they are exposed to a pressure which follows from a competitive industry. Hence, our influencers' short-term contracts can be argued to put a greater pressure on them as they have to compete for good numbers in order to get more jobs. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), many creative people choose to have side-jobs due to the insecurity which follows from short-term contracts. This also seems to be the case for our influencers. This might also be the reason why none of our influencers want to pursue a career as a full-time influencer as they are insecure about how the industry will evolve, and whether Instagram will even exist in ten years or not (Appendix 11, Emma, 32.26).

Another indication of insecurity is also that our influencers are afraid of missing job opportunities if they are "too difficult to work with". This is one of the reasons our influencers do not want to have an agent, as they are afraid that brands choose those who are easier to negotiate with. For similar

reasons, it can be interpreted that our hobby-influencer Anna argues that she finds it difficult to negotiate herself. She argues it could actually be great to have an agent who could negotiate for her, and make sure that she is paid fairly for the hours she invests in the job (Appendix 10, Anna, 8.47).

According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), it is especially freelancers who need unions which can help them negotiate fair contracts. Yet, many do not join such unions, as the company can easily replace them with someone who does not complain (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). Our union expert argues that many part-time bloggers choose not to be members because they only work on a part-time basis, and therefore do not want to pay the fee (Appendix 9, Union expert, 6.14). This is also evident in our data as our full-time influencer Cana is the only one who is a member of the influencer union Danske Bloggere. Nina is instead a member of Dansk Journalistforbund (The Danish Union of Journalists) which Danske Bloggere is a subdivision in but is not specifically a member of Danske Bloggere. This is because she has a Master's degree in journalism, she argues. Our part-time/hobby influencers have not considered unions, in fact, they did not even know of Danske Bloggere. Fiona for instance states that she did not know it existed (Appendix 12, Fiona, 17.00). In line with Hesmondhalgh and Bakers' (2011) observations, Emma states that she does not want to join a union as she is afraid of missing job opportunities (Appendix 11, Emma, 28.40). In contrast, our more experienced influencer, Nina, enjoys the advantages of being a member of a union, as her union has helped her with copyright-related cases, where brands have stolen her content (Appendix 14, Nina, 32.22).

Thus, our influencers report insecurities related to their work as influencers. Evidently, they are affected by their short-term contracts which put a pressure on them. Even though they are in special need for a union who can help them to secure their work, our part-time influencers do not want to join a union. In contrast, our more experienced influencers Cana and Nina are members of a union which can be argued to be because they are full-time or used to be full-time engaged, and therefore find it appropriate. Thus, the influencer profession is not a job with high security but rather characterised by a high level of risk, which is an element of bad work.

Good and bad products

Good and bad work also concerns the product itself. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), creative people care much about producing good products and they are very concerned with the aesthetic quality and its contribution to the common good in society. There are, however, certain circumstances that can prohibit workers from succeeding in creating good products such as pressure, restrictions, careless and meaningless ideas (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). We have previously addressed that our influencers value creative freedom and autonomy, supported by our agency expert Høck who argued that the best influencer content is when they are given creative freedom and less restrictions. We have also addressed that too much pressure is a demotivation for our influencers, why some prefer to keep it as a part-time job, as too much pressure destroys their enjoyment. Hence, we can argue that those circumstances mentioned by Hesmondhalgh and Baker also affect our influencers ability to create good products, why they prefer creative freedom and no pressure.

Other implications in our data show that our influencers prefer to produce good products. One indication is that they care much about the aesthetic quality of their content, and they care about taking great pictures and creating visual expressions. Likewise, Nina argues that she prefers to advertise for products of good quality and brands who treat employees well (Appendix 14, Nina, 12.24). Producing good products is also evident as our influencers are very selective of whom to collaborate with as they prioritise that it should have relevance for them and their followers (Appendix 12, Fiona, 4.57).

Another indication that our influencers prefer to produce good products is that they especially do not want to advertise for bad products. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), creative people do not want to produce bad products which are inferior goods or products that diminish the well-being of others or are harmful (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011, p. 36). Our influencers mention that they would never advertise for tooth bleaching (Appendix 14, Nina, 23.11, 23.53; Appendix 12, Fiona 4.18). Accordingly, there has been a case where many influencers have advertised for the tooth bleaching company “Smile Bright”, which happened to include harmful ingredients (Appendix 13, Cana, 50.54). Other indications which show that our influencers care about producing good products is Anna, who argues that she never posts pictures of herself in a bikini as it could impact young girls’ self-esteem negatively (Appendix 10, Anna, 18.00). Thus, it can be argued that our influencers prefer not to produce bad products which are harmful or diminish the well-being of others.

In line with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's observations of creative people, we can thus conclude that our influencers care strongly about producing good products; they are concerned with its aesthetic expression, its quality, and its contribution to the common good in society. Their products therefore qualify as good products rather than bad products, as they produce *excellent products* that *contribute to the common good*. From the analysis on creative labour, we can conclude that we have identified several similarities between our influencers labour and creative labour. What our influencers perceive as good and bad work, is similar to what Hesmondhalgh and Baker have identified in their study of creative people.

What we have identified as good work within our influencers' profession is; *autonomy*, *interest* and *involvement* and partly *self-esteem*. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) autonomy is desired much by creative people but many creative workers within organisations are not necessarily given it. Especially not those creative workers who are lowest in the hierarchy. They are instead exposed to a high level of powerlessness, overwork, pressure and which results in frustrated-development, boredom, low self-esteem and risk. Our influencers, however, are self-employed and they therefore enjoy more autonomy than those creative people within organisations. This level of autonomy which our influencers employ can therefore be argued to be a unique aspect of the influencer profession. Their high autonomy means that our influencers have high involvement and interest in what they produce, which also results in great content which they are proud of and which contribute to their self-esteem. Hence, those aspects can be identified as good aspects of the influencer profession.

What we instead have identified as bad work within our influencers' profession is; *isolation*, partly *shame*, *frustrated development*, *overwork*, and *risk*. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) isolation is common for freelancers, which is also the case for our influencers as they do not have any colleagues. According to Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011), creative people that are low in the hierarchy in organisations often feel frustrated development as they cannot pursue self-realisation due to powerlessness, boredom, overwork, and pressure. Even though our influencers are not low in a hierarchy within an organisation, they still feel frustrated development as they are exposed to pressure from delivering good performance numbers which forces them to overwork. This affects their work-life balance and causes stress and anxiety, which prohibits their self-realisation. The stress is also caused by a high level of risk due to their short-term contracts. However, it is not that our influencer is not given the opportunity to develop because of low

involvement in the production within an organisation. Instead because they feel that the influencer profession is “too simple” which they cannot learn and develop from. Only Cana works as a full-time influencer by now but plans to create her own business or pursue “a real job” in the future. Due to all these aspects of bad work which can be identified within the influencer profession, most of our influencers choose to have it as a side-job, which can be argued to be a unique characteristic of the influencer profession.

