



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
International Business School

The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Attitudes

A Qualitative Study on What Reasons Affect
Millennials' Attitudes by Influencer Marketing in
Sweden

BACHELOR

THESIS WITHIN: *Business Administration*

NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15 hp*

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: **Marketing Management**

AUTHOR: *Johan Grafström (930328), Linnéa Jakobsson (951008) & Philip Wiede (940213)*

TUTOR: *Jenny Balkow*

JÖNKÖPING *May 2018*

Bachelor in Business Administration

Title The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Attitudes

Authors Johan Grafström

Linnéa Jakobsson

Philip Wiede

Tutor Jenny Balkow

Date 2018-05-21

Key terms Millennials, Influencer Marketing, Attitudes, Trust,

Loyalty, and Elaboration Likelihood Model

Abstract

Background

Influencer marketing has evolved from traditional marketing strategies such as print ads, celebrity endorsement, and digital marketing. Influencer marketing is in comparison to the previously used strategies a new phenomenon that had its major increase during 2016. An influencer is regarded as a person who has built up a lot of followers on a social media platform such as Instagram, and companies are today widely using these people as a marketing tool to reach out to their target audience in an effective way. Because of this increase in popularity and usage, the authors have investigated how millennial attitudes are affected by these promotional messages, as they are an influential group present online. This to get a better understanding of what is needed to be taken into consideration before starting a collaboration between a business and an influencer. After its rise in 2016, a new marketing regulation was introduced to make consumers aware of the content on social media that is regarded as paid partnership, which has changed how people perceive influencer marketing.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate; what reasons affect Swedish millennials' attitudes by influencer marketing on Instagram and blogs.

Method

To meet the purpose of the thesis, focus groups were conducted with participants from Jönköping University, belonging to the millennial generation. The data collected was analyzed using categorical indexing, to identify patterns and repeating topics that became apparent during transcription. This research used a deductive approach as it explores and adds on existing literature and an abductive approach during analysis.

Conclusion

The overall findings of this research indicate that millennials attitudes are affected by influencer marketing due to several reasons such as the alignment of promotions presented by an influencer, the degree of credibility and trustworthiness of the messages, as well as, an influencer's change in style.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everybody who has been involved in our thesis. Firstly, we would like to express our greatest gratitude to our tutor, Jenny Balkow, who has provided us with useful guidance and support throughout the whole writing process.

Secondly, we would like to address our appreciation to the members of our seminar group for their time and effort providing us with useful insights that helped us develop our thesis.


Furthermore, Anders Melander together with the teaching team at Jönköping International Business School have provided us with vital guidelines and instructions from the beginning to the very end.

Last but not least, we would like to sincerely thank all individuals who gladly participated in the focus groups that helped us deepen our knowledge to conclude our findings.

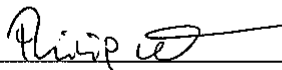
Jönköping, May 21st 2018



Johan Grafström



Linnéa Jakobsson



Philip Wiede

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problem Discussion.....	3
1.3 Purpose	5
1.4 Research question	6
1.5 Definitions.....	6
2. Frame of Reference	7
2.1 Influencer Marketing	7
2.2 Millennials.....	8
2.3 Attitudes	9
2.4 Recommendations through Electronic Word of Mouth.....	10
2.5 Trust and Credibility	11
2.6 Consumer Loyalty and Brand Loyalty	12
2.7 Elaboration Likelihood Model	13
2.8 ELM Connected to Influencer Marketing	15
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Purpose of Research Strategy	17
3.1.1 Research Approach.....	17
3.1.2 Research Method	17
3.2 Focus groups.....	18
3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews	18
3.2.2 Pilot Study	19
3.3 Sampling	19
3.3.1 Participants.....	19
3.3.2 Snowball Sampling.....	20
3.3.3 Plan and execution of sampling	21
3.4 How Interview Questions Were Formulated.....	22
3.5 Influencers	23
3.6 Setup and Execution of focus groups.....	23
3.7 Data analysis	24
3.8 Ethics.....	25
3.8.1 Transparency	25
3.8.2 Reliability	26
3.8.3 Validity	26
3.9 Summary of Methods	27
4. Empirical Findings	28
4.1 Findings from Interview guide	28
4.2 Hard to define an influencer	28
4.3 Trust and credibility	29
4.4 Gender differences among participants	32
4.5 Personal bond	32
4.6 Attitudes towards influencer marketing	33
5. Analysis	37
5.1 Millennials and Influencer Marketing	37

5.2 Attitudes	38
5.3 Trust and Credibility	40
5.4 Loyalty	43
5.5 Elaboration Likelihood Model Applied	44
6. Conclusion	47
7. Discussion	49
7.1 Theoretical implications	49
7.2 Practical Implications.....	49
7.3 Limitations	50
7.4 Suggestions for future research	51
8. References	52
9. Appendices	65
Appendix 1. Interview Guide Swedish	65
Appendix 2. Interview Guide English.....	67
Appendix 3. Focus Group Guidelines Swedish	69
Appendix 4. Focus Group Guidelines English.....	71
Appendix 5. List of influencers used in focus groups	73
Appendix 6. Pictures of influencers used in focus groups.....	75
Appendix 7. Testimony of credibility.....	77

1. Introduction

This section will cover an overview of the digital development, the history of traditional marketing and how it has evolved into how digital marketing is used today and the benefits of using influencer marketing. Moreover, the purpose is presented as well as this study's research question along with a problem discussion and definitions.

1.1 Background

The digital development is due to technical improvements, such as easier and cheaper access to the Internet (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Opreana and Vinerean (2015) argue that the ever-evolving Internet has led to major changes in how marketers work and use marketing tactics. Previous research states that traditional marketing, such as television, magazines, and radio, where the company tries to push out products is now seen as unstable (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Traditional marketing is being seen as outdated because the Internet has changed the market and it has lost the effectiveness (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Prior research also states that the technical development, together with the financial crisis in 2008, changed several companies' marketing strategies. During and after the financial crisis companies had to lower their costs in order to survive, but continuing making revenue was also important, therefore, marketers changed their strategies (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). They were looking for the most effective strategy with the lowest cost. One way to lower the costs but still deliver effective campaigns was to implement a social media marketing strategy (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). At this point, social media's purpose was entertainment but has since then evolved into one of the most common marketing strategies. Instagram is a social media platform where this type of marketing is used. There are several arguments for why companies implement a social media marketing strategy, for instance, social media is being used due to its time, cost, reach, and relations advantages (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). On the other hand, one could argue that social media marketing is being used since traditional ads do not reach today's target in an efficient way.

The development of digital technologies has led to that a majority of the world population gained access to the internet, over four billion people are online and 42% of the population are active on social media. 9 out of 10 of all the people on social media access their accounts through mobile devices (Kemp, 2018). Alongside the social media access,

e-commerce market has also continued to grow. In January 2015, 28% of the time people spend online is on different social media platforms (Bennett, 2015; Kemp, 2018). This number in mind, combined with the rise of online activity, assumptions can be made, that this number will remain at least the same. When the advertisement industry understood these numbers and the opportunities created, the industry adapted their strategy to reach its consumers. Advertisement on social media is not something new but in order for companies to become more effective and to raise their return on investment (ROI), influencer marketing arises as a result. It is well-known that the most efficient and trustworthy advertising is by recommendations from family and friends and 92% of consumers around the world trust an individual's recommendation rather than traditional advertising (Nielsen, 2012; Nielsen, 2015.b). Twitter together with Annalect executed a survey regarding the extent to which people tend to trust influencer's product recommendations. The result showed that 56% of the people asked, rely on recommendations from friends while 49% rely on product recommendations from influencers (Swant, 2016). A common medium that serves as a compliment for influencers to communicate these recommendations is through their personal blogs. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to understand why influencer marketing is so powerful.

Influencer marketing is applied when companies target key individuals, named influencers, who align with the brand values and operate in favor of the companies to find potential customers (More & Lingam, 2017). Furthermore, influencers often contribute new information and have the ability to affect attitudes and behaviors of others, such as help potential customers make a purchase decision (Liu, Jiang, Lin, Ding, Duan & Xu, 2015). An influencer must be trustful otherwise the brand risk to lose its credibility (Gerardo, 2017). Influencer marketing exploded during 2016 and throughout the year, Swedish companies invested in total more than half a billion SEK in total, into the phenomenon (Institutet för reklam- och mediestatistik, n.d.). The trend continued to grow during 2017 and was listed as one of the biggest trends of the year. According to several experts, influencer marketing is expected to continue to grow during 2018 (Ward, 2017). There exist several influencer marketing platforms, acting as an influencer agency to facilitate the process for businesses to choose the most suitable influencer for their marketing purposes, for instance, United Influencers and Cure Media (Cure Media, n.d.-b; United Influencers, n.d.). Additionally, as influencer marketing grew, a new regulation has been implemented, which states that marketers and influencers must state if it is a paid partnership (Konsumentverket, 2016). Influencer marketing is most exposed to millennials due to their frequent use of social media and the Internet (Jade, 2018).

Millennials, also called generation Y, refers to individuals born between 1980 and 2000 (Lu, Bock & Joseph, 2013). This generation is of interest due to their frequent and early exposure to technology and social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Blogs. They are known as digital natives rather than digital immigrants as they actively share and contribute content to other users on social media platforms (Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Grubler, Loureiro & Solnet, 2013). On average, millennials spend five hours per day on social media, which makes them an excellent target for influencer marketing online (Capcito, 2016). Millennials also hold a high level of disposable income with aggregate spending, meaning it is an attractive segment for businesses to target (Henrie & Taylor, 2009). Millennial consumers who recognize that they are exposed to persuasion tactics are more likely to develop negative attitudes towards the persuader (Campbell & Kirmani, 2000). Attitudes are created through evaluations of objects or persons and can be either negative or positive (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Hence, it is vital for businesses to understand the fast transformation on social media, millennials' content contribution and gain knowledge about their attitudes towards this marketing tool (Kilian, Hennigs & Langner, 2012). On the assumption that knowledge is gained, businesses and influencers can capitalize on the opportunity of millennials high online presence and high purchase power.

1.2 Problem Discussion

Even though influencer marketing might seem easy based on findings of Kilian et al. (2012), however, there are a lot of factors that need to be taken into consideration in order to create a successful marketing collaboration between influencer and the business. Some people argue that a connection between the product and the influencer's brand is vital for a good partnership or that a good relationship between an influencer and its followers, leads to a higher authenticity (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). Whereas, others argue that the higher amount of followers an influencer has, is important to create a better response from its followers (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017). Furthermore, an influencer with a higher amount of followers might be considered more credible compared to influencers with a smaller amount of followers. However, this thesis will focus on influencers with a follower-ratio with 10.000 and above. An influencer with a lower ratio than that will be considered as a micro-influencer (Cure Media, n.d.-c).

Influencer marketing is a part of native advertising since it naturally follows the flow on Instagram. Native advertising is thought to be non-disruptive and therefore creating a pleasurable practice for the consumers (Outbrain, n.d.). For instance, a friend's post on Instagram that shows a picture of a smoothie on a famous café in town and another post is a picture of an influencer together with a smoothie and a caption that says 'in collaboration with'. Both of these pictures could influence consumers. However, the difference is that the second picture is paid advertisement while the first one is not. Therefore, influencer marketing is said to be native, because the content suits well with all other content (Sharethrough, n.d.). The new regulation regarding paid partnership has decreased the nativeness on social media since one has to state that there is a collaboration between the influencer and the company. It makes it easier for the consumer to distinguish between paid partnership and non-paid content (Konsumentverket, 2016). One could see connections between stealth marketing and influencer marketing, however, stealth marketing is not legal in Sweden (Marknadsföringslagen, 2008:486). Stealth marketing refers to hidden marketing; the purpose is that the consumer should not be aware of the company's action to affect the consumer (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, millennials spend a lot of time online and on social media. In combination with their purchase power, they are an interesting population to study. More specifically, to investigate how influencer marketing affects their attitudes since they are frequently exposed to it. As opposed to the preceding group, generation X that includes individuals born 1960-1980, millennials represent a larger population and therefore a larger customer group (Moore, 2012). Because of its size and growing market power, it is an attractive target for businesses. Additionally, in the study made by Moore (2012) that investigates the media usage of millennials and differences between previous generations, findings show that millennials are much more likely to engage in social media and at integrating technology in their marketing purposes, furthermore, millennials are the second largest population on Instagram (SOI, 2017). In this thesis, influencer marketing will be investigated on two platforms, Instagram and blogs, due to the large share of influencer marketing that is conducted there (Asano, 2017). Online influencer marketing is further referred to as the utilization of influencer marketing on blogs and Instagram platforms.

The actual usage of influencer marketing is not something completely new, influencers and celebrities have been used in marketing purposes long before influencer marketing on social media and blogs evolved (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010; Scheer & Stern,

1992). There exists previous research on the topic of influencer marketing, both in an offline and online environment (De Veirman et al., 2017). Influencer marketing can easily be mistaken for celebrity endorsement, as they can be seen as relatively similar. Celebrity endorsement is a marketing strategy that focuses on communicating promotional messages using celebrities that have a related background to the product and transferring meanings of the brand to the customer. Celebrity endorsement is concerned with attaching a celebrity's name to a brand to create awareness (Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). An example of this is the collaboration between the Swedish hockey player, Henrik Lundqvist and the hair product brand Head & Shoulders (Rågsjö Thorell, 2018). Hence, the offline environment and the usage of celebrity endorsement is being seen as another marketing tool and will therefore not be investigated in this study. It could be argued that influencer marketing has evolved from stealth marketing and celebrity endorsement, without being illegal but using people with the ability to influence people rather than just being a celebrity (Tuten & Solomon, 2013).

As of 2016, when influencer marketing exploded, different social media platforms has been investigated, however, neither gender differences were investigated nor did the attitudes build on the connection between influencer and company brands. Moreover, prior research is done about gender differences in traditional advertising but do not cover influencer marketing (Sun, Lim, Jiang, Peng, & Chen, 2010). Previous research regarding millennials attitudes towards digital marketing such as pop-up ads has been conducted, showing that their attitudes become more positive when given an incentive (Smith, 2010). Additionally, research made by McCasland (2005) suggest that marketing to millennials and creating a relationship with them will result in loyalty. With the increase of influencer marketing together with the attractiveness of millennials and the new regulation, it is a subject for investigation.

1.3 Purpose

This thesis will investigate; what reasons affect consumer attitudes among Swedish millennials by online influencer marketing on Instagram and blogs. This to gain a deeper understanding of how consumers perceive the marketing tool and thereafter how it can affect their attitudes. It will be done by investigating different parameters such as trust, gender, and collaborations. The aspiration of this thesis is that it will serve as a foundation for how businesses could construct their influencer marketing in a suitable way, for consumers to hold a positive attitude.

1.4 Research question

What reasons affect consumer attitudes among Swedish millennials by online influencer marketing?

1.5 Definitions

A **blog** is an online journal website displaying information posts in reverse chronological order (Duemyer, 2017). The writer usually updates frequently with personal content and allows the reader to engage (Oja, 2018).

A **consumer** can be defined as a user of a product or service; however, it is not necessarily the buyer (WebFinance Inc., n.d.). A consumer in this thesis will be referred to as the person being exposed to influencer marketing and a potential consumer of the product advertised.

Instagram is a social media platform that is accessible on mobile devices, where users have the possibility to share photos and videos. Users also have the opportunity to like and comment on other people's posts (Miles, 2014).

A **target market** is a part of the people that a company aims to sell their products or services to. When defining a target market several aspects are considered, geography, psychographics, and demographics are three common ways to separate a target from the whole population (Kotler, Armstrong & Parment, 2011).

2. Frame of Reference

In the following section, previous research regarding influencer marketing, millennials, and other relevant literature are presented, in order to understand how attitudes are affected. Followed by an investigation of several theories and a deeper description of 'Elaboration Likelihood Model' which will be used in this thesis to analyze the findings.

2.1 Influencer Marketing

There are various definitions of influencer marketing, for instance, “a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to drive a brand’s message to the larger market” (Byrne, Kearney & MacEvill, 2017, p.1). Li & Du (2011) also believe that an influencer is similar to an opinion leader, they define it as an influential person with a strong personal brand. Together with the two mentioned definitions, the authors believe that it could be specified even further to describe influencer marketing in an online environment. Therefore, in this thesis it will be defined as follows; influencer marketing uses a person who has built up a lot of followers on a social media platform such as Instagram or blogs. Furthermore, the person is also being seen as trustable and brands use this person to spread product- and brand awareness (De Veirman et al., 2017).

Previous research has shown that influencers are more likely to be seen as credible and trustworthy compared to a paid advertisement, due to that it fits with the other content on the platform (Abidin, 2016). The authenticity leads to lower resistance towards the message communicated (De Vries et al., 2012). The fact that consumers can choose which influencers to follow, they allow which influencers to influence them, and that the consumers trust their influencer and their opinion should be seen as relevant within the subject (Hsu, Chuan-Chuan Lin & Chiang, 2013). De Veirman et al. (2017) state that one major challenge for brands still is to identify and choose the right influencers. In comparison to direct marketing, influencer marketing uses the power of Word-of-Mouth (WOM) to market their products or services indirectly (De Veirman et al., 2017; Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenthart, 2017).

According to existing literature, Electronic-Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has greater effects on consumer decision-making compared to traditional advertising (Goldsmith & Clark,

2018). Consumers have always valued other judgments higher than an advertiser and this is considered as one of the keys to influencer marketing (De Veirman et al., 2017). The difference between a celebrity and an influencer is that an influencer is more accessible but also much easier to relate to since the influencer often shares more of their personal life. This can be perceived as a personal relationship between the influencer and the follower and therefore, the follower is more likely to trust the influencer's opinions (Abidin, 2016). Previous research presents that it is important that the influencer is both well-known but also appreciated by the audience in order to execute great campaigns (Amos, Holmes & Stratton, 2008).

