UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

ENDORSING A LAPTOP: WOULD YOU BUY IT?

The effects of endorser type and message appeal in advertisements on consumer responses

Master thesis

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Abstract

Introduction – Nowadays, consumers increasingly base their online purchase decisions on user-generated content like online peer reviews. Marketers can respond to this development by providing these consumers with sponsored product reviews from their company, given by third parties. These third parties are known as endorsers. These endorsers, like experts, consumers and celebrities could influence the consumer attitudes and behaviour. Social influencers are relatively new online endorsers. These online celebrities are highly active on blogs, social media and YouTube. The effect of endorsements are especially interesting when we look at endorsement of high-tech products like a laptop, because consumers might perceive a high risk when buying these kind of products online.

Objectives – The primary objective of this study was to compare the effects of three types of endorsers, the social influencer, the expert and the regular consumer. Their effect was measured in terms of attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention regarding the laptop endorsement. The second objective was to investigate the effect of message appeal (emotional and rational messages) on the previously mentioned dependent variables. Furthermore, the possible congruence between the message appeal and endorser was studied.

Method – This study features a 3 x 2 between-subjects experimental research design using an online questionnaire. The advertisement, which was showed to the Dutch speaking respondents (n = 161) consisted of either a rational or an emotional product endorsement by an expert, consumer or a social influencer. Moreover, one possible moderator (laptop knowledge) and three possible mediators (identification, internalization and message credibility) were included in the questionnaire.

Results – The results show significant effects of the expert endorser in contrast to the consumer and social influencer endorser. The findings indicate that respondents show the highest intention to purchase when an expert endorser was included in the ad. This effect is mediated by the mediator 'internalization': the credibility of the endorser fully mediates the effect of the expert (and consumer) endorser. Message credibility only plays a mediating role in the consumer endorser condition. Furthermore, respondents who are highly knowledgeable about a product seem to significantly rely more on expert endorsers than on regular consumer and social influencers, while respondents with little product knowledge do not show a preference. Besides, the findings show that respondents have a more positive attitude towards the ad when a rational message was included in the ad as compared to an emotional message. However, no significant interaction effect was found between the endorser type and message appeal.

Conclusion – This experiment suggests that the effect of a social influencer does not differ from a consumer endorser and is significantly less effective as compared to an expert endorser. Besides, a rational advertisement might result in more positive outcomes as compared to an emotional advertisement. Future research is needed in order to investigate the effect of existing social influencers and other (existing) product types. Additionally, it is interesting to take more consumer characteristics into account as moderators.

Keywords: endorser, advertising, influencer marketing, message appeal, social influencer

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Introduction

Currently, consumers increasingly base their purchase decisions on user-generated content, like peer reviews, blogs and social networks (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Marketers can respond to this development by providing these consumers with sponsored product reviews or testimonials from their company, given by third parties. These third parties are known as endorsers and their product recommendation is known as an endorsement. The endorsement strategy in marketing is characterized by its high believability and a likable source endorsing a product or brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). More specifically, an endorsement is, according to the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), any advertising message that contains opinions, beliefs, findings, or experience of a party other than the sponsored brand that consumers are likely to believe. The third party is the endorser, which can be one person, a group or an institution (FTC). The use of those endorsers in advertising belongs to influencer marketing, which is a strategy that turns the most influential consumers into brand ambassadors (Kirby & Marsden, 2006, p.198) who generate more genuine content than traditional advertising (Experticity, s.d.). However, Lu et al. (2014) found that the reliability of paid/sponsored blog posts on personal blogs is questionable. In this way, endorser ads can also blur the line between real advertisements and personal content. Are endorsements credible and effective?

These days, different endorser types are used. First, experts and consumers. Previous research showed that expert and consumer endorsements do affect consumer attitudes and behaviour (Fireworker & Friedman, 1977 as cited in Lee, Park & Han, 2006). More recent studies have introduced celebrity endorsers and compared this type with expert and consumer endorsers (Biswas et al., 2006; Wei & Lu, 2013; Lafferty & Golfsmith, 1999). Based on previous research it can be concluded that different types of endorsers lead to different consumer responses towards the endorsement advertisement. Nowadays, celebrities need to compete with social (media) influencers (Westenberg, 2016; McCracken, 1989). "A social (media) influencer represents a new type of independent third party endorsers who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets and the use of other social media" (Freberg et al., 2010). The effect social influencers can be compared with the influential effect of celebrities and consequently affect consumer behaviour (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Dean & Biswas, 2001). Researchers argue that information provided by social influencers is more influential than information that is directly provided by the company (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008) or by expert product reviews (Gillin, 2007). This research would like to further investigate the effect of social influencers used in endorsement advertisement and compare the results with the more commonly used expert and consumer endorsements.

Endorsement advertisements are closely related to regular product testimonials. Ghose and Ipeirotis (2009) argue that product reviewers include their personal opinion based on their emotions and feelings about the product or describe factual data about the products' features, or a mix of both strategies. Product endorsements also use a message strategy to transfer the information: message appeal. Kotler and Armstrong (2012) name two important message appeals (rational and emotional), both having their own effect on how the message is perceived. Consumer endorsers are for example more likely to write an emotional message and rational message are more appropriate to use by experts (congruence) (Beldad et al., 2017; Smith, 1993; Claeys et al., 2013). However, no research has been done concerning the effect of message appeal in social influencer endorsements.

In this study an expensive and high-tech product was included in the advertisement, a laptop. In this case, the (financial) risk respondents perceive could increase, which may lead to a strong motivation to consult online reviews to lower that risk. Therefore it could be especially interesting to use endorsement advertisements for this type of product. Biswas et al. (2006) argue that an expert

endorser is more effective as compared to a celebrity endorser in terms of lowering the perceived risk. This research would like to expand the research concerning high-tech product endorsements.

Thus, the objective of this study is to examine consumer responses towards different endorser advertisement strategies of high-tech products based on endorser type and message appeal. First, the theoretical framework will focus on the effectiveness of three types of endorsers. Second, the impact of message framing is examined by manipulating the level of rationality and emotionality. Additionally, the consumers' response towards the total advertisement might differ for each endorser type based on the perceived credibility (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999) depending on their attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (Pappu & Cornwell, 2011), which makes endorser credibility (or internalization) the first mediator of this study. Moreover, identification of the endorser might benefit the consumer behaviour (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Dean & Biswas, 2001). Finally, the credibility of the message might also mediate the effect of the endorsement on the consumer responses (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2001; Han & Ryu, 2012). Finally, product knowledge is included, because the level of information processing (the source, characteristics, message appeal) is dependent on the level of knowledge (Maheswaran & Sternthal, 1990).

The research questions in this study:

Main effect: To what extent do the type of endorser and message appeal in product advertisements influence the consumers' attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word-of-mouth intention.

Mediation effect: To what extent do internalization, identification and message credibility mediate the effect of the endorsement advertisement on consumers' attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word-of-mouth intention.

Moderation effect: To what extent does product knowledge moderate the effect of the endorsement advertisement on consumers' attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word-of-mouth intention.

This study expands the knowledge about the use of endorsers in advertising by incorporating social influencers, who gained popularity during the past few years. Research has been done on the effectiveness of endorsements without the cooperation with a company. However, this research focussed on the use of an endorser in an advertisement coming from the company. Furthermore, this research has combined endorser type and message appeal in one study. The outcomes of this study give marketers insight in using endorsers in advertising strategies. This could eventually result in more authentic and genuine advertisements as compared to traditional advertisements.

In the next section, earlier literature on the use and effects of endorsers in advertisements and the effects of message appeal are discussed. Furthermore, the possible effects of three mediators (identification, internalization, message credibility) and one moderators (product knowledge) are presented. Based on the literature, several hypotheses are formed and a research model is proposed. In the third section, the research method is explained followed by the results in the fourth section. Finally the findings, limitations and implications of this study are presented in the discussion section.

1. Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the earlier literature about the use of endorsers in advertising. In the past years expert and consumer endorsers have been researched (Lee, Park & Han, 2006; Biswas et al., 2006). However, less is known about the effect of social influencers used in advertisements. Their effect is frequently compared with the effect of a celebrity (Gee, 2017; Senft, 2008; Westenberg, 2016), but the actual effect has never been researched before. Nowadays, the effect of social influencers is growing and companies are increasingly using influencers to promote their company (social1nfluencers.com). There are many ways to incorporate endorsers in a business. This research especially focussed on endorsers used in advertisements derived from the company. This study contributes to the endorser usage in marketing activities by examining two different strategies. In this theoretical framework the basis of product endorsements is explained, namely product testimonials (§2.1). Second, three different types of endorsers are described which is the first strategy (§2.2). Thereafter the second strategy, namely message appeal, is introduced (§2.3). Fourth, the possible moderating variables are discussed (§2.4). Finally, the research model is introduced (§2.5).

1.1   Product testimonials

The basis of this research about endorsement in advertising lies within product testimonials. "Testimonials may include a personal story, a description of an individual experience, or a personal opinion. In a typical testimonial, a main character tells a story of his or her personal successful experience and directly or indirectly encourages the audience to follow her example" (Braverman, 2008, p. 666). Consumers rely more and more on third-party product reviews (De Maeyer & Estelami, 2011), which makes testimonials coming from a source other than the company interesting to research. Two well-known sources are experts (product reviews) and consumers (testimonials) (De Maeyer & Estelami, 2011). Thus, testimonials can vary in terms of source.

Additionally, according to Braverman (2008), testimonials differ when compared with fact-based informational messages. Testimonials are derived from one source and follow often the peripheral route of persuasion based on emotion and heuristics. Factual messages consist of statistical evidence and are perceived to be more credible (Braverman, 2008, p. 667). Ghose and Ipeirotis (2009) argue that product reviewers (consumers) include their personal opinion based on emotions and feelings about the product or describe factual data about the products' features, or a mix of both strategies. Therefore it is interesting to research the effect of emotion-based testimonials and fact-based testimonials. This research will focus on two different characteristics of testimonials: source and message framing.

1.2   Endorser effect

The endorsement may originate from different sources or endorsers. This research focussed on three types of endorsers. First, according to the research of Nielsen (The Nielsen Company, 2013), 84% of the respondents trust the recommendation from peers and 68% trust online consumer reviews. Studies argue it is attractive for marketers to use consumer reviews in advertising: consumer endorsement (The Nielsen Company, 2013; Chen & Xie, 2008). Second, an expert must feature specific endorsers' qualifications indicating the expertise with respect to the endorsement (Federal Trade Commission, s,d.). An expert is a suitable person to recommend a product, because of its knowledge and credibility. Third, the social influencer, an endorser who has become quite popular in the past years. This social influencer is a third party endorser who uses his/her blog and social media to influence his/her followers (Freberg et al., 2010). Social influencers are frequently used to promote a brand or product, but little research has been done on the effects of social influencer endorsements. The following subsections discuss the different types of endorsers in further detail.

1.2.1   Consumer endorser

Chen and Xie (2008) cite that consumer reviews play a large role in purchase decisions. A possible explanation is that consumer reviews better represent how the product is used in the consumers' world (Chen & Xie, 2008). Several studies argue the attractiveness for marketers to use consumer reviews in advertising; this is *consumer endorsement* (Chen & Xie, 2006; The Nielsen Company, 2013). A consumer endorsement implies the use of consumer performance reviews in such a way they support the intention of the advertisement. The regular consumer perceive those endorsements as representative and reliable (Federal Trade Commission, s.d.).

Consumer endorsements can be distinguished in online consumer reviews (OCR) and consumer endorsement in advertisements (CEA). Even though the source of OCR and CEA are consumers, they differ on some points. First, CEA are often made in cooperation with a brand or advertiser whereas OCR originate from the consumer itself. Second, the source of the OCR is a user of a specific website or product while the source of CEA is not. These differences may result in different processing of consumer endorsements speaking of expertise and trustworthiness (Lee, Park & Han, 2006). CEA happens to be an efficient way of advertising by including consumer experiences and testimonials in product advertisements (Lee, Park & Han, 2006) and is therefore an interesting research area.

Nowadays, consumer endorsers can become popular content creators by making use of weblogs and social networking sites. Those content creators frequently share their opinions and experiences about for example products, hobbies or lifestyle via blogs or social media. Once these blogs have become successful and gained a lot of followers, these content creators can transform into social influencers who can persuade their followers (Westenberg, 2016). The next section will focus on social influencer endorsers.

1.2.2   Social influencer endorser

Nowadays it is not exceptional that a YouTube-star or social influencer has 100.000 or more followers on social media. During the past years the amount of social influencers has increased enormously. A social influencer is an online spokesperson who can be used as an endorser in advertising (Vlaming, 2014). A social (media) influencer is a type of independent third party endorser who uses his/her blog and social media to influence his/her followers (Freberg et al., 2010). An influencer can be perceived as a knowledge leader in a particular field. This influencer has a large amount of followers, is highly active on social media, and frequently owns a blog website. This personal approach also enhances the endorsement effect (Vlaming, 2014). *Celebrity Intelligence*, a company that mediates between (celebrity) endorsers and businesses, states in an article that social media influencers are more and more competing with traditional celebrities concerning endorsement opportunities (Gee, 2017 in Marketing Week). Popular influencers can be perceived as some kind of celebrities. Senft (2008) names it microcelebrity: people become popular by the extensive use of video, blogs and social media. The influential effect of social influencers can be compared with traditional celebrities (Westenberg, 2016). A celebrity endorsement is considered to influence the consumer behaviour (McCracken, 1989). A celebrity could be perceived as an expert in a specific field, like a professional athlete promoting athlete products.

1.2.3   Expert endorser

According to the FTC an expert must feature specific endorsers' qualifications indicating the expertise with respect to the endorsement (Federal Trade Commission, s.d.). This means that expert and expertise are closely related. "Expertise derives from an actors' ability to provide information to others

because of his experience, education and competence" (Horai et al., 1974). A source consisting of an expert is considered to be more persuasive as compared to non-experts, because an expert is perceived as more reliable (Clark et al., 2012). This finding is in accordance with the research of Maddux and Rogers (1980) who argue that the believability of the advertisements increases when expert endorsers are used, because experts are more credible. Expert endorsements are usually manipulated by focussing on the credentials of the endorser, like a dentist endorsing Oral-B toothbrushes. An expert endorsement tries to make the ad viewer more agreeable to perceive the advertisement corresponding the provided meaning (Biswas et al., 2006).

1.2.4 Effect of endorsement source

In sum, this study distinguishes three types of endorsers: consumers, social influencers and experts. These different types of endorsement sources have different effects on consumers. First, the effect of endorser credibility on the dependent variables is discussed. Second, two possible mediators (internalization and identification) are introduced. Finally, special attention is paid to the effects of social influencers.

Credible spokesperson: effect on dependent variables

According to the research of Tan (1999) endorser's credibility is important to reduce the risk. The credibility of the endorser consists of two factors: objectivity and expertise. Expertise is the most important, because consumers do not perceive an endorser as totally objective. Another research on celebrity endorsers found that the effectivity and credibility of endorsers depend on their attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). Additionally, the usefulness of the given review in the advertisement will be enhanced when the source has expertise (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998) and has positive reputation (Racherla & Friske, 2012). Braunsberger and Munch (1998) concluded that information given by someone who is perceived to be an expert is consequently perceived as more believable and important as compared to information given by experienced individuals like normal consumers.

