Social Media Influencer Marketing

An empirical study on brand sponsorships and the effects on credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry

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JOHANNES KEPLER UNIVERSITY LINZ

Altenberger Str. 69

4040 Linz, Austria

www.jku.at
STATUTORY DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted is my own unaided work, that I have not used other than the sources indicated, and that all direct and indirect sources are acknowledged as references.

This printed thesis is identical with the electronic version submitted.

Linz, May 2017

Victoria Dangl
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

The aim of this master thesis was to explore the effects of sponsorships on the perceived source credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry. In order to answer the research question how sponsorships affect the perceived source credibility, a qualitative approach in the form of focus group interviews and a quantitative approach in the form of an online survey have been used. Before the empirical research was conducted, a theoretical framework is provided which compromises three main topics: Influencer marketing, social media influencers and credibility.

The qualitative approach was done in the form of two focus group interviews, which were conducted in order to further explore the topic of social media influencers, define what makes a social media influencer credible and which factors regarding sponsorships can be assumed to have an influence on source credibility. Furthermore, based on these findings and the findings of literature, hypotheses could be formulated which were further explored in an online survey.

The survey was conducted in April 2017 in the form of an online questionnaire with 283 participants based in German speaking areas.

Within the focus group discussions, it was indicated that three factors are likely to have an influence on source credibility of social media influencers regarding sponsorship, which have been further explored in the survey: sponsorships, transparency and product-fit.

However, sponsorships and transparency did not show a significant effect in terms of influencing source credibility whereas significant differences could be made between product-fit vs. no product-fit.

Nevertheless, the survey was limited to several factors which might have distorted the results. One limitation of the survey was that participants would have needed to possess more knowledge of the topic in order to answer the questions properly. Furthermore, it could be shown that the participants took limited time for the survey, which might have influenced the results of sponsored vs. not sponsored groups.
# Table of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of contents</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of tables</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Problem definition</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Research questions and objectives</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Course of action</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conceptual framework</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Influencer marketing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Introduction into influencer marketing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. Influencer marketing and social media</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3. Influencer marketing in the fitness industry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.4. Cooperations and sponsorships with influencers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Social media influencers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. Definition of social media influencers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. Attributes of social media influencers</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3. Types of social media influencers</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4. Forms of social media influencer marketing</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.5. Types of sponsorships with social media influencers</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.6. Problems and difficulties with sponsorships</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Credibility of social media influencers</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. Definition and types of credibility</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. How to measure source credibility</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3. Credibility of social media</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Reference to study and assumptions</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Methodological fundamentals</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Research design</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Data collection methods and instruments</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1. Focus groups</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.2. Standardized questionnaire</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Research sample</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. Data evaluation methods</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of figures

Figure 1: Paid, owned and earned media.................................................................................................................. 16
Figure 2: Product Placement Daniel Wellington @kruegerpatrick................................................................................. 27
List of tables

Table 1: Gender distribution ................................................................. 47
Table 2: Age distribution .................................................................. 48
Table 3: Social media usage ............................................................... 48
Table 4: Definitions of social media influencers and their credibility ................................................................. 54
Table 5: Dimension of source credibility ........................................... 58
Table 6: Factors that influence source credibility ................................ 60
Table 7: Supported factors by the focus group .................................... 62
Table 8: Cronbach’s Alpha expertise .................................................. 67
Table 9: Item- Total Statistics Expertise ............................................. 68
Table 10: Cronbach’s Alpha trustworthiness ....................................... 68
Table 11: Item-total statistics trustworthiness ..................................... 69
Table 12: Factor Matrix ..................................................................... 70
Table 13: Total variance explained before rotation ......................... 71
Table 14: Rotated factor matrix .......................................................... 71
Table 15: Group cells independent variables .................................... 72
Table 16: Homogeneity of variances ............................................... 73
Table 17: ANOVA between subjects .................................................... 74
Table 18: Summary of hypotheses testing ........................................... 77
List of abbreviations

ANOVA     analysis of variance
BMJ       British Medical Journal
FTC       Federal trade commission
KMO       Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin
MSA       Measure of Sample Adequacy
RAE       Revista de Administração de Empresas
SMI       Social media influencer
Womma     Word of Mouth Marketing Association
1. Introduction

The issue of social media influencers is a very topical one in the marketing scene which has attracted the attention of marketers and researchers. In the following pages, it is stated why the topic of social media influencers and the effects of sponsorships on credibility has been chosen and what the research goals and objectives are.

1.1. Problem definition

The phenomenon of opinion leaders and word of mouth marketing is as old as mankind. For several decades, researchers have been investigating and observing how customers form their opinion about products and who they are influenced by. In 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld suggested the two-step flow communication theory, in which messages by mass media are filtered by opinion leaders who decode messages and pass by filtered information to their peer group. In fact, opinion leaders are simply people/customers that are likely to influence people in their immediate environment.

It was shown by Nielsen that about 92% of people trust in their friends and family when it comes down to purchase decisions, which led to the conclusion that customers tend to believe in people they know and find relatable rather than mass media and celebrity endorsement. The reason for this is that celebrities do show a person-related rather than product-related influence. With the evolution of the internet, other forms of communication became popular. Customers not only use traditional media and relatives as source of information, but also the social networks, company websites and various social media communities. With this new opportunity of online social networking, a new form of communication marketing, “consumer generated media” is becoming increasingly important.

The essence of word of mouth marketing is to attract a high potential of customers via social interactions. With the new possibilities of social media, there is the potential of quick diffusion and quick information spread. Along with social media, new types of “word of mouth

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1 cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 593
2 cf. Katz/Lazarsfeld (1955), p. 32
5 Mangold/Faulds (2009), p.357
6 cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
engines”7 have evolved: Social media influencers. These people are defined as “independent third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media”8.

According to recent research, social media influencers have nearly as much as influence as friends and family nowadays9 - in a joint study on Twitter, almost 40% of consumers have bought an item online after seeing it being used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter etc.10

People follow social media influencers, also referred to as opinion leaders, because they need orientation and guidance in a certain topic11. Social media influencers are likely to be heavy users of the internet and are often engaged in a special topic, they typically are well informed early adopters12. They tend to be passionate about a certain industry like fashion or fitness, and tend to live this lifestyle. For that sake, they use products related to this lifestyle in their daily life, which they (informally or formally) give reviews about. In contrast to celebrities that are often paid to promote and use a product, the social media influencers’ business strategy is to build on their reputation, credibility13, trustworthiness14 and expertise relative to their peer group 15. Furthermore, they provide product related content in contrast to celebrities whose influence is often person-related16.

More and more companies become aware of this power too. A study by Schlesinger Associates showed that 84% of marketing and communications professionals worldwide expect to launch at least one campaign involving an influencer in the next twelve months17.

Not only do these social media influencers have certain power and influence over their community, but they also have a high reach. When they attain a certain number of followers, their posts, pictures, blogs and recommendations are retweeted, reposted etc, introducing a growing community and allowing a certain product or service to be discussed with a large target group. This also means that it represents a platform for companies to introduce new products and services and for customers it represents a new opportunity to search for product comments and purchase suggestions18.

The reason why people believe in them is because they are independent of a company; they are free to state their opinion and are comparable to friends and family. Furthermore, they

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7 Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
8 Freberg et al. (2011), p. 90
9 cf. Swant (2016), p.1
10 cf. Swant (2016), p.1
12 cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2013), p.1152
15 cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2013), p.1152
18 cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
tend to be an intermediary between a brand and the consumer\textsuperscript{19}. With their expertise (relative to their community) they are able to shape information to consumers’ needs and seem to be relatable. However, as for an opinion leader/influencer to be successful in sharing their message, they need to have a social network which means that they need a certain amount of followers, so that their message can be seen and spread\textsuperscript{20}. In the last couple of years, companies have become aware of the power social media influencers have on their customers. In former times, it was the company that influenced the image and perceptions of their brands. Or it was the responsibility of PR agents and journalists to inform consumers about certain products and services\textsuperscript{21}. However, this is not under their control anymore. Nowadays, the control belongs to the consumers because companies forgot the most important attribute in social media: the quality of the relationship between the company and the consumers\textsuperscript{22}. This part has been taken over by other consumers now (social media influencers). They have the power to influence perceptions about a brand\textsuperscript{23} and are able to decide about the success or failure of a new start up\textsuperscript{24}. So it is no surprise that companies reach out to social media influencers in order to collaborate with them and try to convince them to use and promote their products. They are the company’s new “storytellers”\textsuperscript{25}. As stated before, one of the most important attributes of a social media influencer is credibility. Factors that underscore (source) credibility are trustworthiness and expertise\textsuperscript{26}. Trustworthiness on the other hand is correlated with being independent. Hence, the question arises, whether paid sponsorships between companies and social media influencers do have an influence on credibility.

\textsuperscript{19} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p.592
\textsuperscript{20} cf. Katz (1957), p. 68
\textsuperscript{21} cf. Hedemann (2014), p.1
\textsuperscript{22} cf. Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p.185
\textsuperscript{23} cf. Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p. 185
\textsuperscript{24} cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 1
\textsuperscript{25} cf. Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p.185
\textsuperscript{26} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 41
1.2. Research questions and objectives

The aim of this master thesis is to explore the effects on credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry when faced with sponsorships. Due to the novelty of the topic, other objectives related to this are going to be explored.

The first objective is going to be to further explore the topic of social media influencers especially in the fitness industry based on literature and to summarize the findings that have already been made regarding the topic of social media influencers and influencer marketing.

The second objective is to derive assumptions from literature on what defines credibility of a social media influencer and which factors have an influence on the credibility of social media influencers. Based on these assumptions, the third objective is to empirically explore the topic of social media influencers in the fitness industry and the effects of sponsorships on the credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry.

Hence, the goal and the main objective of the thesis is to explore the effect on credibility of social media influencers perceived by consumers when faced with brand cooperation (sponsorships). These objectives lead to the following research question:

1. How do sponsorships/paid social media influencing affect the perceived source credibility of social media influencers?
1.3. Course of action

After the introduction, which compromises the first chapter, the second part of the thesis consists of the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework incorporates an important part for the further analysis, since the hypotheses and assumptions are mainly based on theory and the qualitative analysis. The theoretical framework deals with the topic of influencer marketing, explores the issue of social media influencers in detail, stating the definitions of social media influencers and which attributes they have and explains what defines credibility and how it is measured.

The third chapter of the thesis demonstrates the methodological fundamentals, compromising the research design, data collection instruments and methods, the survey design and data evaluation methods. Within the empirical part, two data collection methods are going to be used. Due to the novelty of the topic of social media influencers, the topic had to be explored further on a qualitative basis before conducting a quantitative survey.

Within the fourth and main chapter of the thesis, the empirical findings of the qualitative and quantitative approach are presented. Before the quantitative results are stated, the hypotheses derived from literature and the qualitative findings are going to be discussed.

Within the fifth and last chapter of the thesis, the results and main findings are summarized and discussed. Due to the results, an in-depth presentation of the limitations of the study is shown as well as implications for academia, social media influencers and marketers and further steps for research will be given.
2. Conceptual framework

The theoretical framework is going to cover issues related to social media influencers such as influencer marketing, social media platforms and online credibility and is going to explain certain aspects which are going to build the framework for the empirical study.

2.1. Influencer marketing

Influencer marketing has gained new popularity over the last couple of years and has evolved into an up-to-date marketing issue. In the following pages, it will be described what influencer marketing is, how influencer marketing is practised on social media and how it is related to the fitness industry.

2.1.1. Introduction into influencer marketing

For several decades researchers have been investigating and observing how customers form their opinion about products and who they are influenced by.

Starting in 1955, Katz and Lazarsfeld were observing the behavior of individuals during election, especially focusing on people who changed their voting intention. They could show that personal influence in the immediate environment (influence by other people) had the highest impact on the decision-making process. Interestingly, not all influencers were identical with the people one would assume to have the highest influence (authorities, people of public interest).

Deriving from the data, the two step flow communication theory was created, in which messages by mass media are filtered by opinion leaders who decode messages and pass by filtered information to their peer group. Opinion leaders, in this case, are simply people that are likely to influence other individuals’ mindsets, opinions and way of thinking. In contrast to formal authorities and public figures in the media, the influence of opinion leaders is a

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27 cf. Katz/Lazarsfeld (1955), p. 32
29 cf. Katz/Lazarsfeld (1955), p. 32
direct one and is based on their informal higher rank deriving from their expertise relative to their peer group (high level of information) or simply their connections\textsuperscript{31}.

Influencer marketing makes use of such opinion leaders by focusing on these “key individuals” that have an influence over target customers or groups\textsuperscript{32}. Influencer marketing is a special form of word of mouth marketing\textsuperscript{33}, which focuses on specific key individuals rather than the whole market in order to convey a company’s message\textsuperscript{34}. The key function of word of mouth marketing is to reach out to potential customers and to raise attention through social contact and interactions\textsuperscript{35}. Due to sensory overload, people tend to look for guidance in a certain topic, which is why friends and family still play a major role in purchase decisions. According to a study by Nielsen, about 92\% of people trust in their friends and family when it comes down to purchase decisions\textsuperscript{36}, which led to the conclusion that customers tend to believe in people they know and find relatable rather than mass media and celebrity endorsement. The reason for this is that celebrities do show a person–related rather than product related influence\textsuperscript{37}.

The Word of Mouth Marketing Association (Womma) has defined influencer marketing as follows: “Influencer marketing is when a marketer identifies, seeks out and engages with influencers in support of a business objective”\textsuperscript{38}. An influencer on the other hand is “a person who has a greater than average reach or impact through word of mouth in a relevant market place”.

Hence, influencer marketing can be seen as an “updated approach to marketing and public relations”\textsuperscript{39} where people are targeted to whom customers are likely to turn to if they need information. It provides the opportunity for companies to raise awareness about their products, to increase their traffic and to express their value proposition\textsuperscript{40}. However the challenge of influencer marketing is to identify the right influencer, since influence per se is something often invisible to outsiders or marketing professionals\textsuperscript{41}.

Although this definition is focusing on business and marketing purposes and is using people that are being trusted due to their informal rank and personal relationship as a communication tool to customers and the target market, influence per se is just an ability by

\textsuperscript{31} cf. Watts/Dodds (2007), p. 442
\textsuperscript{32} cf. Hayes (2011), p. 4
\textsuperscript{33} cf. Hedemann (2014), p.2
\textsuperscript{34} cf. Woods (2016), p. 5
\textsuperscript{35} cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
\textsuperscript{36} cf. Nielsen (2012), p. 1
\textsuperscript{37} cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 2
\textsuperscript{38} Fay et al. (2013), p. 2
\textsuperscript{39} cf. Hayes (2011), p. 6
\textsuperscript{40} cf. Hayes (2011), p. 7
\textsuperscript{41} cf. Brown/Hayes (2008), p. 9
one person to influence the mindset of another person in order to create a reaction\(^{42}\). Hence, one has to acknowledge the fact that influencers are no recent marketing phenomenon. Therefore it is obvious that not only people relevant for the marketplace, but also other types of persons have an influence and use this influence not only for business purposes.

One differentiates between five types of influencers\(^{43}\): people who have a formal position of authority (for example politicians or business leaders), "subject matter experts" (for example scientists or NGO leaders), people from the media (for example journalists and talk show hosts), the “cultural elite” (for example celebrities, designers, artists and musicians) and socially related people for example, personal relationships (friends, family, neighbors), members of community groups and also online networkers in social media. These types of influencers differ in who they are and on which channels their influence is spread. Whereas formal authorities use laws and regulations in order to influence their audience, socially connected people are characterized by social communities and personal contact\(^{44}\).

All these types are also characterized by different roles and personal traits, for example regarding their social network or formal authority\(^{45}\). Nevertheless, what they have in common is that every type of influencer bases his actions upon his influence on his or her community. However, despite the fact that influence is being executed in various ways and by different types of people, marketers nowadays often refer to influencer marketing in the context of influencers on social media, which is going to be treated in the next chapter.

### 2.1.2. Influencer marketing and social media

Social media provides several platforms and communities where customers can engage in, provide and seek information and find guidance for their daily lives. Also for companies, social media has turned into one of the most important communication tools\(^{46}\). It provides a direct contact with customers and new challenges, opportunities and job descriptions arise. Hence, the Internet and social networks have created a world, where everyone can contribute his or her opinion and become a potential influencer\(^{47}\).

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\(^{43}\) cf. Fay (2013), p. 3  
\(^{44}\) cf. Fay (2013), p. 3  
\(^{45}\) cf. Fay (2013), p. 2  
\(^{46}\) cf. Lumma et al. (2013), p. 1  
With the evolution of the internet, other forms of communication have become popular. Customers not only use traditional media and relatives as source of information, but also the social networks, company websites and various social media communities. With this new opportunity of online social networking, a new form of communication marketing, “consumer generated media” or “user-generated-content” is becoming increasingly important. “User-generated-content” is a crucial part of social media and influencer marketing and is characterized by certain attributes. The content is permanently available for the community and it is generated by participants of the community itself rather than professional parties. A concept familiar to consumer-generated content is (electronic) word-of-mouth marketing.

The essence of word of mouth marketing is to attract a high potential of customers via social interactions. Virtual communities are built through interactions via user generated content in form of texts, pictures, videos or audio. With the new possibilities of social media, there is the potential of quick diffusion and quick information spread. Along with social media, new types of influencers have evolved: Social media influencers. These people are defined as “independent third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media”. According to recent research, social media influencers nearly have as much influence as friends and family nowadays - in a joint study on Twitter, almost 40% of consumers have bought an item online after seeing it being used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter etc.

Types of social media platforms

Depending on the platform the influencer operates in, there are various techniques of how to do so. One of the most common and most used social media platforms are Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter. Other social network sites and apps like Whatsapp, Instagram, Linkedin and Google+ are also one of the most frequently used networks when it comes down to social interactions.

In order to give an overview of various social media platforms, the most important platforms, which are used for influencer marketing, are introduced:

49 cf. Mangold/Faulds (2009), p. 357
52 cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
54 cf. Freberg et al. (2011), p. 90
56 cf. Swant (2016), p. 1
57 cf. Statista (2016a), p. 1
58 cf. Statista (2016a), p. 1
Facebook is the biggest social network of the world, with a community of 1 billion users worldwide. People are able to communicate with each other via messages, posts, pictures and videos. Within seconds, a message can be spread across the world. Users are also able to form groups about a certain topic, depending on their interests and likes. It is also possible to create fan sites. Facebook users are able to follow their idols, favorite superstars and other celebrities and are getting an insight into their lives and jobs. What is more, they can comment on and connect with them, via commenting and liking their pictures, posts and videos.

Youtube is a video platform which belongs to Google. Everyday, about 4 billion videos are being watched by users. The website is being visited by more than 800 million people per month. The variety of videos Youtube is providing, is endless. Videos serve as information tool, entertainment, daily video diaries, guidance etc.

500 million people worldwide use Twitter. It is a short messenger service that allows people to “tweet” short thoughts and ideas to their community.

Instagram belongs to Facebook and is an online photo- sharing and social network platform. It has more than 400 million monthly active users and more than 30 billion pictures have been shared since the launch of the app. Users are able to share pictures and videos, tailoring it down to certain topics and interests. Via hashtags, people are able to collect information and pictures for a certain topic.

Influencers on social media

The question arises, how influencers in social media use these networks in order to share information and influence people in their purchase decisions. Like mentioned before, 92 % of consumers tend to trust friends and family (word of mouth) more than any other form of advertising. With the evolution of the internet and social networks, not only offline, but also online friends are available who sometimes also have the advantage of being experts in the field. Consumers watch these people using certain products in their daily lives. For example on Instagram, a fitness- related person is drinking a protein shake after his or her workout or using new Nike shoes during his or her run. People see this post, are able to ask questions about the product and the influencer is giving his or her opinion on the product. By stating

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60 cf. Lumma (2013), p. 38
63 cf. Ratcliff (2016), p. 1
their opinion, they generate interest, drive actions, create goodwill and establish expertise. What is more, this kind of influence is characterized by interactivity, hence a social and relational aspect. Participants can freely send, receive and process content and customers are able to communicate and interact with other customers, also with social media influencers.

Due to the entirely new world of media content and with the rise of social media and bloggers, marketers have learned to use influencer marketing, especially on social media platforms, for their purposes. Although being “the King of Content” in the USA, the topic of influencer marketing on social media is still unexplored in the German speaking areas. However, even though companies do not publish their influencer actions, more and more companies have become aware of the power of influencer marketing. A study by Schlesinger Associates showed that 84% of marketing and communications professionals worldwide expect to launch at least one campaign involving an influencer in the next twelve months.

The goal of influencer marketing is to attract brand ambassadors, multipliers and opinion makers on social media, which in turn are required to influence potential customers positively in their purchase decisions by expressing their interest for the product or brand. Brand ambassadors, multipliers and opinion makers in this case are bloggers, social media influencers (opinion leaders) in general and journalists. In contrast to using traditional media sources as for example newspapers, these influencers operate in the social networks and are able to influence communities in the digital world and are a mediator between a source of information and consumers.

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67 cf. Aula (2010), p. 43  
68 cf. Aula (2010), p. 43  
69 Tamble (2015), p. 1  
70 cf. Kock (2016), p. 4  
74 cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 592
2.1.3. Influencer marketing in the fitness industry

Influencer marketing on social media is being executed in various industries. The top industries for influencer marketing are: Fashion/Beauty; Home/Family; Health/Fitness; Travel/Lifestyle; Food/Beverage and Entertainment 75.

Especially health and fitness has become a recent social media phenomenon 76 and has been one of the industries that uses influencer marketing the most 77. Before the rise of social media, influencers in general as well as in the fitness industry were mostly offline 78. Offline influencers in the fitness industry would be coaches, bodybuilders, and nutrition experts in traditional media for example fitness magazines. They provided consumers with information, gave them tips on how to train and nourish themselves, and gave them purchase recommendations when they asked them for advice. Opinion leaders or influencers are still used as an important function in the health industry, since they serve as role models and help to convey health messages 79.

However, the world of social media has changed the fitness industry significantly. Nowadays, social media influencers shape the success of the health and fitness industry 80. With the evolution of the internet, several fitness experts, trainers, bodybuilders, athletes, and simply people being engaged with health and fitness provide information and give insights into their daily lives online. Social media has provided a platform for fitness experts and non-experts to state their opinion and to share their knowledge with the fitness community 81 and has facilitated the build-up of communities. Social media has cultivated fitness communities and made it possible to interact and communicate on another level 82. Social networks, especially Instagram are inspiring millions of people to exercise and live a healthy lifestyle by promoting fitspiration 83.

Fitspiration is a combination between the two words fitness and inspiration and is used in the social media context in order to describe the promotion of a healthy lifestyle by posting pictures of a healthy diet and exercise in order to motivate the users 84. Contributing to this are the social media influencers in the fitness industry who push their followers in order to

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75 cf. Jade (2014), p. 5-7
76 cf. Lord (2017), p. 3
77 cf. McClelland (2016), p. 1
80 cf. Lord (2017), p. 3
81 cf. Lord (2017), p. 3
82 cf. Schlossberg (2016), p. 4
83 cf. Tiggemann (2016), p. 2
84 cf. Tiggemann (2016), p. 2
reach their fitness goals\textsuperscript{85}. While in the English speaking countries, there are an endless amount of social media influencers in the fitness industry there are hardly any in the German speaking area. One of the most famous fitness influencers in Germany is Pamela Reif. She is one of the most successful influencers in Germany, with 2.8 million followers on Instagram by March 2017\textsuperscript{86}. Through Instagram and her blog, the social media star is promoting her fitness journey, accompanied by several products she is promoting\textsuperscript{87}.

Several supplement and clothing companies make use of these influencers in order to increase company awareness and to influence purchase decisions\textsuperscript{88}. The majority of influencers is promoting a variety of products, which mostly fit to their field of expertise. In the case of Pamela Reif, she is promoting a skinny tea, protein powder, watches etc. Furthermore, her followers are able to rebuy the sportswear she is using during her workout, with the clothing companies being linked to the pictures\textsuperscript{89}.

Whereas most of these fitness influencers only see themselves as people providing information to their followers and to make purchase recommendations, the industry of influencer marketing in the fitness industry is driven by monetary expenditures, even though these are very hidden\textsuperscript{90}. Influencers in the follower category of Pamela Reif are likely to receive a five-digit per post if she is promoting a product on the picture.

Bigger accounts with a follower number of about a 100 million followers are likely to receive up to 500,000 dollars per post\textsuperscript{91}. What makes these influencers valuable is that they enjoy full attention from their community, in contrast to traditional advertising on the internet, which is blocked by users. When it comes down to credibility, the key success of fitness influencers is that they share their fitness story. Hence, they promote their good looks through a healthy lifestyle and exercise, which is their “niche”\textsuperscript{92}. A niche that is approaching consumers on a whole new level, which attracts fitness communities as well as fitness companies that want to promote their products in a different, more relatable and credible way.

\textsuperscript{85} cf. Mediakix (2017), p. 1
\textsuperscript{86} cf. Kock (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{87} cf. Kock (2016), p. 4
\textsuperscript{88} cf. Mediakix (2017), p. 1
\textsuperscript{89} cf. Kock (2016), p. 4
\textsuperscript{90} cf. Kock (2016), p. 8f
\textsuperscript{91} cf. Kock (2016), p. 4f
\textsuperscript{92} cf. Kock (2016), p. 7
2.1.4. Cooperations and sponsorships with influencers

In the last couple of years, companies have become aware of the power, social media influencers have had on their customers. In former times, it was the company that influenced the image and perceptions of their brands. Or it was the responsibility of PR agents and journalists to inform consumers about certain products and services. However, this is not under their control anymore. Nowadays the control belongs to the consumers because companies forgot the most important attribute in social media: the quality of the relationship between the company and the consumers. This part has been taken over by other consumers now (social media influencers). They have the power to influence perceptions about a brand and are able to decide about the success or failure of a new start up.