De Veirman et al. (2017), have also shown that having more followers has a positive effect on the influencer, simply because in that case, they seem more popular. The same research tested the sensitivity of followers/ followees ratio when an influencer has a lot of followers but only follows a few. According to the result, this might have a negative impact if the influencer has a huge amount of followers but just a few followees (De Veirman et al., 2017). Another research has investigated the influencer's role in public health. Recent research states that 32 % of participants get motivated and listen to advice for healthier food and 41% get motivated sometimes (Byrne et al., 2017). Even though most of the influencers do not have any dietitians' education or certificate (Byrne et al., 2017). This shows that influencers have the power to influence other people with their content. Due to the increase of using influencers as a marketing tool, companies have understood this opportunity to market their brand and products to their desired target audience.

2.2 Millennials

This study will focus on millennials as the desired audience, due to their high involvement in the digital landscape. The millennial generation is the one after generation X and there are various definitions of specific dates to when the millennial generation is born (Lu, Bock & Joseph, 2013). However, the most common age span it belongs to refers to individuals born between the years of 1980-2000 (Lu et al., 2013). This generation who grew up in an environment, ingrained with social networking, such as Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter, are known as digital natives. This generational segment is therefore heavily influenced by and reliant on the digital landscape, as well as the use of social media (Parment, 2008; Valentine & Powers, 2013). In comparison to the preceding generation X, millennials are more inclined to use their mobile to connect with brands and for social networking (Moore, 2012). Moreover, this generation has received extensive attention since it is a large and influential consumer segment with

high purchasing power and large consumption (Bush, Martin & Bush, 2004; Cui, Trent, Sullivan & Matinu, 2003). Additionally, marketing to this generation creates a profitable opportunity for companies as they, in turn, can influence purchases of their friends (Lu et al., 2013).

People belonging to the millennial generation have been described as being highly educated, individual and mature with a technological understanding (Syrett & Lammiman, 2003). Moreover, previous research shows that the millennial consumer is more critical towards companies that are not environmental friendly (Lu et al., 2013; Muralidharan & Xue, 2016). Millennials tend to create brand loyalty when they have an emotional attachment and tend to act disloyal to brands that do not satisfy that need (Veloutsou & McAlonan, 2012). In comparison to other generations, millennials are said to be more organized and have a balance between life and work. Most of their purchases are made on clothes, jewelry, health and beauty products (Barbagallo, 2003). They are also interested in distinctive brands with traits similar to their own, to enhance their self-expression (Gupta, Brantley & Jackson, 2010). Besides, their need for uniqueness in purchase intentions, previous studies have shown that endorsement can be used as a marketing tool to attract millennials interests (Qian Ying Soh, Rezaei & Gu, 2017; Branigan & Mitsis, 2014). When companies use influencers as their marketing strategy, this could imply attitude changes among millennials.

2.3 Attitudes

Attitudes can be regarded as evaluations people hold about objects, people, and themselves. The evaluations can be formatted on various experiences such as behavioral, cognitive or affective and these can guide behavioral, cognitive or affective processes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Attitudes also include the tendency of finding an object favorable or unfavorable (Smith, Brief & Stevens, 2008). Attitudes are formatted when an evaluation is assigned to an object and are part of the cognitive learning process when an individual gains experience with an attitude object, thereafter a belief about the object is made (Smith et al., 2008). The formation can also be affective and occurs with associations between objects and feelings, they are enhanced through repeated associations (Smith et al., 2008). Attitude change and persuasion have been studied by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) who state that motivation and ability are required to attend to persuasive agreements and process those (Smith et al., 2008). Depending on the motivation, information is processed either centrally or peripherally. Further research also states that attitudes are relatively resistant to change and a change in attitudes is more likely to occur when information is processed centrally (Smith et al., 2008).

An exploratory study on consumers' attitudes toward relationship marketing and its influence showed that a majority had a positive attitude towards relationship marketing (Jones, Reynolds, Arnold, Gabler, Gillison & Landerm, 2015). The attitude is likely to impact consumer responses favorably when such marketing is used. Relationship marketing can be defined as every marketing activity that is directed to establish, develop and maintain relational exchanges, such as loyalty (Jones et al., 2015). Since influencer marketing also is regarded as relationship building, a connection can be noted between the two and that positive attitude affects influencer marketing as well. Furthermore, Duffett (2017) distributed a survey, examining the influence of social media marketing on consumers' attitudes. The results of this study showed a positive attitude toward this marketing tool as well. As most influencer marketing is communicated via social media, this study shows that consumers at least hold a positive attitude towards the marketing tool.

2.4 Recommendations through Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) correlates to influencer marketing and can have similar effects (Liu et al., 2015). Tiago and Veríssimo (2014), highlights eWOM as an important factor for the digital development and for companies to adapt to a higher digital presence. Recommendation and reviews lay as a ground for WOM and alongside with the technical developments eWOM arise (Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz, & Jianzhou, 2017). EWOM can be defined as communication directed to consumers via the Internet, along with product recommendations and reviews (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). Instead of face-to-face conversations (WOM), people now use recommendations from anonymous sources, eWOM (Heinonen, 2011). Consumers are able to read other unknown customers reviews and comments about products, even though they have never met each other (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). EWOM became a very popular strategy after the recession in 2008 (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). New ways to communicate had been developed over the two last decades, consumers are now connected all the time. Both how consumer communicates and gathers information has been changed. EWOM allows consumers to gather information about products in different ways from different sources and companies have followed this trend and developed a more digital strategy (Hennig-Thurau, Malhotra, Frieger, Gensler, Lobschat, Rangaswamy & Skiera, 2010).

Previous research has shown that WOM recommendation is more effective compared to other marketing strategies (Weiss, 2014), due to the high level of credibility (Kim, Kandampully & Bilgihan, 2018). Furthermore, other studies have also proved that

consumers buying behavior gets more affected by other consumers rather than traditional marketing (Kempe, Kleinberg & Tardos, 2003). For 70% of customers, WOM is the most reliable and trustworthy type of advertising (Jabr & Zheng, 2014; Weiss, 2014). It is through existing literature known that people tend to be more doubtful towards eWOM since it is anonymous and therefore less credible (Heinonen, 2011; Cheung, Lou, Sia & Chen, 2009). Previous studies express that credibility is one of the most important keys when people adopt eWOM (Cheung et al., 2009). Since eWOM reach a wider audience researchers and marketers have been curious to understand the doubts of credibility (Xie, Miao, Kou, & Lee, 2011), and all the benefits are well known through previous research (Kim et al., 2018). Two other important benefits for eWOM is the fact that it excludes the limitations on time and location as it is online (Cheung et al., 2009).

On the other hand, Chu and Choi (2011) state that the ability to express opinions and share experiences on social media has reduced the anonymity and people, therefore, tend to see those expressions as more reliable. Jabr and Zheng (2014) found that reviews from opinion leaders improve sales. A trustable blogger, acting as an opinion leader to promote products or services, is a successful eWOM strategy (Hsu et al., 2013; Cheung et al., 2009). EWOM has been argued to be a part of influencer marketing, in terms of how influencers use their voice to spread information about a product or a brand with the purpose of affecting consumers buying behavior and attitudes (De Veirman et al., 2017). Earlier, eWOM has been thought to be non-paid ads independent of commercial influence, while influencer marketing is sponsored ads. Therefore, there are clear similarities but also obvious differences. Altogether, eWOM is a valuable marketing tool and especially in terms of marketing to millennials. Aquino (2012) states that recommendations and reviews are a large contributor required for millennials to make a purchase and highlights the importance of visual and contextual presentation of information, for millennials to process it intuitively.

2.5 Trust and Credibility

As mentioned, recommendations and eWOM builds upon trust and credibility (Kim et al., 2018) and an influencer must, therefore, be trustworthy in order to influence its followers. Source credibility defines whether a person identifies a claim as true, factual, and unbiased (Hass, 1981). Trust in relation to influencer marketing is highly relevant to this research. In an online environment, trust is defined as the establishment between two parties, the trustor, and the trustee. In this case, an influencer and a follower (Aljazzaf, Perry & Capretz, 2010). Creating trust from building personal relationships

with your customers is crucial for a successful marketing in this digital world (Jabr & Zheng, 2014; Weiss, 2014). Lee and Koo (2012) state that consumers are more likely to trust peer consumers recommendations than corporations and there is a higher chance of proceeding to action if fellow consumers have provided information about a specific product or service. Previous research also investigated the relationship between sponsored blog posts and how that will influence the attitudes towards the products and the brand itself (Lu, Chang & Chang, 2014). Results showed that positive attitudes were generated brands with high brand awareness (Lu et al., 2014). A high brand awareness also raises the level of trust and a consumer's confidence increase (Laroche, Kim & Zhou, 1996). This statement is later on supported by further research, which states that if brand awareness is high, consumers would be more reasonable to trust the claim (Lu et al., 2014). If a blog reader perceives messages as biased, or that the consumer's recommendation is not authentic the level of credibility decreases (Lee & Koo, 2012).

Previous literature concludes that there is a positive correlation between attitude and trust (Macintosh & Lockshin, 1997; Suh & Han, 2003). Trust is the fundamental feature of a marketing strategy aimed at blogs (Chen, Tsai, Kou, & Ching 2008). Blogging is based on trust and the readers most likely trust the content on a blog and get influenced by the blogger, the interpersonal trust, therefore, influence people (Chen et al., 2008). A consumer trusts their influencer and, therefore, trusts the influencer's recommendation. This leads to that both attitudes towards the product and buying behavior gets affected (Hsu et al., 2013). Furthermore, as mentioned above, since the act to start following an influencer is an active choice, the consumer already trusts the chosen influencer (Hsu et al., 2013). With this in mind, the consumer also trusts the influencer's opinions and allows to be influenced.

2.6 Consumer Loyalty and Brand Loyalty

As following an influencer is an active choice, positive attitudes and loyalty are most likely to be created to the influencer after a longer time period (Hsu, Huang, Ko & Wang, 2014). Similarly, for products and brand loyalty that refers to one's tendency to repeatedly purchase the same brand over time but is also a psychological commitment or attitudinal bias a consumer has towards a specific brand. Thus, refuses to switch from this brand even if a better substitute is available (Schoenbachler, Gordon, & Aurand, 2004). Oliver (1999, p.34) has defined loyalty as "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or re-patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future". Previous research shows that there are several key determinants of brand loyalty; brand attitude, brand trust, value for money, and customer satisfaction (Pappu & Quester, 2016). Companies

and influencers are today collaborating with different objectives such as, strengthen the brand value of the organization but also the brand of the influencer, increase product sales and profit to reach a different audience. This type of collaboration between two brands is called co-branding. The term is defined by Blackett and Boad (1999), as a strategic cooperation between two or more brands with the purpose of creating a positive synergy effect, as well as, an increased value for both parts involved. To meet these objectives, it is important that the brands involved are relatively similar regarding identity and image to avoid confusion among the consumers (Xiao & Lee, 2014). Moreover, consumers are affected by the co-operation of the brands and Xiao and Lee (2014), argue for the fit of the brands and the consumer loyalty. Therefore, one must be careful when choosing these types of collaborations. For this study, it is applicable that companies choose influencers wisely and vice versa. The wrong choice of partnership could cause difficulties when consumers are experiencing a hard time relating to it, thus, a negative effect is created and consumers might change their attitudes as well as decrease their consumer loyalty towards the brand (Xiao & Lee, 2014).

According to Kirkpatrick (2016), Twitter has released data analytics from more than 800 Twitter users that reveal the effect of branded tweets. At this social media platform, influencers are almost as trusted as friends. The purchase intent increased 2.7 times with branded tweets as over the exposure of not seeing branded tweets. Although, adding influencer tweets to branded tweets resulted in a significant increase with 5.2 times higher purchase intent (Kirkpatrick, 2016). This type of branding is also visible on Instagram in terms of collaborations and is seen as a paid partnership. It is clear that this strategy has an impact on consumer attitudes and therefore the factors behind attitude change should be understood before constructing branded collaborations with influencers.

2.7 Elaboration Likelihood Model

There are several theories investigating attitudes and attitude change, for instance, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Social Judgement theory (SJT), Cognitive Dissonance (CD) and Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Researchers have used TRA in order to understand behavior intention through attitudes toward a specific behavior and social norms, which are the expectations of other people (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, this theory will not be used in this study since it includes investigation of social norms, which the authors believe does not contribute to this research. SJT is used to explain attitude change in a process of two stages. Firstly, a

judgment between messages in relation to one's own position. Secondly, the attitude change occurs and depends on the difference towards one's own position (Kiesler, Collins & Miller, 1969). Individuals are performing this in their subconscious, comparing every new idea with their present to evaluate the attitude on a continuous scale. Whether or not to act upon the idea, depends on the difference towards one's own attitude position (Sherif, Sherif & Nebergall, 1965). This theory could be suitable as it involves a judgment of relevance but as the individuals are to evaluate their attitudes on a continuum, the self-evaluation can be seen as rather difficult for the participants to explain. Therefore, the authors consider that using this theory, attitudes will not be explicit.

Festinger's theory about cognitive dissonance from 1957, describes dissonance and consonance as cognitions such as opinions, beliefs, and knowledge. Two cognitions are dissonant with each other if they do not match (Festinger, Riecken, & Schachter, 2012). Thus, this theory could be visualized in context as, for example, a person following an influencer who is constantly posting content about textile products made of fur that are not in line with the animal rights, as of which a consumer do not share the same values. The cognition of this will be the fact that the consumer is well aware of this negative effects the production of the jacket causes, but does not take any action against it. Instead, the person will still continue following the influencer or even worse, place a purchase of the jacket and step away from their own personal values. Even though this theory is general in terms of the many areas of application, it is still specific as it investigates individuals' cognitive discomfort when they have faced situations that are not in line with their attitudes. Therefore, this theory is not believed as suitable for this purpose, as it focuses on cognitive discomfort.

ELM is suggested to provide a useful conceptualization of how consumers are persuaded to attitude change by promotional messages (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). As influencers present sponsored posts on Instagram and blogs, promoting products, it can be a useful model for investigating how influencer marketing affects consumer attitudes. It is a widely used model in advertising, marketing, and consumer behavior literature, which suggests its usefulness and reliability (Schumann, Kotowski, Ahn, & Haugtvedt, 2012). ELM was developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) and provides a framework for the persuasion process based on variables of a source, message, recipient, and the context. The model suggests two different routes of persuasion, central or peripheral route. Depending on the consumer's motivation and ability to process a promotional message, elaboration can be either high or low and determine which persuasive route the consumer will take. The central route suggests that elaboration likelihood is high,

meaning the consumer has the ability to process information and motivation exists. Whereas, the peripheral route involves low elaboration likelihood with little ability and motivation for the consumer to process information. Celebrities are often used as a peripheral cue and are important in persuasion process when consumers are not sufficiently motivated to process the promotional message (Edson Escalas & Bettman, 2015). The authors believe that this model is the most suitable to provide a foundation for the purpose. In the following section, a description of how ELM connects to influencer marketing is presented.

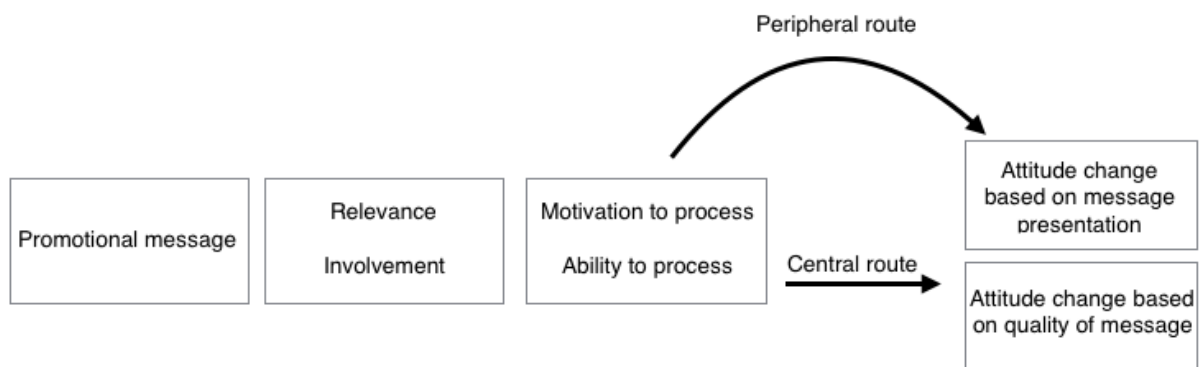


Figure 1: Elaboration Likelihood Model based on Petty and Cacioppo (1983, p.6).

2.8 ELM Connected to Influencer Marketing

Consider a consumer following an influencer on Instagram or any other type of social media that is exercising influencer marketing by sharing pictures and posting reviews about products to promote them. For this situation to be applied to ELM, the consumer must evaluate its motivation and ability to process the information. The evaluation is based on the relevance of the message and degree of involvement of the consumer (Schumann et al., 2012). The relevance can be argued depending on the legitimacy or alignment of the influencer's brand with the product. While the involvement can be considered active since the consumer has chosen to follow the influencer due to personal interest. Therefore, the consumer proceeds into having ability and motivation to process the promotional message and the central route for persuasion will be taken, which leads to a change in attitude (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

An example is a Swedish influencer and fashion blogger Kenza Zouiten, who has one of the most visited blogs in Sweden and currently 1,7 million followers of Instagram (Zoutien, 2018; Cure Media, n.d.-a). Besides, Kenza is also the co-founder of the online clothing shop Ivy Revel, which products' are frequently visible on her blog (Rutherford,

2016). Applied to the ELM, a consumer actively following Kenza and has a personal connection to her, would be more likely to have the motivation and ability to purchase the products promoted via her media channel since those are of high relevance and involvement. The central route will be followed towards an action or attitude change.