Based on previous research it can be concluded that endorser credibility affects the evaluation of the advertisement, brand or product. More specifically, Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) argue that a credible spokesperson positively influences the attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Besides, a person who is perceived to be an expert leads to a more positive attitude towards the advertisement and the source than someone who is perceived as a layman (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998). A possible reason is that experts are perceived to be knowledgeable and factual while consumers talk subjectively about their experiences. Thus, if the advertising message is delivered by a highly credible source, the message will be perceived as more persuasive (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012) and consumers are more likely to purchase the product (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). This statement is in accordance with the study of Till and Busler (1998) who concluded that expertise enhances the endorsement effect. Friedman and Friedman (1979, as cited in Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000) additionally found that this effect is even stronger when the endorsed product is complex and/or expensive. Therefore, this study assumes that endorsing a laptop will be affected by the expertise of the endorser. Ranaweera and Prahbu (2003) concluded that a higher level of trust has a positive effect on word of mouth intention, caused by a strong emotional attachment and emotional response. Word of mouth intention is operationalized as "the intention of consumers to share information with peers about product or services which they find relevant or interesting" (Mikalef et al., 2013). As trustworthiness is part of credibility, this research assumes that trustworthy (credible) endorsers will cause a higher score on word of mouth as compared to less trustworthy (less credible) endorsers.

On the other hand, an endorsement is comparable with a review (FTC). Contradictory to the previous findings, Gillin (2007, as cited in Constantinides & Fountain, 2008) argues that reviews in blogs and consumer reviews increasingly affect the customer preferences and decisions, even more than expert reviews. This indicates that experts may not be that effective in some cases. Therefore it is interesting to measure the effect of expert endorsements in relation to consumer and social influencer endorsements.

This study assumes that expert endorsers are perceived as more credible as compared to consumer and social influencer endorsers, because of their expertise in a specific area and their trustworthiness (Dean & Biswas, 2001). Based on this literature, this study predicts that expert endorsements have a more positive effect on the potential buyers attitude towards the advertisement and the product, intention to purchase and word of mouth intention as compared to consumer endorsements and social influencer endorsements. Also, it is assumed that social influencer endorsements are perceived as more credible as compared to consumer endorsements, because of their higher level of perceived expertise in combination with their social influence.

> *Hypothesis 1: An expert endorsement advertisement will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorsement advertisement.*

> *Hypothesis 2: A social influencer endorsement advertisement will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as compared to a consumer endorsement advertisement.*

Internalization and identification: mediators
Typical consumer endorsers ("non-experts") are characterized by their perceived similarity with the target group of the advertisement, the regular consumer, and experience (Wen et al., 2009). Expert endorsers ("experts") are distinguished by their perceived credibility (Wen et al., 2009) and expertise. Experience and expertise are much alike, therefore the definitions are provided to make the difference between consumer and expert endorsers more clear. Experience is "displaying a relatively high degree of familiarity with a certain subject area, which is obtained through some type of exposure" (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998, p. 25). Expertise is defined as: "having a high degree of skill in/knowledge of a certain subject area, which is obtained through some type of formal training" (Braunsberger & Munch, 1998, p. 25).

A consumer and expert endorser have different effects. A highly credible source (an expert) enhances the purchase behaviour due to internalization. Internalization happens when "consumers perceive the source as credible and as an expert in the products which it endorses and therefore are likely to purchase the product" (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000, p.205). While consumers identifying with the source (like a regular consumer or celebrity) affect behavioural change corresponding the endorser due to identification (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Dean & Biswas, 2001). The identification process is: "Consumers are more likely to adopt behaviour advocated by an association if they identify with the group" (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000, p.205). Wen et al. (2009) argue that consumer endorsers can enhance the identification process because of the perceived similarity between the consumer endorser and the target group of the endorsement. Consequently identification mediates the message

effects including beliefs, attitudes and behavioural responses (Basil, 1996). The effect of social influencer endorsers have not been previously tested regarding the internalization and identification concept, therefore the next paragraph will explore possible effects.

The effect of social influencer endorsements

Nowadays, influencer marketing and the use of social influencers offer marketing communication managers a relatively new way to communicate with their potential consumers. Chi et al. (2011) argue that this is a promotional strategy which includes the use of famous, professional and/or attractive endorsers in advertising to increase the attention, purchase intention and brand awareness. In advertising the popularity of an endorser is often used to endorse a product or a brand and to enhance the reliability (Chi et al., 2011). Little research has been found on the effects of social influencers endorsements in advertisements, but social influencers by themselves do affect consumer responses towards a product or behaviour. First, especially younger consumers can identify themselves with the social influencer and therefore copy the behaviour of that person (Bentley, Earls & O'Brien, 2011 as cited in Westenberg, 2016). This occurrence is based on social influence: "the phenomenon by which the behaviour of an individual can directly or indirectly affect the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in a population" (Song et al., 2007, p. 971). Second, social influencers are highly active in social media networks, which encourages interactivity. Finally, social influencers are perceived to be more authentic as compared to messages coming straight from the company (Marketing-Schools.org, s.d.). Therefore this research assumes that the identification effect also occurs when social influencers are used. This is in accordance with Westenberg (2016) and McCracken (1989) who argue that the effect social influencers can have, can be compared with the influential effect of celebrities (identification effect) and consequently affect consumer behaviour (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Dean & Biswas, 2001). Based on the previous literature this study hypothesizes that the level of identification and internalization mediate the effect of the endorser.

> *Hypothesis 3: Endorser identification mediates the effects of the endorsement source regarding the (a) attitude towards the ad, (b) product attitude, (c) purchase intention and (d) word of mouth intention.*

> *Hypothesis 4: Endorser internalization mediates the effects of the endorsement source regarding the(a) attitude towards the ad, (b) product attitude, (c) purchase intention and (d) word of mouth intention.*

1.3   Message appeal in advertising

As mentioned in §2.1 testimonials can contain an emotional or rational message. The message strategy used in advertising is called message appeal (Mortimer, 2008) or advertising appeal (Li & Song, 2011), that encourages consumer behaviour and influences the attitudes towards the advertised product or brand (Wang et al., 2013). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) mention three types of appeals: rational, emotional and moral. Rational appeals are related to the product's benefits, like the quality, economy, value and performance. Emotional appeals try to connect positive or negative emotions to a product in order to motivate purchase, attract attention and create more belief in the advertisement and brand. Moral appeals are most appropriate for advertising of social causes, which this study will not take into account (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012; Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). Therefore, this study will only take emotionally and rationally framed testimonials into account.

1.3.1 Rational messages

Emotional and rational messages could have different effects on consumer responses. Stafford and Day (1995) concluded that a rational message enhances the attitude towards the ad. Attitude towards the ad is an important construct to measure, because it influences the attitude towards the brand and the purchase intention. This research concluded that rational framing should be used in advertising, because consumers want additional facts. Besides, emotional messages do not always give the desired information (Stafford & Day, 1995). Golden and Johnson (1983) compared thinking and feeling appeals in advertising on advertising effectiveness and found that thinking advertisements, which are relatively more rationally framed, were perceived as somewhat more likeable, providing more (useful) information and evoked a higher purchase intention than feeling advertisements, which are more emotionally oriented. Holbrook (1978) argues that messages containing information based on facts results in higher message credibility and consequently in more positive feelings.

1.3.2 Emotional messages

However, emotional advertising messages are better liked as compared to rational messages (Flora & Maibach, 1990). A study among emotional and informational commercials found that emotional commercials resulted in relatively more positive feelings, a higher effectiveness and a high intention to purchase as compared to rational commercials (Goldberg & Gorn, 1987). Also, emotional appeals are more persuasive than rational appeals when the product involvement is low (Wu & Wang, 2011). This is in accordance with the research of Flora and Maibach (1990), who found that emotional messages work best for consumers at low levels of cognitive issue involvement. However, this study will measure the effect of a high involvement product which might lower the effectiveness of emotional messages. These conflicting results give rise to elaborate the research on the effects of rational and emotional advertisements. On the other hand, Wu and Wang (2011) found no significant difference between the effect of emotional and rational appeal on brand trust, brand affection, purchase intention and overall brand attitude. Based on the conflicting findings in previous studies, this study assumes that rational appeals are more objective and consequently are more credible.

> *Hypothesis 5: A rational advertisement message appeal will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as compared to an emotional advertisement message appeal.*

Message credibility: mediator

Credibility might be a prerequisite for an effective message. This higher level of credibility will possibly enhance positive word of mouth about the subject of the message (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2001; Han & Ryu, 2012). Based on the theory, this study hypothesizes that message credibility mediates the effect of the endorsement on the consumer responses.

> *Hypothesis 6: Message credibility mediates the effects of the endorsement regarding the (a) attitude towards the ad, (b) product attitude, (c) purchase intention and (d) word of mouth intention.*

1.3.3 Interaction between message appeal and endorsement source in advertising

The way a message is framed (message appeal) could interact with the source and consequently influence consumers differently. First, the level of expertise in a message is depending on the message framing (emotional or rational). Gobet (2015) indicates that expertise consists of *knowing-how*, a certain proficiency to accomplish a task, and *knowing-that*, the expert opinion or knowledge. Expert endorsers are perceived as experts in a particular field and as knowledgeable about a specific subject. The information given is therefore objective and factual (Claeys et al., 2013). These third party expert reviewers will explain accurate product information (Chen & Xie, 2005), which is a characteristic of rational message (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009). These message characteristics enhance the readability and quality of the information given (Petty et al., 1983). Those high quality messages affect consumers' attitude more as compared to low quality messages (Lee, Park & Han, 2008), because of the rational reasoning. Besides, a high quality message positively influences the purchase behaviour (Jeong & Lambert, 2001). The research of Beldad et al. (2017) concluded that expert-written reviews are more credible when using a rational appeal as compared to consumer-written reviews. Consequently, those rational messages will result in a higher level of consumer acceptance of the message and in more positive evaluation of the product, which enhances the word of mouth (Hartman et al., 2013).

Therefore, this study assumes that rational messages are suitable to use in expert endorsements wherein knowledge about the product's benefits, like quality and performance will come across. In turn, based on the literature it is expected that congruence between the message appeal (rational or emotional) and the endorser (expert, consumer or social influencer) will result in more positive consumer responses (Beldad et al., 2017).

> *Hypothesis 7: The use of a rational frame by an expert endorser will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as compared to the use of a rational frame by a social influencer and consumer endorser*

On the other hand, reviews of consumers are characterized by their perceived resemblance to how consumers would experience the product (Wen et al., 2009) and how the product is used in the consumers' world (Chen &Xie, 2008). Additionally, these reviews contain their personal experience (Smith, 1993) making use of subjective evaluations and emotionally loaded adjectives, which are characteristics of emotional messages (Claeys et al., 2013). Based on previous research emotional messages are more likely to be used in consumer reviews. Congruence between the endorser and the type of message framing might be a prerequisite to receive more favourable consumer responses.

Consumer endorsers are, when differentiating between expert, consumer and social influencer endorsers, most similar to the actual consumer (Wen et al., 2009). A logical consequence is identification with the source, which affects behavioural change corresponding to the endorser (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). The consumer might think that the situation described by the endorser is also applicable to the consumers' life. In fact, the consumer accepts the message, which indicates the trustworthiness of the endorser (Ohanian, 1990). Friedman and Friedman (1976, as cited in Ohanian, 1990) found that trustworthiness is related to the perceived similarity with the source. This means that a consumer who perceives the endorser as an equivalent person, also perceives the endorser as more trustworthy. According to the scale of Ohanian (1990), higher trust leads to higher source credibility and reliability (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985). Trust is one of the components affecting word of mouth intention (Han & Ryu, 2012). Besides, Schurr and Ozanne (1985) found that higher trust positively affects the (product) attitude and purchase behaviour.

Hypothesis 8: The use of an emotional frame by a consumer endorser will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.

The effect of social influencer endorsement in advertising has not been frequently researched. Therefore, this separate section will discuss possible interaction effects between the social influencer and message appeal. However, as discussed before, when an influencer is used, social influence, interactivity, authenticity and identification might come into play (Song et al., 2007; Marketing-Schools-org, s.d., 2012; Bentley, Earls & O'Brien, 2011 as cited in Westenberg, 2016). A social influencer endorser, who tells the whole story and the entire experience about a brand or product, will enhance the authenticity of the review (Group High, s.d.). The experts mentioned in the study of Zietek (2016) state that authenticity is the key-concept of being a successful social influencer. One important factor, according to the experts, is the use of visual language. The visual language must be authentic; showing the identity of the influencer and process personal experiences in the endorsement (Zietek, 2016). An endorsement containing an experience (Smith, 1993) making use of subjective evaluations and emotionally loaded adjectives which are characteristics of emotional messages (Claeys et al., 2013), and the possible identification with the endorser (Earls & O'Brien, 2011 as cited in Westenberg, 2016) shows us that emotional messages are suitable to use by a social influencer.

On the other hand, most influencers who are active on a blog and social media focus on a specific theme like beauty, lifestyle or gadgets. A good example is www.beautygloss.nl (theme: beauty). The blogger is not a professional make-up artist, but because of her experience she is perceived as a beauty expert (www.beautygloss.nl). Therefore, social influencers could also use the rational message framing, next to emotional message framing, because the effect is comparable with the expert using a rational message.

In sum, this study assumes that social influencers are most effective when they make use of emotionally framed messages, as this enhances their authenticity. However, mentioning some rational product attributes could be part of the endorsement message to "complete" the whole story about the product. When examining some existing *beautyblogs* you often see they mention the ingredients of the product (rational), but the focus is on their experience (emotional). Based on the previous theory, the following hypothesis is formed.

Hypothesis 9: The use of emotional frame by a social influencer endorser will result in (a) a more positive attitude towards the ad, (b) a more positive attitude towards the advertised product, (c) a higher intention to purchase and (d) a higher score on word of mouth as more credible as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.

1.4   Moderating variable: product knowledge

A distinction could be made between technical and non-technical products, whereas technical products frequently need additional information about the functionalities to adequately use the products (Chen & Xie, 2008). This means that a technical product is an experience good, indicating that the characteristics of the product can only be experienced while using the product or when a reviewer reveals his/her experiences (Nelson, 1974; Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). However, a technical product could also be a search good, which means the characteristics of the product can easily be evaluated before the purchase (Nelson, 1974). Some laptop specifications, like the size of the screen and the size of the hard drive are easy to evaluate by most consumers. In this way, perceiving the product as a search or experience good can influence people's need for various types of information in a review. On the other hand, non-technical products such as a t-shirt or a chair often do not need additional information in order to use them. Therefore, a review may be most beneficial for technical products.

In this study an expensive and high-tech product was included in the advertisement, a laptop. Biswas et al. (2006) argue that an expert endorser is more effective as compared to a celebrity endorser in terms of lowering the perceived risk. Another research also state that "reference group appeals" lower the perceived risk during online shopping, especially when an expert endorser is included (Tan, 1999). This research would like to expand the research about high-tech product endorsements and measure to what extent the knowledge of these type of products influences the attitude towards the ad and the product, the intention to purchase and word of mouth.