So it is no surprise that companies reach out to social media influencers in order to collaborate with them and try to convince them to use and promote their products. They are the company’s new “storytellers”. In order to identify the right influencers, companies use quantitative factors as a starting point for their research. The number of followers, daily hits on a blog or channel and how often a post is shared is going to be crucial and necessary in order for an influencer to be recognized by companies.

Types of collaborations and sponsorships

The collaboration with an influencer can either be on a monetary or non-monetary basis. On a non-monetary basis, products are being sent to the influencer, asking him to try the product, review it and as remuneration he or she is able to keep the product. However, with this style of partnership, the company has no control over the brand message and content quality. Furthermore, the influencer is not obliged to disclose the partnership up to a product value of 1000 Euros.

On a monetary basis, there typically exists a contract between the influencer and the company. The influencer reviews products, uses them in his or her daily life and lets their community participate in the process. Typically, the influencer is paid per post. With this form of cooperation, the company has the ability to influence the presentation of the product.

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97 Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p. 185
100 cf. Mediakix (2016), p. 1
and has a direct influence on the opinion and statements of the influencer. The company is able to review the content and to decide on when, where and how the product is posted, furthermore, with a paid sponsorship, the influencer is legally (and also ethically) obliged to disclose the cooperation 103.

On the one hand, transparency should be given due to the credible nature of an influencer. It would be ethically questionable if influencers promoted a product positively which they do not support and use104. On the other hand, influencers who are being paid in order to promote a product, are legally obliged to disclose the sponsorship. According to the FTC, required disclosures have to be “clear and conspicuous” 105.

Also the “Landesmedienanstalt” in Germany has come up with legal obligations an influencer has to consider when faced with a sponsorship. It differentiates between two different forms: If the post or video is largely about the product itself- hence it is a product presentation- the post has to be marked with the hashtag “ad” or in German “Werbung” 106. If the whole video is only about the product, one has to show the viewers that the video is meant to be an infomercial. Additionally, one has to make clear orally that the video or post is made for commercial purposes107. If the product is used in order to tell a story or embedded in the picture without being the centre of attention, the influencer makes use of a product placement. This form of advertising has be disclosed as such by adding the hashtags of "product placement" or in German “Produktplatzierung”108.

Due to the fact that the topic of the thesis are social media influencers in the fitness industry, the supplement industry in fitness marketing is chosen for an example: When an influencer is using a product of the supplement company he or she is sponsored by, he or she is taking a picture with the product, telling his or her community where to buy the product and normally, customers are being granted a discount code when they buy the product online109. In order to receive this discount, they have to state the name of the influencer. Therefore, the company and the influencer can measure the real influence and utility of this advertising method. Another way of how to measure the effectiveness of an influencer for a company is to measure his or her earned media value110.

103 cf. Mediakix (2016), p. 1
104 cf. Woods (2016), p.8
106 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 3
107 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 4
108 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 4
109 cf. Coito (2016), p. 4
Earned media value

Marketers differentiate between three types of offline and online media activities: Paid media, owned media and earned media as shown in Figure 1:

Paid media includes traditional advertising methods of a company and is generated by the company itself. Owned media refers to all media activities that are controlled and activated by the company itself or its agents for example, a company’s website or social media channels. Earned media on the other hand is not directly produced by the company itself, but is rather generated due to their customers (through WOM) or journalists (through traditional media). Another factor is to differentiate between social and traditional activities through the indirect generated media: The social aspect refers to offline and online interactions through consumers for example, blogs, online forums, and posts on Facebook. However, the term earned media nowadays refers to the transparent word of mouth activities that are generated through social media- this form of advertising is highly appreciated since it is the most credible form of media activity. The second aspect, traditional activities, refers to traditional media sources and activities written by professional journalists and media organizations that produce professional content.

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113 cf. Andrew (2012), p. 5
114 cf. Andrew (2012), p. 6
115 cf. Corcoran (2009), p. 1
116 cf. Andrew (2012), p. 6
Whereas the measurement of the value and impact of paid and owned media is rather simple and already explored, it is rather hard to explicitly define how to measure earned media value, since a company has no control over this form of media\textsuperscript{117}. However, due to recent analytical tools, it is still possible for marketers to measure the impact of such social media activities\textsuperscript{118}. In order to measure an earned media value, one has to look at the extended value, which is provided additionally to paid (influencer) activities\textsuperscript{119} - hence, marketers look at the mentions, shares, reposts and reviews of an influencer’s online activities, see Figure1. Based on these data, one is able to calculate an earned media value. The four most influential German influencers on Instagram, according to their earned media value are caro_e_, magic_fox, xeniaoverdose and pamela_rf with an earned media value between 391,000 to 1,5 million USD\textsuperscript{120}.

\textsuperscript{117} cf. Corcoran (2012), p. 1
\textsuperscript{118} cf. Socialmediaführerschein (2011), p.1
\textsuperscript{119} cf. Boytos (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{120} cf. Statista (2016b), p. 1
2.2. Social media influencers

In the following pages, the topic of social media influencers will be discussed. It is going to be explained, what one understands by the term social media influencers, why consumers believe in them, which types of social media influencers there are and how social media influencers are related to sponsorships and cooperations.

2.2.1. Definition of social media influencers

Social media influencers are defined as “third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media”\(^{121}\). They exert their influence through their social media channels for example, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter by posting articles or comments and stating their opinion about certain topics and products\(^{122}\). Like every opinion leader or influencer, social media influencers are defined through their social networks, reach, relevance and reputation\(^{123}\). According to the types of influencers, social media influencers belong to the group of socially connected people(“online networkers”), hence they belong to the category of personal relationships\(^{124}\). With their personal reach, they have the opportunity to influence people’s opinions, their actions are monitored by their audience and people listen to what they have to say\(^{125}\). As mentioned above, according to recent research, social media influencers have nearly as much as influence as friends and family nowadays\(^{126}\) - in a joint study on Twitter, almost 40% of consumers have bought an item online after seeing it being used by an influencer on Instagram, Twitter etc.

On a quantitative basis, their influence is mainly measured by their number of followers, hits on their blogs or the number of times their post is shared\(^{127}\). Due to the boom of social networks, two new types of social media influencers are increasingly interesting for the public and companies: traditional famous personalities that have increased their influence due to their social networks and have created a significant reach on their networks and the younger social media generation which is the first one to reach fame without the use of traditional

\(^{121}\) cf. Freberg et al. (2011), p. 90
\(^{122}\) cf. Tamble (2015), p. 3
\(^{123}\) cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 2
\(^{124}\) cf. Fay (2013), p. 3
\(^{125}\) cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 2
\(^{126}\) cf. Swant (2016), p. 1f
\(^{127}\) cf. Freberg et al. (2011), p. 90
media\textsuperscript{128}. With his 92 million followers on Instagram, Cristiano Ronaldo, a famous soccer player, has generated about 36 million dollars for his sponsor Nike on his social media channels during the last year, all in all he has generated about 176 million dollars for all his sponsors on his social platforms\textsuperscript{129}.

However, one could show that traditional celebrities and famous sports people like Cristiano Ronaldo show a person-related influence rather than a topic-related influence\textsuperscript{130}. A topic-related influence is provided by the second type of social media influencers: the new social media “celebrities”: These kind of selfmade celebrities have evolved through their social networks by posting their own pictures, blogs and videos\textsuperscript{131}. They are typically “famous” (within their community) for their interest in a certain topic and are known as opinion leaders in their field as for example health/fitness or fashion\textsuperscript{132}, hence they have a topic-related influence.

Social media influencers in this sense are “everyday, ordinary internet users”, who created a larger group of followers on their blogs or social media channels through sharing their personal lives and lifestyles on social media and through interacting with their community online and offline\textsuperscript{133}.

This kind of influence makes them more credible and authentic to their audience and a lot of young people are connected to their social media favorites on an “amicable” basis\textsuperscript{134}. The reasons for this is that on the one hand, the new social media stars are favored by a young audience which is known as an adventurous target group that can relate to the social media influencer\textsuperscript{135}. On the other hand, their lifestyle is likely to represent the real life of young people, which makes them more authentic in contrast to celebrities. What is more, digital influencers have an effect on their members by gathering individual communities with similar interests\textsuperscript{136}.

This new form of influencer can be defined as “ordinary consumer”, which is gaining high reach due to the new technologies and the power of social media\textsuperscript{137}. Important for their success is that social media influencers focus on building their personal brand\textsuperscript{138}. This is

\textsuperscript{128} cf. Karsten (2016), p.77
\textsuperscript{129} cf. Badenhausen (2016), p. 1
\textsuperscript{130} cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 2
\textsuperscript{131} cf. Karsten (2016), p. 77
\textsuperscript{132} cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 1
\textsuperscript{133} cf. Abidin (2015), p. 1
\textsuperscript{134} cf. Karsten (2016), p.77
\textsuperscript{135} cf. Karsten (2016), p. 76
\textsuperscript{136} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 592
\textsuperscript{137} cf. Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p.184
done by sharing contents and personal parts of the influencer’s daily lives.\textsuperscript{139} Not only are the traits of social media influencers important for building their own brand, they are also increasingly interesting for companies and brands, since the communication between a company or brand and its consumer has improved and changed along with the new communication and network channels.\textsuperscript{140} Due to the fact that the younger generation of social media influencers has taken over the part of brand communication, they are the “brand’s new storytellers” \textsuperscript{141} and share their brand experiences with the community.\textsuperscript{142}

2.2.2. Attributes of social media influencers

More and more influencers arise, growing communities of hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers.\textsuperscript{143} Hence, the questions arises what makes them different to ordinary (“non-famous”) internet users, which personal traits do they have in order to be able to gather such a large following and influence.

Whereas a high reach and a certain amount of followers is necessary for every influencer in order to have an impact on their community, social media influencers differ from other influencers according to the types of influencers regarding their social aspect.\textsuperscript{144} Hence, an important attribute of social media influencers is that they are in some sort of relationship with their community. They interact with their followers on a daily basis and share their problems and issues with their community.\textsuperscript{145} Furthermore, the influence on the community and their purchase decisions depend on the social media influencer’s reputation, reach and credibility.\textsuperscript{146} Credibility is the key of social media influencers and builds the basis of every influencer marketing activity; if the social media influencer is not credible, he will not be able to convey a trustworthy message, despite any high reach.

Whereas the topic of social media influencers is rather new, the issue of influencers and their personal traits has been known and discovered in research. It is suggested that the most important attributes of a(social media) influencer are authenticity, trustworthiness,\textsuperscript{147}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{139} cf. Abidin/Ots (2016), p. 153  \\
\textsuperscript{140} cf. Zauner/Koller/Fink (2012), p. 682  \\
\textsuperscript{141} Goodman/Booth/Matic (2011), p. 185  \\
\textsuperscript{142} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 592  \\
\textsuperscript{143} cf. Abidin/Ots (2016), p. 155  \\
\textsuperscript{144} cf. Fay (2013), p. 3  \\
\textsuperscript{145} cf. Abidin (2015), p. 1  \\
\textsuperscript{146} cf. Hedemann (2014), p. 2f  \\
\textsuperscript{147} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), 596
\end{flushleft}
expertise\textsuperscript{148} and a strategic social location\textsuperscript{149}. Due to the fact that social media influencers are simply influencers in the online world, these traits are expected to also apply to them.

**Trustworthiness and expertise**

Trustworthiness and expertise are known as factors that underscore source credibility, hence, how acceptable and credible a piece of information and the person who is conveying the message is perceived by a person/consumer\textsuperscript{150}. Furthermore, trustworthiness and authenticity are important resources for a social media influencer because they act as independent actors (they are freely sharing their emotions and opinions on social media) and their community relies on them to provide trustful information\textsuperscript{151}. Consequently, their credibility is based on the fact that they are no marketers and have no commercial intention\textsuperscript{152}. A consumer trusts an influencer when he or she has confidence in him to provide information in an objective and honest manner\textsuperscript{153}.

What is more, an influencer shows expertise when his or her information seems to be a source of valid assertions and when this expertise is higher in relation to the community\textsuperscript{154}. Their expertise either results from an objective qualification or from their experience and interest in a specific topic. What is more, the reason why people believe in them is that they are independent of a company\textsuperscript{155}; they are free to state their opinion and are comparable to friends and family. Furthermore, they tend to be an intermediary between a brand and the consumer\textsuperscript{156}. Expectations from the community to the influencer vary when it comes to expertise: Social media influencers have the function of recommending various products related to their field of expertise and interest. Due to the social aspect social media influencers provide, the community of a social media influencer expects him or her to provide them with useful information and recommendations \textsuperscript{157}. With their expertise (relative to their community) they are able to shape information to consumers’ needs and seem to be relatable.

\textsuperscript{148} cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2014), p. 1152
\textsuperscript{149} cf. Katz (1957), p. 81
\textsuperscript{150} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 41
\textsuperscript{151} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 596
\textsuperscript{152} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{153} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 41f
\textsuperscript{154} cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2014), p. 1152
\textsuperscript{155} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{156} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 592
\textsuperscript{157} cf. Brooks (2014), p. 1
Strategic social location/ social interactions

However, as for an opinion leader/influencer to be successful in sharing their message, they need to have a social network. They need a certain amount of followers, so that their message can be seen and spread\textsuperscript{158} - hence a strategic social location. Influencers typically gather a larger following on their blogs or social channels\textsuperscript{159}. Although smaller accounts can show influence too, most of the social media influencers’ references relate to larger accounts with high numbers of followings.

What is more, influencers are well informed early adopters\textsuperscript{160}, which means that people rely on them to provide their community with new information and recommendations. Their task is to mediate messages, to filter information in the digital environment and to pass it to its community. According to a recent study, the prototype of a social media influencer is a person that enjoys communicating with people, and is "smart, ambitious, productive and poised"\textsuperscript{161}. Hence, social media influencers can be characterized as outgoing human beings that enjoy to interact with their followers and to provide their community with the latest news and trends.

In summary, the seven key characteristics of social media influencers are” trust, knowledge, communication, a desire to help, good timing and the power of persuasion”\textsuperscript{162}. People trust in social media influencers, because they are more authentic and relatable than mass media and celebrities. They provide their community with knowledge and show expertise, which is higher in contrast to their peer group. What is more, influencers show a passion for their content and posts, which motivates and inspires their community\textsuperscript{163}. They show a natural desire to interact with people and to socialize and they are aware of the right timing, when to share information with their peer group. Deriving from these attributes and traits, social media influencers have the power to influence people and are able to shape the mindsets of their community\textsuperscript{164}.

\textsuperscript{158} cf. Katz (1957), p. 61
\textsuperscript{159} cf. Abidin (2015), p. 1
\textsuperscript{160} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 592
\textsuperscript{161} Freberg et al. (2011), p. 91
\textsuperscript{162} Brooks (2014), p. 1
\textsuperscript{163} cf. Brooks (2014), p. 2f
\textsuperscript{164} cf. Brooks (2014), p. 2
2.2.3. Types of social media influencers

Social media influencers can be classified according to several categories; however, the most common is differentiating between the size of the network. One differentiates between mega-influencers, macro-influencers and micro-influencers\textsuperscript{165}. All social media influencers possess a dense network with a solid reach (being able to produce and communicate relevant content), relevance (how strong the influencer’s content is connected to a topic or brand) and resonance (ability to cause a certain behavior from the followers). However, the extent of these three factors differs between the three types of influencers\textsuperscript{166}.

Mega-influencers are typically celebrities like actors and artists, sportsmen or social media stars that show a following above 1 million subscribers\textsuperscript{167}. Although having the highest reach due to the high number of followers, studies could show that mega-influencers have the lowest engagement rates and resonance\textsuperscript{168}. This correlates with a study of “Markerly”, which showed that the rate of engagement (likes and comments of followers) decreases (in proportion to the followers) when the number of followers rises\textsuperscript{169}. This phenomenon can be explained through the resonance of the influencer.

Mega-influencers are typically celebrities that enjoy a variety of different follower groups. If the celebrity promotes a certain product on his social media channels (for example sports clothing), a broad range of target groups are approached, which may not show an interest in sports clothing\textsuperscript{170}. Hence mega-influencers reach a high number of people. However, the chances that they reach out to the target group which is interested in a special topic, is lower than with micro-influencers.

Macro-influencers have a number of followers between 10,000 -1000,000 people and show a high influence specific to their topic, for example fitness or fashion\textsuperscript{171}. Nevertheless, one could show that the engagement rate still decreases significantly from 8% at less than 1000 followers to 4% at 10,000 followers to 1.7% at 100,000 followers\textsuperscript{172}.

Micro-Influencers are widely overlooked due to their low number of followers. However, studies could show that this type of influencer can be highly valuable for companies and

\textsuperscript{165} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{166} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p.1f
\textsuperscript{167} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p. 1
\textsuperscript{168} cf. Bauer (2016), p. 3
\textsuperscript{169} cf. Markerly Inc. (2015), p. 3
\textsuperscript{170} cf. Bauer (2016), p.4f
\textsuperscript{171} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p. 3
\textsuperscript{172} cf. Bauer (2016), p. 3
more and more agencies seem to start valuing the influence of micro-accounts\textsuperscript{173}. An account between 500-10.000 followers can be seen as a small account. The definitions, however, vary between different agencies. Micro-influencers tend to have the highest brand relevance and resonance, encouraging 25-30\% engagement per post\textsuperscript{174}. This can be explained by the fact that micro-influencers are known to have faithful and topic-affin followers, which makes them more trustworthy than bigger accounts\textsuperscript{175}. Micro-influencers use their personal experience with a brand and their strong relational network in order to exert their influence\textsuperscript{176}. What is more, the follower groups of influencers below 10.000 subscribers are likely to consist of family and friends, which increases the trust factor of the influencer\textsuperscript{177}. One can say that the opinion of these influencers is crucial to their audience, which makes them highly valuable. However, the reason why macro or mega influencers are still preferred by companies is that micro-influencers do not have the reach companies wish to see- in order to have the same reach like bigger accounts, it would take multiple micro-influencers, which requires several resources and time\textsuperscript{178}. Nevertheless, one can see that the “optimal” influencer in theory has a follower group between 10.000 and 100.000 followers in order to manage a successful combination between high engagement and sufficient reach\textsuperscript{179}.

Due to the lack of research regarding types of social media influencers and the complexity of measuring qualitative influence, experts have come up with only suggestions of other different categories how to differentiate between the various types of social media influencers. As a suggestion, the social media agency “tobesocial” came up with six different types after approaching and observing several bloggers and influencers: the “up-to-date”, the “lifestyler”, the “entertainer”, the “activist” the “expert” and the “artist”\textsuperscript{180}. The “up-to date” influencer is providing his audience with the latest news and states his opinion about them. The “lifestyler” is known as a trendsetter and is likely to influence the media and trends. The “entertainer’s” attributes are creativity, humor and individuality and operates in the industries of video games, digital issues and pop culture. The “activist” is socially and politically active and uses his social media channels in order to raise awareness of these topics\textsuperscript{181}. The “expert” is providing information to his community and enjoys a high reputation due to his knowledge. “The artist” likes to produce his own content and share it with his community by

\textsuperscript{173} cf. Bauer (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{174} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p. 3
\textsuperscript{175} cf. Bauer (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{176} cf. Gottbrecht (2016), p. 3
\textsuperscript{177} cf. Bauer (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{178} cf. Adweek (2016), p. 3
\textsuperscript{179} cf. Markerly Inc. (2015), p. 4
\textsuperscript{180} cf. Harringer (2016), p. 4f
\textsuperscript{181} cf. Harringer (2016), p. 7f
using his talent on his social media platforms. The artist is operating in various industries for example sport, lifestyle, nature and food\textsuperscript{182}.

2.2.4. Forms of social media influencer marketing

Influencer marketing through social media influencers is basically being executed through online word of mouth\textsuperscript{183}. However one has to differentiate between the two terms. Whereas almost all influencer marketing activities include word-of-mouth actions, the two terms must not be interchangeably used. Whereas influencer marketing is defined as targeting key influencers that have an effect on the target customers, word-of-mouth is the medium or way how the message is spread\textsuperscript{184}.

The knowledge about the essence and effectiveness of word-of-mouth marketing is still increasing and has evolved into a crucial strategy in social influence and marketing activities\textsuperscript{185}. In contrast to traditional advertising, word of mouth marketing uses the network relations of consumers and information among customers is likely to be spread more quickly\textsuperscript{186}.

Word of mouth in the context of social media influencer marketing is defined as an “interactive exchange of information between two or more consumers that is not commercially motivated”\textsuperscript{187}, hence consumers are more prone to trust in a recommendation of a friend or family member than a sponsored post from a company\textsuperscript{188}. Therefore, social media influencers, in whom consumers believe nearly as much as in friends and family nowadays, are used in order to recommend certain products or brands.

Social media influencer marketing is being executed in three different ways: marketing to influencers, marketing with influencers and marketing through influencers\textsuperscript{189}. Marketing to influencers means that the company is proactively approaching an influencer, creating stories around him and building relationships with him or her\textsuperscript{190}. Hence, the target customer in this case is the influencer himself and the company who is approaching the influencer is in the role of the advertiser that tries to convince his customer of a certain brand or product. If

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{182}cf. Harringer (2016), p. 9
  \item \textsuperscript{183}cf. Woods (2016), p. 6
  \item \textsuperscript{184}cf. Markethub (2016), p. 3
  \item \textsuperscript{185}cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
  \item \textsuperscript{186}cf. Li/Lai/Chen (2011), p. 5143
  \item \textsuperscript{187}cf. Baker/Donthu/Kumar (2016), p. 226
  \item \textsuperscript{188}cf. Woods (2016), p. 6f
  \item \textsuperscript{189}cf. Hayes (2011), p. 3
  \item \textsuperscript{190}cf. Hayes (2011), p. 6
\end{itemize}
the influencer is convinced by the company or product that has been advertised, he or she is going to be likely to spread the message of the company. Hence, this would represent the case of marketing through influencers where the influencer is used in order to raise awareness of the company. Marketing with influencers means that the influencer is an advocate of the company or brand. Influencers will promote the product or brand on all their channels continuously and influencers are also likely to become “the face of the company”.

This paper aims at examining the correlation between influencers, companies and consumers, which is why the topic of marketing through and with influencers is going to be treated further. As mentioned before, social media influencers advertise products or brands by stating purchase recommendations. This can be done in the form of raising awareness of the company by mentioning the product or brand on the social media channels of the influencers (marketing through influencers). In the social media influencer marketing context, this is called a “social media shoutout”. An influencer is asked by a company to post a picture, using or wearing a certain product and mentioning it on social media. In order to promote the product, it is being sent for free to the influencer, asking him or her to give a review on the product. A company can also provide certain discount codes for the target customers and can request certain wordings that have to be mentioned. If the influencer has an ongoing partnership with the company, he or she is promoting the product or brand continuously over his or her social media channels. Also, an ambassador is attending certain events that the company is hosting and both parties have set expectations.

One approach how products are advertised for or mentioned on social media through or with social media influencers, is product placement. Product placement can be defined as inserting a “recognizable branded product into the content or background of a range of media formats”. In traditional media as for example television or movies, the role of product placement can either be passive or active. If a passive approach is chosen, the product is only part of the setting, whereas in an active role, it is used by the actor.

In newer formats, for example in social media, the combination of content generated by users and word-of-mouth recommendations provide significant opportunities for product placement. The majority of product placement on social media however is held in a rather...

194 Coito (2016), p. 4
195 cf. Coito (2016), p. 4f
simple way. Product placements on social media consist of a creator of the message-producing content- and a “promotional message”\textsuperscript{200}.

Especially Instagram has grown in popularity when it comes down to product placement on social media. The photo-sharing app is less time consuming to develop content and provides opportunities for social media influencers and companies to provide visual content\textsuperscript{201}. A perfect example for successful product placement on Instagram is the company “Daniel Wellington”, a Swedish company that sells elegant but simple accessories and watches\textsuperscript{202}. Daniel Wellington’s success is largely based on working with social media influencers (online celebrities and other SMIs).

After being selected from the company, social media influencers post pictures with the watches, including the product into their program\textsuperscript{203}. In the example picture below, the product is not the main focus of the picture - rather, the product is held in the background.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{product_placement_daniel_wellington.png}
\caption{Product Placement Daniel Wellington @kruegerpatrick}
\end{figure}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{200} cf. Liu/Chou/Liao (2015), p. 302
\textsuperscript{201} cf. Flöger (2016), p. 4
\textsuperscript{202} cf. Flöger (2016), p. 4
\textsuperscript{203} cf. Liu/Chou/Liao (2015), p. 300
\end{flushright}
To make product placement with social media influencers work, several aspects are essential for the influencer to maintain his or her credibility and for the company to gain a lucrative advantage. First of all, the product needs to fit to the influencer’s character and topic of interest\(^{204}\). If a product does not fit the influencer’s personality, and the conceptual fit is not given, this can lead to a loss in authenticity on both sides, on the brand’s side and on the influencer’s side\(^{205}\). Furthermore, the influencer needs to have a certain amount of reach for the product to be exposed successfully. An influencer needs to have a certain amount of followers or audience in order for the promotion to be valuable for the brand. Another crucial factor is product involvement. Simply put, product involvement is the degree of interest (cognitive and emotional) that a person has in a product category\(^{206}\). Consumers with a high product involvement tend to be severely careful when choosing a product and seek for suitable information, which is why social media influencers are effective in product placement due to their position as leading experts in their field\(^{207}\).

### 2.2.5. Types of sponsorships with social media influencers

Companies can partner up with social media influencers in various ways, regarding sponsorships, there are two different ways of how to do so: Either the influencer is being paid or the cooperation with the company is on a non-monetary basis- an unpaid sponsorship\(^{208}\). Another way how social media influencers are “promoting” products is in the form of a “natural brand advocate”\(^{209}\). Due to the novelty of social media influencer marketing, the definitions vary and different opinions are stated what defines a paid sponsorship. Whereas people some are of the opinion that unpaid sponsorships are still some sort of compensation and that only earned media is truly unpaid\(^{210}\), others say that only sponsorships that are based on monetary terms count as paid sponsorships\(^{211}\). On the other hand others claim that only two differentiations exist, including unpaid sponsorships in earned media\(^{212}\).