However, a consumer that follows an influencer who promotes a product that is not in line with the influencers' personal brand, the promotional message can be argued to be less relevant and no involvement, the motivation and ability for the consumer to process become low. Due to low motivation and ability to process information, the consumer will follow the peripheral route. This route highlights the quality of the message to influence the consumer, as the credibility of the influencer becomes less (Petty, Heesacker & Hughes, 1997). In this case, the consumer will place less attention on the promotional message and more to the source and how the message is presented. Thereafter, the consumer will make an evaluation about the promotion, as it is not consistent and a negative attitude might occur. Based on this theory, the study will show when promotional messages presented by online influencers are considered relevant by the consumers, in this case, millennials. The study will also show millennials' motivation and ability to assess such message and if they will proceed to attitude change, both through the peripheral route or the central route. Hence, this model will be used for analyzing the findings in order to understand how consumer attitudes are affected by influencer marketing, which can indicate the importance of a connection between the product and the influencer's brand. Furthermore, if and why a consumer decides to unfollow an influencer will be analyzed and explained through the ELM, depending on the connections and the level of trust as well as credibility.

3. Methodology

In the following section, data collection and purpose of research strategy will be presented. Since this is an exploratory research, data collection in this study will be done from primary data collected through focus groups. How the interviews were structured as well as what sampling method that has been used is also explained.

3.1 Purpose of Research Strategy

3.1.1 Research Approach

To begin with, this research started off with a deductive approach. A deductive approach aims to test an existing theory's validity based on empirical observations (Crowther & Lancaster, 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015). Even though deductive reasoning is more commonly used in quantitative studies, it was decided to test the empirical findings according to ELM (Crowther & Lancaster, 2009). There exist other research approaches such as inductive which in contrast to deductive begins with collecting data, analyzing it, with the aim to develop a new theory. However, inductive approach is less applicable when there is a need to generalize (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016), and will therefore not be used. Throughout the research process and when the analysis of data started, the research proceeded into a more abductive approach, as the authors found some surprising elements that could not be explained by ELM. An abductive approach has similarities of both deductive and inductive but is not a mere combination of the two (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). Instead, it allows the authors to move back and forth between data and theory, as it has the aim of recognizing themes and patterns, while concurrently testing a theory with additional data. Thus, as elements occurred that could not be answered by existing research, this thesis transitioned from a deductive approach to a more abductive approach and includes components of both.

3.1.2 Research Method

The reason for the choice of intended research method, focus groups, is the strong belief that collecting qualitative data from the interviewees will be of higher value than other alternatives. For instance, conducting an online survey. With the intended purpose of examining consumer attitudes regarding influencer marketing, the authors believe that there might be limitations regarding the collection of information if the procedure would be carried out through, for example, an online survey. This is due to the complexity of the subject in the matter and one might not fully reveal the correct information. To clarify

this, by investigating how influencer marketing affects consumer attitudes by executing focus groups, it will allow the possibility to study facial expressions, tone of voice and other general behavior of the participants which is not possible through questionnaires. Furthermore, a possibility of asking follow-up questions will allow the interviewees to elaborate. Moreover, the intention of this process is to add another tool when conducting a focus group, namely an interview guide. An interview guide is a type of questionnaire used in interviews to help the researcher with the structure of the interview (Saunders et al., 2016). The guide should include questions and topics that have to be carried out during the conversation, usually in a particular order.

3.2 Focus groups

Focus groups will be the method used for collecting primary data. It is defined as numerical or non-numerical information that is being gathered directly by the researcher from surveys, experiments, and observations. The information has not been previously published and is a component of the researcher's intellectual capital (Duignan, 2016). Moreover, a focus group is a relatively small number of participants, usually 8-12, being interviewed and led by a moderator with minimum participation who guides the line of discussion with the desired purpose (Halkier, 2010). The aim of the process is to create a discussion among the participants to encourage them to express their feelings about a subject (Duignan, 2016). Moreover, due to time constraint, it was decided that the focus groups will consist of four to six participants, as smaller groups also have been proven successful (Halkier, 2010). It is also believed that a smaller number of participants, along with a semi-structure of the focus group, will provide a better discussion and allow time for everyone to speak. Although, there exist limitations with collecting data through focus groups. For example, some participants might feel it is intimidating discussing such topic in a group and rather agreeing and confirming to the group norm instead of fully disclose their personal opinions (Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, since data collected will only come from a small sample, a total of 17 participants, generalizations of attitudes from the participants will not be possible.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

When conducting interviews there are different approaches to follow; structured, unstructured, semi-structured. Depending on the purpose of research, the different approaches will be more or less effective. In order to suit the purpose of understanding how consumer attitudes are affected by influencer marketing, semi-structured interviews were chosen to use, that is a combination of the two different ones. Unlike a structured interview where the same questions are asked in the same order to all the respondents

(Corbetta, 2003), the semi-structured approach is more flexible and an interview guide is commonly used in this case (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). Moreover, unstructured interviews are informal. They do not engage or require any framework for questioning to be followed as the other approaches do (Ryan et al., 2009). The interview guide may be constructed with pre-determined topics and questions but is also allowing unanticipated responses and issues to emerge by using the technique of open-ended questions, this means that one might omit some questions depending on the specific context that is encountered in relation to the research topic (Saunders et al., 2016). In the same way, questions may be added to explore the research question and topic to gather more rich data. The benefit of this approach is the possibility to explore new paths and interests that may not have been considered initially (Gray, 2004). Both unstructured and semi-structured interviews are used to gather data that will be evaluated qualitatively. These data are likely to not only discover the 'what' and 'how' of but also place more emphasis on 'why' (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.2.2 Pilot Study

In an early stage of the research process, it was decided to conduct a pilot study. The reason for this was simply to gain real-life experience about how the actual focus group should be structured and earn knowledge about the different scenarios that would arise during the session. By conducting a pilot study and analyzing the results, the research group gained knowledge about positive focus points but also questions that need improvement before the execution of the focus groups. From this, the authors are then able to draw a more qualified decision how further focus groups should be constructed.

3.3 Sampling

3.3.1 Participants

A requirement for participant selection, to fulfill the purpose of this thesis, is that they should belong to the population of social media users, such as having access to the Internet and an Instagram account but also following influencers. This requirement is essential since the participants need to understand the social media platforms and are exposed to influencer marketing. However, both active and less active users are of interest in order to detect differences in attitudes between the two. As recognized by Pew Research Center (2010), millennials fit the requirement, as they are social networking users. Therefore, both females and males born 1980-2000, were asked to take part in the study. Since the study delimits to Sweden, only Swedish students from Jönköping University were asked to participate. The different sampling techniques that have been used to find the right participants is described in the following section. A list of all focus

group with characteristics is shown in Table 1. Throughout this study, the participants are differentiated in terms of F1, F2, M1, M2, which is an abbreviation for male and female since the participation of these focus groups are fully anonymous. The table shows which focus group the different participants were participating in, the duration of the session, how many influencers each of them were following on social media and also whether the participants had a positive or negative attitude to influencer marketing.

Abbreviation	Gender	# of Influencer Followees	Group	Duration	Meeting place	Date	Positive/Negative
F1	Female	10	1	01:09:56	Jönköping University	2018-04-05	Negative
F2	Female	70	1	01:09:56	Jönköping University	2018-04-05	Positive
F3	Female	50	2	00:48:44	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Positive
F4	Female	30	2	00:48:44	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	N/A
F5	Female	50	2	00:48:44	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Positive
F6	Female	20	3	00:56:17	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	N/A
F7	Female	20	4	00:42:18	Jönköping University	2018-04-12	Neutral
F8	Female	30	4	00:42:18	Jönköping University	2018-04-12	Positive
M1	Male	3	1	01:09:56	Jönköping University	2018-04-05	Negative
M2	Male	2	1	01:09:56	Jönköping University	2018-04-05	Negative
M3	Male	50	2	00:48:44	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Positive
M4	Male	35	3	00:56:17	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Neutral
M5	Male	15	3	00:56:17	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Neutral
M6	Male	25	3	00:56:17	Jönköping University	2018-04-10	Neutral
M7	Male	5	4	00:42:18	Jönköping University	2018-04-12	Positive
M8	Male	5	4	00:42:18	Jönköping University	2018-04-12	Neutral
M9	Male	15	4	00:42:18	Jönköping University	2018-04-12	N/A

Table 1: List of Focus Groups

3.3.2 Snowball Sampling

When selecting upon sampling methods, there are different techniques to choose between and the choice of sampling technique should be decided upon depending on the research question and the type of data that is ought to be collected (Saunders et al., 2016). Variables such as; time, money, access, and the size of the sample are all factors that need to be taken into consideration when selecting the most appropriate sampling technique. Three different non-probability sampling techniques were investigated when selecting the most appropriate sample method. Purposive, snowball, and self-selection sampling. For purposive sampling technique, one needs to be subjective when selecting participants that will best enable an answer to the research question(s) and to meet the objectives of the research (Saunders et al., 2016). The other two are included in volunteer sampling and a subjective approach is also applied to these techniques when choosing samples. Snowball sampling differ from self-selection and purposive since in this technique, participants are volunteered to be part of the research rather than chosen, as the case is for self-selection sampling when each of the participants is allowed to identify their desire to be included in the research (Saunders et al., 2016). Snowball sampling is commonly used when the selection of participants is difficult to meet the desired

population. For this, there are four different steps to take into consideration when this issue arises;

1. “Make contact with one or two cases in the population.
2. Ask these cases to identify further cases.
3. Ask these new cases to identify further new cases (and so on).
4. Stop when either no new cases are given or the sample is as large as is manageable.” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 303).

Since focus groups were the method for collecting data for this study, the authors reached out to a millennial that fulfilled the requirements, who further on brought friends to the focus group, meaning snowball sampling was used. This will be described more in detail in the next section. Neither purposive sampling nor self-selecting sampling would have been appropriate due to the absence of single interviews.

3.3.3 Plan and execution of sampling

To maximize the sessions as much as possible, the authors needed to clearly plan the different objectives of the process. At first, the research group started with deciding how many participants that should be included and what type of demographics to choose. There was a need to decide whether the focus groups should be of only men, women or both. The decision was a mixed group of male and female individuals was based on the assumption that the most qualitative information will be gathered when one is able to observe how the different gender is acting and responding to the questions asked. As well as fulfill the purpose of detecting different attitudes of influence marketing between the genders, but also due to neglect from the academic body of investigating gender differences.

For gathering participants to the focus groups, the authors suggested potential participants to reach out to. The suggestions were based on factors such as none of the authors have got any close connection to this person, is active on social media, and is doing their studies at Jönköping University. These factors were important as the intention was to create interesting discussions about the topic of influencer marketing by participants that not necessarily share the same values, neither is similar to the authors of this thesis. As well as, not familiar with the field of study on beforehand and are already active on the different social media platforms. This to avoid bias during the interview to make sure the results are being objective in terms of avoiding the participants to be led or controlled by the moderators’ opinions. Although, there could

be positive aspects of inviting participants that are familiar with the authors if the aim of the focus group is to create a free discussion among the respondents. Previous familiarity with the moderators could serve as an ice-breaker and thus, make it more comfortable for the participants to express their feelings and own opinions about the topic. When being aware of this, the authors wanted to have a focus group of four to six people and asked the first a pre-known participant to bring friends so the group was existing of at least two females and two male participants. The pilot study consisted of four people in total, two females and two males.

3.4 How Interview Questions Were Formulated

The process of formulating questions was made thoroughly based on ELM in order to understand how consumers' attitudes are affected by influencer marketing. For instance, questions regarding participants' activity on social media, the underlying reasons and motivation to follow an influencer and the estimated degree of affection by influencers were included. As well as questions about whether participants had unfollowed influencers and why. To illustrate an example of how participant's motivation to start following an influencer questions such as; "Why do you follow influencers?" and "Do you want to recognize yourself in an influencer?" were asked. The responses of these show that the participants have an interest in the person they follow and a motivation to be influenced. Thereafter, questions regarding a product promoted by influencers and the connections between these were asked to assess whether motivation towards the influencer has increased or decreased. If motivation has decreased, the route taken is dependent on the presentation of the message. On the other hand, if motivation has increased or remained, the central route is taken because of a high quality promotional message.

Since this is an exploratory research, it is of high importance to reflect upon what information that should be obtained from the participants and therefore questions were needed to be constructed accordingly. The exact questions are attached as *Appendix 1 and 2*. Note that some of the questions were formulated in a quantitative manner to lay as a foundation for the discussion such as "Do you follow influencers?" and "How many?" Since this approach is a semi-structured interview, the interview guide was followed by questions based on the response from the participants. Interview guidelines can be found *Appendix 3 and 4*.

3.5 Influencers

It was decided to present pictures with names of different Swedish influencers during the focus groups. The use of the pictures will be described in more detail, in the setup and execution paragraph. The sampling of influencers was made during a brainstorming session within the research group where possible influencers were written down on paper and a list was made. In addition to this, individuals belonging to the target market were asked to add and suggest other influencers. This resulted in a list of 30 different Swedish influencers that were later on narrowed down to 20 and included a mix of male and female influencers and lifestyle bloggers. A list of these influencers with a short description can be found in *Appendix 5*.

3.6 Setup and Execution of focus groups

The pilot study really created a room for discussion and the created interview structure was also used for the original focus groups. As mentioned, snowball sampling was used to gather participants with a minimum of four in each group. The focus groups were held at Jönköping University and the sessions were all set up in the same manner and will be explained more thoroughly. To facilitate the data gathering and maintain a high quality of the focus group, the research group was assigned to different roles on beforehand. One secretary who took notes of interesting facts and the other two were acting as moderators that led the session together by asking follow-up questions and made sure the participants stayed on-topic.

1. Participants were welcomed to the session and the research group expressed their gratefulness for taking part of this research. They were supplied with coffee or other beverages and the first minutes was for small talking to break the ice and to make the participants feel comfortable.
2. Furthermore, the participants were given an interview guide with 11 questions to answer both open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions and were asked to sign an informed consent together with an acceptance that the interview was being recorded. This can be found in *Appendix 1 and 2*.
3. After the participants were done with the interview guide, the moderator started asking follow-up questions based on the responses that had been to get a deeper understanding about the specific area and to allow the participants to start a discussion among them.
4. The session was later finished with a presentation of pictures of the chosen influencers and now the participants had to assess their familiarity with them.

Each one of them was asked to choose three influencers they would like to be recommended a product or service from as well as choose three they would not like to receive recommendations from. The pictures can be found in *Appendix 6*. The reason for the choice to include this as a part of the interview was due to the difficulty for participants to come up with several people one might follow and this might not reveal one's attitudes towards the influencers. Moreover, the authors expected this to evoke in an interesting discussion about the participant's attitudes towards the influencers.

The atmosphere in the focus groups was relaxed but still informative. Most participants enjoyed discussing the topic and all had a lot of interesting inputs. It appeared as all participants received enough time for them to express themselves and answer the questions. In the end, they were also asked if they had anything more to add when the session was ending.

3.7 Data analysis

In order to properly analyze the findings, the authors implemented cross-sectional and categorical indexing for structuring the data (Mason, 2002). It involves creating a system for arranging the data, meaning identifying repeating topics and patterns that became appeared during the study (Mason, 2002). This method for analysis of data was chosen since all data was text-based as the sound recordings were transcribed. Therefore, it was clear to create an overview of the data. The development of cross-sectional index was created through extensive reading and interpretation of data. Assessment of variables in ELM such as relevance, involvement, motivation and ability to process, as well as attitude change, either based on presentation or quality of message was made by interpretations by the authors.

Once the focus groups were conducted, the authors of this thesis transcribed the recorded material individually and thereafter started identifying relevant topics. The authors later met to compare and discuss the different topics they had found, creating triangulation. In order to realize when the data collection is sufficient and stop the collection of new data, the data analysis should be an ongoing process throughout the study (Williamson, 2002). This allowed the authors to either stop or continue the data collection at any point.

3.8 Ethics

In order to provide a research with high standards, it is essential that ethical issues are taken into account. Especially when qualitative research is conducted, as it involves human interaction and a trust-based relationship between the authors and the participant (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Initially, when gaining access to the participants, it is important that their participation is voluntary, they are not harmed and are informed about the research. Therefore, participants were gathered using snowball sampling and were not pressured to take part. Moreover, the participants had the informed choice of the right to withdrawal at any point during the study. Since the study carried a semi-structured interview design, participants were encouraged to express their answers and feelings freely, as the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of their thoughts. The authors were aware of the emotional risk that such a design carries and that the participants might perceive it as uncomfortable. Therefore, they were informed about their right to privacy and anonymity to decrease those feelings. Participants are therefore as mentioned, referred to, in the transcripts and quotations, as pseudonyms, for example, F1, F2, M1, M2, indicating male and female number 1 etc. rather than their names. Using pseudonyms also increases the confidentiality of the research as no information about the participants were disclosed (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked to sign an informed consent, an agreement to participate and allow data to be collected, also provided was information of the research as well as potential benefits and risks to take part. They were also informed that the interviews were being recorded. As mentioned previously, the interview guide had been pilot tested to ensure easy to follow and that no questions were leading. Then the interviews were carried out. Afterward, the participants were debriefed about the full purpose of the study and they were given the opportunity to ask questions.

3.8.1 Transparency

The most overarching concern for establishing quality in qualitative research is transparency and it lays the groundwork for other means to establish quality, such as reliability and validity (Hiles, 2012; Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Transparency concerns the writing of the research in terms of presentation and dissemination of findings, meaning the methods and procedures used, needs to be clear and explicit (Hiles, 2012). Transparency also goes hand in hand with reflexivity and the authors' ability to reflect upon their own assumptions and decisions as it is a potential source of bias. Therefore, a thorough explanation of the chosen research design and strategies, selection of

participants, collecting and interpretation of data has been carefully explained. Transparency can further be laid out in three dimensions, data transparency, analytic transparency and production transparency (Moravcsik, 2014). Data transparency refers to the empirical data gathered. Analytic transparency is the analysis of data and the evidence to support a claim. Lastly, production transparency regards the information of methods used in the research (Moravcsik, 2014). Application of these dimensions, providing a clear presentation of data procedures, interpretation of results and methods used, facilitates the replication processes for other researchers (Hiles, 2012). By being transparent in qualitative research reports, how data from focus groups were gathered, transcription of interviews and testimony of credibility, it also indicates to the participants that ethical principles are followed (Roulston, 2016).