The level of product knowledge could ultimately influence the purchase intention of the consumer (Brucks, 1985). The level of information processing is dependent on the level of knowledge. Consumers with moderate product knowledge process more of the given information as compared to the consumers who know little or very much about the product. Expert consumers would read the advertisement more in detail when the message contains product attributes (for example: "It has a large memory capacity of 512K") while novice consumers are more motivated to read the messages when benefit information is included (for example: "It has a large memory capacity adequate to run several programs simultaneously") (Maheswaran & Sternthal, 1990). Besides, the level of information processing is dependent on the ability and motivation of the consumer (Kim, Matila & Baloglu, 2011). Therefore, in this study it is assumed that consumers with a lot of knowledge about the product and consumers with little knowledge react differently towards a rational message as compared to an emotional message.

> *Research question 1: To what extent do respondents with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge react differently to the type of message appeal in terms of attitude towards the ad, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention?*

Biswas et al. (2006) researched the effect of consumer product knowledge in relation to endorser effectiveness (perceived risks). In this research a highly technical product is used, a laptop. Biswas et al. (2006) found that expert endorsements are more effective than consumer endorsements when the endorsement product is a technical product. The same research also implies that an expert endorsement will result in even more positive consumer responses when the consumer is very knowledgeable. A consumer with a lot of knowledge will perceive the expert as more credible than a non-expert celebrity endorser. A consumer with little knowledge will rely more upon peripheral cues like the source, than logical reasoning (Biwas et al., 2006). However, previous research did not take the social influencer endorser into account and the effect of endorser effectiveness is limited to

perceived risks. Therefore, this study explored the effects of the expert, social influencer and consumer endorser on the buyers attitude towards the ad and product, intention to purchase and word of mouth.

Research question 2: To what extent do respondents with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge react differently to the endorser type in terms of attitude towards the ad, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention.

1.5 Research model

The following scheme (figure 1) shows the research model used in this research.

Product endorser:
Social influencer -
Professional expert -
Consumer

Mediating variables
Internalization endorser
Identification endorser
Message credibility

Message appeal:
Emotional - Rational

Mediating variable
Credibility message

Consumer responses
Product attitude
Purchase intention
Attitude towards the advertisement
Word of mouth intention
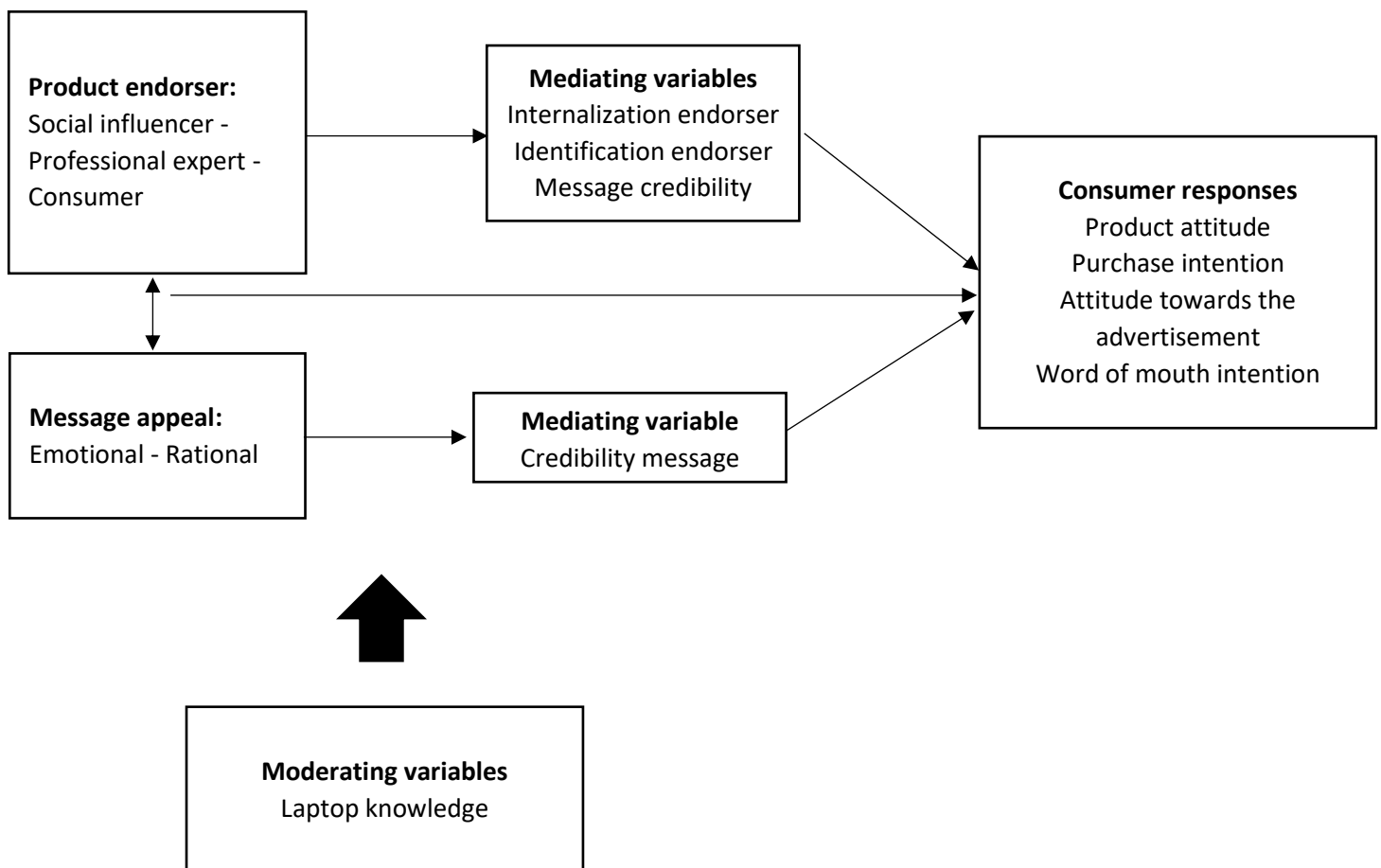
Moderating variables
Laptop knowledge

Figure 1 - Research model

2. Method

This chapter discusses the research design and proposed method that will be used to answer the research question and to test the hypotheses. First, the experimental design is explained (§3.1) followed by the explanation of the pre-tests (§3.2). Thereafter, the stimulus materials are presented in §3.3 and the procedure is discussed in §3.4. The participants and demographic results can be found in §3.5. In the next section the dependent measures and the used scales are described (§3.6). Thereafter, the moderating (§3.7) and mediating (§3.8) measures are presented. Finally, the manipulation check questions and the results of manipulation checks are discussed (§3.9).

2.1 Experimental design

This study consists a 3 x 2 between-subjects experimental design. Therefore, this study examined the effect of two independent variables: (1) the endorsement source namely a consumer endorser, social influencer endorser and expert endorser and (2) the message appeal including a rational advertisement and an emotional advertisement message. The product used in the advertisement is a neutral product (a laptop). In this case, the gender of the source informing about the product does not influence how people perceive the product (Beldad et al., 2016). The dependent variables in this study were: 1) attitude towards the advertisement, 2) product attitude, 3) purchase intention and 4) word of mouth intention. Additionally, one moderator (laptop knowledge) and three mediators (message credibility, identification and internalization) were taken into account.

2.2 Pre-test

Three pre-tests were performed to avoid possible side effects as much as possible.

2.2.1 Pre-test 1 - Product-source combination

The product used in all conditions was endorsed by three different endorsers (consumer, social influencer and expert). However the same picture was used to represent each type of endorser. According to Beldad et al. (2016) it is necessary that the gender of the endorser is congruent with the gender of the product. Consequently, the gender of the information giver when a neutral product is presented, does not influence the consumer responses. A laptop happens to be a neutral product, which means it is neither masculine nor feminine and therefore the gender of person reviewing the product should not matter (Beldad et al., 2016). The researcher performed a pre-test whether consumers perceive a female or a male endorser as a more suitable person to endorse a laptop in order to avoid possible gender effects. Fifteen respondents who fit in the target group have filled in the pre-test questionnaire. The results show that 60% of the respondents agree a male person is the most appropriate person to inform about a laptop. Therefore this study used the picture of a man to indicate the consumer, social influencer and expert. The method and results can be found in appendix A.1.

2.2.2 Pre-test 2 - Message appeal: rational and emotional

In this study two types of message appeal were used: rational and emotional. The content of the messages was based on the research of Leonidou & Leonidou (2009) and Wu & Wang (2011). A pre-test was performed to indicate the effectiveness of the message appeal. Did the respondents correctly perceive the message as emotional or rational. Every sentence or part of the text that belongs together has been pretested using a seven-point semantic differential scale ("1=emotional/feeling" and

"7=facts/information") based on the research of Rosselli, Skelly and Mackie (1994). Table 1 shows the results of the pre-test.

Table 1 - Pre-test message appeal (n=15)

Message appeal	Question	Perceived as *M (SD)*
Rational	*Q1: This laptop has good specifications. It has a 15 inch screen, the newest i5 processor and a fast SSD (500GB). Even so, the cooling system does a great job. The laptop does not overheat when using extensively.*	5.60 (1.77)
Rational	*Q2: Even the exterior of the laptop is made from high quality metal.*	5.13 (1.60)
Emotional	*Q3: This laptop emits a great quality. I was positively surprised how fast and smooth this laptop functions.*	3.00 (1.77)
Rational	*Q4: After using, I believe that the speakers of this laptop do have a good quality. The sound is suitable for listening to music and watching movies.*	2.80 (1.61)
Emotional	*Q5: The laptop does a good job when running many programmes simultaneously. Besides, this laptop is a real eyecatcher because of its sleek, beautiful design.*	3.00 (1.77)
Emotional	*Q6: I am happy with this purchase!*	1.73 (1.58)
Rational	*Q7: This laptop is definitely worth the money.*	3.40 (2.26)
Emotional	*Q8: I also watched a few movies on this laptop together with friends and they were clearly jealous of the unique sound and image experience.*	2.33 (1.29)

1 = "emotional/feeling"; 7 = "facts/information"

The results indicate that the sentence mentioned in question 4 and 7 (rational) were not perceived (emotional) as they were intended to be perceived. These two sentences were replaced. The final texts, as used in the advertisements, were:

> *Rational: "This laptop has good specifications. It has a 15 inch screen, the newest i5 processor and a fast SSD (500GB). Even so, the cooling system does a great job. The laptop does not overheat when using extensively. Even the exterior of the laptop is made from high quality metal. Due to the surround sound speakers and the Intel HD Graphics 620 video card it is no problem to watch HD movies and play music. This laptop is value for money."*

> *Emotional: "This laptop emits a great quality. I was positively surprised how fast and smooth this laptop functions. The laptop does a good job when running many programmes simultaneously. Besides, this laptop is a real eyecatcher because of its sleek, beautiful design. I also watched a few movies on this laptop together with friends and they were clearly jealous of the unique sound and image experience. I am happy with this purchase!"*

The complete second pre-test can be found in Appendix A.2. Section 3.3 shows the adjusted and final messages used in the experiment.

2.2.3 Pre-test 3 - Final questionnaire

After pre-testing the gender of the endorser and the message appeal (rational vs. emotional message), the questionnaire as a whole was also pre-tested. A female and male person from the target group were asked to fill in the questionnaire like any respondent would, while thinking out loud about difficulties they encounter. The questionnaire has been edited based on the comments of these two

test persons. Table 2 summarizes the actions that have been taken based on the outcomes of the pre-test. Appendix A.3 discusses the extensive results of pre-test 3.

Table 2 - Pre-test final questionnaire

Actions
The introduction reveals marginal information about the subjects of the questionnaire to avoid bias.
The first sentences of the introduction includes how much time filling in the questionnaire would take.
The possibility to pause the questionnaire has been left out of the introduction in order to avoid that people forget to finalize the questionnaire.
Some questions were only focussed on the message and not on the product. However, the addition "do not pay attention to the product (class)" is left out, because that would actually make people think about that product.
The Dutch translation of "beneficial" is replaced by "gunstig", instead of "voordelig".
The combined scale measuring purchase intention is replaced by an existing scale derived from another research.
The variable "endorser credibility" is measured using the total scale of Ohanian (1990), because endorser credibility consists of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness.
The rationality of the rational message is improved by adding more technical features.

2.3   Stimulus materials

In total, six different fictitious advertisements for a laptop were made to manipulate the independent variables. Based on the pre-test, a picture of an average man will be used in all six conditions in order to eliminate influences like age and attractiveness. The first manipulation is the description of the endorser, which needs to indicate a consumer, a social influencer or an expert. Second, a rational message and an emotional message were formulated according to the research of Wu and Wang (2011) and Leonidou and Leonidou (2009). Figure 2 and 3 show two examples of the used advertisements. Appendix B gives an overview of the stimulus materials.

Figure 2 - Consumer - emotional message

Figure 3 - Consumer – rational message

2.4   Procedure

In order to collect data and measure the variables, a questionnaire was used. This questionnaire was distributed online using a non-probability sampling technique. Online distribution was chosen over offline distribution, because of the low costs, the digital processing, increased time efficiency and anonymity, which lowers socially desirable answers. The main language of the questionnaire was Dutch, because this study focussed on the effects on Dutch consumers. The participants who decided to take part in the questionnaire were first presented to some demographic questions like gender, age

and education. Furthermore, some questions regarding internet usage, online buying and laptop experience were asked. Thereafter, the participants were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions followed by questions about the several dependent variables. Finally, several manipulation checks were executed and the mediator variables were introduced in the questionnaire.

2.5 Respondents

In this research a non-probability sampling technique is used. In this case, respondents are reached due to their convenient accessibility. The age of the respondents ranges from 18 to 35 years old, because this age category buys the most online private purchases and is therefore the most interesting age segment (CBS, 2016). The respondents will be randomly assigned to one of the conditions. The potential respondents will be asked to fill in the questionnaire via social media and direct messaging.

In total, 499 people have started the online questionnaire of which 240 questionnaires were finished. However, only 161 questionnaires of the completed questionnaires were useful for analysis. The participants were excluded from analysis based on the time used to fill in the questionnaire, their age and whether they answered the manipulation check questions correctly. The majority of the participants were women (male: 46, female: 115). The participants are all Dutch speaking and aged between 18 and 35 years old (mean = 24.05 years old). The majority of the participants is higher educated (hbo or wo). The characteristics of the participants in each condition are presented in table 3.

Table 3 - Demographics respondents

Conditions	Participants	Age	Gender		Education	
	N	Mean (SD)	Male (%)	Female (%)	High (%)	Low (%)
Expert						
Emotional	25	22.80 (2.58)	28.0	72.0	72.0	28.0
Rational	27	25.11 (3.71)	33.3	66.7	66.7	28.0
Consumer						
Emotional	26	24.38 (3.43)	38.5	61.5	65.4	34.6
Rational	25	23.96 (3.77)	32.0	68.0	68.0	32.0
Social influencer						
Emotional	31	23.81 (3.24)	12.9	87.1	67.7	32.3
Rational	27	24.19 (3.66)	29.6	70.4	74.1	25.9
Total	161	24.05 (3.438)	28.6	71.4	68.9	31.1

2.6 Dependent measures

Each respondent is randomly assigned to one of the six conditions in order to measure the dependent variables. The items used in the study are all derived from existing studies (Bruner, 1992; Kim, Lee & Hur, 2012; Goyette, 2010; Lowery, 2004; Flanagin & Metzge, 2000). Two constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale and three variables were measured on a seven-point semantic differential scale. In order to ensure the validity and reliability, a factor analysis and reliability analysis have been conducted.