This analysis has therefore strengthened our assumption, that influencer marketing can be categorised as a creative industry. Our influencers can be defined as creative people who employ creative labour which is especially characterised by high autonomy and frustrated development. Another unique characteristic of creative labour which is addressed by Hesmondhalgh and Baker but not included in their model, is emotional labour. Emotional labour also showed to be a unique characteristic of influencers’ creative labour, which we will address below.

4.3.3 *Emotional labour*

As an important reflection of emotional labour, working with emotions particularly requires the worker to “induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others” (Hochschild, 1983, in Hesmondhalgh & Baker, p. 162). This is often associated with the industries of nurses and flight attendants, as these are particularly associated with employing one’s emotions into one’s work.

As touched upon earlier, many of our influencers' passion for taking pictures to a business evolved by coincidence. Arguably, many did not know what they were getting into nor what it would entail in the long run. In general, many are thus not prepared for what it actually demands as a person to be an influencer. Emphasising this, academic expert Christensen stresses her concerns that many of these young people are not educated or know what it takes, nor what impact it can have on their lives. She highlights “that influencers should be more aware about what they're actually doing and what they are working with” (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 18.42). By not being prepared for this, the impacts by employing your emotions in your work can have great consequences. Ward and McMurray (2016) stress that the negative consequences of emotional labour are among others emotional exhaustion, self-estrangement and stress, which impacts our well-being, physical health and job satisfaction. Hence, it becomes even more crucial to prepare

young influencers for what they are signing up for. With the convenient access to social media today and the fact that it does not require much to create a profile and post pictures on Instagram, it is quite easy to begin as an influencer. However, young people today tend to undermine that it is just a reflection of an inconclusive reality; a fraction of the whole, and thus actually consider the hard work that it requires in the process.

Despite this industry's popularity, the influencer profession has several consequences. One downside is that social media comprises the core in their work, which makes it tremendously difficult to truly "be off" since they are always able to work. As Cana mentioned earlier, she finds it "invasive" to her life and thus challenging to find the right balance between work and spare time. As she finds it difficult to put her work aside, it has the consequence that she rarely has any time off (Appendix 13, Cana, 20.50).

Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) stress that creative workers sometimes struggle to distance themselves from the emotional effects which follow from emotional labour. Evidently, this is the case for the influencers' profession as well, as they are constantly exposing their emotions to the public. As defined earlier, influencers are selling their identity and emotions through personal narratives which they display online (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 4.46, 13.30). Supporting this, Hochschild (1983, p. 7) demonstrated that people who employ emotional labour are subjects for "selling an emotional part of their selves" (cited in Ward & McMurray, 2016, p. 5). Since the influencers are indeed selling their emotions and personalities through pictures and blog posts, it becomes a challenge to master the balance of exposing just the right amount of yourself. Academic expert Christensen stresses that "working with these emotions in a systematic way is a huge challenge for a person to do" (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30) and that the reel challenge is in fact to know what you actually feel:

> When you work with your emotions systematically, you can have challenges in feeling or knowing what you feel yourself. […] it's impossible for these people to actually have a feeling without displaying it. And their followers are engaging in this system and the influencers are also trying to engage them. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 15.49)

She further emphasises that part of creating successfully authentic advertisement is for the She further emphasises that part of creating successfully authentic advertisement is for the influencer to put in their own genuine emotions. However, to ensure the authenticity for each brand

partnership, they constantly have to change these emotions, to fit into the brand's narrative (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30). However, many of our influencers have selectively chosen not to share personal or sensitive information and details about their lives. Fiona stresses that she "completely stay away from doing that" (Appendix 12, Fiona, 10.02). Following this, Nina also emphasises that she is "not one who exploits my privacy for the sake of a company. But I could still have that feeling of, now it is too much" (Appendix 14, Nina, 21.06).

When discussing what they share, Emma states that it is only innocent things about fashion that she posts, why she thinks it does not give rise to any discussions at her profile (Appendix 11, Emma, 37.55). She further elaborates that if she had written about or posted more "controversial things" then she might have thought more about the reactions that could evolve with it. However, even if her post became more personal, she emphasises that it is her standpoints and sometimes that might upset some people when they disagree (Appendix 11, Emma, 37.55). She therefore is not concerned about sharing her voice through her profile.

The negative side of the "medal" is also emphasised by Cana, who stresses that it is important to learn how to act when people do not like you. "When you share a lot of your life, there will also be something that people do not think is nice" (Appendix 13, Cana, 17.28). In fact, many fashion-influencers share limited personal details. However, Cana and Emma both started out with a personal blog before joining Instagram, but only Cana is still managing both channels today, as Emma exclusively focuses on her Instagram channel. Although Cana's theme is generally more lifestyle-oriented, she has shared personal stories like when having a guilty conscience towards her kids, in addition to also sharing pictures with her belly that shows stretch marks and "loose" skin as a reflection of the fact that no one is perfect (see Figure 10). As the picture visualises, we can see in her text that she utilises her emotion when she talks about being a bad mother and are thus reflecting upon her own thought and is actually not promoting any brands in this regard. Arguably, influencer marketing is not only focusing on promoting or endorsing products, why the definition of "brand influencer" and "selling product" is not sufficient. This is partly because it does not address their emotional labour and partly because they also make their profile authentic by creating a narrative that brands can tap into.