3.8.2 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with consistency and replicability of generating the same results using the same instrument. The idea of reliability is not used to the same extent in qualitative research as quantitative research since it is more subjective, with a specific context and is more difficult to replicate, compared to a questionnaire in quantitative research (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Still, to assure some level of reliability, there are some aspects to consider. The interviewers must be aware of their actions to avoid interview bias (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, the interviewers in this study were careful not to impose their own beliefs while probing the participants. Response bias is another aspect to consider and it might occur if the participants feel insecure about sharing too much personal information (Saunders et al., 2016). Since the topic regarded attitudes of influencer marketing, this could be the case. Although as snowball sampling was used, a participant was asked to bring other participants that he or she knew. The response bias can, therefore, be regarded to be low as the participants were familiar with each other.

3.8.3 Validity

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), validity in qualitative research involves three aspects, internal- and external validity and relevance. Using response validation or member checking and asking for comments during the focus groups established this. Furthermore, a testimony of credibility was signed by the authors to ensure the truthfulness of the data collected. This is attached as *Appendix 7*. External validity, also generalizability, is when findings are applicable to other settings or a larger population (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Providing generalizations of qualitative research can be difficult as a study is often conducted in a unique setting. However, well-formulated method, theory, and circumstances regarding the context can allow for some

generalizability. The final aspect of validity is relevance and it means that the research study must be meaningful and useful for others. Due to the increasing attention to influencer marketing as a marketing tool and consumer's attitudes towards it, the findings of this thesis could be useful to others of interest in this field.

Another aspect that can improve quality of research is triangulation, which is a combination of several perspectives to gain a complete understanding of the subject (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). In this study, data triangulation, methodological triangulation and investigator triangulation is used. Data triangulation is the usage of different data sources such as collecting data from different people at different times. The study consisted of four focus groups, with minimum of four people in each, performed at different times. Methodological triangulation occurs when more than one method is used in the same study. However, in this study, the focus group interviews and the connected interview guide, is regarded as only one method. Investigator triangulation means that different observers and interviewers are used to minimize bias (Flick, 2007). Therefore, all three authors were present during the focus group interviews and thereafter, analyzed the observations and transcribed the recordings individually and later gathered to summarize all findings. The use of triangulation can enhance the quality of the research if similar results are provided.

3.9 Summary of Methods

In this study, a deductive approach was used to begin with, as it grounds in ELM. The purpose of this thesis is to study how attitudes are affected by influencer marketing, among millennials in Sweden. In order to fully explore this, a qualitative approach was applied and focus groups was used to gather the primary data. The focus groups were conducted using semi-structured interviews together with an interview guide. When selecting a suitable sample for the empirical data, non-probability sampling with snowball sampling was used. The data was first analyzed and transcribed individually by the research group and later discussed together to formulate the findings. When analyzing the findings, the study took a more abductive approach, as surprising elements occurred. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the authors of this thesis strived to be as transparent as possible throughout the research process and minimizing bias using triangulation techniques.

4. Empirical Findings

In this section, the empirical findings gathered during the research will be presented. The section begins with a presentation of findings from the interview guide, followed by findings from the focus groups. The focus group will be presented case by case and this decision was taken by the authors to clarify the data to readers.

4.1 Findings from Interview guide

The interview guide in *Appendix 1 and 2*, was done to collect background information regarding the participant's attitudes towards influencers and the marketing tool. In order to demonstrate that they had met the requirements to participate in this study, by collecting information about gender and age. The interview guide showed that all of the participants follow influencers on social media and the main channels were Instagram, blogs, and podcasts. The reason for the participants to follow an influencer was mostly due to inspiration and entertainment but also to stay up-to-date regarding trends. Furthermore, a majority of the respondents consider that they are affected by influencers to a large extent, even if they are not aware of it all times. Results showed that 94% of the participants agreed that they have sometime unfollowed an influencer on a social media platform.

4.2 Hard to define an influencer

For all focus groups, it was recognized that the participants had difficulties in defining an influencer and who is regarded as one. The participants also had different views on whether an athlete or an artist is considered as an influencer.

M2, M4, F3, F4, F6, and F7 define an influencer as a person with status, who is well-known and has the ability to influence people on social media, also known as an opinion leader. F2 mentions Ronaldo and argues that he is not considered as an influencer but more of a role model. Whereas F1 believes that Ronaldo could be an influencer to someone. The discussion continues and F2 defines an influencer as a person who does a lot of collaborations with companies. The first thing that popped up in my head as in influencer was actually 'The Weekend' says M2. However, F2 does not regard either an athlete or an artist as an influencer. Neither does F3 who says that she would not describe Zlatan as an influencer and M5 agrees. On the other hand, M8 believes that Zlatan is the

perfect definition of an influencer and even though his intention might not have been to become an influencer, he presents and promotes products for which he receives payment. However, participants were united that Henrik Lundqvist is just a celebrity and not an influencer regarding influencer marketing. Henrik's name is just attached to the brand Head & Shoulders which M6 describes as traditional marketing.

*"I think that Zlatan is the definition of an influencer, he is a pro at it and in creating his own brand and a link to the products he promotes."*¹ M8

M5, M8, and F7 agree that an influencer is a person who promotes products on Instagram and receives payment in return, a collaboration. Even though, participants in all focus groups quite quickly decided that presenting sponsored content is not a requirement to be an influencer but rather presenting and influencing a feeling to the followers.

*"A person who posts beautiful photos of nature and has 1 million followers, who does not promote anything, still has to be called an influencer. Since they still influence by providing a feeling to the followers."*² M8

4.3 Trust and credibility

Throughout all focus groups trust was a recurring topic that seems to be a key to influencer marketing. F1 says that she does not trust paid content if the post says 'in collaboration with', she believes that the opinion is not real and has no value, which M2 agrees upon. F3 mentions that influencer marketing sometimes becomes non-genuine and fake, this statement is confirmed by F4 and M4, who question whether or not the opinion is genuine.

*"I do not trust a sponsored post, I do not trust their opinion if they get paid."*³ F1

¹ M8: Jag tycker att Zlatan är typ definitionen av en influenser, han är ju proffs på det. På att skapa sitt egna brand och produkter kopplade till sig.

² M8: Någon som lägger upp fina naturfoton och har en miljon följare, som inte marknadsför något måste ändå få kallas för influenser då. För att dom ändå påverkar genom att ge en känsla till följarna.

³ F1: Om någon lägger upp ett sponsrat inlägg så litar jag inte på det, får dom betalt så litar jag inte på åsikten.

“It has to do with the person's personality, otherwise the sponsored post feels just bought.”⁴ M2

Another important subject for all participants is that there should be a clear connection between the influencer and the promoted product. M6 claims that it is important to have a connection in order for the influencer to build their brand, which M5 continues to develop and argues that the level of credibility becomes low if a product is not in line with the influencer's brand. It could almost be ridiculous if there is no connection between the influencer and the product says M8.

“I would say that one becomes less affected if the product is not in line with the influencer. This person that has a product in line with their brand knows what he or she talks about and therefore I tend to trust that person more. I would be more likely to buy the product. If the connection is unclear I don't get affected to the same extent.”⁵

M5

When the connection between the influencer and the product is unclear, questions were asked whether the influencer or the company is the one that risks the most. F4 believes that it is the influencer that loses their reputation first because the company just tries to reach out to customers and sell their product. M7 believes the company is making a mistake since they possibly target the wrong audience, at the same time, he believes the influencer lose their credibility since it is clear that the only objective is to earn money.

“The company is making a big mistake since they target the wrong audience. And the influencer loses my respect since it is not in line with the influencer brand and in that case it is just about earning money.”⁶ M7

The participants appeared to have different opinions whether or not the amount of followers enhances trust and credibility. The data collected showed that half of the group

⁴ M2: Det måste ha något med personens personlighet att göra! Om den ska bli sponsrad av något för annars känns det så himla köpt.

⁵ M5: Jag skulle säga att man blir inte riktigt lika påverkad som om produkten låg inom influencers linje. Den här personen vet vad han eller hon pratar om och därför får jag en större tillit till personen. Jag skulle bli mer sugen på att köpa den då. Men det biter inte lika hårt om det är malplacerat.

⁶ M7: Företaget gör en stor miss där för dom når ut till fel målgrupp. Och influencers tappar jag respekt för då det är utanför den personens spår och i mina ögon handlar det bara då om att tjäna pengar.

of participants believed that a high number of followers enhance trust, whereas, the other half believed it did not. M6 said the amount of followers does not matter because he is doing the judgment himself. F3 says the quality of the content is more important than the number of followers, which is something that M4 agrees upon and says it is about the authenticity of the influencer. M8 argues that the amount of followers has an impact due to the fact that a person with a high amount of followers is often a bigger profile and therefore more trustworthy. Also, that influencer must be more careful since he or she risks to lose many more followers with bad collaboration compared to someone with fewer followers. F8 continues the argument that it is hard to tell since it is more about the person rather than the number of followers.

“I also believe that bigger profiles must set more requirements and be pickier since they reach out to a wider target. But I think that it is about the personality and who you are. I follow several people that have around 1000 followers but still is defined as an influencer because they share parts of their everyday life. And I trust them more since they are more personal. But trust also comes with the amount of followers since they must likely deny more offers compared to an influencer with less amount of followers.”⁷ F8

Focus group two discussed the need for proof to strengthen the credibility around the product. F3 gave an example to the group if someone posts a picture of her hair and says that a specific product is great, how do we know that? Maybe she had great volume before. To validate the product, F3 prefer a pre and post pictures. In that case, blogs and video blogs are more useful and credible than just a picture says F3, it feels more genuine and harder to fake if it is a video which both F5 and M3 agrees upon.

“I like to see some kind of proof. E.g. Cosmetics. I want to see that it actually works. For example through a pre and post pictures.”⁸ F5

⁷ F8: Jag tror också att det är så att större profiler måste ställa mer krav och tänka efter mer än mindre profiler eftersom att dom når ut till så många. Jag tror det handlar om personlighet och vem man är. Jag följer flera som har 1000 följare men ändå klassas som influenser för att dom delar med sig av sitt liv och sådana grejer. Som jag då litar på mer just för att dom är så personliga. Men att förtroende kommer med följantantal för att förmodligen så har dom tackat nej till fler erbjudanden än vad folk med färre följare hade gjort.

⁸ F5: Jag gillar att se bevis. T.ex. ansiktsprodukter. Då vill jag se att det funkar. Typ nån för och efter bild för att se att aah det kanske stämmer då.

4.4 Gender differences among participants

Findings from the focus groups showed that there is a clear difference between men and women regarding influencer marketing, both consumer's interest in the subject and how it is presented to them. The data further showed that men in this study tend to follow significantly fewer influencers compared to women. On average, men followed 17 influencers while female participants followed 35 influencers. Both F7 and F8 says that they have experienced a frequent presentation of vouchers and discount codes by influencers which they find annoying as they are more interested in receiving inspiration. The tendency for females to follow more influencers could explain this matter. However, F7 says that discount codes could increase the likelihood of a spontaneous purchase.

*"If there is 20% off at NA-KD, then I often fall into the trap."*⁹ F7

M8 mentions that he has not experienced the annoying problem with discount codes because he does not follow as many influencers. M4 and M7 also believe that females have a natural tendency to make spontaneous purchases as to which F6 agrees.

An additional reason for the dominance of females in influencer marketing and the frequency of spontaneous purchases could be further explained with the usage of blogs. All females except two, read blogs for fashion and entertainment purposes. Both F2 and F3 states that following a blogger for ten years, creates a strong connection and a personal bond which makes her more likely to trust the opinions and recommendations of the influencer. F1 describes a situation in which she has followed the blogger and influencer Kenza for many years. Kenza also has a fashion brand and promoted a pair of shoes that F1 felt a need that she must have them.

*"I felt a craving for the shoes after Kenza had recommended them."*¹⁰ F1

4.5 Personal bond

A repeating subject throughout all focus groups was the importance of having a personal relationship with the influencer. F3 does not experience Instagram to be as personal compared to a blog or YouTube.

⁹ F7: Om det är 20 % på NA-KD så åker jag ofta dit.

¹⁰ F1: Jag fick craving på skorna efter att ha sett dem på Kenzas blogg.

"If you follow someone on YouTube, you feel as if you know the person and I believe that I would be more easily affected."¹¹ F3

M6 says that he had similar experiences of closeness when he listened to an influencer's podcast.

"I might as well be sitting next to him so it becomes very close."¹² M6

These two examples could indicate a relationship between feelings of a personal bond and audio, as there is a possibility to hear the influencer's voice. F2 also says that she seeks influencers that follow a golden thread in their content and posts that reflect herself to gain additional bond. Her feelings of closeness become more apparent as she only addresses the influencers by her first name which M1 points out. She replies "but I still know them, sort of."¹³ The relationship between a follower and an influencer is further explained and implied to have a deeper meaning as M3 believes influencers could act as aspirational targets.

"I still think that an influencer is a reflection of oneself or what you would like to become or achieve."¹⁴ M3

4.6 Attitudes towards influencer marketing

Among all the participants there were different opinions regarding if influencer marketing is perceived as positive or negative. F1 says "unfortunately, I don't believe it's positive."¹⁵ M1 agrees upon this for the reason that he believes it seems very shallow. On the other hand, both M3, M7, F2, F3, F5, and F8 perceive influencer marketing as positive, although, F3 expresses her concern to the new upper secondary school possibility of choosing influencer marketing as a preferred education. M4 believes that he has a neutral attitude to influencer marketing. He believes it is a clever marketing tool to use, but if there are too much sponsored posts, he might become annoyed. Likewise, M6 has for a long time been positive to it, but as time goes on and nothing new appears regarding influencer marketing, instead, much of the content is the same with all the influencers which he considers negative. Moreover, F7 and M8 share a neutral relation

¹¹ F3: För om du följer någon på YouTube så känns det mer att du känner personen och då tror jag att de skulle påverka mig mer.

¹² M6: Jag skulle lika gärna kunna sitta bredvid och då blir det väldigt nära.

¹³ F2: Fast jag "känner" dem ju ändå typ.

¹⁴ M3: Jag tror ändå influencern är en reflektion av en själv, eller vad man vill bli eller ha.

¹⁵ F1: Jag tycker inte det tyvärr.

to influencer marketing and have not reflected upon it, as they say, it is a new marketing tool.

The focus groups showed that negative attitudes towards influencer marketing could arise for several reasons. For all participants, it was common that the reason to start following an influencer on Instagram was due to its content shared with the followers. As mentioned before, inspiration and entertainment were important aspects of why the participants were following certain individuals on social media. Although, it was clear that when influencers had fallen away from their origin and acted more as an ad-machine with many collaborations, participants expressed their negative opinions to them. To the question “What was the reason to why you unfollowed someone?” M4 responded: “No but, it’s about what you mentioned before, that it results in too much marketing all at the same time, and the influencers have lost the reason to why I started following them from the beginning.”¹⁶ F6 did add that she gets tired of when influencers are not seen as genuine anymore. M4 continues and says it feels that the influencers are selling their accounts and the content is not personal anymore. M1, F1, and F2 share the same values that they consider too much sponsorship as annoying. Moreover, a correlation between unfollowing someone and sponsored posts was investigated. M5 considers it to be acceptable if the person he follows sticks to the area of the influencer’s interest and states an example of a snowboarder who markets bindings for snowboards because then M5 feels it is more genuine since the snowboarder has an interest in it. Moreover, when a collaboration between a company and an influencer does not match, it could instead result in a negative effect.

“A product which does not interfere with this person could instead be ridiculous.”¹⁷ M8

M3 illustrates this: “Yes, for me it’s like when it gets too much and there’s no relevance to the product. For example, if someone should do a collaboration for a hair product and the person does not even have hair.”¹⁸ M4 has unfollowed snowboarders or skaters many times when there becomes too much sponsorship. He feels that they end up with just selling boards instead of their previous skating content and it turns out to not be relevant any longer. F6 continues with saying: “I’ve watched a lot of YouTube videos when a girl

¹⁶ M4: Nej men det var väl det som ni sade innan att det blir för mycket reklam på en och samma gång, och de har tappat det som mig att följa från början.

¹⁷ M8: En produkt som inte alls förknippar med den personen kan bli nästan löjligt.

¹⁸ M3: Ja men för mig blir det typ när det blir too much och det inte är någon relevans till produkten, till exempel om nån skulle göra för nån hår-grej och så har dom inte ens hår.

is doing her makeup, just because I feel it's fun. But one time there was a girl who started market too much and then I unfollowed, it wasn't fun anymore, I lost my interest."¹⁹ Except for the promotion of products that are not in line with the influencer's brand, the participants highlighted examples that resulted in unfollowing of influencers as well. Situations such as when products get promoted by several influencers simultaneously or when an influencer does several different collaborations concurrently with different brands, often used with discount vouchers could be experienced as excessive marketing for the followers as well. M4 gets irritated when discount codes are constantly exposed.

*"It irritates me so much because I'm thinking that people could be ambassadors for many companies. But if your posts are too repetitive constantly followed by vouchers, then I get tired of it. Then I definitely lose the credibility, but if you handle it smoothly, and the product is great, I think it could work. It's just about how you do it."*²⁰ M4

F7 feels that the vouchers are being promoted by a specific group of influencers on Instagram. If someone promotes a product that she wants to buy but has not supplied a voucher, it is easy to find it from another influencer, although, she is not following influencers because of the vouchers. Both F7 and F8 have felt that it has been situations with too many vouchers that are stimulating around and when the person disappears behind the sponsored posts, F7 has unfollowed people because of this.