2.6.1 Attitude towards the advertisement

The *attitude towards the advertisement* construct was measured by nine questions, based on the seven-point semantic differential scale mentioned in Bruner (1992, p. 697) (α = 0.88). The respondents were asked to assess the following word combinations: good - bad, convincing – unconvincing, unattractive – attractive, clear – not clear, uninteresting – interesting, authentic – not authentic, believable – unbelievable, informative – uninformative, credible – not credible.

2.6.2 Product attitude

The *product attitude* construct was measured by nine questions, based on the semantic differential scale mentioned in Bruner (1992, p.81) (α = 0.911). The respondents were asked to assess the following word combinations: bad quality – good quality, pleasant – unpleasant, desirable – undesirable, positive – negative, pleasing – annoying, useful – useless, boring – interesting, attractive – unattractive, good – bad.

2.6.3 Purchase intention

The *purchase intention* construct was measured by four questions, based on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, used in the research of Dodds et al. (1991) and Sweeney et al. (1999) (α = 0.90). An example: "The probability that I would consider buying the product is very high".

2.6.4 Word-of-mouth intention

The scale of Kim, Lee and Hur (2012) and the scale of Goyette (2010) were combined to measure *word of mouth intention* (α = 0.73). Word of mouth is measured by four items, which need to be assessed on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For example: "I would be willing to recommend this product".

2.6.5 Message trust

The questionnaire included a variable named message trust. However, when looking more carefully, message trust was no dependent variable but part of the mediator message credibility. The questionnaire measures twice the same construct based on the same scale of Ohanian (1990). Therefore message trust was excluded from analysis.

2.7 Moderating measures

This research also incorporated one moderating variable, which is a variable that possibly affects the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, namely laptop knowledge. It was measured before the manipulations as part of the demographic questions. The participants could rate their knowledge on a seven-point scale ranging from "very much knowledge" to "very little knowledge". The researcher made up the following question: *Please indicate your level of knowledge about laptops. It is about your knowledge about the specifications, quality and performance of the laptop.*

2.8 Mediating measures

The mediating variables are, according to literature, expected to mediate the effect of the endorser on consumer responses. The first mediating variable is the credibility of the endorser based on the level of identification and internalization. The second mediating variable is message credibility, which is assumed to mediate the effect of the endorser and the message appeal on the dependent variables.

2.8.1 Internalization

The source credibility scale of Ohanian (1990) was used to measure internalization, the credibility of the endorser (α = 0.91). The credibility scale consists three subscales, namely attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise. The factor analysis made clear that the trustworthiness loaded under the same factor as message credibility. In order to avoid deleting another mediator (message credibility), the items indicating trustworthiness were excluded from analysis. Besides, attractiveness also loaded under another factor and was therefore excluded from analysis. Consequently, only the expertise items were left to measure internalization. A seven-point semantic differential scale was used consisting of the following items: expert – not an expert, experienced – inexperienced, knowledgeable – unknowledgeable, qualified – unqualified, skilled – unskilled.

2.8.2 Identification

The level of identification was measured using the similarity scale of Peetz (2012) on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (α = 0.84). The four items used, were formulated like: "When I was reading the product review...I identified with the endorser".

2.8.3 Message credibility

The scales of Lowery (2004) and Flanagin and Metzger (2000), which are both mentioned in Roberts (2010) are combined to measure the credibility of the message used in the endorsement advertisement (α = 0.83). A seven-point semantic differential scale consisting of five items was used to measure the message credibility. The participants were asked whether the message is accurate or inaccurate, fair or unfair, unbiased or biased, unbelievable or believable, not trustworthy or trustworthy.

The factor analysis of the items resulted in eleven factors. All items, which loaded below 0.40 and/or belong to another factor are excluded from analysis. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the variable message trust will be excluded. Table 4 gives an overview of the final items used to measure the constructs: the grey marked items are used for analysis.

Table 4 - Factor analysis

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Message credibility	Product attitude	Credibility endorser (expertness)	Purchase intention	Message appeal	Identification
Message trust - Fair:Unfair	.81					
Message trust - Trustworthy:Untrustworthy	.75					
Message trust - Reliable:Unreliable	.74					
Credibility endorser - Trustworthy:Untrustworthy	.74					
Attitude towards advertisement - Trustworthy:Untrustworthy	.72					
Credibility endorser - Honest:Dishonest	.72					
Attitude towards advertisement - Credible:Not credible	.69					
Credibility endorser - Sincere:Insincere	.68					
Message trust - Sincere:Insincere	.68					

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Message credibility	Product attitude	Credibility endorser (expertness)	Purchase intention	Message appeal	Identification
Message credibility - Unbelievable:Believable	.64					
Credibility endorser - Reliable:Unreliable	.64					
Product beoordeling realistisch -Not realistic:Realistic	.64					
Message credibility - Trustworthy:Untrustworthy	.62					
Message trust - Dependable:Undependable	.61	.43				
Message credibility - Accurate:Inaccurate	.43					
Attitude towards advertisement - Authentic:Not Authentic	.41					
Message credibility - Unbiased:Biased						
Product attitude - Desirable:Undesirable		.81				
Product attitude - Pleasant:Unpleasant		.80				
Product attitude - Positive:Negative		.73				
Product attitude - Useful:Useless		.59				
Product attitude - Annoying:Pleasing		.58				
Product attitude - Good:Bad		.57				
Product attitude - Bad quality:Good quality		.57				
Credibility endorser - No expert:Expert			.78			
Credibility endorser - Qualified:Unqualified			.78			
Credibility endorser - Knowledgeable:Unknowledgable			.78			
Credibility endorser - Experienced:Inexperienced			.77			
Credibility endorser - Skilled:Unskilled			.72			
Purchase intention - There is a strong likelihood that I will buy this product.				.75		
Purchase intention - I will purchase this product.				.74		
Purchase intention - I would not consider buying this product.				.71		
Purchase intention - The probability that I would consider buying this product is very high.				.67		
Message appeal - De product review mainly describes emotions.					.81	
Message appeal - The product review mainly describes facts.					.76	
Message appeal - The product review mainly describes an experience.					.73	
Message appeal - The product review mainly describes functions.					.72	

Component	1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Message credibility	Purchase intention	Message appeal	**Identification**	**Attitude towards ad**	**Credibility endorser (attractiveness)**	**Product attitude**	**WOM intention**	**Manipulation check: endorser type**
Identification - When I was reading the product review I felt like I had a lot in common with the person who gave the product review.				.85					
Identification - When I was reading the product review it felt like the person who gave the product review and I were the same.				.83					
Identification - When I was reading the product review I identified with the endorser.				.83					
Identification - When I was reading the product review I had a different opinion than the person who gave the product review.									
Attitude towards advertisement - Uninteresting:Interesting					.69				
Attitude towards advertisement - Unattractive:Attractive					.61				
Attitude towards advertisement - Good:Bad	.42				.59				
Attitude towards advertisement - Clear:Not clear					.59				
Attitude towards advertisement - Convincing:Unconvincing	.47				.50				
Attitude towards advertisement - Informative:Uninformative			.42		.45				
Message credibility - Complete:Not complete					.42				
Credibility endorser - Unattractive:Attractive						.73			
Credibility endorser - Beautiful:Ugly						.73			
Credibility endorser - Elegant:Plain						.69			

Component	1	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	Message credibility	Purchase intention	Message appeal	Identification	Attitude towards ad	Credibility endorser (attractiveness)	**Product attitude**	**WOM intention**	**Manipulation check: endorser type**
Product attitude - Attractive:Unattractive							.64		
Product attitude - Boring:Interesting							.56		
WOM intention - I mostly say negative things to others.							.52		
WOM intention - I strongly recommend people buy products online from this company.		.42						.55	
WOM intention - I would be willing to defend this product when others speak poorly about it.								.55	
WOM intention - I would be willing to recommend this product.								.44	
Manipulation check - Describe endorser									-.71

Factors < 0.4 are suppressed

2.9 Manipulation checks

Two manipulation check questions were asked in order to decide if the respondent have understood the manipulations correctly. The first question asked which kind of endorser was showed in the advertisement (an expert, a regular consumer or a person who is active on a blog, YouTube, social media). The respondent was also asked to rate the emotionality and rationality of the message.

2.9.1 Endorser

In order to measure if the respondents perceived the endorser correctly, an ANOVA was performed. Based on the results, it seems that many respondents who were presented with an expert endorser did not fill in that they saw an "expert". There was no significant difference between the expert and consumer condition, which means that the respondents could not differentiate between the consumer and expert. Therefore the manipulation has failed. The cross table (table 5) shows the answers on the manipulation check question concerning the endorser type. It is remarkable that only 30 of the 68 respondents who saw an expert, actually filled in they saw this expert.

Table 5 – Manipulation check endorser type - green is a correct answer (n=225)

		Manipulation check		
		Expert	A regular consumer	A person who is very active on a blog, YouTube, social media
Endorser in ad	Expert	30	19	19
	Consumer	7	51	13
	Social influencer	6	22	58

In order to increase the internal validity, respondents who answered the endorser manipulation check wrongly were excluded from analysis. Unfortunately, too little respondents in the expert condition were left to do a reliable analysis (n=139). Therefore the researcher asked 36 more people to participate in the questionnaire which only included the expert condition (emotional and rational). 22 of these new respondents answered the manipulation check question correctly and were useful for analysis. Consequently, all participants in the analysis answered this manipulation check question correctly which makes it a "perfect manipulation" (table 6).

Table 6 – Respondents per endorser type condition (n=161)

Condition	N
Expert	52
Consumer	51
Social influencer	58

2.9.2 Message appeal

The second manipulation check question needed to determine if the emotional and rational message were perceived correctly. A seven-point bipolar scale was used ("1 = highly emotional" and "7=highly rational"). An independent samples t-test shows a significant difference (t (159) = 10.23, p < 0.001) between the emotional condition group (M = 2.64, SD = 1.12) and the rational condition group (M = 4.44, SD = 1.10). It can be concluded that respondents who have read emotionally framed message significantly indicate this message as emotional. This also goes for the respondents who have read the rationally framed message. They perceived the message as rational.

However, the dataset still consists of respondents who answered the message appeal manipulation check questions wrongly. Therefore, a second analysis was conducted without those respondents. First, the median split technique (median = 3.75) was used to split the dataset in two groups of respondents (emotional and rational) who answered the manipulation check correctly. The independent samples t-test indicates that the rational condition group (M = 4.94, SD = 0.78) significantly (t (120) = 20.44, p < 0.001) scores higher as compared to the emotional condition group (M = 2.19, SD = 0.70). This means that no strong differences have been found between the original dataset and this dataset. Therefore this research will use the complete dataset (n=161) in order to conduct further analyses. However, it must be taken into account that not every respondent answered

the manipulation check questions correctly. This research ended up with 161 useful respondents (n=161) with a minimum of 25 respondents per condition (table 7).

Table 7 - Respondents per condition

Condition	N
Consumer - emotional	26
Consumer - rational	25
Expert - emotional	25
Expert - rational	27
Social influencer - emotional	31
Social influencer - rational	27

3. Results

The following section describes the analyses done in SPSS in order to test the hypotheses. First, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed to measure the main and interaction effects of the independent variables (§4.1). Thereafter, the Baron & Kenny method was performed in order to test the effect of the possible mediators (§4.2). Finally, another MANOVA was done to test the possible moderator effect (§4.3). An overview of the hypotheses and results can be found in the §4.4.

3.1 The main effects of endorser type and message appeal

The main effects of the endorser type and message appeal were measured using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The endorser type (expert, social influencer, consumer) and message appeal (emotional, rational) were included as the independent variables. Whereas attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention count as the dependent variables. Table 8 gives an overview of the means and standard deviations.

Table 8 - Means and standard deviations per condition (n=161)

		Attitude towards the ad	Product attitude	Purchase intention	Word of mouth intention
Conditions		*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Expert					
	Emotional	4.32 (1.08)	4.86 (1.04)	3.84 (1.59)	2.77 (1.55)
	Rational	4.56 (1.07)	5.01 (0.87)	3.82 (1.36)	3.38 (1.35)
Consumer					
	Emotional	3.85 (1.26)	4.76 (0.95)	2.86 (1.41)	2.60 (1.14)
	Rational	4.27 (1.06)	4.55 (0.93)	2.85 (1.59)	3.38 (1.20)
Social influencer					
	Emotional	3.97 (1.08)	4.41 (1.01)	2.82 (1.24)	2.82 (1.10)
	Rational	4.36 (0.94)	4.73 (0.76)	3.43 (1.47)	3.10 (1.01)
Endorser type					
	Expert	4.45 (1.07)	4.94 (0.95)	3.84 (1.46)	3.09 (1.47)
	Consumer	4.06 (1.18)	4.66 (0.94)	2.86 (1.48)	2.71 (1.16)
	Social influencer	4.16 (1.03)	4.56 (0.91)	3.10 (1.37)	2.95 (1.06)
Message appeal					
	Emotional	4.04 (1.14)	4.66 (1.01)	3.14 (1.47)	2.74 (1.25)
	Rational	4.40 (1.02)	4.77 (0.86)	3.39 (1.50)	3.12 (1.20)

Note: 1 = low score on dependent variable (negative score)
         7 = high score on dependent variable (positive score)

After performing the MANOVA, Wilks' Lambda value shows significant results for a main effect of type of endorser ($F_{(8, 304)}$ = 2.02, p = 0.04, η^2 = .05). No additional interaction effects were found. An overview of the results can be found in table 9.

Table 9 - Multivariate test (n=161)

Multivariate test		F-value	p	η²
Wilks' Lambda				
	Endorser	2.02	.04*	.05
	Message appeal	1.70	.16	.04
	Endorser*message appeal	1.06	.39	.03

*p<.05

The MANOVA also showed the main and interaction effects on the dependent variables. The type of endorser has a significant main effect on purchase intention ($F_{(8,304)} = 6.43$, $p = .002$, $η² = .08$). The Bonferroni analysis showed that participants in the expert condition (M = 3.84, SD = 1.46) have a significant higher purchase intention as compared to participants in the consumer (M = 2.86, SD = 1.48, p = .002) and social influencer condition (M = 3.10, SD = 1.37, p = .03). Likewise, message appeal has a significant main effect on attitude towards the advertisement ($F_{(4,152)} = 4.22$, $p = .04$, $η² = .03$). Participants who were exposed to the rational message have a more positive attitude towards the ad (M = 4.40, p = 1.02) as compared to the participants who were exposed to the emotional message (M = 4.04, SD = 1.14). An overview of the effects on the dependent variables is given in table 10.