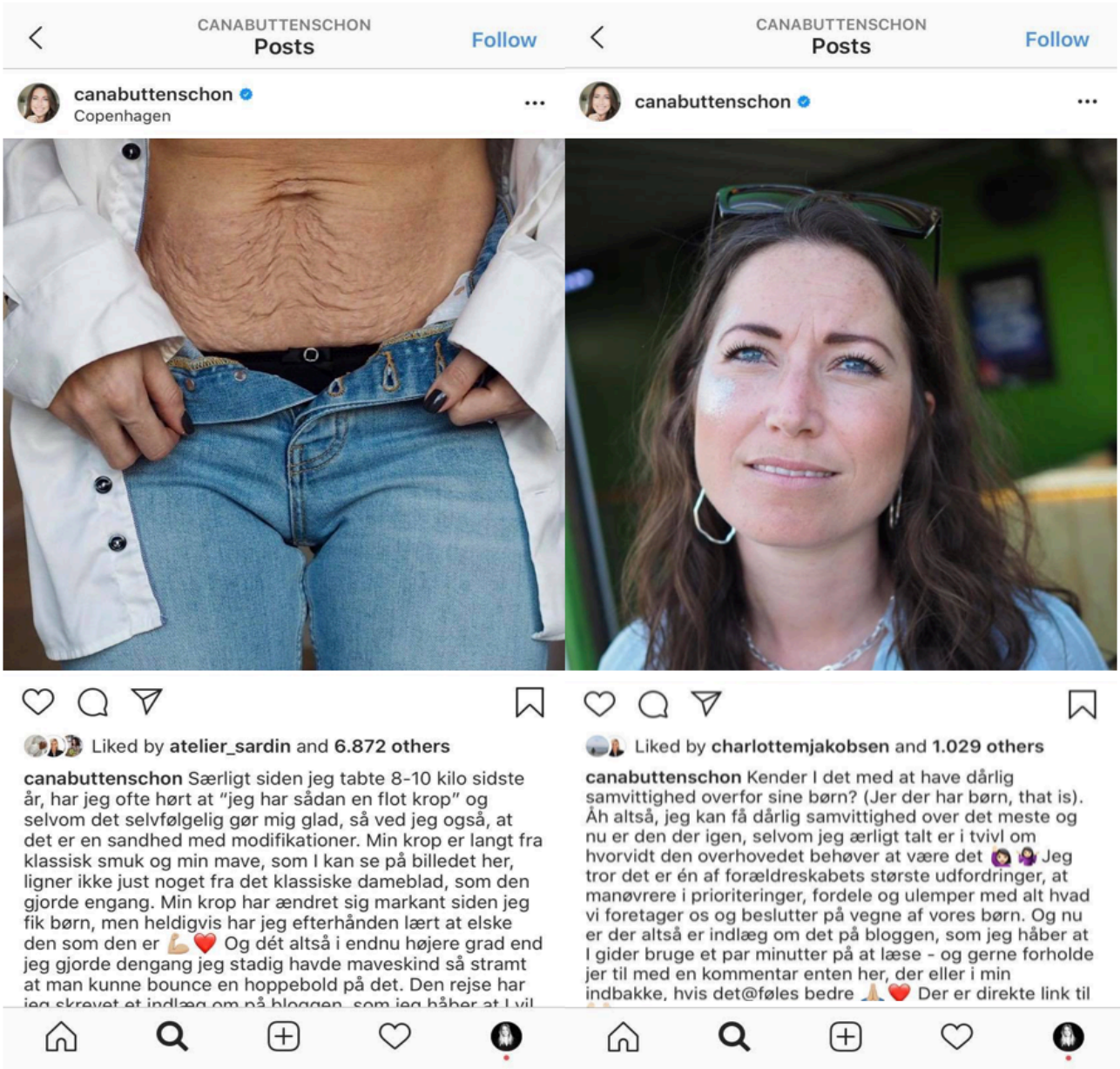

Figure 10. *Instagram post from Cana's profile (2020)*

Commonly, our influencers are expressing general satisfaction with their followers, as they are "behaving" nicely both in their comments and in direct messaging (Instagram inbox system). However, they also highlight that they do pay attention to this as they are very much concerned with a positive dialogue at their profile. If the followers do not behave properly or write repulsive comments, then Fiona does not hesitate to just block them (Appendix 12, Fiona, 13.02). She expresses a general ignorance towards these messages, as it does not impact her. Cana also

stresses that she tries not to visit these websites in order to be as little as possible affected by the critical media:

> I know that it exists, but I also from the beginning made it clear to myself that I should not let it bother me and go in checking. Just as well as when Ekstrabladet writes articles about me, I should not read the comment trail on their website because I know it's not a nice place for me to be. I just get upset, and I think if you are able to just shake it off and say, I know there's something and there's someone, I don't know who it is, I don't know how much it is, I do not know how small it is, but I know someone will probably sit and hate me a little. But can I do something? So can I do something the other way around? Can I do something about it? and I don't think I can. So I think it's lost course no matter what. And then there is simply no reason to move to where you need to be so upset. (Appendix 13, Cana, 24.28)

Thus, even though our influencers do not experience negative behaviour and comments in general at their profiles, they are very aware of shielding themselves from general impacts of this. Both by trying not to read what is "out there" e.g. on Jodel and on the comment trail on "Ekstrabladet", as well as just "blocking" people when writing repulsive messages. Arguably, our influencers are thereby protecting themselves from this consequence of emotional labour that otherwise can have negative impacts.

Other impacts though, are the requirements of constantly changing their emotions for each campaign purpose, which have negative consequences for many influencers who are challenged by this. Academic expert Christensen stresses that because influencers sell emotions, they constantly need to "change or reallocate or find emotions to make this commercial authentic and if she doesn't, she's out of business, because the core of her business is to make authentic advertisement" (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30). The pressure to deliver great content is both towards their followers and the brand partnerships. Academic expert Christensen emphasises that this pressure of "systematically work on her or his emotions on several levels […] is very stressful" (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30). Thus, the influencer industry is challenged by the fact that more and more influencers get anxieties and become depressed (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 15.49). She further highlights that "this is emphasising a culture where it's normal to display or broadcast your emotions" (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 15.49). However, only Linnea has shown signs of exhaustion and self-estrangement, whilst the rest of our participants

have not shown any signs of these implications in their capacity of being an influencer. Yet, stress has become a general factor for our influencers, as they highlight that they feel stressed to deliver good content. Expressing their concerns, they highlight that they in general can become stressed with deadlines, making sure they have enough content, delivering good statistics to brand partnerships and so on. Cana recognises that it is a challenge. “We are dependent on having good numbers and everything, and you always feel that you have to perform, so that can be difficult. It is a huge challenge. Ehm and I think there are really, really many people who are struggling with this. I included” (Appendix 13, Cana, 17.28). Thus, it has resulted in a tremendous pressure for the influencers to constantly deliver and produce great content in order to get good responses from followers and brands. Although many of our influencers are “only” part-time, and therefore not exclusively making a living nor dependent on their commercialised work, several news sites have repeatedly reported headlines with young influencers feeling stressed and increased anxiety. For instance, one headline stated that “Stressed youtubers are a society challenge” (see Christiansen, 2020), where one influencer publicly has shared his experience of the challenges with anxieties and stress that has evolved with fame. In her interview, Cana emphasises the challenges of this; "becoming superstars on social media in no time, it can be a little worrying for me sometimes” (Appendix 13. Cana, 9.13). With one’s profile getting more attention, Cana argues that they become a sort of a role model and stresses that it is crucially important that the influencer is actually up for the job because of their responsibility towards their followers.

> I may not always think that they are all equally good at sharing positive news [but] there are some ethics and morals that one has to be aware of. You can't be a bad example. So because even though many people say "I'm not a role model", no, but you kind of are anyway. I mean, there are 50,000 people who follow your life every day and look at what you do. And even if you do not want to acknowledge it, people are anyway still doing what they see. (Appendix 13, Cana, 9.13)

Ward and McMurray (2016) argue that emotional labour is not for everyone; “some people can do it and some people can’t” (p.14). Supporting this, Cana stated that it is vital “to have a stable core inside [and] knowing that I am good enough as I am and I have a value in me” (Appendix 13, Cana, 28.47). Arguably, as influencer marketing highly employs emotional labour it becomes crucial to

prepare especially young people who want to become influencers what it actually entails and demand of one as a person. Hence, many influencers are not aware of the demands it takes to work as an influencer, and thus how dependent they actually are on their own emotions in order to deliver authentic content. Arguably, emotional labour is a premise for this profession and has become a condition to perform emotions, genuine emotions in order to be authentic.