Another topic that arose during one focus group was influencers who exploit and leverage from a closely connected celebrity. For instance, Maja Nilsson, a Swedish influencer living together with the Swedish football player Victor Lindelöf playing for Manchester United. At one point she was brought up to discussion and F2 said that she did not like the type of influencer that is famous just because her partner is a successful athlete. M2 argues that publicity should be earned instead of using the fact that she has a famous partner. F1 compared this to Janni Delér and said that she has done the same thing and using her partner Jon Olsson's name to become famous. Whether or not this is the same, it is two-sided. Although, F2 clearly stated that this was not the same thing since Janni Delér had a blog before meeting Jon, living her own life, do not post that much about her

¹⁹ F6: Jag har kollat mycket på YouTubeklipp när en tjej sminkat sig, för att jag tycker det är kul. Men då var den en tjej som började marknadsföra för mycket och då avföljde jag, då var det inte kul längre, då tappade jag intresse.

²⁰ M4: Det stör mig så mycket, för jag tänker att många kan vara ambassadörer för många företag. Men om du gör inlägg gång på gång om att du har rabattkod hit och dit ja då tröttnar man. Då tappar man tilliten totalt, men om man sköter det snyggt i tur och ordning och produkten är bra så tror jag det kan fungera. Det handlar bara om hur man gör det.

boyfriend, and comes from a wealthy family. Overall, the participants had different opinions about whether or not it is acceptable to use the fact that one's partner is a celebrity.

5. Analysis

This section analyzes how consumer attitudes are affected by influencer marketing using the empirical data. Several patterns were detected and links were found between personal relationship and attitudes towards influencer marketing, as well as credibility is a fundamental factor. The analysis is further investigated and strengthened by the frame of reference.

5.1 Millennials and Influencer Marketing

As mentioned in the frame of reference, millennials tend to purchase brands that they regard as similar to themselves, to strengthen their self-expression (Gupta et al., 2010). The empirical data collected, showed that many participants followed influencers that they viewed as a self-reflection and a role model. A recurring subject throughout all focus groups was the necessity of a personal bond between the influencer and the products being promoted. A relation between trust and this subject can be noted. For instance, if the influencer promotes products that align with its personal brand, the follower is more likely to trust the recommendations of products being promoted (Hsu et al., 2013). This is further illustrated by an example of a participant:

“It is a balance, if there are too many promotions, interest is lost. There has to be a balance between lifestyle, curiosity, and promotions. If there are too many promotions, you could instead read a magazine.”²¹ M8

Another finding from the focus groups was the importance of beautiful and visual pictures for the participants to notice and process pictures posted on Instagram and blogs. This implies a need for influencers to post promotional pictures that appeal to millennial consumers to receive their attention (Aquino, 2012).

“I want to see pictures that are aesthetically appealing and does not belong to my everyday life or work. I only want to see beautiful pictures or amusing people.”²² F6

²¹ M8: Det är en balansgång det där, om det bara blir ett reklam plank så blir det som du säger då tappar man hela grejen det ska vara någon balans mellan livsstil, nyfikenhet och så ska man kunna blanda in reklam i det. Blir det för mycket då kan man läsa reklam ur en tidning.

²² F6: Jag vill mer se det som är estetiskt tilltalande som inte hör till mitt vardagsliv eller jobb. Jag vill bara se fina bilder eller roliga personer.

It was expected that millennials would consider an influencer as a person with sponsored content. However, this study showed it necessarily does not need to be the case. Some of the participants argued that sponsored content defines an influencer but the majority argued that it is more how the person interacts with their audience and what messages the influencer signals rather than the amount of paid partnerships. However, too many paid partnership is throughout all focus groups considered as annoying. This implies that influencers must be selective when choosing which companies to collaborate with, otherwise they risk to lose their follower's interest and affect their attitudes negatively. People are now so aware of influencer marketing and its existence, which one could argue a new chapter with more critical consumers has started.

5.2 Attitudes

Within this research, the participants had both positive and negative attitudes regarding influencer marketing. A research conducted by Jones et al. (2015) showed that a majority had positive attitudes toward this type of marketing. However, according to this study, no clear majority of the participants regarded influencer marketing as either positive or negative. Several participants seem to have changed their attitude to be more neutral. During the discussion, the participants believed that the new regulation about sponsored content is part of the attitude change (Konsumentverket, 2016). Still, it is important to mention that the participants understand why companies use influencer marketing. Participants believe companies have to be careful and creative in its usage, to make sure it continues to be an effective marketing tool.

A correlation between the number of influencers the participants were following and their attitude towards influencer marketing could be noted. The higher amount of influencers the participants were following, indicated a more positive attitude towards the marketing tool and vice versa. However, M7 is regarded as an outlier as he only followed five influencers but still holds a positive attitude towards influencer marketing. Based on his replies, he only follows humoristic accounts on Instagram and YouTube meaning he prefers entertainment and he receives happiness from following influencers, hence a positive attitude. Furthermore, another reason for the positive attitude could be argued that it is due to the possibility of being selective when choosing who to follow and get influenced by. Worth to be noted is another correlation that female participants tend to hold a positive attitude towards influencer marketing and follow a higher number of influencers compared to males. This could be due to females in this study appeared to have a natural and higher interest in fast consumption goods such as makeup and

fashion. While, men in this study tend to follow entertainment, sports or accessories, which are areas that are not typically marketed by influencers, moreover goods of this type are not considered as fast consumption. Therefore, companies must be aware of the gender differences that exist in influencer marketing.

“I believe that influencer marketing has been regarded as positive during a long time but turns more and more towards something negative since it is not something new anymore”²³ M6

Even though the participants found it difficult to define whether their attitudes were positive or negative towards influencer marketing, it is something that will continue to be of interest. Naturally, there might be small changes during the time but the phenomenon will remain. The fact that the participants found it problematic to state their attitude to influencer marketing, could be because of its transformational phase and as it enhances fast consumption that exploits the environment. Nowadays, millennials have become more critical as they tend to be more environmentally friendly (Lu et al., 2013; Muralidharan & Xue, 2016; Nielsen, 2015.a). Also, due to the new regulation, the participants claim that they are more aware and critical to paid partnerships and may not consider the influencers’ opinions as genuine. However, upper secondary schools in Sweden has as mentioned now developed an education focusing mainly on influencer marketing which strengthens the theory that influencer marketing will continue to grow and develop in line with the society’s expectation.

In the empirical findings, it is presented that the participants had a hard time to distinguish between celebrity endorsement and influencer marketing. The participants had different opinions whether or not an athlete and an artist should be seen as an influencer. For instance, Ronaldo was not seen as an influencer while Zlatan was. Still, their Instagram’s are relatively similar with a lot of collaborations (Ronaldo, 2018; Ibrahimovic, 2018). The authors believe that the different attitudes towards Zlatan and Ronaldo could be due to lack of knowledge about Ronaldo, as Zlatan is more well-known to the participants. Whether or not an artist or an athlete is seen as an influencer seems to depend on what kind of collaborations the celebrity is doing and how the person is acting on social media. Participants argued that Henrik Lundqvist is not perceived as an influencer even though he influences people since he is a role model, while Zlatan is both

²³ M6: Jag tycker man har länge tyckt att det är positivt men det börjar gå mer och mer mot det negativa att det är inget nytt längre.

an influencer and a role model. However, it appears as millennials have positive attitudes towards celebrities using influencer marketing. This is mostly due to that there are less 'sellouts' and the collaborations have a connection to the influencer celebrity.

Additionally, the participants seem to be critical and hold negative attitudes towards influencers that have not earned their publicity but instead take advantage of a famous partner or such. Influencer marketing of this type might be considered as undeserved hence negative attitudes might be based on jealousy because the person has not achieved success by own means, for instance, Maja Nilsson. This could be compared to other influencers and bloggers, who have worked hard for a long time and created own brands.

5.3 Trust and Credibility

As mentioned earlier in this study, creating trust from building personal relationships with your customers is crucial for a successful marketing plan within this digital world (Jabr & Zheng, 2014; Weiss, 2014). Although, the participants had clear opinions regarding the trust and credibility related to sponsored posts. According to M2, if the influencer should be sponsored, the product needs to match the influencer's personality, otherwise, the opinion does not feel genuine. F2 strengthen this by stating that it is different if the influencer is already using the product before collaborations, which adds credibility. This means that the influencers not only need to create a golden thread in their content but they also need to be critical when evaluating different collaborations. It is important that they accept products and collaborations that match their personality and not only focusing on short-term financial goals.

“There are several products which I get disgusted of, such as Fit Tea and Bali Body as they are going big with sponsorships of influencers. Automatically, I don't like the product as I see right through it, they (the companies) don't care. I like it more when for example, Adam Gallagher, a fashion icon from New York usually has an outfit of the day and tag a brand, sponsorship or adlink.”²⁴ M3

Further evidence which supports that influencers need to be careful before agreeing upon a collaboration, is that the followers tend to distrust and unfollow the influencer. Hence, negative attitudes could be created towards the influencer. Even though both the

²⁴ M3: Det finns vissa produkter som jag får avsmak för typ Fit Tea och Bali Body dom har bara pumpat ut sponsorer. Jag gillar automatiskt inte produkten för jag ser rakt igenom dom, dom bryr sig inte. Jag tycker mer att der är najs typ Adam Gallagher, typ modekille från New York han brukar ha typ outfit of the day och tagga ett märke, sponsrat eller adlink.

influencer and the company may lose reputation, it is the influencer that loses the most according to the empirical findings. Companies only use influencers as a marketing channel to reach an audience which the influencer might have, while the influencer is perceived doing it for financial objectives if the product is outside of the influencer's brand. An example that illustrates a credible collaboration is stated by F8.

*"I'm thinking it depends on who the person is. Is it someone who is very transparent with his/her opinions, why not charge for something that you anyway will recommend? And sometimes it could be extra credible since you want to signal to your followers that you stand behind this to a hundred percent. Sometimes it could add extra credibility but if you don't know the person, it could be perceived as bought media."*²⁵ F8

Participants highlighted the fact that showing proof when testing a product will add extra credibility. One participant brought up makeup as an example of products that she would like to see a pre- and post-picture of an influencer using it, to prove that it actually works, before placing an order. This is strengthened by Lee & Koo's (2012) findings that if a consumer perceives recommendations as biased or not authentic, the level of credibility decreases. Especially for millennials, it is highly important that recommendations are perceived as authentic as it is a larger contributor for millennials to make a purchase (Aquino, 2012).

There were different opinions regarding whether or not a high amount of followers is considered as more trustworthy. Some of the participants believed that it has no effect. A person with fewer followers could instead be perceived as more trustworthy since they are more personal.

*"I follow several people that have a thousand followers but anyway they are considered as influencers since they are sharing their life and such things, thus, I do trust more since they are so personal. Maybe it's easier to talk with them more."*²⁶ F8

²⁵ F8: Jag tänker att det beror på vem personen är, är det en som är väldigt öppen i sina åsikter innan, varför då inte börja ta betalt för något man ändå kommer att rekommendera. Och ibland kan det vara extra trovärdighet, för att man vill signalera för sina följare att man står bakom detta till hundra procent. Ibland kan det ge mig tillit men känner man inte personen så kan det kännas som om man är lite köpt.

²⁶ F8: Jag följer flera som har ganska 1000 följare men ändå klassas som influencer för att dom delar med sig av sitt liv och såna grejer. Som jag då litar på mer just för att dom är så personliga. Man kanske kan prata med dom mer.

Influencers who are famous with a lot of followers could be trustworthy since they are more vulnerable and need to avoid bad collaborations to maintain their reputation. Also, using influencers with a lot of followers can hopefully result in a greater exposure to a larger target audience. However, for consumers to maintain a positive attitude to influencer marketing, it could be an opportunity to use influencer with a smaller amount of followers, as it can be seen as more trustworthy according to the participants. They also argued that a person with 200-300 followers could recommend anything, which is the big difference in comparison to the previously mentioned who will risk losing credibility if recommending products that are not ethically correct. The influencer might lose trustworthiness because of this.

“One should also bear in mind, that you know that the person with more followers has received more money and is doing this as their work, and regarding this, then the person has really validated the product. Whereas, a person with less number of followers might be more prone to build his/her brand to grow.”²⁷ M6

Furthermore, empirical findings showed that the quality of the content posted on an Instagram account was a decisive factor if an influencer is considered trustful rather than the number of followers. M3 mentioned initial trust, as the first sight, when exploring an Instagram account, is the number of followers. Participants believe that the easiness of ‘buying’ followers on Instagram has made them more critical as influencers are not seen reliable. This can be seen as an unethical way to gain exposure of their account and with the acknowledge of being able to buy thousands of followers on Instagram, one might be more critical towards accounts with a high number of followers, thus, leads to decreased trust.

“I did an experiment, with an Instagram account. The thing is, you don’t even need to pay for the followers. You only need to click a button to follow someone and you’ll receive two followers back. So it’s also because of my experience in this, I know how easy it is to earn followers and likes. I pay attention to it immediately, this person has a lot of followers, but they still need to back it up in some way to earn my trust.”²⁸ M3

²⁷ M6: Man skulle också tänka på, tror jag, att man vet att den som har fler följare har fått mer pengar och gör detta som ett arbete och när det gäller en sån funktion, då har den verkligen provat produkten, men när det gäller en som har lite färre följare, då kanske den är mer benägen att bygga sitt varumärke för att komma högre upp.

²⁸ M3: Jag gjorde ett experiment, bara med ett Instagram konto. Asså man behöver inte ens betala för följare man kan klicka på en knapp så följer man någon så får man tillbaka två följare.

In this study, the actual number of followers was not a decisive factor for creating trust and credibility, it is more of a first impression that there might be good content on the account. This contradicts the statement of De Veirman et al. (2017) that the higher amount of followers leads to more trust and better response from its followers. Instead, personality and background of the success of the influencer could be seen as more important for the level of genuineness and the products being promoted. Bearing this in mind, a high amount of followers could add more trust to the followers if the influencer is still being genuine, personal, and acting according to their personality. Although, it should not be considered as an initial factor for trust.

5.4 Loyalty

Regarding loyalty, it was important for the participants that the influencer keeps their personal style. If they change their trademark, there is also a risk that they lose their followers that have shown their loyalty for years. It is important for the influencer to make sure that their followers are satisfied with the content but also excited about what is next, it is important for the influencer to remember why the followers started to follow in the first place, keeping that in mind and not becoming a person that just post advertisement. This is also supported by Veloutsou and McAlonan (2012) who state that millennials create brand loyalty when they have an emotional attachment, for instance, keeping the content personal. Likewise, millennials tend to be disloyal when the content does not satisfy their expectations or needs. For example, when the person has changed their style or only posting sponsored content. In the frame of reference, Schoenbachler et al. (2004) explain the psychological commitment the followers have towards the brand or influencer, but also the risk that followers might switch to more interesting brands or in this case, a more interesting influencer.

The importance of a clear connection between the influencer and the product has been analyzed earlier, in terms of credibility and creating trust. It is important when creating trust but also to build and maintain loyalty, since confusion among the followers can lead to a decrease in loyalty, therefore confusion should be avoided. A bad collaboration, where the consumer finds it difficult to see connections of the collaboration between the influencer and the product. This might cause a negative effect, a change in attitude and a decrease in loyalty (Xiao & Lee, 2014). A common reason why the participants unfollow

Nu är det också för att jag är insatt i det, jag vet ju hur enkelt det är att skaffa följare och skaffa likes. Jag tänker på det direkt, dom har mycket följare, men det är fortfarande så att they need to back it up liksom.

an influencer is due to that the influencer posts too much paid content. Once again, collaborations where the followers do not see the connection and get a feeling that the influencer is just doing it for financial purposes. That could result in negative attitudes and also be the reason to why people unfollow once the loyalty is equal to zero.

5.5 Elaboration Likelihood Model Applied

As mentioned earlier, a link between the influencer and the product being promoted is very important for millennials to notice the message and process it. As stated in the frame of reference, when a consumer is presented with a promotional message, an evaluation of relevance and involvement occurs. Relevance can be the consumer's perception of legitimacy between the message and the influencer, and involvement can be whether the consumer is presented to the message of own interest or if it is targeted ads. If relevance and involvement are high, the consumer precedes into having the motivation and ability to process the message and attitudes are formed based on the quality of the message. However, if relevance and involvement are low, the consumer has little motivation and ability to process the message. Still, if the message presented is appealing to the consumer, attitudes can be formed based on the presentation. Therefore, using this model when analyzing the findings, can emphasize the importance of a link between product promotions presented by an influencer. For instance, the findings suggest that trust between a follower and an influencer must be established for followers to notice promotional messages. Additionally, the promotion must be aligned with the influencer's brand otherwise, it is not regarded as credible. If there is a personal relationship between the consumer and the influencer, attitudes are more likely to become affected.

As mentioned previously, celebrities are used as a peripheral cue when consumers are not motivated enough to process the promotional message (Edson Escalas & Bettman, 2015). Which could be the case with Henrik Lundqvist and Head & Shoulders. Another reason as to why consumers take the peripheral route can be illustrated by an example from focus group one. A group of fashionista bloggers and influencers had been invited to collaborate with a low price food company called Eldorado. F1 says "When I first saw it, I thought it was very odd. I could not believe they meant Eldorado."²⁹ Meaning, she did not see any relevance between fashion bloggers consuming this type of product that did not have any involvement. When experiencing low relevance and involvement, the consumer precedes into having little motivation and ability to process the promotional

²⁹ F1: Jag såg och det och jag tyckte det var jättekonstigt. Jag bara de kan ju inte mena Eldorado.

message of purchasing these food products. However, the presentation of promoting Eldorado products was made with beautiful pictures in an appealing manner. Therefore, an attitude change in actually purchasing these products can be based on the presentation and take the peripheral route.