In this thesis, the differentiations that are used in legal terms are going to be applied: Paid sponsorships with social media influencers are based on monetary terms- hence, the

\(^{204}\) cf. Flöger (2016), p. 7

\(^{205}\) cf. Flöger (2016), p. 7f

\(^{206}\) cf. Flöger (2016), p. 8

\(^{207}\) cf. Flöger (2016), p. 8

\(^{208}\) cf. Mediakix (2016), p. 1

\(^{209}\) Ganesh (2016), p. 1

\(^{210}\) cf. Wall (2016), p. 2

\(^{211}\) cf. Mediakix (2016), p. 2

\(^{212}\) cf. Ganesh (2016), p. 1
influencer is being paid for spreading the brand message and promoting products. If an influencer promotes a product on his social media channels and has been compensated for it by a company, he or she is obliged to disclose this information. Furthermore, a company is in control of the brand message: They are able to review the content, give their approval and are allowed to require changes. In most cases, the company and the influencer base their business operations on a specified contract that involves fixed terms. Hence, the company decides how, when and why the product is presented by the influencer.

If the influencer receives no remuneration in form of money, one speaks of an “unpaid” sponsorship. In the case of unpaid sponsorships the products are being sent to the influencer for free and the company has no control over the brand message. No contracts exist between the influencer and the company. As a result, there is no possibility given to review the content and quality of the promotion. Apart from products, the company can also offer free flights, hotel stays and travel experiences.

Regarding unpaid sponsorships, the “Landesmedienanstalt” differentiates between various forms regarding stated obligations and product value: If the company that sent the product does not expect any specific actions, hence there are no obligations attached to the product, it is no form of promotional activity. The influencer is able to give a positive review, but can also show the negative aspects of the product. If the company does not expect a positive review—hence the influencer is not allowed to state any negative aspects, this can be seen as a promotional activity, which has to be disclosed in the picture or video. If the product is only embedded in a story and not explicitly stated as a review, the promotional activity is called product placement. It depends on the product value whether the promotional activity has to be disclosed. Product placements below a product value of 1000 Euros do not have to be disclosed— if there are no obligations in a form of an only positive review. A product value of more than 1000 Euros has to be disclosed as product placement.

In some cases, social media influencers do not depend in any way on a company; they buy the products on their own and provide their community with information about the product. The opinion stated in such product reviews reflects the own opinion of the influencer. Certain marketers call these influencers “natural brand advocates” or earned

213 cf. Wall (2016), p. 1
216 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 2
217 cf. dieMedienanstalten(2016), p. 2f
218 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 1
219 Ganesh (2016), p. 1
influencers. This form of “cooperation” is very lucrative for companies, since there already exists a positive relationship between the product and the influencer. The promotion is driven by the influencer’s own positive mindset and enthusiasm about the product and its ingredients or services. What is more, customers tend to believe in these kinds of influencers more- they are perceived more trustworthy due to their independency of a company.

The independency of a company implies that the influencer is actually into the product or service and that he is willing to pay for it. On the other hand, it is very beneficial for the company, since the promotion is free and they do not have to worry about guiding the influencer in the right direction. Regarding earned influencers -hence if the promotion is independent of a company and there exists no promotional or commercial interest behind the review- there is no obligation to denote the product. Still, influencers have to be aware of the effect on its followers if they review a product. Nevertheless, they are role models for their community and all their actions and reviews of a product or service do have a promotional effect.

2.2.6. Problems and difficulties with sponsorships

As it has been mentioned before, one of the most important attributes of social media influencers are authenticity, trustworthiness and independency. When partnering up with a company, social media influencers themselves and also the company have to consider several factors to make for the cooperation or sponsorship to be successful and to avoid legal and also ethical problems.

An ethical problem with sponsorships might occur, if there is a discrepancy between an influencer’s positive attitude towards the product and his or her saying. Hence, it is ethically questionable if an influencer promotes a product, he or she does not believe in. What is more, companies and also some social media influencers tend to mislead their consumers when it comes to properly disclosing the sponsorship, which implies legal consequences. Furthermore, by doing so, a social media influencer is likely to lose credibility among his or her followers.

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220 cf. Wall (2016), p. 2
221 cf. Wall (2016), p. 2
222 cf. Wall (2016), p. 2
223 cf. dieMedienanstalten (2016), p. 1f
225 cf. Woods (2016), p. 8
226 cf. Woods (2016), p. 8
her audience, which contradicts the fact that the fame of an influencer is based on his credibility\textsuperscript{227}.

Furthermore, one has to consider the fact that social media influencers are being followed and trusted due to the fact that they are no marketers\textsuperscript{228}. By partnering up with companies, the basis of their credibility is being tested. However, marketers argue in this point, since hardly any research has tested this problem on a quantitative basis. Whereas some argue that consumers will not mind sponsorships as long as the influencer and the company are transparent, others believe that in the long run, partnering up with a social media influencer will assimilate to traditional advertising methods and lose its effectiveness\textsuperscript{229}.

Apart from the ethical aspect and the evaluation of credibility when faced with sponsorships from the consumer’s point of view, one also has to consider the legal framework. Although 6 out of 10 influencers seemed to be aware of the FTC guidelines in 2016, only 10\% of marketers and companies are familiar with the legal framework regarding influencer marketing\textsuperscript{230}. It seems questionable, if marketers truly do not know about the guidelines or if they are well aware, but simply deny the guidelines. Three out of ten influencers have been asked by marketers not to disclose the sponsored post or the compensation the influencers have received from the company\textsuperscript{231}. The reason for this is that marketers are aware of the fact that unsponsored posts or earned influencers, are more trustworthy in their reviews and actions than paid influencers whose opinions and statements depend on a company or brand\textsuperscript{232}. However, a deception of reality has legal and also social consequences companies and influencers should be aware of: By not labelling an ad correctly, the FTC is obliged to punish the behavior\textsuperscript{233}. What is more, influencers are likely to lose their credibility, if the deception is revealed. Both, marketers and influencers, are advised to disclose the sponsorships in order to avoid legal and social consequences. Despite the fear of losing authenticity with a sponsored post, it could be shown that customers tend to get used to such a type of cooperation, since more and more influencers reveal how and why they get compensated\textsuperscript{234}.

Apart from legal and ethical aspects, the biggest risk for marketers is to find the right influencer\textsuperscript{235}. As with every cooperation, marketers have to consider carefully, which type of person represents their brand the best. It also has to be considered, if the target audience of

\textsuperscript{227} cf. Abidin/Ots (2016), p. 154
\textsuperscript{228} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{229} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 171
\textsuperscript{230} cf. McCarthy (2017), p. 2
\textsuperscript{231} cf. McCarthy (2017), p. 2
\textsuperscript{232} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 171
\textsuperscript{233} cf. McCarthy (2017), p. 3
\textsuperscript{234} cf. McCarthy (2017), p. 3
\textsuperscript{235} cf. Woods (2016), p. 17
the influencer aligns with the company and/or product. By aligning with companies and showing commercial content, influencers are constantly "at risk of breaching their contract of trust" with their community. Hence, the product has to fit the influencer’s field of interest, since this also represents the main interests of his or her followers. One has to be aware of the fact that every negative connotation with the brand can affect the influencer and any negative attention that is raised by the influencer can affect the company and brand image.

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236 cf. Woods (2016), p. 16
238 cf. Woods (2016), p. 17
2.3. Credibility of social media influencers

In the following chapter, one of the most important attributes of a social media influencer is going to be discussed: Credibility. Credibility is essential for a marketing communication and is necessary in order to convey a message to the community successfully. In order to get a deeper insight into the topic, different forms and types of credibility are going to be discussed as well as how to measure credibility. Furthermore, this chapter contains information on how credibility is treated on social media.

2.3.1. Definition and types of credibility

The concept of credibility goes back to Greek history, based on Aristotle’s writings on rhetoric skills. How persuasive a speech was received depended on a speaker’s ethos (characteristics of the speaker), his pathos (emotions) and logos (how logical and reasonable the information was). More modern definitions think of credibility as the “believability” of a source. However, one can say that credibility is a concept of daily life activities, which makes it hard to narrowly formulate the definition and meaning of credibility.

The concept of credibility is universally relevant, due to its application in almost every area for example, the credibility of statements in a legal context, the credibility of historical documents and the credibility of speakers. Nevertheless, in almost every situation where credibility has to be judged, three prerequisites are likely to be given: communication, relevance and uncertainty. Credibility is going to be a central concept when one receives an information from another person. Thus, the information is “second hand”. Hence the basis for credibility judgment is the communication between a sender and a receiver of an information. Furthermore, if a person receives a message which he or she has not evaluated by him or herself, a level of uncertainty is given. If the information has an influence on the receiver’s actions, the information and hence, the credibility of the message and communicator is relevant.

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240 cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p. 211
243 cf. Eisend (2003), p. 7f
244 Eisend (2003), p. 8
Credibility can relate to different objects\(^{247}\) for example, to the person or the message which is conveyed\(^{248}\). Credibility is a multi-dimensional concept: One differentiates between three types of credibility: Message credibility, medium credibility and source credibility. Medium credibility is the degree of how credible a certain medium, through which a message is spread, is perceived\(^{249}\). Examples for a medium are a newspaper or television. Message credibility focuses on the message itself rather than on the medium. It measures how credible the communicated message is perceived and can be compared to the concept of “logos” from Aristotle\(^{250}\).

On the other hand, source credibility deals with the credibility of the speaker and implies “a communicator’s positive characteristics that affect the receiver’s acceptance of a message”\(^{251}\). Hence, this form of credibility concentrates on the person who is conveying the message- and his or her characteristics - through a medium. In general, one can say that source credibility is defined as the “believability of the speaker”\(^{252}\). Some scholars and literature refer to source credibility only, when they talk about credibility in general, since the source is typically the most important attribute and central concept when it comes down to evaluating credibility\(^{253}\).

A source can be a person or an organization\(^{254}\). The source has to communicate the message independently, be fully responsible for it and also have an influence on the message. Only if these characteristics are given, the transmitter of the message can also be classified as a source\(^{255}\).

Source credibility can be compared to the concept of ethos, since both definitions refer to the characteristics of the speaker itself\(^{256}\). Researchers believe that the characteristics of a person have a high influence on the persuasiveness of a message\(^{257}\), which makes the concept of source credibility highly important for the topic of social media influencers.

Furthermore, the credibility of a source depends on what a recipient is perceiving, hence, research is focusing on a recipient-oriented view\(^{258}\). This means that the concept of source credibility does not (only) focus on the intention of the communicator, but mainly on the

\(^{247}\) cf. Küster-Rhode (2010), p. 10
\(^{248}\) cf. Nawratil (1997), p. 15
\(^{249}\) cf. Golan (2010), p. 3
\(^{250}\) cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2012), p. 211
\(^{251}\) Ohanian (1990), p. 41
\(^{252}\) Metzger/Flanagin (2012), p. 211
\(^{253}\) cf. Küster-Rhode (2010), p. 10
\(^{254}\) cf. Golan (2012), p. 211
\(^{255}\) cf. Küster-Rhode (2010), p. 11
\(^{256}\) cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2012), p. 211
\(^{257}\) cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 39
\(^{258}\) cf. Nawratil (1997), p. 18
characteristics and intentions of a source, a recipient of an information is perceiving\textsuperscript{259}. This also means that the concept of source credibility is meant to be a subjective attribution of a recipient of an information and depends on the perception of the receiver as well as the current situation and context\textsuperscript{260}.

The concept of source credibility is a two dimensional concept – hence-it is underscored by two factors: Trustworthiness and expertise\textsuperscript{261}. Trustworthiness is defined as “the degree of confidence in the communicator’s intent to communicate the assertions he considers the most valid” \textsuperscript{262} and expertise as “the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions” \textsuperscript{263}. Hence, in order for a speaker to be perceived as credible, it is necessary that his or her audience trusts him to provide them with valid information and that he is able to provide this information based on a level of expertise. If he does not, and the receiver of the message believes the contrary, hence that the source is not providing him or her with valid information, he is likely to reject the information. Also, a source will be perceived as more credible, the more “well informed” and “intelligent” he seems to his audience\textsuperscript{264}.

Since the definition of Hovland, which seemed as a breakthrough in credibility research, other constructs have been added to source credibility, which, however, have not been consistently used in research when studying source credibility. Whereas expertise and trustworthiness are present concepts in source credibility studies, the concept of “goodwill” or “intent toward receiver” has been lost \textsuperscript{265}. A communicator’s level of goodwill is high, when the receiver believes that he has its best interests at heart\textsuperscript{266}.

Other constructs or dimensions of source credibility which are frequently used refer to the way a source is presenting itself or its appearance, for example presentation or attractiveness\textsuperscript{267}. Although research suggests that physical attractiveness is a factor that contributes to a person’s judgment of a person/source, it is still an unclear issue, since the definition and dimensions of attractiveness are countless\textsuperscript{268}.

\textsuperscript{259} cf. Nawratil (1997), p. 18
\textsuperscript{260} cf. Küster Rhode (2010), p. 10
\textsuperscript{261} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 41
\textsuperscript{262} Hovland/Irving/Harold (1953), p. 21
\textsuperscript{263} Hovland/Irving/Harold (1953), p. 21
\textsuperscript{264} cf. Hovland/Irving/Harold (1953), p.21
\textsuperscript{265} McCroskey/Teven (1999), p. 90
\textsuperscript{266} cf. Westerman/Spence/van der Heide (2012), p. 200
\textsuperscript{267} cf. Eisend (2006), p. 3
\textsuperscript{268} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 42
2.3.2. How to measure source credibility

Credibility is a multi-dimensional concept, which is hard to narrowly define. Therefore, in order to measure (source) credibility, it is necessary to use a multi-item approach\textsuperscript{269}. Several studies have dealt with an “explorative factor analysis” in order to measure the dimensions of source credibility. The goal of this analysis is to empirically derive dimensions that describe a certain concept. Participants had to rate source credibility by rating single items related to source credibility. These items are then summarized into factors and in turn, make up the concept of source credibility\textsuperscript{270}.

Several studies have examined what determines source credibility and which dimensions it consists of, however, there were no consistent results given regarding the number of dimensions of source credibility\textsuperscript{271}. Nevertheless, what most dimensions have in common is that they all include some form of expertise and trustworthiness in their factors. Therefore, several dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise have been suggested, which have been proven to measure source credibility. In a study of Ohanian, dimensions that have been found to undermine the concept of trustworthiness, expertise and attractiveness have been tested: According to the study, expertise consists of five measurable dimensions: “expert”, “experienced”, “knowledgeable”, “qualified” and “skilled”. Trust also consists of five dimensions: “dependable”, “honest”, “reliable”, “sincere” and “trustworthy”\textsuperscript{272}. In a more recent study, Eisend analyzed the dimensions of source credibility of a sales person. According to his definition, source credibility consists of three dimensions: sincerity (can be compared to trustworthiness), professionalism (can be compared to expertise) and attraction\textsuperscript{273}. The single items were “honest”, “sincere” and believable for sincerity, “accurate”, “informative”, “successful”, “skilled”, “trained” and “professional” for professionalism and “dynamic”, “expressive”, “appealing”, “attractive” and “exiting” for attraction\textsuperscript{274}. In order to find the right spokesperson for a product on social media, it is crucial to examine, how effective and credible a source is in conveying a message, hence, how persuasive a person is and which characteristics this depends on\textsuperscript{275}. However, one has to say that previous research on source credibility has focused on existing literature and measures regarding source credibility and has not considered more updated approaches. As

\textsuperscript{269} cf. Eisend (2006), p. 3
\textsuperscript{270} cf. Eisend (2006), p. 3
\textsuperscript{271} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 40
\textsuperscript{272} cf. Ohanian (1990), p.46
\textsuperscript{273} cf. Eisend (2006), p. 22
\textsuperscript{274} cf. Eisend (2006), p. 22
\textsuperscript{275} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 39
a result, it is necessary to further examine dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise and to explore if given dimensions also fit to the concept of social media influencers.

2.3.3. Credibility of social media

Along with the internet and social media, consumers have found new channels in order to seek information and new sources that provide information, have evolved. Especially social media is a new driving force for people when it comes down to information seeking\(^{276}\), due to the fact that it allows users to access a variety of risk and crisis information\(^{277}\). Also, since the access to information is gained rather quickly, it is a convenient opportunity for those trying to reduce their uncertainty. Due to these new forms, it became interesting to know, how users form their opinion about the credibility of the source that is providing the information\(^{278}\). Hence, it has become increasingly important for researches to evaluate the people (consumers) providing the information and to find out how credible these sources are\(^{279}\). Credibility is closely linked to information, since it observes how the receiver rates a source in relation to the information he is receiving\(^{280}\).

The use of social media as a source of information is rising. With the rise of usage, the number of sources that provide information is also rising, since users are allowed to create their own content, which is not reviewed by professionals. In traditional media, a variety of “gatekeepers” are assigned to this task. They act as a professional filter of information, so to say, they decide which information is provided and how the message is conveyed\(^{281}\). An example for gatekeepers in traditional media like newspapers are journalists or publishers. One characteristic of social media is that it lacks such professional gatekeepers, since the access to provide information is not limited. Hence, the judgment on how credible a piece of information is and of the source conveying the message, belongs to content producers (users), but also to the ones receiving the information (also consumers)\(^{282}\). Whereas in traditional media, credible sources could often be identified by their formal authority,

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\(^{278}\) cf. Westerman/Spence/van der Heide (2012), p. 199  
\(^{279}\) cf. Westerman/Spence/van der Heide (2012), p. 200  
\(^{281}\) cf. Westerman/Spence/van der Heide (2012), p.200  
qualifications/experience and professional status, social media has increased the complexity of identifying credible information and sources.\textsuperscript{283}

Hence, relying on source credibility has become increasingly important on social media regarding risk and information seeking. On the one hand due to the fact that the focus has shifted from traditional information providers to the users\textsuperscript{284}, on the other hand, this is so because information seekers need to rely on the credibility of the source since there is no limited access.

Due to that fact, researchers have focused on factors that are being judged if looking for credible sources Metzger and Flanagin have described these factors\textsuperscript{285}: A source is providing accurate information, if it does not contain error and can be verified outside the online world. Another factor, authority refers to the person who launched the information, hence, what qualifications the person has. Thirdly, objectivity deals with the intent of the source for providing the information, hence, what his or her purpose is. It also includes the question whether the information is subjective or a fact. It is also important that an information is “up-to-date” (currency) and that the information is provided in depth and in an comprehensive way (coverage).

What is more, research has focused on certain heuristics people use when faced with credibility evaluation\textsuperscript{286}: Heuristics simplify the evaluation process. The reputation of a source is a highly important heuristic when faced with credibility judgment due to the fact that people are likely to believe in issues they recognize or are familiar with more than with unfamiliar ones. The endorsement heuristic states that people tend to believe in information and sources which are believed by others too. Another important heuristic is the one of consistency. This means that the information provided by a source has to be consistent with other sources. On the other hand, if expectations are not met, the information will be judged as not credible. The last heuristic is the one of persuasive intent. If an information is perceived as biased, people are likely to judge it as not credible. In this case, it could be shown that people seem to feel manipulated, which makes them mistrust the information\textsuperscript{287}. This can also be applied to a source. Social influence research has dealt with how people react to sources that are biased. Results show that when people recognize the manipulation intent of a source, they are likely to reject the information or persuasion attempt\textsuperscript{288}.

\textsuperscript{283} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p. 211
\textsuperscript{284} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p. 212
\textsuperscript{285} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p. 213
\textsuperscript{286} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p.214f
\textsuperscript{287} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p.216
\textsuperscript{288} cf. Metzger/Flanagin (2013), p. 216
As stated in previous chapters of the thesis, one of the essences of the success of social media influencers is based on their credibility\textsuperscript{289}. Due to their trustworthiness (resulting from communication and interactivity with their community, their relatability and authenticity)\textsuperscript{290} and expertise (providing information to their peer group, being an expert in a certain field and being the most knowledgeable in contrast to their community)\textsuperscript{291}, social media influencers can be characterized as a credible source in the social media environment. However, credibility is not only an important tool for social media influencers themselves in order to build their own community and grow their channels, but it also supports the effectiveness to be a brand endorser for a product\textsuperscript{292}. However, as mentioned earlier, biased sources tend to have a negative effect on the persuasion of people\textsuperscript{293}, which made it interesting for marketers and social media influencers to evaluate the effect of biased advertising on credibility of social media influencers. The problem is that companies use social media influencers, because they have grown a community due to their authenticity and credibility\textsuperscript{294}. However, due to the sponsorship, the influencer is likely to lose credibility. This can be explained by the fact that companies try to make influencers their marketers. On the contrary, the credibility of social media influencers is based on the fact that they are independent of a company, hence, they are non-marketers\textsuperscript{295}. Resultingly, one can see that the concept of source credibility of social media influencers in the online world is contradictory and complex.

2.4. Reference to study and assumptions

The topic of social media influencers is an up-to-date marketing issue, which is why hardly any or no quantitative studies have been conducted so far on this topic. Hence, the goal of this thesis was to further explore the attributes of social media influencers, especially their credibility and the effects of sponsorships on source credibility.

The central concept of the empirical research of this thesis is the concept of source credibility. Factors that underscore (source) credibility are trustworthiness and expertise\textsuperscript{296}. The credibility of a social media influencer builds the basis for their success. Their

\textsuperscript{289} cf. Abidin/Ots (2016), p. 154
\textsuperscript{290} cf. Uzunoglu/Misci (2014), p. 596
\textsuperscript{291} cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2014), p. 1152
\textsuperscript{292} cf. Abidin/Ots (2016), p. 154
\textsuperscript{293} cf. Metzger/Flanagan (2013), p. 216
\textsuperscript{294} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 171
\textsuperscript{295} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{296} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 41
community believes in them due to their expertise in comparison to their peer group\textsuperscript{297}, their intent to provide valid information and due to their independency and ability to freely state their opinion. However, it has been stated that more and more companies make use of the credibility of social media influencers in order to promote their products, which is contradictory to the fact that the social media influencers’ success is based on being no marketer\textsuperscript{298}.

Hence, the question arises whether cooperations and sponsorships between companies and social media influencers do have an influence on the credibility of social media influencers. Therefore, the objective of the study is to explore the effects on credibility of social media influencers perceived by consumers when faced with brand cooperation with the central research question: How do sponsorships/ paid social media influencing affect the perceived source credibility of social media influencers?

The research question implies that there are several factors influencing source credibility. In order to explore these factors on a quantitative basis and to construct hypotheses, several assumptions have been made in order to examine which factors are going to be quantified.

It has been stated that sponsorships are argued to have an influence on the credibility of an influencer, since their credibility is based on being independent of a company\textsuperscript{299}. Therefore, it was assumed that sponsorships were a factor having an influence on the credibility of social media influencers. Supported by the arguments of marketers, it is assumed that sponsorships lower the credibility of a social media influencer. Hence the first assumption is as follows:

\textit{H1: The source credibility of a social media influencer in the fitness industry is higher, when he or she is not sponsored by a company}

If it happens to be a paid sponsorship, social media influencers are legally obliged to disclose the sponsorship\textsuperscript{300}. A deception of reality has legal and also social consequences companies and influencers should be aware of: By not labelling an ad correctly, the FTC is obliged to punish the behavior\textsuperscript{301}. What is more, influencers are likely to lose their credibility, if the deception is revealed. Both, marketers and influencers, are advised to disclose the sponsorships in order to avoid legal and social consequences. Despite the fear of losing authenticity with a sponsored post, it could be shown that customers tend to get used to such

\textsuperscript{297} cf. Loeper/Steiner/Stewart (2014), p. 115
\textsuperscript{298} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{299} cf. Anderson (2010), p. 172
\textsuperscript{300} cf. Mediakix (2016), p. 2
\textsuperscript{301} cf. McCarthy (2017), p. 3
a type of cooperation, since more and more influencers reveal how and why they get compensated.302

Hence the question arose, if social media influencers truly lose their credibility if they are deceptive about a sponsored post or if the customers tend to get used to this type of cooperation. Therefore, another assumption of the study was that transparent social media influencers are more credible than not-transparent social media influencers:

**H2: The source credibility of a social media influencer in the fitness industry is higher if he or she is transparent about the sponsorship**

Another factor that might influence the source credibility of a social media influencer is the fit between the product/company and the branch of the social media influencer is operating in and the influencer itself. The product has to fit the influencer’s field of interest, since this also represents the main interests of his or her followers. One has to be aware of the fact that every negative connotation with the brand can affect the influencer and any negative attention that is raised by the influencer can affect the company and brand image.303

Due to the literature, it is assumed that for an influencer to be credible, he or she needs to promote products that fit to his or her field of expertise. Hence, a third assumption has been made:

**H3: The source credibility of a social media influencer in the fitness industry is higher, if the product fit is given**

Furthermore, it was assumed that the longer the relationship with a company is, the higher is the credibility. Nevertheless, this assumption cannot be supported by literature and was assumed by the author herself. The reason for this assumption was that by observing the interaction of followers and influencers, one could see that changes in sponsors had very high engagement (in a negative way). Hence, it was assumed that changing the sponsor too often has an influence on the credibility of an influencer:

**H4: A social media influencer in the fitness industry is more credible when he or she is consistent with his sponsor**

However, the above suggested constructs were pre-assumptions that had to be supported by consumers in a qualitative approach and in a second step further explored within a quantitative design.

3. Methodological fundamentals

The empirical part represents the main part of the thesis. In order to explore the effects of brand sponsorships on the credibility of social media influencers, the design of an empirical study has been chosen. An empirical research aims at solving research problems and answering research questions and research hypotheses based on own derived data\(^\text{304}\).

The study consists of two approaches: Due to the novelty of the topic of social media influencers, two focus groups were conducted in order to be able to derive data for a quantitative survey. After examining the data, an online survey was created, which examined the influence of sponsorships on the source credibility of social media influencers. In the following pages, the research design, data collection methods, survey design and how data was evaluated will be presented. The hypotheses will be demonstrated in section 4.2, because they were developed after the conduction of the qualitative survey, hence, a smoother transition is provided.