4.4 Sub conclusion research question part one

Finally, it can be concluded that influencer marketing can be categorised as creative labour, and is both creative in product and process, why we argue that influencer marketing has the qualifications to be categorised within the creative and cultural industries. Beyond the similarities in creative characteristics, we argue that the influencer profession can be considered its own unique industry within the cultural and creative industries. Influencer marketing differs from other industries as it has developed from a technological evolution which has resulted in changes in its symbolic code and technical base. This has resulted in a new business model, which is characterised by user generated content of high symbolic value, reflecting personal narratives and emotions.

4.5 Professionalisation of influencer marketing

In this section we will address the second part of our research question; why is it challenging to professionalise this industry? First, we will address how far influencer marketing has come in the process towards professionalisation, then follows the identification of possible challenges to the process.

4.5.1 *Professionalisation; how far are they in the process?*

The starting point of the influencer marketing process towards professionalisation can be argued to be the moment when brands began to pay regular people to advertise their brand through the influencers' own social media channels. "The transition towards paid work" is emphasised by Mieg as progress towards professionalisation in a broad sense (2008, p. 502). He denotes

professionalisation as "the transformation of an occupation into a profession" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502). In his simplified sequence of seven steps based on Wilensky (1964), Mieg presents the process from becoming a full-time occupation towards the creation of a code of ethics:

> (1) a job becomes a full-time occupation;
>
> (2) establishing a training school;
>
> (3) establishing a university program;
>
> (4) founding a local professional association;
>
> (5) founding a national professional association;
>
> (6) creation of a state license;
>
> (7) creation of a code of ethics.
>
> (Mieg, 2008, p. 504)

These steps present the typical sequence that an industry undertakes in the process towards professionalism. The first stage in the process; when a job becomes a full-time occupation, can be reflected in the influencer journey. What for many influencers started as a hobby, has quickly turned into a business by endorsing and promoting brands commercially in their content. In fact, the influencer profession has today become a professional full-time job for several today, who exclusively make a living by creating content to maintain their profile and thus engaging in paid brand collaborations. Yet, many people are today solely working as an influencer, as well as numerous people are working with the influencer profession at other levels; by hobby or as a side-job. "In just a few years, influencer marketing has become a livelihood for individuals [and] a new business area for agencies in the advertising industry [...]. Although the market is booming, it is far from mature yet" (Wang & Thompson, 2019a). With the rise in the number of influencers and the increase in influencer marketing agencies, it indicates a new industry that has evolved. Today there are at least 16 creative agencies in Denmark that are primarily working with influencer marketing (Kielgast, 2019).

The influencer profession, as touched upon earlier, can be argued to have emerged as a result of the technological revolution with the rise of social media. The emergence of Instagram made it possible for ordinary people to create their own content and share it with other users. As Mieg (2008) emphasises, professionalisation can from a historical point of view be argued to be an

open-ended process, which can evolve “from within” or “from above”. With the technological development, the influencers have thus exploited a market that has evolved “from within” and initiated the first step in the process towards professionalisation. However, because the profession has emerged from within in contrast to from above, the influencers have been responsible for their own “training” and development of skills and competencies needed in the process. Because that has been a learning-by-doing process, their skills and competencies have advanced along the way and over time improved their creativity with regards to the content.

The enhancement of the competencies of influencers has also become apparent in their content's visual expressions as highlighted by Erz and Christensen (2018). In their study of 12,000 blog posts from five fashion blogs, they found that there has been a change in the bloggers’ visual presentation through the years. By migrating toward professional equipment, the influencers are investing in improving the quality of their photos and content. For example, by shifting from taking their own photos to hiring a photographer, it allows them to increase the photo quality of their content. The change in quality of the photos as well as their development of skills in editing are a reflection of the transformation towards professional practices (Erz & Christensen, 2018). “[...] Consumers, who started blogging as hobby, pursued it more systematically as serious leisure in a community of bloggers, yet further transformed into professionals who developed their own, individual person brands” (Erz & Christensen, 2018, p. 79). In fact, many influencers today have transformed into human brands. As we demonstrated earlier, the influencers in our study have in time become increasingly strategic in their decisions on whom to collaborate with and how to tailor each content for the specific campaign purpose. The need for consistency also extends to the creation of the influencers sponsored content, by becoming more selective in choosing the products that fit their persona and by carefully anticipating which products that truly will work for their audience. This indicates that their work has become more professional today.

As influencers become more invested in the economic success of their account as a result of seriously and systematically working with their content creation, they have indeed evolved as professional individuals. This is also emphasised by our influencers, who generally state that the brand partnership process is highly professional, because each collaboration is negotiated through a contract that includes price, product and purpose. The importance and necessity of contracts between artists and partners is highlighted by Caves (2000) as this is what these collaborations rely on. He further illuminates the relationship between artists and agents as an important and

dyadic, mutually interdependent relationship that is particularly common in the creative industries. In our study, only Cana is having an agent that she can spare with. This is probably because most of our influencers are only part-time and thereby not exclusively dependent on their brand collaborations. Yet, with the rise in influencer-agencies focusing on managing influencers and their business it represents an industry towards professionalism.

With that in mind, in relation to Mieg's process of professionalisation, we can, therefore, argue that the profession of influencers reflects a professional business in an emerging industry today. Accordingly, the influencer profession can thus be identified in the first stage of professionalisation; from a job to a full-time occupation. However, we can also identify other stages in the professionalisation process of this profession. According to our academic expert Christensen a boarding school with a focus on the influencer work has been established. The boarding school in question, which we have been able to identify, is "Rydhave Slot Efterskole", which have created a new social media program that focuses on social media, influencers and blogging (Rydhave Slots Efterskole, 2020). This reflects a process towards an acknowledgement of this profession and can be argued to reflect the second stage in the professionalisation process by Mieg of establishing training schools. Similarly, several "business academies" and influencer courses have emerged as a result to improve influencers skills in photos, editing, visual expressions, etc. (Mitchell, 2019). Thus, several businesses in the domain of influencer marketing have arisen in the last few years as a result. Hence, the second step in the process of professionalisation can be identified; the establishment of training schools.

Another step of the professionalisation process we can identify is the stage of professional associations, which according to Mieg can be "seen as one milestone in the process of professionalisation" (Wilensky, 1964; Mieg, 2008, p. 503). In an attempt to organise the influencer profession, Danske Bloggere was formed in 2017, as a subdivision within the union of journalists (Bak, 2020). The aim of Danske Bloggere is to work for bloggers' interests in relation to, for example, tax, advertising legislation, working conditions, copyright, debt collection, etc. One of the purposes that they are currently working on is to contribute with an ethical code of conduct for influencers and bloggers to help navigate what to do and what not to do. Apart from indicating this step towards professional associations, this also indicates the last step in Mieg's process of professionalisation, namely the creation of a code of ethics. These codes of ethics are according to Wilensky (1964) an important step towards professionalisation as occupations can otherwise

not be considered to be truly professionalised. Nevertheless, all of our participant experts account for future ethical codes to be crucial for influencer marketing's professionalisation. Because of the ambiguities in the definition of influencer marketing, those ethical rules are still in the process of being defined (Christiansen, 2020).