Table 10 - Main effects independent variables (n=161)

Independent variables		df	F-value	p	η²
Endorser type					
	Attitude towards advertisement	8, 304	1.70	.19	.02
	Product attitude	8, 304	2.30	.10	.03
	Purchase intention	8, 304	6.43	.002*	.08
	Word of mouth intention	8, 304	1.14	.32	.01
Message appeal					
	Attitude towards advertisement	4, 152	4.22	.04*	.03
	Product attitude	4, 152	.34	.56	.002
	Purchase intention	4, 152	.70	.40	.004
	Word of mouth intention	4, 152	3.60	.06	.02
*Endorser * message appeal*					
	Attitude towards advertisement	8, 304	.12	.11	.90
	Product attitude	8, 304	.94	1.08	.34
	Purchase intention	8, 304	1.78	.86	.43
	Word of mouth intention	8, 304	.57	.38	.69

*p<.05

3.2 Mediation effects

Besides the direct main and interaction effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables, the mediation effects of three possible mediating variables (endorser credibility, identification and message credibility) are tested. Table 11 gives an overview of the means and standard deviations of the possible mediators. Looking at the outcomes of the multivariate analysis in §4.1 (table 9 and 10), there is only a main effect of endorser type on purchase intention ($F(8,304) = 6.43$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .078$) and of message appeal on attitude towards the advertisement ($F(4,152) = 4.22$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .03$). Therefore, a mediation effect could only possibly occur between endorser type and purchase intention and between message appeal and attitude towards the advertisement.

Table 11 - Means and standards deviations mediators (n=161)

		Endorser credibility	Identification	Message credibility
Conditions		*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Expert				
	Emotional	5.02 (1.22)	2.40 (1.28)	4.00 (1.55)
	Rational	5.22 (.73)	2.64 (1.13)	4.85 (1.08)
Consumer				
	Emotional	2.80 (.98)	2.36 (1.25)	3.30 (1.19)
	Rational	3.85 (.97	2.69 (1.39)	4.03 (1.18)
Social influencer				
	Emotional	3.99 (1.03)	2.71 (1.66)	3.32 (1.18)
	Rational	3.97 (1.00)	2.40 (1.14)	4.44 (.99)
Endorser type				
	Expert	5.12 (1.00)	2.52 (1.12)	4.44 (1.38)
	Consumer	3.29 (1.10)	2.52 (1.32)	3.64 (1.28)
	Social influencer	3.98 (1.01)	2.56 (1.44)	3.85 (1.23)
Message appeal				
	Emotional	3.91 (1.38)	2.50 (1.42)	3.52 (1.33)
	Rational	4.36 (1.09)	2.57 (1.21)	4.46(1.12)

Note: 1 = low endorser credibility/identification/message credibility
         7 = high endorser credibility/identification/message credibility

In order to test the mediation effect, a multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was performed in order to measure possible main and interaction effects between the independent variables and the possible mediators. After performing the MANOVA, Wilks' Lambda value showed significant results for main effects of type of endorser ($F(6, 308) = 14.50$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$) and message appeal ($F(3,153) = 6.13$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .107$). The MANOVA indicated that endorser type only has a significant main effect on endorser credibility ($F(5,155) = 42.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$) and message credibility ($F(5,155) = 3.85$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .05$) and not on identification. Also, message appeal has only a significant effect on endorser credibility ($F(5,155) = 7.71$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$) and message credibility ($F(5,155) = 15.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$). Therefore, the mediation analysis was only applied to the possible mediators: message credibility and endorser credibility (expertise). An overview of the results of the MANOVA can be found in table 12 and 13.

Table 12 - Multivariate test (n=161)

Multivariate test		F-value	p	η²
Wilks' Lambda				
	Endorser	14.503	<.001**	.22
	Message appeal	6.126	.001**	.11

**p<.001
*p<.05

Table 13 - Main and interaction effects mediating variables (n=161)

Mediating variables		df	F-value	p	η²
*Endorser type * purchase intention*					
	Endorser credibility (expertise)	5, 155	42.83	<.001**	.36
	Identification	5, 155	.01	.99	.000
	Message credibility	5, 155	3.85	.02*	.05
*Message appeal * attitude towards the ad*					
	Endorser credibility (expertise)	5, 155	6.71	.01*	.04
	Identification	5, 155	.18	.68	.001
	Message credibility	5, 155	15.31	<.001**	.09

**p<.001
*p<.05

In order to conduct a mediation and regression analysis it is necessary to construct a dummy variable for each endorser type in order to create a categorical variable (Field, 2009). Thereafter, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to indicate significant correlations between the dependent (purchase intention, attitude towards the ad), independent (endorser type, message appeal) and mediating variables (endorser credibility, message credibility). Significant correlations were found between all variables except for the social influencer endorser. Thus, only the expert and consumer endorser will be used for mediation analysis.

The mediation analysis was done according to the Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation analysis method. Four linear regression analyses were performed in order to measure the beta coefficient and significance level between the different variables. When looking at figure 4, regression 1, 2 and 3 clarify the

Figure 4 - Mediation analysis according to Baron and Kenny (1986)

relationships between the independent, mediator and dependent variable. The fourth regression analysis contains all three variables to see if regression 1 fades away when the mediator is included. This means a mediation effect occurs.

It can be concluded that the effect of the expert and consumer endorser on purchase intention is fully mediated by endorser credibility. However, message credibility only fully mediates the effects of the

consumer endorser on purchase intention. The significant regression between the expert endorser and purchase intention is not faded away by the mediator. Moreover, the mediation analysis confirms that the effect of message appeal on attitude towards the ad is fully mediated by message credibility. Tables 14 until 18 summarizes the regression analyses in order to research a possible mediation effect.

Table 14 - Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of the expert endorser on purchase intention is fully mediated by endorser credibility

Independent variables	β	t	p
Regression 1			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (expert)	.85	3.51	.001**
Regression 2			
Dependent variables: endorser (expert)			
Endorser credibility	.20	8.14	<.001**
Regression 3			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser credibility	.58	7.17	<.001**
Regression 4			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (expert)	<.001	.001	.999
Endorser credibility	.58	6.00	<.001**

**p<.001

Table 15 - Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of the consumer endorser on purchase intention is fully mediated by endorser credibility

Independent variables	β	t	p
Regression 1			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (consumer)	-.59	-2.39	.02*
Regression 2			
Dependent variables: *Endorser (consumer)*			
Endorser credibility	-.17	6.38	<.001**
Regression 3			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser credibility	.58	7.17	<.001**
Regression 4			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (consumer)	.15	.60	.55
Endorser credibility	.60	6.65	<.001**

**p<.001
*p<.05

Table 16 - Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of the expert endorser on purchase intention is not mediated by message credibility.

Independent variables	β	t	p
Regression 1			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (expert)	.85	3.51	.001**
Regression 2			
Dependent variables: *Endorser (expert)*			
Message credibility	.09	3.22	.002*
Regression 3			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Message credibility	.64	8.70	<.001**
Regression 4			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (expert)	.43	2.04	.04*
Message credibility	.60	8.00	<.001**

**P<0001
*p<.05

Table 17 - Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of the consumer endorser on purchase intention is fully mediated by message credibility.

Independent variables	β	t	p
Regression 1			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (consumer)	-0.59	-2.39	0.02*
Regression 2			
Dependent variables: *Endorser (consumer)*			
Message credibility	-0.06	-2.21	0.03*
Regression 3			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Message credibility	0.64	8.70	<0.001**
Regression 4			
Dependent variable: *purchase intention*			
Endorser (consumer)	-0.29	-1.37	0.17
Message credibility	0.62	8.35	<.001**

**P<0.001
*p<0.05

Table 18 - Mediation analysis confirms that the effect of message appeal (rational/emotional) on attitude towards the ad is fully mediated by message credibility.

Independent variables	β	t	p
Regression 1			
Dependent variable: *attitude towards ad*			
Message appeal	0.37	2.15	0.03*
Regression 2			
Dependent variables: *message appeal*			
Message credibility	0.14	4.84	<0.001**
Regression 3			
Dependent variable: *attitude towards ad*			
Message credibility	0.49	9.12	<0.001**
Regression 4			
Dependent variable: *attitude towards ad*			
Message appeal	-0.11	0.70	0.49
Message credibility	0.50	8.75	<0.001**

**P<0.001
*p<0.05

3.3 Effect of moderators

The research design of this study also included one possible moderator, namely laptop knowledge. The possible moderation effect of laptop knowledge was studied by doing a three-way MANOVA. It is necessary to transform the continuous variable "laptop knowledge" into a categorical variable by performing a median split (M = 4.00, SD = 1.52). Laptop knowledge was divided in a group with a lot of knowledge about laptops and a group with little knowledge based on the median. The distribution between knowledgeable and less knowledgeable respondents is quite equal (see table 19).

Table 19 - Distribution high/low laptop knowledge respondents (n-161)

Laptop knowledge	Respondents (N)	Respondents (%)
A lot of laptop knowledge	86	53.4
Little laptop knowledge	75	46.6
Total	161	100

The following table gives an overview of the means and standard deviations depending on the level of laptop knowledge in each condition.

Table 20 - Means and standard deviations per condition

Conditions			Attitude towards the ad	Product attitude	Purchase intention	Word of mouth intention
			M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Expert						
	Emotional	A lot of knowledge	4.90 (.96)	5.41 (.94)	4.94 (1.24)	3.79 (1.87)
		Little knowledge	4.05 (1.06)	4.61 (1.02)	3.34 (1.50)	2.29 (1.15)
	Rational	A lot of knowledge	4.58 (.95)	5.17 (.71)	4.03 (1.30)	3.47 (1.38)
		Little knowledge	4.52 (1.38)	4.63 (1.13)	3.34 (1.45)	3.16 (1.37)
Consumer						
	Emotional	A lot of knowledge	3.94 (1.18)	4.59 (.87)	2.58 (1.23)	2.46 (.90)
		Little knowledge	3.76 (1.37)	4.91 (1.02)	3.13 (1.55)	2.74 (1.35)
	Rational	A lot of knowledge	4.39 (1.18)	4.43 (.95)	3.17 (1.71)	2.72 (1.43)
		Little knowledge	4.15 (.95)	4.68 (.93)	2.54 (1.46)	2.94 (.96)
Social influencer						
	Emotional	A lot of knowledge	3.98 (1.10)	4.39 (1.07)	2.64 (1.13)	2.65 (.98)
		Little knowledge	3.96 (1.10)	4.44 (.95)	3.10 (1.40)	3.11 (1.27)
	Rational	A lot of knowledge	4.40 (1.05)	4.74 (.86)	3.33 (1.47)	3.16 (.90)
		Little knowledge	4.32 (.83)	4.71 (.66)	3.54 (1.51)	3.03 (1.18)

Expert	A lot of knowledge	4.67 (.94)	5.24 (.77)	4.30 (1.33)	3.57 (1.51)
	Little knowledge	4.20 (1.16)	4.72 (1.03)	3.34 (1.45)	2.57 (1.27)
Consumer	A lot of knowledge	4.15 (1.18)	4.51 (.90)	2.86 (1.48)	2.59 (1.16)
	Little knowledge	3.94 (1.19)	4.80 (.97)	2.86 (1.51)	2.83 (1.17)
Social influencer	A lot of knowledge	4.17 (1.08)	4.55 (.99)	2.95 (1.32)	2.87 (.94)
	Little knowledge	4.14 (.97)	4.48 (.81)	3.32 (1.45)	3.07 (1.20)

Thereafter, a multivariate analysis was performed taking message appeal, endorser type and laptop knowledge as independent variables and attitude towards the ad, product attitude, purchase intention and WOM intention as dependent variables. The results of the multivariate tests including the Wilks' Lambda are presented in table 21. Table 22 presents the effects of laptop knowledge.

Table 21 - Multivariate effect of laptop knowledge

Moderating variable		Wilk's Λ	*df*	*F*	*p*	η²
Laptop knowledge						
	Laptop knowledge	.99	4, 146	.52	.72	.01
	Laptop knowledge * Endorser	.90	8, 292	1.95	.05	.05
	Laptop knowledge * Message appeal	.99	4, 146	.35	.84	.01
	Laptop knowledge * Endorser * Message appeal	.96	8, 292	.80	.61	.02

Table 22 - Main and interaction effects

Moderating variable		df	F-value	p	η²
Laptop knowledge					
	Attitude towards advertisement	11, 149	1.75	.19	.01
	Product attitude	11, 149	.69	.41	.01
	Purchase intention	11, 149	1.49	.22	.01
	Word of mouth intention	11, 149	.66	.42	.004
*Laptop knowledge * endorser*					
	Attitude towards advertisement	11, 149	.42	.66	.01
	Product attitude	11, 149	3.27	.04*	.04
	Purchase intention	11, 149	3.53	.03*	.05
	Word of mouth intention	11, 149	3.37	.04*	.04
*Laptop knowledge * message appeal*					
	Attitude towards advertisement	11, 149	.39	.53	.003
	Product attitude	11, 149	.01	.91	<.001
	Purchase intention	11, 149	.13	.72	.001
	Word of mouth intention	11, 149	.21	.65	.001
*Laptop knowledge * endorser * message appeal*					
	Attitude towards advertisement	11, 149	.59	.56	.01
	Product attitude	11, 149	.12	.89	.002
	Purchase intention	11, 149	1.62	.20	.021
	Word of mouth intention	11, 149	1.70	.19	.022