3.1. Research design

The research design describes the methodological construct of a study and consists of different aspects that can be described\(^\text{305}\). The empirical study includes an exploratory and an explanatory approach. An explorative approach is used, when the goal of the research is to explore and describe relevant issues, with the intention to derive scientific research questions and hypotheses from it\(^\text{306}\). Therefore, this approach was used in order to explore the factors influencing the credibility of social media influencers and to derive relevant research questions in order to build the basis for the construction of hypotheses. Based on this construct, an explanatory approach was used in order to prove the derived hypotheses. Exploratory studies are designed to explore an issue, which has not been discovered fully yet and help to derive posteriori hypotheses, which is why they are typically being executed in a qualitative way\(^\text{307}\). A qualitative research approach is used when a new scientific issue is explored or when the goal of the study is to analyze and explore a smaller study group in depth\(^\text{308}\). Due to the novelty of the topic of social media influencers, a qualitative approach in

\(^{304}\) cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 187
\(^{305}\) cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 182
\(^{306}\) cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 192
\(^{307}\) cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 193
\(^{308}\) Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 185
form of a focus group gave primary insights into the topic before quantifying the results. What is more, the qualitative approach provided the opportunity to explore and to confirm the factors which have an influence on credibility. Also the qualitative approach provided a deeper insight into the topic.

After the factors influencing the source credibility of social media influencers have been confirmed, the hypotheses have been further explored with a quantitative approach in form of an online survey.

In summary, a “mixed method design” 309 has been used in order to answer the research question, which means that both approaches, qualitative and quantitative were used. The qualitative approach served as priori study in order to generate hypotheses for the quantitative study.

3.2. Data collection methods and instruments

In order to answer the research question, both, primary and secondary data collection has been used. Primary data is defined as data that is derived based on an own empirical research, whereas secondary data is derived from already existing sources 310. Secondary data has been derived from the literature, whereas primary data was explored through the empirical study in form of a qualitative approach (focus groups) and a quantitative approach (online survey).

3.2.1. Focus groups

The qualitative approach of the study was conducted in the form of focus groups. Focus groups are a form of group interviews that help to generate qualitative data. The goal is to encourage participants to open a dialogue in order to find out about motives and perceptions 311. Within a focus group interview, a moderator is used who is responsible for guiding the participants through the interview and to encourage the participants to state their opinion 312. The number of participants should be between six to ten people, paying attention to avoid extreme inhomogeneity or on the contrary, extreme homogeneity. In the case of

309 Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 184
310 Homburg (2017), p. 263
311 Kitzinger (1995), p. 299
these focus groups, participants had to have a fitness related knowledge in order to be able to talk about the topic of social media influencers in the fitness industry. However, participants were not too similar with regard to their fitness interests and people they followed. On the one hand the size of the group should be big enough in order to generate sufficient and a variety of data, on the other hand it should be small enough in order for the discussion to be performed in an organized way. Focus groups help to generate an idea about the feelings and opinions of participants on a certain issue. They can also be used in order to generate data for a quantitative survey and to derive hypotheses from the data.

Therefore, the approach of focus groups was chosen in order to get insights into the topic of social media influencers and to derive conclusions from it regarding the quantitative survey. The goals of the focus groups were to generate an idea of what defines a social media influencer, why people believe in him or her, if the credibility construct of source credibility (generated from theory) applied to the credibility of social media influencers and which factors have an influence on source credibility, when consumers are faced with sponsorships and cooperations with social media influencers.

Two focus groups were conducted. The first group discussion took place on the 8th of December at the JKU in Linz. The second focus group took place on the 29th of December at a local gym in Amstetten. The discussion was recorded via audio in order to be able to transcribe the data in a further step. Both interviews lasted about 1 to 1.5 hours.

The focus group consisted of four steps: Planning the focus group discussion, execution of the focus group discussion, the documentation of the focus group discussion and the analysis of the focus group discussion. In order to make discussion run like a thread, it was necessary to plan and guide the relevant questions. Therefore, an interview guide was created, which is presented in the Appendix. Before the interview started, participants had to sign a privacy policy which declared that the data is only going to be used for scientific purposes within the thesis, that the discussion is going to be audiotaped and that data is treated anonymously. Furthermore, a short information regarding sociodemographic factors was given by the participants.

The discussion itself started with an introduction to the topic, followed by a starting question which encouraged the group to share their opinion. Since the main discussion should be part of the participants, the moderator should be in a neutral position and only participate in the discussion if participants are drifting away from the main topic or when there is the need for

313 cf. Rabiee (2004), p. 656
further, more detailed discussion of the topic. Furthermore, a moderator is allowed to ask further questions about issues that have not been mentioned and is able to clarify issues at the end of the discussion. As mentioned before, data was audiotaped and written down in a second step in a form of a transcript. Data has been analyzed according to the issues discussed in the focus group. Statements made in the group were assigned to a single factor that had to be explored.

The results of the focus groups are going to be discussed in the chapter 4.1.

3.2.2. Standardized questionnaire

After analyzing the qualitative data, a quantitative survey was executed via an online questionnaire. A standardized questionnaire mainly consists of closed questions with provided answers, where participants have to choose between different alternatives. The quantitative approach via a standardized questionnaire was chosen due to the fact that it provides the possibility to derive a significant amount of data, which can be directly compared. Furthermore, the approach of an online questionnaire was chosen. An online questionnaire provides the possibility to derive a larger amount of data in a shorter period of time, due to the possibility of high reach via the internet. Also the target group of the desired sample (young, social media affine people interested in fitness) is more likely to be found via social media channels like Instagram or Facebook. Therefore, the link of the survey was distributed via several fitness channels on Instagram and Facebook and shared by the community.

Before the survey was made public for participants, a pre-test was conducted in order to make sure that the questions and items of the survey were understandable and that the procedure of the survey was smooth and clear. The pre-test survey was sent to 11 participants in a time span from 11th to 12th of April 2017. The pre-test was accessible for two days. Since only minor problems or misunderstandings occurred, which could be solved immediately, the actual survey was done between the 12th and the 23rd of April 2017. Hence, the survey was available for 11 days.

Within the survey, hypotheses that were derived from the quantitative survey and literature were tested. The goal of the quantitative survey was to find out if and how sponsorships have

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316 cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 405
an effect on source credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry.

In order to generate the data, the study consisted of an introduction and two elimination questions. Since it was necessary that participants are familiar with social media and fitness influencers, the requirement to participate in the study was that the participants had a social media account and that they followed some fitness influencers on social media. The main part of each of the eight group questionnaires consisted of a picture derived from the social media platform Instagram of a famous fitness influencer called Amanda Bucci. Before creating the survey, the influencer was contacted in order to receive permission for using the pictures.

Participants had to review one of the eight pictures and read the text that was attached to it. The full questionnaire is stated in the Appendix.

Every text was changed by the author of the thesis according to the different independent variables. In order to compare the eight situations, only the necessary changes regarding the variables were made. After reviewing the picture and the text attached to it, participants had to rate the influencer’s expertise and trustworthiness according to a multi item scale. The scale was derived from Ohanian’s dimensions of source credibility and dimensions that have been added from the focus group data. According to the study of Ohanian, expertise consists of five measurable dimensions: “expert”, “experienced”, “knowledgeable”, “qualified” and “skilled”.319 Trust also consists of five dimensions: “dependable”, “honest”, “reliable”, “sincere” and “trustworthy”. The full dimensions of source credibility are going to be presented in chapter 4.1.2.

In the end, participants had to name their age and sex in order to enable the author to describe the sample according to sociodemographics. Sex was asked in the form of a nominal scale (female/male) and age in the form of an open question.

The questionnaire was created via the software “EFS Survey” from Questback through the academic program “Unipark”, due to the fact that the software is available for students at JKU and one is able to export the data to various programs for analysis.

319 cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 46
3.3. Research sample

At first, this section describes the sample of the focus groups. In a second step, the sample of the quantitative survey is presented.

The overall sample consisted of 13 participants, 6 were part of the first focus group and 7 took part in the second focus group. The goal of 8 people per focus group could not be met, since some participants cancelled shortly before the group discussion date. However, the number of participants was in the range of the ideal focus group number and every single participant had the opportunity to state his or her opinion.

All participants were chosen due to their interest in fitness and social media. The participants followed at least two fitness influencers on Instagram or Facebook and also worked out on their own and were fitness affine (which was no prerequisite due to the fact that the target group of social media influencers is also made up of beginners). The sample was chosen and approached by the author of the thesis in person.

Regarding age distribution, the majority of the sample (90%) was between the age of 20 and 28. Only one respondent was 34 years old. The reason for the relatively young age of the participants is that the target group of social media influencers is made up of people that grew up with the world of social media. 8 females and 5 male participants took part in the group discussions. The majority of the focus group participants were students.

As mentioned before, the online survey was available from the 12th of April to the 23rd of April. Overall, 470 participants took part in the survey. However, 7 had to be excluded in the first question due to the fact that they had no social media account and 4 stopped the survey during question 1. 152 people stated that they did not follow fitness influencers on social media, which also excluded them from the survey. Out of the 307 that follow social media influencers on social media, 287 rated the survey designs. However, only 283 finished the survey completely, which shows a termination rate of 92%.

Of the total 283 participants, 91 were male and 192 female. This corresponds to a 32.16% male and 67.84% women share as shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>91 respondents</td>
<td>192 respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.16%</td>
<td>67.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Gender distribution
Of the total 283 participants, 57 were below the age of 20, 142 between 20 and 25, 76 between 26 and 35 and 8 people between 36 and 54, as seen in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Below 20</th>
<th>20 to 25</th>
<th>26 to 35</th>
<th>36 to 54</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57 respondents</td>
<td>142 participants</td>
<td>76 participants</td>
<td>8 participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Age distribution

Regarding the social media usage and the following of fitness influencers, statistics are as follows:

261 participants that completed the survey stated that they are familiar with social media and that they use social media every day. 22 participants that completed the survey stated that they are familiar with social media, but do not use it every day. The results can be seen in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, I use social media everyday</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but I do not use social media everyday</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Social media usage

In the second question, participants were asked, if they followed fitness people on social media for example on Facebook or Instagram. If the answer was no, participants were not able to proceed with the survey. Logically, within the data set, 283 participants stated that they followed fitness influencers on social media, otherwise they would have been excluded from the survey.
3.4. Data evaluation methods

This section is going to describe how both, qualitative and quantitative data was evaluated and analyzed.

Both surveys were evaluated anonymously, hence, only the age and gender of the participants were selected, making sure that the answers cannot be associated with any of the participants. The data was only used in statistically aggregated form.

The goal of the focus groups was to confirm or neglect the suggested independent variables (factors that have an influence on source credibility of social media influencers) and to get a deeper insight into the topic of social media influencers. Furthermore, the dimensions of what source credibility consists of had to be confirmed. Consequently, in order to analyze the data, categories were built according to the suggested factors. Every statement related to each of the factors was collected and summed up, which created a consistent view. Additional information was collected in separate category groups. The transcript can be seen in the Appendix.

Data obtained from the quantitative survey was analyzed via the evaluation program SPSS version 24. A 2x2x2 full factorial between subjects design was used in this study. Two levels of sponsorship (sponsored vs. not sponsored), two levels of transparency (transparent vs. non transparent) and two levels of product-fit (product fit vs. no product fit) were tested. How the independent variables have been derived and the reasons for it are going to be stated in the results section.

Before the actual data was analyzed, it had to be made sure that the quality criterions for an empirical test are given, which will be discussed in the next section.

After this analysis had been conducted, the evaluation method in form of a multi-factorial ANOVA was used in order to test the hypotheses. This data evaluation method was chosen due to the fact that the effects of three independent variables on one dependent variable were measured. All three independent variables are measured with a nominal scale, whereas the dependent variable is measured with an interval scale. In order to ensure that ANOVA can be conducted, data was tested on several assumptions that are necessary for an ANOVA: The sample should be normally distributed and homogeneity of variance should be given. Within a multi-factorial ANOVA, it will be differentiated between main and

interaction effects\textsuperscript{322}. Whereas main effects are used to show, if the independent variables have an influence on the dependent variable, an interaction effect is when the effect of an independent variable depends on another independent variable\textsuperscript{323}.

### 3.5. Measurement of quality criteria

Before the analysis of a data set, it has to be made sure that data is suitable for measuring a certain construct. Within empirical testings, three main criteria are used in order to assess the quality of a data set: Objectivity, reliability and validity\textsuperscript{324}.

Objectivity is given, when the results of a study are independent from the researcher\textsuperscript{325}. One differentiates between objectivity regarding measurement, evaluation and interpretation\textsuperscript{326}. Within the study of this thesis, objectivity is given due to the fact that participants received a standardized questionnaire, which provided the same instructions and evaluation criteria.

Reliability measures how accurately a test is measuring a certain characteristic\textsuperscript{327} and if the test is free from measurement errors\textsuperscript{328}. One differentiates between three different types of reliability: (Internal) Consistency, test-retest reliability and parallel-forms reliability\textsuperscript{329}. In order to evaluate the reliability of the items used for the study, internal consistency was analyzed in the form of Cronbach’s Alpha. Cronbach’s Alpha is one of the most common methods to evaluate internal consistency\textsuperscript{330}. Cronbach’s Alpha depends on the number of items used and the inter-item correlation and cannot be used for measuring a whole multi-dimensional construct. Hence, it is necessary to analyze the internal consistency of every sub dimension of a construct separately\textsuperscript{331}, which is why expertise and trustworthiness have been analyzed within two measurements of Cronbach’s Alpha. Reliability coefficients result in a measure between 0 and 1, whereas 0 would mean that the measurement is completely unreliable and 1 that the measurement is perfectly reliable without any measurement errors\textsuperscript{332}. Whereas various definitions exist on the threshold of Cronbach’s Alpha, the majority of researchers define a reliability coefficient below 0.8 (some 0.7) as low, a level between 0.8 and 0.9 as

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\textsuperscript{322} cf. Homburg (2017), p. 406  
\textsuperscript{323} cf. Homburg (2017), p. 406  
\textsuperscript{324} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 33  
\textsuperscript{325} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 34  
\textsuperscript{326} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 34  
\textsuperscript{327} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 34  
\textsuperscript{328} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 468  
\textsuperscript{329} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 34  
\textsuperscript{330} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 132  
\textsuperscript{331} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 468  
\textsuperscript{332} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 443
satisfying and above 0.9 as high\textsuperscript{333}. For this study, the threshold level of 0.8 was chosen in order to determine whether internal consistency is given. Hence, if Cronbach´s Alpha is above 0.8, it can be assumed that the items are internally consistent and that no item has to be removed from the scale after reliability analysis.

A valid test also needs to be reliable, however, reliability does not guarantee validity\textsuperscript{334}. Validity is used to show, if a test is truly measuring a desired construct\textsuperscript{335}. One differentiates between three different types of validity: Content validity, construct validity and criterion validity\textsuperscript{336}. Content validity is concentrating on theoretical inputs instead of empirical statistics, hence, the assumptions have to be derived from valid theoretical inputs\textsuperscript{337}. Content validity is given, if the test is adequately capturing the measured construct based on professional assumptions and constructs\textsuperscript{338}. Criterion validity on the other hand is given, if the measured construct correlates with an external criterion\textsuperscript{339}. Construct validity is often times used as generic term for validity\textsuperscript{340} and is able to show, if a test is measuring those characteristics which he is supposed to measure\textsuperscript{341}. Again, one differentiates between convergent, divergent and factorial validity\textsuperscript{342}. Within this study, factorial validity was measured via a factor analysis. The goal of a factor analysis is to reduce data as well as explore correlations between items and latent variables. There are two forms of factor analysis: Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Whereas an exploratory factor analysis aims at finding factors, confirmatory factor analysis is used for verifying already assumed models\textsuperscript{343}. An exploratory factor analysis in the form of a principal factor analysis was used in this study in order to explore correlations between items and latent variables. Furthermore, a rotation was used in order to better interpret the factor structure\textsuperscript{344}. An orthogonal rotation technique in the form of a varimax rotation was used\textsuperscript{345}. Before the factor analysis was conducted, data was analyzed according to its suitability. Hence, a KMO and Bartlett test were conducted. A KMO coefficient above 0.8 will be accepted as suitable\textsuperscript{346} and the Bartlett´s test needs to be significant.

\textsuperscript{333} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 140
\textsuperscript{334} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 469
\textsuperscript{335} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 36
\textsuperscript{336} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 34
\textsuperscript{337} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 470
\textsuperscript{338} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 36
\textsuperscript{339} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 470
\textsuperscript{340} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 471
\textsuperscript{341} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 39
\textsuperscript{342} cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 446
\textsuperscript{343} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 180
\textsuperscript{344} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 203
\textsuperscript{345} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 205
\textsuperscript{346} cf. Bühner (2006), p. 206
The majority of the construct of source credibility has been derived from theoretical inputs. In a study of Ohanian, the construct was validated by a principal component analysis (followed by a varimax rotation) and a confirmatory factor analysis\textsuperscript{347}.

\textsuperscript{347} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 44
4. Empirical findings

Within this chapter, the results of the focus groups and survey are presented. It is going to be started with the qualitative findings. Based on these findings, the derived hypotheses will be presented. In a third step, the outcomes of the quantitative survey will be shown.

4.1. Qualitative research findings

The goal of the focus group was to a) get a further insight into the topic of social media influencers, b) to empirically revise the dimensions of source credibility of social media influencers on a qualitative basis and c) to confirm or neglect the suggested independent variables that have an influence on source credibility when faced with sponsorship in order to be able to formulate hypotheses for the quantitative survey.

4.1.1. Qualitative insights of the focus group results

In order to get a deeper insight into the topic of social media influencers, respondents were asked to state what they associate with the term social media influencer in the fitness industry and which examples they know and or follow on social media.

What is more, they had to discuss certain situations or actions of social media influencers in the fitness industry that had a negative effect on the credibility of social media influencers. Hence, participants shared their experiences regarding negative and positive examples of social media influencers in the fitness industry. The results are summarized in Table 4, Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7. The focus group discussions were held in German, however, the summaries were formulated in English for better understanding. Hence, the original statements had to be translated and cannot be stated word by word. The transcripts can be seen in the Appendix.
| Definition social media influencer in the fitness industry and examples | • Persons that reach people through their work  
• Huge audience  
• Fitness-related recommendations  
• Provide knowledge  
• I believe in them  
• Honest, competent  
• People that promote products through their social media channels and are approached by companies  
• They inspire people, role model  
• High number of followers  
• Examples: Sophia Thiel, Bodykiss, Kayla Itsines, Stephanie Davis, Ulisses World, SimeonPanda |
|---|---|
| What makes them credible | • Motivation  
• They are relatable  
• Appearance (they need to look a certain way, otherwise no role model)  
• Informative videos  
• Expertise  
• When you have the feeling he or she really wants to help you  
• Being authentic (represent a certain lifestyle)  
• Build trust through acting like a friend  
• Number of followers  
• When you can see how much effort it really takes |
| Incredible situations | • If everyone is jumping on the “trend bandwagon”- no individuality  
• role model is promoting too many products  
• Only purpose is money  
• Taking advantage of people  
• If people look different from what they promote  
• Exaggerated and unrealistic statements  
• Untrue statements  
• Being deceptive about the actual work it takes |

Table 4: Definitions of social media influencers and their credibility
In general, participants defined social media influencers in the fitness industry as people with a high number of followers that promote products on their social media channels. They are described as honest and competent people that inspire people and act as role model. Furthermore, they provide fitness-related knowledge and recommendations to their followers. Due to the majority of female participants, mostly female fitness influencers were mentioned for example Sophia Thiel, Kayla Itsines, Bodykiss, the Bässler twins and Stephanie Davis, when participants were asked to state the influencers they know and follow on their social media channels. Male participants added that they also follow famous fitness influencers like Simeon Panda und Ulisses World. One participant mentioned that the majority of influencers she follows are US-based for example, Nikki Blackketter.

Regarding the question, what makes a social media influencer credible, the majority of participants stated that expertise is an important factor. The followers of a fitness influencer are keen on seeing helpful workout videos, fitness tips and recommendations. What is more, a fitness influencer needs to have a certain physical appearance in order to be able to act as a role model, to be credible and in order to convey this kind of expertise successfully. For an influencer to be credible, he needs to represent a certain lifestyle, which has to be visible according to his looks, actions and statements. Hence, an influencer also needs to be authentic in order to be credible. One more factor that relates to authenticity is the fact that an influencer needs to show the reality of the fitness lifestyle. Consequently, people want to see the actual effort behind the scenes. Several participants also mentioned that social media influencers in general are perceived as a friend to their followers, hence, they build trust through acting like a friend. The reason for this is that they seem to be honest in their actions and statements, by stating their actual opinion. “Some critically analyze, which product is useful and which product is not useful. This makes it more credible. Like a recommendation from a friend”348. Related to this is that a credible influencer has the intention and the goodwill to help his or her community. So his or her community must have the feeling that the influencer truly focuses on providing information and expertise instead of only focusing on the monetary aspect.

Interestingly, some participants also stated that the number of followers adds up to the credibility of a social media influencer. The logic behind it is that respondents associate a high number of followers with an interesting image and popularity, which in return makes the influencer more interesting and results in a following.

Participants also discussed situations, when they perceived the social media influencers in the fitness industry as incredible. Since it was mentioned that participants appreciate the

348 Transcript a (2016), p. 3
helpful intention of a social media influencer regarding his or her community, it has a negative effect on credibility if the influencer is “only in it for the money”. Participants stated that they are very well aware of the difference and that they can tell who is honest and truthful in his or her statements. The majority of participants stated that exaggerated and unrealistic statements are truly diminishing the credibility of an influencer. Examples of such exaggerated statements are (according to participants) for example “with this detox tea you will never experience hunger, still have a lot of energy and you will lose 20 pounds in 3 weeks”\textsuperscript{349}. Related to this are false and deceptive statements: Since participants found that being honest and real about the work fitness influencers put in, it is rather unbelievable if influencers disguise or enhance their statements and situations. This is also related to the topic of authenticity. If an influencer’s statements and his physical appearance do not match, this has a negative effect on credibility. As an example, participants mentioned bodybuilders that promote highly processed products while being a supporter of clean, whole foods. Another factor that leads to decreased credibility is promoting too many products and jumping on the “trend bandwagon”. If an influencer is promoting too many products, it causes the impression of only “being in it for the money”, which, as mentioned before, diminishes the credibility of an influencer. Another important factor for an influencer’s credibility is his or her individuality. Participants mentioned that if every influencer they follow is promoting the same product at the same time, they do not believe in them.

However, these examples were just an introduction into the topic. Factors influencing source credibility that have been derived from literature are going to be discussed in another chapter.

\textsuperscript{349} Transcript a (2016), p. 8
4.1.2. Qualitative findings of credibility dimensions

As mentioned before, one of the goals of the focus group was to examine and further explore the dimensions of source credibility. Due to the fact that the concept of social media influencers cannot be fully compared to other celebrities and their credibility dimensions, the focus group discussion helped to support the suggested dimensions from literature.

The dependent variable source credibility has been said to consist of two concepts: The concept of expertise and the concept of trustworthiness\textsuperscript{350} According to Ohanian, expertise consists of five measurable dimensions: “expert”, “experienced”, “knowledgeable”, “qualified” and “skilled”. Trust also consists of five dimensions: “dependable”, “honest”, “reliable”, “sincere” and “trustworthy”. These factors have been used in order to describe the source credibility of celebrities and have been empirically tested via a confirmatory factor analysis. In her study, Ohanian also included source attractiveness as a factor. However, this dimension was not used in the study. The reason for this is that the focus of the study and social media influencers in general is on the social aspect. Furthermore, it is true that social media influencers in the fitness industry are credible due to looks, but this rather depends on their shape and form (muscles).

The dimensions of expertise and trustworthiness were discussed in the focus group and have been slightly changed or completed according to the focus group discussion results. In Table 5, the chosen dimensions for the variable source credibility are shown and it is stated, which dimensions are from literature and which dimensions have been derived from the focus group results.

\textsuperscript{350} cf. Ohanian (1990), p. 46
The dimension “skilled” was not used, since it can be used as a synonym for “experienced” or “Expert”. Dependable is not part of the dimensions of trust in the quantitative survey, since it is also a synonym for “reliable”. Whereas both definitions could be used in English, despite the similarity, one has to keep in mind that the survey was translated into German. It was expected that asking participants very similar to almost identical items would result in distorted results.

The factors trustworthiness and expertise could be verified by the focus groups. Expertise can be seen as a major criterion of source credibility for a social media influencer, especially in the fitness industry, due to the fact that his or her followers are interested in recommendations and advice regarding health and exercise issues. The dimension “informative” has been added to the construct due to the fact that participants expressed their

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>„experienced“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„qualified“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„competent“</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„knowledgable“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„Expert“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„informative“</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„reliable“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„honest“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„authentic“</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„sincere“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„relatable“</td>
<td>Focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>„trustworthy“</td>
<td>Ohanian (1990)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
desire for informative videos and information seeking. A credible influencer is characterized by wanting to help his community and provide it with information. Another dimension that has been mentioned is the one of competence. Apart from expertise, qualifications, knowledge, being an expert and providing information, a social media influencer (in the fitness industry) needs to convey a certain feeling of competence.

Regarding trustworthiness, the dimension of honesty was crucial for participants: Honesty related to transparency, but also honesty and authenticity in the statements and actions of social media influencers. It was mentioned several times that a social media influencer in the fitness industry needs to be authentic and real. Hence, they need to represent a certain lifestyle which should be supported by their statements and actions. This is the reason why the dimension of being “authentic” has been added to the construct, since it is an important aspect that describes the credibility of a social media influencer. Related to this are the dimensions of being “sincere” and “trustworthy”: Participants stated that they only believe in social media influencers that seem to have their best interests at heart, so to say that their goal is to inspire and motivate their community instead of focusing on the monetary aspect.