This indicates several processes in the different stages of the professionalisation process, yet in an atypical sequence. However, from our analysis, there is no indication towards a university program nor any state license at this moment. Yet, the question becomes if it is even possible to actually obtain an education for becoming an influencer or if it is unrealistic, as the influencers according to our academic expert Christensen, sell emotions and identity. Accordingly, it becomes questionable to educate people in selling that. However, considering other creative industries like theatre, dance, music, etc. several of these institutions have today become recognised institutions with separate education respectively. In fact, these educations help artists improve their skills by giving them the basis for each profession. These creative industries have today become organised and acknowledged as individual industries. Thus, the question becomes if the greatest factor of professionalisation is thus "time" in order to an education can be established.

The fact that the influencer profession can "only" be identified in stage one in the process of professionalisation, with few indications to other stages as well, indicates several challenges that have impacted that. Those challenges will be addressed in the following.

4.5.2 *What are the challenges to become professionalised?*

"Professionalisation is a process whereby occupations have become, or seek to become, publicly recognized as professions" (Hoyle, 2001, p. 15473). In this context, influencer marketing has not become fully professionalised yet, as we just have demonstrated. Besides, Influencer marketing has not yet been acknowledged as an industry by the government. In this relation, it is noticeable how Wilensky argues that "the right" professional status is the end-goal for many occupations, but "remarkable few of the thousands of occupations in modern society attain it" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 141). The question is then why influencer marketing has not attained this "end goal"?

From our analysis so far, we have been able to identify several possible challenges to influencer marketing professionalisation. As touched upon in the theory section, professionalisation is a competition for authority and legitimacy. One can argue that to attain this, there needs to be

a shared understanding of what influencer marketing is. This is for instance what our academic expert Christensen emphasises. According to her, one of the biggest challenges to influencer marketing is that there is no definitive definition and shared understanding of what influencer marketing is. This makes it difficult to make the right decisions in order to professionalise the industry, as she explains:

> I've tried to talk with the government. I think what is difficult is that governmental wise that this is, first of all, we need to define what it is, to make politicians take responsibility, to be, to be responsible for this like. Is this a digitalised system, is it the labour system. Where do we actually have to make these rules? So, the definition of what it is, is important. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 28.30)

Here she addresses that in order for the government to make the right decisions, there must first be a shared definition. This in fact has its consequences as she emphasises with the union Danske Bloggere:

> We need to define and agree on what it is, before we can actually say okay, what do we need to do? And that's probably the biggest issue also with Danske Bloggere right now, because they are also fragmented in the way to define it. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 28.30)

Accordingly, Danske Bloggere has been struggling to take the right actions, because there is no definitive definition of what influencer marketing is. According to academic expert Christensen, the first step is to acknowledge that influencer marketing is a professional industry; “and when we do that, I think we can move on. But the government needs to accept it, and we, as a society need to accept that these are not just young people doing something for fun, but it's an actual industry” (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 23.09). A shared definition is also something the influencers themselves could benefit from. According to academic expert Christensen, it is an issue that the influencers themselves are not aware of what they are actually doing. The issue is that “they have to change the emotions constantly, fitting into these brands. So that's, working with these emotions in a systematic way is a huge challenge for a person to do” (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 13.30). She stresses that the issue for influencers is that they do not realise this before it is too late and has caused stress and anxiety, why we need to acknowledge that influencer marketing is emotional labour. This is because it is not a job one can check-in and out of, as

influencers cannot take their “uniform off” as flight attendants can (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 36.02). She argues that we cannot put influencer marketing in a traditional box next to radio and tv, because if we do that, we risk killing the industry:

> I think the one thing is this whole, we need to change the way we work in media strategies when we work with influencers and that's, that's costing money and media agencies don’t want to use money which is outside the budget so that's, that's an actual issue if you want to, challenge, if we want to do quality influencer marketing work, we need to do this. Otherwise, it's just going to be more of what we're all already seeing in the industry and I think the industry is going to kill itself. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 10.32)

Her argument is that we need to change working processes when we work with influencers and not treat them as “things”, as we otherwise are going to kill the industry. This leads to another challenge as the responsibility to professionalise influencer marketing is a shared responsibility:

> I think it's a shared responsibility. I think the government has the responsibility to set down regulations for this work industry. I think the organisation has a responsibility to educate themselves. I think the media agencies have a huge responsibility to change their work processes. I think the influence of agencies has an enormous responsibility to educate the influencers with their responsibility, how are you influencing your followers, and I think also the influencers have a responsibility themselves in terms of educating themselves and taking care of these followers. (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 20.03)

Another challenge which academic expert Christensen emphasises is that influencer marketing is an industry which has no rules. She explains that some of the more professional influencers actually wish for more regulation in order to exclude the less professional influencers. The issue here is though that governmental regulations will affect other industries as well, preventing the government from initiating further regulations (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 28.30).

In general, our interviewees emphasise that more rules are not considered to be the right solution for the industry. Our union expert argues that they do not want to make rules, but instead ethical codes and guidelines. Our influencer Cana also argues that it will be difficult to make rules as we have “freedom of speech”, but guidelines will be more suitable. In fact, our influencers are

in general not enthusiastic about more rules and regulations. One even indicates that too many rules will be demotivating (Appendix 12, Fiona, 18.42). A challenge in this relation is also that our influencers do not want to be organised and prefer not to join a union. As also addressed earlier, our influencers value autonomy and creative freedom strongly. It, therefore, raises the question, whether too many rules and regulations could kill the industry as such. We therefore asked our academic expert Christensen if too many regulations would kill the creative part of the profession. She answered that it is an important question that she cannot answer, but she would like an expert panel to further discuss these topics (Appendix 7, Academic expert, 40.28). However, not all influencers are negative towards more rules. Cana believes it will help professionalise the industry, as she hopes brands will choose to collaborate with those who follow them (Appendix 13, Cana, 9.13). Our agency expert also welcomes more ethical rules and guidelines, for the industry to become more professional.