An opposite example of when a consumer instead take the central route is illustrated by M9 when he made a purchase of a watch. He had been following an influencer for a long time, who is also a pilot. The pilot had a collaboration with a famous watch brand Paul Hewitt. Because of pilot's previous interest in watches, the product promotion was of both relevance and involvement. Since the consumer had similar interests in planes and watches, he proceeded into having high motivation and ability to process the message of purchasing the watch. Thus, the central route was taken and an attitude change occurred based on the quality of the message.

Moreover, the participants were asked questions if they ever have unfollowed an influencer and in that case why. If they have unfollowed someone there is a change in attitude and it was important to understand why they unfollowed, the reasons for losing motivation to follow and the motivation to click unfollow. In order to explain why people decide to unfollow an influencer, the authors have developed the ELM into a version that considers a promotional message that ends up with a person unfollowing the influencer. The re-defined version contains motivation and ability to unfollow. If the consumer is presented to a promotional message that does not have any either relevance or involvement to the influencer, the consumer can precede into having motivation and ability to unfollow the influencer, taking the escape route. This is most common when consumers believe content is too repetitive and negative attitudes are formed. An attitude change is based on annoying messages that result in lack of interest to the consumer. In today's society with information overload, this model can facilitate the understanding that consumers are rather selective when following influencers on Instagram.

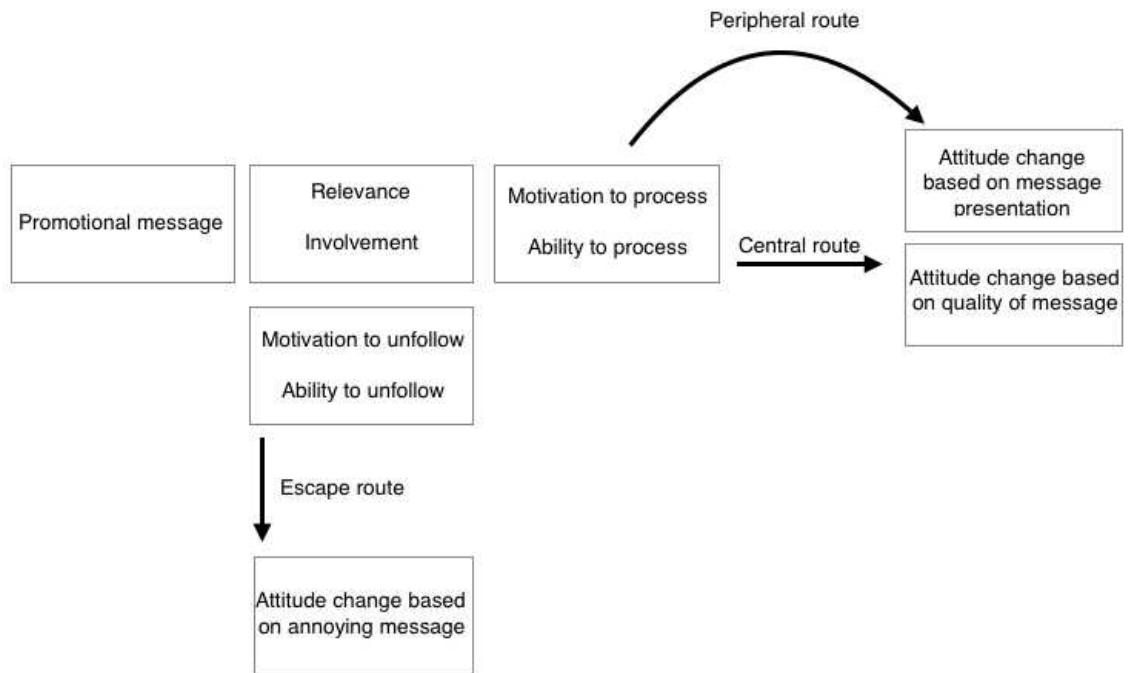


Figure 2: New model created based on Petty and Cacioppo (1983, p.6) and findings from the study.

As expected, when analyzing the attitudes of the participants related to spontaneous shopping and personal attachment, there was a strong link to ELM. The empirical findings showed that when individuals had a stronger bond to the influencer, such as following for a longer time, the likelihood of placing an order of a product recommended by the influencer was higher and often done immediately through the central route. In contrast to this, participants with less relation to the influencer who processed information provided by an influencer, did more investigation to compare factors such as; price and product reviews on other websites, thus, took the peripheral route. Participants with less motivation and relation to the influencers also tend to look for discount vouchers provided by other influencers before a purchase was made.

6. Conclusion

In this section, answers are presented to the research question. Conclusions of the empirical data have been provided by the authors.

As seen in this study, consumer attitudes are affected by influencer marketing due to various reasons. Firstly, a collaboration between an influencer and a company must be noted by the consumer, be of high relevance and involvement for the consumer to process it. Thus, a collaboration needs to align with the influencer's brand and previous content. This complies the chosen theory ELM, as it leads participants through the different steps of the model in relation to influencer marketing. If relevance or involvement is low, this could lead to negative attitudes to the influencer and the consumer might unfollow by taking the escape route, according to the new version of ELM. Consequently, trust is key in a successful influencer marketing strategy and a personal bond between the influencer and the follower should be strived for. Consumer attitudes in this study are affected negatively when there is a lack of trust between the influencer and the follower. Secondly, too many paid partnerships could also have a negative effect on the influencer, as it often decreases the authenticity of the message. This is needed to be taken into consideration before accepting any collaboration. Although, discount vouchers from collaborations should still be provided but influencers need to be careful with the frequency rate of providing these. Very often, content that is not being sponsored is more inspirational, authentic, and convincing which often lead to a higher conversion rate anyway. Finally, it is important for influencers to be aware of their cornerstones that made them successful from the very beginning. This study showed that millennials consider influencer marketing as positive as long as the influencer does not turn into an ad-machine, but instead stick to their inspirational and entertaining posts that drew attention and attracted followers at first.

From the beginning, the authors believed that an influencer would be regarded as an opinion leader, who had a large number of followers online, with the requirement of having paid partnerships with companies, promoting their products. Although, the major contribution of this thesis was the low ability among participants to define what an influencer is and who is regarded as one. In all focus groups, there were conflicting views of the requirements of an influencer. Furthermore, the participants also had difficulties in distinguishing between celebrities and influencers. This indicates that

influencer marketing still is relatively new as there is a lack of academic knowledge, in terms of formal definitions, and deep public knowledge.

For businesses to make use of this report, the above reasons for consumers' attitude affection of influencer marketing, should be considered. A business collaboration can either be with a famous influencer that has a high amount of followers, as those tend to reach a wider audience or with an influencer that has fewer followers to reach a more precise target. The first mentioned will most likely be more expensive, but the costs are considered low in comparison to traditional marketing tools. Nevertheless, the essential factor is that the company ensures that the influencer maintains good quality content and has the right target audience, regardless the size, for consumers to perceive relevance and involvement. Additionally, this study also noted gender differences in influencer marketing. Men are not as frequent followers of influencers as women. As presented in the empirical findings, men showed a tendency of listening to podcasts rather than using the social platforms suggested by the authors. Therefore, a possible solution for businesses to target men using influencer marketing is via podcasts, which could develop positive attitudes to influencer marketing among men that will create brand awareness and in the end will lead to a higher conversion rate.

Nowadays, influencer marketing is more about creating awareness as the level of nativeness has decreased. Because of the new regulation, influencers must clearly state any type of paid partnership, which makes it easier for the consumer to understand when a product or service is being promoted. This means that creativity and innovativeness are crucial for companies and influencers today in order to stand out in our digital society.

7. Discussion

In this section, implications of this study are presented, followed by limitations such as time, a narrow target market and a small sample size. Moreover, the authors have presented areas of future research.

7.1 Theoretical implications

This thesis, in combination with existing literature within the area, analyzes the Elaboration Likelihood Model while focusing on Swedish millennials' attitudes towards influencer marketing. When analyzing the empirical data, unexpected findings were found and the authors believed that a re-defined model would simplify the result. Therefore, another route was added to the model in order to understand and explain why millennials unfollow an influencer when they are not satisfied with the content leading to an attitude change. Hence, the re-defined version of ELM might help others to understand the reason why consumers are selective when choosing what influencers to follow and what information to process. Furthermore, this thesis has also given further support to when the different routes are being taken within influencer marketing, and that there is a high need for relevance and involvement for consumers to process promotional messages in an online environment.

7.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this thesis provide insight of millennials' attitudes towards influencer marketing. Companies, as well as influencers, could use this study as a guide regarding how millennials reason about influencer marketing, what is important for a successful campaign and why some collaborations might not work. A common mistake for an unsuccessful collaboration is the lack of connection between the influencer's brand and the company's brand. Furthermore, since the nativeness has decreased due to the new regulation, companies and influencers need to work even harder to remain a high level of trust as that is a key to attract millennial consumers. Otherwise, the content is considered as less authentic and therefore it is important to develop creative and innovative solutions to capture and keep the consumers satisfied.

7.3 Limitations

There are several limitations within this thesis, both limitations that the authors were aware of on beforehand but also unexpected limitations that arose during the process. First of all, time was an issue since the authors only had four months to finalize the study. With this in mind, the sample became very narrow, containing only students from Jönköping University born 1997-1993, which is only a small part of the target millennials. This makes it hard to draw a general conclusion about the attitudes toward influencer marketing. With more time, a larger sample could have been reached, outside Jönköping but also execute focus groups with more participants, which would have enabled the authors to draw a more generalized conclusion in this study.

Due to the timeframe, focus groups were conducted as the only source for the empirical findings. Using focus groups have limitations, first of all, the participants tend to interrupt each other since they are eager to express their opinions. Even though the moderators tried to make sure that everyone got the chance to share their opinions it was difficult since there exist some dominant people. There is also a risk that some participants may get influenced by strongly opinionated participants. In order to avoid or at least decrease this issue, the moderators told the participants that everyone's opinions are important and that there is no right and wrong answer. Furthermore, in order for the participants to feel secure and enable a discussion without language barriers, the groups were held in their native language, Swedish. Later on, the citations were translated into English in order to suit the thesis, which could imply some translation issues. At some points, all the participants spoke at the same time and in that case, it was hard to tell who said what which lead to further data loss. Facial expressions from the focus groups were not handled completely since the focus groups were recorded instead of filmed and transcribed afterward.

Podcast was a platform the participants mentioned throughout the focus groups. Even though a pilot study was conducted to notice these types of flaws and other platforms that could have been included, podcast did not occur to the authors. If the authors would have been aware of the case before, more research and focus could have been put into influencer marketing through podcasts. There exists data which have not been discussed in the empirical findings since it was not regarded as relevant. Most of the empirical data have been of value but due to small changes in the process, this was hard to predict, therefore, all data gathered was not discussed in the analysis.

The fact that this is the first time any of the three authors is writing a thesis and therefore lack experience, a lot of time and energy was spent in order to understand the different parts of the study. However, considering these limitations, this study still contributes to the area of research with new perspectives and conclusions.

7.4 Suggestions for future research

From all learnings, findings, and limitations of this thesis, several cases for future research have been found. For this thesis, a small sample was investigated which limited the possibility to draw general conclusions. To further examine the influencer marketing's effect on attitudes, a larger demographic sample, with different ages and other geographical areas could be included. With a larger sample in a wider geographical area, a more generalized conclusion could be drawn. Another interesting finding that creates new areas for future research is how influencers should develop creative and innovative solutions to continue capturing the audience. Especially when the phenomenon is expected to keep growing and the influencer market will become more saturated. However, as concluded, podcasts are seen as a more suitable platform when using influencer marketing targeting men, since difficulties were noted in affecting men's attitudes via Instagram and blogs. Therefore, the main potential for future research is to investigate how influencer marketing could target men to reach a wider audience in comparison to today.

8. References

- 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>
- Ajzen, I. & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall.
- Aljazzaf, Z. M., Perry, M. A., & Capretz, M. (2010). Online trust: Definition and principles. *Proceedings - 5th International Multi-Conference on Computing in the Global Information Technology, ICCGI 2010*, 163-168.
- Alvesson, M., & Sköldbberg, K. (2009). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Amos, C., Holmes, G., & Strutton, D. (2008). Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(2), 209-234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073052>
- Araujo, T., Neijens, P., & Vliegenthart, R. (2017). Getting the word out on Twitter: The role of influentials, information brokers and strong ties in building word-of-mouth for brands. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(3), 496-513. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1173765>
- Asano, E. (2017). How powerful is Instagram influencer marketing? Retrieved April 20, 2018, from <http://www.convinceandconvert.com/social-media-research/instagram-influencer-marketing/>
- Aquino, J. (2012, February). Gen Y: The next generation of spenders. *Customer Relationship Management*, 20-23. Retrieved from <http://www.destinationcrm.com/Articles/Editorial/Magazine-Features/Gen-Y-The-Next-Generation-of-Spenders-79884.aspx>
- Barbagallo, P. (2003). Teens. *Target Marketing*, 26(4), 95-106.
- Bennett, S. (2015, January 27). *28% of Time Spent Online is Social Networking*. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <http://www.adweek.com/digital/time-spent-online/>
- Blackett, T., & Boad, B. (1999). *Co-Branding: The Science of Alliance*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Bolton, R. N., Parasuraman, A., Hoefnagels, A., Migchels, N., Kabadayi, S., Gruber, T., Loureiro, Y. K., & Solnet, D. (2013). Understanding generation Y and their use of social media: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Service Management*, 24(3), 245-267. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09564231311326987>

Branigan, E., & Mitsis, A. (2014). Reach for generation y: Using celebrity endowment to communicate about nonprofit causes with young people in Australia. *Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 19(4), 314- 323. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.1503>

Bryman A. & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Byrne, E., Kearney, J., & MacEvilly, C. (2017). The Role of Influencer Marketing and Social Influencers in Public Health. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665117001768>

Bush, A. J., Martin, C. A., & Bush, V. D. (2004). Sports celebrity influencer on the behavioral intentions of generation y. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(1), 108-118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021849904040206>

Café. (2018). Om Viktor. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://viktorfrisk.cafe.se/om-viktor/>

Campbell, M. C., & Kirmani, A. (2000). Consumers' use of persuasion knowledge: The effects of accessibility and cognitive capacity on perceptions on an influence agent. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27, 69-83. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/314309>

Capcito. (2016, October 4). Hur marknadsför man till millennials - framtidens starkaste köpgrupp?. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <https://www.capcito.com/blog/millennials-marknadsforing/>

Chen, J. S., Tsai, H. T., Kuo, Y. J., & Ching, R. (2008). Blog effects on brand attitude and purchase intention. *5th International Conference Service Systems and Service Management - Exploring Service Dynamics with Science and Innovative Technology, ICSSSM'08*.

Cheung, M., Luo, C., Sia, C., & Chen, H. (2009). Credibility of Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Informational and Normative Determinants of On-line Consumer Recommendations. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13(4), 9-38. <https://doi.10.2753/JEC1086-4415130402>

Chu, S., & Choi, S. (2011). Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Social Networking Sites: A Cross-Cultural Study of the United States and China. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 24(3), 263-281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2011.592461>

Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social Research Theory, Methods and Techniques*. London: SAGE Publication.

- Crowther, D., & Lancaster, G. (2009). *Research Methods A concise introduction to research in management and business consultancy*. (2nd ed.). Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Cui, Y., Trent, E. S., Sullivan, P. M., & Matinu, G. N. (2003). Cause-related marketing: How generation y responds. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 31(6), 310-321. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09590550310476012>
- Cure Media. (n.d.-a). *Bloggportalen*. Retrieved March 6, 2018, from <https://www.bloggportalen.se/BlogPortal/view/TopLists?tl=1>
- Cure Media. (n.d.-b). *Vår story*. Retrieved May, 3, 2018, from <https://www.curemedia.se/var-story/>
- Cure Media. (n.d.-c). *Hitta rätt i influencer-djungeln*. Retrieved April 9, 2018, from <https://www.curemedia.se/hitta-ratt-i-influencer-djungeln/>
- Daymon, C., & Holloway, I. (2011). *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications* (2nd ed.). Oxon: Routledge.
- Delér, J. (2018a). *YouTube*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyTmTQTyGA2I7mMBODzqig>
- Delér, J [jannid]. (2018b). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/jannid/>
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- De Vries, L. Gensler, S., & LeeFlang, P. S. H. (2012). Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), 83-91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003>
- Dietz, M. (2018a). *YouTube*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdyTmTQTyGA2I7mMBODzqig>
- Dietz, M [margauxdietz]. (2018b). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/margauxdietz/>
- Duffett, G. R. (2017). Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes. *Young Consumers*, 18(1), 19-39. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-07-2016-00622>
- Duignan, J. (2016). *A dictionary of business research methods*. (1st ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Duemyer, R. (July 18, 2017). *Blogging: What is it and is it so popular?* . Retrieved April 20, 2018, from <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/blogging-what-is-it-1794405>
- Edson Escalas, J., & Bettman, J. R. (2015). Managing brand meaning through celebrity endorsement. *Review of Marketing Research, 12, 29-52*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1548-643520150000012002>
- Expressen. (2018). Alex Schulman. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.expressen.se/kronikorer/alex-schulman/>
- Festinger, L., Riecken, H., & Schachter, S. (2012). *When prophecy fails* . (1st ed.). Mansfield Center, CT: Martino Pub.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research* . Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Flick, U. (2007). *Managing quality in qualitative research* . London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Friberg, H [hannalicious]. (2018). *Instagram* . Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/hannalicious/?hl=sv>
- Frisk, V [viktorfrisks]. (2018). *Instagram* . Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/viktorfrisks/?hl=sv>
- Forni, M. (2018a). *Om mig* . Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://forni.se/om-mig/>
- Forni, M [michaelaforni]. (2018b). *Instagram* . Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/michaelaforni/>
- Forsgren, E [erik.forsgren]. (2018). *Instagram* . Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/erik.forsgren/?hl=sv>
- Gerardo. A. Dada. (2017, November 14). What is influencer marketing and how can marketers use it effectively. *Forbes* . Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2017/11/14/what-is-influencer-marketing-and-how-can-marketers-use-it-effectively/#56a8696b23d1>
- Goldsmith, R., & Clark, R. (2008). An analysis of factors affecting fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 12(3), 308-322* . <https://doi.org/10.1108/13612020810889272>
- Gray, D. (2004). *Doing research in the real world* . (1st ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Gupta, M., Brantley, A., & Jackson, V. P. (2010). Product involvement as a predictor of Generation Y consumer decision making styles. *The Business Review, 14(2), 28-33* .