Due to the fact that some social media influencers in the fitness industry are perceived as “friends” by some of the participants, the dimension “relatable” has been added. Relatable is a suitable term for a person that one has some relation to or feels sympathy for. Social media influencers are often no “celebrities” in a narrow sense, but they have the same background as their community. They also share their problems and issues with them, which their community can relate to. Hence, it has been stated that being relatable adds up to the source credibility of a social media influencer.

4.1.3. Factors influencing source credibility- qualitative findings

Before the focus group discussions were conducted, some factors that might have an influence on source credibility have been assumed, which have been presented in chapter 3.1. Table 6 shows a summary of what participants said regarding the single factors. The majority of factors could be supported, however, some had to be rearranged for the formulated hypotheses. Table 7 shows the assumed factors that had to be confirmed and their characteristics and if they could be supported by the focus groups.
| Sponsored                                                                 | • Influencers still have to earn their money somehow  
|                                                                           | • You just know it if someone is sponsored  
|                                                                           | • It is distorted if it’s sponsored  
|                                                                           | • Not something bad, still they have to be transparent  
|                                                                           | • Incredible if it is commercially oriented  
|                                                                           | • Did not know that opinion is also paid  
|                                                                           | • You cannot trust sponsored statements 100%  
|                                                                           | • If someone is not sponsored and praises a product, it must be really good  |
| Transparency                                                              | • it is good when they are transparent  
|                                                                           | • it makes a difference  
|                                                                           | • asses statements better  
|                                                                           | • transparent- more credible  
|                                                                           | • not transparent about sponsorship distorts the results  |
| Product fit                                                               | • ridiculous  
|                                                                           | • It hurts their image  
|                                                                           | • fitness industry you should stay there  
|                                                                           | • Absolutely no interest in it  |
| Consistency                                                               | • Depends on why they change the sponsor  
|                                                                           | • Depends on how often- once every couple of years is fine  
|                                                                           | • If he or she is honest about the sponsor change it is ok  
|                                                                           | • reasons why  
|                                                                           | • A person represents a certain brand, if they change it this is weird  |

Table 6: Factors that influence source credibility
The first factor that had to be discussed was if sponsorships (being paid for promoting products) have an influence on source credibility. Especially if people make a difference between paid social media influencers, unpaid sponsorships and social media influencers that promote products without being paid or supported by a company. The differences between the three characteristics were not stated in the first question. However, they were explained during the discussion, since participants did not know the differences and were not aware of the consequences (opinion of sponsored social media influencers is dependent on company’s rules and obligations). Surprisingly, the consensus of the group was that being sponsored per se does not influence the credibility of a social media influencer. The groups were of the opinion that social media influencers have the right to be paid due to their work they put in their channels and due to the information they provide. However, participants also stated that they automatically perceive information from a sponsored social media influencer differently than from an unsponsored one. Participants said that they start from the premise that the statements from sponsored social media influencers are “distorted” and that “one cannot believe it to a 100%” 351. Furthermore, they assume that if a social media influencer is not sponsored and still promotes and praises a product that the product itself must be of good quality. The reason for is that the influencer has spent his own money on the product. When participants were introduced to the differences and that the opinion is also paid when social media influencers are sponsored, they changed their attitudes. They stated that if the opinion is paid, this would have a major effect on the credibility of social media influencers.

The third factor that was being discussed was the product fit. Since the topic of the focus group discussion were social media influencers in the fitness industry, respondents were asked about what they think about social media influencers that promote products not related to fitness for example tooth paste or watches. All respondents said that they think promoting non fitness-related products is ridiculous and unnecessary. The community of a social media influencer in the fitness industry has no interest in products with no relation to fitness, since they expect from their influencer to post fitness contents and to give fitness advice. Hence, participants were of the opinion that promoting non fitness related products or in general, promoting products that do not fit the field of expertise of the social media influencer and the

351 Transcript b (2016), p. 6
field of interest of the community, will be ignored and hurts the image and credibility of the social media influencer.

The last factor that was discussed was the factor of consistency. Before the focus group discussion, it was assumed that changing the sponsor too often has an influence on source credibility. However, this factor was only assumed by the author and was not supported by literature.

According to participants it is true that changing the sponsor every couple of months contributes to a negative image and loss of credibility. This is, however, hardly ever the case. Social media influencers (in the fitness industry) change their sponsor (if they even change the sponsor) every couple of years, which was fine for the participants, especially if they understand the reasons why social media influencers change their sponsor and/or they subjectively prefer the other sponsor. Furthermore, social media influencers should be again transparent about the change and the reasons in order to be credible.

Hence, Table 7 shows the factors that could be supported by the focus group and factors that could not be supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumed factors</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Supported by focus g.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Sponsored vs. not sponsored</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Transparency vs. no transparency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>Product fit vs. no product fit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Consistent vs. non consistent</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Supported factors by the focus group

After a short summary of the focus group findings, the factors that have been presented in this chapter will be formulated into hypotheses.
4.1.4. Summary of qualitative findings

A social media influencer in the fitness industry acts as a role model, passes on information to his or her community, has a high number of followers and is competent. The reasons why people follow social media influencers (in the fitness industry) are diverse. The majority of people uses the channels of social media influencers in order to inform themselves about certain topics related to fitness. The characteristics and the personality of a social media influencer play a major role too: Attributes that have been said and verified to be credible are: Authenticity (to represent a certain lifestyle), Honesty, Expertise, Trustworthiness, function as a role model, being relatable and motivation. Some of the participants also mentioned that they trust a social media influencer’s opinion as much as the opinion of a friend.

If the number of followers increases, this fact has been perceived as rather positive, since a high number of followers contributes to higher credibility. However, participants also stated negative examples of social media influencers in the fitness industry which lost their credibility along with an increasing number of followers. Examples that were stated were promoting products constantly (infomercial), promoting products that do not fit the lifestyle of the social media influencer and acting unnaturally.

Regarding the factors that have an influence, almost every assumed factor could be supported by the focus group results. It could be shown that participants make a difference between sponsored and not sponsored social media influencers in terms of credibility. However, the majority is not aware of the influence of a company on the opinion of the social media influencer. One can assume that the effects on credibility would be much higher if people were aware of this influence. The most important factor that could be supported was transparency. Participants of the focus group were of the opinion that transparency provides them the opportunity to assess the information better. If the sponsorship is disguised, this has a negative effect on the credibility of a social media influencer. Regarding product fit, it could be shown that promoting a non-fitness related product has an influence on the perception of the influence and that promoting fitness-related products is perceived as more credible. The fourth factor could be partly supported, but, participants also stated that if they can understand the reasons why a social media influencer is changing his or her sponsor and is transparent about it, it has no effect on the credibility of a social media influencer. It is indicated that there is no effect either when the change happens every couple of years (which happens in reality).
4.2 Formulated hypotheses and survey design

Deriving from the literature and the results of the focus groups, it was possible to formulate hypotheses that could be empirically tested on a quantitative basis. However, due to the novelty of the topic of social media influencers and the number of variables and factors that have been stated by the focus group participants, one had to consider the limited volume and possibilities of the study. It was not possible to consider every factor that might have an influence due to several reasons: Beside the already stated reasons why consistency has not been chosen for the study, it would not have been possible to receive meaningful results in this period of time and with the chosen study design. In order to examine, whether consistency has an influence on the source credibility of social media influencers, a long term observation by participants of social media influencers would have been necessary in order to receive realistic results. The same applies to promoting too many products or promoting products on every single post.

In this chapter, the hypotheses for the quantitative survey and its independent variables are presented. In the study it was assumed that three independent variables (transparency, being dependent on a company and product fit) have an influence on one dependent variable with two characteristics (trustworthiness and expertise).

**Transparency**

The factor transparency can be supported by theory and by the focus groups. In a further step, it should be proven by the quantitative study that an influencer is less credible if he or she disguises the sponsorship. Hence, the hypothesis is as follows:

H1: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she discloses the sponsorship

**Dependency on a company(Sponsored)**

Originally, a difference was made between three different scenarios: no sponsorship, unpaid sponsorship and paid sponsorship. However, in order to empirically test these situations, respondents would have to be enlightened about the legal aspects and cooperations, which might have distorted the results. Furthermore, it would not represent the reality of social media influencers’ posts: The goal of the survey was to confront participants with realistic situations in order to be able to derive constructive results regarding sponsorships. The reason for the lack of difference is that participants in the focus group were not aware of the reality of sponsorships and the differences between a paid and an unpaid sponsorship.
Moreover, it is hard to examine whether an influencer is paid or has received the products for free, since the legal obligations for disclosure differ depending on the legal framework of the country. In Germany and Austria social media influencers are only obliged to disclose a sponsorship at a product value of 1000 euros, which makes it impossible to say if there was a need or obligation for transparency and even if the post is sponsored. Hence, there will be differentiated between two characteristics: dependency on a company (sponsorship) vs. independency from a company (no sponsorship). In the quantitative survey, participants are going to compare two different variations regarding sponsorships: Either a brand is supporting the product promotion (indifferent to the monetary aspect) or the influencer has paid the product on his or her own. Since it became clear in the focus group that people do make a difference between sponsored and not sponsored posts (in terms of credibility), the second hypothesis is as follows:

**H2:** The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she is independent of a company

**Product fit**

The third independent variable can be supported by literature and by the focus groups. It has been indicated that it influences the credibility of a social media influencer if he or she promotes a product that does not belong to his field of expertise and to the field of interest of the community. The goal of the quantitative survey is to prove that companies need to carefully choose the social media influencers they cooperate with in terms of product fit. Hence that the influencer needs to fit to the brand’s characteristics and attitudes. Therefore, the third hypothesis is as follows:

**H3:** The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if the product fit is given

Deriving from the hypotheses and the dependent variable (source credibility), a 2x2x2 factorial design is going to be applied in the quantitative survey. Due to the fact that all independent variables are in the form of a nominal scale (two characteristics) and the dimensions of the dependent variable in the form of an interval scale (Rating from 1-7), the survey design results in a multi-factorial ANOVA with 8 different pictures, randomly assigned to the participants.

After answering two selective questions, each participant is assigned to one of the eight study designs. The eight study designs only differ regarding the independent variables. Regarding transparency, posts have been disclosed according to FTC guidelines. In order to be transparent, each transparent design implies a disclosed text about the sponsorship (“this product is sponsored by..”) and supported by hastags (“sponsored”, “ad”, “werbung”).
The independent variable “dependency on a company” or “sponsorship” is stated in the introduction (“you are going to see a famous, sponsored (or not sponsored) social media influencer in the fitness industry”). Furthermore, two different pictures were used in order to clarify the difference. Since transparency and sponsorships are related, the hashtags also apply to the second independent variable.

For the third independent variable, a different picture was used, in which the chosen social media influencer promotes a product which is not related to fitness (a watch). In order to support the variable, the attached text also implies that the influencer is related to fitness and that wearing the watch is unfamiliar to her.

The texts and hashtags attached to the pictures have been created and reformulated by the author of the study, in order to clarify the difference between the eight study designs. Hence, the texts have not been copied or used from the original posts.
4.3. Quantitative research findings

The aim of the quantitative survey was to prove the effects of sponsorships on the source credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry. Therefore, the three hypotheses which have been derived from literature and the focus group results were tested. Before providing the results of the hypotheses test, the results of the reliability analysis and validity analysis are shown. Before the data regarding the hypotheses has been analyzed, it had to be made sure that the quality criterions of measured data can be given.

4.3.1. Reliability analysis

A reliability analysis was conducted. A reliability analysis is used in order to ensure that the items are free from measurement errors and that is defines how accurate an item is measured. Therefore, in order to analyze the internal consistency of the items, Cronbach’s Alpha was used. Cronbach’s Alpha should be above 0.8 in this study. Moreover, the item-total statistics was measured.

The reliability analysis was carried out after the actual data collection of the quantitative survey. The reason for measuring Cronbach’s Alpha for this thesis was to ensure that the items that have been proposed by literature, but also the items that have been added due to the focus group results, are reliable and internally consistent. If Cronbach’s Alpha had been below the required level and the inter-item correlation was not given, the item would have been removed from the analysis. Since source credibility is assumed to be a two dimensional concept, an analysis has been conducted for every subdimension. Cronbach’s alpha of the dimension expertise is presented in Table 8, Cronbach’s Alpha of the dimension trustworthiness and Table 10. Furthermore, the item-total statistics for each of the dimensions are provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha based on standardized items</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0,927</td>
<td>0,927</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Cronbach’s Alpha expertise

\[352\] cf. Döring/Bortz (2016), p. 468
The items that correspond to expertise do show a high Cronbach´s Alpha of 0.927. This is an “excellent” value. Hence, the internal consistency of the scale is very high.

In addition, the item-total statistics are provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scale mean if item deleted</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item-total correlation</th>
<th>Squared multiple correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach´s Alpha, if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>16.89</td>
<td>40.180</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td>0.631</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>17.20</td>
<td>40.197</td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>17.27</td>
<td>40.110</td>
<td>0.864</td>
<td>0.776</td>
<td>0.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>17.44</td>
<td>40.020</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.745</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>17.56</td>
<td>39.616</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td>0.717</td>
<td>0.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>18.22</td>
<td>44.120</td>
<td>0.601</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>0.937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Item-Total Statistics Expertise

The relevant columns in this case are the corrected item-correlation and Cronbach’s Alpha, if the item was deleted. The corrected item-correlation shows to which extent an item correlated with another one. All items show values above 0.3. The last column shows Cronbach’s Alpha, if the specific item was deleted. If every item was kept for the analysis, this shows a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.927 for expertise. Only if the item “informative” was deleted, this would result in a higher Cronbach’s Alpha, however, due to the fact that Cronbach’s Alpha is above the threshold level of 0.7, this can be of minor concern. Hence, the analysis of Cronbach’s Alpha could show that internal consistency is given and no item of expertise has to be removed before the analysis.

The second dimension that had to be tested was trustworthiness. Its Cronbach’s alpha is presented in Table 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha based on standardized items</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.924</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Cronbach’s Alpha trustworthiness
As for expertise, Cronbach´s Alpha for the dimension trustworthiness also shows an excellent value of 0.924. Hence, internal consistency can also be assumed for the items of trustworthiness.

In addition, the item-total statistics are also provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale mean if item deleted</th>
<th>Scale variance if item deleted</th>
<th>Corrected item-total correlation</th>
<th>Squared multiple correlation</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha, if item deleted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>18.19</td>
<td>47,283</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.531</td>
<td>0.919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>17.83</td>
<td>43,952</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>0.913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>17.93</td>
<td>42,903</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.674</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>17.92</td>
<td>44,312</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatable</td>
<td>18.16</td>
<td>45,267</td>
<td>0.764</td>
<td>0.596</td>
<td>0.912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>44,430</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Item-total statistics trustworthiness

The item-total statistics show that no elimination of an item would improve Cronbach´s Alpha. Due to the high level of Cronbach’s Alpha, internal consistency of the items of trustworthiness can be assumed and hence no item will be eliminated after reliability analysis.

In a next step, the items “experienced”, “qualified”, “competent”, “knowledgeable”, “Expert”, “informative”, “reliable”, “honest”, “authentic”, “sincere”, “relatable” and “trustworthy” are going to be analyzed within a validity analysis.
4.3.2. Validity analysis

Before data was analyzed, it had to be made sure that data is suitable for a factor analysis, which can be shown with the KMO- Coefficient. The KMO coefficient in this study is 0.942, what is more Bartlett’s test is significant. Hence, data is suitable for a factor analysis. Furthermore, all MSA coefficients are above 0.5, which also indicates that data is suitable for factor analysis.

In a first step, a principal factor analysis was computed without rotation, without extracting factors. Factor loadings could show that all items correlate with Factor 1 (expertise), whereas the variables “honest”, “authentic”, “sincere”, “relatable” and “trustworthy” load on Factor 2 (trustworthiness), which is shown in Table 12:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Trustworthiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>0.725</td>
<td>-0.310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>0.834</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>0.874</td>
<td>-0.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>0.836</td>
<td>-0.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>0.838</td>
<td>-0.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>0.646</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>0.797</td>
<td>0.352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatable</td>
<td>0.771</td>
<td>0.201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>0.202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Factor Matrix

This can be explained by the fact that high expertise results in trustworthiness whereas high trustworthiness does not automatically result in high expertise, which is demonstrated in the Principal Component Analysis in Table 13, which shows that almost 90% of variance can be explained from the first six items (Expertise):

In a first step, it could be shown that the items load on two components (expertise and trustworthiness). In order to be able to better interpret the factor structure, a varimax rotation was conducted in a second step:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7,781</td>
<td>64.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,160</td>
<td>9.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>3.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.333</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.244</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Total variance explained before rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expertise</th>
<th>Trustworthiness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced</td>
<td>0.747</td>
<td>0.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable</td>
<td>0.803</td>
<td>0.356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>0.534</td>
<td>0.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>0.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>0.360</td>
<td>0.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatable</td>
<td>0.441</td>
<td>0.663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>0.475</td>
<td>0.695</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Rotated factor matrix

After the rotation it can be seen that “experienced”, “qualified”, “competent”, “knowledgeable”, “Expert”, “informative” as well as “reliable” load on expertise. However, “reliable” also loads on trustworthiness. “Honest”, “authentic”, “sincere”, “relatable” and “trustworthy” distinctively load on trustworthiness.

Within this analysis, it could be shown that source credibility is a two-dimensional concept, consisting of the component expertise and trustworthiness.

4.3.3. Descriptive analysis

Before the results of the hypotheses testing are presented, a short overview is provided regarding the participants of each group, their means and standard deviations are stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sponsorship</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Product fit</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Deviation</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not sponsored</td>
<td>Not transparent</td>
<td>No product fit</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sponsored</td>
<td>Not transparent</td>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sponsored</td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>No product fit</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sponsored</td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Not transparent</td>
<td>No product fit</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Not transparent</td>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>No product fit</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15: Group cells independent variables

Each of the eight cells compromises at least 30 participants, which was required in order to make valid and meaningful results possible. The means show the group means of the
dependent variable source credibility. One can see that all group means are rather centered (a likert scale between 1-7 was used).

Also, variances have been tested according to homogeneity in order to ensure the assumptions of an ANOVA:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Credibility</th>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on mean</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on median</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on median and adjusted df</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on trimmed mean</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>0.885</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16: Homogenity of variances

One can see in Table 16 that the differences in variances are not significant. Based on the means, the significance level is above 0.05, which means that the value is not significant. Hence, the homogeneity of variances is given. In the following chapter, the results of the hypotheses test are going to be presented.
4.3.4. Hypotheses testing

The previous chapter gave an overview of the mean values and standard deviations of the groups. However, a conclusion cannot be drawn from descriptive analysis, since data needs to be tested whether there are statistically significant differences between the groups and if the independent variables have an influence on source credibility.

An ANOVA was used in order to test the hypotheses and interaction effects between groups. The results can be seen in Table 17:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3,930</td>
<td>2,763</td>
<td>0,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3544</td>
<td>2491,59</td>
<td>0,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,505</td>
<td>0,355</td>
<td>0,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,771</td>
<td>0,542</td>
<td>0,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product fit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20,774</td>
<td>14,604</td>
<td>0,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship* Transparency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,65</td>
<td>1,862</td>
<td>0,173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship* Product fit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,10</td>
<td>1,477</td>
<td>0,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency* Product fit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,362</td>
<td>0,255</td>
<td>0,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorship* Transparency* Product fit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,120</td>
<td>0,085</td>
<td>0,771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: ANOVA between subjects

Table 17 shows that there are no significant between-subjects effects: Sponsorship* Transparency have a p-value of 0,173; Sponsorship* Product fit have a p-value of 0,225;
Transparency* Product fit have a $p$-value of 0.614 and all three independent variables together have a $p$-value of 0.771. Also Table 18 shows that there is one main effect of product fit ($p=0.000$). Since the hypotheses are formulated in a one-sided way, the significance levels must be divided by two in order to reach the significant value. After testing between subjects significances, the main effects are going to be tested:

The first independent variable which was assumed to have an influence on source credibility was transparency. It was assumed that if an influencer was honest and transparent in his actions that he seemed more credible. Hence, the hypothesis was formulated as follows:

**H1: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she discloses the sponsorship**

Thus, hypothesis one predicted that social media influencers that are transparent are rated more credibly than non-transparent influencers. Although there are differences in source credibility regarding transparency, the between group differences were not statistically significant ($F(1,283)=0.542; p=0.462$). Due to the fact that the hypothesis is formulated one-sided, the p-value has to be divided by 2. Hence, the $p$-value is 0.231, which is not statistically significant. Looking at the means for not transparent ($M=3.595$) and for transparent ($M=3.490$), it can also be seen that the difference is low.

The second independent variable was sponsorship. It was assumed that a social media influencer that is dependent on a company, meaning that is sponsored, has a lower credibility than an independent influencer. Hence, the hypothesis was formulated as follows:

**H2: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she is independent of a company**

Thus, hypothesis two predicted that not sponsored social media influencers are more credible than sponsored influencers. Again, one can see slight differences in means between the sponsored group ($M=3.585$) and not sponsored ($M=3.500$) group means, however, they are not statistically significant ($F(1,283)=0.355; p=0.552$). Again, the $p$-value must be divided by 2, which results in a value of 0.276. Therefore, hypothesis two needs to be rejected as well.

The third independent variable which was assumed to have an influence on source credibility was product-fit. Hence, it was assumed that an influencer promoting a product that fits to the influencer’s field of expertise is perceived to be more credible than an influencer that promotes a product which does not fit to his or her field of expertise.
Thus, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H3: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if the product fit is given**

As seen in Table 18, product-fit shows a significant between-group difference ($F(1,283)=14.604; p=0.000$). Groups means are significantly different, showing a higher group mean for the group with no product-fit ($M=3.814$) than for the group where the product fit was given ($M=3.271$). Since the group means for the group without product-fit are higher, the third hypothesis also needs to be rejected.
4.3.6. Summary of quantitative findings

Despite differences in means, none of the formulated hypotheses could be confirmed. The results are summarized in Table 18:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Confirmed /rejected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher, if he or she discloses the sponsorship</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher, if he or she is independent from a company</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher, if the product fit is given</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Summary of hypotheses testing

In the following chapter, possible reasons and explanations are going to be found for these results.
5. Conclusion

This part of the master thesis presents a summary and discussion of the main findings, related to the initially defined research objectives and questions. Furthermore, limitations are discussed, which might have had an influence on the results of the quantitative study and the overall quality of the thesis. In the last section of the conclusion, implications are derived from the results as well as further steps will be discussed, which have to be taken or should be continued for further research.

5.1. Summary

This master thesis dealt with the topic of social media influencers, especially in the fitness industry and the influence of sponsorships on source credibility. The topic was chosen, due to the fact that it is currently one of the most recent marketing issues, attracting the attention of more and more companies. The concept of influencer marketing is not a recent trend. However, social media influencers have just evolved in the last couple of years due to the introduction of the internet and social media platforms. Marketers are ensured of the fact that the large following of social media influencers and their effectiveness is mainly based on their credibility, authenticity and social interaction. What makes them credible is their realness, hence they share their life stories with their community, they provide expertise in their topic of interest and what is more, they are independent. Thus, their credibility in promoting products is also based on the fact that they are no marketers with no commercial interest. As mentioned above, more and more companies are becoming aware of the credibility of social media influencers and try to cooperate with them. Consequently, the question arose for the author, if these sponsorships have an effect on the credibility of social media influencers. Supported by literature, the goal of the thesis was to prove that sponsorships do have an (negative) effect on the credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry.

In order to answer the research question, two approaches have been used: A qualitative approach in the form of two conducted focus groups and a quantitative approach in the form of an online survey. Before the focus group was conducted, several assumptions had to be made regarding the question what influences the source credibility of a social media influencer in the fitness industry. It was assumed that not only the fact that an influencer is sponsored has an effect on credibility, but also how the product fits to the field of interests of
the community and to the field of expertise of the social media influencer. In this case, it was assumed that products related to fitness as for example supplements, workout clothes etc are more credible than products unrelated to fitness as for example toothpaste or watches. The third assumption was that if an influencer is honest about his or her sponsorship, the credibility is higher. This assumption was derived from literature, due to the fact that social media influencers are ethically, but also legally obliged to disclose a sponsorship. Another assumption that has been made was that the more often social media influencers change their sponsors, the less credible they are.

5.2. Discussion of main findings

The results of the focus groups indicated that people do not mind the paid sponsorship per se, but they perceive the messages differently than if the social media influencer was not sponsored. Hence, it was mentioned that sponsored posts cannot be taken seriously and that they are distorted. However, one could also see that participants were not aware of the consequences of sponsorships on the opinion of social media influencers. As stated in literature, sponsored social media influencers are paid for their opinion, which means that the sponsor is able to influence the opinion of the influencers by telling them what to exactly say about the product. After participants had been informed about this fact, an obvious negative effect on credibility could be noticed. Regarding transparency, every participant expressed his or her desire for the social media influencers to be honest and transparent. Common consent was that disguising the sponsorship would lead to a loss in credibility. Participants also said that a product fit must be given in order to attract their attention. Regarding consistency, since social media influencers hardly ever change their sponsors (every couple of years), which was not seen as a problem.

Within the focus group, other factors that might have an influence on source credibility have been discussed as well as items that correspond or make up source credibility. Items that make up source credibility have been assumed beforehand, deriving from theoretical models of source credibility. A social media influencer is characterized by his or her expertise, a larger following, honesty, authenticity and also their social aspect (some perceived them as friends). Participants also mentioned that they lose credibility in an influencer if he or she is promoting too many products, when no individuality is given or when the influencer’s appearance and statements do not match. Within the online survey, it would not have been possible to analyze the effect of the number of promoted products on source credibility due to the survey design and time management. In order to receive valid results, this would take
a long time observation of a single influencer by a selected audience. The same applies to the other factors, since participants would need to follow the influencer for a long time in order to know his characteristic and lifestyle.