Another challenge which academic expert Christensen emphasises is that not all influencers take responsibility for educating themselves. This can be argued to be a problem, in the sense that professionalisation is a matter of pursuing status and improving skills (Hoyle, 2001). We have previously defined influencer marketing as a self-employed side-job profession. But what does this mean in regard to pursuing status and improving skills? The professionalisation of influencer marketing has happened from "within", which means that it is a self-taught profession, where our influencers have not been able to rely on education within the field. They have to professionalise themselves but as we found, the skills of influencers are mainly authenticity. According to Cana, those "soft skills" are not adequate for training and educational purposes. She argues that influencers have to develop personal competencies, which includes realising how your influence can affect your followers, how to behave responsibly, and how to consider ethics and morals (Appendix 13, Cana, 9.13). All of our expert respondents are agreeing that responsible behaviour will help professionalise the industry and welcome ethical standards. This can be argued to be important as professionalisation "denotes the transition towards paid work that is subject to binding quality standards. In this wide sense, people and activities can be professionalised, gaining in professionalism" (Mieg, 2008, p. 502). Hence, the binding quality standards which help our influencers to become professionalised can be argued to be ethical codes and guidelines. What else can be argued to be their quality standards is also their performance numbers which they are being evaluated by.

Other quality standards can be argued to be tax-rules and commercial regulations. What appears to be a threat towards gaining this professionalism is the fact that the influencer profession is a self-employed-side-job-profession. As previously addressed, our influencers started their influencer journeys as a hobby and suddenly brands offered them compensation. Because it is so "easy" to start, many influencers are not fully aware that their hobby turns into a business, which requires knowledge of tax rules, commercial advertising rules and a responsibility. One of our influencers, Anna, mentions that she is not fully aware of the rules, while our part-time influencer mentions that no one on her level follows the tax rules (Appendix 11, Emma, 35.58). The influencers indicate that they do not always follow the commercial rules, which seems to be a general critique of influencers, as we have touched upon in our literature review. Similarly, the first influencer in Denmark has recently been taken to court for not using proper disclosures on advertisements (Hecklen & Ingvorsen, 2020). Other influencers have been criticised for buying followers (Meinecke & Bavnhøj, 2020). Those behaviours reflect the fact that influencers do not live up to the quality standards, which has a negative effect on the industry.

However, the level of professionalism varies among influencers. Our agency expert stresses that some influencers are more professional than others, and especially those with less number of followers need more guidance (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 9.24). In fact, she argues that some influencers act less professional as they behave unethically, which has a negative impact on the whole industry (Appendix 8, Agency expert, 27.23). Our more experienced full-time influencer Cana stresses that she follows the rules, which she considers to be appropriate (Cana, 33.01). Hence, it can be argued that some influencers who are newcomers and only work as influencers part-time are less professional, which impacts the industry's professionalism in general.

Therefore, we can argue that this self-employed-side-job-profession challenges the professionalisation of influencer marketing, which is why the development of personal skills and ethical rules and regulations may help the process of professionalisation. It can also be argued that if the influencers live up to these quality standards, they gain more professionalism, and hence have better opportunities to gain status and legitimacy. As previously stressed, this is fundamental to gaining professionalisation, as Wilensky argues: "any occupation wishing to exercise professional authority must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy" (Wilensky, 1964, p. 138). Both scientific and non-scientific knowledge can serve as

a technical base, but it is more likely to achieve professional authority, where it is valued by society (Wilensky, 1964). Thus, it will be difficult for influencer marketing to convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy and achieve authority if they do not develop personal skills and comply with regulations and ethical codes.

Another challenge which can be identified concerns the frustrated-development, which we found is a characteristic of influencer marketing. The influencer-job does not contribute to our influencers self-realisation as they feel they do not learn anything. This raises the question whether influencer marketing leans on a doctrine of knowledge which is "too general and vague", which Wilensky argues to be a barrier to professionalisation. Accordingly, such barriers prohibit occupations to achieve exclusive jurisdiction and autonomy (Wilensky, 1964). One could argue that influencer marketing is a simple practice of "taking a photo and posting it" and a "simple practice of promoting products" as general definitions on influencer marketing indicates. However, as our analysis has shown, influencer marketing is more than that. Influencers are selling personality and can be argued to be symbol creators who create symbolic content; hence they can be defined as creative people which profession can be categorised within the creative and cultural industries. However, if this is not the general understanding which society and influencers themselves employ, how can the industry ever win legitimacy? This emphasises, even more, the importance of defining the industry within the creative and cultural industries, respectively to its characteristics of creativity. This also puts an emphasis on the importance of establishing rules and regulations which do not kill creativity. Based on this, it becomes crucial to acknowledge influencer marketing as a creative industry in order to provide the industry with the best possible chances to achieve professionalisation and thereby save the industry from killing itself.

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to answer the research question: how can the influencer profession be defined within the cultural and creative industries, and why is it challenging to professionalise this industry?

In regard to the first part of the thesis research question, we have been able to demonstrate that influencer marketing has several characteristics in common with those of creative and cultural industries. First of all, our analysis has shown that influencers can be considered creative people, because they are highly motivated in producing creative products. They have started their influencer journeys as a hobby by sharing visual creative content on social media. Through an analysis of the creativity in influencers' product and processes, we argue that influencer marketing is a highly creative profession. Their content has shown to be highly creative products as they have high symbolic value due to its authenticity that is based on personal narratives and emotions. Thus, we argue that our influencers classify as symbol creators who produce symbolic content, in accordance to Hesmondhalgh's characteristics of creative industries. Moreover, our influencers have also shown to be creative in their working processes, as they have to tailor each collaboration to the specific campaign purpose, which means that they have to shift visual expressions and emotions every time. Thus, we argue their working processes to be characterised by non-standardisation and flexible tasks, which according to Jones et al 2012 depicts a highly creative process. Hence, we argue that influencer marketing can be considered as a highly creative industry.

Through an analysis of our influencers' labour we further demonstrate their fit with the characteristics of the creative industry. Through a conceptual analysis with Hesmondhalgh and Baker's (2011) creative labour model of good and bad work, we found several similarities of influencer marketing to creative labour. What Hesmondhalgh and Baker found to be perceived as good and bad work for creative people, is similar to what our influencers perceive as good and bad work, which strengthen our assumption, that they are creative people. With their studies, Hesmondhalgh and Baker demonstrated that creative people especially value autonomy and creative freedom and that they normally have to work their way up in a hierarchy within organisations to obtain it. What we found to be a unique aspect of influencer marketing is that our influencers are self-employed and enjoy a high level of autonomy and creative freedom. We also

found that the moment they are restrained from their autonomy and creative freedom, they may reject collaboration with the professional brands. The moment the job is putting pressure on them to the extent that they cannot concentrate on enjoy producing creative content, they prefer to limit their workload and typically prefer to have it as a side-job. Accordingly, we can conclude that our influencers are intrinsically motivated and prefer creative freedom and fun over money and pressure, why most of our influencers prefer to have the influencer job as a side-job. We also found that most of our influencers want to keep it as a side-job because it does not give them the opportunity for self-realisation, as they do not feel that the job contributes with enough knowledge. Therefore, besides having similar characteristics to creative labour, influencer marketing has its own unique characteristics of high autonomy within good work, and frustrated development within bad work. Hence, we can characterise influencer marketing as a self-employed-side-job-profession within the creative industries. In regard to this thesis first part of its research question, we, therefore, conclude that influencer marketing can be categorised as creative labour, and that it is creative in both product and process, why we argue that influencer marketing can be categorised within the cultural and creative industries.