Halkier, B. (2010). *Fokusgrupper*. Solna: Liber AB.

Halonen-Knight, E., & Hurmerinta, L. (2010). Who endorses whom? Meanings transfer in celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 19(6), 425-460. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421011085767>

Hannalicious. (2018). *Om Hanna*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://hannalicious.se/kontakt/>

Hass, R. G. (1981). Effects of source characteristics on cognitive responses and persuasion. In Petty, R. E., Ostrom, T. M., & Brock, T. C. (Eds.). *Cognitive responses in persuasion* (pp. 141–172). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Heinonen, K. (2011). Consumer activity in social media: Managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10(6), 356-364. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.376>

Hennig-Thurau, T., Malthouse, E., Friege, C., Gensler, S., Lobschat, L., Rangaswamy, A., & Skiera, B. (2010). The Impact of New Media on Customer Relationships. *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), 311-330. <https://doi.10.1177/1094670510375460>

Henrie, K. M., & Taylor, C. D. (2009). Use of persuasion knowledge by the millennial generation. *Young Consumers*, 10(1), 71-81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17473610910940800>

Hiles, D. R. (2012). Transparency. In Given, L. M. (Ed.). *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 891-892). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.

Hsu, C., Chuan-Chuan Lin, J., & Chiang, H. (2013). The effects of blogger recommendations on customers' online shopping intentions. *Internet Research*, 23(1), 69-88. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10662241311295782>

Hsu, C. P., Huang, H. C., Ko, C. P., & Wang, S. J. (2014). Basing bloggers' power on readers' satisfaction and loyalty. *Online Information Review*, 38(1), 78-94. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-10-2012-0184>

Hussain, S., Ahmed, W., Jafar, R., Rabnawaz, A., & Jianzhou, Y. (2017). EWOM source credibility, perceived risk and food product customer's information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 66, 96-102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.034>

Hörner Kloo, V., Bederoff, J., Fjällborg, U., Skarin, U., Lindsten, P.O. & Byttner, K.J. (3 March 2018). *Här är näringslivets 125 mänskligaste kvinnor 2018*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.va.se/nyheter/2018/03/05/har-ar-naringslivets-125-maktigaste-kvinnor-2018/>

Ibrahimovic, Z [iamzlatanibrahimovic]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/iamzlatanibrahimovic/>

Institutet för reklam- och mediestatistik. (n.d.). *Influencer marketing omsätter en halv miljard*. Retrieved February 9, 2018, from <http://www.irm-media.se/nyheter/2017/influencer-marketing-omsatter-en-halv-miljard>

Jabr, W., & Zheng, Z. (2014). Know Yourself and Know Your Enemy: An Analysis of Firm Recommendations and Consumer Reviews in a Competitive Environment. *MIS Quarterly*, 38(3), 635-654. <https://doi.org/10.25300/MISQ/2014/38.3.01>

Jade, Z. (2018). *How to reach millennials through influencer marketing*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://hireinfluence.com/blog/how-influencer-marketing-reaches-millennials/>

JLC. (2018). *YouTube*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6WAeYfHfNgaf9DNg5OAdKQ>

Jones, M. A., Reynolds, K. E., Arnold, M. J., Gabler, B. C., Gillison, S. T., & Landers, V. M. (2015). Exploring consumers' attitude towards relationship marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 29(3), 188-199. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2014-0134>

Josefsson, S [sannealexandra]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2017, from <https://www.instagram.com/sannealexandra/?hl=sv>

Kemp, S. (2018, January 30). *Digital in 2018: World's internet users pass the 4 billion mark*. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2018/01/global-digital-report-2018>

Kempe, D., Kleinberg, J., & Tardos, É. (2003). Maximizing the spread of influence through a social network. In *Proceedings of the Ninth ACM SIGKDD International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining*, 137-46. New York: ACM.

Kiesler, C., Collins, B.E., & Miller, N. 1969. *Attitude Change: A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Approaches*. New York: Wiley.

Kilian, T., Hennigs, N., & Langner, S. (2012). Do millennials read books or blogs? Introducing a media usage typology of the internet generation. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(2), 114-124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363761211206366>

Kim, S., Kandampully, J., & Bilgihan, A. (2018). The influence of eWOM communications: An application of online social network framework. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 80, 243-254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.11.015>

Kirkpatrick, D. (2016). Twitter says influencers are almost as trusted as friends. *Marketing Dive*. Retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://www.marketingdive.com/news/twitter-says-influencers-are-almost-as-trusted-as-friends/419076/>

Kirtiş, K., & Karahan, F. (2011). To Be or Not to Be in Social Media Arena as the Most Cost-Efficient Marketing Strategy after the Global Recession. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 260-268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.083>

Kissie. (2018). *About Kissie*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://kissies.se/about-kissie/>

Konsumentverket. (2016, November 7). *Marknadsföring i sociala medier och bloggar*. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.konsumentverket.se/foretag/marknadsforing/marknadsforing-i-sociala-medier-och-bloggar/>

Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., & Parment, A. (2011). *Principles of Marketing Swedish Edition*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Laroche, M., Kim, C., & Zhou, L. (1996). Brand familiarity and confidence as determinants of purchase intention: An empirical test in a multiple brand context. *Journal of Business Research*, 37(2), 115-120. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963\(96\)00056-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(96)00056-2)

Lee, K., & Koo, D. (2012). Effects of attribute and valence of e-WOM on message adoption: Moderating roles of subjective knowledge and regulatory focus. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1974-1984. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.05.018>

Li, F. & Du, C.T. (2011). Who is talking? An ontology-based opinion leader identification framework for word-of-mouth marketing in online social blogs. *Decision Support Systems*, 51(1), 190-197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2010.12.007>

Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 458-468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011>

Liu, S., Jiang, C., Lin, Z., Ding, Y., Duan, R., & Xu, Z. (2015). Identifying effective influencers based on trust for electronic word-of-mouth marketing: A domain-aware approach. *Information Sciences*, 306, 34-52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ins.2015.01.034>

Lu, L., Bock, D., & Joseph, M. (2013). Green marketing: What the millennials buy. *Journal of Business Strategy*, 34(6), 3-10. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBS-05-2013-0036>

Lu, L., Chang, W., & Chang, H. (2014). Consumer attitudes toward blogger's sponsored recommendations and purchase intention: The effect of sponsorship type, product type, and brand awareness. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 34, 258-266. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.007>

Löfgren, E [ellinorlofgren]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/ellinorlofgren/>

Löwengrip, I. (2018a). *About*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://www.isabellalowengrip.se/about/>

Löwengrip, I [isabellalownegrip]. (2018b). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/isabellalownegrip/>

Macintosh, G., & Lockshin, L. (1997). Retail relationships and store loyalty: A multi-level perspective. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 14(5), 487-497. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8116\(97\)00030-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0167-8116(97)00030-X)

Marknadsföringslagen (2008:486). Retrieved March 12, 2018, from https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/marknadsforingslag-2008486_sfs-2008-486

Mattsson, M [mattssonmoa]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/mattssonmoa/>

McCasland, M. (2005). Mobile Marketing to Millennials. *Young Consumers*, 6(3), 8-13. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17473610510701133>

Miles, J. (2014). *Instagram power: Build your brand and reach more customers with the power of pictures*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education.

Moravcsik, A. (2014). Transparency: The revolution in qualitative research. *American Political Science Association*, 48-53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096513001789>

More, J. S., & Lingam, C. (2017). A SI model for social media influencer maximization. *Applied Computing and Informatics*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aci.2017.11.001>

Moore, M. (2012). Interactive media usage among Millennial consumers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(6), 436-444. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363761211259241>

Muralidharan, S., & Xue, F. (2016). Personal networks as a precursor to a green future: a study of “green” consumer socialization among young millennials from India and China. *Young Consumers*, 17(3), 226-242. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-03-2016-00586>

Nielsen. (2012, October 4). *Consumer trust in online, social and mobile advertising grows*. Retrieved March 13, 2018, from <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2012/consumer-trust-in-online-social-and-mobile-advertising-grows.html>

Nielsen. (2015, May 11a). *Green Generation: Millennials say sustainability is a shopping priority*. Retrieved May 7, 2018 from, <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/green-generation-millennials-say-sustainability-is-a-shopping-priority.html>

- Nielsen. (2015, September 28b). *Recommendations from friends remain most credible form of advertising*. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <http://www.nielsen.com/eu/en/press-room/2015/recommendations-from-friends-remain-most-credible-form-of-advertising.html>
- Nilsson, A [alexandranilsson]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/alexandranilsson/>
- Nouw. (2018). *Contact*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://nouw.com/contact?l=sy>
- Oja, D. (April 8, 2018). *What is a blog?*. Retrieved April 20, 2018, from <https://firstsiteguide.com/what-is-blog/>
- Oliver, R. (1999). Whence Consumer Loyalty?. *Journal of Marketing*, 63, 31. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=2012866d-e9d8-4d40-a891-48b6775671b7%40sessionmgr103&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWNvb2tpZSxpcCx1aWQmc2loZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=2444274&db=buh>
- Olsson, J [jonolsson1]. (2018a). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/jonolsson1/>
- Olsson, J. (2018b). *Bio*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://jon-olsson.com/bio>
- Olsson, J. (2018c). *YouTube*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQb1TTrfRzQZmEfsx77Oqw>
- Opreana, A., & Vinerean, S. (2015). A New Development in Online Marketing: Introducing Digital Inbound Marketing. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 3(1), 29-34. Retrieved from http://marketing.expertjournals.com/ark:/16759/EJM_305opreana29-34.pdf
- Outbrain. (n.d.). *Native Advertising*. Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.outbrain.com/native-advertising/>
- Pappu, R., & Quester, P. (2016). How does brand innovativeness affect brand loyalty? *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(1/2), 2-28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2014-0020>
- Parment, A. (2008). *Generation Y: Framtidens konsumenter och medarbetare gör entré*. Stockholm: Liber.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 123-162. Retrieved from https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/psyifp/aeechterhoff/wintersemester2011-12/vorlesungskommperskonflikt/petty_cacioppo_elm_advaeypsocpsy_buchkapitel1986.pdf

- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: application to advertising. In Percy, L. & Woodside, A.G. (Eds), *Advertising and Consumer Psychology* (pp. 3-23). Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Petty, R. E., Heesacker, M., & Hughes, J. N. (1997). The elaboration likelihood model: Implications for the practice of school psychology. *Journal of School Psychology, 35*(2), 107-136. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405\(97\)00003-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(97)00003-4)
- Pew Research Centre. (2010). *Millennials: A portrait of generation next*. Washington: Pew Research Centre.
- Qian Ying Soh, C., Rezaei, S., & Gu, M. L. (2017). A structural model of the antecedents and consequences of generation y luxury fashion goods purchased decisions. *Young Consumers, 18*(2), 180-204. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-12-2016-00654>
- Redgert, D [danielredgert]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/danielredgert/?hl=sv>
- Rimér, B [bingorimer]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/bingorimer/?hl=sv>
- Ronaldo, C [cristiano]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 23, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/cristiano/>
- Roulston, K. (2016). Issues involved in methodological analyses of research interviews. *Qualitative Research Journal, 16*(1), 68-79. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-02-2015-0015>
- Roy, A., & Chattopadhyay, S. P. (2010). Stealth marketing as a strategy. *Business Horizons, 53*(1), 69-79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.004>
- Rutherford, C. (2017, April 7). Meet the blogger behind Sweden's newest retail concept. *Harper's Bazaar*. Retrieved March 6, 2018, from <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/fashion/designers/news/a15022/ivyrevel-launch/>
- Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation, 16*(6), <https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2009.16.6.42433>
- Rågsjö Thorell, A. (2018, February 5). Någon har snott Henke Lundqvists schampo. Retrieved May, 3, 2018, from <https://www.resume.se/nyheter/artiklar/2018/02/05/nar-materialarikonon-pudding-ar-borta-blir-henke-lundqvist-schampoflaska-stulen/>
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). *Research methods for business students*. (6th ed.). Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.

- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students*. (7th ed.). Harlow, Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Scheer, L., & Stern, L. (1992). The Effect of Influence Type and Performance Outcomes on Attitude Toward the Influencer. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29(1), 128-142. <https://doi.10.2307/3172498>
- Schoenbachler, D., Gordon, G., & Aurand, T. (2004). Building brand loyalty through individual stock ownership. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 13(7), 488-497. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420410568426>
- Schulman, A [alexschulman]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/alexschulman/?hl=sv>
- Schumann, D. W., Kotowski, M. R., Ahn, H., & Haugtvedt, C. P. (2012). The elaboration likelihood model: A 30-year review. In Rodgers, S. and Thorson, E. (Eds), *Advertising Theory* (p. 51-68). New York: Routledge.
- Simonsson, L [lucas_simonsson]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from https://www.instagram.com/lucas_simonsson/?hl=sv
- Skoglund, E [elinskoglund]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/elinskoglund/>
- Sharethrough. (n.d.). *Native advertising*. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <https://sharethrough.com/nativeadvertising/>
- Sherif, C. W., Sherif, M., & Nebergall, R. (1965). *Attitude and Attitude Change: The Social Judgment-Involvement Approach*. Philadelphia: Saunders.
- Smith, A. N., Brief, A. P., & Stevens, F. G. (2008). Attitudes. In Clegg, S. R. & Bailey, J. R. (Eds). *International Encyclopedia of Organisation Studies*. (p. 77-79). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications inc.
- Smith, K. T. (2010). Digital Marketing Strategies that Millennials find Appealing, Motivating or Just Annoying. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(6), 489-499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2011.581383>
- SOI. (2017). *Svenskarna och internet 2017*. Retrieved May 3, 2018, from <http://www.soi2017.se/sociala-medier/instagram/>
- Suh, B., & Han, I. (2003). Effect of trust on customer acceptance of Internet banking. *Electronic Commerce Research And Applications*, 1(3/4), 247-263. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1567-4223\(02\)00017-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1567-4223(02)00017-0)
- Sun, Y., Lim, K.H., Jiang, C., Peng, J.Z., & Chen, X. (2010). Do males and females think in the same way? An empirical investigation on the gender differences in Web advertising evaluation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(6), 1614-1624. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.06.009>

Swant, M. (2016, May 10). *Twitter says users now trust influencers nearly much their friends*. Retrieved February 19, 2018, from <http://www.adweek.com/digital/twitter-says-users-now-trust-influencers-nearly-much-their-friends-171367/>

Syrett, M. & Lammiman, J. (2003). Catch them if you can. *Director*, 57(3), 70-76.

Tiago, M., & Veríssimo, J. (2014). Digital marketing and social media: Why bother? *Business Horizons*, 57(6), 703-708. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.07.002>

Tuten, T. & Solomon, M. R. (2013). *Social Media Marketing*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

United Influencers. (n.d.). *Influencer marketing*. Retrieved May 3, 2018, from <http://www.unitedinfluencers.com/influencer-marketing/>

Valentine, D. B., & Powers, T. L. (2013). Generation Y values and lifestyle segments. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 30(7), 596-606. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-07-2013-0650>

Veloutsou, C. & McAlonan, A. (2012). Loyalty and or disloyalty to a search engine: The case of young Millennials. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(2), 125-135. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/07363761211206375>

Ward, T. (2017, December 1). The influencer marketing trends that will dominate 2018. *Forbes*. Retrieved February 18, 2018, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomward/2017/12/01/the-influencer-marketing-trends-that-will-dominate-2018/2/#725b27595e69>

Wathen, C. D., & Burkell, J. (2002). Believe it or not: Factors influencing credibility on the web. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53(2), 134-144. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.10016>

We are Cube. (2018a). *Andreas Wijk*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://wearecube.se/andreas-wijk/>

We are Cube. (2018b). *Janni Delér*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <http://wearecube.se/janni-deler/>

We are Cube. (2018c). *Sanne Alexandra*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <http://wearecube.se/sanne-alexandra/>

WebFinance Inc. (n.d.). *What is a consumer: Definition and meaning*. Retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/consumer.html>

Weinås, A. (2018a). *Manolo*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <http://www.manolo.se>

Weinås, A [anderasweinas]. (2018.b). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/anderasweinas/?hl=sv>

Weiss, R. (2014). Influencer marketing. How word-of-mouth marketing can strengthen your organization's brand. *Marketing Health Services*, 34(1), 16-17. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=c5fa71de-a734-4974-8446-dfcd8310009%40sessionmgr102&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBlPWVnb2tpZSxpcCx1aWQmc2loZT1laG9zdC1saXZl#AN=96053583&db=buh>

Wijk, A [andreaswijk]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved April 3, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/andreaswijk/>

Williamson, K. (2002). *Research methods for students and professionals* (1st ed.). Wagga Wagga: Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt Uni.

Xiao, N., Hwan, S., & Lee. (2014). Brand identity fit in co-branding. *European Journal 68 of Marketing*, 48(7/8), 1239 – 1254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-02-2012-0075>

Xie, H., Miao, L., Kuo, P., & Lee, B. (2011). Consumers' responses to ambivalent online hotel reviews: The role of perceived source credibility and pre-decisional disposition. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 30(1), 178-183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.04.008>

Zoutien, K [kenzas]. (2018). *Instagram*. Retrieved March 6, 2018, from <https://www.instagram.com/kenzas/?hl=sv>

9. Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide Swedish

- Frågeformulär för fokus grupp -

För att vi ska kunna använda informationen från fokusgruppen på bästa möjliga sätt, så vill vi ha lite bakgrundsinformation. Vänligen kryssa för det alternativ som stämmer bäst överens med dig själv.