Within the online survey, a 2x2x2 study design was tested, with three independent variables (sponsorship, transparency and product-fit) and one dependent variable (source credibility). In order to ensure that participants are familiar with the topic of social media influencers, two selection questions were asked (if they use social media and if they follow social media influencers in the fitness industry). Then participants were randomly assigned to one of eight study designs. A picture of a social media influencer in the fitness industry was presented, asking participants to rate several items from a likert scale from 1-7 that correspond to source credibility. The only difference between the study designs was made according to the independent variables.

Looking back to the introduction of the thesis, the research question was as follows:

1. How do sponsorships/paid social media influencing affect the perceived source credibility of social media influencers?

Answering the research question on a quantitative basis, one has to say that sponsorships/paid advertising does not affect the perceived source credibility of social media influencers. Data could not confirm any of the formulated hypotheses. The hypotheses which were formulated as follows:

H1: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she discloses the sponsorship

H2: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if he or she is independent of a company

H3: The source credibility of a social media influencer is higher if the product fit is given

There was no significant difference between sponsored social media influencers and not sponsored social media influencers (F(1,283)=0,355; p=0.552:2) with group means of the sponsored group (M= 3,585) and not sponsored (M= 3,500) group; as well as transparent SMIs and non-transparent SMIs(F(1,283)=0.542; p=0.462:2) with group means from the non-transparent group of M=3,595 and transparent M=3,490. This leads the author to the conclusion that according to the data, sponsored social media influencers are equally credible than not sponsored social media influencers. The same applies to transparent vs. not transparent social media influencers. Product-fit showed a main significant effect (F (1,283) =14.604; p=0.000). However, the means of credibility of the social media influencer
promoting a product without product-fit (M=3,814) were higher than if the product-fit was given (M= 3,271). This means that according to the data, social media influencers promoting products unrelated to fitness are more credible than social media influencers promoting products related to fitness. These results can neither be supported by literature nor by the results of the focus group. Furthermore, the result of H3 (product-fit) is rather irrational, hence it might not be valid to draw conclusions from the results. Within the limitation chapter, reasons for those results are going to be found and an explanation will be given.

However, one has to say that the qualitative data and literature showed other results, which is why it might be assumed that the reason for the rejection of the hypotheses does not lie in the content but in the survey design and the time that participants took for the survey, which is also going to be explained in the chapter limitations.

5.3. Limitations

Since the results of the online survey were not expected in this way, an explanation has to be given which limitations justify or explain the results. Before the limitations regarding every single independent variable are stated, some general limitations which affected the quality of the thesis must be discussed:

The topic of social media influencers is a very recent marketing issue, which is why hardly any scientific literature can be found on this topic. Nevertheless, it provided enough literature regarding influencers in general and credibility. The fact that social media influencers have the same or different traits than other influencers has been assumed by literature and marketers; however, hardly any literature provides scientific research and proof on this topic.

Due to the lack of scientific proof, the chapter of literature research is limited and also contains citations of various internet sources.

What is more, the industry of social media influencers in this thesis was limited to the fitness industry. So, all the results and conclusions can be drawn from the background of fitness only. However, this limitation had to be made due to the overwhelming number of industries, social media influencers operate in. In order to receive a clear structure and empirical design, it was necessary to limit the industry to one field.

Regarding the focus groups, it had been planned to integrate an expert group, consisting of 6 to 8 social media influencers in the fitness industry, based in Austria in order to gain deeper
insight into the topic from the perspective of social media influencers themselves. Various social media influencers were approached by the author on various social media channels and email. What is more, the author reached out several times to them. However, only 2 of the approached social media influencers responded back. Hence, no expert group was conducted.

Regarding the quantitative study, as with every online survey which is conducted anonymously, it cannot be fully made sure that the participants answered with their best intentions and with their best knowledge. Related to this, it cannot be proven if the participants truly possess a social media account and follow fitness influencers, which might lead to distorted results.

What is more, it was necessary to carefully read through the questionnaire in order to understand the expectations and differences between the study designs. It was increasingly important that the participants understood that the influencer is operating in the fitness industry (regarding product fit) and that they carefully read the hashtags (since they have been an indicator for transparency and sponsorship). One limitation is that it cannot be assumed that all participants carefully read through the questionnaire.

After discussing the general limitations, the lack of confirmed hypotheses of the quantitative survey is now explained in depth.

5.3.1. Sponsorships- Limitations

The hypothesis that credibility of not sponsored social media influencers in the fitness industry is higher than of sponsored social media influencers in the fitness industry could not be confirmed. Interestingly after the author has eliminated all participants which had a response duration below two minutes or longer than one day this resulted in a main effect of sponsorship, means being higher for the not sponsored group. However, if all these participants had been removed from the survey, the minimum number of participants per cell would not have been met, which is why respondents could not be removed. Therefore it is assumed that the study design regarding sponsorship shows major limitations:

Not only it is assumed that the time that participants take for the survey, influences the outcome of the effects of sponsorships on source credibility, but also the difference between the survey designs, which is also related to time management. The differences of the survey designs were not as obvious as obviously needed: The difference between sponsored and
not sponsored posts were disclosed by the description of the picture (“you are going to see a sponsored/not sponsored influencer”) and the mentions in the attached text, which however mainly applied to transparency (“my sponsor @pesience” “#sponsored, “#ad”, “#werbung”) Although the participants have been encouraged to carefully read the text and the hashtags were written in bold, it cannot be assumed that participants noticed the difference.

A limitation related to this is that participants only saw one survey design: It might have been useful for participants to compare two pictures in order to be able to see a difference in the pictures.

However, the most important limitation that participants in the focus groups said was that they did not mind the sponsorship per se, but rather perceived the message differently than with not sponsored posts. What is more, a negative effect on credibility was only visible when participants were faced with the influence of sponsors on the opinion of social media influencers. It can be assumed that the results would have been different if participants had been informed about this fact beforehand. However, the goal of the thesis was to test the effects of sponsorships on the credibility of social media influencers within a realistic environment. Hence, the goal was also to show sponsors and brands how to promote their products with social media influencers in the most credible way. It would have been useless information for companies if the information regarding differences had been provided, since in reality, the majority of people are not aware of the differences between sponsorships and especially on the effects on the opinion of social media influencers.

However, due to the fact that the outcome was probably limited by the time, participants took for the survey, it still can be assumed that sponsorships might have an effect on source credibility of social media influencers in the fitness industry, if the survey was repeated with a higher number of participants and improved incentives to fill out the questionnaire with the participants’ best interest.

5.3.2. Transparency- Limitations

It could not be proven that transparent social media influencers are more credible than non-transparent social media influencers. The reason for the previous assumption of the hypothesis was that all of the participants in the focus group stated that transparency was very important in order for an influencer to be credible. Furthermore, literature indicated a
difference between transparent and non-transparent posts, due to the credible and authentic nature of social media influencers.

One limitation that might apply to sponsorships also might apply to transparency: The differences of the survey design. In fact, transparency was shown with the same signs as sponsorship, which again, is hard for a participant without any background to evaluate and to differentiate. Furthermore, it could be shown in literature that the majority of influencers does not disclose the sponsorship properly or is told by the sponsor not to disclose it. Therefore, the majority of followers of social media influencers in the fitness industry might not be used to transparent posts and might not recognize or appreciate them as such.

Before the survey was conducted, it was assumed by the author that the factor transparency would be recognized by the given survey design. However, it might have improved the results if transparency had been also a factor being observed over a longer period of time.

What is more, participants in the focus group stated that transparency is a major factor in assessing the credibility of an influencer, however, the legal definitions of transparency might be different to what the followers define as being transparent. Hence it might have been necessary to further explore, what followers understand by being transparent.

5.3.3. Product fit- Limitations

Product- fit was the only independent variable that showed a significant main effect. However, the hypothesis still could not be supported since the mean of credibility of the non-product- fit group was higher.

A major limitation of this factor was that the picture corresponding to no product-fit was not ideally chosen in order to demonstrate the difference between the groups and the difference between fitting and non-fitting products. In order to clearly show a difference to fitness-related products, a product should have been chosen which is completely unrelated to fitness for example a tooth paste or books. The reason for choosing the picture which is used in the survey is that the author needed to receive permission for using the pictures, in order to eliminate legal consequences. Only one influencer agreed on using her pictures for the survey, which is why the number of pictures to choose from was limited. Since the selected social media influencer (a social media influencer in the fitness industry) is keen to only promote products which fit to her expertise and personality, it was impossible to choose a picture which did not fit the influencer’s field of interest and expertise at all. The chosen influencer does not promote products which are controversial or do not fit to her field of
interest and expertise at all. Hence, it can be assumed that the participants did not perceive the promoted product as “not fitting”.

However, another limitation might relate again to the limited time that participants took to read the survey and to the influencer itself. The chosen influencer is a famous US based influencer in the fitness industry. However, it can be assumed that the majority of participants did not know the field of expertise of the influencer, since she is rather unknown in the German and Austrian area. As mentioned before, other fitness influencers (in the German and Austrian area) were approached for permission to use their pictures, however, the author did not receive any responds. Nevertheless, it was stated in the description of the pictures that the influencer is situated in the fitness industry. Furthermore, the title of the survey and the introduction implied and explicitly told that the topic of the survey is related to social media influencers in the fitness industry.

Another limitation that has been mentioned regarding transparency might also apply to productfit: Participants in the focus group mentioned that as long as a product fits to the personality of an influencer and his field of expertise, the promotion of a product is credible. Hence, the definitions of what productfit is composed of might differ between literature and the survey participants.

5.4. Implications and further steps

The results of the focus groups and results of the quantitative survey provide major implications for further research. Due to the high number of limitations and novelty of the issue, however, it does not imply valid implications for marketers.

With that being said, the data implies that it has no effect on the credibility of social media influencers is he or she is sponsored, and if he or she is transparent or not transparent. Furthermore it implies that promoting products unrelated to fitness would lead to higher credibility of a social media influencer, which, however cannot be assumed to be a valid result. This leads to the following implications.

5.4.1. Academic implications

The focus group results provided interesting qualitative insights, on what defines a social media influencer and which attributes make him or her credible. Hence, this would build a basis for further research in order to further explore quantitatively why social media
influencers gather such a large following and if they can be compared to or
differentiated from other influencers. The quantitative survey was a first intent to empirically
test the influences of sponsorships on the source credibility of social media influencers in a
quantitative way. Although the influence of sponsorships on source credibility could not be
confirmed by data, the lack of results can be rather attributed to the study limitations. Thus, a
repetition of the questionnaire in another setting, with more and different participants, where
it can be ensured that participants carefully read the instructions might lead to different
implications and results. Hence, the following steps would need to be changed regarding the
study design:

In order to make sure that participants carefully read the questionnaire and that they fully
understand the implications and dimension, it will be necessary to chose participants that are
informed about the topic (which could not have been made sure due to the anonymous
design). Furthermore, it might be necessary to show participants two pictures in order to
compare them. What is also necessary is that differences regarding the independent
variables are clearly underlined, by choosing more “drastic” or obvious pictures. Before the
conduction of the survey, it has to made sure that participants are aware of the dimensions
and definitions of transparency and sponsorship.

The focus group results also indicated that there are further factors influencing source
credibility, which might be explored further by observation. Some factors implied that they
require a different research design and a longer period of time in order to receive valid
results. Factors that, according to the focus group discussion, have an influence on source
credibility are “promoting too many products”, “promoting products too often” and “every
influencer is promoting the same brand or product- no individuality”. Another factor that
might be further explored is when an authentic social media influencer is suddenly promoting
or representing a brand and is then changing the way he or she behaves.

Due to the limited time and resources of the master thesis, the factors could not be
implemented in the quantitative research design and are therefore, open for further research.

5.4.2. Implications for practical application

As mentioned above, no valid recommendations or implications can be stated deriving from
the quantitative survey due to the high number of limitations and the lack of scientific
research, the study is based on. Nevertheless, the focus group results gave first insights into
the topic which can be explored further and might be interesting for social media influencers
in the fitness industry. In general, it can be said that for an influencer in the
fitness industry to create a larger follower base, he or she needs to provide expertise to his
or her community. People are keen to see informative workout videos and want to receive
valid nutrition and exercise information and recommendations. Social media influencers in
the fitness industry act as a role model for their community, hence they inspire people.
Furthermore, some people might perceive them as friends, thus, the interaction with their
followers and authentic, honest statements are important.

Regarding sponsorships, data implies that there is no significant difference between not
sponsored and sponsored social media influencers, however, as mentioned, this implication
would be too early to state, since it is not completely clear if the measured data is valid.

The same implications are true for marketers and sponsors when it comes down to
sponsorships of social media influencers. However, again, looking at the focus group data,
there is the implication that sponsorships per so do not bother the followers of social media
influencers, nor does the fact that social media influencers are being paid for sponsorships.
However, qualitative data also implies that sponsored social media influencers still need to
have the opportunity to freely state their opinion in order to be credible. Sponsors must be
aware of the fact that the long term followers of a social media influencer recognize changes
in the behavior of their role model which in turn has an effect on their credibility. However,
these results need to be further based on a quantitative study, which this master thesis was
not able to prove.


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Appendices

a) Focus group guideline

Begrüßung:


Unterschreiben der Datenschutzerklärung

Formular demographisch Daten (Samplebeschreibung) Sample A besteht aus 8 Personen im Alter von 18-25 Jahren, fitnessbegeistert und Social Media affin

Ablauf erklären: Dauer des Gesprächs ca. 1h/ es werden Fragen gestellt die einen Austausch von Meinungen ermöglichen- pro Fragen werden ca. 7 Minuten eingerechnet

Fragen dienen zur Orientierung des Moderators, Fragen werden nicht im Vorhinein vorgelesen, sie dienen zur Anregung eines Gespräches und können durch Folgefragen ergänzt werden

1. Einstiegsfrage: Was versteht ihr unter einem Social Media Influencer. Könnt ihr mir Beispiele anhand von Personen im Fitnessbereich nennen denen ihr folgt?

Ziel der Frage ist es, das Gespräch in Gang zu bringen und die Teilnehmer aufzulockern. Zu dieser Frage ist es jedem Teilnehmer möglich, etwas beizutragen da alle teilnehmenden Personen Social Media affin und sportbegeistert sind. Weiters
trägt es dazu bei, dass alle Teilnehmer dieselbe Vorstellung von den besprochenen Personen haben, sodass mögliche Unklarheiten geklärt werden können.

2. Was sind eurer Meinung nach die wichtigsten Eigenschaften eines Social Media Influencers?

Mit dieser Frage wird versucht, die Parameter von Social Media Influencer zu definieren. Erwartet werden Antworten wie unabhängig, vertrauenswürdig, kompetent, ehrlich, authentisch, glaubwürdig, etc., welche schon in dem conceptual framework definiert wurden.

3. Was sind Faktoren, die einen Social Media Influencer glaubwürdig machen und welche Faktoren machen ihn unglaubwürdig?

Da der wichtigste Parameter in der Masterarbeit der der source credibility ist, wird mit dieser Frage die Definition im Social Media Influencer Bereich beantwortet. Da davon ausgegangen wurde, dass andere Personen wie Prominente und deren Glaubwürdigkeitseigenschaften nicht (immer) vergleichbar sind, ist das Ziel, die Konstrukte von Glaubwürdigkeit von Social Media Influencer für die quantitative Befragung neu zu definieren.

4. Was sind eure Erfahrungen wenn die Zahl der Follower bei einem Social Media Influencer steigt und Sponsoren ins Spiel kommen, ändert das etwas für euch in Bezug auf die Glaubwürdigkeit?

Hier wird die erste unabhängige Variable (sponsorships) abgefragt. Die Frage versucht zu bestätigen, dass Sponsorships einen Einfluss auf die Glaubwürdigkeit haben und somit auch Teil der Befragung sind.

5. (Folgefrage Frage 4) Es gibt ja unterschiedliche Formen von Kooperationen. In manchen werden die Influencer nicht bezahlt und dürfen die Produkte einfach ausprobieren, bei manchen werde die Influencer bezahlt. Was sind eure Gedanken dazu hinsichtlich der Glaubwürdigkeit?

Da davon ausgegangen wird, dass den Teilnehmern die Unterschiede nicht bewusst sind, diese aber relevant für die Befragung und die Arbeit sind, wird den Teilnehmern nur erklärt, dass es einen Unterschied gibt. Es wird bewusst ausgelassen, dass die Meinung bei bezahlten Influencern vorgegeben ist, da dies die Teilnehmer unnötig beeinflussen würde.
6. Wenn ihr an die gerade besprochenen gesponserten Social Media Influencer denkt, fallen euch Situationen ein, wo ihr dachtet dass das Sponsoring unglaubwürdig war? Welche Faktoren haben euch an dem Sponsoring gestört?

Diese Frage ist bewusst allgemein formuliert, um den Teilnehmern Raum für Eigenständigkeit zu geben und um mögliche Faktoren in den Fragebogen mit einzubeziehen, die nicht im Vorhinein abgeleitet wurden.

7. Wie wichtig ist euch Offenheit bei Kooperationen? Hat es für euch Auswirkungen wenn ein SMI gesponsert wird und das nicht preisgibt?

Diese Frage beruht auf dem Gedanken dass laut der FTC eine Kooperation offengelegt werden muss. Ziel ist es herauszufinden ob dieser Faktor tatsächlich eine Auswirkung auf die Glaubwürdigkeit hat.

8. Kennt ihr Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich die zusätzlich auch Produkte bewerben, die in keinem Zusammenhang mit Fitness stehen? Würdet ihr seiner Meinung über das Produkt trotzdem glauben, beziehungsweise es kaufen?

Diese Frage versucht herauszufinden, ob der Fit zwischen einem Produkt und einem Social Media Influencer gegeben sein muss, oder aber ob die Follower auch Meinungen über Produkte annehmen, die nicht im Spezialisierungsbereich des Influencers liegen.


Die letzte Frage versucht, den fehlenden Faktor zu verifizieren. Da angenommen wird, dass ein ständiger Wechsel des Sponsors zu Unglaubwürdigkeit führt, ist anzunehmen dass es positive Auswirkungen auf die Glaubwürdigkeit hat wenn ein SMI konstant bei einem Sponsor bleibt.
b) Focus group Transcript a 8.12.2016

I: Meine erste Frage wäre, was versteht ihr unter einem Social Media Influencer und könnt ihr mir Beispiele nennen von Leuten denen ihr folgt auf Instagram Facebook etc.?

B1: Dann fang ich einfach mal an. Social Media Influencer in Fitnessbereich folg ich jetzt zum Beispiel wie du sagtest der Sophia Thiel, ähm und die Stephanie Davis und aus Deutschland 2 aus road to glory, die Arty und Gill, ich schau mir das schon jeden Tag an was sie für Videos posten, rein aus Interesse an, was die für Fitnesstipps und so haben.

B2: Ja auch Sophia Thiel und äm team trio? Nein wie heißen sie? Fittrio, und Anni, da fällt mir der Name wieder nicht ein. Teambody love oder so, müsst ich nachsehen wie die heißt, aber ich seh mir auch an was sie machen, was posten, auf Instagram so kleinere, Sportsachen, aber die haben nicht so die große Community und ja..

B3: Auch Sophia Thiel nur auf Youtube, und Bodykiss, und früher auch Bluepilates aber jetzt nicht mehr


B5: Ich folge..ich bin eher über die amerikanischen Bodybuilder, Bikinifitness an das gekommen, folge eher so Nicki Blakketer, Britney Lasser, und Sophia Thiel, weil die eben oft aufscheint auf Instagram, und auch den Bässler Zwillingen folg ich manchmal gerne. SMI im Fitnessbereich ist für mich hauptsächlich jemand der über seine Social Media Kanäle Sachen vertreibt und von Firmen angesprochen wird, unterschwellige Platzierungen und so.

I: Das find ich interessant verbindet ihr mit SMI nur Leute die Geld dafür bekommen, keine Leute die…?

B2: Nein nicht unbedingt, früher oder später kommen dann halt Angebote, zb eine Freundin von mir, die macht keine Fitnesssachen aber , die postet einfach viel auf Instagram und bekommt jetzt auch schon Angebote von Firmen dass sie zw ihre Uhr oben hat und es läuft früher oder später sowieso auf das raus, dass du was mit deinen Kanälen vertreibst.
B4: Es kommt auf jeden Fall auf die Anzahl der Follower drauf an. Also auch dass er eine gewisse Glaubwürdigkeit in meinen Augen hat. Ich sag mal so, die Masse hat circa ein wissen, wer da gut und wer schlecht ist. Es ist halt auch so, man bekommt halt die Vorschläge in dem Bereich, der hat halt viele Follower, die passen, für was ich mich interessiere.

I: Das ist interessant, weil das auch ein Punkt ist was ich meiner Arbeit diskutieren werde mit der Followeranzahl, ob das mit der Glaubwürdigkeit zusammenhängt. Also verbindet ihr schon eine gewisse Glaubwürdigkeit mit Leuten die eine hohe Followeranzahl haben?

B2: Ja vielleicht einfach dass sie bekannt sind, je mehr Follower desto mehr bekannt, aber zum Beispiel es gibt ja voll viel Große, die auf einmal sagen, wie das zum Beispiel mit dem Detox Tea kam, da ist dann gekommen, dass jeder gesagt hat „O man seitdem ich auf der Welt bin trinke ich den Tee und der ist so super, „ Das ist für mich überhaupt nicht glaubwürdig, weil ich halt mitbekommen hab, jeder macht jetzt ein Video zu diesem Detox Tee, und dann war das nicht glaubwürdig, jeder ist einfach darauf angesprochen worden, auf den Zug aufgesprungen und hat es einfach gemacht, und so geredet als würden sie seit 10 Jahren diesen Tee trinken, da weiß man einfach, das stimmt sowieso nicht.

B6: Ich muss sagen, also ich schau eigentlich schon viel Instagram, ich schau mir oft Videos an, so kurze, was sie grade so machen für Workouts, und ich weiß okay, das nächste mal im Studio mach ich die gleichen Übungen, weil, bei ihr hat das voll gute Effekte, es sieht halt gut aus, -die Deutschen guck ich weniger, außer Sophia Thiel hin und wieder, aber das ist auch schon etwas zu viel geworden, jetzt bin ich eher auf die amerikanischen, denen man mehr ansieht, dass sie Sport machen.

I: Also, macht das für euch einen Social Media Influencer aus, also warum folgt ihr den Leuten, wollt ihr Workouttips haben, oder weil er gut aussieht, alles zusammen?

B5: Ja manchmal ist es interessant wenn sie sich auf einen Bikini Wettkampf vorbereiten, wie lange das eigentlich dauert, und dass es bei manchen eben nicht funktioniert hat und sie es dann abgebrochen haben und wie viel das auch teilweise kostet, das ist auch ganz nett, wenn sie da ehrlich sind. Und wenn sie Inhalte bringen wie zb einen Trainingsplan, so Vorschläge, wie kann man zb die Schulter trainieren, so informative Videos reinbringen und nicht nur ihren Alltag, weil mich interessiert es nicht, mir gibt das jetzt nicht soviel was sie essen, oder wenn sie einkaufen gehen, halt informativ.

I: Das finde ich einen guten Punkt findet ihr das auch?
B1: Ja

B4: Also mir geht's nur um die Übungen. Ich meine ich schau mit den Typen zuerst an, und denk mir, so möchte ich aussehen, oder so eher nicht oder das war super, und wenn ich mir denke, der sieht so aus wie ich in 10 Jahren aussehen möchte oder in 5 Jahren, und das wäre für mich realistisch, dann schau ich, was macht der damit er das auch geschafft hat. Dann schau ich natürlich, welche Übungen er macht, natürlich auch welche Produkte er nimmt. Genauso informativ

I: Also eine gewisse Expertise ist schon nötig in dem Bereich?

Alle: Ja (Zustimmendes Nicken)

B1: Ja schon, wenn der jetzt gerade erst zum Trainieren angefangen hat, und schon anfängt zum Videos machen, dann ist das für mich nicht gerade eine große Vorbildwirkung, ich schaus mir hauptsächlich an dass ich mal auf neue Übungen komme, dass ich eine Abwechslung reinbringe, und vielleicht auch ein bisschen als Motivation, damit man sieht, ja die haben das erreicht, irgendwann kam man das auch selber erreichen.

I: Was sind denn Faktoren für euch, die einen SMI glaubwürdig machen bzw was macht ihr unglaubwürdig? Ihr habt schon gesagt Expertise, vorher hat noch wer gesagt er hat wem entfolgt weil er viel zu viel promoted hat...? Fallen euch noch Punkte ein?

B1: Ja ich glaub auch wie wie vorher gesagt haben die Followeranzahl,

B5: es ist auch wichtig, ob er viele verschiedene Produkte promotet, wir haben auch gesagt dass manche eine ganze Bandbreite von Produkten promoten, das wirkt nicht mehr glaubwürdig weil man sich vorkommt wie in einer Dauerwerbesundung. Wenn wir jetzt sagen ok die haben eine Marke, von denen werden sie gesponsert, beim Gewand zb, wenn sie das immer herzeigen und tragen, aber wenn sie da einen Gewandhersteller, da eine Supplement Firma, da Riegel und beauty, dann kommt es dir so vor als machen sie es nur für Geld und nicht weil es sich was bringt auch.

B3: Manche machen sich auch voll unglaubwürdig mit der Produktplatzierung, die voll schwärmen, wenn ich mir denke, kein Mensch kann so begeistert sein von einem Produkt. Manche analysieren ja wirklich kritisch, was bringt ihnen was, was nicht. Das ist dann auch glaubwürdiger. Das ist dann wie eine Empfehlung von einer Freundin. Manche sagen auch die haben es gratis bekommen, kaufen würden sie es nicht um das Geld, das find ich ganz cool.

I: Deine Freundin oder die Fitnessleute?
B3: Die Fitnessleute. Aber es kommt so rüber wie wenn es dir eine Freundin erzählt- wenn sie auch die Nachteile davon rüberbringen und nicht nur schwärmen.

I: Also findest du schon dass es einen Unterschied innerhalb Sponsorships gibt? Manche werden ja bezahlt, manche nicht.