In regard to this thesis second part of its research question, we conclude that influencer marketing is heading towards professionalisation; the process whereby occupations seek to become publicly recognised as a profession. We have been able to identify several steps which influencer marketing is going through that are typical for occupations in the process of professionalisation. First and foremost, we have come to the conclusion that influencer marketing is going through a professionalisation process which is happening from "within". Influencer marketing has emerged from technological development, which made it possible for consumers to share content on social media. The starting point for influencer marketing happened when brands started to pay consumers to advertise through their own content. This indicates a process of professionalisation as it is a "transition towards paid work" and represents the first step of professionalisation; when a job becomes a full-time occupation (Mieg, 2008). Other steps which according to Wilensky (1964) naturally follow from a professionalisation process are; establishing of training schools, university programs, state license and code of ethics. Some of those steps have started to evolve, as we can identify training-relatable schools in the form of business academies and influencer courses have emerged as a result to improve influencers skills in photos, editing, visual expressions, etc. Similarly, a union specifically for influencers has been founded,

who works on establishing common ethical guidelines for influencers and bloggers. Accordingly, we argue that influencer marketing has not undergone the full process of professionalisation in accordance to the steps of professionalisation which Wilensky presents (1964).

We have been able to identify five major possible challenges to influencer marketing's professionalisation; (1) an inconclusive definition of influencer marketing, (2) an industry with no rules, (3) influencers lack of development of skills and personal competencies, (4) influencers unwillingness to be organised, (5) and a missing acknowledgement of the professionalisation as a shared responsibility. We argue that those are the reasons why influencer marketing has not attained the proper "end-goal" of professionalisation as it has not been acknowledged as an industry yet. On the basis of our whole analysis we finally raise the question, whether influencer marketing has higher chances of becoming professionalised if acknowledged as a creative industry with respect to its own unique characteristics. We argue that such categorisation could shed light on the industry's capability and vulnerability, which will increase the chances of gaining legitimacy and diminish the chances of killing it.

Further research

This thesis has served to fill a gap in the currently published research agenda on influencer marketing and has studied influencer marketing in relation to creative industries and professionalisation. A qualitative research approach was chosen with semi-structured interviews of influencers and industry experts. This qualitative approach has given insight into how influencers and industry experts perceive and experience influencer marketing. The thesis has shown that the professionalisation of the industry is a complex process, which we need to take seriously in order to not kill the industry. The aim of the research has been to contribute with knowledge which can be valuable for different actors within the influencer marketing industry when dealing with the professionalisation of influencer marketing.

As the professionalisation of influencer marketing is a complex process, further research which addresses how the industry could be professionalised could be of great value. In this relation, other research approaches could be considered useful. Focus groups could, for instance, be very relevant, where different actors from the field could discuss different solutions to professionalise influencer marketing. Similarly, a quantitative research approach across influencers could contribute with a broader insight in the field, and possibly discover relevant issues to influencer

marketing's professionalisation which have not been prevalent in this thesis. Other researchers could also consider extending our research and include different types of influencers, as youtubers might create more creative and emotional content than fashion-instagrammers. As such, this paper as a starting point can provide a basis for further research.

6 REFERENCE LIST

Abidin, C. (2015). Communicative ❤️ intimacies: Influencers and perceived interconnectedness. *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, & Technology*, *8*. https://doi.org/doi:10.7264/N3MW2FFG

Abidin, C. (2016). Visibility labour: Engaging with Influencers' fashion brands and #OOTD advertorial campaigns on Instagram. *Media International Australia*, *161*(1), 86–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16665177

Alampi, A. (2019). The future is micro: How to build an effective micro-influencer programme. *Journal of Digital and Social Media Marketing*, *7*(3), 203–208.

Amabile, T. M. (1997). Motivating creativity in organizations: On doing what you love and loving what you do. *California Management Review*, *40*(1), 39–58. https://doi.org/10.2307/41165921

Amabile, T. M., & Pratt, M. G. (2016). The dynamic componential model of creativity and innovation in organizations: Making progress, making meaning. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, *36*, 157–183. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2016.10.001

Arendt, R. (2020). Influencer marketing: Er der en voksen til stede? [Influencer marketing: Is there an adolt present?][Webinar]. *Brand Heroes*.

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2018). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, *November 2017*, 0–1. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Backaler, J. (2018). Digital Influence. In *Digital Influence*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78396-3

Baitenizov, D., Dubina, I., Campbell, D., Carayannis, E., & Azatbek, T. (2019). Freelance as a creative mode of self-employment in a new economy (a literature review). *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, *10*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-018-0574-5

Blackett, T., & Boad, B. (1999). *Co-branding: The science of alliance* (T. Blackett & B. Boad (Eds.)). Macmillan Press.

Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2019). The perceived fit between Instagram influencers and the endorsed brand. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *59*(4), 440–454. https://doi.org/10.2501/jar-2019-030

Brinkmann, S. (2013). Research design in interview studies. In *Qualitative Interviewing, Chapter 2*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199861392.003.0002

Brinkmann, S. (2014). *Det kvalitative interview* (1st ed.). Hans Reitwels Forlag.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015a). *Interview Det kvalitative interview som håndværk [Interview: The qualitative interview as tools]* (3rd ed.). Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015b). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3. ed.). Sage.

Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2010a). *Kvalitative metoder: En grundbog*.

Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2010b). Kvalitet i kvalitative studier [Quality in qualitative studies]. In *Kvalitative metoder* (1st ed., pp. 489–499). Hans Reitwels Forlag.

Brown, D., & Hayes, N. (2008). *Influencer marketing: Who really influences your customers?* (P. (Firm) (Ed.)). ProQuest Firm.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5. ed.).

Carr, C. T., & Hayes, R. A. (2014). The Effect of Disclosure of Third-Party Influence on an Opinion Leader's Credibility and Electronic Word of Mouth in Two-Step Flow. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *14*(1), 38–50. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2014.909296

Caves, R. E. (2000). *Creative industries: Contracts between art and commerce*.

Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (2016). *A dictionary of social media*. Oxford University Press.

Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (2020). *A dictionary of media and communication*.

Chenecey, S. P. de. (2019). *The post-truth business: How to rebuild brand authenticity in a distrusting world*.