Namn _____

Datum _____

1. Vilket kön har du?

Kvinna _____

Man _____

2. Vilket år är du född?

3. Följer du influencers på Sociala Medier?

Ja _____

Nej _____

4. Om ja, uppskattningsvis, hur många **influencers** följer du och på vilka kanaler?

5. Varför följer du en influencer? (Du kan välja flera alternativ)

a) Rabatter

b) Inspiration

c) Underhållning

d) För att vara uppdaterad kring trender

e) Annat (ange vad) _____

6. Har du någon gång köpt en produkt rekommenderad av en influencer?

Ja _____

Nej _____

7. Hur mycket tror du att du själv påverkas av influencers?

- a) Inte alls
- b) Lite
- c) Ganska mycket
- d) Mycket

8. Läser du bloggar?

Ja _____

Nej _____

Om ja, nämn dina favoriter

9. Varför läser du bloggar? (Du kan välja flera alternativ)

- a) Rabatter
- b) Inspiration
- c) Underhållning
- d) För att vara uppdaterad kring trender
- e) Annat (ange vad) _____

10. Har du någon gång avföljt en influencer?

Ja _____

Nej _____

11. Anser ni att ett större följarantal skapar mer tillit?

Ja _____

Nej _____

I denna fokusgrupp kommer ljudet att spelas in för att på bästa sätt kunna använda datan i forskningssyfte.

Jag _____

godkänner detta _____ Signatur

Appendix 2. Interview Guide English

- Questionnaire for focus group –

For us to use the data gathered during the focus groups, in the best way possible, we would like some background information. Please choose the alternative that suits you the best.

Name _____

Date _____

1. What is your gender?

Male _____

Female _____

2. Which year are you born?

3. Do you follow influencers on social media?

Yes _____

No _____

4. If yes, approximately, how many **influencers** do you follow and on which channels?

5. Why do you follow influencers? (You can choose several options)

- a) Discounts
- b) Inspiration
- c) Entertainment
- d) To be updated according to trends
- e) Other (please state) _____

6. Have you ever bought a product recommended by an influencer?

Yes _____

No _____

7. How much do you think you are affected by influencers?

- a) Not at all
- b) To some extent
- c) To large extent
- d) To great extent

8. Do you read blogs?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, mention you favorites

9. Why do you read blogs? (You can choose several options)

- a) Discounts
- b) Inspiration
- c) Entertainment
- d) To be updated according to trends
- e) Other (please state) _____

10. Have you ever unfollowed an influencer?

Yes _____

No _____

11. Do you believe a larger number of followees create ore trust?

Yes _____

No _____

In this focus group the audio will be recorded to best enable the use of data in this research purpose.

I _____

Approve of this _____ Signature

Appendix 3. Focus Group Guidelines Swedish

- Riktlinjer och följdfrågor till fokusgrupp -

Påminn deltagarna om att det inte finns några rätt eller fel svar. Informera deltagarna om diskussionerna kommer att spelas in, men de kommer att vara anonyma. Be deltagarna signera sina formulär för att godkänna ljudinspelning. Be deltagarna fylla i sina frågeformulär.

Generell diskussion

Följdfrågor kring det ifyllda frågeformuläret

- Hur definierar du en influencer?
- Måste man ha sponsrade inlägg för att definieras som en influencer?
- Varför följer du influencers?
- Vill du känna igen dig i din influencer?

Köpbeteende

- När gjorde du senast ett spontanköp pga en influencer?
- Vad är det för produkter du köpt? (Svara bara om ni vill)
- På vilket sätt påverkade influencern dig? God smak? Rabattkod?
- Hur mycket påverkas ni?

Blogg

- Diskussion kring blogg
- Varför?

Influencers trovärdighet

- Varför har ni avföljt en influencer?
- Vad var det som gjorde att du avföljde?
- Funderar ni över influencers personliga brand?
- Funderar ni över kopplingen mellan influencer & företag/ produkt.
- När tappar en influencer ert förtroende?
- Anser ni att följarantalet hos influencers spelar roll och ökar trovärdigheten?
- Vilka faktorer påverkar din uppfattning kring varumärkena relaterade till influencers och dess samarbetspartner? (Två frågor)

En influencers varumärke

- Förklara för gruppen att framför dem ligger 20 influencers och deltagarna tillfrågades att välja 2-3 influencers de skulle vilja följa och 2-3 influencers det inte skulle följa.

Sedan ombads deltagarna att dela med sig av sina svar och tankar till resten av gruppen. Påminn gruppen om att det inte finns några svar som är rätt eller fel.

“Titta på de här bilderna, vilka känner du igen” Och vad tänker du om dem?

Elin Skoglund

Kenza Zoutien

Janni Delér

Alexandra Kissie Nilsson

Hanna Hannalicious Friberg

Ellinor Löfgren

Isabella Löwengrip

Margaux Dietz
Moa Mattsson
Michaela Forni
Sanne Alexandra Josefsson
Jon Olsson
Viktor Frisk
Daniel Redgert
Andreas Wijk
Erik Forsgren
Andreas Weinås
Lucas Simonsson
Bingo Rimér
Alex Schulman

Svarar på frågor vad de gillar/ inte gillar:

Välj ut tre du skulle vilja bli rekommenderad av? Varför valde du just dessa?

Välj ut tre du inte skulle vilja bli rekommenderad av? Varför valde du just dessa?

Frågor för det här avsnittet

- Vad gjorde att du valde/inte valde denna influencern?
- Påverkar influencerns personliga brand ditt val? Ökar det sannolikheten att köpa något?
- Vill du känna igen dig i din influencer?
- Ökar ett företags/ produktens trovärdighet om det eller den promotas av “din” influencer?
- Hur ställer du dig till när en influencer blir sponsrad av ett märke de inte “kan känna sig vid”?

Andra typer av influencers

- Sportprofiler som Zlatan, Lundqvist, Sarah Sjöström tex. anses de som influencers?

Övriga frågor

- Har du något som du vill lägga till för någon av frågorna?
- Känner du att du har fått chansen att säga vad du tycker?
- Vill du lägga till något som du känner skulle vara av värde för uppsatsen?
- Hur tror ni att framtiden kommer se ut med influencer marketing?
- Är influencer marketing positivt eller negativt?

Vi tackar deltagarna för deras tid, funderingar och idéer

Appendix 4. Focus Group Guidelines English

- Guidelines and follow-up questions for focus group -

Remind the participants that there are no right or wrong answers. Inform the participants that the discussions will be recorded, but they will be anonymous. Ask the participants to sign their interview guide to allow recording. Ask the participants to fill out the form.

General discussion

Follow up questions regarding the interview guide

- How would you define an influencer?
- Is there a need for having sponsored posts to be defined as an influencer?
- Why do you follow influencer?
- Do you want to recognize yourself in an influencer?

Buying behavior

- When was the last time you made a spontaneous purchase because of an influencer?
- What products did you buy? (Answer only if you want to)
- In what way did the influencer affect you? Good taste? Voucher?
- To what extent are you affected?

Blog

- Discussion regarding blogs
- Why?

Credibility of the influencer

- Why have you unfollowed an influencer?
- Were there any specifics that made you unfollow?
- Do you ever reflect over the influencer's personal brand?
- Do you reflect over the connection between the influencer and the company?
- When do you lose trust to an influencer?
- Do you believe the amount of followers does matter and increase the trustworthiness?
- What factors affect your perception regarding the influencer and its collaboration partner?

An influencer's brand

- Explain to the participants that there are pictures of 20 influencers in front of them and that they should choose two-three influencers they would like to start follow and also not want to follow.

Later, the participants were asked to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. Remind the participants that there are no right or wrong answers.

“Look at these pictures, who do you recognize and what do you think of them?”

Elin Skoglund

Kenza Zoutien

Janni Delér

Alexandra Kissie Nilsson

Hanna Hannalicious Friberg

Ellinor Löfgren
Isabella Löwengrip
Margaux Dietz
Moa Mattsson
Michaela Forni
Sanne Alexandra Josefsson
Jon Olsson
Viktor Frisk
Daniel Redgert
Andreas Wijk
Erik Forsgren
Andreas Weinås
Lucas Simonsson
Bingo Rimér
Alex Schulman

Answer question of what they like/do not like_

Choose three influencers you would like to receive recommendations from. Why did you choose these?

Choose three influencers you would not like to receive recommendations from. Why did you choose these?

Questions for this section

- What reasons made you chose/ not chose these influencers?
- Does the influencer's personal brand your choice? Does that increase the likelihood of buying a product promoted by this influencer?
- Does the company's trustworthiness increase if it gets promoted by the influencer of your choice?
- What do you feel when an influencer is being sponsored by a brand they have no connection to?

Other types of influencers

- Sports profiles such as Zlatan, Henrik Lundqvist, Sarah Sjöström, are they considered as influencers?

Other questions

- Do you have anything to add to any of the questions?
- Do you feel that you have got the chance to really express your opinions?
- Would you like to add anything more that you feel would contribute to this thesis?
- How do you believe future would look like regarding influencer marketing?
- Is influencer marketing positive or negative, according to you?

We thank all the participants for their time, opinions and ideas.

Appendix 5. List of influencers used in focus groups

Alexandra Nilsson also known as “Kissie” is a lifestyle blogger with over 120 000 readers each day and 270 000 followers on Instagram (Kissie, 2018; Cure Media, n.d.-a; Nilsson, 2018).

Alex Schulman is an author and columnist at Expressen (Expressen, 2018). He is also an influencer with almost 180 000 followers on Instagram (Schulman, 2018).

Andreas Wijk is a model and blogger in fashion. He has been featured as one of the most influential person within menswear (We are cube, 2018a). He has 183 000 followers on his Instagram profile (Wijk, 2018).

Andreas Weinås is the executive editor for the style site Manolo, freelance writer for King Magazine and fashion influencer (Weinås, 2018a). He has over 100 000 followers on Instagram (Weinås, 2018b).

Bingo Rimér is an entrepreneur, photographer and influencer with 160 000 followers on Instagram (Rimér, 2018).

Daniel Redgert is an entrepreneur within media and an influencer with almost 30 000 followers on Instagram (Redgert, 2018).

Elin Skoglund is editor in chief at Nouw, at one of Scandinavias largest blog platforms, where she also blogs (Nouw, 2018). She has about 40 000 followers on Instagram (Skoglund, 2018).

Ellinor Löfgren runs a lifestyle blog and has almost 60 000 followers on Instagram (Löfgren, 2018).

Erik Forsgren is a fashion model and has almost 300 000 followers on Instagram (Forsgren, 2018).

Hanna Friberg also known as ‘Hannalicious’ is a lifestyle blogger and fashion designer for NAKD (Hannalicious, 2018). She has over 150 000 followers on her Instagram (Friberg, 2018).

Isabella Löwengrip is an influencer and entrepreneur within the beauty sector and has over 1,5 million readers on her blog and 426 000 followers on Instagram (Löwengrip, 2018a, Löwengrip, 2018b). In 2018, she was given the award, as the most powerful woman within enterprise in Sweden (Hörner Kloo, Bederoff, Fjällborg, Skarin, Lindsten & Byttner, 2018).

Janni Delér is a fashion and lifestyle blogger (We are Cube, 2018.b). Besides she also has a YouTube channel with around 290 000 subscribers and Instagram profile with 1,3 million followers (Delér, 2018a, Delér, 2018b).

Jon Olsson is a freestyle skier, blogger and also founder of the travel gear company, Douchebags (Olsson, 2018b). He has over 1 million subscribers on his YouTube channel and almost 1 million followers on Instagram (Olsson, 2018c, Olsson, 2018a).

Kenza Zoutien is a fashion entrepreneur and founder of the clothing company IvyRevel (Rutherford, 2016). She runs one on Sweden's most popular lifestyle blogs and has 1,7 million followers on her Instagram (Cure Media, n.d.-a; Zoutien, 2018).

Lucas Simonsson is a comic and YouTube influencer with almost 300 000 subscribers and over 500 000 followers on Instagram (JLC, 2018; Simonsson, 2018).

Margaux Dietz is a blogger and YouTuber with around 125 000 subscribers on her channel (Dietz, 2018a). On her Instagram, she has around 148 000 followers (Dietz, 2018b). In 2018, she was awarded as Influencer of the year (Börjesson, 2018).

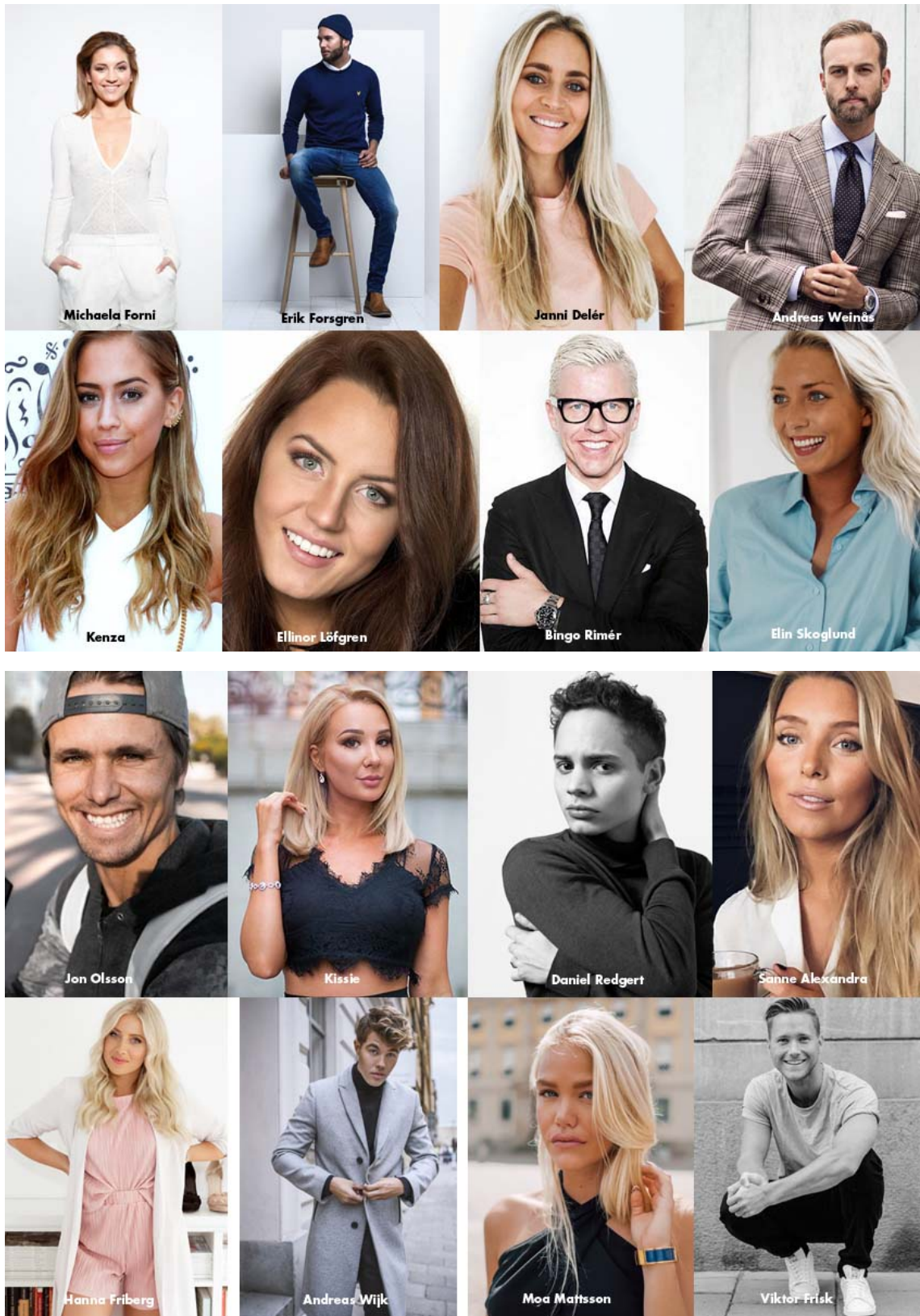
Michaela Forni is an author and runs the lifestyle platform, Daily Forni where she blogs (Forni, 2018a). On her Instagram, she has almost 1 million followers (Forni, 2018b).

Moa Mattsson runs a fashion and lifestyle blog and has almost 140 000 followers on Instagram (Mattsson, 2018).

Sanne Alexandra Josefsson is a fashion designer and runs her own brand called Sanne Alexandra (We are Cube, 2018c). She is also a lifestyle and fashion blogger with over 150 000 followers on Instagram (Josefsson, 2018).

Viktor Frisk is an artist and fashion blogger (Café, 2018). He has over 300 000 followers on Instagram (Frisk, 2018).

Appendix 6. Pictures of influencers used in focus groups





Appendix 7. Testimony of credibility

Jag Johan Grafström Johan Grafström intygar att den empiriska data som har samlats från min fokus grupp under perioden 050418 och 120418 är sanningsenligt sammanställd.

Jag Linnéa Jakobsson Linnéa Jakobsson intygar att den empiriska data som har samlats från min fokus grupp under perioden 050418 och 120418 är sanningsenligt sammanställd.

Jag Philip Wiede Philip Wiede intygar att den empiriska data som har samlats från min fokus grupp under perioden 050418 och 120418 är sanningsenligt sammanställd.

I Johan Grafström Johan Grafström hereby certify that the empirical data that was collected during my focus group during the period 050418 and 120418 is truthfully compiled.

I Linnéa Jakobsson Linnéa Jakobsson hereby certify that the empirical data that was collected during my focus group during the period 050418 and 120418 is truthfully compiled.

I Philip Wiede Philip Wiede hereby certify that the empirical data that was collected during my focus group during the period 050418 and 120418 is truthfully compiled.