B2: Ich denke es kommt darauf an wie er es präsentiert. Wenn er zuerst sagt ich will nur natürliche Produkte nehmen und dann kommt er auf einmal mit einem anderen Produkt wo man weiß das ist voll die Chemie oder so, das ist für mich unglaubwürdig. Weil zuerst vertritt er den Lifestyle und dann den anderen. Da muss man sich halt auch entscheiden, wie macht man es.

I: Also authentisch müssen sie sein?

B2: Mhm.

I: Noch was?

B5: Das Produkt- also es hat schon was damit zu tun, wie authentisch man ist. Ich kenne keinen männlichen Bodybuilder, der ein Diät Whey promotet, das kann ich mir eher bei Frauen vorstellen, bei Männer ist es eher so, nimm den Booster dann drückst du 10 Kilo mehr,. Der ist neu, du weißt dass der neu ist, der heißt dann 2.0, es ist viel weniger drinnen als beim ersten, weil der erste verboten worden ist, und dann will er den anbringen. Da hilft man den Leuten natürlich auch, aber dann weiß ich genau, das ist unglaubwürdig. Zum Beispiel DMHA weiß nicht ob du das kennst, die haben jetzt sowas gemacht und dann gibt es Leute die den promoten damit was weitergeht.

I: Würde es das glaubwürdiger machen wenn sie ehrlich darüber wären?

B5: Ja darum schaue ich sehr gerne Garnnikus auf Youtube. Der vergleicht untereinander und testet das, da hol ich mir mehr meine Infos

B4: Obwohl es über Myprotein nie irgendwas schlechtes sagen , das finde ich schon sehr verdächtig-

B5: Genau das ist auch wieder was.

B4: Obwohl die sind so Objektiv, im Labor und vergeben Punkte. Sie haben halt über andere Marken noch nie was schlechtes gesagt, vielleicht gibt es nichts negatives, ich hab mir ja alles angesehen, aber das fand ich dann schon komisch. Wir haben uns dann halt über Myprotein die Poduktreviews angesehen, die wir bestellt haben und das war schon sooor positiv. (Stirnrunzeln)
B5: Ich hatte auch nicht das Gefühl dass alle Produkte so gut sind wie sie dafür Meinung gemacht haben und man sieht auch auf ganz klassischen Internetseiten, abgesehen von Social Media, dass auch die Werbung eingespielt wird für Myprotein.

B4: ja stimmt etwas auffällig.

B5: Ja, das ist mir jetzt im Nachhinein bewusst geworden

B2: das ist dann eigentlich gut gemacht wenn man es erst merkt wenn man viele Videos ansieht, dass sie genau über das eine nie was negatives sagen

B5: Genau.

B4: Man muss extra auf die Homepage gehen damit ein Werbebanner kommt, und bei vielen Leuten geht man gar nicht mehr auf die Homepage weil man ihnen eh auf Youtube, Instagram etc folgt.

B2: Ich geh nie auf eine Homepage

Alle: Ich auch nicht

I: Also ihr habt jetzt schon gesagt dass wenn einer mehr Followers bekommt dann kommen automatisch Sponsoren dazu, ändert das was in Bezug auf die Glaubwürdigkeit automatisch?


I: ok also eher positiv?

B5: JA

B4: Kommt drauf an von wem er gesponsert wird. Wenn er jetzt von einer weltweit bekannten Marke gesponsert wird dann ok aber wenn man von einem Detox Tee gesponsert wird, das ist eher peinlich

B2 Ja voll vor allem wenn sie dann so reden als würden siez schon 20 Jahre nehmen. Obwohl ich ganz genau weiß wenn ich mir 5 Videos auf Youtube ansehe das ist alles gerade erst gekommen. Da war grade der Hype aber alle sagen das nehmen sie schon seit 10 Jahren und das ist so super, das ist für mich nicht glaubwürdig.
B5: nein aber mit so Marken wie Adidas...Monster Energie, Red Bull wenn du von sowas gesponsert wirst...selbst wenn du bei uns im Dorf von jemand gesponsert wirst ist das schon was.

B4: vom Mcdonalds

Alle lachen

I: Find ich jetzt sehr interessant dass ihr Sponsorships positiv aufnimmt.. es gibt ja auch Leute die werden nicht bezahlt und bewerben trotzdem Produkte (unterschied nochmal erklärt)


B4: Wenn sie es in jedem 2ten Video bringen, zumindest etwas dosiert

I: weil ich jetzt vorher gesagt habt dass noch nie was negatives über ein Produkt kam , habt ihr euch schon mal überlegt dass diese Leute eine Liste von Sachen bekommen die sie über das Produkt sagen müssen?

B1: Ja denke schon dass das zusammenhängt damit

I: und das stört euch schon?

B2: das ist nicht glaubwürdig. Wenn du dir das ansiehst und dir denkst das passt nicht zur Person wie sie sich vorher gegeben hat , wenn das ein komplett anderer Mensch ist dann weißt du eh dass es nur wegen dem Geld ist und nicht wegen der Meinung oder weil man sagt das Produkt ist echt gut

I: aber wenn das Produkt passt und die das schon immer benutzt haben dann stört euch das nicht wenn sie dafür bezahlt werden?

B4: Das ist ja nichts Böses. , das ist ja auch viel Arbeit, so ein Youtube Kanal, Videos schneiden und bearbeiten, die wollen natürlich was dafür bekommen, so würde man es ja nicht machen. Man macht das am Anfang weil es Spaß macht aber dann sicher nicht mehr

B3: und wenn du das hauptberuflich machst musst du ja dein Leben finanzieren können.


B3: ich hab das schon oft in Videos gehört dass der und der gesponsert ist.
I. Das ist ein guter Punkt. Also Offenheit ist wichtig.

Alle: JA

I: weil theoretisch wenn sie bezahlt werden sind sie verpflichtet es offen zu legen. Das macht für euch einen Unterschied wenn sie es nicht offenlegen

B4: also sie müssen es offen legen wenn sie bezahlt werden und wenn sie es geschenkt kriegen nicht?

I: Markieren sollten sie es trotzdem sonst macht es für den Sponsor keinen Sinn

B5: War da nicht letzten eine Diskussion mit Ronaldo weil der das nicht macht?

B2: du kannst ja auch sagen „ich habe das heute im Geschäft gekauft-und ich bin so begeistert“(Sarkasmus)

B4: aber wenn du dir denkst, der gibt sein eigenes Geld dafür aus..

B1: dann wird es schon was gescheites sein

I: das hab ich vorher gemeint es gibt ja Leute die es sich selber kaufen und es bewerben, was findet ihr da jetzt besser?

B2: ich glaube wenn man es bezahlt kriegt oder gratis dann wär’s schon gescheiter wenn man wenigstens die unterstützt

B5: es kommt jetzt auf die Marke drauf an. Wenn man jetzt gesponsert wird von Ironmaxx, wie die Bässler, die kriegen alles von Ironmaxx. Eine ganze Palette, die können sich da was aussuchen. Wenn ich jetzt eine kleine Firma bin, und hab nur ein zb Detox Teil, dann ist es ok, dann kann man das etwas größer ansprechen, ich hab mir das jetzt gekauft, ich bin von dem Überzeugt. Bei solche Leute wie den Bässlers, die haben halt Ironmaxx, die machen auch Gewinnspiele mit Ironmaxx

I: die werden ja auch bezahlt dafür

B2: sie machen das wenigstens offensichtlich, wenn nur immer alles von denen kommt brauchen sie es nicht mehr offenlegen

I: Punkt Bässler Zwillinge sind die für euch glaubwürdig?

B5: Nein.. Wenn ich sie vergleiche mit anderen Frauen auf Instagram , rein vom Körper her..

I: Ich mein nur weil wir vorher von Expertise geredet haben, die trainieren nur Zuhause werden aber von einer Fitnessmarke gesponsert.
B5: Ja...es gehört auf jeden Fall was dazu dass man so einen Körper hat. Ich
hab auf jeden Fall Respekt vor Leute die sich gut auf Instagram inszenieren können und
darum geht es wenn man gut aussieht, wenn sie dann noch ein Produkt bewerben, warum
nicht ist gut für sie und den Hersteller

I: Das heißt wenn die Bässler Zwillinge dir als Mann sagen das ist gut, dann glaubst du das?

B5: sie haben jetzt mich für als Mann nicht so viel Vorbildwirkung. Wenn die Bässler
Zwillinge Männer sind, und halbwegs gut aussehen, dann kommt ein Dritter der sagt das
auch noch , dann würde ich das auf jeden Fall probieren und kosten

Unterhaltung über Bässler Zwillinge im Hintergrund

B5: das ist ja auch, da gibt's diese Sunny Knows, die postet einfach so viel über ihren Alltag,
wie sie sich schminkt, und wie sie sich anzieht--*seufzer*

wird dokumentiert

B6: dann machen sie so viel Blödsinn

B5: das find ich ... ich hab das Gefühl das ist bei den Männern nicht so...die machen
vielleicht einmal was lustiges beim Mcdonalds das warst. , dann geht's nur mehr ums
Fitnessstudio und welche Übung..nicht so viel um Drumherum

B4: aber grade bei Frauen stellt das vielleicht die Ebene fürs Vertrauen her ..so Freundinnen
mäßig. Die Freundin gibt dir Schminktipps, zeigt dir was sie sich kauft. Da ist das halt auch
so.

B3: glaub auch dass das Frauen interessiert und die Zielgruppe von Männern sind auch
trainierende Männer.

B5: Für mich sind Männer auch glaubwürdiger beim Aussehen. Es geht bei mir rein ums
Aussehen. Wenn der so gut aussieht wie er aussieht dann glaub ich ihm dass der was weiß

I: Stellst du das gleich im Zusammenhang mit dem Produkt, das muss ja nicht heißen weil
der von dem gesponsert wird dass er so aussieht wie er aussieht

B5: das Stimmt. Ich kanns nicht nachprüfen, ich glaubs bzw nehme ich es mal so hin. Ich
nimms so hin weil ich es sowieso nicht überprüfen kann. Im Endeffekt entscheide eh ich ob
ich das Produkt dann nehme oder nicht

B4: Im Rühl glaubt man nicht dass ers nimmt
B5: Ja genau zb Markus Rühl. Ich weiß genau dass der sicher nicht jedes Produkt für das er schon mal Werbung gemacht hat nehmen

I: Wieso nicht?

B5: weil er ganz anders aussieht als was er vertritt. Glaub nicht dass der jemals in seinem Leben ein Diät Whey oder Fatburner oder.. genommen hat. Und sagt dann aber in seine Vorträge dass man keine 15 verschiedene Aminos braucht obwohl er genau die beworben hat.

B2: ist das der?

B5: Ja

B2: der sieht eher aus als würd er sich was spritzen

B5: ja sicher ganz schön sogar, da weiß ich genau dass der solche Produkte nicht nimmt

B4: er sagt ja auch dass ers nicht nimmt

B5: was die Glaubwürdigkeit von ihm ja auch wieder bessert, er wird dann als Person ja noch glaubwürdiger , die Marke

I: weil ?

B5: weil er ehrlich ist

I: verbindet ihr das dann mit der Marke ?

B5: nein mit ihm . wenn er sagt du brauchst das eig eh nicht nehmen ist es ein Plus für ihn

B4: aber ein Minus für die Marke

B3: es ist halt eine echte Aussage wenn er selbst wenn er gesponsert wird sagt das braucht kein Mensch

B2: darf man das überhaupt wenn man gesponsert wird?

B1: glaub ich nicht

B5: er kann es sich mittlerweile leisten

I: hat er das auf seinen Social Media Kanälen auch gesagt?

B5: nein nur im Vortrag,… er bewirbt schon was, das macht er halt weil er Geld bekommt

I: Fallen euch Beispiele ein wo die Sponsor Situation sehr ungläubwürdig war?
B5: Ja Hardcore Preworkout, wo es heißt mit dem kannst du fliegen oder so, also Aussagen wo sie komplett übertreiben

B4: Oder solche Gürtel die vibrieren

B5: oder Elektroschocks wo du nichts tun musst


B2: mit dem Detox...wenn sie sagen du hast keinen Hunger und trotzdem Energie... und dann hast du in 3 Wochen das gewünschte Ergebnis, dass du 15 Kilo weniger hast. Das ist unrealistisch.

B4: Ja eh aber wenn du neu bist dann glaubst du das.

I: Also ihr glaubt das nicht mehr, dh Anfänger schon?

B5: nicht nur Anfänger sondern auch Leute die mit wenig Aufwand in kurzer Zeit Erfolge sehen wollen. Das wünschen ja die meisten. Das sind halt viele Leute. Die dann anfällig sind

I: Hat das was mit dem Produkt oder der Person zu tun? Ist dann zb Sophia Thiel unglaubwürdig als Person wenn sie zb einen Detox Tee bewirbt?

B2: Ich finde das einfach unglaubwürdig. Wenn das ein kompletter Blödsinn ist dann ws schon

B3: Bei mir kommt es darauf an wie sie es rüberbringt. Wenn sie zb sagt sie nimmt es als Unterstützung aber es ist kein Wundermittel.

I: Ok also wenn sie übertreiben.

B3: Ja wenn sie es ehrlich betrachten dann finde ich es schon glaubwürdig. Wenn sie sich jetzt hinstellt und sagt sie nimmt 5 Kilo in der Woche wegen dem ab schaut das keiner

B5: Wenn ich jetzt daran denke, wenn die Männer denen ich folge einen DETox Tea anbieten..

Alle lachen
B5: dann wär das beides, ich würd weder dem Typen noch was glauben und das Produkt. weißt auch nicht ..wenn jetzt ein Mann mit 120 Kilo und 5% Körperfett mir erzählt er nimmt das dann ..nein.

B3: Zuerst die ganzen Zusatzstoffe reinfressen und dann..

I: wir haben vorher darüber gesprochen dass Fitnessleute auch Sachen bewerben was nicht ihre Profession ist oder sie keine Expertise haben, glaubt ihr das?

B4: ja wenn sie gut aussieht , das sieht man ja e bei der Schminke und den Klamotten, da kann ich mir ja seber eine Meinung bilden. Wenn es um Ernährung geht oder Pulver, da weiß ich es im Vorhinein nicht .aber wenn ich sehe die zieht sich so und so an, dann seh ich ja ob das was gleichsieht oder nicht

B5: Da hat man gleich die Kontrolle. Ich kann nicht sagen ob sie die Suplemente die sie bewirbt schon seit 5 Jahren nimmt aber bei Schminke seh ich gleich das Ergebnis. Wenn das passt macht es das glaubwürdig

I: und wenn das gar nicht zusammenpasst dann ist es unglaubwürdig?

Ja dann ist es lächerlich (alle)

I: um euch ein Beispiel zu nennen, SMI bewerben oft auch soziale Zwecke oder zb Zahnpastawerbung, was denkt ihr euch da?

B5: Soziale Aspekte find ich toll, weil sie ihre Aufmerksamkeit nützen können. Sie können einfach Leute sehr gut erreichen.


I: Weils nicht zu ihnen passt?

B1: nein weils einfach nicht zu meinen Interessen passt


B1: Ja mich auch,, ich will von denen was übers Trainieren sehen

B6: ich überspiel das immer und spul zu dem vor was mich interessiert
I: auch wenn sie gut aussehen?


B2: ich hab mal so ein fürs Training Schmink Video gesehen und mir gedacht wer macht so einen scheiß, das war so lächerlich

(Diskussion über Schminke beim Training)

I: Aber würdet ihr das sehen wollen wenn einer nur ungeschminkt herumläuft und filmt?

B3: Ja es gibt da eine Schweizer Bodybuilderin die geht immer ungeschminkt laufen, mit roten Kopf und verschwitzte Haare.

B1: Das ist doch authentisch!

B3: Ja voll!

B1: ich brauch da auch keine aufgetakelten Mädels


Diskussion über eine Instagram Frau_ Kontext: Manchmal folgen wir Leute die uns total nerven, aber weil’s lustig sind und ein Zeitvertreib und man redet drüber

I: und wenn die dann gesponsert werden?

B1: ws nix positives. Wenn wir schon ein negatives Bild über die Person haben

B4: da fragt man sich schon, wen sucht sich die Firma da aus, wen haben sie in der Öffentlichkeitsabteilung

I: nächster Punkt wie seht ihr das wenn einer ständig die Sponsoren wechselt was ist wenn einer immer bei seinem Sponsor bleibt, vl sogar bevor er gesponsert wurde?


B4: Wenn e alle gut sind, braucht man keinen der einem erklärt was gut ist

B2: Wenn man wenigstens eine Begründung bringt, wenn du immer wieder wechselst ist das komisch

B3: Wenn man jetzt mal nach 2 Jahren den Sponsor wechselt finde ich es nicht problematisch aber wenn man viele Wechsel drinnen hat ist schon komisch
I: Müssen sie dann eine Erklärung bringen?

B2: Glaubwürdiger ist e s schon aber im Endeffekt sind e alle gut

I: Kennt ihr die Paula Krämer, die hat jetzt von Wieder auf ESN gewechselt

B5: das versteh ich aber, weil ich mit Wieder verbinde dass da Blödsinn drinnen ist

B4: wenn einer auf was umsteigt was besser , größer und besser bezahlt ist sind man das schon ein denk ich, das würden wir selber auch machen

B5: und wie gesagt bei Wieder hör ich nur negatives

B6: ich hör bei ESN nur negatives

Diskussion über Supplementfirmen Ironmaxx ist super

B5: Dh mit jedem der von Ironmaxx gesponsert wird mit de verbindest du automatisch was positives?

B5: JA

I: und umgekehrt?

B5: das müsst ich mir ansehen aber grundsätzlich positiv ist meine Einstellung nicht gleich. Ich verbinde auch zb mit Weider mit eher männlichen Produkten, ..

I: Stephanie Davis wird von Wieder gesponsert, die hat aber zu Biotech gewechselt

B5: Gut

I: wenn man den Wechsel nachvollziehen kann dann ist es in Ordnung, wenn man zu einer „schlechteren“ Firma wechselt ist es komisch?

JA

B2: Wenn die bei für eine für mich persönlich bessere Firma war und wechselt dann zu einer für mich schlechteren dann ist das für mich unglaubwürdig.

B1: ja zu oft wechseln ist auch oft unglaubwürdig

B5: Im Prinzip steht ja dann die Person für die Marke. Wenn sie das dann ändert ist es zu verwirrend. Sie kriegt ja Sympathiepunkte und Follower weil sie zu einem Produkt steht, wenn sie dann wechselt..weiß auch nicht..ich enftolge ihm nicht aber ..
B2: Dann hat man halt den Eindruck wenn da ein besserer Vertrag alle drei Monate kommt, gewechselt würde, als würden sie nicht persönlich dafür stehen.

B3: Es wär halt wichtig dass die Person das Produkt dann auch nutzt und die Persönlichkeit und der Lebensstil passen. Wenn ich z.B. keine Supplements nimm und dann voll gesponsert werde ist das auch komisch.

I: Dh wenn einer die Produkte vorher schon nutzt bevor er gesponsert wurde, das wäre der Idealfall?

Alle: JA

Also das ist am glaubwürdigsten:

Ja schon

B5: ich seh das anders, wenn man immer nur das eine genommen hat gibt es ja keinen Vergleich. Das ist dann unglauwürdig

B2: Am besten wärs sie probiert z.B. über einen Zeitraum und entscheidet sich dann was sie besser findet

I: Es gibt ja auch Leute die nehmen sich Zeit und vergleichen die Sponsorangebote, ist das glaubwürdig?

B1: Ja

B4: die Leute können umso glaubwürdiger agieren wenn sie in einer besseren Position sind. Wenn sie sich die Sponsoren wirklich aussuchen können. Dann können sie wirklich den aussuchen, mit dem sie sich am Besten identifizieren können, wenn man nur einen hat wie z.B. Wieder und man denkt sich die macht das nur weil sie der halt da ist. Wenn man sich bewusst dafür entscheidet ist es glaubwürdiger.

I: würdet ihr das trotzdem nachvollziehen können wenn einer dann das Sponsos hip eingeht?

B4: Ja, aber ich finde es trotzdem glaubwürdiger wenn sie die Wahl hätten

I: ich hatte den Eindruck das macht für euch keinen Unterschied ob einer bezahlt wird oder nicht?

B2: ja es werden eh so viele gesponsert, man achtet da nicht so drauf
B3: und du merkst ja auch wie die Person ist in den Videos wenn du der länger folgst, man merkt wenn die dann plötzlich einen Zettel liegen hat was sie sagen soll da wirken sie oft komisch. Das ist mir dann wichtiger als wenn sie das bezahlt kriegt

I: Punkt Aussehen..

B5: für mich Grund Nummer 1 warum ich wem folge und mich für dessen Produkte interessiere. Wenn der nur 1 Jahr trainiert hat weckt er kein Interesse, ist ja auf dem selben Level wie ich

I: also sie müssen eine gewisse Vorbildwirkung haben und Expertise?

Alle: Ja

Das ist ganz wichtig

I: Brauchen sie dafür ein Zertifikat?

B1: aus das hab ich ehrlich gesagt noch nie geachtet. Ich geh davon aus wenn die schon lange trainieren dass sie wissen was sie tun

Nur mehr generelle Diskussion

Thiel: ansehen weil sie oft vorgeschlagen wird, Facebook Werbung,

Bässler: glauben wir nicht, dass sie so einen Körper ohne Gewichte geschafft haben, aber sehen gut aus

c) Transcript 29.12.2016

I: Was versteht ihr unter einem Social Media Influencer und könnt ihr mir Beispiele in der Fitness Industrie nennen?

I: Also deswegen folgst du ihr, wegen den Vorher nacher Fotos oder auch wegen ihrer Persönlichkeit?

A1: Ja auch, aber sie taugt mir halt auch voll. Ich mein man muss schon ein realistisches Bild haben, das wird wahrscheinlich nicht so bald zu erreichen sein, aber die Bilder von ihren Klienten sind schon realistischer, das ist schon motivierend. Auf Facebook hab ich auch schon mal die Bikinibodychallenge gemacht, 77 Tage Strandfigur, es ist eh immer dasselbe System, die User stellen ihre Vorher Nacher Fotos rein, ich hab auch schon mal was gezahlt dafür, schreck auch vor sowas nicht zurück.

I: Wem folgt ihr und warum, was versteht ihr unter einem SMI?

A2: Dass er viele Follower hat. Wenn er ein großes Publikum hat, und viele Leute dem zustimmen..

I: Das ist also die Voraussetzung? Können Leute auch Influencer sein, die wenig Followers haben?

A2: Naja wenn sie nicht viele Followers haben, sie nicht viel Einfluss

A3: Naja wenn du den persönlich kennst..bzw dich (tippt auf Interviewer), ich schau mir deine Sachen schon immer an

A4: Ich glaub dass das im kleinen Bereich passiert, dann sind halt keine paar Tausend sondern ein paar hundert, zb in Amstetten und Umgebung oder so

A2: Naja es hängt halt immer davon ab. Zb in Amstetten ist tausend viel

A4: Ja das glaub ich auch

A2: Wennst in der USA bist, sind Tausend normal

A5: Ich finde dass ein Influencer nicht viel oder wenig Follower haben, sondern einfach die Leute damit erreichen, was er macht, egal wie vieles dann sind, ich hab da zb jetzt einen auf Instagram, dem ich folge, der hat auch einen Youtube Channel, Görki heißt der, und ich finde der macht eigentlich ziemlich gute Sachen und hat halt angefangen mit Fitnesstipps und so weiter, bei dem man einfach merkt dass nicht die Promotion von irgendwelchen Artikeln im Vordergrund steht sondern schon mehr die Wissensbildung vom Menschen an sich was das Training anbelangt.

I: Also wenn der eine gewisse Expertise hat, ist da wichtig?

A5: Ja
I: Ok gut. Wem folgt ihr denn noch so?


I: Ich hab mir ein paar Adjektive ausgeschrieben vielleicht könnt ihr was dazu sagen beziehungsweise mir diese bestätigen. Ein Influencer sollte ehrlich, authentisch, vertrauenswürdig, und kompetent sein..richtig?

A1: Dass er gut aussieht..(lacht)

A3: Vertrauenswürdig ist schwierig zu sagen wenn ich eine Person nicht kennte oder? Das ist für mich immer so eine Sache. Ich find die Sophia Thiel e ganz lieb wie sie das mit den Videos macht und so, und sie redet auch mal über was ganz anderes, voll lustig, aber persönlich kenn ich sie trotzdem nicht. Wenn ich dich kenne, und wir trainieren zusammen ist das was ganz was anderes.

A5: Was Glaubwürdigkeit angeht bin ich einfach sehr skeptisch. Ich hab selber auf Instagram angefangen Bilder zu posten, vom Wandern und so und ich finde man kann wenn man will ein komplett falsches Bild vermitteln. Ich könnt mich hinstellen als wär ich der ärgste Wanderer, und geh jeden Tag am Berg, daweil ist das nur von einer Wanderung. Ich muss schauen ob ich da was verwenden kann, ob das für mich einen positiven Aspekt hat oder nicht

A6: Ich glaub ihnen, bis auf den Punkt ob sie natural sind oder nicht

A2: Wo ich immer stutzig werde ist so was wie 30 Tage Challenge, keine Arbeit dahinter, du musst nichts tun, alles ist einfach, wenn sie dir verkaufen da ist keine Arbeit dahinter, das ist eher unglaubwürdig, weil das stimmt einfach nicht.

A1: Dann hängts eh meistens gleich an irgendwelchen Produkte

A2: Genau dann musst du dir gleich was dazukaufen, sonst funktionierst schon gar nicht ,das ist einfach unglaubwürdig , ich glaub auch dass viele Leute darauf reiinfallen, da bin ich mir ziemlich sicher ,dass sie glauben ,dass das total easy geht aber. ..das finde ich auch schön bei Sophia Thiel dass die da ehrlich ist, wenn sie sagt da steckt viel Arbeit dahinter , du musst einfach Konsequent sein
I: Gutes Beispiel wär hier der Detox Tee

A2: Ja Grüntee ist überall ja

I: Da war halt der Punkt mit der Ehrlichkeit dass sie sagen trink den Tee und du siehst aus wie Sophia Thiel


A5: ich würd bei einer Sophia Thiel meine Hand nicht ins Feuer legen dass die komplett natural ist.