Childers, C. C., Lemon, L. L., & Hoy, M. G. (2019). #Sponsored #Ad: Agency Perspective on Influencer Marketing Campaigns. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *40*(3), 258–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2018.1521113

Christiansen, M. Ø. (2020). *Stressede youtubere er et "samfundsproblem": Snart kommer forbund med nye retningslinjer [Stressed youtubers are a 'society problem': Soon the union will introduce new codes of conduct]*. DR Kultur. https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/stressede-youtubere-er-et-samfundsproblem-snart-kommer-forbund-med-nye-retningslinjer

Christiansen, M. Ø., & Bjerge, R. (2020). *Kendt youtuber: Stress og depression er normalt i*

branchen [Famous youtuber: Stress and depression are common in the industry]. DR Kultur. https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/kendt-youtuber-stress-og-depression-er-normalt-i-branchen

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *68*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009

Erhvervsministeriet. (2019). *Vækstplan for de kreative erhverv: Et kreativt Danmark i front [A growth plan for the creative industries: A creative Denmark in the front]*. https://em.dk/media/13187/20456-em-vaekstplan-kreative-er-hverv-a4_web_enkeltsidet_04.pdf

Erz, A., & Heeris Christensen, A. B. (2018). Transforming consumers into brands: Tracing transformation processes of the practice of blogging. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *43*, 69–82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2017.12.002

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *17*(2), 138–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885

Feick, L. F., & Price, L. L. (1987). The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information. *Journal of Marketing*, *51*(1), 83. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251146

Forening: Bloggere bør følge et etisk kodeks [Union: Bloggers should comply with an ethical codex]. (2019). Berlingske. https://www.berlingske.dk/danmark/forening-bloggere-boer-foelge-et-etisk-kodeks

Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 242–256. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.004

Gürkaynak, G., Kama, Ç. O., & Ergün, B. (2018). Navigating the uncharted risks of covert advertising in influencer marketing. *Business Law Review*, *39*(1), 17–19. https://acces.bibl.ulaval.ca/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=128101605&lang=fr&site=ehost-live

Hartley, J. (2005). *Creative industries*. Blackwell Publishing.

Hartley, J., Potts, J., Cunningham, S., Flew, T., Keane, M., & Banks, J. (2013). *Key concepts in*

creative industries.

Hecklen, A., & Ingvorsen, E. S. (2020a). *Populær dansk influencer tiltalt for at lave skjult reklame på sociale medier [Popular Danish influencer indicted for making covert advertising on Social Medias]*. DR Penge. https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/penge/populaer-dansk-influencer-tiltalt-lave-skjult-reklame-paa-sociale-medier

Hecklen, A., & Ingvorsen, E. S. (2020b). *Populær dansk influencer tiltalt for at lave skjult reklame på sociale medier [Popular Danish influencer indicted for making covert advertising on Social Medias]*. DR Penge.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *18*(1), 38–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073

Hennig-Thurau, T., Hofacker, C. F., & Bloching, B. (2013). Marketing the Pinball Way: Understanding How Social Media Change the Generation of Value for Consumers and Companies. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*(4), 237–241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.005

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2002). *The cultural industries*.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013). *The cultural industries* (3. ed.).

Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2011). *Creative labour: Media work in three cultural industries*.

Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (2002). Active interviewing. In *Qualitative research methods, Darin Weinberg (ed.)* (pp. 112–125).

Hou, M. (2019). Social media celebrity and the institutionalization of YouTube. *Convergence*, *25*(3), 534–553. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517750368

Hoyle, E. (2001). Teaching as a profession. *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 15472–15476. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279885200031

Hughes, C., Swaminathan, V., & Brooks, G. (2019). Driving Brand Engagement Through Online Social Influencers: An Empirical Investigation of Sponsored Blogging Campaigns. *Journal of Marketing*, *83*(5), 78–96. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919854374

Jacobsen, B., Brinkmann, S., & Tanggaard, L. (2010). Fænomenologisk human og samfundsvidenskab [Phenomological human and social science]. In S. Brinkmann & L. Tanggaard (Eds.), *Kvalitative metoder: En grundbog* (pp. 192–197). Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Jones, C., Lorenzen, M., & Sapsed, J. (2012). Creativity and creative industries. In *Oxford Handbook of Creative Industries*.

Jones, C., Lorenzen, M., & Sapsed, J. (2015). Creative Industries: A Typology of Change. *The Oxford Handbook of Creative Industries*, 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199603510.013.030

Justesen, L., & Mik-Meyer, N. (2012). *Qualitative research methods in organisations studies* (1st ed.). Hans Reitwels Forlag.

Katz, E. (1957). The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-To-Date Report on an Hypothesis. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, *21*(1), 61–78. https://doi.org/10.1086/266687

Kielgast, N. (2018). *De unge stjerner er blevet big business [The young stars have become big business]*. DR Indland. https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/de-unge-stjerner-er-blevet-big-business

King, N., & Brooks, J. M. (2018). Doing Template Analysis: A Guide to the Main Components and Procedures. *Template Analysis for Business and Management Students*, 25–46. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473983304.n3

Kort nyt: Influencer-bureauer 2018. (n.d.). Kulturministeriet: Slots of Kulturstyrelsen. https://mediernesudvikling.slks.dk/index.php?id=38962

Levin, A. (2020). *Influencer marketing for brands: What YouTube and Instagram Can Teach You About the Future of Digital Advertising*. Apress. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4842-5503-2

Mathisen, B. R. (2017). Entrepreneurs and Idealists: Freelance journalists at the intersection of autonomy and constraints. *Journalism Practice*, *11*(7), 909–924. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2016.1199284

Mieg, H. A. (2008). Professionalisation. In F. Rauner & R. Maclean (Eds.), *Handbook of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Research* (Vol. 1). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-8347-1

Pringle, H. (2004). *Celebrity Sells*. John Wiley & Sons.

Reijmersdal, E. A. van, & Dam, S. van. (2020). How age and disclosures of sponsored influencer videos affect adolescents' knowledge of persuasion and persuasion. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01191-z

Rydhave Slots Efterskole. (2020). *Sociale Medier – Lær hvordan du bliver blandt de allerbedste*

[Social Media: Learn how to become one of the best]. https://www.rydhave.dk/interesseomraader/sociale-medier/

Shan, Y., Chen, K. J., & Lin, J. S. (2019). When social media influencers endorse brands: The effects of self-influencer congruence, parasocial identification, and perceived endorser motive. *International Journal of Advertising*, *0*(0), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1678322

Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological Theory*, *30*(3), 167–186. https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275112457914

van Driel, L., & Dumitrica, D. (2020). Selling brands while staying "Authentic": The professionalization of Instagram influencers. *Convergence*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856520902136

Wang, K., & Thomsen, J. (2019a). *Bureauer: Influencer marketing er "det vilde vesten" [Agencies: Infuencer marketing is "the wild west"]*. Mediawatch. https://mediawatch-dk.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/Medienyt/Web/article11180785.ece

Wang, K., & Thomsen, J. (2019b). *Sociale medier har gjort mund-til-mund-metoden til reklamemarked i vækst. [Social media has made the word-of-mouth approach into an advertising market in growth]*. Mediawatch. https://mediawatch-dk.esc-web.lib.cbs.dk:8443/secure/Medienyt/Web/article11180768.ece

Ward, J., & McMurray, R. (2016). *The dark side of emotional labour*.

Wilensky, H. L. (1964). The professionalization of everyone? *American Journal of Sociology*, *70*(2), 137–158.

7 APPENDIX