*p<0.05

After performing the MANOVA, the results do not indicate a main effect of laptop knowledge. However, the Wilks' Lambda value showed a **marginal** significant interaction effect of laptop knowledge * type of endorser (F(8, 292) = 1.95, p = .05, η² = .05). The graphs (graph 1 until 4) and the main and interaction effects (table 22) indicate that the very knowledgeable respondents significantly have a more positive product attitude (F = 3.27, p = .04, η² = .04), a higher purchase intention (F = 3.53, p = .03, η² = .05) and a higher WOM intention (F = 3.37, p = .04, η² = .04) than respondents with "low laptop knowledge". This result is only the case in the expert condition. The difference between the respondents with much or little knowledge fades away in the consumer and social influencer condition.
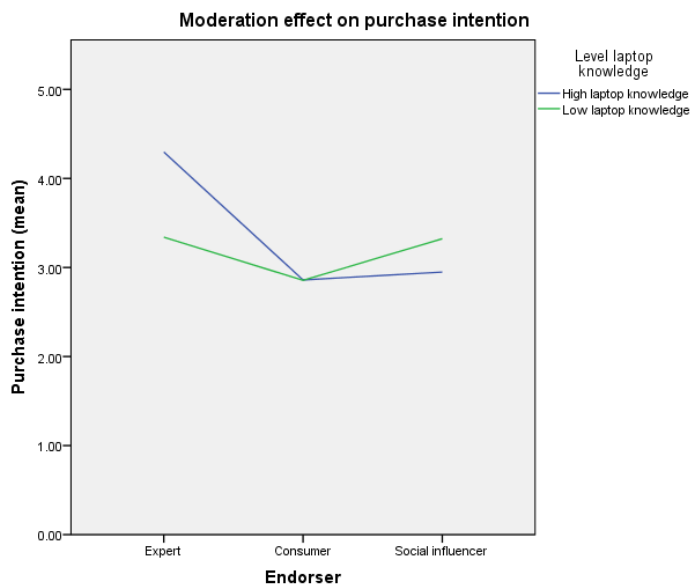
Graph 1 - Moderation effect on purchase intention
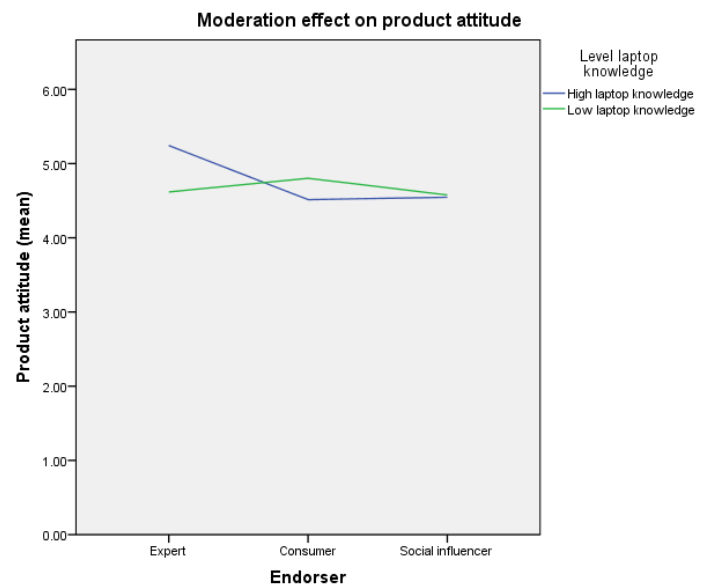
Graph 2 - Moderation effect on product attitude
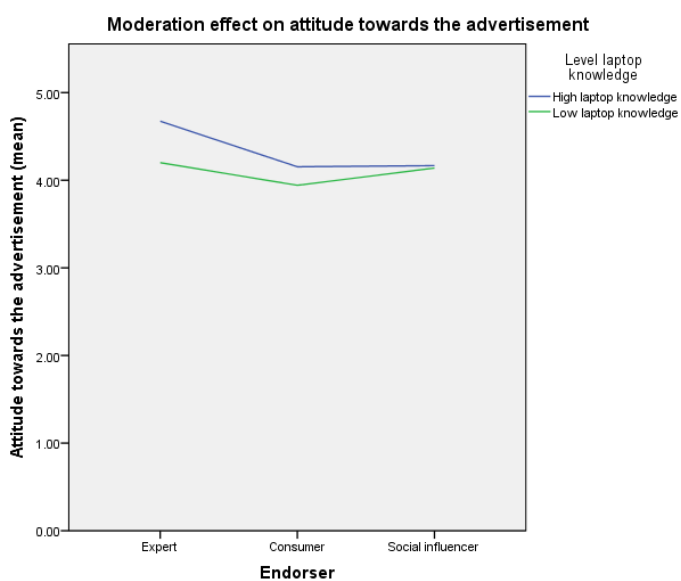
Graph 3 - No moderation effect on attitude towards the ad
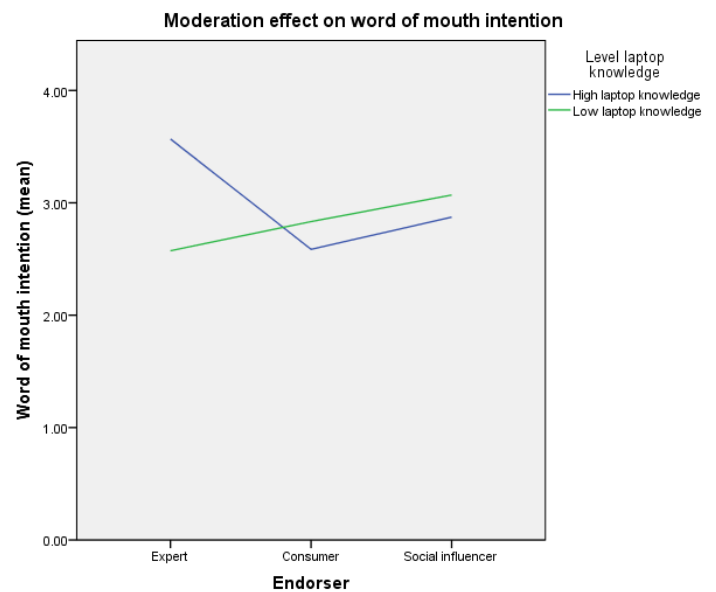
Graph 4 - Moderation effect on word-of-mouth intention

3.4 Overview results

The following table (table 23) indicates which hypotheses are supported by this research and answer the research questions.

Table 23 - Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Result
1a: An expert endorsement advertisement will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorsement advertisement.	Rejected
1b: An expert endorsement advertisement will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorsement advertisement	Rejected
1c: An expert endorsement advertisement will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorsement advertisement	Supported
1d: An expert endorsement advertisement will result in a higher score on word of mouth intention as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorsement advertisement	Rejected
2a: A social influencer endorsement advertisement will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to a consumer endorsement advertisement.	Rejected
2b: A social influencer endorsement advertisement will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to a consumer endorsement advertisement.	Rejected
2c: A social influencer endorsement advertisement will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to a consumer endorsement advertisement.	Rejected
2d: A social influencer endorsement advertisement will result in a higher score on word of mouth as compared to a consumer endorsement advertisement.	Rejected
3a. The attitude towards the ad is more positive when the identification with the endorser is higher.	Rejected
3b. The product attitude is more positive when the identification with the endorser is higher.	Rejected
3c. The intention to purchase is higher when the identification with the endorser is higher.	Rejected
3d. The score on word of mouth is higher when the identification with the endorser is higher.	Rejected
4a. The attitude towards the ad is more positive when the endorser internalization is high, as compared to low endorser internalization, among the endorser types.	Rejected
4b. The product attitude is more positive when the endorser internalization is high, as compared to low endorser internalization, among the endorser types.	Rejected
4c. The intention to purchase is higher when the endorser internalization is high, as compared to low endorser internalization, among the endorser types.	Partially supported

4d. The score on word of mouth is higher when the endorser internalization is high, as compared to low endorser internalization, among the endorser types.	Rejected
5a: A rational message appeal will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to an emotional advertisement message appeal.	Supported
5b: A rational message appeal will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to an emotional advertisement message appeal.	Rejected
5c: A rational message appeal will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to an emotional advertisement message appeal.	Rejected
5d: A rational message appeal will result in a higher score on word of mouth as compared to an emotional advertisement message appeal.	Rejected
6a. The attitude towards the ad is more positive when the message is perceived as credible, as compared to a less credible message, among the endorser types.	Rejected
6b. The product attitude is more positive when the message is perceived as credible, as compared to a less credible message, among the endorser types.	Rejected
6c. The intention to purchase is higher when the message is perceived as credible, as compared to a less credible message, among the endorser types.	Partially supported
6d. The score on word of mouth is higher when the message is perceived as credible, as compared to a less credible message, among the endorser types.	Rejected
7a: The use of a rational frame by an expert endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to the use of a rational frame by a social influencer and consumer endorser.	Rejected
7b: The use of a rational frame by an expert endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to the use of a rational frame by a social influencer and consumer endorser.	Rejected
7c: The use of a rational frame by an expert endorser will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to the use of a rational frame by a social influencer and consumer endorser.	Rejected
7d: The use of a rational frame by an expert endorser will result in a higher score on word of mouth as compared to the use of a social influencer and consumer endorser.	Rejected
8a: The use of an emotional frame by a consumer endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
8b: The use of emotional frame by consumer endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
8c: The use of emotional frame by a consumer endorser will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
8d: The use of emotional frame by a consumer endorser will result in a higher score on word of mouth as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
9a: The use of an emotional frame by a social influencer endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected

9b: The use of emotional frame by social influencer endorser will result in a more positive attitude towards the advertised product as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
9c: The use of emotional frame by a social influencer endorser will result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
9d: The use of emotional frame by a social influencer endorser will result in a higher score on word of mouth as compared to the use of an emotional frame by an expert endorser.	Rejected
Research question 1: To what extent do respondents with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge react differently to the type of message appeal in terms of attitude towards the ad, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention?	No significant difference between the respondents with very much and little knowledge.
Research question 2: To what extent do respondents with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge react differently to the endorser type in terms of attitude towards the ad, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention.	Significant interaction effect of endorser * laptop knowledge in terms of product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention.

4. Discussion

Nowadays, weekly millions of Dutch people watch online videos of "YouTube creators" (Social1nfluencers, s.d.). The YouTube creators are also called social influencers and are usually characterized by their high popularity and wide reach among their followers via different social media channels. Next to the grown amount and popularity of social influencers, consumers currently base their purchase decisions more on user-generated content, like peer reviews (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Therefore the use of endorsers in advertising, which combines a believable and likable endorser with a peer review, is assumed to increase the advertising effectiveness (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Despite the growing attention given to influencers in advertising, little is known about the effects of social influencer endorsers in relation to consumer and expert endorsers. This study provides a further understanding of consumers' responses towards different endorser advertising strategies. The goal of the study was to investigate how consumers respond to different endorser advertisements. In particular, the effects of endorser type (expert, consumer, social influencer) and message appeal (emotional, rational) on the attitude towards the advertisement, product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention. After the discussion of the findings, the practical limitations (§5.1), limitations and further research directions (§5.2) are discussed. Finally, a short conclusion of this research is given (§5.3).

Endorser type

The first aim of this study was to investigate the effect of endorser type. The findings show that consumers have a higher purchase intention when an expert endorser was shown as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorser. This is in line with earlier studies, which indicate that expert endorsements result in more favourable consumer responses (Dean & Biswas, 2001; Maddux & Rogers, 1980; Biswas et al., 2006). A possible explanation for this effect, is that expert endorsers are perceived as more credible as compared to consumer and social influencer endorsers, based on their perceived expertise and trustworthiness (Dean & Biswas, 2001). Likewise, an expert endorser is assumed to be more persuasive and reliable (Clark et al., 2012). On the other hand, no effect has been found when a consumer endorser and a social influencer endorser are included in the ad. A possible explanation is that respondents rely more on an expert than on a regular consumer or social influencer when looking for a high-tech product (Biswas et al., 2006). Another explanation could be the use of a fictitious social influencer in the ad. The representation and trustworthiness of the social influencer might be enhanced when a real, well-known social influencer is used. In this way, the effect of a social influencer endorser might be comparable with a celebrity endorsement, which could result in behavioural change (McCracken, 1989). The consumer endorser might not carry out the predicted identification effect, because the review is sponsored by the company and this may decrease its authenticity. A product review located on an independent website enhance the effectiveness of the review. The findings revealed no significant effect of endorser type on attitude towards the ad, product attitude and word of mouth intention. This is not in line with previous research of Braunsberger and Munch (1998), who found that a endorser with much expertise enhances the attitude towards the ad as compared to a novice endorser. Additionally, Ranaweera and Prahbu (2003) argued that a higher level of trust positively affects word of mouth intention. Besides, a credible spokesperson positively influences the attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand and purchase intention (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). Factors that might influence the consumer responses are the level of product interest and the likelihood that the respondent would buy a relatively expensive product online. When a respondent is not interested in buying this laptop, because the specifications are not in accordance with his/her needs or this person simply does not need a laptop, he or she might evaluate the endorsement more negatively independent of the type of endorser. A less interested and motivated

respondent might be less mouldable by a third party and consequently reacts more neutral to the endorsement.

Message appeal

The second aim of this study was to investigate the effect of message appeal in advertisements. The findings show that consumers have a more positive attitude towards the rational ad as compared to an emotional ad. The findings are in line with the research of Holbrook (1978) who found that factual messages result in higher message credibility and more positive feelings. Additionally, Stafford and Day (1995) concluded that a rational message enhances the attitude towards the ad. Two possible explanations are that consumers prefer facts and emotional advertisements do not always give that desired information (Stafford & Day, 1995). On the other hand, no significant differences were found in terms of product attitude, purchase intention and word of mouth intention. This is not in line with the research of Golden and Johnson (1983) who argue that rationally framed advertisements evoke a higher purchase intention as compared to feeling advertisements. Stafford and Day (1995) also state that a positive attitude towards the ad consequently influences the attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. A possible explanation is the characteristics of rationally and emotionally messages based on previous research are not executed in the right way, or simply do not work for this target group. Furthermore, Wu and Wang (2011) found no significant difference between the effect of emotional and rational appeal on purchase intention and overall brand attitude, which would partly support the outcomes of this research. As previously mentioned, other factors that could influence the consumer responses are the level of product interest and the likeliness that the consumer would buy a relatively expensive product online.

Interaction effect

Additionally an interaction effect between the endorser type and message appeal was expected, but no significant interaction effect was found during the data analysis. This means that there is no relationship between the two conditions. This is not in line with previous research which assumes that congruence between the message and the endorser would enhance the consumer responses (Beldad et al., 2017). Clearly, respondents do not connect a specific endorser to an emotional or rational message. A possible explanation is the preference of the respondents: some people like to hear how someone experiences a product and others are more focussed on the product characteristics. Besides, both (emotional and rational) advertisements contain the basic characteristics of the laptop on the left side. This means that the factual data about the laptop is revealed in both advertisements. This could decrease the effect of message appeal. Further research can be done on messages that are both emotionally and rationally framed, because this strategy is frequently used by social influencers nowadays. The true distinction between emotional and functional messages might be a little bit old-fashioned.

Mediators: internalization, identification, message credibility

The third aim of this study was to investigate the effect of three mediators (internalization, identification and message credibility) on the consumer responses. The findings show that internalization mediates the effect of the endorser type (expert and consumer) on purchase intention. The findings are in line with the research of Daneshvary and Schwer (2000), who argue that a highly credible source could affect the purchase behaviour positively due to internalization. A possible explanation for this effect is that a credible source is perceived to speak the truth what increases the effectiveness of the advertising (Van der Waldt et al., 2009). However, no mediation effect occurred in terms of product attitude, attitude towards the ad and word of mouth intention. The credibility of the specific endorser might not be strong enough to influence all consumer responses, because other

factors like the chosen picture of the endorser may decrease the endorser credibility. This might the case when respondents evaluate the person who is pictured as less attractive due to their personal taste. Credibility consists of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise (Ohanian, 1990). Another explanation is that the endorser was not perceived as intended, because the expert and social influencer were fictitious. *Familiarity* is, especially for social influencers, an important part of the effectiveness of an endorser (Chi et al., 2011). This might explain the low influence of the social influencer endorser and could be solved when using a real social influencer and expert. However, existing opinions about a certain endorser should be taken into account.

The findings also show that message credibility mediates the effect of message appeal on attitude towards the advertisement. Additionally, the findings show that message credibility mediates the effect of the endorser type (consumer) on purchase intention. The mediation effect of message credibility is supported by the literature, because Holbrook (1978) indicates that message credibility results in more positive feelings. Other researchers indicate that advertisement credibility has an effect on attitude towards the ad (Lutz et al., 1983; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). A possible explanation is, when the message is perceived as credible, the total advertisement will be positively evaluated by the consumer. Likewise, credible endorsers enhance purchase intention (Ohanian, 1999, p. 46 as cited in Van der Waldt et al., 2009). However, the mediation effect does not occur for purchase intention, product attitude and word of mouth intention. This is not in line with the previous studies, which argue that message credibility possibly enhances the word of mouth (Gremler, Gwinner & Brown, 2001; Han & Ryu, 2012). Although the questionnaire items were focused on the textual part only, the respondent could have taken the whole advertisement into account. The layout of the message (like the font) or the endorser type might overrule the effect of the message credibility.