A1: die gefällt mir eh nicht so, die Kayla gefällt mir mehr

A5: Wenn ich mir nur ihr Training ansehe und für mich das was nützt kann mir im Endeffekt egal sein ob sie natural ist. Nur ist es oft schade ,wenn eine Figur für Frauen übermittelt wird, die gar nicht zu erreichen ist. Glaubwürdig. Ja nein. ich weiß nicht

A4: Ich glaub die Leute die schon mal trainieren waren oder zumindest ein bisschen Erfahrung haben wissen dass das nicht realistisch ist.

A5: Gerade bei den Männern sieht man es ja wirklich gut . Ich kanns auch nicht sicher sagen aber der Görki wirkt seit vielen Jahren gleich von der Statur her ...und wenn er sagt er macht grade Massephase und wird immer breiter, dann merkt man ok, der nimmt einfach viel an Fett zu. Und Muskelsmasse sieht man am Schluss, wenn er wieder abnimmt, aber manche wirken einfach so unrealistisch breit und immer definiert und immer komplett trocken...ich glaub schon dass es Leute gibt die natural sind . Aber du merkst es, wenn du einen hast der nach Jahren mal an sein Limit kommt, das ist dann schon glaubwürdig.

I: Wenn ihr seht dass die Followeranzahl steigt und eventuell Sponsoren dazukommen, ändert das was für euch in Bezug auf die Glaubwürdigkeit?

A2: wie heißt denn die eine Kärntnerin?

I: Stephanie Davis?

A2: Ja genau. Der folg ich nimmer, die hat zum Beispiel eine Kooperation gehabt , irgendein Vitaminpräparat oder iwas war das, und in jedem zweiten Foto war das drinnen und
irgendwann ist mir das auf die Nerven gegangen. Es waren nur noch Selfies von ihr mit dem, und dann hab ich mir gedacht, das bringt mir nichts wenn ich mir das ansehe.

A4: das wollt ich auch sagen. Wenn das zu viel wird, sodass nur mehr „Jetzt hab ich mein neues Gewand von dem bekommen .und das ist jedesmal fett hingeschrieben und jedes Foto so, dann hab ich da noch einen Becher in der Hand, das ist so aufdringlich finde ich . Die müssen schon was Leben das ist klar, wenn die ab und zu mal einen Sponsor erwähnen, dann ist das ok, aber es muss irgendwie …wenn es zu aufdringlich ist taugt es mir nicht mehr

A5: Da gibt es auch so einen jüngeren Deutschen..wie heißt der ..Fitnessoskar ..Der erwähnt das immer dass er von dem und dem Geld bekommt .hat auch schon öfters gesagt dass er was für was bekommt und wie viel. Und dass er davon lebt. Und mir geht's dann oft gar nicht so auf die Nerven, wenn er einfach. Weiß nicht der macht dann oft richtiges Produkt Placement wie er zb. Er zeigt wie er sich seinen Booster herrichtet und hat halt alles von Myprotein da stehen und macht Werbung dafür, aber Gleichzeit sagt er auch dass man jeglichen anderen nehmen kann. Er sagt nicht dass das die einige Marke ist, aber das ist halt sein Sponsor . und dass er was zusätzliches dazukriegt. Den Zusatz find ich ganz gut, weil ich denk mir dann er gibt mir genug Tipps, die mir gefallen , dann kann ich auch über seinen Link einkaufen um ihn zu fördern

I: also grundsätzlich stört es euch nicht wenn die Leute für die Produkte bezahlt werden solange sie ehrlich sind?

A2: sie müssen ja von was leben, die meisten machen das ja hauptberuflich . Von Bodykiss hab ich mir letztens was angesehen, sie hat gemeint sie kriegt oft Angebote die sie ablehnt und 2 Wochen später sitzt dann eine andere mit dem Video..

I: Das ist eben ein großer Punkt in meiner Arbeit, dass sie dann ja auch für die Meinung bezahlt werden und vorgegeben bekommen, was sie sagen…

A2: Das ist dann die Frage ob sie da ehrlich sind

I: da wollt ich euch eben Fragen ob das einen Unterschied macht wenn ihr wisst der hat eine fixe Liste was er sagen soll

A6: das merkt man doch

A5: Ich finde das weiß man doch, das ist halt sein Sponsor

A6: man kann sich ja seine eigene Meinung bilden
A5: Ich hab das aber wirklich selten erlebt dass die das Produkt dann so feiern und sagen das ist das Allerbeste Produkt. Meistens ist es so, dass hab ich von meinem Sponsor und das nimm ich immer und das taugt mir

A6: Aber Myprotein soll ja nicht so gut sein

A5: Genau aber beim Oskar zum Beispiel hätt ich nie gehört dass der sagt Myprotein, das ist DAS BESTE. Das zum Beispiel, da denk ich mir dir leitet das bewusst in eine Richtung wo er Geld verdient, das ist der Simon Teichmann, das ist ein Deutscher, und der macht extrem gute Videos, was das Training und verschiedene Übungen angeht und erklärt das immer voll gut. Mit Muskelauflauf, wie funktioniert das, wo ist der Ansatz,.. Ursprung, wie wirkt sich die Übung aus...der macht das gut und kompetent, aber der hat jetzt seine eigene Supplement Linie rausgebracht und der erwähnt jetzt in fast jedem Video seine Supplements. Dass das überhaupt die besseren sind und es keine besseren Produkte am Markt gibt, da denkt man sich auch, das ist eine reine Vermarktung von einem selber Momentan,

I: Also wenn sie es übertreiben, das ist unglaubwürdig.

A5: Ja genau

I: Fallen euch sonst noch Situationen ein, boa he da ist er mir wirklich am Nerv gegangen?

A2: Es gibt für Frauen dieses Size Zero Programm zum Beispiel. Da lädst dir dieses Programm runter, für den Ernährungsplan musst du dann wieder IHRE Eiweißshakes kaufen. Im Endeffekt musste sie wirklich viel Geld dafür ausgeben. Was sie billiger bekommen hätte können. Das ist halt oft so, da kaufst du was, dann kriegst du das nächste angedreht

A3: wos dann weitergeht mit spezielle Produkte. Ich hab das Programm auch in einer Werbung gesehen, habs mir angesehen was da dahinter steht. aber dann gleich wieder zugemacht, kompletter Blödsinn

A2: Aber das ist halt ein Programm was extrem bekannt ist weil sie viel Werbung macht ich kenn aber eig niemand mit guten Erfahrungen

A3: ich auch nicht

A5: Mir fällt jetzt nichts ein wo ich komplett enttäuscht war, ich hab das nie so direkt ausprobiert, bin dann meistens so dass ich mir das selber nochmal ansehe oder gewisse Freunde frage, was ich besten machen kann und wie sich das auswirkt. Und da merkt man schon, das ist nochmal eine andere ehrliche Meinung. Wenn ich zum Beispiel ihn
frage (deutet auf Mitbefragten), der hat halt schon einiges ausprobiert was sich
was bringt und was sich nichts bringt, und da habe ich wirklich eine Meinung wo ich sagen
die kann ich vertreten, aber nichts war ein kompletter Schwachsinn

A2: Ich glaub das ist eher für Leute die neu Anfangen und mit dem noch nie was tu tun
hatten. Ich glaube denen passiert es schneller dass man da einer Person vertraut, was die
sagt.

I: Das hab ich schon öfters gehört dass vor allem Leute, die sich nicht so auskennen, diesen
SMI wie einer Freundin vertrauen..

A7: Ich würde ihnen nicht so glauben

A1: Naja wennst du ihnen nur auf Instagram folgst hast du ja keinen persönlichen Kontakt zu
denen. Ich hab das schon mal gehabt, auf Facebook, mit der 90 Tage Bikini Challenge, die
ja auch immer nur werben, dass man die Produkte kauft, alles andere kriegst du gratis,
komplett auf dich abgestimmt, blablabla, und dann schreibst du halt mit einen von denen ja?
Du bist dann ja schon richtig Best Frieds mit denen, erzählst ihnen deine Ziele und Träume,
und dann hat sich rausgestellt dass das nur Plus Produkte sind, aber es ist halt so, von dem
kannst du dich schon beeinflussen lassen. Man hat den Eindruck du liegst ihm persönlich
am Herzen aber in Wirklichkeit gar nicht. Hauptsache du kaufst die Produkte

I: (Sophia Thiel Geschichte) Wie Sophia Thiel einer bekannten abgeraten hat ihr Programm
zu kaufen weil sie eh schlank ist

Alle: das ist cool

A1: das ist wirklich ehrlich ja

A5: Man merkt jetzt aber voll den Unterschied zw Frauen und Männer, bei Frauen geht es
nur ums abnehmen, bei Männer wie krieg ich viel Masse, Mir fällt jetzt aber eigentlich keiner
von diesen Instagrammern ein der sagt innerhalb von 30 Tagen bist du ein Gerät, die sagen
alle es ist viel Arbeit und du musst viel trainieren

A2: Ich glaub bei Frauen ist das generell einfach wenn du was abnehmen willst, isst du halt
30 Tage nix.

I: Wie wichtig ist es, dass er offen bei Kooperationen ist?

A2: das müssen sie doch inzwischen per Gesetzt offen legen oder?

I: (Erklären wann sie offenlegen müssen)
A2: ich finde das gut, das macht es transparent

I: Macht das einen Unterschied wenn einer nicht ehrlich ist?

A2: ja für die Glaubwürdigkeit natürlich, weil man kann es einfach viel besser einschätzen wenn einer sagt er wird gesponsert. Man könnte es dann realistischer sehen und dann sagen ok vielleicht ist dann doch ein bisschen eine andere Wahrheit dahinter.

A5: Ja das finde ich auch, es verfälscht es total wenn man nicht weiß ob er gesponsert wird und der lobt das in den Himmel , dann geh ich davon aus, wenn ich glaube dass der nicht gesponsert wird, dass das Produkt wirklich so gut ist , das verfälscht das extrem, vor allem wenn du nur Bilder siehst und du nicht wahrnehmen kannst, wie ehrlich das gemeint ist

I: aber ihr habt vorher gemeint es macht keinen Unterschied ob er bezahlt wird oder nicht

A2: sie müssen halt ehrlich sein darüber

A5: Ich hab ja vorher gesagt sie sollen ehrlich darüber reden , von wem sie bezahlt werden. und jetzt hab ich gesagt ,dass ich…wieder dieselbe Meinung, weil wenn sie es nicht sagen , verfälscht es das total , wenn er zb nicht sagt dass er von Myprotein gesponsert wird und dann sagt er der Booster ist ein Wahnsinn, ..

I: JA aber das impliziert ja dass es einen Unterschied macht ob der gesponsert wird oder nicht

A4: Meiner Meinung nach kommt es darauf an wie bekannt der ist, nehmen wir mal einen Schwarzenegger her, wenn der irgendwo was oben stehen kannst, gehe ich davon aus dass der mörder Kohle dafür kriegt. Wenn du einen lustigen hast den nur Insider kennen dann kriegt er was bezahlt oder nicht oder nur die Produkte.. ..Bei jedem Skifahrer, Fußballer..wenn der was oben hat kriegt er immer ein Geld, und hier ist das meiner Meinung nach auch so ..Wenn einer jetzt vom Amateur zum Profi im Bodybuilding geht ist das klar dass man das nicht so unterscheiden kann

A3: Für mich macht das schon einen Unterschied, ob man einem No Name oder einem Bekannten oder dir (zeigt auf Interviewer) glaubt, wenn du das Produkt testest, als ein Promi oder so. der nimmt sich vi ein 2 mal dass er iwas darüber sagen kann. Ja natürlich, der kriegt dafür zahlt du vielleicht nicht. Da glaub ich lieber einem glaubwürdigen, als einen den ich mehr kenne als , zu dem ich mich mehr hingezogen fühle als zu einem Promi

I: weils personenbezogener ist?
A3: Genau, aber die meisten Leute fallen auf so Promis rein. Der nimmt das, der hat das an, supercool

A5: Ok ich schließ mich jetzt einfach ihrer Meinung an

I: Nein erklärts mir nochmal vl verstehs ich dann


I: Ich weiß was du meinst aber du gehst davon aus dass es verfälscht ist und ich glaube nicht dass die meisten Leute wissen dass der für die Meinung bezahlt kriegt.

A5: wenn sie wissen dass er gesponsert wird?

I: Ja aber das heißt ja nicht automatisch dass er genau gesagt kriegt was er sagen muss.

A5: das habe ich schon gewusst

A2: ich nicht, ich dachte Sponsoring heißt dass der die Artikel gratis zur Verfügung gestellt kriegt, und Fotos davon macht. Aber dass die Meinung gesponsert wird hab ich nicht gewusst

I: es gibt 3 Arten, Eva Saischegg, fitbit.. not sponsored, unpaid sponsoring, paid sponsoring…Erklärung

A2: wie sieht man den Unterschied?

I: die bezahlten müssen offengelegt werden, aber für die Firmen macht es keinen Sinn auch bei den unbezahlten wenn sie nicht markiert werden, wenn sie es sich selber zahlen dann sagen sie das meistens auch… deswegen wollt ich wissen ob das einen Unterschied macht

A5: ja dann schon

A2: naja wenn die Meinung gezahlt wird dann schon, das finde ich arg

I: wenn ihr jetzt überlegt habt ihr schon einmal was negatives über ein gesponsertes Produkt gehört?
A2: die einzige ist die Bodykiss. Die sagt offen wenn sie gesponsert ist und dass
sie aber ihre Meinung sagt. Einmal ist der Sponsor zurückgetreten weil sie eine schlechte
Kritik hatte.

A1: ich würd bei Eiweißsachen trotzdem lieber dich fragen, oder jemand halt den ich kenne,
auch wenn ich so einen sehe. Ich würd jetzt kein Produkt kaufen nur weil ich es bei ihr
gesehen hab. Ich kann mich erinnern auf Facebook war mal dieser Eggshake, jedes zweite
Bild war von dem, da hast du voll viele Kritiken gelesen dass das ein Scheiß ist. , die Werte
voll schlecht, da kauf ichs lieber nach der Meinung von einem der sich auskennt.

A2: Mir ist die Meinung von Leuten die ich persönlich kenne wichtiger

I: Ich habe letzten einen interessanten Punkt gehört und zwar dass Leute nach dem
Aussehen gehen, also dass die Leuten auf Instagram glauben die gut aussehen und dann
annehmen sie nehmen die Produkte

A1, A2: Das glaub ich nicht

A4: Das ist etwas gutgläubig ha?

A3: Ich glaub unterbewusst schon dass es so ist, bewusst nicht

A2: Glaub das ist auch eher bei den Männern oder? Schauen Frauen da auch so wenn
Männer dann so super dastehen?

A3: Also ich weiß es noch von meinen Mitbewohnerinnen. Weil die oft so einen Scheiß
kaufen. Und ich frag sie was ist mit euch falsch? Aber die machen das wirklich. Die kaufen
Sachen weil sie es auf Facebook sehen. Oder ein Foto oder Video, dann kaufen sie das und
nach 3 Tagen naja

A2: die sind aber leicht zu beeinflussen

A3: Aber ich glaub das sind die meisten Leute ganz einfach

A2: Ja eh

A2: Ich glaub dass die meisten Leute das unterbewusst ja wirklich machen

I: Ich hatte das schon oft dass ich Leuten einen Trainingsplan geschrieben hab und die Leute
dann aber gemeint haben der auf Youtube macht das anders und machen es dann so

A1: Da gibt es dann ws wieder 2 verschiedene Kategorien von Leuten. Die die einen
vertrauen und welche die sich blind verhalten

A5: Ich finde es gehört schon etwas mehr dazu als Aussehen alleine. Wenn der zb eine komische Stimme hat dann kann ich mir den nicht 10 Minuten anhören. Was schon ein Beispiel ist, wenn einer komplett dünn ist und mir dann erzählt , dass der jetzt schon ewig Masse aufgebaut hat.naja.. also deswegen ist das Erscheinungsbild schon auch wichtig. Auch wenn der jetzt voll auf Stoff ist, alleine schon dass das so ein mordstrum Typ ist, hat schon ein bissl die Funktion von einem Cliff Hanger. Wenn du jetzt in einem Video einen massiven Typen mit dem Titel massives Brustworkout siehst, dann drückst du eher drauf als wenn das umgekehrt ist. Also ich finde schon dass es was ausmacht Was aber nicht heißt dass seine Meinung dann die bessere ist. Man muss es sich anschauen und nichts 1:1 übernehmen. Einfach anschauen, ausprobieren. Wenn ich mir beim Anschauen schon denke eig tut mir das voll weh und zieht überhaupt nicht ,dann weiß ich schon dass die Übung nicht so leiwand ist , oder für mich nicht so l. , kann ja für ihn gut sein

I: Ok ich hab noch 2 kleine Punkte und zwar was haltet ihr davon wenn Fitnessleute andere Produkte bewerben wie Zahnpasta oder Uhren wie Daniel Wellington? Glaubt ihr ihnen dann?

A3: Zahnpasta war die Kärtnerin!Jetzt weiß ichs wieder so nervig

A4: Eine Uhr kauf ich mir sowieso..die muss mir gefallen. Die kann oben haben wer will. Das sind so Sachen. Schön für sie wenn sie die Uhr bekommen hat .aber mehr noch die Uhr als die Zahnpasta..so ein scheiß

A5: Find ich auch lächerlich

A2: ich tät das nie, ich mein ich schau mir auch die Bilder an , aber ich würd nie

A3: Da schadet ja auch ihrem Image, ich versteh nicht bei der Stephanie warum sie das dann so exzessiv macht . Im Endeffekt schadets nur ihrem Image dann .

A2: Genau. Es heißt ja immer man sollte nicht allesmachen sondern sich auf eines spezialisieren. Und wenn ich im Fitnessbereich bin dann sollt ich da auch bleiben

I: aber wenn jetzt eine Mode und Fitness als Hauptthemen hat dann passt es wieder?

A2, A1: Ja dann schon

A4: Ich lass mir auch noch einreden,
A2: mir gefällt das zb auch wenn du (zeigt auf I) ein Bild hast mit einem ganz normalen Gewand. Mir gefällt das voll wenn du sie in einem schönen Kleid siehst, nicht im Sportgewand.

A3: O Gott, sie haben ein Leben außerhalb (lacht)

A2: genau. Oder wenn sie einen Anzug anhaben und was anderes machen oder so. das ist eine gewisse Abwechslung das gefällt mir zb.

I: macht es sie dann authentischer?

A2: Ja du merkst einfach die stehen ganz normal im Leben so wie ich. Stehen nicht nur im Fitnessstudio mit Sportklamotten und so. Aber dass ich da so schaue was die da so anhat oder umhat..nein

A5: Manchmal ist es vl ein Anstoß oder so. Du denkst dir dann he der Pulli sieht leiwand aus oder so

A2: Ja wenn mir ein Sportgewand gefällt dann schon..Uhren oder so nein

A1: Das ist jetzt kein Fitness Influencer aber wenn die Lena Gercke ein lässiges Sportgewand anhat dann das schau ich mir schon gerne an

A3: aber Nike ist ja da eh das beste Beispiel.

I: gut dann hab ich nur einen Punkt und zwar wie wichtig ist es dass die Leute bei einem Sponsor bleiben? Ständig wechseln und Glaubwürdigkeit?

A2: Bei Gewand wärs mir egal, bei Produkte ist es was anderes

I: hauptsächlich Supplements.

A3: Kommt drauf an warum sie wechseln. Wenn sie sagt das ist nicht das richtige und nix gescheites dann versteh ichs…aber wenn es nur ums Geld geht

A2: Aber wenn einer vorher gesagt hat das ist das beste und dann auf einmal nicht mehr..?

I: Ja von dem gehen wir jetzt aus. Wenn der gesponsert wird , bezahlt wird

A3: nein das wär komisch

A5: Dann ist er nicht glaubwürdig.

A4: Kommt drauf an, wenn das einmal in 5 Jahren ist oder jedes halbe Jahr
A3: Ich mein wenn er sagt die Produkte sind nicht mehr so gut und es hat nicht mehr zusammengepasst...

A5: Stimmt schon wenn du jetzt sagst die letzten 5 Jahre, ich mein die letzten 5 Jahre hat sich bei mir auch was geändert. Und meine Meinung zu vielen Sachen geändert. Dann finde ich es schon glaubwürdig er muss es halt dementsprechend präsentieren. Zb wenn er sagt he ich hab nen neuen Sponsor und am nächsten Tag gleich weißt eh. Wenn er sagt ich hab mir das jetzt angesehen und getestet, mir ist es lieber, ich lege es euch nahe, aber wenn wer nicht will soll er beim alten bleiben. So ungefähr, dann ist es gut..ich mein gut, dann glaub ichs ihm halt , dann ist es glaubwürdiger

A3: halt nicht einfach so austauschen

A2: sie müssens halt schon probieren. Ich find es besser wenn einer sagt er hat das jetzt schon mal ein Monat probiert

A5: Ich hab das so gut von einem gefunden, der hat das vier Jahre gemacht oder so, und hat sich dann für alte Videos entschuldigt weil er Sachen falsch vorgezeigt hat , falsche Ausführung, falsch erklärt. Es ist gut wenn sies dann nochmal zusätzlich erklären und nicht so am Rand stehen lassen.

I: wäre es für euch wichtig wenn einer von zb seinem ersten Whey gesponsert wird, also dass sie die Produkte vorher schon hatten?

A2: ich fände das super wenn sie es vorher schon genommen haben

A4: ich finde es ist egal weil dus eh nicht weißt. Der kann mir viel erzählen

A3: Entstehen nicht dadurch erst die meisten Sponsorings dass man es vorher herzeigt? Dass man Fotos mit den Produkten macht und du die Firma markierst und die werden auf dich aufmerksam?

A5: Ja wenn du eine gewisse Reichweite hast kann das schon sein, halt nicht jeden Tag weil sonst müssen sie dir ja nichts mehr zahlen, dann bewirbst du die Produkte ja sowieso

I: Gut dann danke, wenn ihr keine Ergänzungen mehr habt bedanke ich mich, ihr wart eine große Hilfe.
Umfrage Social media influencer im Fitnessbereich


1. Wie vertraut sind Sie mit sozialen Medien wie Instagram und Facebook?
   X sehr, ich nutze soziale Medien jeden Tag
   X mittel, ich nutze soziale Medien, aber nicht jeden Tag
   X gar nicht, ich besitze keinen Instagram bzw Facebookaccount

2. Folgen Sie Personen im Fitnessbereich auf Instagram bzw Facebook?
   X Ja
   X Nein
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Einen wunderschönen guten Morgen! Gerade ist meine neue Bestellung eingetroffen, darunter auch das neue Whey von meinem Sponsor @pescience. Ich finde es mega gut, es hat wirklich gute Werte und schmeckt gigantisch. Ist aber nur eine „limited edition“ also müsst ihr schnell sein!

Bitte kreuzen Sie nun an, wie dieser Influencer auf Sie wirkt

überhaupt nicht erfahren 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr erfahren
überhaupt nicht qualifiziert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr qualifiziert
überhaupt nicht kompetent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr kompetent
überhaupt nicht sachkundig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr sachkundig
überhaupt kein Experte 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr großer Experte
überhaupt nicht informativ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr informativ
überhaupt nicht verlässiglich 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr verlässiglich
überhaupt nicht ehrlich 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr ehrlich
überhaupt nicht authentisch 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr authentisch
überhaupt nicht aufrichtig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr aufrichtig

überhaupt nicht vertraut 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr vertraut

überhaupt nicht vertrauenswürdig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sehr vertrauenswürdig

Zum Schluss würde ich Sie um eine kurze Information zu Ihrer Person bitten:

Alter: 

Geschlecht: x männlich

X weiblich

Ich bedanke mich sehr herzlich für Ihre Teilnahme!

Abbildung: @amandabuccifit

Ich möchte darauf hinweisen, dass die Texte zu dem Bild zu Studienzwecken vom Verfasser der Masterarbeit selbst erstellt wurden und dass alle rechtlichen Standards in den Originalposts eingehalten wurden.
Group 2

Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Einen wunderschönen guten Morgen! Gerade ist meine neue Bestellung eingetroffen, darunter auch das neue Whey von @pescience. Ich finde es mega gut, es hat wirklich gute Werte und schmeckt gigantisch. Ist aber nur eine „limited edition“ also müsst ihr schnell sein!

#pescience #newflavor #fitgirl #fitness
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten nicht gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:


#neinnatürlichkeinewerbung
#notsponsored #schönwärs #fitgirl
#fitness#gymrat #protein
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten gesponsten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Spring vibes und Wochenende #thankgoditsfriday Heute mal keine Fitnessklamotten, ist ganz ungewohnt für mich. Die Uhr von @mvtn geschickt bekommen und liebe sie einfach. Ich trage sie rund um die Uhr, auch zum Training=D

#sponsored #ad #werbung#mvtn #tgif #weekendvibes #fitgirl#ootd
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten, nicht gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:


#fitgirl #fitness #gymrat #protein
Group 6

Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten, gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Spring vibes und Wochenende #thankgoditsfriday Heute mal keine Fitnessklamotten, ist ganz ungewohnt für mich.

@mvtmwatchses

#tgif #weekendvibes #mvtm #fitgirl#ootd
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten, nicht gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Spring vibes und Wochenende #thankgoditsfriday Heute mal keine Fitnessklamotten, ist ganz ungewohnt für mich.
#tgif #weekendvibes #fitgirl#notsponsored#ootd
Sie sehen nun ein Bild von einem bekannten, nicht gesponserten Social Media Influencer im Fitnessbereich. Bitte betrachten Sie das Bild, lesen Sie den dazugehörenden Text aufmerksam durch und bewerten Sie dann den Influencer hinsichtlich der unten angeführten Eigenschaften:

Spring vibes und Wochenende #thankgoditisfriday Heute mal keine Fitnessklamotten, ist ganz ungewohnt für mich.

#tgif #weekendvibes #fitgirl#ootd