Moderators: laptop knowledge
The fourth aim of this study was to investigate the effect of the possible moderator, laptop knowledge. In this study, laptop knowledge does not moderate the effect of message appeal on the dependent variables (research question 1). Respondents with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge about laptops do not differ on the dependent variables in the emotional and rational condition. This is not in line with the research of Maheswaran and Sternthal (1990) who argue that consumer with much product knowledge would read the advertisement more in detail when the message contains product attributes (rational messages) while layman are more motivated to read the messages when benefit information is included (emotional messages) (Maheswaran & Sternthal, 1990). A possible explanation is that the guidelines of Leonidou and Leonidou (2009) and Wu and Wang (2011) regarding formulating emotional and rational messages were not properly implemented in the experimental conditions of this research. Moreover, a few basic the product characteristics are mentioned in every condition on the left side of the ad, which may blur the line between a totally emotional and rational message.

The findings do show a between-subjects effect of laptop knowledge between the endorser type and the dependent variables. Consumers with a lot of knowledge and little knowledge about laptops do differ (between-subjects effect) on the dependent variables in the different endorser conditions. The findings show that an expert is more persuasive as compared to a consumer and social influencer endorser when respondents who are relatively knowledgeable about laptops are involved, resulting in a more positive product attitude, a higher intention to purchase and a higher score on word of mouth (research question 2). The findings give more insight into how knowledgeable and less knowledgeable consumer evaluate the ad. The results are in line with previous research of Biswas et al. (2006) who indicate that expert endorsements will enhance consumer responses when the high knowledgeable consumer are involved. A possible explanation is that these consumers rely more on a credible spokesperson, because this person is also knowledgeable. Besides, a very knowledgeable consumer is

more capable of verifying the (factual) information given and decide, in this case, if the laptop is interesting to buy. On the other hand, a less knowledgeable consumer will rely more upon peripheral cues like the source type, than on logical reasoning about the product attributes (Biwas et al., 2006). Additionally, these consumers might rely more on identification with the source and consequently affect behavioural change corresponding the endorser (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000; Dean & Biswas, 2001). Wen et al. (2009) argue that consumer endorsers can enhance this identification process because of the perceived similarity between the consumer endorser and the target group. Likewise, a knowledgeable consumer could possibly identify more with the expert endorser. Laptop knowledge shows no moderation effect in the social influencer condition. A possible explanation is that the social influencer has characteristics of both an expert and a 'regular' consumer and therefore evenly influences both, knowledgeable and less knowledgeable, consumers.

4.1 Practical implications

The results of this study have several implications for marketers who are interested in using endorsement advertisements for their business. First, the findings suggest it is important to consider which endorser type to use in the advertisement. The expert endorsement advertisements result in a higher intention to purchase as compared to the consumer and social influencer endorsement. This especially goes for consumers who are very knowledgeable about the advertised product. The findings revealed that expert endorsers are most effective when used to persuade very knowledgeable consumers in contrast to consumer and social influencer endorsers. On the other hand, Biswas et al. (2006) claims this is only true when technical products are involved. Marketers must take into account that the endorser effect could change when non-technical products are involved. The same applies to search and experience goods. A laptop is a search good, because its characteristics and price can be evaluated before buying the laptop which maybe decrease the effectiveness of the endorsement. An endorsement of an experience good may be more effective, because it can reveal the product experiences and complements the factual information given about the product. This research shows no evidence that consumers with little laptop knowledge may rely more on consumer and social influencer endorsers as compared to expert endorsers.

Marketers need to recognize these findings when designing and implementing an endorsement strategy. They need to choose their endorser based on their target group. Do I need to reach new potential customers, which are not familiar with the type of product (low product knowledge)? Or am I interested in consumers who already know a lot about the product category (high product knowledge)? Although, the effect of the social influencer is comparable with the consumer endorser, a real social influencer could increase its persuasiveness because of the celebrity effect (Westenberg, 2016; McCracken, 1989). Therefore, marketers should carefully consider which social influencer is suitable to promote their product (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012), based on the match-up hypothesis in order to enhance the believability, favourability and purchase intention (Kamins & Gupta, 1994 as cited in Zhu & Tan, 2007). Additionally, marketers should ensure a credible endorser, because higher (expert and consumer) endorser credibility enhances the purchase intention. The credibility of the endorser depends on the level of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise (Ohanian, 1990). They should be aware that an expert is not automatically the most credible person, because a regular consumer could also be perceived as truly credible because their experiences might be closer to reality (Daneshvary & Schwer, 2000). Marketers should also search for the most credible advertising message, because message credibility mediates the effect of the consumer endorser on purchase intention.

Second, message appeal only seems to influence attitude towards the advertisement. A rational message results in a more positive attitude towards the ad as compared to an emotional message. The

findings suggest that, independent of the endorser type, a rational message is the most effective. Although, the difference between the effect of emotional and rational messages is not very strong. Therefore marketers must be aware to include factual information, because this is perceived as credible (Braverman, 2008, p. 667). Besides, Stafford and Day (1995) argue that consumers want additional facts. As mentioned previously, the findings suggest that message credibility is also an important factor regarding the advertisement effectiveness. Finally, marketers must be aware that the outcomes may be different for low-involvement products, because Flora and Maibach (1990) found that emotional messages may fit better in that case.

The main goal was to research the possible effect of social influencers and compare this effect with two other types of endorsers, experts and consumers. The findings revealed that the effect of the social influencer is comparable with the consumer endorser. However, marketers should take into account that the results could have differed when an existing, real social influencer was used. Besides, another product type may cause different results. For example, nowadays, beauty products or clothes are more common to be endorsed by a social influencer in comparison to a laptop. These suggestions are useful for marketers when they are considering to corporate a social influencer in their business.

4.2   Limitations and further research directions

This section discusses several limitations of this research and thereby suggests further research directions. The first limitation of this study is the use of convenience sampling. This means that the researcher cannot control for the characteristics of the sample group. This resulted in an unequal distribution of gender. Besides, this research only asked respondents between 18 and 35 years old. A subsequent study could include all ages in order to measure differences between age groups. When replicating the study, a more diverse sample should be used including an equal distribution of men and women and low and high educated people. Consequently, a moderator analysis of gender could be done which might lead to more interesting results.

Second, the questionnaire and manipulations could be improved. For example the formulation of the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire introduced a scenario regarding the advertised product in which the respondent needed to imagine he/she is interested in a specific laptop. Thereafter the respondent was asked to evaluate how likely it is that he/she would buy the product. One statement says: "The probability that I would consider buying this product is very high". It is very likely that the respondents answered "yes" on this question if the scenario has been well processed (the respondents are framed to be interested in this laptop). Furthermore, the advertisements used in the experiment were simplified as compared to professional advertisements, which decreases the chance to generalize of the outcomes. The layout of the advertisement could for example influence how the product review is perceived (high/low quality versus credibility). Furthermore, this questionnaire was a quantitative study asking the respondents about their intention and feelings, but it is not guaranteed that this have led to behavioural change. A qualitative field study would give insight into the actual purchase behaviour.

Another question focussed on the attractiveness of the person pictured in the product review. The person chosen was a man based on the outcomes of the pre-test. Some male respondents commented they thought it was weird to assess the attractiveness of that person. However, research showed that the level of attractiveness of the endorser could influence the credibility of the endorser (Ohanian, 1990). The picture was chosen by the researcher keeping professionalism and a neutral appearance in mind to prevent side effects. However, this goal was not tested in a pre-test. Therefore, it is recommended in further research to pre-test the picture and layout to avoid possible bias.

The specific laptop specifications mentioned in the product review could also have influenced the consumer responses. Some quotes of respondents: "The advertisement gave me too little information to make a decision" and "When I read about the high quality laptop speakers, I immediately thought the message was not trustworthy". It is recommended to involve a real expert in order to enhance the message credibility.

The last comment about the questionnaire is about the manipulation check question concerning the endorser type. The existing question asked which endorser they saw (regular consumer, expert or an influencer via social media). However, many respondents answered this question wrongly. This study assumes that the respondents removed their attention from the text about the endorser to the product information (figure 5). It is recommended to let the respondents also rate the expertness, attractiveness and trustworthiness separately to measure how they *perceive* the endorser.

Figure 5 – Paying attention to different parts of the advertisement

Third, due to the results of the factor analysis, the mediator endorser credibility is in this research only based on the expertise of the endorser, while in fact endorser credibility consists of expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). The mediator endorser credibility is still used in the analysis, but a remark must be made. The expertise of the endorser is actually one of the manipulations in this research. Therefore, it is actually logical that endorser credibility mediates between the endorser type (which varies in terms of expertise) and the consumer responses. Besides, the other mediator message credibility loads under the same factor as endorser credibility (trustworthiness) so one of the two variables needed to be deleted. It is questionable if the respondent could really make a distinction between credibility of "the message" and "the endorser/person". Future research should take into account that respondents might evaluate the whole advertisement as one. It is recommended to measure endorser credibility as a whole based on the "soft side" (attractiveness and trustworthiness) and the "hard side" (expertness) as mentioned in the previous paragraph (§5.1). The credibility of the message itself might be difficult to distinguish from the total advertisement, thus replacing this variable by advertisement credibility might increase the validity. Interesting mediators like the layout and the pictures used in the advertisement could possibly affect the advertisement credibility and are interesting for further research.

Next, the product used in this experiment is relatively expensive, which involves more risk. It is really dependent on the respondents' interest in the product if he or she is willing to purchase it. Further research could replicate this study using a low-risk product. Petty et al. (1983) found that the celebrity status of an endorser has a bigger influence on low-involvement products as compared to high involvement products. Moreover, the message credibility seems to influence the evaluation of high involvement products to a greater extent. This implies that the endorser has less influence on high involvement products like a laptop, which could explain the non-effect of the social influencer. Therefore future research could even consist of a high and low involvement product to compare their effects.

Furthermore, this research used a non-existing brand, which makes it more difficult to evaluate its qualities. Wang and Yang (2010) argue that previous knowledge about the brand (brand image and brand awareness) affects the relationship between brand credibility and purchase intention. This effect is possibly absent when an unknown brand is used. A future study could include brand familiarity and brand image as mediators. Additionally, endorsers could influence the brand image by creating unique brand associations (Wang & Yang, 2010). However, it should be taken account that previous knowledge and experience could also bias the results.

As this research would like to give more insight into the effect of social influencers in relation to experts and consumers in endorsements. The influence of social influencers is based on the power of 'social influence' and the willingness to identify with the source (Bentley, Earls & O'Brien, 2011 as cited in Westenberg, 2016). Besides, the effect of popular social influencers is comparable with celebrities (Westenberg, 2016; Senft, 2008). However, the results indicate that the effect of the social influencer endorser is comparable with the consumer endorser. Future research can be done including existing popular social influencers in the experimental design, because this research used a fictitious social influencer.

Besides, the theoretical framework assumes that social influencers are most effective when they make use of emotional message framing, because this enhances their authenticity. However, mentioning some rational product attributes could be part of the endorsement message to "complete" the whole story about the product. The results suggest no significant effects between the rational and emotional message. Further research could investigate if a combination of emotional and rational characteristics might enhance the social influencer effectiveness.

The respondents were also asked to indicate their online shopping frequency and product review usage. In order to delimit the reach of this study they were not discussed in the results. However, it is still interesting to focus in the future on the influence of consumer characteristics. Ling, Chai and Piew (2010) found that online shopping experience influences the customer online purchase intention. Besides, Zhu and Zhang (2010) found that online reviews are more effective when consumers are featured with relatively greater Internet experience. In this way, it is possible that consumers who use product reviews more frequently perceive the endorsement differently.

4.3   Conclusion

The findings of this experimental research provide insight into the consumer evaluation of different endorsement strategies in advertisements. This study elaborates the knowledge about the effects of endorser type (expert, consumer, social influencer) and message appeal (rational, emotional), whereby taking the moderator laptop knowledge and mediators internalization and message credibility into account. The effect of third-party influencers has grown, which encourages marketers to implement endorsers in their marketing strategy. However, limited research has been done on the effects of social influencers and compared their effect with experts and consumers. The findings indicate that an endorser advertisement including an expert results in the most positive consumer evaluations whereby credibility plays an important role. Especially respondents with a lot of product knowledge seem to rely more on the expert. The effect of the social influencer is comparable with the consumer endorser. Finally, rational messages are more effective as compared to emotional messages. These findings are important for marketers when considering endorsers in their advertising strategy. Future research is needed in order to research the effect of existing social influencers and other (existing) product types. Additionally, it is interesting to take more consumer characteristics into account.

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Appendix A. – Pre-test

A.1 Pre-test: product-gender source combination

Product

The following question has been asked: "Who do you perceive as the most suitable person to give information about a laptop?". The participants could choose between 'a man' and 'a woman'.

Figure 6 – Laptop used in the advertisement

Results

15 participants aged between 18 and 35 filled in the pretest questionnaire. The results indicate which gender fits the product the most in order to reduce the possible gender-effects. If participants on beforehand think a woman is not eligible to inform about a laptop, then this could possibly affect how the participants evaluate the information given in the advertisement. The results (table 24) show that 60,0% of the participants think a man is the most appropriate person to inform about a laptop. Therefore this study will use the picture of a man to indicate the consumer, social influencer and expert

Table 24 - Results pre-test 1

Who do you consider to be the most suitable person to review a laptop?

	N	%
A man	9	60.0
A woman	6	40.0
Total	15	100.0

A.2 Pre-test: message appeal

In this study the message appeal will be manipulated: one message will be rational and the other message will be emotional. The messages are constructed based on the research of Leonidou & Leonidou (2009) and Wu & Wang (2011).

Pre-test messages

Rational: "Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle SSD (500 GB) schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet goed zijn werk. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik. De buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt. Na gebruik ben ik van mening dat de speakers een geweldige kwaliteit hebben. Het geluid is geschikt voor het luisteren van muziek en het kijken van films. Deze laptop is zijn geld zeker waard."

Emotional: "Deze laptop straalt een geweldige kwaliteit uit. Ik werd tijdens het gebruik zeer positief verrast door de snelle en soepele werking van deze laptop. Het is prettig om veel programma's tegelijk te kunnen gebruiken. Daarnaast is deze laptop een echte eyecatcher door het strakke, mooie ontwerp. Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving. Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!"

Pre-test method

A pre-test has been done to indicate the effectiveness of the message appeal: whether the message is correctly perceived as emotional or rational. Every sentence or part of the text that belongs together have been pretested using a seven-point semantic differential scale ("1=emotional/feeling" and "7=facts/information") based on the research of Rosselli, Skelly and Mackie (1994).

Results pre-test

15 respondents aged between 18 and 35 years old have filled in the pre-test questionnaire. The results can be found in table 25.

Table 25 - Results pre-test 2

	M (SD)	Intended as	Perceived as
Q1	5.60 (1.77)	Rational	Rational
Q2	5.13 (1.60)	Rational	Rational
Q3	3.00 (1.77)	Emotional	Emotional
Q4	2.80 (1.61)	Rational	Emotional
Q5	3.00 (1.77)	Emotional	Emotional
Q6	1.73 (1.58)	Emotional	Emotional
Q7	3.40 (2.26)	Rational	Emotional
Q8	2.33 (1.29)	Emotional	Emotional

Q1: Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle (500GB) SSD schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet goed zijn werk. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik.

Q2: Ook de buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt.

Q3: Deze laptop straalt een geweldige kwaliteit uit. Ik werd tijdens het gebruik zeer positief verrast door de snelle en soepele werking van deze laptop.

Q4: Na gebruik ben ik van mening dat de speakers een geweldige kwaliteit hebben. Het geluid is geschikt voor het luisteren van muziek en het kijken van films.

Q5: Het is prettig om veel programma's tegelijk te kunnen gebruiken. Daarnaast is deze laptop een echte eyecatcher door het strakke, mooie ontwerp.

Q6: Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!

Q7: Deze laptop is zijn geld zeker waard.

Q8: Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving.

The results indicate that question 4 and 7 are not perceived as intended. "Na gebruik ben ik van mening dat de speakers een geweldige kwaliteit hebben. Het geluid is geschikt voor het luisteren van muziek en het kijken van films" is perceived as emotional, while it was intended to be a rational message. "Deze laptop is zijn geld zeker waard" is perceived as emotional, while it was intended to be an emotional message.

Adjusted messages
The messages are adjusted based on the results.

Rational: "Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle SSD (500 GB) schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet goed zijn werk. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik. De buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt. Door de surround sound speakers en de Intel HD Graphics 620 videokaart is HD-films kijken en het afspelen van muziek geen probleem. De prijs-kwaliteitverhouding van deze laptop is zeer goed."

Emotional: "Deze laptop straalt een geweldige kwaliteit uit! Ik werd tijdens het gebruik zeer positief verrast door de snelle en soepele werking van deze laptop. Het is prettig om veel programma's tegelijk te kunnen gebruiken. Daarnaast is deze laptop een echte eyecatcher door het strakke, mooie ontwerp. Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving. Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!"

A.3 Pre-test: final questionnaire

After pre-testing the gender of source and the message appeal (rational vs. emotional message), the questionnaire as a whole was also pretested. One female and one male person from the target group was asked to fill in the questionnaire like any respondent would, while thinking out loud about difficulties they encounter.

Results

Table 26 summarizes their comments followed by the changes made based on the comments.

Table 26 - Results pre-test 3

Person 1 (female)	Person (male)
"Why do you mention it is a product review? Do you not reveal too much about your research?" Action: The questionnaire now only mentions, before displaying the real product review, that participants will read "information about a product".	Person 2 mentions: "Is it necessary to ask if the person is attractive?". Action: It is correct that this is the only question that measures another subject, namely endorser attractiveness. The other statements measure endorser trustworthiness and expertise. Together, they form the construct endorser credibility. Later on other items that measure endorser attractiveness are added to the questionnaire.
Person 1 asked halfway reading the introduction how much time the questionnaire will take. Action: Based on this comment the time indication has been moved to an earlier section in the introduction. Now the respondents know in an earlier stage how much time the questionnaire will take. This could be an important trigger to finalize the questionnaire.	Person 2 claims that the reverse coded items do not enhance the validity of the questionnaire, because participants really have to take care of this items when filling in the questionnaire. Action: Actually, reverse coded items could enhance the validity, because it prevents participants to fill in the questionnaire thoughtlessly.
Person 1 suggested to not mention the respondent could pause or stop the questionnaire, because that might increase the chance that people forgot to finish the questionnaire. Action: This sentence has been deleted.	When person 2 was reading the product review, he felt more like reading a blog (his endorser was a blogger, but the message was rational) instead of a review. He also indicates that the message was very subjective. Does this subjectivity harm the rationality of the message? Action: More technical features have been added to the rational message.
Person 1 mentions it is not really clear what "very often", "often" etc. indicate (Q5 and Q6), because those words could have different meanings. Action: No action has been taken, because this study focusses on the subjective opinion of the participant. There is no existing scale which defines "often".	

Do not mention that the question is NOT about the product of product class, because that actually makes people think about that product. Action: This sentence has been deleted.	
The translation for "beneficial" (voordelig) may be incorrect. Action: "Voordelig" has been replaced by "gunstig".	
Person 1 states that two questions about purchase intention contain the same information. Action: The researcher decided to use a different scale.	

Appendix B. Manipulations

Getest!

Laptopwinkel.nl

"Deze laptop straalt een geweldige kwaliteit uit! Ik werd tijdens het gebruik zeer positief verrast door de snelle en soepele werking van deze laptop. Het is prettig om veel programma's tegelijk te kunnen gebruiken. Daarnaast is deze laptop een echte eyecatcher door het strakke, mooie ontwerp."

Mark de Graaf
Consument

Mark is een klant van laptopwinkel.nl. Hij testte deze nieuwe laptop, de Novo 1, in ons assortiment.

Novo 1
15 inch - Intel Core i5
500 GB SSD - 4 GB RAM

"Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving. Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!"

Getest!

Laptopwinkel.nl

"Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle SSD (500 GB) schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet zijn werk excellent. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik. De buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt."

Mark de Graaf
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Laptopwinkel.nl

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Mark de Graaf
ICT specialist

Mark is een expert en adviseur op het gebied van ICT & laptops. Hij testte deze nieuwe laptop, de Novo 1, in ons assortiment.

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"Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving. Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!"

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"Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle SSD (500 GB) schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet zijn werk excellent. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik. De buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt."

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"Door de surround sound speakers en de Intel HD Graphics 620 videokaart is HD-films kijken en het afspelen van muziek geen probleem. De prijs-kwaliteitverhouding van deze laptop is zeer goed."

Getest!

Laptopwinkel.nl

"Deze laptop straalt een geweldige kwaliteit uit! Ik werd tijdens het gebruik zeer positief verrast door de snelle en soepele werking van deze laptop. Het is prettig om veel programma's tegelijk te kunnen gebruiken. Daarnaast is deze laptop een echte eyecatcher door het strakke, mooie ontwerp."

Mark de Graaf
Gadget blogger & YouTuber

Mark heeft 156.000 abonnees op YouTube en maakt blogs & video's over nieuwe gadgets. Hij testte deze nieuwe laptop, de Novo 1, in ons assortiment.

Novo 1
15 inch - Intel Core i5
500 GB SSD - 4 GB RAM

"Ook heb ik al meerdere malen met vrienden een film gekeken op deze laptop en zij waren duidelijk jaloers op de unieke geluids- en beeldbeleving. Ik ben blij met deze aankoop!"

Getest!

Laptopwinkel.nl

"Deze laptop heeft goede specificaties. Het heeft een 15 inch screen, de nieuwste i5 processor en een snelle SSD (500 GB) schijf. Ook het koelsysteem doet zijn werk excellent. De laptop raakt niet oververhit bij intensief gebruik. De buitenkant van de laptop is van hoogwaardig metaal gemaakt."

Mark de Graaf
Gadget blogger & YouTuber

Mark heeft 156.000 abonnees op YouTube en maakt blogs & video's over nieuwe gadgets. Hij testte deze nieuwe laptop, de Novo 1, in ons assortiment.

Novo 1
15 inch - Intel Core i5
500 GB SSD - 4 GB RAM

"Door de surround sound speakers en de Intel HD Graphics 620 videokaart is HD-films kijken en het afspelen van muziek geen probleem. De prijs-kwaliteitverhouding van deze laptop is zeer goed."

Appendix C. Questionnaire

Beste deelnemer,

Ik ben Manon Bijsterbosch en ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn master aan de Universiteit Twente. Deze vragenlijst is onderdeel van mijn master scriptie. Ik zou het enorm waarderen als u de tijd wilt nemen om deze vragenlijst in te vullen. Het invullen duurt ongeveer 7 minuten Allereerst zal er een aantal demografische vragen gevraagd worden. Daarna wordt informatie over een product gepresenteerd. Ik wil u vragen deze informatie goed te lezen en te bekijken om vervolgens de vragen hierover te antwoorden.

Dit onderzoek gaat over uw mening; er zijn geen correcte of foutieve antwoorden mogelijk. Uw antwoorden zullen vertrouwelijk en anoniem worden behandeld. Het is van belang dat u de hele vragenlijst invult. Als u vragen heeft over deze vragenlijst of over het onderzoek in het algemeen, kunt u contact met mij opnemen via m.bijsterbosch@student.utwente.nl.

Door op "verder" te klikken, gaat u akkoord met de deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Q1 De volgende vragen gaan over uzelf. Wat is uw geslacht?

- ◯ Man (1)
- ◯ Vrouw (2)

Q2 Wat is uw leeftijd in jaren? ….

Q3 Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde opleiding?

- ◯ Vmbo, Mavo (1)
- ◯ Havo (2)
- ◯ Vwo (3)
- ◯ Mbo (4)
- ◯ Hbo (5)
- ◯ Wo (6)
- ◯ Anders, namelijk ... (7) _____

Q4 Hoeveel jaar heeft u ervaring met internet?

Q5 Hoe vaak koopt u producten online?

- ◯ Heel vaak (1)
- ◯ Best vaak (2)
- ◯ Regelmatig (3)
- ◯ Soms (4)
- ◯ Bijna nooit (5)
- ◯ Nooit (6)

Q6 Hoe vaak raadpleegt u online productbeoordelingen/recensies/reviews als u online producten koopt?

- ◯ Heel vaak (1)
- ◯ Best vaak (2)
- ◯ Regelmatig (3)
- ◯ Soms (4)
- ◯ Bijna nooit (5)
- ◯ Nooit (6)

Q7 Hoe hoog schat u uw kennis over laptops in? Het gaat om uw kennis over de specificaties, kwaliteit en prestaties van laptops.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Zeer weinig kennis	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Zeer veel kennis

Tip voor telefoongebruikers: kantel nu uw beeldscherm om de vragen gemakkelijker in te vullen.

U kunt ook inzoomen. Bekijk en lees het scenario en de onderstaande productbeoordeling. Stelt u zich voor dat u op zoek bent naar een gemiddelde laptop voor thuisgebruik. De specificaties van de laptops van het merk "Novo" komen erg in de buurt van wat u zoekt. U komt de volgende productbeoordeling van deze laptop, de Novo 1, tegen op de website van een laptopwinkel.

[Random assignment of one of six conditions]

Q8 De volgende vragen gaan over de productbeoordeling die u zojuist gezien heeft. Hoe zou u de productbeoordeling beschrijven? Geef aan in hoeverre de volgende woorden bij de productbeoordeling passen. Het gaat om uw gedachten over de productbeoordeling zelf. Denk niet te lang na over het antwoord. Over het algemeen geldt dat de eerste ingeving de beste is.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Goed	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Slecht
Overtuigend	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Niet overtuigend
Onaantrekkelijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Aantrekkelijk
Duidelijk	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Onduidelijk
Niet interessant	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Interessant
Authentiek	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Niet authentiek
Geloofwaardig	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Ongeloofwaardig
Informatief	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Niet informatief
Betrouwbaar	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Onbetrouwbaar

Q9 Hoe zou u de productbeoordeling beschrijven? Geef aan in hoeverre de volgende woorden bij de productbeoordeling passen.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Aannemelijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Niet aannemelijk
Eerlijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Oneerlijk
Betrouwbaar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onbetrouwbaar
Onoprecht	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Oprecht
Geloofwaardig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Ongeloofwaardig

Q10 De volgende vragen gaan over het product (de laptop) zelf.

Wat is uw beeld van de laptop gebaseerd op het bericht dat u zojuist heeft gezien? Geef in hoeverre u de volgende woorden bij het product vindt passen.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Slechte kwaliteit	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Goede kwaliteit
Prettig)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onprettig
Wenselijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onwenselijk
Positief	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Negatief
Vervelend	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Aangenaam
Goed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Slechts
Nuttig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Nutteloos
Saai	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Interessant
Aantrekkelijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onaantrekkelijk

Q11 Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen (7-punts schaal "zeer mee oneens" tot "zeer mee eens").

1. De kans dat ik deze laptop overweeg te kopen is heel groot.
2. Ik zou niet overwegen om deze laptop te kopen.
3. Ik zou dit product kopen.
4. Het is zeer waarschijnlijk dat ik deze laptop zal kopen.

Q12 Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. Beoordeel de volgende stellingen op basis van het bericht dat u zojuist heeft gezien (7-punts schaal "zeer mee oneens" tot "zeer mee eens").

1. Ik zou bereid zijn om deze laptop aan te raden.
2. Ik ben bereid om deze laptop te verdedigen als anderen er negatief over spreken.
3. Ik zal overwegend negatief praten over deze laptop tegenover anderen.
4. Ik zou het andere mensen sterk aanraden om deze laptop online te kopen.

Nu volgt dezelfde productbeoordeling als die u eerder heeft gezien in deze vragenlijst. Bekijk en lees deze nog één keer goed en beantwoord de daaropvolgende vragen.

Q13 Het laatste gedeelte van deze vragenlijst gaat over of u de productbeoordeling, die u zojuist heeft gezien goed heeft begrepen en wat uw mening is over de persoon en de boodschap. Hoe zou u de persoon benoemen die de laptop heeft getest in deze advertentie?

○ Een expert (1)
○ Een reguliere consument (2)
○ Een persoon die zeer actief is op een blog, YouTube, social media (3)

Q14 Beoordeel de persoon die de productbeoordeling heeft gegeven op de volgende eigenschappen.

Ik beschouw deze persoon als ...

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Bekwaam	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onbekwaam
Geen expert	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Expert
Ervaren	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onervaren
Onaantrekkelijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Aantrekkelijk
Gekwalificeerd)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Ongekwalificeerd
Betrouwbaar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onbetrouwbaar
Eerlijk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Niet eerlijk
Geloofwaardig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Ongeloofwaardig
Mooi	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Lelijk
Ondeskundig	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Deskundig
Stijlvol	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Niet stijlvol
Echt	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Onecht

Q15 Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen. Toen ik de productbeoordeling las, ... (7-punts schaal "zeer mee oneens" tot "zeer mee eens").

1. ... voelde het alsof ik veel gemeen had met de persoon die de laptop beoordeelde.
2. ... voelde het alsof de persoon die de laptop beoordeelde en ik hetzelfde waren.
3. ... kon ik mijn identificeren met de persoon die de laptop beoordeelde.
4. ... had ik een andere mening dan de persoon die de laptop beoordeelde.

Q16 De laatste vragen gaan over de boodschap/de informatie die de productbeoordeling wil overbrengen.   Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de volgende stellingen (7-punts schaal "zeer mee oneens" tot "zeer mee eens").

1. De productbeoordeling beschrijft hoofdzakelijk functies. (1)
2. De productbeoordeling beschrijft hoofdzakelijk emoties. (2)
3. De productbeoordeling beschrijft hoofdzakelijk feiten. (3)
4. De productbeoordeling beschrijft hoofdzakelijk een ervaring. (4)

Q17 Beoordeel de boodschap/de informatie die de productbeoordeling wil overbrengen op de volgende eigenschappen. Ik beschouw de boodschap/informatie als ...

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Geloofwaardig	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Ongeloofwaardig
Onnauwkeurig	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Nauwkeurig
Betrouwbaar	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Onbetrouwbaar
Bevooroordeeld	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Onbevoordoordeeld
Compleet	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Niet compleet

Q18 Geef aan in hoeverre u deze productbeoordeling realistisch vindt. Ik vind deze productbeoordeling ...

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	8 (8)	
Helemaal niet realistisch	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Zeer realistisch